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Sustainability via Security – A New Look

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Crime is carbon costly and if sustainability is to go forward as the vision that can guide and inform design and planning agendas, it must find ways to address security issues (crime as well as the fear of crime). This special edition of the Built Environment uniquely focuses upon issues of crime, design and security in the context of sustainable development. This is an area where many practitioners recognise the "need to explicitly integrate crime issues within sustainability frameworks" (Cozens, 2007 p. 187), yet to do so they require more information. In recognising the need to both stimulate debate and to provide practical examples, this volume brings together a selection of authors from a variety of different backgrounds to highlight the links between different approaches, agendas and methodologies. It also identifies some of the tensions and conflicts of trying to deliver sustainable and secure developments, and how best to resolve these differences.

The original aim of this special edition was to highlight the pinch points between the two agendas of crime prevention and sustainable design and to draw attention to the difficulties that this has created for practitioners aiming to meet the aims and objectives of their relevant agenda/s. Those who have worked within the field of community safety (and more specifically the field of designing out crime from the built environment) will be aware of the historic tension between the two agendas. Sustainability has been largely interpreted to mean environmentally friendly, environmentally friendly is seen as getting people out of their cars and on to their feet and bicycles; getting people on to their feet and bicycles often means creating more permeable pathways, and creating more pathways could inadvertently create more opportunities for crime and disorder.

These arguments have often been simplistically presented as Crime Prevention Design Advisors/Architectural Liaison Officers (CPDAs/ALOs) demanding closed developments whilst many architects, planners and others working to the sustainability agenda sought permeable, open developments to encourage environmentally friendly ways of living and travelling (Fairs, 1998; Stungo, 1998; Summerskill, 2000). Yet as this edition progressed, it became clear that such polarisation not only misinterprets the issue, it also entirely misses the point. Whilst the term sustainability is often presented as meaning environmentally friendly and sustainable developments as being those which are built to minimise carbon emissions and reduce climate warming, this again is too simplistic an account of sustainable design. The Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (now Department for Communities and Local Government) document *Defining Sustainable Communities* (2005) defines sustainable communities as "places where people want to live and work now and in the future" (ODPM, 2005 p.1). Clearly to create places where people want to live and work, that do not compromise the needs of future generations to do the same, we must create places that are built for longevity, where people feel safe (and *are safe*), where developments do not need to be regenerated or demolished, but offer resilient designs that anticipate the needs of tomorrow. Building sustainable developments is not only about the use of environmentally friendly materials, it is also about creating environments which are safe, attractive and ecologically rich (Edwards, 2000). As Fox's paper highlights, there is a common misunderstanding that sustainability means 'environmental' or 'green' and this interpretation misses the main point of sustainable development, which is to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes at the same time. In recognising that security is a route to sustainability rather than an obstacle to overcome, the focus of this journal changed from being about sustainability versus security to **sustainability via security.**

As Armitage and Monchuk highlight within this special edition, there is no doubting the importance of sustainable development. The United Kingdom needs more homes, yet the impact upon the environment must be minimised. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that a step forward for the green agenda does not present a step back for crime prevention and designing out crime. In their paper *Reconciling Security with Sustainability: The Challenge for Eco-Homes,* Armitage and Monchuk present detailed findings that review both planning and crime prevention policy, as well as analyse the impact of existing eco-homes throughout the United Kingdom. One of the key findings of their paper is that the research did not identify any features of sustainable design that would prevent a development from achieving Secured by Design (SBD) accreditation. Equally, no features of SBD were identified which would make it difficult to achieve a high rating on the Code for Sustainable Homes. So what is it precisely that prevents the marriage of green and blue? Developments that had failed to align the two agendas appear to have failed because of a lack of communication and consultation between key partners, not because of a lack of common ground or design ingenuity. In fact there was no design feature that was essential for sustainability that made it impossible to achieve a secure development (or vice versa). Common features of developments which had failed to align the two agendas were a

lack of communication between developer/planning department and the ALO/CPDA, a perceived lack of flexibility by the ALO/CPDA and/or misinterpretations of the aims and principles of the two agendas. In contrast, developments which had met the requirements of both the Code for Sustainable Homes (or EcoHomes) and SBD had ensured that the ALO/CPDA was consulted at the concept/pre-planning stage, had excellent systems of communication (for example, basing the ALO/CPDA within the planning department) and were staffed by individuals who understood the requirements of those working to a complementary agenda. Although concluding that the two agendas can work together, Armitage and Monchuk highlight how current policy is doing little to emphasise the need for truly sustainable communities to be safe and secure. Security is currently marginal to the Code for Sustainable Homes, with maximum scores for sustainability being achievable with no attention being given to security. The marginalisation of security is justifiable only if three criteria apply:

- Firstly, that residential planning decisions have no (or trivial) crime consequences.
- Secondly, that security and sustainability are generally incompatible in design choices, and
- Finally, that crime itself is carbon neutral.

