

'The Government believes that it is important to help create mixed and inclusive communities, which offer a choice of housing and lifestyle. It does not accept that different types of housing and tenures make bad neighbours'

PPG3: Housing paragraph 10

Creating mixed communities

The creation of successful residential environments is about much more than visually attractive design. It is also in essence about providing opportunities for homes which respond to people's needs and providing a framework within which communities can become established and grow.

Mixed neighbourhoods of people of different ages and economic status and with different lifestyles and different levels of mobility and independence can provide a number of important community benefits. For example, they can:

- lead to a better balance of demand for community services and facilities such as schools, recreation facilities and care for elderly people;
- provide opportunities for 'lifetime communities' where people can move home without leaving a neighbourhood;
- make neighbourhoods more robust by avoiding large concentrations of housing of the same type;
- enable community self-help such as with arrangements for child care, help with shopping, the garden or during the winter freeze;
- assist community surveillance with people coming and going throughout the day and evening, as compared to the dormitory suburb which becomes deserted during the working day, making the opportunities for crime easier.

The provision of a mix of housing types and uses¹ can also contribute to the creation of more attractive residential environments by enabling a greater diversity of building forms and scales. For example:

- apartments can give scale to local centres and turn corners elegantly with continuous frontage;
- town houses can contribute to more formal compositions of avenues, circuses and squares and help frame open spaces;
- community buildings such as schools and health centres can be designed to give status to civic spaces and provide a focus for community.

The provision of a range of housing in terms of dwelling size, type and affordability as well as appropriate community facilities and services, such as open spaces, crèches, daycare and health services, are all important in creating the framework within which communities can grow.

Providing a range of housing opportunities

A good mix of both housing types and sizes is important in creating a basis for a balanced community. The case studies show that even comparatively small developments can embrace a wide mix of dwelling types.

The Rolls Crescent development at Hulme demonstrates how design flair can deliver a very wide range of dwelling types within a coherent street scene. Within the scheme of 67 dwellings there are 11 different dwelling types ranging from three-storey, 5-bedroom houses to single-storey 2-bedroom units designed to be wheelchair accessible.



A range of different housing opportunities are well integrated to create a balanced community and a coherent street scene. Rolls Crescent, Hulme

Much recent housing has provided a limited range of tenure choices, often focusing on a narrow market segment or particular housing need. Even where affordable housing has been provided as part of a development, it has often been poorly integrated with homes developed for private rent or sale.

At Poundbury, more than 20% of the dwellings provided in the first phase of development are for affordable rent. These are provided mainly in small groups of between two and four dwellings which are scattered throughout the development. A key point is that in terms of building form and external appearance they are indistinguishable from the homes for private sale.

Integrating special needs and general housing



Homes for affordable rent

Small groups of houses for affordable rent scattered throughout the first phase of development at Poundbury, Dorchester

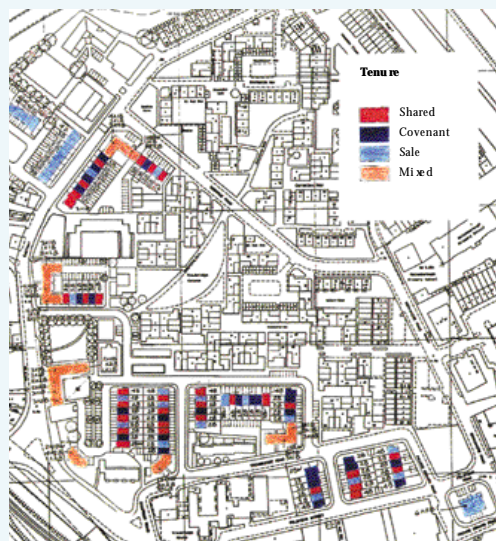
Integrating different housing types and needs can greatly enrich the quality of community life by engendering both a sense of belonging and a sense of respect for all.

However, care needs to be taken at all stages of the design process to ensure that the range of housing needs is fully understood (including taking expert advice as appropriate) and to make sure that any potential conflicts between the lifestyles of different groups are taken into account.

