RESIDENTS' VIEWS OF NEW FORMS OF HIGH DENSITY AFFORDABLE LIVING

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Please contact:
Communications Department,
Joseph Rowntree Foundation,
The Homestead,
40 Water End,
York YO30 6WP.
Tel: 01904 615905.
Email: info@jrf.org.uk

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Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace

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Chartered Institute of Housing
Octavia House, Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JP
Telephone: 024 7685 1700
www.cih.org

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Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP
Telephone: 01904 629241
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All opinions and any errors contained in the report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Joanne Bretherton
Nicholas Pleace

Executive Summary: about the research

Background to the research

The UK has become characterised by high house price inflation during the last 20 years. In February 2007, the Department for Communities and Local Government reported that the average house price in the UK had topped £200,000. House price inflation was running at an estimated 9.9 per cent (CLG, 2007; *BBC News*, February 2007). Alongside the rise in house price relative to income, a number of other changes have occurred. There has been a cultural shift in British society which means that more people tend to live alone and also have the expectation of living independently. This has led to increased rates of household formation. In 2004, the Barker review on housing supply suggested that an additional 120,000 private sector homes would be required per annum in England to reduce the trend in real house prices to the European average (Barker, 2004).

Furthermore, Hills (2007) notes the 'residualisation' of social housing with cities at risk of becoming socially and economically unbalanced. The presumed need for greater social diversity and cohesion through 'mixed' communities might be promoted via the availability of new affordable high density mixed tenure housing. However, 'high density' and inner city living are embedded with negative connotations. Problems associated with socio-economically polarised urban areas, and retaining key workers in cities associated with housing stress and suburban sprawl are significant, but can new forms of higher density affordable and mixed tenure housing be successful? Proposals in *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable* (CLG, 2007) to increase the overall supply of affordable housing and produce good quality, 'green', well designed homes give these issues even greater pertinence.

The research objectives

The research was concerned with understanding whether it was possible to develop new forms of affordable, mixed tenure higher density housing that would be successful. This study focused specifically on resident perceptions within these new forms of high density affordable and mixed tenure housing. It looked at:

- the process of deciding to move into schemes;
- their experience of the positive and negative aspects of life there;
- clarifying the medium and long-term housing aspirations.

Perspectives from a range of different household types were analysed including: young single people; key workers and households containing children to ensure a range of diversity was represented.

The research methods

The research had five principal components. A scoping review, a survey of residents in eight new housing schemes,[1] focus groups and interviews with residents, resident seven-day 'diaries' on their use and perception of their homes alongside interviews with housing managers and developers.

The case studies

Eight case studies were chosen with the following criteria for selection:

- location within an urban area;
- was to have been developed on a brownfield site;
- location within an area with high housing costs;
- provide affordable housing and/or mixed tenure housing some of which was affordable;
- be a newly built scheme using new architectural ideas and design rather than traditional housing (i.e., less than 5 years old);
- be built at a relatively high density.

Three schemes were in London, one in Scotland, one in the North West, one in the South East and one in the South of England. The schemes were diverse and varied in size, design, density, percent affordable and tenure mix within the selection criteria.

The decision to move

The degree to which respondents could exercise choice when moving into one of the case study schemes varied by the tenure of that respondent. Owner occupiers had the greatest capacity to choose other housing options, as they were opting to buy within schemes that were charging market prices for the accommodation on offer (i.e., there was the option to buy something else that was equivalent). For other respondents, the choices that they had were more constrained.

The overarching importance of affordability and the chance to get onto the property ladder among Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) respondents was an interesting finding. This was particularly interesting in that it seemingly eclipsed some other factors, including location, though this was less true in respect of other factors (interior space and interior design). Architecture and design were important to most of the respondents. There was also some concern with issues such as car parking and crime and safety in the neighbourhoods when the decision to move was being taken.

1 Findings from the survey are only indicative of the wider population as the survey was not a representative sample.

Living in the case study schemes

The first set of significant findings related to affordability. Here there was evidence that for some households, their lower cost housing is not as 'affordable' as it could be. Some LCHO respondents and some social rented sector tenants were reporting problems with affordability, uncommon for owner occupiers who had paid full market prices.

The design and architecture of these schemes, some of which had been awarded architectural prizes, was viewed positively by many of the respondents. A key finding was that modern architecture could produce a sense of 'space' within high density developments. One of the most surprising findings of the research was that respondents generally did not think of themselves as living at high densities. Many elements of the design of individual flats and houses, such as allowing in a large amount of natural light and offering a high degree of insulation, were viewed very positively. Other aspects of design, most notably sound proofing and site parking, lack of green areas and, to a lesser extent, factors that were seen as reducing site security, were not viewed as positively.

Crime was a concern for many respondents. Most felt safe within their homes, but they could sometimes feel unsafe within their housing scheme. Crime in surrounding neighbourhoods was quite often a cause for concern among respondents. Housing management was quite often criticised and seen as a negative aspect of life in some of the case studies.

There was not a strong sense of community cohesion within the schemes, although some respondents wanted a greater sense of, and greater opportunity for, participation. This was not viewed as necessarily problematic by other respondents who were more concerned with general good neighbourliness than with any wish to participate in communal activities. There were tensions within mixed tenure schemes between different resident groups.

People and their homes

While factors such as affordability, design, architecture and tenure mix were often very important to respondents, there was another dimension within their reactions to where they lived, which might be termed their 'emotional' response. People's responses to their homes were often complex and multifaceted, for some it was a balance between different factors that were positive and negative, for others some aspect of their home gave them a sense of delight in where they lived.

The importance of the wider environment as a cause of discontent has been made clear, as has the inability of design to always successfully counteract environmental issues, particularly factors like crime and anti-social behaviour. The important role of design and architecture, as well as space standards, in producing very positive feelings about living space was also illustrated.

Residents' futures in the schemes

In attempting to clarify the medium and longer-term housing intentions and aspirations of respondents, there was evidence that a quite high proportion of respondents wished to move (39 per cent). In addition, more than one half did not expect to stay in their current homes for five years or more at the point at which they took part in the fieldwork (52 per cent). The reasons why people wanted to move varied. Reasons given were affordability issues and a lack of fit between their current housing and the changing composition of a respondent's household. However, the most often cited reasons for moving were not do to with the schemes themselves but with crime, anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes and many respondents expressed a wish for their scheme to be resituated in a better area.

The often assumed ideal of a detached home in suburbia or a rural area only reflected the housing aspirations of some of the respondents. Many actually preferred to be in a city and this was why, for many, they had chosen to live in one of the eight case study schemes in the first place.

Lessons for new developments

Successes include innovative architecture and design offering a sense of space and light. This gave rise to not feeling as though one was in 'high density' housing. Given the negative connotations with 'high density housing' this is a considerable success. LCHO properties evoked positive reactions especially in terms of a chance to join the property ladder and a higher standard of housing than could otherwise be afforded. Location for amenities, public transport and the general urban setting was viewed by many as an attractive point and it is where developments had been largely successful.

Although the schemes had introduced greater socio-economic diversity into the areas where they were situated, they were often not well integrated within those areas with little interaction between the schemes and surrounding neighbourhoods. There were reports of feelings of separation and 'encroachment' by the local area which resulted in a greater fear of crime. Despite the affordable housing remit, affordability was an issue especially for LCHO residents. Furthermore, LCHO residents generally reported most frustration with the schemes, especially strong resentment when grouped with social rented sector tenants. Housing management and estate maintenance were frequently reported by respondents as unsatisfactory. Tenure mix was not greeted with great enthusiasm, alongside a lack of community spirit. Turnover or *desire* to move seems to be quite high, especially for owner occupiers and LCHO – it was providing a stepping stone. It was often said that the development itself was pleasing and a good place to live, however it was the environment in which it was situated that influenced people to move.

Chapter One
About the research

Introduction

This first chapter describes the research objectives and background to the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the methodology of the research.

The research objectives

Essentially, the research was concerned with understanding whether it was possible to develop new forms of affordable, mixed tenure higher density housing that would be seen as successful by residents. In particular, the research was designed to understand 'what worked' and what 'did not work' in relation to architecture, management and overall planning of these new forms of affordable mixed tenure housing based upon resident perspectives.

Some of the existing research has focused on comparison between European and British cities, with a view to seeing what can be learned from high density housing in Europe (PRP Architects, 2002). Such reviews are based on understanding different models and looking at their applicability to the UK. One of the central findings of such comparative work is that there is a bewildering variety of approaches being pursued in different contexts, rather than one standard European 'model'.

Studies looking at residents' perceptions of housing have tended to report that attitudes to housing density are often quite complex. For example, some research has found that people will accept the case for higher density urban living, but then not want to adopt such a lifestyle themselves (Tunstall, 2002). This shows that people make a distinction between the kind of home they would *ideally like* and the types of housing they are *prepared to accept* (Tunstall, 2002).

This distinction is helpful because it provides a more realistic appraisal of the compromises or trade-offs that individuals and households are prepared to make. The research has also drawn attention to the 'balance' within housing decision-making in relation to living at higher densities. For example, households may not view the relative levels of space available within a modern higher density flat or apartment as being particularly good, but this may be outweighed by the fact that they are, for example, a ten minute walk from work, rather than facing a two hour commute (Tunstall, 2002).

Other research has focused on the attractiveness of higher density living to families in cities. This research has again shown that there can be complex reactions to higher density living by families. Good schooling, a sense of safety and also a general sense of 'order', through urban space being clean and well designed, were as important to families as affordable housing that was appropriate in design (Silverman, *et al.*, 2005).

The present research was designed to focus specifically on the perceptions and views of people within new forms of high density affordable housing. The specific research objectives were as follows:

- To understand the process of decision-making which leads people to move into new forms of affordable higher density housing, including what attracted them to developments, any factors that made them hesitate, and the extent to which their housing choices were constrained.
- To explore residents' views on the positive and negative aspects of life in new housing of this type. The research was designed to examine the impact of the following:
  - housing design;
  - housing management;
  - anti-social behaviour;
  - rules governing the use of homes and any communal space;
  - the social and economic mix of residents in developments;
  - the issues arising from neighbours living in close proximity to one and other;
  - patterns of home use amongst residents;
  - the wider urban context within which developments were situated.
- To clarify the medium and long-term housing aspirations of residents in new affordable and mixed tenure high density housing (i.e., were these households aiming to leave these schemes for the suburbs or were they planning to stay?).

The research placed particular emphasis on analysing the perspectives of different types of households who have made their homes in this form of housing – including young single people, key workers and households containing children – to ensure that the full diversity of experience was represented in the study.

Background to the research

While there have been periods of adjustment and occasional falls the UK has become characterised by high house price inflation during the last 20 years. In February 2007, the Department for Communities and Local Government reported that the average house price in the UK had topped £200,000 (CLG, February 2007). House price inflation was running at an estimated 9.9 per cent. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors reported that the average price of a house in the East Midlands (traditionally a low cost area) was some £143,000 which was equivalent to five times the average income (*BBC News*, February 2007).

It is this last point that has become most important. Incomes have not kept pace with the rise in house prices and for many households, owner occupation is becoming more difficult to achieve (Wilcox, 2003). In 2005, Wilcox estimated that there were more than 1.25 million younger households in England, Scotland and Wales whose incomes would mean they were not eligible for housing benefit (financial help with the rent) if they lived in social housing, but who could not afford a mortgage (Wilcox, 2005).

Alongside the rise in house price relative to income, a number of other changes have occurred. There has been a cultural shift in British society which means that more people tend to live alone and also have the expectation of living independently. This has led to increased rates of household formation. Rising geographical and, to an extent, social mobility, has also led to new households being drawn away from some areas and towards others. The population is also ageing with more households living alone. The proportion of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 16 per cent in 2006 to 22 per cent by 2031 (ONS, 2007). In 2004, the Barker review on housing supply suggested that an additional 120,000 private sector homes would be required per annum in England to reduce the trend in real house prices to the European average (Barker, 2004). Longer-term estimates suggest that an extra 4.3 million households will require accommodation by 2021 in England, with this demand falling disproportionately on the South East (Bate *et al.*, 2000).

As Hills (2007) notes, what some have termed a 'residualisation' of social rented housing has occurred in the last 20 years, with the poorest people in UK society becoming concentrated in this tenure. As Hills reports, the proportion of social tenants in paid employment fell from 47 to 32 per cent between 1981 and 2006 (Hills, 2007). Specific groups such as older people, disabled people and some ethnic minorities have also become concentrated in this tenure. Social rented housing has become almost 'fenced off' in many areas, seen as an option only for the poorest groups and as an unattractive proposition compared to owner occupation. There is now a central policy concern to reduce the concentrations of poverty and social exclusion and promote more socio-economically diverse communities (Hills, 2007).

Some cities, particularly London, are viewed as being at risk of becoming socially and economically unbalanced. The concern is that inner city populations will become composed of only the affluent 'information class' professionals who can afford the premium costs of city life and the poorer, marginalised people who are living within subsidised social housing. These socially and economically 'divided' urban spaces are, in turn, seen as raising the risk that families will see the city as a place characterised by anti-social behaviour and crime and perceive a danger to their children (McGrail, 1999; ODPM, 1999; Dutton, 2003; CABE, 2005). In turn, if families leave the cities, the imbalance in the population will become worse (Bate *et al.*, 2000; Dutton, 2003).

While research suggests that socio-economically 'mixed' neighbourhoods are not problem free, it also shows that mixed areas have tended to escape the problems associated with large concentrations of social housing. There can be lower levels of

anti-social behaviour and a higher quality physical environment in properly planned mixed neighbourhoods (Allen *et al.*, 2005). Overcoming the risks associated with unbalanced neighbourhoods through promoting mixed neighbourhoods is a key recommendation highlighted by the recent Hills review, which has been welcomed by government (Hills, 2007).

Part of the issue of social diversity and cohesion within cities is the availability of attractive housing options to key professionals. There are several classes of 'key workers' ranging from the police, to teachers and health care professionals, whose involvement in city life is essential but who cannot afford access to owner occupation within cities. These professionals have to be attracted to and remain in cities in order for cities to be both socio-economically balanced and to have the right range of essential public services available (Greater London Authority, 2001; Cope, 2002; ODPM, 2003).

The impact of carbon dioxide emissions has also become important alongside these social issues. If families that can afford to do so choose to live outside cities, the wage earners in those households will commute to work. It is reasonable to anticipate that they will commute greater distances as demand for housing in the suburbs pushes prices up in those areas most proximate to the urban zones where employment is concentrated. Those working in essential public services may also choose to commute to work on the basis that owner occupation and a better standard of living is an option that is available 20 or 30, or perhaps 60 or 70 miles, from where they work, which is not available within walking distance of their place of employment. This is true also of low skilled workers who need affordable housing closer to city centres and places of appropriate employment (Green and Owen, 2006). The suburban sprawl that surrounds major cities is in itself seen as ecologically damaging, because of its impact on the finite land and natural resources of the UK (Bramley and Morgan, 2003). However, as is discussed in later paragraphs this contention is not without dispute.

At least a partial solution to these problems may lie in changes in planning, architecture and models of housing tenure. The argument is a fairly simple one. If new, affordable, mixed tenure housing can be developed within inner cities, which potential residents are attracted to and in which they feel themselves to be safe, then the population within cities can be rebalanced and suburban flight slowed down. Key workers, families and the lower middle classes will return to the cities. Through the use of mixed tenure, lower-income households who may have been marginalised in mono tenure social housing estates, will live instead in more 'balanced' communities. Although Cheshire (2007) argues that there is scant clear-cut evidence that making communities more mixed makes the life chances of those on lower incomes any better; it is evident that flexible new forms of tenure allow lower-income households to become part owners, giving them a stake in their homes. Ecological, socio-economic and infrastructure problems will be partially addressed by making cities better places to live.

The central difficulty is the availability and cost of development land within cities. It is not economically viable to build orthodox forms of housing that are known to attract families, key workers and other target groups and make them 'affordable', as land is both too scarce and too expensive. The brownfield sites (reused urban space, as opposed to 'greenfield' sites) that are available are quite often relatively small in scale (Burton, 2003). This means that if new forms of affordable and/or mixed tenure housing are to be built, they have to be built at higher densities.

There are essentially two arguments as to why new affordable and mixed tenure high density housing may not work. The first argument is that many people do not like 'high density' living and the second argument is that many people do not like cities, either.

Evans and Hartwich (2005 and 2006), for example, argue that overzealous planning constraint in the UK leads to small, unaffordable and unattractive dwellings that people do not want to live in. From their perspective, the UK should opt to make much more land available for housing, allowing development of bigger, more attractive houses and increasing supply relative to demand, thereby reducing house prices. They also advocate the case for suburban 'garden city' living, arguing that this is what most people want, that it produces a better standard of living, and is not as ecologically damaging as is generally assumed (Evans and Hartwich, 2006).

