



Designing and experiencing sensory  
urban environments: An intensive case  
study of Grand Union Village in West  
London

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY

**DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I Ashley Nye hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated and referenced. All drawings in this thesis are my own, and where they have been reproduced from other sources this is acknowledged.

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**THESIS ABSTRACT**

Investigating the role of the urban village within ‘neo-traditional’ urbanism, existing studies focus on flagship projects such as Poundbury. By contrast, this thesis explores the under-researched everyday and mainstream developments undertaken by volume house builders. These developments are not associated with a philanthropic disregard for profit, nor are they showcases for urban theories such as the urban village movement.

Through an intensive investigation of one urban village: Grand Union Village (GUV) in Ealing, West London this thesis tracks the development process from conception in 1999 to completion in 2011. It maps the compromises made along the journey resulting from conflicting relationships within the developer, volume house builder Taylor Woodrow. Utilising research drawn from unprecedented access to the development team and original Vision documents, the thesis examines the ‘macro-environmental’ elements of the Grand Union Vision, which were guided by urban village principles. The ‘micro-environment’ is examined through the design details, and textures of the built environment which informed the way a sense of place and experience were scripted into GUV. Furthermore, experiential qualities of GUV are explored through walking interviews considering the ‘after-life’ of the Village and the relationship between design and the lived reality of place.

To conclude, this thesis demonstrates how the conflict between the drive for profit and desire to implement urban village principles could not be reconciled at GUV resulting in a development that is more akin to a large housing estate than an urban village. Whilst the sensory and experiential design details of GUV set it apart from normal suburban housing, such details are superficial and will diminish over time. Furthermore, within a suburban setting, the ambiguities of theorising the urban and the village prove problematic, and residents transgress and resist key urban village elements. As such wider attitudes towards suburban urban village developments need to change to allow true urban villages to be delivered.

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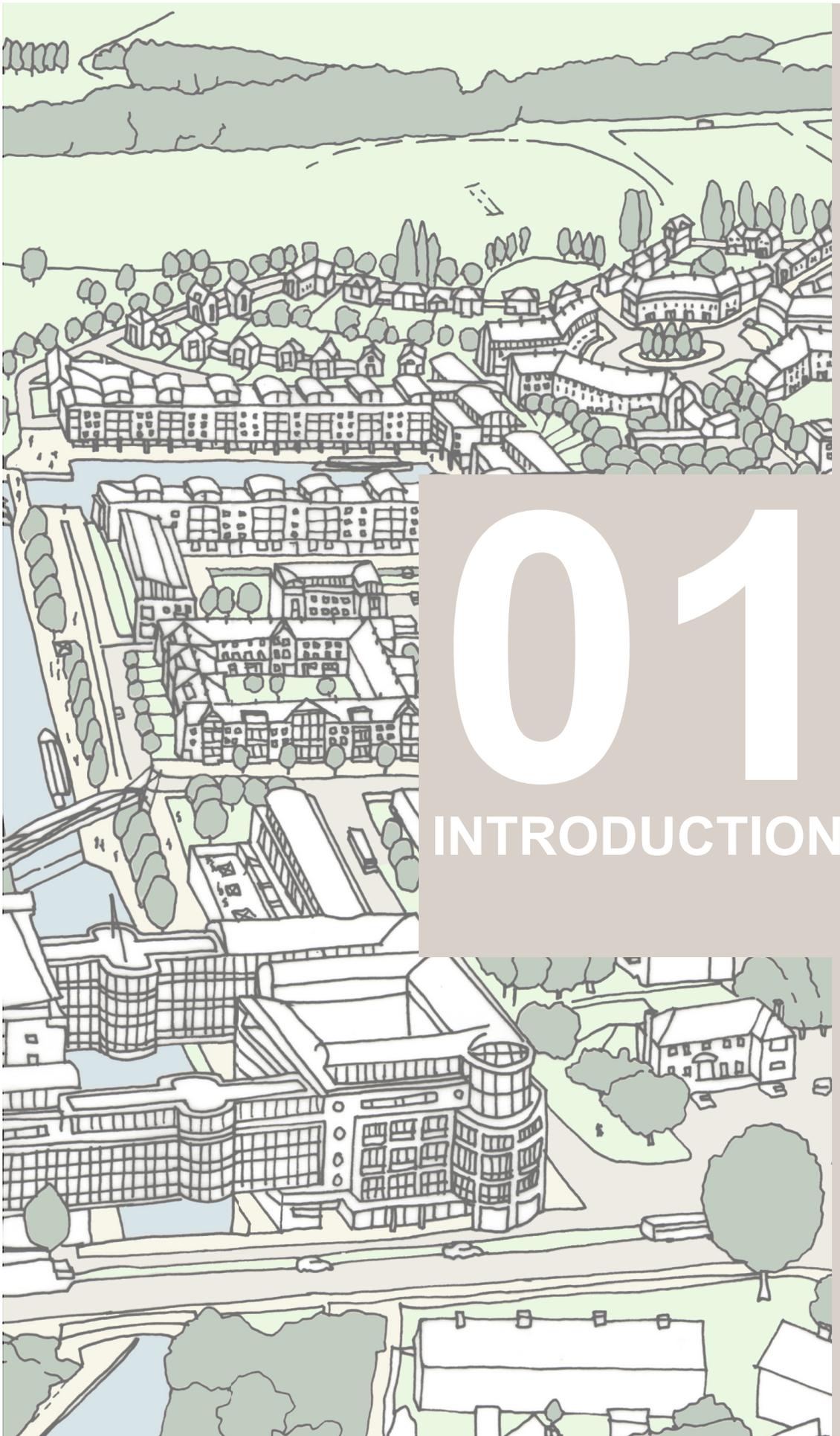
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## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