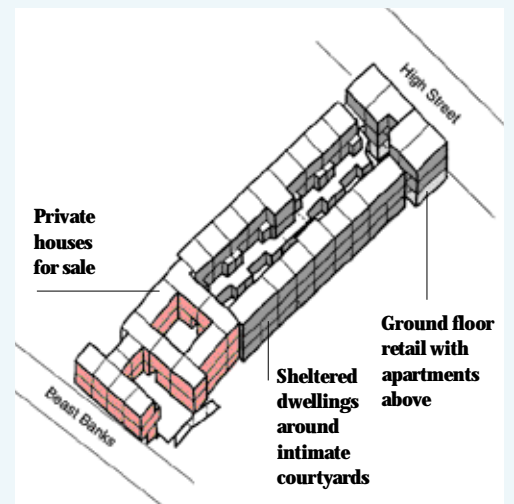
The successful integration of special and general needs housing can be helped by innovative design approaches which deal with the requirements of care providers in relation to the place rather than by building standard solutions.

The development of Webster's Yard, Kendal demonstrates the potential of such an approach. Here, 44 sheltered dwellings for elderly people have been designed alongside a dozen houses and apartments for sale on a narrow, sloping town centre site. The quality and richness of the development reflect the careful crafting of the scheme to fit its context and could not have been achieved through the use of standard types.

The Trowbridge Estate, London



In an inner urban context, the redevelopment of the Trowbridge Estate seeks to create a wide range of housing choices. The result is a 'pepper potting' of different housing opportunities around the development.



Responding to the characteristics and the needs of residents through design. Webster's Yard, Kendal

Supporting the community

The analysis of the area surrounding a site (see Chapter 2) will build up a clear picture of the existing facilities and services which residents will be able to access conveniently on foot. This is an important starting point in considering the need for new community facilities and services in an area and whether it may be appropriate and possible (in terms of site size and the availability of funding) to provide these as part of the overall development of the site.

The key point is that the provision of new facilities and services should build on and enhance the range and quality of facilities already available in the area, including residents' access to them. For example, it may well make more sense to secure improvements to the quality of an existing open space or play area close to a site rather than seeking additional provision on the site itself. Consultation with the local community can help enormously in ensuring that proposals reflect community aspirations as well as encouraging local people to take a stake in decisions about their neighbourhood.

Some activities and uses (such as late night entertainment or noisy sports or play) will be incompatible with the lifestyle aspirations of some people, but this need not necessarily require the activities to be geographically separated from dwellings. Many potential problems can be resolved through careful attention to detailed design and arrangements for long term management. For example, by taking care in:

- locating noisy activities such as play facilities for older children away from residents who may be particularly sensitive to noise;
- using the mix of different dwelling types (and lifestyles) to create buffers between quiet areas and areas of intense use;
- locating bedrooms away from noise sources.

These considerations of design and management are important because often the easy option of separating activities and uses can contribute to the creation of problem areas. For example, placing children's play areas to the rear of dwellings, or in the corner of a site where it cannot be overlooked, helps to create the conditions for nuisance and antisocial behaviour.



Open space at the heart of a community provides a sense of identity and a safe place to play. Boscombe, Bournemouth



Open spaces at the rear of dwellings have no civic value and often become a source of nuisance



Medical centre at ground floor level with apartments above. Isledon Village, Islington

With imaginative design, the provision of community facilities can not only support community development and meet needs, but also help create a focus and sense of identity for a neighbourhood. Too often inadequate attention has been paid to this potential with:

- 'a site' for a school or open space being provided as a planning requirement, rather than as an integral part of an urban design strategy;
- the facility being developed to meet the functional requirements of the user or provider without proper regard for its civic design potential.

This can result in civic buildings being dispersed around a site, rather than drawn together to create a community centre and a focus for the public transport network.

The benefits of an integrated approach to urban design are illustrated at Isledon Village, Islington, London. In this case an intensive community consultation programme helped to define priorities for the provision of community facilities and a vision of how these should be incorporated into the new residential neighbourhood.

The resulting development includes a variety of community facilities catering for a range of needs and has been successfully incorporated into the scheme. These include a medical centre at ground floor level with apartments above, a nursing home for elderly people with mental health problems and a self-built nursery school with a community room and play facilities for local children.

Some key points

In terms of providing a framework for the development of a mixed community, the following key points should be considered:

Housing mix

- Does the development provide a range of housing opportunities in terms of dwelling types, size, affordability and accessibility?
- How successfully have different types of housing been integrated with each other?

Community facilities

- Has the need for any supporting community facilities and services been considered in relation to existing patterns of provision?
- Has the provision of community facilities been considered as a part of the urban design strategy for the site?

End notes:

- 1 The forthcoming DTLR publication Mixed Use Development: practice and potential gives further consideration to the delivery of mixed use development, including housing, in town centres