One of the key arguments here is that families with children do not wish to live in inner cities when they can avoid doing so. It is argued that families perceive risks to child safety and are concerned about the standard of education available in inner city schools. There is certainly evidence that middle class parents force up house prices around schools that are perceived as having a good performance, buying homes nearby to ensure their child or children are within the catchment area. There are estimates that house prices can be 33 per cent higher around the 'best' local primary schools (Cheshire and Sheppard, 2004).

Research conducted by MORI for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), showed that over half the population wished to live in a detached house, compared to 22 per cent who preferred a bungalow, 14 per cent who wanted a semi-detached house and 7 per cent who wished to live in a terraced house. The MORI poll also found that a detached house was the most popular choice across the whole UK population, regardless of socio-economic or cultural difference (CABE, 2005).

The term 'high density' can also summon up images of tower blocks beset with social problems in the popular imagination. It is interesting to note that the Project Advisory Group (PAG) for the present research, which included architects, planners and social housing executives,[2] suggested that the term 'high density' should not be employed during the fieldwork as it was felt to have too many 'negative connotations'.

2 Please see acknowledgements.

The problems within socio-economically polarised urban areas, the difficulty in recruiting and retaining key workers in some cities and the unacceptable ecological costs,[3] that have been associated with housing market stress and associated commuting and suburban sprawl, are significant. Bearing in mind the perceived barriers to success, can new forms of affordable housing built at relatively high densities be successful in helping to counter these problems? If such developments can indeed be successful, what is that facilitates success? These questions are all the more pertinent following the recent *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable* (CLG, 2007) proposals for an increase in the supply of housing including more well designed, good quality, greener and affordable homes delivered in mixed communities.

The research methods

The research had five principal components. A scoping review, a survey of residents in eight new housing schemes, focus groups and interviews with residents, resident 'diaries' on their use and perception of their homes, and interviews with housing managers and developers. The questionnaire, topic guide for resident focus groups and diary can be viewed by accessing the Centre for Housing Policy's website at: www.york.ac.uk.

Scoping review

The first stage of the research was a scoping review (overview) of the recent research on high density housing. This was designed to contextualise the research through reviewing the evidence on living in higher densities within urban environments in the UK and in other countries where applicable.

Survey of residents in eight housing schemes

Eight case study housing schemes were selected in consultation with the PAG for the research. Seven of the eight case study schemes were mixed tenure developments. They provided varying mixtures of market value (i.e., full local price) owner occupation, low-cost owner occupation (including shared ownership), social renting and private renting (see Chapter Two for details).

The residents in these schemes were sent a brief, self completion questionnaire. In order to try to facilitate a reasonable response rate, residents were given the chance to opt into a random draw for prizes of £750, £500 and £250. Following the initial return of completed surveys, the non-returnees were identified and sent a second copy of the survey.

Despite this planning and the scale of the incentives offered, the overall response rate was low at approximately 14 per cent. There are difficulties in asking individuals to

3 The 'high ecological costs' of suburban sprawl are not undisputed, see Evans and Hartwich, 2006.

freely opt to take part in postal surveys of this sort and these levels of response are quite commonplace. Nevertheless, 240 residents did respond to the survey, which gave a sufficiently large group for statistical analysis and which both enhanced and contextualised the later fieldwork. However, this does mean that the survey findings are indicative rather than representative of the wider population.

Most of the respondents to the survey were women (64 per cent). The main household types and tenures they were within are shown in Table 1.1. The respondents were largely of White British ethnic origin (80 per cent), though 6 per cent were Black and another 6 per cent were Asian (the remainder were from other ethnic groups).

Table 1.1: Household type and tenure of survey respondents (per cent)

Household type	Owner occupiers	LCHO*	Social rented sector tenants	Private rented sector tenants	All
Lone person	26	46	25	100	31
Couple no children	47	20	7	0	26
Couple with children	22	23	20	0	21
Lone parent	2	8	41	0	17
Adults sharing	2	3	4	0	3
Other	1	0	4	0	2
All	100	100	100	100	100
Base	**88**	**61**	**76**	**12**	**237**

Source: Postal survey. Base: 237 respondents. *Low Cost Home Ownership.
Data on household composition were missing in three cases.

Focus groups

The survey functioned as a recruitment and selection tool for resident focus group participants. People were asked to 'opt in' to the focus groups by supplying the research team with their contact details and ticking a box confirming they would like to be interviewed.[4] Respondents were given a small (£10) 'thank you' for participating in a focus group.

Six focus groups were conducted with residents. When someone had been invited to a focus group but was unable to attend, telephone interviews were employed. In total, 25 respondents were involved in interviews and focus groups. They were evenly divided in terms of gender, with a mixture of parents, lone parents, lone adults and older people taking part. Respondents were a mixture of social rented sector tenants, owner occupiers and people in Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) arrangements.

4 The research was conducted following Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines see: **http://www.the-sra.org.uk/ethical.htm**

Diary 'interviews'

A modified version of the 'diary interview' technique (Corti, 1993) was employed by the research in order to better understand the day-to-day life in the housing schemes. The diary based interview method was selected as being particularly suitable for understanding patterns of time use, which can provide detailed insight into people's use and experiences of their homes. Furthermore, this method was also used to explore more sensitive and difficult issues, such as anti-social behaviour by other residents or feelings about tenure mix.

Each respondent had a brief 'placing' interview with a researcher before then being asked to record their experiences and perceptions to be recorded in freeform way. Each respondent received a thank you payment of £30 for completing the diary. Sixteen respondents participated in the diary interviews, nine were women and six were men. Half of the respondents were parents. The respondents were a mixture of social rented sector tenants, owner occupiers and people in LCHO arrangements.

Interviews with housing managers, heads of regeneration and development and private developers

Across the eight case studies, 11 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with housing managers, heads of regeneration and development and staff within private developers took place. All the participants had extensive knowledge of the developments and had either frontline (neighbourhood) and/or strategic involvement with our selected case studies in addition to other similar developments.

The report

Chapter Two provides an overview of the case study schemes, describing their broad characteristics, design, tenure mix and location. The remaining chapters in the report cover the following subjects:

- Chapter Three considers the residents' reasons for moving into the case study schemes.
- Chapter Four reports on the attitudes of residents about living in the case study schemes.
- Chapter Five considers what can be termed the 'emotional' reaction of people to their homes, the less tangible factors that make a difference to living in accommodation that linked to individual perception and responses.
- Chapter Six reviews the intentions and aspirations of residents through considering reasons they gave for wishing to stay within, or move from, their current home.
- Chapter Seven presents the overall conclusions from the study and provides lessons, recommendations and policy implications for new developments obtained through the course of this research.

Chapter Two
The case studies

Introduction

This chapter describes the eight case studies. Following an overview of the criteria for selection as a case study, each scheme is described.

The criteria for selection as a case study

To be included in the research a housing scheme had to fulfil a number of criteria. In summary, these were as follows:

- location within an urban area with high housing costs;
- to have been developed on a brownfield site;
- to provide affordable housing and/or mixed tenure housing some of which was affordable;
- to be a newly built scheme (i.e., less than five years old) using new architectural ideas and design rather than traditional housing;
- to be built at a relatively high density.

In part, these criteria were drawn from the policy objectives behind mixed tenure high density housing (see Chapter One). However, in drawing up the list of potential case studies the research also found that many new affordable schemes tended to have all these characteristics.

The working definition of 'high density' employed for the research was determined in consultation with the architects on the PAG.[5] 'High density' was defined as being around 90-100 dwellings or 400-plus habitable rooms per hectare. This is relatively high compared to some definitions (e.g., 80 dwellings or 250 habitable rooms per hectare[6]). However, this definition was felt to be appropriate as it focused the research on new affordable housing that was 'denser' than existing urban housing, such as traditional terraced housing. In practice, however, this definition was sometimes difficult to operationalise as many new schemes were actually built at lower densities. The definition was therefore used as a guide and some less densely developed schemes were incorporated into the fieldwork.

5 Project Advisory Group, please see acknowledgements.

6 Some definitions of 'high density' range as high as 300+ dwellings per hectare, see for example PRP Architects (2002) *High Density Housing in Europe: Lessons for London* (details in bibliography).

To be 'affordable', case studies had to offer low cost home ownership (LCHO), and/or social housing for rent. 'Mixed tenure' was defined as any combination that involved two or more of the following: market price owner occupation, LCHO, social rented housing and private rented sector housing.

To be a 'new' scheme, a case study had to ideally be less than five years old. Very recently completed schemes were not included in the research, as it was felt to be unlikely that residents would have a full picture of a scheme that had been operational for less than one year. There was no fixed definition of 'innovative' design or architecture, other than that the case studies could not simply be blocks of flats or terraced houses that employed entirely orthodox design. Innovative use of interior space, external design and the layout of the site were all considered in selecting case studies.

As the selection process got underway, it quickly became apparent that there was considerable diversity in newly developed schemes that were within the criteria for selection. While social housing has tended to be characterised by quite specific architectural models and by universal principles of management (Bines *et al.*, 1993), this was found not to be the case in relation to new developments of affordable/ mixed tenure higher density housing within urban areas.

The case studies

Most of the selected schemes were developed by housing associations. In many instances, these schemes cross-subsidised the affordable housing they provided by selling some properties at full market price. The schemes included developments in which affordable and market price housing were mixed together and schemes in which they were kept separate.

A basic description of each scheme is provided below. A quick overview and cross comparisons of the schemes can be done easily by referring to Table 2.1 on page 18. All the participating agencies and case studies are anonymised. Whilst this means that it is not possible to go into specifics, it is important to note that there were schemes among the case studies that had been in receipt of design awards and/or architectural prizes.

Scheme 1

Scheme one located in the North West of England was completed in 2001. This high density scheme (100 units per hectare) provided 75 flats set around a communal courtyard. Built to between four and six storeys, there was a mixture of accommodation and workspace on site. The scheme was focused entirely on the provision of social housing for rent and had a high degree of tenant involvement in

management. The developer was a housing association. The principal objective of the scheme related to urban regeneration as the whole area was being redevelopment. Since its inception other developments and facilities have been constructed or planned nearby. The design is quite unusual in attempting to adhere to a striking architectural style in a user friendly contemporary development.

Scheme 2

Scheme 2 located in the South East of England was completed in 2005. This was a quite large development with almost 300 units on site. The average density was less than 100 units per hectare though this varied across the site. It also encompassed shops and a community centre. The tenure mix incorporated market sale owner occupation, affordable rent and LCHO. The development contained houses and flats that were distinctive in design from each other with a variety of colours and sizes, at the highest, three storeys high. The scheme was specifically aimed at providing some housing for key workers and used what is sometimes termed 'pepper potting' so that housing unit's specific tenures were not concentrated. The developer was a housing association. Known as a housing 'hot spot' area, this scheme provides much needed affordable housing. The development replaced an estate that had been characterised as problematic. This scheme actually achieves higher density than its predecessor.

Scheme 3

Scheme 3 was also located in the South East of England with its first phase completed in 2001. This was an extensive development with a programme to build over 900 units and in addition to providing a tenure mix, also provided a mix of housing densities. In parts of the site, density was as low as 10 units per hectare, while in others it was as high as 150. The scheme was demarcated between market sale owner occupation through to low cost owner occupation and private renting (in the more densely developed areas). The scale of the development had meant that Section 106 agreement had been reached with the local authority.[7] Most of this privately developed scheme was market sale, with 10 per cent of the units being lower cost owner occupation. The affordable housing was managed by a housing association. Built in an area of housing stress, with both private sale and affordable housing need, for the housing association it was an opportunity to place individuals in types of housing and an area that ordinarily they would not be able to afford.

Scheme 4

Located in an urban area in the South of England, Scheme 4 was completed in 2006, although the people who took part in the fieldwork had been resident in it for more

7 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation, with a developer. The obligation is sometimes termed as a 'Section 106 agreement' and in this instance means that a company was only given permission to develop a large new housing development on condition that a proportion of that development was affordable.

than one year. The density was relatively high, at 90 homes per hectare. There were approximately 175 dwellings, mainly composed of two bedroom flats or apartments with a smaller number of one bedroom flats. In addition, the site had a small number of large flats and large townhouses. The scheme comprised three main blocks with several storeys and balconies for each unit. Much of the development was market sale owner occupation, though 40 per cent of the units were LCHO. As in Scheme 2, Scheme 4 used 'pepper potting' so the affordable housing was not all located in one space. The developer was a housing association. Objectives were primarily those of regeneration on a brownfield site close to the city centre.

Scheme 5

Scheme 5 was one of three that were located in London. Completed in 2003, the scheme had approximately 70 units, mainly made up of one and two bedroom flats. There were a smaller number of three and four bedroom maisonettes. The density was 122 dwellings per hectare, the highest of all the case studies. Built, as the other case studies, on a brownfield site, the scheme was constructed around a large green communal area. The entire scheme was affordable, offering social rented housing, key worker LCHO and renting and LCHO. It included accommodation for people with support needs and was designed to be accessible. The developer was a housing association. It was essentially designed as a model of affordable housing in a very expensive part of the country within the remit of it being high density, energy efficient and innovative in construction with a balanced sustainable mixed community.

Scheme 6

This second London based scheme was completed in 2003 and consisted of over 400 dwellings. Fifteen per cent of the development was affordable housing, comprising both social rented housing and LCHO. All the dwellings were set within seven storey blocks, although this scheme, like Scheme 3, was designed so that the affordable housing was physically separate from the market sale housing. In this instance, even the entrance to the affordable housing was physically separated from the entrance to the market sale housing. The scheme was developed by the private sector, though the affordable housing element was managed by a housing association.

Scheme 7

The final London case study had been finished in 2004. Again, this was quite a sizeable development with over 300 units being provided at a density of 69 units per hectare. The largest element within this was two bedroom flats. Built as a series of four storey blocks, Scheme 7 was again set around a communal 'green' area and had facilities that included a shop and a community centre. Approximately 40 per cent of the properties were market sale owner occupation, 30 per cent LCHO and 30 per cent social rented housing. The development incorporated properties built to Lifetime

Homes standards (**http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/**) and was designed to be wheelchair accessible. The developer was a housing association. The objective was for a mixed communities scheme to be built with affordable high quality housing in an area that had previously suffered from a poor quality environment as part of an extensive regeneration project in the area.

Scheme 8

Scheme 8 was located in a large urban area in Scotland. It was completed in 2000 and contained approximately 100 units. The development was made up entirely of one, two and three bedroom flats and more or less evenly divided between the different sizes of flat. The tenure mix was mainly balanced towards social renting, covering 70 per cent of the flats, with most of the remainder being LCHO through shared ownership. A handful of flats had been built for market sale owner occupation. The development was a two to four storey perimeter block with a community centre and enclosed terraced gardens and surrounded by allotments for use by the residents. As in some of the other schemes, a few flats were specifically designed for disabled people. Unlike the other schemes, Scheme 8 was designed to be car free. Thus sustainability was fundamental as well as the mixing of tenures.

Similarities and differences

As Table 2.1 on page 18 shows, the case studies were quite a diverse set of schemes. They varied in size, design, density and the degree to which they offered affordable housing or a mixture of tenures. This variation was even found in schemes developed by the same agency, where lessons from previous developments and new ideas could mean significant differences between newer and older schemes that had the same basic objectives.

There were also some quite significant differences between the case studies that need to be borne in mind when reading the rest of this report. One of the schemes was entirely social rented housing, others were privately developed. The degree to which the mixed tenure schemes focused on affordability also varied considerably, from 100 per cent to 15 per cent.

The case studies were broadly comparable in many respects. However, it must be noted that the discussion below is not based on housing schemes that were identical in design, ethos or purpose.