BW	British Waterways
CABE	Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment
CDT	Community Development Trust
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions
DfT	Department for Transport
DOE	Department of Environment
GMV	Greenwich Millennium Village
GUV	Grand Union Village
HZ	Home Zone
JTP	John Thompson and Partners
LBE	London Borough of Ealing
LBH	London Borough of Hillingdon
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCHA	Paddington Churches Housing Association
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PFBE	Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
TW	Taylor Woodrow
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
UTF	Urban Task Force
UV	Urban Village
UVG	Urban Village Group
UWP	Urban White Paper



# 01

## INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 GUV: an initial encounter

*I stand on the junction of Broadmead Road and Taywood Road looking east towards Grand Union Village (hereafter GUV). In front of me is a crescent block of flats, broken at the centre by a road which forms the entrance to the development. The blocks of flats are three-storeys high, a mixture of brown bricks, white render and clad in cedar boards. Large windows dominate the façade of the buildings that greet me as I slowly begin to walk into the Village. I hear flags rustling in the wind to my left and right, hoisted to promote the development and entice people to enter Taywood Road, and on into the sales suite. To my right is a large 10-foot tall entrance board with the words “GUV, Refreshing West London” in large letters across the top. Below this ‘welcome’ has been written in five languages, a result of the large Asian diaspora located in this area of West London.*

*I walk along the grey tarmac path passing small green shrubs on both sides of the road which soften the aesthetics of the two entrance blocks, and make the Village more inviting. A large silver car drives past and I watch as it turns left into the one-way system and quickly out of sight. Underfoot I can feel the coarse tarmac that has been laid, temporarily, to provide a crossing for those in wheelchairs and with prams. The raised tactile bumps push upwards on the bottom of my trainers. I hear talking from one of the balconies and look upwards to the third floor where a young white male is standing, talking on his mobile phone whilst leaning against the dark grey metal railings.*

*Looking down I notice three cars parked, two wheels of each car are on the path and I have to divert my course to walk round them. Another car drives past, and in spite of the low 10mph speed limits, this one is travelling at a greater speed and has to break heavily as it turns right leading into Ballinger Way. Emblazoned on top of the road sign is the London Borough of Ealing (LBE) logo visible from where I stand at the entrance to the central lozenge space which is the centre of the development. Having moved from the narrow entrance, the space opens up in front of me, compelling me to move forward to the green island at the centre of the road.*

*As I walk forward the stench of rubbish briefly fills the air. To my left is a small storage area containing two large silver metallic bins both are full and slightly ajar. I cross the road quickly and stand at the end of the central lozenge looking eastwards towards the Grand Union Canal. Despite the canal not being visible from where I am stood, the design of the Village leads you forward towards the large blocks of flats and canal beyond, about 100m in front of me. The buildings are vast in size, 7-storeys in height at their largest point stepping down to 5-storeys at the edges which are barely visible behind the row of housing that lines the central lozenge on both sides. The buildings are broken at the centre by a pathway which leads to Engineers Wharf, especially built for the Village. The materials of the blocks and houses are identical to the flats I encountered at the entrance to the development, brown brickwork and white painted render. The largest blocks however have a wing-like detailing to them, which is only for aesthetic experience.*

*I sit for a moment on one of three large curved grey granite benches. The smooth tops of the benches contrast with their coarse and rough textured sides. I still hear the sound of cars moving along Broadmead Road, which punctuates the quietness and tranquillity of the Village at regular intervals. Behind me is the sales centre for the development, a small one-storey building with GUV in large silver letters on the front. Inside I see a white couple, 30 years old walking slowly around and stopping at the giant model of the development in the centre of the room. My attention is diverted by the sound of voices. As I turn back towards the large buildings to my right I see two Asian women walking towards me, dressed in vibrantly coloured saris. I allow them to pass before standing and walk east through the Village.*

