

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRADITIONAL URBANISM: THEY FEED EACH OTHER

At the beginning of this Vision statement we defined Sustainable Development as:

“A process through which social objectives are met in an environmentally benign way and at the optimum long-term economic cost.”

We also acknowledged that traditional town form, consistent for centuries, contributed so much to the achievement of sustainable objectives, but that more needed to be done.

Traditional towns were:

- Efficient, mixed-use and walkable
- They used local materials, understood local climate and landscapes
- Local people did tend to be more involved in decision-making

But—

- They didn't recycle as well as we need to do today
- Their fuels were not as clean and efficient as they need to be today
- Waste and water were taken too much for granted

We have no right to build anything anywhere if we do not take our global responsibilities seriously. Never before has 'Think Global, Act Local' been more urgent.

Recently and increasingly, emphasis is placed on the 'business case' for sustainable development. We have to grow sustainably or suffer immense damage to our planet.

“As for lifestyle changes, we do need to be wary of overdosing on climate change and indulging in guilt. Real changes will only take place through a combination of education and legislation, with a recognition that a lower carbon lifestyle can provide real benefits. These include improving the urban realm, encouraging higher density living without burning unnecessary transportation energy, where the advantages of high quality open space, social space, communal facilities and employment opportunities all co-exist. There are

precedents which prove that this sort of vision can work.”

— Peter Clegg. 'The Future of Green Architecture' Architectural Review, August 2005

A report by economist Sir Nicholas Stern (2006) suggests that global warming could shrink the global economy by 20%.

Scientific evidence of global warming is “overwhelming” and its consequences “disastrous”.

The Stern Review forecasts that 1% of global gross domestic product (GDP) must be spent on tackling climate change immediately.

It warns that if no action is taken:

- Floods from rising sea levels could displace up to 100 million people
- Melting glaciers could cause water shortages for 1 in 6 of the world's population
- Wildlife will be harmed; at worst up to 40% of species could become extinct
- Droughts may create tens or even hundreds of millions of “climate refugees”

Pia Hansen, of the European Commission, said the report clearly makes a case for action, “Climate change is not a problem that Europe can afford to put into the 'too difficult' pile. It is not an option to wait and see, and we must act now”.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has calculated that a cut of at least 60% in the emission of carbon into the atmosphere is essential before 2050 for long-term stability in the global climate. This is in the context of a fast-growing world population and global economic growth averaging between 1 and 2% per annum. A 60% reduction in carbon emissions in the UK will have profound impacts on land use planning, mobility, modes of transport, the design of buildings (including homes), the construction industry, the way in which energy is generated and conserved. It will affect the whole way we live.

“It is argued that industrial and economic development in the 20th century and the growth in material prosperity in the rich Western nations did not take sufficient account of the harm done to nature and that nature must be regenerated in the 21st Century. Nature was not valued properly.”

— Jonathan Smales. Beyond Green

Correct, but neither was the Town valued properly and we left ourselves with neither good town nor good nature, We have rampaged across the landscape running away from ‘Town’ pursuing ‘Nature’ and ruining both. The result was and sadly still is, Sprawl , “the disorganized expansion of an urban or industrial area into the adjoining countryside”

— OED

The very fact that Sherford is designed as a Town is in itself a major step in the right direction. Changes in land use to reduce the frequency of highly polluting short journeys, direct investment, regulatory and fiscal changes to encourage the provision of local retailing, the increased provision and uptake of public transport, cycling facilities and pedestrian routes and an increase in local food production for local consumption are embedded in the Sherford ethos.