None of the above assertions is credible. As for the first, the literature reviewed by Armitage and Monchuk shows that planning decisions do have substantial crime consequences. For example, the four evaluations of SBD implementation are unanimous in demonstrating the crime-reductive effects of these standards. As for the second criterion, their research shows that security and sustainability are usually not perceived to be in tension by domain experts, but the opposite, that there are substantial areas of synergy. Furthermore, there is no shortage of imaginative ways of working around perceived tensions. Many of the tensions identified within existing developments were a consequence of poor design. The sustainability agenda was irrelevant to the perceived tension and remediation would not jeopardise the sustainability of the development. As to the third criterion, a paper given by Monchuk and Pease (2009), which compliments that presented within this special edition, shows crime to be *carbon costly*. Factoring in the costs of police mileage in response to crime, the replacement of stolen and damaged property, the health and other costs to crime victims and others living in crime-challenged areas, together with indirect payments such as the costs of removal away from homes in crime-ridden areas, maintenance and refurbishment of void homes, demonstrates what a huge carbon footprint crime leaves. Crime control is thus an important contributor to the establishment of stable, sustainable communities, which should be reflected in its weighting in the Code for Sustainable Homes.

In his paper - *Crime Prevention, the Planning System and Sustainable Development: Addressing Policy Challenges in English Practice,* Kitchen outlines the history of crime prevention as a consideration within the planning process, from the Department of the Environment circular 5/94 to the Design and Access statements required by the Department for Communities and Local Government circular 01/2006. This review of policy and legislation highlights how crime prevention has gradually been built into the English planning system. Also, on a more positive note, it shows how far the planning system has come in terms of the importance placed upon crime prevention within planning considerations. Whilst presenting this progress, Kitchen goes on to highlight the ambiguities that are present between existing policies and initiatives and the difficulties that this presents for practitioners making planning decisions on the ground. This is illustrated through the presentation of a recent case study in Salford (Greater Manchester) where there were conflicting views from the applicant and the police ALO. Whilst the applicant had ticked all boxes in terms of compliance with policy and consideration for crime prevention, disagreements remained on key issues relating to the design and layout of the development. Kitchen warns of the dangers of expecting a Planning Committee of elected members to overcome differences that neither academic research nor professional literature have yet resolved.

Cozens and Love present a detailed review of the literature surrounding the contentious issue of permeability – the extent to which urban forms allow (or restrict) the movement of pedestrian or vehicular traffic in different directions, one of the key debates surrounding the agendas of crime prevention and sustainability. As well as exploring the 'encounter' versus 'enclosure' debate, Cozens and Love present the insights gained from an innovative applied research project into improving the management of pedestrian access ways (PAWs) in Western Australia. Through the development of their Situational Crime Prevention Assessment (SCPA) that comprises a suite of five tools for assessing and reducing crime risk in PAWs, Cozens and Love have created a framework that allows local governments to diagnose local problems/issues and to apply integrated and more appropriate solutions at the localised level.

Drawing upon one of the key areas of debate within the field of designing out crime within the built environment –

that of permeability and pedestrian movement, Evans presents the findings of a five-year research study into accessibility, urban design and social inclusion (AUNT-SUE). Perceptual and safety issues - one of the major barriers to transport access for vulnerable groups - are explored by Evans who goes on to present an urban design street audit or index (SDI) that can be used as a transferable index for measuring accessibility.

In his paper *SafeGrowth: Moving Forward in Neighbourhood Development*, Saville highlights the challenge of maintaining crime prevention in the long term. He poses the idea that a crucial factor in sustaining prevention is the process of consultation, implementation and planning. Saville presents the SafeGrowth model - an integrative planning process which employs five planning steps to help residents to learn how to create and self-regulate their own safety. The key, according to Saville, is the shift towards a new style of user centred prevention - one in which safer places emerge from residents co-designing for themselves rather than having programmes of interventions imposed upon them by 'experts'. The move away from standardised Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) checklists towards a holistic approach to the design, build and management of communities could offer valuable lessons for the current system of designing out crime within the United Kingdom.

Gamman and Thorpe echo Saville to some extent by also exploring what 'user centred and 'co-design' approaches can contribute to designing out crime, in particular in addressing competing multi-stakeholder demands. Their paper concludes the special edition by emphasising how carbon costly crime impacts economically, socially and environmentally upon communities, and what design can do to address this. The paper describes in detail a user/abuser centred design methodology, and identifies how this connects with other areas of social design activity, and the methods currently being delivered by designers to address other complex social issues as well as crime. It argues that design against crime constitutes sustainable design because it aims to anticipate and design out crime problems before they emerge – rather than intervening with carbon costly retrofit solutions after the problem occurs. Gamman and Thorpe outline their Iterative Design Model and the stakeholder engagement methods utilised by the Design Against Crime Research Centre to create co-designed briefs that are fit for purpose in serving the multiple needs of the communities the designs address. They suggest that knowledge about these methods, generated by the Bikeoff.org project, may be useful to CPDAs and ALOs when dealing with developers, to raise questions and further understanding about whether or not stakeholder engagement has been appropriately undertaken. Their conclusions share with other authors in this journal the idea that sustainable design and development is possible, and likely to be more socially responsive and socially significant, if user consultation which helps to mediate and integrate competing social and ethical agendas is carefully built into all development stages of design and build.

This special edition has brought together a variety of papers on subjects relevant to the issues of security and sustainability. The authors debate contentious issues such as permeability and conflicts within policy and legislation and present tools to identify local crime problems as well as models and frameworks to target and mediate these. We hope that the papers within this volume will stimulate debate as well as providing tools to aid the development of truly sustainable communities.

References

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