*Either side of me are terraces of two-storey brown brick housing, each with a large balcony on the upper floor. The grey metal railings that surround the French windows contrast against the brown brickwork. Once again the sound of flags whistling in the wind fills my ears, because they line this part of the development. The vibrant pinks and deep greens of the planting make this a very engaging space to walk through. It is well maintained, with no rubbish in the flower beds and the plants have been kept in perfect condition. I reach the tarmac path at the centre of the green space and to my right the development opens up once more as the housing stops and is replaced by a car park and a three-storey building. On the ground floor of this building is a small Costcutter store which occupies the corner retail unit, adjacent to a halal butchers and dry cleaners. I leave the path, and before I reach the small tarmac road I can feel the tactile granite setts beneath my feet, heightening the underfoot experience.*

*I soon reach the other side of the road and walk 15 metres east to the canal basin entrance. The path changes from dark grey tarmac to a white paving slab laid perfectly and covering the entire marina. For the first time I catch a glimpse of the canal, the dark, murky, water sitting in stark contrast to the white paving that surrounds it. The basin soon disappears behind the 'Blue Green' restaurant that I am now standing in front of. As I stand looking towards the top of the building, a loud cheer rings out and reverberates around the central lozenge. I look right and see that the Montessori nursery children have moved outside and are playing on their small play area 10 metres from where I am stood, encased on all sides by a tall fence.*

*Moving east and walking down the steps into the canal basin, I soon reach the bottom of the white steps, and before me the canal basin opens out. The white paving has small flecks of dark blue glass mixed into it which occasionally catches the light as you walk along. All of the paving slabs are immaculately maintained, and look brand new despite being laid a couple of years before. The basin is an impressive sight, the colourful canal boats line both sides of the water and beyond this a boat slowly motors its way up the Grand Union Canal. I turn right and walk 10 metres before sitting on one of the granite benches looking out over the canal basin and reflecting on the space I have walked through. My first encounter with GUV.*

*(Personal diary observation of first visit to GUV, 11.30am, Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008)*

### *1.1.1 The process of designing and experiencing GUV*

In 1999 developer Taylor Woodrow (TW) decided that the Northolt site they had occupied since 1942 for their headquarters was no longer viable for a contemporary volume house builder. Changes in the construction industry meant that sites as large as their own (21.78 hectares) were no longer required. Much of the site was derelict, a wasteland detached from everything that surrounded it. In its heyday, the site had been home to heavy industry for over 100 years. TW's offices spanned the Grand Union Canal on the northeast corner of the site. To the south of the site were their private social and sporting facilities including playing fields. These facilities were only intended for the use of TW employees that had a profound impact on the ways people experienced the site. The main bulk of manufacturing was done at the centre of the site, which was the location of a pre cast concrete yard, numerous research and design buildings and facilities for the storage and maintenance of the TW fleet of cars and machinery.

Prior to the late 1990s the site supported 1400 jobs in a thriving community, with a range of employment opportunities that enhanced the local area. However, decentralisation of TW in the 1990s resulted in the relocation of their head offices to the Midlands and the pre cast concrete yard, research centre and maintenance yards were also relocated. By 1999 employment had fallen to less than 800, and TW decided to turn this industrial brownfield site into an urban village (UV).

This thesis is about developing a comprehensive understanding of GUV, situated in a critical architectural geographic approach to research as advocated by Loretta Lees, Mark Llewellyn and others. As such it moves beyond representational forms of research to consider the lived experience of place, embodied and sensory understandings, and the materiality of the Village. Unlike existing research, it focuses on the ways in which the UV concept is lived and experienced from the perspective of GUV residents. The empirical chapters for this research present a narrative of residents' daily rhythms and practices.

The thesis however does more than this and is concerned with the full process of the UV concept. It examines how UV and developer rhetoric changes through the process of making an UV. Furthermore it is about the reality of the UV concept as opposed to textual plans and documents. As such the whole process and story of development is told from initial designation of the site through to the lived reality and finished product. The thesis tells the story of the development process that occurred post 1999 from the conceptualisation of GUV to the lived experience of the development in 2011, as shown in figures 1.1 and 1.2. This journey begins by detailing the research questions.



Figure 1.1 Aerial photograph of the TW site in the mid 1990s detailing the main industrial elements on the site (TW photograph)



Figure 1.2 Aerial sketch showing the view northwards of GUV in 2011 (Author's drawing)

## 1.2 Research questions

The principle research question for this thesis is:

**How do the geographies of UVs move from vision to reality in ordinary developments?**

This thesis explores the mundane and everyday geographies of the UV concept. Existing research into the UV model focuses on flagship developments such as Poundbury designed

as showcases for neo-traditional urbanism. This thesis however examines the development process from vision to the built product<sup>1</sup>. In doing so it examines the lived reality of a vision and residents' sensory engagements with place.