Table 2.1: Cross comparison of scheme details

Scheme	Location	Year built	No of dwellings by type	Personal outside space	Density per hectare*	Size of site	Tenure mix	Community centre
1	North West England	2001	75 flats 14 x 1 bed 42 x 2 bed 19 x 3 bed	Some	120 units per hectare	0.49 hectares	Wholly affordable rented – housing co-operative	No – but on-site meeting room
2	South East England	2005	299 mixed 18 x 1 bed flats 109 x 2 bed flats 2 x 2 bed bungalows 70 x 2 bed houses 84 x 3 bed houses 16 x 4 bed houses	Some	43 units per hectare	6.6 hectares	Approx 12 % = Owner occupier Approx 88 % = Affordable rented, LCHO, Key worker	Yes
3	South East England	2001 (1st Phase)	900+ mixed *(information not available)*	Most	40-150 units per hectare	29 hectares	90 % = Owner occupier, 10 % = LCHO, Social rented	No
4	South of England	2006	174 mixed 40 x 1bed flats, 112 x 2 bed flats, 5 x 3 bed flats, 17 x 4 bed townhouses	All	90 units per hectare	Almost 2 hectares	37 % = Affordable rented, LCHO 63 % = Owner occupier	No
5	London	2003	65 mixed 31 x 1 bed flats 12 x 2 bed flats 16 x 3 bed houses 6 x 4 bed houses	Some	122 per hectare	0.53 hectares	All affordable: Social rented, Key worker rental, LCHO, Rough sleepers Initiative	No – but set around a shared communal area
6	London	2003	410 flats** Of 59 affordable: 8 x 1 bed 46 x 2 bed 1 x 3 bed 4 x 4 bed	None	*(information not available)*	*(information not available)*	15 % Affordable = LCHO Social rented 85 % = Owner occupier	No
7	London	2004	320 flats 72 x 1 bed 165 x 2 bed 74 x 3 bed 7 x 4 bed 2 x 5 bed	Some	69 units per hectare	4.6 hectares	Approx 60 % affordable = Social rented, LCHO Approx 40 % = Owner occupier	Yes
8	Scotland	2000	120 flats 35 x 1 bed 46 x 2 bed 39 x 3 bed	Some	75 units per hectare	1.6 hectares	90 % Affordable = LCHO, Social rented 10 % = Owner occupier	Yes

* Some schemes had a fairly low overall density but contained affordable housing units that were built at high densities.

** Due to restrictions from the developer, only the affordable units were used in the study.

Chapter Three
The decision to move

Introduction

This chapter examines the process of decision-making that led people to move into the case study schemes. The analysis focuses on what attracted them to the scheme they lived in, what made them hesitate and to what extent their choices were constrained. The chapter begins by giving an overview of the respondents' principal reasons for moving in to their scheme. These broad findings are then considered thematically, exploring the views of the residents according to the significant factors that emerged as positive reasons for moving in, or negative elements which discouraged them.

An overview of the decision to move

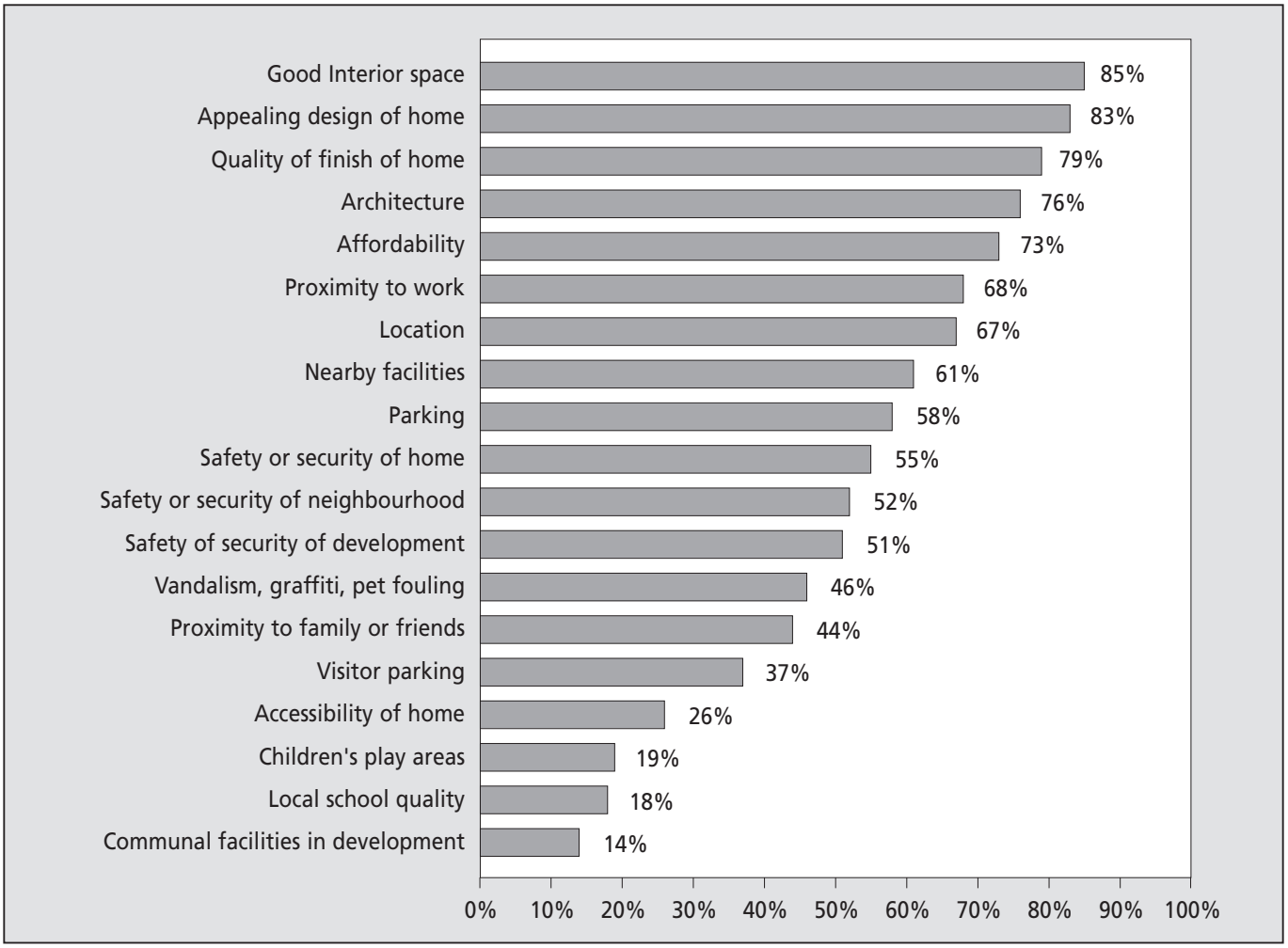
Figure 3.1 overleaf illustrates the factors that were incentives to moving into the case studies. The figure is based on the percentage of respondents who listed a factor as an 'incentive' or a 'strong incentive' for moving in. The higher percentages indicate that a factor was a more 'popular' reason for moving in.

A lower percentage did not necessarily reflect that a factor was a disincentive since respondents could also view factors with indifference. A good example of this is reviewed in the discussion on communal facilities within this chapter (see below).

The importance of design and architecture is immediately evident as is the importance of interior space and the standard to which the home had been finished. The other factor that is immediately evident is affordability, ranked at the same broad level as design, interior space, architecture and the quality of the finish of a home. Alongside this are a range of variables that will be familiar to any reader from the process of looking for a new home, including general location, proximity to work and access to nearby facilities.

The fieldwork suggested that these factors were often being assessed comparatively against other housing options within the reach of the respondents. For a respondent, 'interior space' for example, would tend to be measured against the other accommodation that was within their reach, rather than according to an 'ideal' standard. Both earlier research (Tunstall, 2002) and the fieldwork for this study, illustrate that residents in new higher density housing were prepared make realistic compromises in their housing decisions.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of respondents reporting a factor was an 'incentive' or 'strong incentive' for moving into their current housing scheme



Source: Postal survey. Base: 240 respondents.

It is also important to bear in mind that different respondents' housing choices were constrained to varying degrees, according to their personal situation. People in LCHO probably faced a more constrained choice than those respondents who had bought their housing at market value and who could have opted for alternative owner occupied housing in the same area.

Tenants in social rented accommodation would usually have had the most constrained choice, though they would still often have had some choice. Many social landlords either make more than one offer to prospective tenants, or are members of choice-based lettings (CBL) schemes which give potential tenants a choice between properties. However, allocations' criteria still set the parameters of that choice, so a social rented sector tenant cannot opt for a flat or house that is bigger than they need, in the way someone with sufficient money to do so can buy a bigger house than they need. Social housing supply may also limit choices, particularly in London and the South East where pressure on social rented stock may lead to more limited choices.

Affordability

Affordability was often an important consideration for respondents when moving into a development. However, survey respondents who were living in different tenures did not always view this factor with the same importance.

The respondents to the survey were within one of three broad groups, 40 per cent were 'market value' owner occupiers, 27 per cent were people in LCHO arrangements and 34 per cent were social rented sector tenants.[8] For owner occupiers, 'affordability' was reported as either an incentive for moving in, or as a strong incentive for moving, for 74 per cent of respondents.

The figure for LCHO respondents was rather higher, at 92 per cent. It was also found that 72 per cent of LCHO respondents reported 'affordability' as a 'strong incentive' for moving in compared to 28 per cent of owner occupiers. The figures among social rented sector tenants were rather lower, with 58 per cent reporting 'affordability' as an incentive or strong incentive for moving in. For some social rented sector tenants, affordability was not a particular issue as they were wholly benefit dependent, but others were in full or part time employment, which made the level of the rent and service charge significant.

Comparison between alternatives in making housing decisions was clear from the fieldwork with respondents. Affordability would sometimes be talked about in terms of respondents thinking that the development was 'good value for money' when compared to other affordable alternatives. Emphasis was often placed on features that would be unavailable with other housing options, at the same cost, within a city centre:

> *I want a garden but you know you can't afford to live in the city and definitely can't afford to have a garden...so it was like these places have got allotments so that's really nice.* LCHO respondent.

As noted above, LCHO respondents tended to rate affordability more highly than other respondents. For this group of people, it was often affordable owner occupation that was the principal reason for their moving into a scheme. For some, the attraction of buying a quarter share[9] in their home and 'getting onto the property ladder' was more appealing than any other aspect of the housing itself:

> *The way that there is an easy procedure where you can buy a house and at the end of the day own it if you so choose really.* LCHO respondent.

8 A very small number of respondents were private rented sector tenants, but this group was not large enough to allow statistical tests to be conducted and is excluded from this particular analysis (see Table 1.1 in Chapter One).

9 One quarter ownership is just an example, as there were different LCHO arrangements in different schemes. The survey had a relatively low response rate and so is only indicative of the wider population. In our sample most of the LCHO respondents had shared ownership arrangements (77 per cent), another 6 per cent had either shared equity or discounted sales arrangements and 17 per cent had Key Worker Living LCHO arrangements.

Some LCHO respondents openly stated that they did not find their current home an attractive prospect other than it offering a chance to get into owner occupation. This could sometimes mean that they stated that if they could have afforded to buy outright, then they would not have chosen their current home.

Location

Location of the scheme was an important factor in the decision-making process for potential residents. Survey responses showed that 67 per cent of households named overall location as either a 'strong incentive' or 'incentive' to selecting their current home.

Again, there were some differences by tenure of the respondents. Among the owner occupiers, 80 per cent reported that location was a strong incentive or an incentive. The figure for LCHO respondents was lower at 52 per cent, rising again to 67 per cent of social rented sector tenants. The importance of getting onto the property ladder seemed greater for LCHO respondents than location. These respondents were three times more likely to cite 'affordability' as a 'strong incentive' (72 per cent) for moving in than they were to cite 'location' as a 'strong incentive' (23 per cent).

This is a particularly interesting finding as later in Chapter Five it describes how this decision eventually worked out for some of the LCHO residents. One of the most positive reactions by this tenure was the simple fact of owning their own home (or part thereof). However, at the same time dissatisfaction at being placed alongside social rented sector tenants was evident within the development where this was the case.

There were several related factors that were closely associated with location which are discussed below.

Nearby facilities, proximity to work and friends and family

Having facilities such as shops, public transport terminals and pubs nearby was an incentive for 61 per cent of households when choosing their particular scheme. In focus groups too, participants mentioned that accessibility to the city centre and good transport links made schemes more attractive.

However, it could also be the case that respondents wanted their housing to be very close to the facilities they needed. This was particularly the case among respondents in the three London case studies, where anything above a ten minute walk to a tube or bus station was sometimes perceived as inconvenient.

Some of the developments in the case studies had been built on brownfield sites that were at the edge of residential areas or which had been used for a non-residential purpose prior to the development. This could mean that local services were some

distance away. A lack of local shops within walking distance, particularly for small purchases, was mentioned several times as a discouraging factor.

> *There are no shops to buy anything.* LCHO respondent.

Proximity to friends and family was not seen as an incentive or disincentive to moving into a scheme by a majority of respondents. Most respondents reported this as a 'neutral' (i.e., unimportant) factor. It tended not to be mentioned or discussed in focus group discussions or interviews.

Proximity to work, in contrast, was seen as an important factor, with 78 per cent of owner occupiers, 77 per cent of LCHO respondents and 52 per cent of social rented sector tenants reporting it as an incentive or strong incentive. Employment rates among the social tenant respondents tended to be somewhat lower than the other groups, though 61 per cent of households contained someone in employment (compared to 90 per cent of owner occupiers and 97 per cent of LCHO respondents[10]). This may be higher than the national average as during 2005/6 only 26 per cent of households taking up new housing association tenancies in England contained someone in full time employment (Centre for Housing Research, 2007), but it has to be taken into consideration that most of our respondents were located in the South East and London where employment is higher.

Perceptions of the local area

Perception of an area is something that is based on personal intuition and interpretation. There is research evidence that perceptions can be more strongly influenced by factors like rubbish on the streets (or tidy streets), than by 'objective' measures of whether an area is, for example, economically prosperous (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998).

Perception of the local neighbourhood or area was frequently cited as something that had *discouraged* respondents from moving into their scheme during the focus groups and interviews. The areas in which these kinds of development tended to built had, at least at first, discouraged some residents from moving in.

> *Outside* (of the Scheme) *is quite depressed. So that itself can put you off.* Owner occupier.

> *Initially I thought 'oh, you know* (area around Scheme)*, isn't the best place'.* LCHO respondent.

These residents had nevertheless taken the decision to make the move in any case, other factors outweighing their perception of the neighbourhood. The complexity involved in striking a balance between factors when making a decision to move was again illustrated by this finding.

10 A few respondents in the owner occupied category were retired people who had traded down and were living on occupational pensions. There had, in a very few instances, been a loss of employment in LCHO households since the LCHO arrangement had been entered into.

Design and architecture

Architecture

For many respondents, architecture was often very influential in their decision to live in one of the case studies. Seventy-six per cent of respondents stated this as a 'strong incentive' or 'incentive' to move in when they answered the survey question on this subject.

Again, there were some differences between respondents in different tenures. Ninety per cent of owner occupiers described architecture as an incentive to moving in. This compared to 63 per cent of LCHO respondents and 67 per cent of social tenants.

Many participants spoke of the appeal of the overall design of the development during their first viewing of what became their homes. For instance:

> *Nice surroundings. Nice trees. Nice pavements.* Social rented sector tenant.
>
> *When you drive in...you come round that corner, it opens up...that beautiful green space. You see families out there having a lovely time, you see young kids kicking balls around and having a good time and you think yes it feels very nice...* Owner occupier.

As noted in Chapter Two, some case studies had received awards for design or architecture. However, respondent opinions were divided on whether the receipt of a prize was an incentive to move in, or whether unusual architectural designs could in some instances deter prospective residents.

> *I've always liked quirky modern architecture.* Social rented sector tenant.
>
> *They don't look like real houses, they look like they landed from outer space.* LCHO respondent.

Parking

The availability of on-site parking for one's household was often an incentive for moving into a scheme. Seventy-one per cent of owner occupiers described it as an incentive or strong incentive, as did 60 per cent of LCHO respondents. It was less of an issue for social rented sector tenants (32 per cent), but these households tended to have lower incomes or be benefit dependent, which meant they did not necessarily have cars.

Parking as an incentive for moving into schemes rather went against the 'green' credentials of new forms of higher density, affordable urban housing, which are one of the reasons for its development (see Chapter One). One of the broad objectives in encouraging these developments is to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from commuting, by moving people closer to their work.

Existing research into the issue of parking suggests that, realistically speaking, there is little likelihood of households that can afford cars giving them or associated car parking provision up (Stubbs, 2002). Some research has also suggested that public transport is often seen as inadequate, expensive and slower than cars (even in central London), with car ownership being seen particularly important for families with children (CABE, 2005; Cope, 2005). These studies suggest that the question is more one of transport infrastructure and personal choice than one that can be addressed by anything other than extreme proximity to work and other facilities, which can of course only ever be achieved for some residents within any given development.

The availability of visitor parking was a rather controversial issue among the respondents. This was one of the few aspects of their scheme that was reported as a disincentive for moving in by a reasonably large proportion of respondents. Forty per cent of social rented sector tenants described this as a disincentive for moving in, as did 30 per cent of LCHO respondents and 28 per cent of owner occupiers. Parking was not an issue in one case study that offered no parking at all.

The design and layout of flats and houses

A good standard of interior space was universally important in the decision to move. Ninety-four per cent of owner occupiers described it as an incentive or strong incentive to move to their scheme, as did 78 per cent of LCHO respondents and 77 per cent of social rented sector tenants.

There was also enthusiasm for homes that had an 'appealing and attractive design'. Almost all the owner occupiers (93 per cent) listed this as an incentive for moving in, as did 80 per cent of LCHO respondents and 72 per cent of social rented sector tenants.