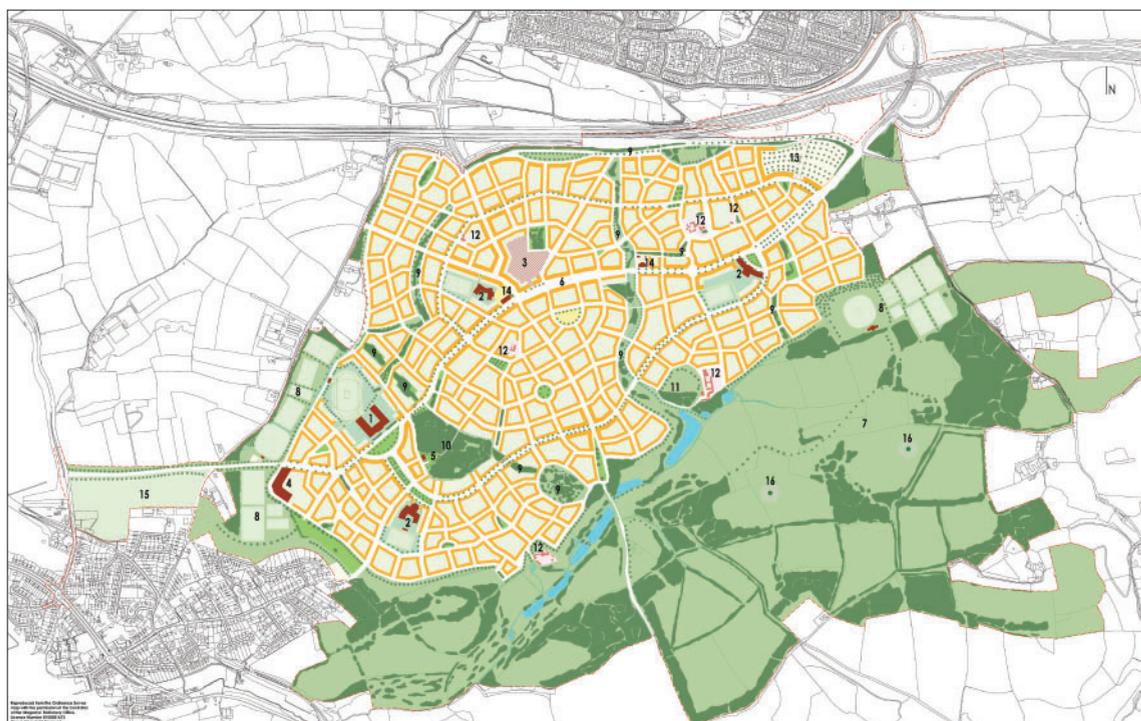
Added to that, **but never at the expense of it**, must come the conservation of energy through the widespread adoption of efficient and smaller combustion engines, home insulation, efficient appliances and efficient manufacturing processes. These are the cheapest and easiest to im-

plement, followed by the development of new generating capacity from more efficient technology such as combined heat and power and renewable sources such as wind and solar. Happily, the changes that are seen to be necessary to meet environmental imperatives in Sherford can also help to create stronger community and better more liveable places and spaces.

A Good Plan Arbitrates

As with all specialists there is a danger of being your own audience and defining the perfect examples of what is needed to maximise that specialised concern. The unintended consequences can be damaging. If you maximise solar orientation the complex nature of the public realm can suffer. There are those that claim we need to abandon these civic traditions because the environment demands it. That implies we have no fixed nature defining what we are and what we do. Culture evolves slowly and human nature slower still, if at all.

Sherford is designed to demonstrate and reinstate both the civic tradition and the environment. Both are imperative, possible and mutually reinforcing: civility and restoration.



Sherford's Town Plan

Land use, accessibility and movement

Sherford co-ordinates land use with all modes of transportation, minimising the need to use personal motorised transport. Mixed-use development is concentrated around commercial and transportation nodes, with residential and employment densities supporting the public transport system.

The street system is interconnected to allow multiple paths for movement through the community. The street network responds to existing topography to minimise earth works and site engineering. The streets are designed to be safe and comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists and where possible, designed to frame important views.

The overwhelming majority of residences in Sherford are located within a 400 m (5 minute walk) of town centre and neighbourhood facilities, parks and public transport, with the majority of commercial activities centred on a pedestrian oriented Main Street.