Flagship projects show us little about the UV model, and it is more important to identify and examine everyday developments where the pressures of development and profit are greater. This raises questions such as; it is possible to implement UV ideals in everyday developments? How does theory move from concept to reality? What compromises are made during this journey? To achieve this four further research questions investigate each stage of the development process and lived experience of the UV.

### **How is the UV concept utilised by volume house builders in visions for new developments on a macro and micro level of place building?**

The ways in which the UV model informs development on a village wide scale as well as the micro-geographies of place are considered. On a macro level the UV concept alludes to elements such as links to the local area, public infrastructure and the ideal of community. On a micro level it is concerned with the lived experience of place such as materiality, location of play areas and public spaces. This prompts further questions which investigate how place is developed through different scales.

### **To what extent can the built environment of UVs shape peoples' experiences of place and behaviour?**

Examining the social and cultural claims made by the UV movement, this question feeds into wider attitudes towards the built environment and the lived experience of place. For example, the UV model attempts to reduce car use and challenges wider attitudes towards the car and public transport. In UV rhetoric, good urban design is seen as having the ability to shape peoples' behaviour, and the design of the streetscape is central to this through the creation of residential zones which are proximate to shops and services. This question therefore, addresses the claims put forward by the UV model that it is possible to build community, and that experiences of the built environment can be affected by micro-level engagements.

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<sup>1</sup> Within the thesis "Vision" is defined as the Grand Union Vision, whilst "vision" is a reference to the concept and process. The same is true of the capitalisation of "Village" meaning Grand Union Village, as opposed to "village".

## **How do sensory understandings and interactions with the built environment shape peoples' lived experience of place?**

Challenging the dominance of ocular-centric research into experiences of the built environment, this question inverts existing research that prioritises vision over other sensory understandings of place. In doing so it contests the view proposed by Hesselgren that “until now we have dealt with visual perceptions because these are the most important ones in...discussions of man’s perception of his man-made environment” (Hesselgren, 1975:59). Instead this question, like recent academic work (Edensor, 2005; 2007; Adams et al, 2007) champions other senses that are deemed as having “less importance” by Hesselgren (Hesselgren, 1975:59).

Research focusing on a full range of sensory interactions with place, especially in regards to the experience of UVs is essential because the UV model makes distinct claims about the meaningful engagements residents’ have with place. This research therefore engages with olfactory, tactile, aural and visual experiences of place, and in doing so explores the lived reality of an UV, demonstrating how sensory experiences are affected by the materiality of place. Furthermore it investigates how experiences of the built environment are bound up in embodied and sensory interactions from the perspective of the user. New developments are often criticised for their lack of sensory experience which leads to cursory experiences of the built environment (Edensor, 2007). Therefore this research uses ‘mobile methodologies’ to delve into residents’ sensory interactions with GUV and greater understand the relationship between people and place (Evans, 2008).

## **Are the core claims of UVs attainable by volume house builders?**

The UV concept values the incorporation of a mix of uses, public participation and longer-term profit gain for the developer. These values place additional costs on a housing development that must be met by the developer. It is therefore questioned whether the UV model is sustainable outside flagship projects where the need for profit becomes greater. Addressing this question the economics of everyday UVs are investigated to demonstrate how design and development is constrained by profit.

Volume house builders have a commitment to their shareholders to deliver the greatest amount of profit from a development. Conversely they also have a requirement to act responsibly and these actions are published in annual corporate social responsibility reports. Therefore the balance between profit and responsible development is investigated. According to the Urban Village Group (UVG), early attempts to create neighbourhoods were “led by a number of prominent and familiar philanthropists and urban thinkers, [who] sought to create immediate, idealized and enduring societies” (Aldous, 1992:3). This research question therefore examines

whether it is possible to build everyday UVs without the philanthropic disregard for profit found in early utopian developments or contemporary flagship developments.

### 1.3 Chapter structure

The seven further chapters of this thesis are outlined below:

*Chapter 2* establishes the key principles of the UV movement and the development of this rhetoric. It offers a journey through the concept of the UV from the development of Garden Cities in the 1900s through to the high point of the UVG in 1999. Furthermore it shows how UV ideals continue to shape urban planning in 2011.

*Chapter 3* contextualises the thesis focusing on ways of gaining knowledge about the city as more than a text and the need to consider the experiential, performative and embodied ways of thinking about the built environment. A critical examination of existing theoretical research of the city argues that urban geographers need to move towards a ‘critical architectural geography’. From this perspective the city becomes a space that is experienced, practiced and performed. This thesis is about how a vision is operationalised, and the chapter draws on ways of thinking about this from the perspective of material, sensory and experiential geographies of academic research.

This in turn feeds into the ways in which these themes are developed within a research framework. The second part of this chapter therefore demonstrates how the turn towards mobilities and movement within geography led to the emergence of walking interviews which seek to retain the rich narratives of participants and the ‘placed’ element of their experiences. Furthermore it explores the implementation of this method and how coding subsequent transcripts takes on new forms of geo-coding. In addition to walking interviews the other methods used in this thesis, such as ethnographic diaries and document analysis of the reports and documents related to the development of UVs, are examined.