This was an area in which LCHO seemed to be influenced by factors other than affordability in making their housing choice. While noticeably less influenced than other respondents by location, they were equally influenced by interior space and appealing interior design.

The newness and modern internal design of many of the case study schemes seemed to foster an image of them being 'clean' and 'easy to maintain' among interviewees and focus group participants. This was an appealing initial factor for many:

> *Wow. Brand new flats.* LCHO respondent.

> *Modern. Great décor.* Owner occupier.

However, for some respondents the design could be slightly off-putting, especially in terms of size. Comments were made during interviews and focus groups about having, *"nowhere to put a table"* (in the lounge or kitchen), and particularly about

many one bedroom properties needing to be bigger. Factors like this had been a disincentive to move into the scheme, though again, other considerations had outweighed these issues.

Alongside the interior space and interior design, the quality of finish in homes was also an important incentive for moving in. Among the owner occupiers, 84 per cent reported that quality of finish was an incentive for moving in, as did 77 per cent of LCHO respondents and 67 per cent of social rented sector tenants. This finding suggested that good design also had to have a good finish, if it were to be attractive to potential residents.

Crime and safety

Judgements about crime and safety are often based on the appearance of an area (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998). There is also a cultural and media bias towards the portrayal of urban space as 'unsafe' and rural settings as being 'safe', which influences popular perceptions. Any actual experience of crime may also be quite likely to strongly influence one's perceptions of whether an area is safe.

Crime and safety within the case studies

Vandalism, graffiti and pet fouling were reported as disincentives for moving into a scheme by 18 per cent of households. Owner occupiers were the most likely to report an *absence* or *low levels* of these problems as an incentive for moving in (63 per cent), compared to 35 per cent of LCHO respondents and 40 per cent of social rented sector tenants. The responses to the survey did not allow comparison between schemes, but it is worth noting here that the case studies with the higher proportions of owner occupiers tended to be in 'better' areas in this respect. Issues such as graffiti and young people 'hanging about' schemes were mentioned as disincentives for moving in during the focus groups and interviews, but these were not frequently raised subjects.

The safety and security of their homes was generally seen as an incentive for moving in, or in neutral terms, by most respondents. Safety and security were listed as incentives by 63 per cent of owner occupiers and by 61 per cent of LCHO respondents and half of the social rented sector tenants. Overall, only 9 per cent of respondents reported that home security was a disincentive for moving in. The material from the focus groups and interviews reinforced this finding.

Crime and safety in the surrounding neighbourhood

Crime and safety around the scheme did not really feature as a disincentive to moving into a scheme among the owner occupiers (7 per cent), but as already noted, they were more concentrated in schemes that were in 'better' areas. Among LCHO respondents, it was reported as a disincentive in 20 per cent of cases, with a similar finding among social rented sector tenants (18 per cent). For most respondents, crime

and safety levels in the neighbourhood were seen either in neutral terms or as incentives for moving in because crime levels were perceived to be acceptably low.

During the course of focus group discussions neighbourhood crime and safety was mentioned as an initial deterrent by some respondents. Words used to describe initial feelings about local areas included: *"violent"*; *"scary"* or *"depressed"*, and there were clear links to whether or not an area was regarded as 'good' or 'bad' as a whole.

Communal facilities

While many of the case studies offered some sort of communal facilities, these were very rarely described as an incentive to moving into the scheme. Many respondents were indifferent, describing the presence or absence of communal facilities in neutral terms (70 per cent of owner occupiers, 62 per cent of LCHO respondents and 57 per cent of social rented sector tenants reported them 'neither an incentive nor disincentive'). A few respondents talked about the attractiveness of 'community participation', but they were firmly in the minority.

> *I was really attracted to the fact that there was a community centre. That really appealed to me...That you could be part of a community in a city.* LCHO respondent.

Parking is often given less priority than communal aspects as it is seen as ecologically and socially undesirable (it can use up a lot space that could be used for more housing or more facilities) whereas community participation is seen as a 'desirable' objective by policy-makers. In particular, the presence of a community centre is intended to promote social interaction between a new scheme and the surrounding community.

However, community centres were not seen as an attraction and were largely greeted with indifference. This was an interesting, though perhaps not entirely surprising, finding. Community engagement is notoriously difficult to accomplish, especially in a society that has become more geographically and socially mobile. Many middle class people tend to form relationships through work or education rather than have 'local' groups of friends, or interact with neighbours (Wellman and Leighton, 1979). There is also extensive evidence of the difficulties involved in getting social rented sector tenants to participate in community activities or become involved in tenant participation in the UK (Bines *et al.*, 1993; Flint, 2006).

Summary

The level of choice respondents could exercise when moving into one of the case study schemes varied by the tenure of that respondent. Owner occupiers had the greatest capacity to choose other housing options, as they were opting to buy within

schemes that were charging market prices for the housing on offer (i.e., there was the option to buy something else that was equivalent). For other respondents, the choices that they had were more constrained, though it was not necessarily the case that they would have had no other choice at all.

The overarching importance of affordability and the chance to get onto the property ladder among LCHO respondents was an interesting finding. This was particularly interesting in that it seemingly eclipsed some other factors, including location, though this was less true in respect of other factors (such as interior space and interior design).

Architecture and design were important to most of the respondents. There was also some concern with issues such as car parking and crime and safety in the neighbourhoods when the decision to move was being taken. Residents were, however, largely unmoved by the presence or absence of communal facilities when making the decision to move.

Chapter Four
Living in the case study schemes

Introduction

This chapter examines in detail how the residents felt about day-to-day living in the case study schemes. Respondents' views are explored on both the positive and negative aspects of life and the impact of design, management, resident mix and the wider urban context on their relationship with their homes are examined. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the main 'plus and minus' points of living in the eight schemes. This is then followed by a detailed look at various aspects of life in the case study schemes, including living in mixed tenure developments and living within a scheme with relatively high housing density.

An overview of life in the case study schemes

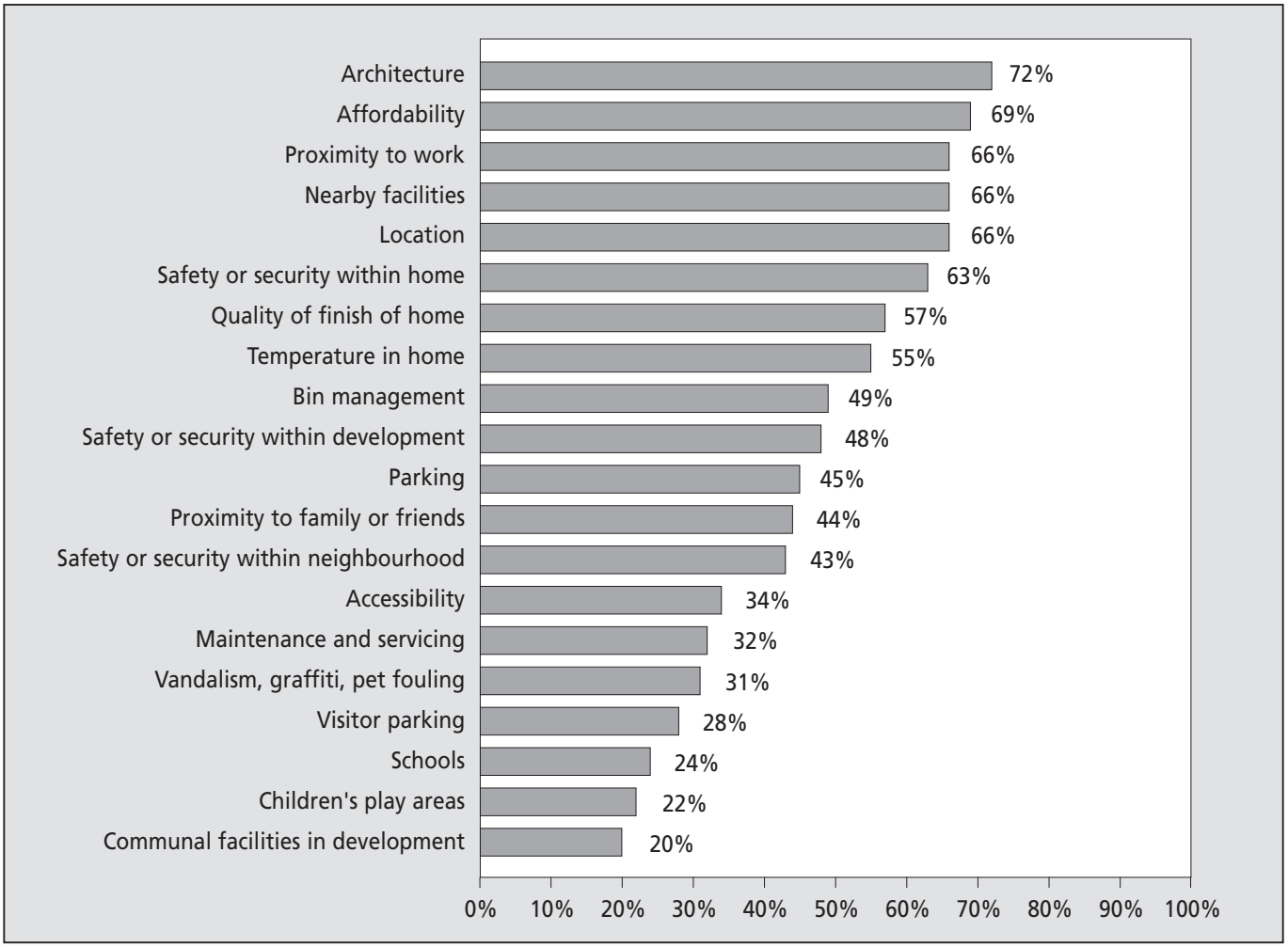
Figure 4.1 on page 30 presents an overview of what the respondents perceived as the 'good points' about living in the eight schemes. Again, a low average could indicate indifference and/or that something was not viewed positively, while a high average indicated that a factor was viewed positively.

It can be seen that architecture, proximity to work, location and affordability were generally seen as good factors by the residents (Figure 4.1). The factors listed here do not differ greatly from the initial overall incentives to moving in that were outlined by residents in the previous chapter (Figure 3.1).

Figure 4.2 on page 31 presents an overview of what the respondents perceived as the 'bad points' about living in the eight schemes. Aspects of parking, especially for visitors, and the general condition of the scheme seemed to be the areas where respondents were least positive. Issues such as maintenance and servicing, bin (refuse) management and safety and security within the surrounding neighbourhood tended to be viewed less well than factors such as architecture, location and affordability. This corresponds with the findings in the previous graph (Figure 4.1) with low scores being given to parking and maintenance.

A comparison between Figure 4.1 and Figure 3.1 suggests several factors which were incentives for moving in that also tended to be viewed as positive factors about living in the eight case studies. Taking architecture as an example, 76 per cent of respondents described it as an incentive or strong incentive for moving in with 72 per cent describing it as a 'good point' or 'very good point' about day-to-day life in their

Figure 4.1: Percentage of respondents who described different aspects of life in their housing schemes as 'good' or 'very good'



Source: Postal survey. Base: 240 respondents.

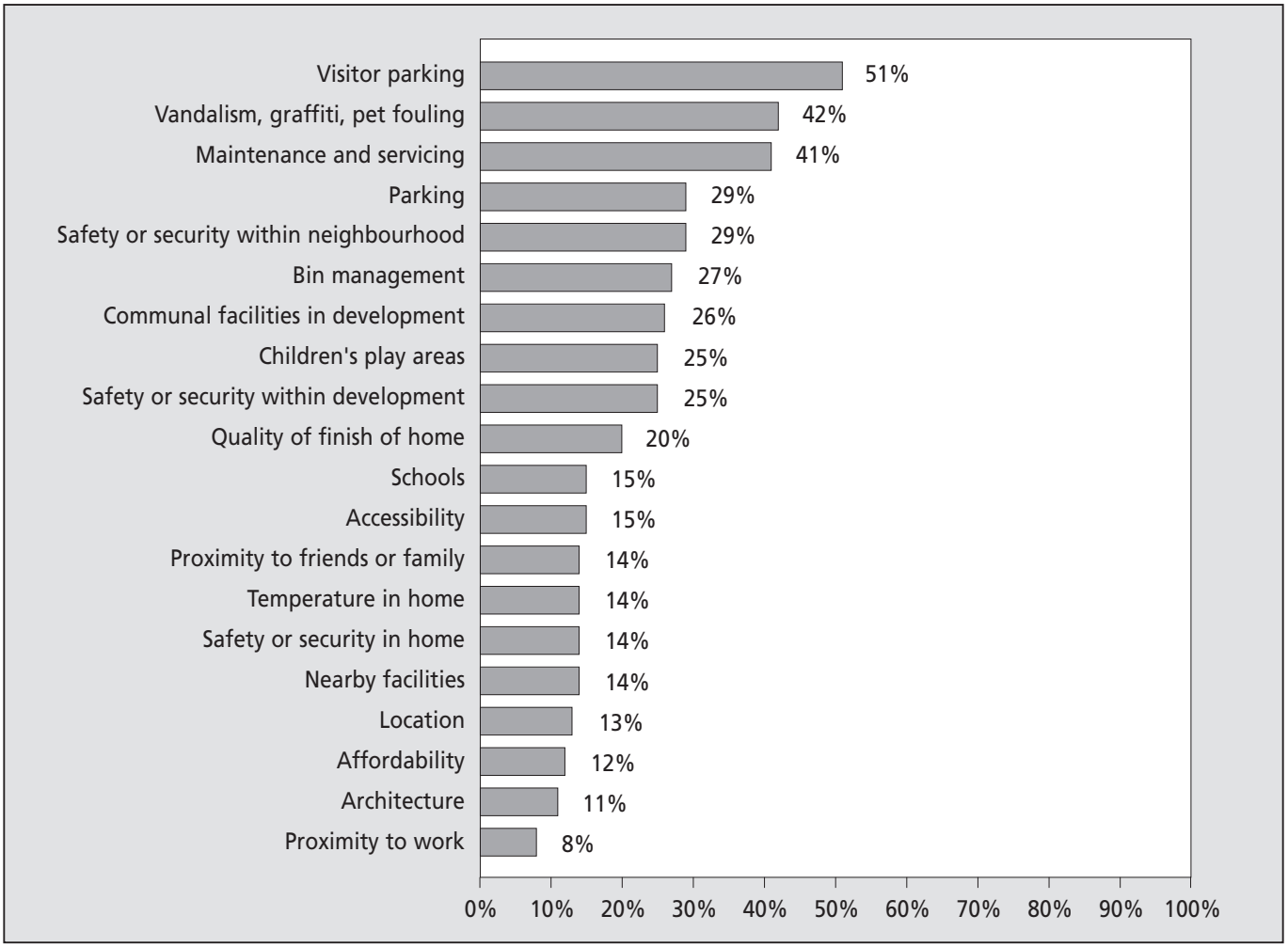
scheme. Factors such as proximity to work were also rated equally positively (for 68 per cent it was an incentive to move in and 66 per cent described it as a 'good point' about living in their scheme).

Affordability

Most respondents were neutral about whether affordability was a good point about living in their scheme (overall 62 per cent listed it as 'neither a good nor bad point'). In terms of housing tenure this view was true of 70 per cent of owner occupiers, 65 per cent of LCHO respondents and 51 per cent of social rented sector tenants.

However, respondents were fairly unlikely to describe it as a 'good' or 'very good point' (14 per cent of owner occupiers, 7 per cent of LCHO respondents and 12 per cent of social rented sector tenants). Affordability was also reported as a 'very bad point' in fairly high proportions in some instances. Although only 16 per cent of

Figure 4.2: Percentage of respondents who described different aspects of life in their housing schemes as 'bad' or 'very bad'



Source: Postal survey. Base: 240 respondents.

owner occupiers reported affordability as a 'very bad point', this compared with 28 per cent of LCHO respondents and 37 per cent of social rented sector tenants.

Respondents were also asked how affordable they found their housing to be. Perhaps slightly surprisingly, owner occupiers were the most likely to report it as 'affordable' (49 per cent), compared to quite low proportions of LCHO respondents and social rented sector tenants (see Table 4.1). Social rented sector tenants were the most likely to report that their housing was 'quite difficult to afford' or 'difficult to afford'. This is akin to findings from Palmer *et al.* (2006) whereby, as a share of disposable income, housing costs were found to be much higher for people on low incomes than for others.