Sherford's Neighbourhood Structure



Sherford's Street Structure

Water and wildlife

The Town Plan reflects an understanding of watershed forms and processes with storm-water management design standards incorporated to negate downstream impacts of development.

The urban form has been adjusted to reinforce, celebrate and link to a regional ecological network, whilst maintaining the walkable neighbourhood structure of traditional places. Ecological protection and passive recreational access are designed in mutually supportive ways. Allied to this homes are oriented towards open space and views to the maximum extent possible.

The public parks and school sites are integrated to offer excellent recreational, environmental learning, and community development opportunities. Schools are positioned to have convenient access to greenways, leading to open space.

The public facilities (schools and community centres) are shared to accommodate different uses at different times of the day.



Sherford's Landscape Masterplan

The Urban Blocks

Traditional towns have a structure of blocks and plots that define the public realm. But they do much more in Sherford. They are designed to maximise the infiltration and storage of ground water. Wherever possible they are designed to embrace and protect important environmental features. Block lengths are short enough to provide easy movement and choice for pedestrians and cyclists.

There are multiple plot sizes within each block to accommodate many housing and tenure types. Though varied, setbacks are minimised to create a sense of enclosure on the streets.

This summary list is perhaps not exhaustive, and there are many detailed and precise strategies outlined later in this Masterplan Book. But the list deliberately combines environmental stewardship with traditional town form and character. **They do feed each other.**

The physical fabric does not guarantee a successful community, but it can certainly hinder the formation of one if it does not support both interaction and stewardship. Sherford supports both, and a successful community is a sustainable one.

“A group of people, connected by a sense of belonging to one another and to a place. A sustainable community is one that has robust common values that encourage social and cultural diversity and ways of work, pleasure and education that preserve the health of people and nature, both locally and globally. From these strong foundations can come longevity and prosperity, self-determination and the freedom of self-government. A community is concerned with the heritage, present and future of the society, economy and place which provides a home for it.”

— Jonathan Smales. Beyond Green.

This is Sherford.



Sherford: from the South West.
Illustrator: Chris Draper

Figure Acknowledgments

Figure 2	<i>'Urban Villages'. Urban Villages Group 1992</i>
Figure 10	<i>Hurd R.M. 'Principles of City Land Values' Record and Guide New York 1924</i>
Figure 11	<i>'Urban Villages' 1992</i>
Figure 12	<i>Aston. M. & Bond.J. 'The Landscape of Towns' Dent. London 1976</i>
Figure 46	<i>Detail of the Plan of Bath by C. Harcourt Masters 1794.</i>
Figures 49 & 50	<i>Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ontario. 'Making Choices' 1995</i>
Figure 61	<i>'Urban Villages and the Making of Communities', Spon 2003</i>
Figure 63	<i>Krier, R. 'Town Spaces' Birkhauser. Basel 2003</i>
Figure 74	<i>Duany & Plater Zyberk. 'Lexicon of the New Urbanism' DPZ, 2002</i>
Figure 84	<i>'Liveable Neighbourhoods' Western Australian Planning Commission 2000</i>
Figures 89, 101, 102	<i>Barton et al., 'Sustainable Settlements' University of the West of England, 1995</i>
Figure 93	<i>Devon County Council Department of Education</i>
Figure 139	<i>The Duchy of Cornwall</i>
Figures 144, 145	<i>Brand, S., 'How Buildings Learn'. Penguin Books, 1994.</i>
Figures 148, 149,161	<i>Bentley et al. 'Responsive Environments' Butterworth Heinemann, 1985.</i>
Figure 162. Various	<i>'Houses into Flats'. Ascot London 1948</i>
Figure 166	<i>CABE. 'Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher densities work' 2005</i>
Figures 167, 168	<i>Llewelyn-Davies 'Sustainable Residential Quality.' LPAC 2000</i>
Figures 178, 179	<i>Urban Design Associates 'Louisiana Speaks: Pattern Book' LPA Support Foundation 2006</i>