*Chapter 4* presents the first of four empirical chapters which use the case study of GUV to demonstrate the development process, from initial designation of the site through to the completion of development, to consider the lived experience of place. The data for these empirical chapters emerged from unprecedented access to all stakeholders in the design team and residents. Specifically, this chapter considers the process through which a Grand Union Vision was developed for the site. It commences with an overview of the history of the site and the impetus for redevelopment and subsequently examines how the developers, TW proposed the use of the UV concept for GUV. Furthermore it observes the role that the UV played in initial negotiations between TW and the LBE. Following this it investigates how the development was envisioned and the evolution of the Grand Union Vision from 1999 to

2011. These changes, it will be shown, were primarily the result of shifts in national planning policy and the economics of the site.

The ‘macro-environmental’ details of the Vision and the ways that it reflected UV rhetoric will also be analysed in this chapter. It details the process of community consultation, the application of the mixed-use concept, the role of movement, and attempts to decrease car use. Running throughout this section is a narrative of design that attempts to re-engineer society and place. The chapter concludes with an exploration of how the process of value engineering could be regarded as a degradation of the Vision for GUV.

*Chapter 5* explores the micro-environmental elements of design. The aim of this chapter is not to consider the lived experience of place but rather how a sense of place and attachment to place were incorporated into the detailed design of GUV. As its point of departure the chapter utilises the extensive research conducted with the design team and their perspectives about placemaking and experiences of place.

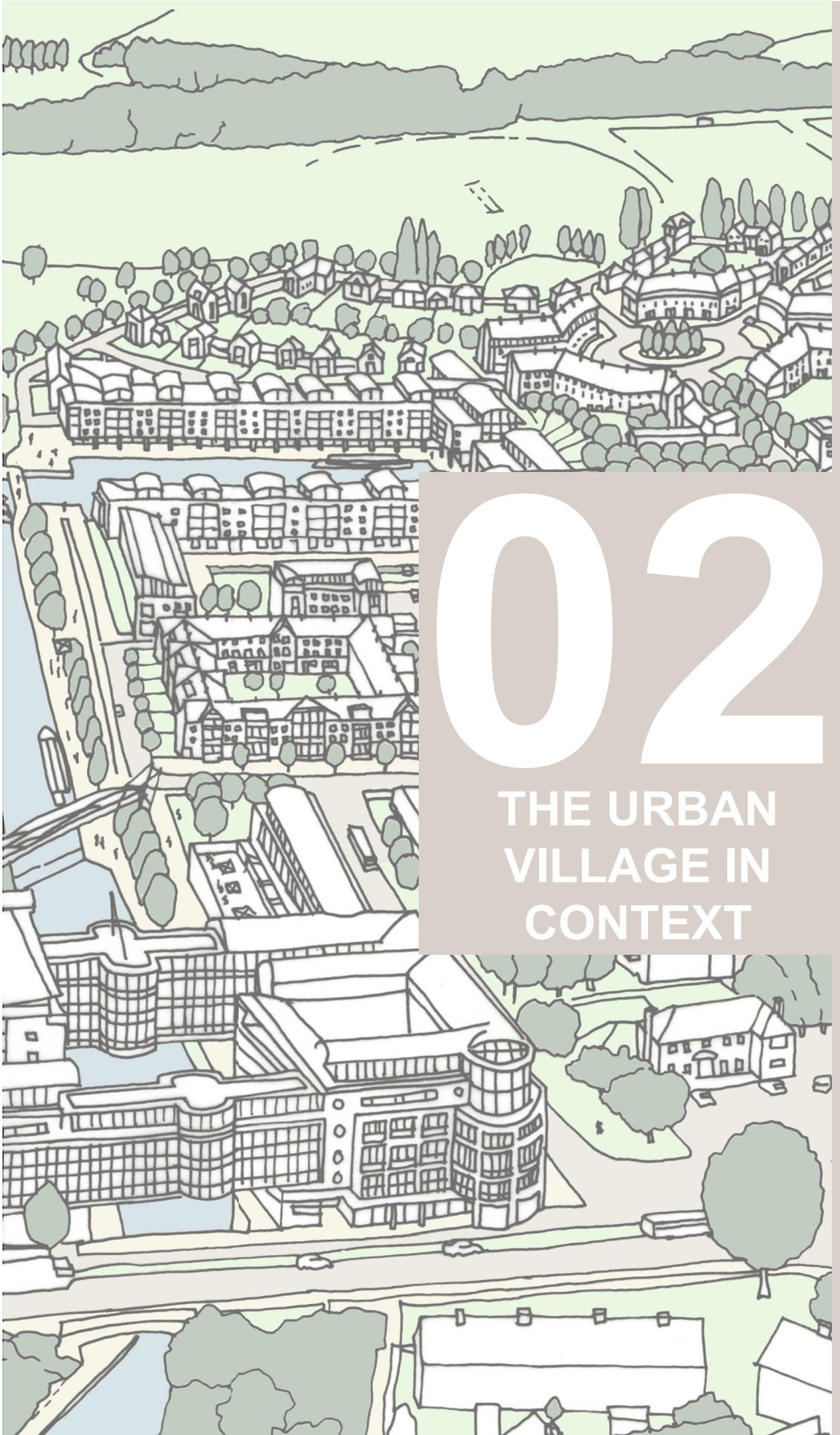
The chapter explores the sense of place articulated by the designers and how this notion of GUV as a place is based on defining the surrounding urban fabric as placeless. It details the use of an informal design code developed by landscape architects Allen Pyke in August 2000 which dictated the creation of character areas within the Village. These character areas sought to generate a sense of place through the purpose-built canal basin, designed to be the ‘heart’ of the Village, and defining GUV as a ‘destination’. Finally the impact of materials on the relationship between articulations of place and experience by designers are analysed. It emphasises that the materials used in GUV played a key part in the design team’s attempts to generate a sense of place and affective experiences of the built environment by using materials unique in colour and tactile experience for different parts of the Village.