Some other research on the cost of living in affordable high density mixed tenure developments has drawn attention to high service charges making some schemes relatively expensive to live in. One study found gross rents in some London schemes that were equivalent to over 30 per cent of *net* income. The same study noted that

Table 4.1: Views on affordability by tenure (per cent)

	Owner occupiers	LCHO	Social rented sector tenants	All
Affordable	49	26	36	38
Quite affordable	32	39	29	33
Do not think about it	12	13	7	10
Quite difficult to afford	7	16	20	14
Difficult to afford	0	5	8	4
All	100	100	100	100
Base	84	61	75	220

Source: Postal survey. Base: 220 respondents. Excludes 12 respondents in the private rented sector. Data were missing in 8 cases.

even when differentiated or progressive service charges were employed, rising with household income or changing with tenure type, they could still be equivalent to 20-25 per cent of rental costs in some London schemes (HACAS Chapman Hendy, 2004).

Service charges were most often complained about by LCHO respondents. LCHO views on high service charge costs and the level of management service received in return (discussed further later in this chapter) are highlighted by the following quote:

> *I think that the charges that the housing association makes for all the maintenance and stuff far exceeds what I see coming back from that. You know they're supposed to maintain all the gardens and all the outside stuff and all the landscaping and all that...So that's a downside (to living here) 'cos I do feel like I'm shelling out a lot of money that I'm never seeing any comeback on.* LCHO respondent.

To be able to afford to buy the market value owner occupied housing offered by most of the case studies someone had to be relatively affluent. These housing schemes were often located in areas with very high house prices and they seemed to attract households that were relatively affluent. This suggests a certain irony in that the housing offered by the eight schemes was the most 'affordable' for those who were the most affluent. These findings do need to be balanced against those in Table 4.1, which showed that 65 per cent of both social rented sector tenants and LCHO respondents reported that their housing was either affordable or quite affordable. Nevertheless, this was lower than the 81 per cent of owner occupiers who gave the same response.

As can be seen in Table 4.2, LCHO and social rented sector tenants tended to report they were managing well in financial terms less frequently than owner occupiers. They also tended to manage less well than the general population of England (the question on financial management was drawn from the 2004 *Family and Children Survey*). Forty per cent of social rented sector tenants reported at least some financial difficulties, compared to 6 per cent of owner occupiers and 17 per cent of LCHO respondents.

Table 4.2: Financial management by tenure of respondent (per cent)

Overall, how well is your family managing financially these days?	Owner occupiers	LCHO	Social rented tenants	All	*England FACS 2004*
Very well	27	10	7	16	23
Quite well	41	22	14	27	36
Get by alright	27	50	41	38	32
Do not manage very well	2	9	10	6	3
Have some financial difficulties	4	5	22	10	5
In deep financial trouble	0	3	8	4	1
All	100	100	100	100	100
Base number	86	58	74	218	–

Source: Postal survey. Base: 218 respondents. Excludes 12 respondents in the private rented sector. Data were missing in 10 cases. Comparison is with 2004 *Family and Children Survey*.

During the course of focus group discussions and interviews, respondents who were in LCHO arrangements often mentioned how the opportunity to get onto the property ladder was a positive aspect of life in their schemes. Some individuals spoke of how buying homes of similar size in the same locations would cost a substantial amount more than they could afford and that their scheme had given them a route into owner occupation in such an area.

There was some evidence from the focus groups and interviews that some LCHO respondents viewed the relatively high cost of their home relative to their income as acceptable because of the other benefits that they were accruing. Thus, their home, for some of the LCHO respondents, could be simultaneously quite difficult to afford and yet be viewed as representing 'good value for money', both in terms of what it offered for the money they were paying and in terms of it being perceived as giving them access to the property ladder. Chapter Five provides a more extensive discussion on this when outlining what 'delights' residents about their housing.

Again, a comparative element in assessing affordability may be important here, just as it seemed to be in relation to the decision to move. Housing costs were sometimes high, but for some respondents this was in a context where the costs of alternative housing were sometimes very high, to the point in areas like central London where they were unaffordable unless one was living within something like one of the eight schemes. In this sense, this housing could be simultaneously somewhat expensive for its residents and yet still, in the context of the housing market surrounding it, *relatively* cheap. The findings from the fieldwork may explain why 66 per cent of respondents overall reported that their housing was 'good value' or 'very good value' for money.

Nevertheless, some LCHO respondents did report feeling that their housing was relatively difficult to afford.

...It not being cost effective...They could at least do it so that it's affordable housing. I know they're making it "affordable" because you only need a mortgage on 25 per cent, but technically I'm paying more in mortgage and rent than I would do if the bank would just give me the mortgage for 100 per cent of the property in the first place....So it wasn't cost effective at all. LCHO respondent.

Design and architecture

Exterior architecture

Owner occupiers were again the most likely to view the architecture of their scheme positively, though a majority of LCHO and social rented sector tenants also described it as a 'good point' or 'very good point' about living in their homes. Very few respondents described the architecture of their scheme in negative terms.

During the focus groups and interviews residents often mentioned the 'nice design' of their particular scheme; one respondent remarked how their scheme was:

...lovely, I think it's a really nice building. LCHO respondent.

Others reported:

...it obviously tries to copy the evolution of a village... That gives you a sense that you're in something that's new, but it's got a sense of being there longer than it really has...It cheers me up... Owner occupier.

As I turn off the main road into the park, all the noise, traffic, queues just vanish and a feel of slow pace calm descends. (Diary extract), Owner occupier.

Sometimes architecture produced mixed feelings among the respondents. A lack of privacy, coupled with high security, left the following RSL resident equivocal on design:

It's a plus and a minus that really isn't it, because the way it's designed everyone knowing each other, everything looking inwards, like you can't just anonymously go up in a lift and go into your little flat without being seen, you know people can see each other all the time which is good for socialising and great for its security, but it also means that your business is everyone else's business.

A few respondents also reported that they thought certain designs necessitated greater levels of maintenance. Some of the more unusual designs were seen by this minority as being perhaps rather more impractical than conventional housing.

In some parts it's too adventurous in its design...If some of it was a bit more conventional it would help to maintain it. Social rented sector tenant.

Parking

A lack of visitor parking was a real issue for many of the respondents. It was the aspect of living in the eight schemes that attracted the most criticism, with one half of

the respondents reporting it as a 'very bad point' or 'bad point' about where they lived in their survey responses. Discussion of the issue was a feature of many focus groups and interviews.

> *I'm a bit ambivalent about that actually. When we haven't got friends round I'm ok about it, but when they come round we have to try and rush around and find parking spaces for them...The problem is...people park permanently in the visitors' spaces who live here.* Owner occupier.

> *Lots of cars in the parking bays. Seems to be a lot of "visitors" as all the visitor parking bays are all full. Bit worried about what we will do at Christmas when the in-laws come for a week...* (Diary extract), Owner occupier.

Designated resident parking did not yield as much criticism and was seen in a somewhat more positive light. It was also generally deemed to be safe and secure. However, almost one third of respondents viewed it as either a 'bad point' or 'very bad point' about where they lived (30 per cent).

When there was insufficient resident and visitor parking available, some respondents complained that people parked *"everywhere"* around their scheme. This gave a feeling that streets were *"cluttered"* with cars and a small number of respondents were concerned that this would attract crime.

Living at higher densities

Most respondents did not feel they were living in particularly overcrowded settings. It was uncommon for the respondents to make any reference to the density of dwellings in the development in a negative way.

> *I certainly don't feel like it's overcrowded or anything.* LCHO respondent.

Architecture and resident profile appeared to be playing a very important role in these general perceptions of the eight case studies. Neighbouring traditional housing or social housing estates was quite often compared negatively with the eight case studies by respondents who talked about a greater sense of space. Four elements appeared to be particularly important:

- open space at the front of housing seemed to give a sense of 'space', even when there were housing units underneath, above and at either side of someone's home;
- asymmetrical or curved design of blocks, for example when they curled around a communal or green space rather than following a symmetrical line, gave respondents a greater sense of space;
- the presence of green communal space;
- child and family density, schemes with higher proportions of families seemed to be perceived as being more 'crowded'.

One focus group was quite surprised when told of the actual number of properties that surrounded them. Remarks were made as to how the shape of the scheme, overlooking a green communal area, generated an atmosphere of being in a *"low density"* housing setting.

However, not all the respondents viewed the density at which they were living as positively. Sometimes it was factors like having more cars within the scheme than there were parking spaces that led to a sense of overcrowding, in other cases it was the visible presence of people and children within the scheme. Similarly, other aspects of site management could give a sense of being 'overcrowded', such as poor refuse management.

> *It's not that there's too many people, it's that the facilities aren't there to cope with it, like the bins.* LCHO respondent.

> *I think there's too many properties in such a small amount of space.* LCHO respondent.

An absence of green communal space could also generate a sense of being 'overcrowded' among some respondents. For example, one LCHO respondent talked about the possible use of waste land near their home to create a communal garden which they felt would change the atmosphere in their scheme.

> *It's such a small point (the proposed garden) but I think it would make such a difference.*

In broad terms, the findings here were positive – design, architecture and management were often combining to give respondents a sense that they were not living in overcrowded or high density schemes. A sense of overcrowding, where it exists, might be partially addressed by design changes like sufficient car parking, providing a reasonable amount of green communal space. Looking at the balance of household types at the design stage might also be beneficial.

Design and environmental impact

As noted in Chapter One, one of the arguments in favour of new forms of higher density housing in urban areas is the ecological one. The argument partly centres on reducing car use and the CO_2 emissions associated with commuting considerable distances to work. However, design, insulation and the possibility of incorporating at least some renewable energy sources into new forms of urban living could also have potentially positive environmental impacts.

While respondents were very likely to report that they viewed environmental friendliness of their homes as 'important' (90 per cent), when asked about the ecological friendliness of their housing scheme, 41 per cent reported that they did not know how 'green' it was. This pattern may have reflected mass media exposure and the statements of politicians in the UK and some respondents expressed doubts about how 'ecological' the outlook of their fellow residents was:

Most people live here because it's a way of living in a bigger flat cheaply so I think that there's probably things that aren't being made the most of environmentally, like the heating system is supposed to be low energy...you don't have to pay extra for the heating...and so what everyone does is put all the radiators on full blast and all the windows open and they're walking about in shorts in the middle of winter. LCHO respondent.

Respondents did tend to praise energy efficient design, however. The amount of sunlight that entered their homes and the effective heating systems were often viewed as reducing heating bills and as being desirable because they reduced CO_2 emissions.

...these flats are so energy efficient even our winter usage is only £20 per month. LCHO respondent.

...so bitterly cold. Caught bus home. Once at home warmed through in minutes – no central heating needed – flat is so very well insulated. (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.

Some respondents also made suggestions to improve ecological friendliness. This included use of 'grey' water (for example, channelling run off from the roofs to flush toilets). Energy efficient design and intelligent use of building resources appeared to be viewed positively by the respondents, suggesting that where benefits were obvious, there was considerable sympathy for a more ecologically sensitive approach to design.

The design and layout of flats and houses

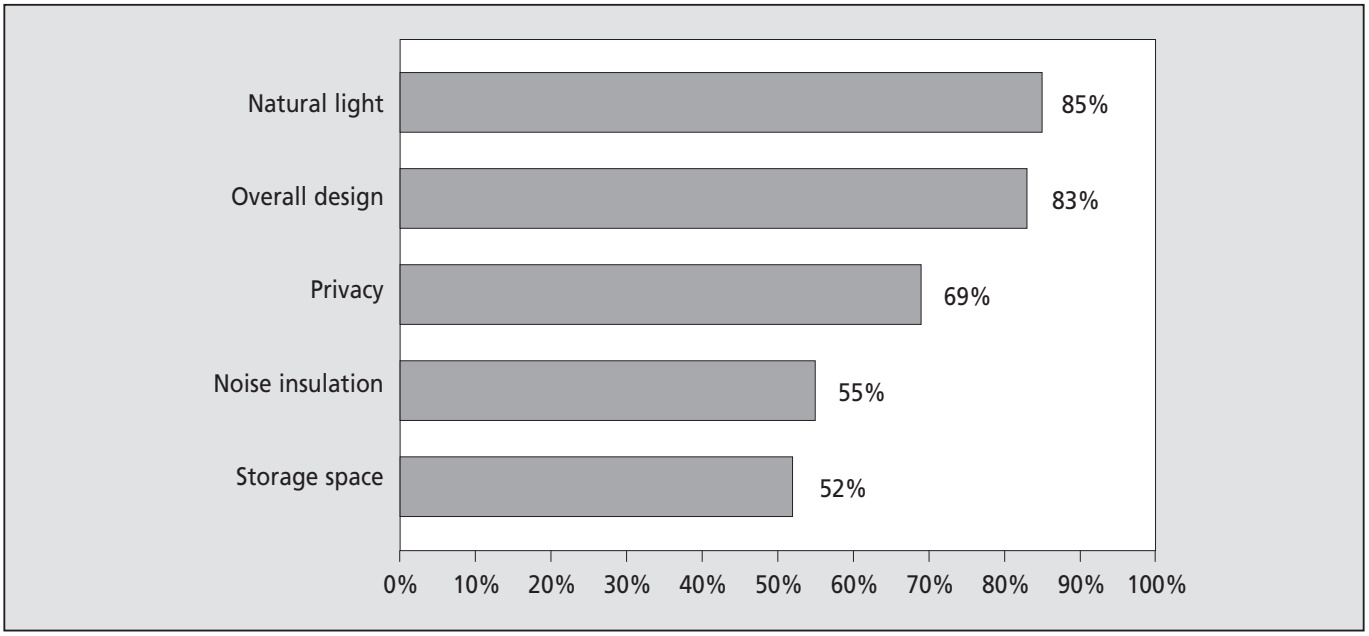
Overview

Figure 4.3 shows the percentage of respondents who reported they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with different aspects of their home. As can be seen, some of the findings were positive, with respondents reporting themselves 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the level of natural light in their homes in 85 per cent of cases and with the overall design of their homes in 83 per cent of cases. There was slightly less satisfaction with levels of privacy, although given the high density of many of the eight schemes (see Chapter Two), the fact that 69 per cent of respondents reported satisfaction with privacy was perhaps better than might have been expected. The respondents were less positive on noise insulation and storage space.

There were not large differences by respondent tenure in respect of views on natural light in their homes, nor were there differences in respect of overall design. Across all three tenures, the respondents tended to be positive about these aspects of their homes.

Social rented sector tenants were less likely to be positive about the levels of privacy they had than other respondents. Just under one half (48 per cent) reported being

Figure 4.3: Percentage of respondents who described themselves as 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with different aspects of their housing



Source: Postal survey. Base: 240 respondents.

'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', while 24 per cent reported dissatisfaction (17 per cent were neutral). By contrast, 71 per cent of LCHO respondents and 75 per cent of owner occupiers expressed satisfaction with their levels of privacy. This may again be a function of where the owner occupiers and LCHO residents tended to be, in that they were sometimes physically separate from social rented sector tenants. In a few instances, owner occupiers were in much smaller buildings or detached housing that was on the same site as much more densely developed affordable housing.

There were some differences in respect of noise insulation. One quarter of owner occupiers, 39 per cent of LCHO respondents and 38 per cent of social rented sector tenants reported dissatisfaction with this aspect of their homes. This again suggested that owner occupiers were sometimes having a qualitatively different experience in their homes than other tenure groups.

Natural light

Satisfaction with the levels of natural light across the eight schemes was generally high. This was an aspect of architecture and design that was praised by respondents in the survey, focus groups and interviews and in their diaries.

> *That was a good selling point to me. High ceilings and a big window space to create light rooms.* LCHO respondent.
>
> *This is a pleasant, light and warm space* (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.
>
> *It's sunny and warm in the flat. Really like being in the space.* (Diary extract), Owner occupier.

Overall design

Flats and other forms of housing were quite often designed so that the kitchen and living area were in one space, rather than occupying two rooms. Two points were raised repeatedly in the focus groups and interviews. The first was that it evoked a feeling of more space in their home, but at the same time, the second was that it also resulted in problems related to noise. Several residents mentioned, how if a washing machine or dishwasher was being used, then it was virtually impossible to watch TV in the same space.

Another issue that arose was a difficulty in fitting existing furniture into these open plan spaces. As was noted in Chapter Three, there were sometimes doubts about moving into a scheme because of issues like where an existing dining table or other large piece of furniture would fit. Sometimes factors like the positioning of radiators were reported as making it difficult to fit furniture into a given space. Sometimes a sense of space being tight, in terms of the detail of not being able to fit things into corners or situate furniture in a logical place, produced frustration among respondents.

> *The design of much of it is illogical.* LCHO respondent.

> *It's the silly things like your Hoover fits between the toilet and the wall. How many times have you been in a place where it doesn't fit...It just makes all the difference. It's the little things.* Owner occupier.

Although it was viewed with variable satisfaction, storage space was not often the subject of discussion in focus groups or interviews, nor was it often mentioned in respondents' diaries. Despite the some of the problems with furniture placement, it was noted equally, as just outlined above, that the flats in particular were:

> *...light and warm and spacious.* LCHO respondent.