*Chapter 6* analyses the lived experience of place from the perspective of residents living in the Village. It presents three walking interviews undertaken with a canal boat resident, a private ownership resident, and a shared tenancy resident offering a broad spectrum of opinions and experiences. The interviews presented in this chapter give a sense of residents’ use of place and how they interact and experience these places. Each interview focuses on one part of the Village, yet speaks to broader issues in the design and experiences of the Vision. The focus of this chapter is on the detailed design of place and the micro-geographies of GUV and demonstrates how residents experience design and shape materialities through their use of the built environment.

*Chapter 7* develops the themes presented in chapter 6 focusing on the ways in which GUV residents interact with the design decisions made during the planning process. At its core are ideals related to experiences of the built environment including the everyday practices and

routines of people that dwell within GUV and how these rhythms of experience relate to the Vision and generate a sense of place and community. In analysing lived experience, the chapter also emphasises the temporal nature of interactions with the environment, influenced by the time of day and seasonal variations. It demonstrates how some residents transgress these patterns of use and wider experiences of GUV. Furthermore the politics of race within GUV and how this fits within a framework of multiculturalism within West London are explored. Finally residents' sensory understandings of place are analysed demonstrating how they interact with the built environment. The chapter illustrates that GUV was designed with a limited spectrum of sensory experience which heightens the sensory impact of noises, sounds and smells particularly within the canal basin.

*Chapter 8* concludes the thesis presenting the main contributions made, particularly how UV principles are unobtainable to volume house builders who operate outside of philanthropic endeavours and flagship projects. Such challenges place pressure upon initial masterplans that result in the vision being value engineered down. Furthermore the future of GUV is situated within wider debates about the future of the UV concept. It answers questions about whether the sensory and experiential elements in the design of GUV set it apart from normal suburban housing or whether these are superficial and will diminish over time. It ascertains whether UVs are good for the planning system and how they are bound up in the ambiguities of theorising the urban and the village, and what each of these elements brings to the development process. Finally, it concludes with a consideration of the context of UVs, particularly in West London, paying attention to the role of race and community as well as thinking about how GUV fits into wider systems of behaviour such as car use.



# 02

## THE URBAN VILLAGE IN CONTEXT

## Introduction

In 1989 at the request of Prince Charles, the UVG was formed consisting of architects, planners, and developers who were reacting against the perceived shortcomings of urban planning and the placeless urban environments that had been created over the preceding forty years (Aldous, 1992). Using a term made popular by Hebert Gans' in his book *The Urban Villagers: Group and class in the life of Italian-Americans*, the UVG published a series of short reports and books during the early and mid 1990s that detailed their vision for a new city life (Gans, 1982 Aldous, 1992, 1995; Neal, 2003). Developing case studies of existing, and primarily historic towns such as Edinburgh and Clerkenwell, the UVG report calls for the creation of “neighbourhoods that will be popular, productive and beautiful places to live both now and for generations to come” (Aldous, 1992:14).

This chapter examines the evolution of UV ideals and charts their development. This began in the 1800s by early exponents of urban and rural living such as Ebenezer Howard and continues through to the high point of the theory in the late 1990s, and the impact it has on contemporary urban planning.

### 2.1 The evolution of the UV

This first part of this section outlines the key planning movements that inform the ideals behind the UV concept, rather than individual thinkers, such as Jane Jacobs and Kevin Lynch, whose work is used by the UVG. Such ideas are developed throughout the thesis. Rather, this section considers key planning movements that the UVG consider in their utopian aspirations for city life. Foremost amongst these are Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities, however British New Towns are also considered. The focus on these movements is because they emerge during key points in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the planning movement shifted to consider new ways of housing the British population particularly through calls to community which “was used both explicitly and implicitly to criticise contemporary society” (Gilbert, 1992:32). Garden Cities emerged in the context of rapid industrialisation of cities, New Towns emerged in the context of post-war rebuilding, and the UV was born of social unrest in British cities and placeless suburban growth. Each of these movements proposed models for utopian growth and redevelopment of ways of living, yet each had key principles that remained similar to those which first emerged in Howard's Garden Cities.

#### 2.1.1 *The history of UV principles*

The conceptual ideas raised under the guise of neo-traditional planning are not new, but have their roots in the development of planning theory over the past 110 years. The ideal of the UV emerged from a long tradition of utopian town planning dating back to the model

settlements developed by urban philanthropists in the 1800s. As Mike Biddulph argues, UV principles adopted by the UVG in the mid 1990s “owe a significant debt to established principles of urban design” (Biddulph, 2000:66). The UV movement can therefore be seen as the latest model that seeks to create a utopian experience of city life by combating the perceived ills of existing built form. Echoing Ebenezer Howard’s disdain for 19<sup>th</sup> century city life, early UVG rhetoric argued that:

“The manufacturing and heavy industry base, upon which many of our cities originally grew, began to rapidly contract. The commercial heart of many centres dissolved as shops and offices increasingly chose to relocate to out-of-town retail and business parks, whilst vast housing estates, built just a decade or two earlier, began an intense and painful process of social, economic and physical disintegration”.

(Neal, 2003:1)

In *Urban Villages and the Making of Communities*, Peter Neal describes how Garden Cities have been a key influence on the UVG. Howard’s ideas became prominent with the publication of *Garden Cities of To-morrow* in 1902 (Howard, 1902). This work emerged in the context of 1890s pioneering philanthropic industrial villages such as William Hesketh Lever’s Port Sunlight, and George Cadbury’s Bournville. Howard’s ideas feed into such developments, which advocated a return to rural living, showcased in the “Back to the Land” movement which created 25 utopian communities in the late 1800s (Hall, 1998).

Howard’s ideas were bound up in the creation of communities and relied on rich land owners to engage in philanthropic work. Foremost amongst his ideas, was a third way of living, not of the town or the country, but a combination of both. This notion of the ‘three magnets’ was based on the fact that the “city had economic and social opportunity but overcrowded housing and an appalling physical environment. The countryside offered open fields and fresh air, but there were all-too-few jobs and very little social life” (Hall, 1998:17). Howard’s solution to this was to combine the two elements to create town-country living in which “all the advantages of the most active and energetic town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination” (Howard, 1898:7). Such ideas resonate with UV attempts to combine the urban and the village, although in contrast to Howard’s Garden Cities, UVs place a greater emphasis on city locations through brownfield developments.

Each of Howard’s Garden Cities was to be 405 hectares in size with a population of 32,000 people. Measuring  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile in radius, each city was to be high density living with 235 people per hectare. The Cities were to be surrounded by greenbelt yet would also be mixed-use, providing jobs for the population and leisure activities. Furthermore, they would fall under communal ownership (Howard, 1902). To facilitate the development of Garden Cities, Howard established the Garden City Company, which was a mix of urbanists and planners

including Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker who worked as the architects for Letchworth Garden City. The board also comprised of philanthropic businessmen such as Edward Cadbury, Franklin Thomasson (a cotton spinner), and Thomas Purvis Ritzema (newspaper proprietor) (Hall, 1998).

Such a group was established in the 1990s to promote the UV concept. The UVG consisted of Trevor Osborne (property developer), Leon Krier (architect), Martin Lang (volume developer), Tim Melville-Ross (banker), and Colin Amery (architectural consultant) amongst others. The UV concept relies heavily on the Garden City ideal and:

“The astonishing thing about Howard’s plan is how faithfully it follows the precepts of good planning a century later; this is walking-scale settlement, within which no one needs a car to go anywhere, the densities are high by modern standards thus economising on land; and yet the entire settlement is suffused by open space both within and outside”.

(Hall, 1998:23)

UV ideas can therefore be traced back to the influence of Howard’s Garden City, which is also true of the early New Towns developed in Britain. As with Garden Cities, and unlike UVs, New Towns followed the same form of advocating an abandonment of the city in favour of new rural settlements. Patrick Abercrombie’s plan for London called for damaged communities to be uprooted, and relocated to new settlements outside of the capital (Abercrombie, 1945). In total 28 new towns were built after 1946, and in 1991, 3% of the entire UK population lived in a new town, showing the influence they had on the daily lives of people (Hall, 1998).

Early New Towns adapted Howard’s ideas for contemporary British living. They incorporated neighbourhood forms of growth, localised services and infrastructure and therefore resembled Garden City ideas. However, New Towns such as Milton Keynes developed in the 1970s and 1980s, were reliant on planning for the car, and lacked integrated mixed-use and therefore became suburbs, similar to the garden suburbs that Ebenezer Howard had reacted against.