Privacy

The survey findings on privacy were, as noted, perhaps rather more positive than might have been expected given the relatively high densities of the eight case studies. There were very few comments about privacy in the diaries, focus groups or interviews. There were some findings that while not focused on 'privacy', in the sense of feeling intruded upon, were linked to living at a relatively high density. These are discussed towards the end of this chapter and within Chapter Five.

Noise

Reflecting the survey responses, noise issues were more frequently mentioned by residents of RSL or LCHO properties rather than by owner occupiers. This applied both in respect of the diaries and the interviews/focus groups. Noise pollution is associated with stress and reducing excessive noise has been given priority as one of the main targets of the anti-social behaviour programme (Flint, 2006). The distress caused by experiencing frequent loud noise when at home was evident in some of the comments from the respondents.

Kids making kid noises AGAIN! Am worried about the amount of crying going on. I think they are elephants at times – not 2 year olds! (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.

Lots of music noise from next door today...It's started getting louder in the past week. Would have been better to have both houses stairs adjacent to each other in the design, where possible. (Diary extract), RSL respondent.

Woken up by door slamming on landing. Wish the housing association would fix the door so it didn't slam. (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.

Access to personal outside space

Access to one's own garden was a more common feature of life within the eight case study schemes than might be expected. However, this was determined by scheme design, rather than tenure or other factors. There were some case studies where quite a high proportion of residents had access to a garden, others in which there was only communal green space.

In overall terms, it was unusual for respondents to lack any kind of exterior space at all. Only 14 per cent of respondents reported that they did not have access to their own garden, own yard or own balcony. However, there were differences between tenures on this point. Among owner occupiers, only 5 per cent had no exterior space, compared to 15 per cent of social rented sector tenants. Among the LCHO respondents however, the total rose to 28 per cent.

Individuals quite often spoke enthusiastically of having access to exterior space. Access to a balcony was quite often seen as a benefit as were yards and gardens. A few respondents complained about a lack of personal outside space.

I'd love a balcony. LCHO respondent.

Crime and safety

Home security

There were few differences between respondents in different tenures in respect of their views on home security. Most reported that it was a 'good point' or 'very good point' about where they lived (68 per cent of owner occupiers, 66 per cent of LCHO respondents and 61 per cent of social rented sector tenants). The owner occupiers were unlikely to describe it as a 'bad point' or 'very bad point' about their homes (5 per cent), although one quarter were neutral (26 per cent reported it as neither a 'good point' nor a 'bad point'). Among LCHO respondents, feelings were slightly more negative, 15 per cent reported it as a 'bad point' and 20 per cent were neutral, with the same being true of social rented sector tenants (18 per cent saw it as a 'bad point', 20 per cent were neutral). In general terms, the respondents usually felt safe within their homes.

Site security

Feelings about site security, how safe their scheme or development felt when moving around the site, for example after parking the car and walking to one's flat, or walking between flats or buildings, were less positive. Overall, 50 per cent of respondents reported that safety and security within the development was a 'good point' or 'very good point' about where they lived. The figure for owner occupiers was slightly higher at 57 per cent, though as already noted above, the owner occupiers were more concentrated in some schemes than others (see Chapter Two). Forty-six per cent of LCHO respondents and social rented sector tenants reported safety and security as a 'good' or 'very good point'.

For many respondents, a sense of insecurity when outside their flat or house and walking around the site of their scheme was evident in both their diary entries and their comments in focus groups or in interviews. Sometimes this sense of insecurity appeared to be heightened by graffiti, pet fouling and vandalism on site and there is research evidence that suggests that perceptions of area safety are strongly linked to these factors (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998). Within the survey responses, 38 per cent of owner occupiers, 46 per cent of LCHO respondents and 38 per cent of social rented sector tenants described these factors as a 'bad' or 'very bad point' about where they lived.

Low level anti-social behaviour within the boundaries of the case study schemes was frequently mentioned in the focus group discussions and diary entries. The following is just one of several incidents reported in a diary completed by a LCHO resident.

> *18.50: ...Youths have moved to top of path under No 10's or is it 11's doorway. At top of path saw completely uprooted bollard and upturned shopping trolley. Couldn't help but link all this. Phoned police to report vandalism. Might have known the bollards would barely last a week. The neds*[11] *around here have no respect for anything.*

Low level anti-social behaviour and crime, such as young people hanging around in groups and writing graffiti or vandalising street furniture, was quite commonly reported. Elements in scheme architecture and design that enhanced a sense of security were viewed positively. Lighting around a scheme, secure entrances and stairwells and coded, video or telephone entry systems all increased respondents' sense of security.

> *6pm: Returned after dark. Good lighting in estate. Felt very safe.* (Diary extract), Social rented sector tenant.

When security systems or lighting were broken, or damaged, respondents reported feeling uneasy if these were not very quickly repaired. Some complained that low standards of maintenance potentially contributed to more serious crime.

11 Scottish slang denoting teenagers who undertake anti-social behaviour. The Collins English dictionary defines a 'ned', with admirable neutrality, as a *"young working-class male who dresses in casual sports clothes"*.

In some schemes the design of the development as a whole seemed to give rise to a greater sense of security. One social rented sector tenant commented:

> *Overall it felt very safe the way that flats are overlooked and the doors are overlooked makes it feel as though it's harder for people to burgle and things and that was consciously built into the design.*

There is a school of social housing management that places particular emphasis on poor design increasing the risk of crime and anti-social behaviour (Coleman, 1985). Though this has been criticised for ignoring the links between socio-economic factors and crime levels; architecture and design were sometimes interpreted by respondents as 'attracting' anti-social behaviour.

> *There's pathways and access from several different areas. I think it attracts anti-social behaviour because they know that they can...they've got a lot of escape routes...They (the police) can't get a car up. So they can stay at the entrance and they can see the police coming. If the police come they've got plenty of ways they can disappear.* LCHO respondent.

The importance of individual notions of degrees of vulnerability became clear during the course of the fieldwork. Conversations with respondents showed that in many cases fear of crime was subjective. To illustrate, when the following LCHO respondent was asked about local crime he answered:

> *I don't really worry too much about that sort of thing, being six foot two and eighteen stone.*

Perceptions within the same household could also differ:

> *I feel reasonably secure, but my partner doesn't with the kids.* LCHO respondent.

Older people sometimes said that they did not want walk around their scheme at night alone and, rather alarmingly, one individual's sexuality played a part in their perception of crime and safety:

> *Because I'm gay and I walk around on my own at night time ...some people start yelling...I've only felt that living here...No-one's ever hit me or anything but I wouldn't be surprised if someone did.* LCHO respondent.

This is a complex area and an examination of people's responses in relation to the fear of crime is not within the remit of this research. Existing research tends to emphasise that fear of crime in urban space is heightened by the behaviour of others which is interpreted as a risk being present. The associations between a sense of insecurity and, say young people hanging around on schemes and acting anti-socially that were found by the research reported are in line with findings from research on fear of crime in urban areas (Pain and Townshend, 2002). There is also research evidence that fear of crime can become heightened when someone feels physically unable to defend themselves or is in weakened physical state (Chandola, 2001).

Crime and safety in the surrounding neighbourhood

The findings on neighbourhood safety were not particularly positive, with 44 per cent of respondents overall reporting safety and security within their neighbourhood as a 'good point' about living in their current home. One quarter of owner occupiers, 32 per cent of LCHO respondents and one quarter of social rented sector tenants described neighbourhood safety as a 'bad point' or 'very bad point' about where they lived.

Some respondents in some schemes drew a distinction between the wider neighbourhood and the development on which they lived. For these respondents, their home and the scheme in which it was situated was seen as a relatively 'safe' zone in comparison to the urban space around it. Life inside the schemes was seen differently, in terms of safety, security and crime levels to the 'outside world'.

> *But generally it's a lot different to the immediate world outside, (local area) is quite a high crime area really and this is a bit of an oasis in that respect.* Social rented sector tenant.

There was also a tendency to see crime as an external risk to the schemes and their residents. Groups of young people, often associated with crime in the responses given to the research team, were assumed to be from outside a given scheme. The following exchange between two owner occupiers typified these attitudes:

> *People in the* (scheme) *tend to want to live a quiet, secure, safe, relaxed life and it's all the outsiders from the established* (local area)*.*
>
> *It's the outside factors that make living in* (scheme) *horrid. If it were secured off with a little fence I think we'd be alright!*

The findings here were not always very positive. As noted in Chapter One, one of the key objectives of these forms of development is to encourage social inclusion through rebalancing the socio-economic profile of marginalised urban areas. The interviews and diaries instead gave a sense of respondents sometimes having an almost siege like mentality, viewing their flat or house as 'safe', but seeing the exterior space (to varying degrees and extents) as being unsafe. Sometimes a sense of safety extended within the boundaries of their housing scheme, sometimes it did not, but whether the 'threat' was seen as being outside the front door, or outside the scheme, it was still often perceived as being present.

It is very important to note that these feelings were not universal; there were respondents to the research who did not view their home, the site or neighbourhood as being unsafe. As noted above, perception of crime also changed with the point of view, some people felt more vulnerable than others. There would also have been other factors that were hard to control for. For example, one tends to perceive a city as a less alarming place to live if you have lived in one all your life.

Housing management

Only a minority of respondents reported that 'maintenance and servicing' were 'good points' or 'very good points' about where they lived (32 per cent overall). Among owner occupiers, the figure was 31 per cent, with similar proportions of LCHO respondents (32 per cent) and social rented sector tenants (34 per cent) having the same view. Forty per cent of respondents reported that maintenance and servicing were 'bad points' or 'very bad points' about where they lived (the level was approximately the same across all three tenure groups).

Negative comments about housing management were quite common within the focus groups, interviews and diaries provided by the respondents. Waste management, which can be a difficult issue in relatively dense housing (particularly in respect of managing insects and rats where concentrations of household waste exist), was a subject that particularly concerned some of the respondents, with 28 per cent of respondents overall complaining about it:

> *I have complained about the standards of rubbish collection several times but the management company (name) are very unresponsive.* (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.

Many respondents believed that service charges were far too high for the level of housing management service offered. It was quite often claimed by residents that they would in fact carry out their own maintenance, especially in respect of cleaning communal areas, and this rendered the charges inappropriate.

> *For all the money we pay for the management company, every month, it's absolutely disgusting.* Owner occupier.

As noted above, slow or poor repair that was perceived as effecting site security was viewed particularly poorly by some respondents:

> *18:15: Back from work to find main door unlocked. It's insecure but the Housing Association don't see it as an urgent repair. Last (tho' not the first) time I complained I was told they had a 10 day target. For a main door? Ridiculous...* (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.

Resident representation

Engagement with formal mechanisms of resident representation was, compared to much social housing, relatively high (at 20 per cent of respondents). The social rented sector tenants were particularly likely to be involved in resident representation (32 per cent). Given research that indicates that social landlords usually struggle to find sufficient people to engage in resident participation (Bines *et al.*, 1993), this suggests that the respondents may not, in this respect, have been representative of residents in general.

Respondents quite often reported that they did not feel that the managing agency 'listened' to them. Only 9 per cent reported that they were 'always listened to' in their survey responses and 35 per cent reported they were 'never listened to' with a further 38 per cent reporting that they were only 'sometimes' listened to. Often the specific experience of residents actually focused on what they saw as a poor response about an aspect of the housing management service, making a complaint, seeking a service and not getting what was seen as a satisfactory response.

> *It's just incompetence...If I have to ring them my blood pressure shoots up.* LCHO respondent.

Social cohesion within the schemes

One of the key objectives for these new developments is the promotion of a greater social mix within inner city areas. As Hills (2007) notes, recent policy has been aimed towards creating smaller mixed tenure developments incorporating both social and private housing that are specifically designed to promote community cohesion. Seven of the case studies were mixed tenure developments and one, through provision of market value owner occupation specifically targeted at people on lower incomes, also sought to house people with very different economic status on the same site. A number of the schemes also had community centres.

Community activity

Some respondents reported a sense of dissatisfaction with the general level of community activity within their scheme. Some wanted a greater sense of shared interest and participation than was present.

> *The last time I actually met someone, a new person, I know they were imbued with enthusiasm about (scheme), and a community where things take place, and then I met them again a couple of months later and they looked thoroughly depressed and just shrugged her shoulders and I said it's the culture of the place.* LCHO respondent.

> *The only community spirit we've sort of had is since we all found out certain things about someone else that has pissed us all off.* LCHO respondent.

Some respondents felt that where facilities like community centres were present on site, they were often under-utilised, or the events and activities they offered were focused on quite specific groups of people or limited in scope. These respondents wanted to participate in the communal life of their scheme but felt that there should be more opportunities than was the case.

> *The other thing is I'm disappointed to find that I feel quite excluded from this part, from the community centre. I've no reason to be in here at any time at all. I work 9 to 5 and it seems to be really that things happen for people that are doing stuff maybe with families or whatever through the day. So while I was very attracted to*

the community centre I find there is no community here for me...It was something that had attracted me to the place but it has just never actually happened. LCHO respondent.

This finding has to be balanced against survey findings that suggested quite a high degree of indifference towards facilities like community centres being on site (see Chapter Three). Many respondents seemed to wish for good neighbourliness, in terms of consideration and courtesy towards others, but had no interest in any form of group interaction. Two respondents' answers on whether they felt like 'part of the community' were representative of many respondents' views:

Not really but I'm not trying either...I work with the public so when I'm on my days off I'm really not interested in talking to people. LCHO respondent.

...depends if you want to be part of the community really. I'm not that proactive. LCHO respondent.

Tenure mix

For some respondents, particular tensions existed around the question of people in different tenures being on the same site. This was an aspect of living in the case study schemes where respondents tended to express their opinions quite forcefully. Much of the opinion that was offered tended to be negative and may not necessarily represent the majority view.

It doesn't mix, we just tolerate each other. LCHO respondent.

I don't think there should be social housing personally...It should all be key workers. LCHO respondent.

Among some of the owner occupiers and LCHO respondents there was a belief that social rented sector tenants did not maintain their homes or respect the surrounding area. A few respondents openly stated that where unkempt areas existed it was the 'responsibility' of social rented sector tenants, who were assumed to be the cause of damage, anti-social behaviour and other problems within a scheme.

...because when you're only renting I don't think you look after the flat as much as when you own it. LCHO respondent.

I don't believe that they would do that if they were buying it. There's somebody who constantly brings in a trolley from Tesco's and then just leaves it in the corridor. LCHO respondent

I resent people who are renting...It's different, they just don't seem to care...I like to live somewhere nice and I'm paying for the privilege. LCHO respondent.

In some schemes, private landlords had bought flats and were renting them out. A few respondents viewed this as also being problematic.

Seventy per cent of our building rent and they don't give a monkey's. Owner occupier.

The researchers had a sense that there was more tension in those schemes where there was a physical separation between the affordable and market value housing as is evidenced below.

> *It does feel a bit like segregation.* LCHO respondent.

> *Everybody knows who moves in, they know which one is gonna be home owner, shared ownership or what...Or there's a slight design difference or a bigger garden...or there's an extra shower and so basically even though they're trying to integrate, they're not because they've already set a difference.* Social rented sector tenant.

> *There's a slight resentment. Everything is magnified though isn't it, everything is seen...So you're exposed completely...Everyone knows your business in a way.* Social rented sector tenant.

Some respondents reported feeling that their social status was lessened by being in an 'affordable' block or that they may be seen by some other residents as being the 'cause' of problems. These findings are similar to Cheshire's (2007) work which suggests that mixing neighbourhoods does not effectively help those on lower incomes and it also detracts from the welfare of the, even marginally, better off.

The fieldwork did not suggest that any problems within the eight case studies were linked to a specific group of residents. There was also some evidence that the negative attitudes of some respondents to other groups of residents were, at least in some cases 'pre-formed', rather than being the result of experiences within their current housing. One focus group that happened to be made up entirely of owner occupiers was, until the question was asked, unaware that they lived in a mixed tenure scheme. The reaction was initially one of disbelief, followed by statements that if there was indeed a mix, no problems had been encountered *"so far"*.

Despite this, respondents were fairly likely to view the tenure mix within their scheme positively or at least neutrally. This view was held by many respondents and it would be incorrect to suggest that the negative attitudes were universally held. Positive views of tenure mix were present, and while there were sometimes problems within the schemes, not all the respondents assumed it was one particular group of residents.

> *The affordable (LCHO) housing is really good...You can't tell the difference between affordable housing and housing association.* Owner occupier.

> *Per se I don't have a problem with the idea of having sort of mixed tenure. For all I know maybe the worst ones are owner occupiers.* LCHO respondent.

Clearly there is work to be done if mixed tenure schemes are to be successful from the point of view of all their potential residents. In particular, there may need to be efforts made to counteract stereotypical images of social rented sector tenants among at least some people who are more affluent.

Summary

There are a number of significant findings in relation to people's attitudes and experiences in living in the eight case study schemes.

The first set of findings relate to affordability. This study shows that for some households, their lower cost housing is not as 'affordable' as it could be. Some LCHO respondents and some social rented sector tenants were reporting problems with affordability. It was, by contrast, uncommon for owner occupiers to report any difficulties in respect of affording their homes.

The design and architecture of these schemes, some of which had been awarded architectural prizes, was viewed positively by many of the respondents. One key finding was that modern architecture could produce a sense of 'space' within high density developments. Many elements of the design of individual flats and houses, such as allowing in a large amount of natural light and offering a high degree of insulation, were viewed very positively. Other aspects of design, most notably sound proofing and site parking, lack of green areas and, to a lesser extent, factors that were seen as reducing site security, were not viewed as positively.

Crime was a concern for many respondents. Most felt safe within their homes, but they could sometimes feel unsafe within their housing scheme. Crime in surrounding neighbourhoods was quite often a cause for concern among respondents. Housing management was quite often criticised and seen as a negative aspect of life in some of the case studies.

Awareness of the environmental impact of housing was low, but residents had positive views about energy efficiency in areas such as household heating, particularly (as in this instance) where they could see direct benefits.

There was not a strong sense of community cohesion within the schemes, although some respondents wanted a greater sense of, and greater opportunity for, participation. This was not viewed as necessarily problematic by other respondents who were more concerned with general good neighbourliness than with any wish to participate in communal activities. There were tensions within mixed tenure schemes between different resident groups.

Chapter Five
People and their homes

Introduction

While factors such as affordability, design, architecture and tenure mix were often very important to respondents, there was another dimension within their reactions to where they lived, which might be termed their 'emotional' response. Research on the 'meaning' of home has shown that it is something that is defined for many people in psychological and emotional ways as well as social or 'cultural' terms. In other words, what we understand by 'home' is often a matter of our own reactions to accommodation, reactions that can vary between individuals even when they are living in identical settings (Somerville, 1997).

To gain access to these personal responses, respondents participating in focus groups or interviews were asked two questions. The first was whether there were any factors that *'delighted'* respondents about where they lived (this was asked first), and the second was whether any *'really bad points'* about where they lived. This question was asked prior to any other discussion about life within their housing and left completely open.

The findings reported here were not always true of everyone, or even a majority of the respondents. The intention is to give the reader an overview of the range of personal responses that respondents had to their homes.

Factors that 'delighted' respondents

Design was quite often reported as giving respondents a sense of 'delight' in where they lived. A sense of spaciousness was seen as a particularly pleasing feature. High space standards or the presence of useful rooms, like a second bathroom, could also be viewed very positively. Factors such as a good view from the window, looking down onto communal gardens and ponds were also viewed very positively.

It's a beautiful flat and the view is stunning out there. LCHO respondent.

I find my flat light and warm and spacious. I really like that. LCHO respondent.

The location of schemes, including access to good public transport and being within reach of a city centre was also viewed as important. A sense of being within easy reach of required services could also be important, which could be particularly true when respondents did not run a car.

The bus service is very important. Social rented sector tenant.

I definitely see the situation in terms of being next to a supermarket and being on bus routes...and people using a lot of public transport and things. I think a connection that we have to buses and things. In terms of that kind of situation it's great. LCHO respondent.

A sense of being somewhere better than could otherwise be afforded was quite strong among some respondents. Living in a home that offered a standard of housing that would be out of reach financially if it were not 'affordable' gave some respondents an instant feeling of attachment to, and sense of satisfaction with, their homes:

There was that feeling as well that you're getting something that people are paying a tremendous amount of money for private flats. LCHO respondent.

I think it's probably the best thing I ever did, was go for this. It was the only way I could've got any property or on the property ladder at all. LCHO respondent.

Other respondents were pleased that there was little to distinguish their 'affordable' flat with the owner occupied ones in the same development.

One of the strongest findings was simply people reporting feeling positive about having a home of their own. This was something that was particularly true for LCHO respondents.

There's nothing exceptional about the place, but it's just my own.

Factors associated with discontent

Respondents also talked about aspects of their homes that they were unhappy with. For some respondents, there was a negative emotional reaction to finding out that their home was within a mixed tenure development only after they had moved there. For example, one LCHO respondent in London reported frustration about not being made aware that they would be actually be living in an entirely separate block of flats from the 'market value' owner occupiers and would instead be among rented flats.

They also hadn't made it clear that the part we would be in is also the first two, I think three, floors of people who are totally rented...It felt like well why didn't you make that clear because you've divided us from the totally private (market value owner occupied) flats...we spent all this money and you never even told us there's a possibility...please understand it's not me being snobbish.

A feeling of 'deceit' was reported by some other respondents, again linked to finding out that their LCHO housing was amongst social and/or private rented accommodation only after they had moved in.

I feel duped. LCHO respondent.

As was shown in Chapter Four, reactions to high noise levels within schemes could be strong among some respondents. The noise from neighbours was quite often the first problem respondents mentioned. Noise was said to be more prevalent in summer months when a lot of the other residents would have windows open. It was often felt that there was a *'lack of consideration'* for others by those who generated a lot of noise. A low standard of noise insulation had a very negative effect on people's relationship with their homes. As is shown in Chapter Six, it could be a reason why people wanted to move.

Crime levels were given on many occasions as the first 'bad point' a person could think of. The negative emotional response to crime, perhaps particularly of some LCHO respondents who quite often had a lot of emotional energy (and financial commitment) tied up in becoming a 'home owner' was quite often very strong. Home ownership is often pursued precisely to gain a greater sense of emotional and financial 'security' (Somerville, 1997) and these respondents found themselves feeling unsafe and insecure. As one respondent put it:

> *I'm living on a council estate...People getting shot at. The police are here every five seconds...unsupervised kids, breaking everything.* LCHO respondent.

In addition to crime, LCHO respondents could also feel troubled by anti-social behaviour in the local vicinity, including graffiti, setting bins alight, the destruction of objects in and around the development and the general congregation of groups of youths meant:

> *An irritation that's beyond minor.* LCHO respondent.

Maintenance and the future appearance and potential deterioration of the development due to what was perceived to be insubstantial upkeep created a feeling of discontentment and worry for many LCHO respondents. Alongside crime and anti-social behaviour, poor standards of maintenance could exacerbate their sense of insecurity, of a misdirected investment in LCHO that had not delivered the sense of having their 'own' (desirable) place to live. Sometimes there was a feeling that LCHO was something of a 'rip off', particularly in relation to the level of service charges.

> *I think that the charges that the housing association makes for all the maintenance and stuff far exceeds what I see coming back from that. You know they're supposed to maintain all the gardens and all the outside and stuff and all the landscaping and all that...So that's a downside 'cos I do feel like I'm shelling out a lot of money that I'm never seeing any comeback on.* LCHO respondent.

Location could produce very negative responses as well as very positive ones, as is graphically illustrated in the following:

> *...the location. It forms a certain hub...an itinerant travel of vomiting, swearing, urinating drunks at the weekend...You've got (fast food chain) down there so you're always sure of a regular supply of litter or half eaten food flung in your garden.* LCHO respondent.

A sense of being *"under siege"* by the established neighbourhood was reported by more than one respondent. This had created strong feelings of dissatisfaction with their homes among some respondents. Some schemes were built in older neighbourhoods that respondents thought were *"run down"* which, from their perspective, meant that the scheme offered *"rich pickings"* (i.e., it was a relatively affluent enclave that formed a target for theft).

Many respondents thought that people from the surrounding area ventured onto the schemes and committed acts of anti-social behaviour. Some respondents felt that their scheme would be 'wonderful' if it were somewhere else.

> *I think the community is maybe slightly bound together by the 'common enemy', which is the surrounding area.* LCHO respondent.

Design and architecture were generally viewed more positively than negatively and one of the more striking findings of the research was that respondents often did not feel they were living in 'high density' housing (see above and Chapters Three and Four). However, this was not universally true, some people did feel they were living in very close proximity to others and that this could be a cause of tension.

> *I would say really the density of people, because it's a new build...Because it's high density as well there's a lot of domestics that go on.* Social rented sector tenant.

There could also sometimes be a sense of being under surveillance. This was again specifically linked to the presence of a large number of people in a relatively small space.

> *It can be very oppressive everybody knowing everybody else and knowing everybody's business...I think it's partly the intense design.* Social rented sector tenant.

Good and bad together

For many respondents, the positive and negative factors of life in their housing counterbalanced one another. There were irritations and worries, but there were also very positive things about where they lived. Their reactions to their homes were often complex and could be changeable.

> *When I moved I felt genuinely very privileged to have new good accommodation and somewhere I felt relaxed and happy and I still feel quite privileged for that. I'm just disappointed by my environment and people that are around me... That has marred my experience of living here...The housing association didn't seem to do anything and the community didn't seem to do anything either... But otherwise I feel very lucky to have this accommodation and opportunity.* LCHO respondent.

Summary

This chapter shows the importance of understanding emotional reactions to living situations in determining why respondents reacted positively or negatively to their homes. People's responses to their homes were often complex and multifaceted, for some it was a balance between different factors that were positive and negative, for others some aspect of their home gave them a sense of delight in where they lived. There were also respondents who were highly discontented because of one or more aspects about living in their home.

The importance of the wider environment as a cause of discontent has been made clear by this chapter, as has the inability of design to always successfully counteract environmental issues, particularly factors like crime and anti-social behaviour. The important role of design and architecture, as well as space standards, in producing very positive feelings about living space is also illustrated by these findings.

Chapter Six
Residents' futures in the schemes

Introduction

One of the key objectives of the new forms of affordable high density housing in cities is to help maintain socio-economically balanced communities, ensuring that families live within cities and attract and retain key workers to urban areas. A key 'test' for these kinds of housing is therefore whether or not current residents are likely to stay in residence, or whether they have plans to leave.

It was therefore a key concern of the research to clarify the medium and longer-term housing intentions and aspirations of respondents. The chapter begins by providing an overview of people wishing to stay or move from their current homes and the possible indicators that may explain this. The chapter then moves on to focus more specifically on residents who intended to move and looks at the principal reasons behind them wishing to do so. Finally, the aspirations, rather than intentions, of residents in these schemes are analysed and the types of housing and areas individuals *would like* to live in are presented.

To stay or not

The survey presented respondents with a deliberately stark question: *'Given the choice would you stay here or move somewhere else tomorrow?'* The responses to this question were mixed.

A majority of respondents said they would rather 'stay where they were' (61 per cent), while 39 per cent reported that they would 'rather leave'. Sixty-two per cent of owner occupiers and 65 per cent of social rented sector tenants reported that they 'wanted to stay', compared to 48 per cent of LCHO respondents.

This question was, however, an expression of an aspiration or wish to move, rather than a statement of concrete *intent* to move. Only 13 per cent of respondents reported both that they wished to move and would only continue to live in their current home for less than a year. Thus, the actual numbers of households that were actually going to move was significantly lower than the 39 per cent who expressed a wish to move.

The majority of those who expressed a wish to move also reported that they intended to live in their current home for two years or more (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Intended duration of residence by whether or not a respondent wished to move* (per cent)

Intended duration of residence	Stay	Move	All
< 1 year	4	33	16
2-5 years	33	41	36
5+ years	43	12	31
Do not know	20	13	18
All	100	100	100
Base	**138**	**90**	**228**

Source: Postal survey. Base: 228 respondents. Data were not available for 12 respondents.
*Based on survey question, *'Given the choice would you stay here or move somewhere else tomorrow?'*

At the most extreme interpretation, assuming that all those intending to leave within one year actually left, then approximately one in ten respondents were going to move out of their existing homes within a year. If around one in ten residents left their homes every year, this would give the schemes quite a high resident turnover.

Table 6.1 also shows that 52 per cent of all respondents were reporting that they were likely to continue to live in their current home for less than five years. Although the proportion who reported that they would stay for longer than this was nearly a third of all respondents (31 per cent), this again suggests a fairly high level of turnover (note also that 38 per cent of those respondents who said they would 'stay' were nevertheless planning to move within five years).

Almost two-thirds of LCHO residents intended to be in their current property for less than 5 years (61 per cent) with just 23 per cent expecting to stay longer. This may have been because this housing was seen as an 'affordable stepping stone' into the property market and therefore temporary by nature. Interestingly, social rented sector tenants had rather different views and 43 per cent reported they would live in their current home for at least 5 more years. While this was a more positive finding it may have also been related to their having more constrained housing choice than the other respondents. Twenty-six per cent of owner occupiers thought they would only be resident for another five years or more, as with the LCHO respondents, this suggested that these respondents were expecting to move on.

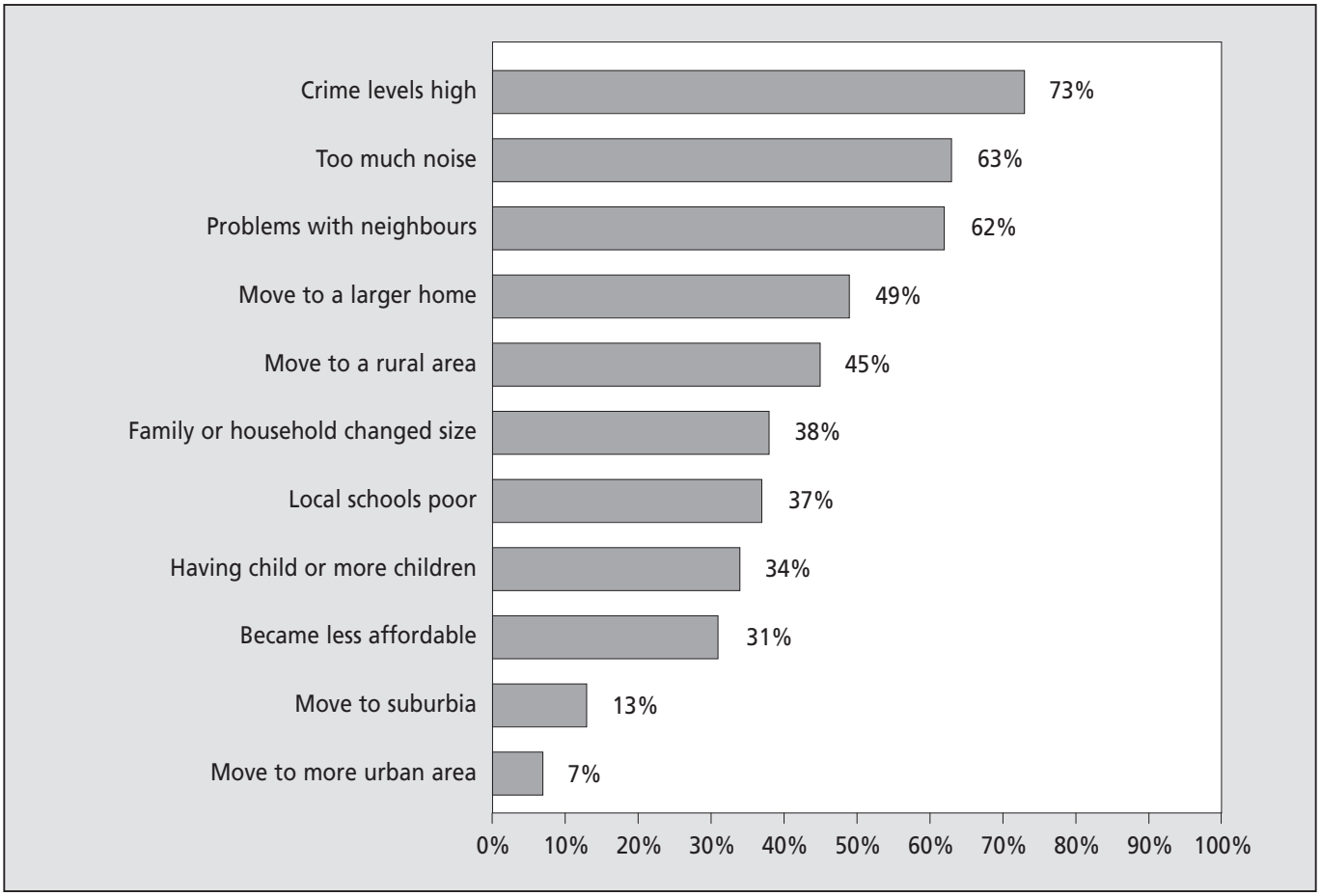
The reasons why households wanted to move are presented in Figure 6.1. As can be seen, the main reasons given were local crime levels, noise within the scheme and problems with neighbours. Just under one-third of households that wanted to move reported that their housing had become less affordable. In many respects these findings were unsurprising, given the results from the other parts of the research reported above. There were also other reasons, such as the addition of children, a move to a larger home or the wish to live in a more rural area.

In many respects, there were few differences between tenure groups in reasons for wishing to move, with all emphasising crime, noise and problems with neighbours as reasons. However, the LCHO respondents who wanted to move were more likely to report that their home had become 'less affordable' (43 per cent) than were owner occupiers (31 per cent) or social rented sector tenants (16 per cent).

The research asked all the survey respondents which factors would make them wish to move from their current home. When asked what *theoretically* might cause them to want to move, those respondents who reported wanting to stay ranked factors like high crime levels, neighbour disputes and noise, in an almost identical way to those who wanted to move. In other words, if someone who wanted to 'stay' started encountering the same factors as were causing someone else to want to leave, the research findings suggested that that person would then also want to leave.

It seemed to be the case that people who wanted to stay were not necessarily any more tolerant of the factors that made other people want to move. The difference appeared to be that they were not experiencing those factors, or at least not experiencing those factors to the same extent, as those who wanted to move.

Figure 6.1: Reasons for moving reported by percentage of respondents who reported they 'would move somewhere else tomorrow' given the choice

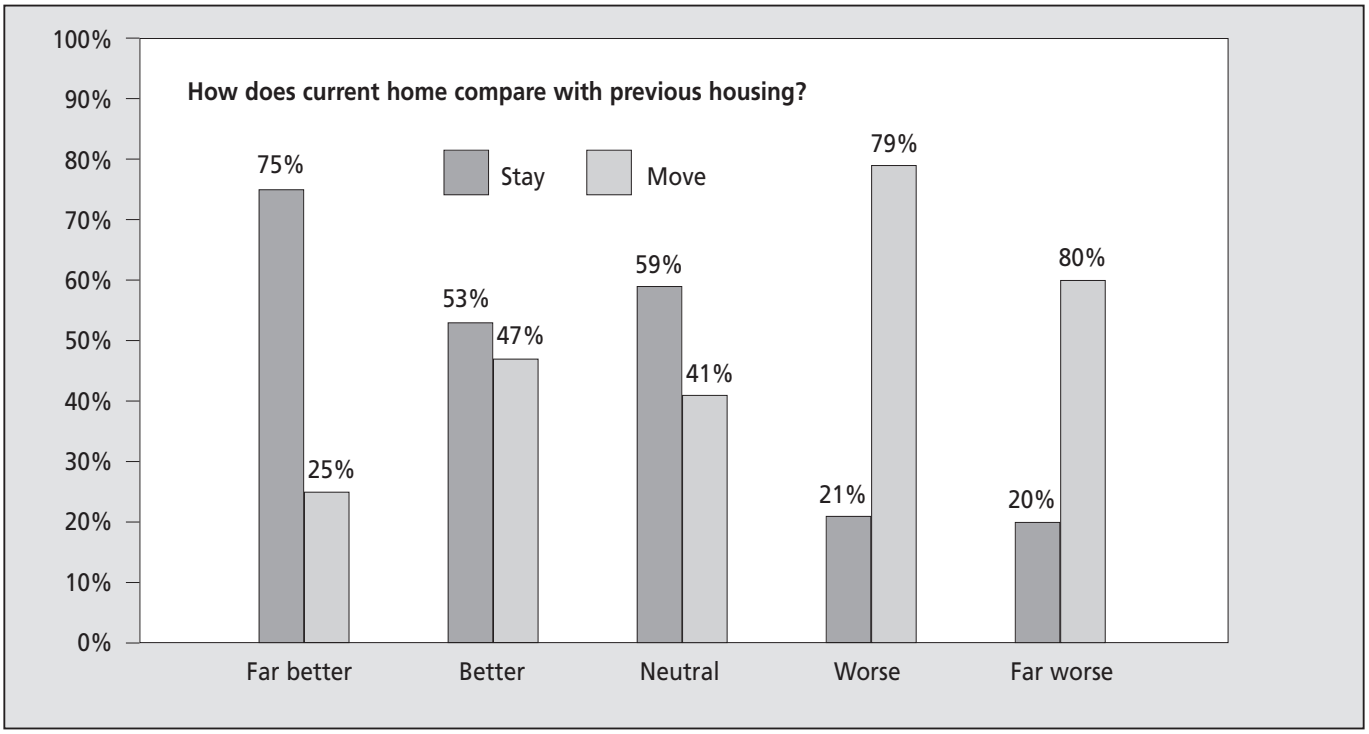


Source: Postal survey. Base: 90 respondents. Respondents could give more than one reason for wanting to move.

Households containing a child were somewhat more likely to express a wish to move (48 per cent) than those without a child (35 per cent). There was also what might be termed a 'London effect', in that one third of the Londoners wanted to move compared to 20 per cent of respondents living in other areas.

The research also showed that the comparison between respondents' current homes and their previous homes was very important in relation to whether or not they wanted to move. As is shown in Figure 6.2, respondents who thought their current home an improvement on where they last lived were the least likely to want to move. As would be expected, the reverse was also true, in that people who thought their last home was better than their current home were more likely to move. Almost all those who thought their last home had been better wanted to leave.

Figure 6.2: Whether respondents 'would move somewhere else tomorrow' given the choice by how their current home compared with their previous housing



Source: Postal survey. Base: 227 respondents. Data were missing in 13 cases.

Reasons for wanting to move

Crime and anti-social behaviour

The findings from the focus groups and interviews reinforced the findings from the survey shown in Figure 6.1. Crime and anti-social behaviour were often cited as a reason why a respondent wished to move from their current home.

> *...and also the anti-social behaviour is kind of sealing it...Just fed up with this city stuff you know...We were thinking of moving out after five years...but are now sort of talking about next year.* LCHO respondent.

If I could pick the flat up and put it somewhere else, I'd still be happy, but where it is...(crime, anti-social behaviour) and all of that, it's not the best opportunity. LCHO respondent.

Location

Sometimes it was general dislike of an area, rather than crime or another specific aspect that caused respondents to want to move:

While thinking about all this I'm looking forward to flat hunting in the spring...I've had enough of (local area) and it's desire to keep itself down at heel. I'll miss my space but I'm looking forward to not having to rely on the housing association and their various incompetence's [sic] *and not having to put up with general ignorance in my community.* (Diary extract), LCHO respondent.

Lack of personal exterior space

Living in an urban area without access to a private garden or outside space influenced some residents in wishing to move. The focus groups showed that in fact a large number of individuals wanted a garden and felt they would need to be out of the city in order to do get one:

Probably things like wanting a garden and wanting to move out of the city I guess more generally. Social rented sector tenant.

We think we're gonna move out. Partly because of him (baby) because we'd like to have a garden...certainly not in the city. LCHO respondent.

Changes to the household

For the respondents who took part in the focus groups, interviews and diary interviews, one of the most powerful factors influencing whether or not they moved was the same as for anyone else in any housing circumstances. If their household increased in size, either because they gained a partner or because they gained a child, or both, it would be expected to prompt a move.

I think most people tend to stay here and are quite happy being here until something quite large happens to them like they have lots of kids and need a bigger house... Social rented sector tenant.

This same approach was echoed by many respondents. One respondent encapsulated a wider point, which was that the schemes and the housing within them were seen by some of their residents as being *inflexible* spaces that could not be adapted to other uses. For these respondents, the schemes were seen as places that could not grow and adapt as the needs of their residents changed.

Communities and needs grow and change and maybe that needs to be built a little more into design structures...children have very different needs from young adults. You know they need gardens, they need safe places to play...you need more segregation in your own space. Social rented sector tenant.

Changes in circumstances

A change in employment could also, of course, result in a need to move. Again, this was something that could affect any household in any housing circumstances, rather than being particular to the respondents or the eight case studies.

> *Where we have a higher turnover it tends to be younger single people who are often going say to London for work, it's usually positive things isn't it that would make you move.* Social rented sector tenant.

Respondents' housing aspirations

Respondents were about asked their *aspirations* in addition to their actual *intentions* for their future housing. This provided an insight into where respondents would *rather* live, given the choice. The focus was on housing options that were, or that respondents expected to eventually become, realistic.

Quite a few people said they would like to remain in the same relative vicinity, just in what they usually termed 'a nicer area'. Many of the Londoners, said would like to live in a nicer part of London, although immediately afterwards they almost always exclaimed that they *"could never afford it"*. Some of the other residents expressed a desire to live in a 'middle class' area.

A few respondents talked wanting to live in an older home that has 'more character' than their present 'new build'. This showed again showed that while contemporary architecture and design were popular, the appeal was not universal.

Some LCHO respondents aspired to 'full' owner occupation rather than shared ownership. Though other respondents perceived financial risks and vulnerability associated with having a larger mortgage.

The assumed ideal of a detached home in suburbia or a rural area did not correspond with the reality of what all of the respondents wanted. Some respondents had chosen to live in the eight schemes because they were in urban areas. Some wanted to move *closer* to the centre of the cities that they were living in, so they could be within walking distance of all the services they would need. As one Londoner put it:

> *I'm not really that type of person that says I'd love to live in the country. To me it's all fields and no shops and restaurants.* LCHO respondent.

Summary

There was evidence that a quite high proportion of respondents wished to move (39 per cent) and that more than one half did not expect to stay in their current homes for five or more years when the study was conducted. The reasons why people

wanted to move varied. Perhaps the strongest reasons directly related to the schemes themselves were affordability issues and a lack of fit between their current housing and the changing composition of a respondent's household. The most often cited reasons for moving were not do to with the schemes themselves but with crime, anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes and many respondents expressed a wish to live in a 'better' area than the one in which their scheme was situated.

The often assumed ideal of a detached home in suburbia or a rural area only reflected the housing aspirations of some of the respondents. Many actually preferred to be in a city and this was why, for many, they chose to live in one of the eight case study schemes in the first place.

Chapter Seven
Policy recommendations and lessons for new developments

Introduction

This final chapter reviews the main lessons from the research and attempts to draw out the policy implications for the future development of higher density affordable/mixed tenure housing in urban areas. The chapter begins by reviewing the aspects of the eight case studies that were particularly successful. This is followed by a discussion of some of the lessons for possible improvement in the design and management of future schemes.

The successes of the schemes

Architecture and high density

It was clearly the case that innovative architecture had proven attractive to many residents. One of the particular successes of the case study schemes was that many respondents had the sense that they were not living in 'high density' housing. A sense of space and light both within individual flats and houses and more generally within the schemes was often spoken about by respondents. Given the negative connotations associated with media and popular images of 'high density housing' this aspect of the eight case studies must be viewed as a considerable success. It was anticipated that the number of comments around density would be high, but in fact very few residents spoke of the density of their particular development in negative terms.

Some respondents spoke about the aesthetic appeal of the architecture and external design of the schemes in which they lived.

Internal design

The level of natural light within flats, houses and apartments was another aspect of the design within the case studies that was commonly praised by the respondents. As well as producing a pleasing ambience within their homes, the levels of sunlight were also viewed positively as helping, alongside modern insulation, in the provision of highly energy efficient heating. The 'open plan' design of their homes, generally involving the provision of a combined living and kitchen area, also gave some respondents a greater 'sense of space' within their homes than they had had in their previous accommodation.

Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) opportunity

For some respondents who had entered into LHCO arrangements, the chance to join the property ladder was a major attraction and benefit of where they lived. This was viewed very positively indeed by those respondents who had not had the chance to own property before.

Respondents in LCHO arrangements also sometimes spoke of having access to a much higher standard of housing than would otherwise be available to them with the budget they had available. Some other respondents also talked about the high standard of their housing compared to the other alternatives that were accessible to them. Many respondents reported being pleased with the 'standard of the finish' of their housing.

Location

The location of the schemes was viewed positively by some respondents. Access to local amenities, public transport termini and other facilities was viewed as being a particular advantage of where they lived by respondents. For some respondents, as noted in the preceding chapter, the urban location of schemes was a major part of their attraction. For these respondents the presumed 'ideal' of detached housing in a suburban or rural area was not what they wanted in a home.

Areas where the schemes were less successful

Development standing 'out' of local community

One of the key objectives of encouraging the development of higher density affordable and mixed tenure housing is to promote greater degree of socio-economic 'mix' within some polarised urban areas. The findings of this research did not suggest that the schemes were interacting with the surrounding neighbourhoods in a positive way.

A key observation from the fieldwork was the finding that many respondents felt 'under siege' from the surrounding neighbourhood which was seen by many as a source of crime and anti-social behaviour. Sometimes respondents reported an 'encroachment' into their scheme by young people from surrounding estates, who were again associated with low level anti-social behaviour, 'threatening' activities, vandalism and graffiti.

Many respondents reported a sense of separation between their housing scheme and the surrounding community. These new developments had often been built in long established residential areas that were characterised by socio-economic deprivation. Schemes could seem almost 'alien' within the neighbourhoods in which they were situated. This was viewed by some respondents as contributing to the 'attraction' of their schemes to groups of young people.

Crime

Within their homes, respondents generally felt secure, but this sense of security could dissipate quite quickly as they moved away from their front door. In some cases, respondents felt that the scheme itself was less safe than their homes, in other cases the scheme and their homes felt relatively safe compared to the surrounding neighbourhoods. Fear of crime and distress caused by experiencing anti-social behaviour were commonplace.

Affordability

There were questions about how affordable some of the housing was. In some cases, social rented sector tenants reported difficulties in meeting their housing costs, but the main complaints about finding housing costs difficult to meet came from LCHO respondents. Service charges were found to be high for LCHO respondents and were seen as excessive by some of those respondents. Those who had bought market value owner occupied property reported the least problems in relation to affordability.

LCHO issues

The LCHO respondents often reported the most extreme reactions to where they lived of all those participating in the fieldwork. While they could be among the most positive, particularly in respect of having a chance to get on the property ladder, they could also feel very frustrated by various aspects of where they lived. Sometimes LCHO respondents reported a mix of strong positive and negative emotional responses to where they lived.

LCHO respondents often found the tenure mix within some of the schemes problematic. This could be a particular issue when they were separated off from market value owner occupiers and/or grouped together with social rented sector tenants. The reactions to these situations were complex and individual, but they often centred on a sense that the 'investment' (both financial and emotional) that they had made in their home was less fulfilling than they had hoped it would be. This was because they felt their housing and the environment in which it was situated was less than desirable. There could be strong feelings of resentment towards housing associations in those cases where LCHO respondents did not feel they had been made properly aware of what the tenure mix would be.

Management and maintenance

Housing management and estate maintenance were frequently reported by respondents as unsatisfactory. This was exacerbated further by what was often perceived as excessively high service charges. Frequently, residents felt that the level of service offered did not warrant these high costs. These findings are similar to those of Bailey *et al.* (2006) who highlighted the importance of management when creating successful mixed communities.

Tenure mix

This was part of a wider problem in relation to tenure mix within the schemes. Both owner occupiers and LCHO respondents quite often reported feeling that their homes were made less attractive and the scheme was made a less desirable place to live because of the presence of social rented sector tenants. These feelings were not really substantiated with any form of proof, but the conviction that social rented sector tenants were 'a problem' was often strongly held by these respondents.

Conversely, social rented sector tenants and some LCHO respondents feel stigmatised or looked down upon by owner occupiers on the same site. This could be a particular issue within those schemes where LCHO and/or social rented accommodation was physically separate from the market value housing, for example by being in a separate block or area.

Community

Community spirit tended to be lacking from the eight case studies. In part, this was a result of the tensions between tenure groups that existed in mixed tenure schemes. However, there was also evidence that both the opportunities and facilities to engage in communal activities were absent from some of the schemes.

Future intentions

One final point related to the degree of turnover in the schemes. There was some evidence that people expected to move on from their existing homes for reasons that would be found among people in any housing setting, such as change of job or a change in household composition. For a few respondents, the need to move when they had a child or their household composition changed in some other way reflected what they saw as a degree of inflexibility in the design of their housing.

Owner occupiers and LCHO respondents were more likely to anticipate moving in less than five years than social rented sector tenants, suggesting that the former two groups quite often viewed their current housing as a 'stepping stone'.

Among the respondents who did want to move, factors such as local crime levels, anti-social behaviour and disputes with neighbours were more commonly cited as prompting a wish to move than issues like affordability or design. Thus, it was often the environment in which the eight case study schemes were situated, rather than the schemes themselves that led people to want to move. Respondents fairly frequently stated that housing would be much improved if it were situated in a different area.

Lessons for the future

This study suggests that the objectives of *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable* (CLG, 2007) in terms of greener well-designed, good quality homes

with increased delivery of affordable housing in mixed communities are only achievable if close attention is paid to:

- the management of such developments;
- the actual extent of 'affordability' for LCHO residents; and
- the placement of the affordable properties within the scheme.

Finally, in order to promote a greater degree of socio-economic mix, the development has to fit within the surrounding neighbourhood and community in order to avoid the polarisation identified in this research.

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