By the 1980s, few New Towns embodied Garden City ideas, and coupled with further suburban growth and unrest in some British cities, neo-traditional planning emerged as a new way of planning for city growth and renewal.

### 2.1.2 *Neo-traditional planning*

In the late 1980s and early 1990s neo-traditional planning movements emerged which challenged accepted forms of city building. These neo-traditional planning movements were situated in the desire to create new forms of city life, reacting to what they perceived as the negative effects of suburban growth. Despite advocating earlier attempts to redefine urban living, neo-traditional planners argued that the city should be the location for new communities rather than the countryside. They began to debate and call for new ways of thinking about cities based on; the neighbourhood unit, localised transport, regional models of growth, sustainable development and social cities. Neo-traditional planning quickly spread throughout the world, operating on different scales, yet usually confined to specific countries or continents. The two foremost neo-traditional planning movements were UVs in the U.K context, and the New Urbanism in the U.S. Each of these planning movements is interlinked with academics, architects, planners and urban designers moving between the groups and maintaining close links across this network.

#### *Urban Villages*

In the late 1980s the concept of the UV emerged as a reaction against placeless urban environments and suburbs. The movement emerged in the context of deindustrialisation of British cities and social unrest, resulting in the decline of the inner city area of many British cities (Aldous, 1992). The call for the UV was based around solutions within cities rather than relocating populations to rural areas as much of British planning had proposed before this point.

Prince Charles in 1989, argued that we should be learning from the past to create communities that work (HRH Prince Charles, 1989). This call was based on historic forms of building as explored above. In June 1990 the UV campaign was first launched, and in 1992 UV ideals were formalised in the UVG report *Urban villages: a concept for creating mixed-use urban developments on a sustainable scale* (Aldous, 1992). Subsequent publications offered further advice, such as the economics of developing UVs and these ideas are explored in section 2.2 (Aldous, 1995). As will be shown in section 2.1.4, during the 2000s the UVG changed in its structure, eventually merging with the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment (PFBE). The PFBE is Prince Charles' own charity aimed at improving standards of design and building across the UK. Although the UV operates within a UK context, it also has links with other neo-traditional planning movements, especially New Urbanism, and these have become more pronounced since the movement joined with PFBE.

### *The New Urbanism*

Similarly to the UV movement, the New Urbanism was formed in the early 1990s and formalised at the first Congress for New Urbanism meeting in Alexandria, Virginia in 1993. New Urbanism operates in a North American context, and was formed to address the social problems of contemporary cities and offer alternatives for their growth. They criticised the sameness of suburbia and argued that communities are often economically and racially homogeneous with their physical layout offering little support for the creation of public transport links. Instead communities were often zoned into similar housing types based on tenure, price, plot size and style.

Therefore 170 planners, architects and academics attended the Congress, foremost amongst these being Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, key proponents of the New Urbanism. During the Congress and in subsequent publications, New Urbanists expressed concern about the placelessness of modern suburbs, the decline of central cities, and the segregation of communities by race and income (Leccese, 2000).

In 1996 New Urbanists adopted the *Charter of the New Urbanism* which was a document similar in scope to the UVG report. This document aimed to set a vision for new ways of thinking about cities, and contained models and examples of new ways of neighbourhood planning, although their influences stemmed from historically prominent urban thinkers such as Clarence Perry's neighbourhood unit. These models attempted to restore urban centres, reconfigure sprawling suburbs and conserve environmental assets (Leccese, 2000). Foremost this was pursued through a neighbourhood model of growth. The New Urbanism has links to the UV movement such as the former chair of the Congress, Hank Dittmar who now acts as the chief executive at PFBE.

#### **2.1.3 *The UV and an Urban Renaissance of British cities***

In 1997 a Labour government came to power in Britain, which produced a different path for the British planning system, based on community and social aspirations under the banner of an Urban Renaissance of British cities. According to Imrie and Raco, Labour's policy focused on "active citizens, through the context of community" (Imrie and Raco, 2003:6). It is not the purpose of this section to explore national policy and the Urban Renaissance in general, as this has been achieved by other authors (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Johnstone, 2004). Rather, this section considers how UV principles informed national planning policy of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The focus of this section will be on the Urban Task Force (UTF) report of 1999 and the Urban White Paper (UWP) of 2000, as well as the Millennium Villages and Sustainable Communities report (DETR, 1999a; DETR, 1999b; DETR, 2000a).

The resurgence of community-based planning and the UV in British planning can be witnessed by the inclusion of the concept in the Planning Policy Guidelines developed by the government which state that; “the planning system can be used to deliver high-quality, mixed-use developments, such as UVs” (PPG 1 quoted in Aldous, 1992:58). In a similar vein to the UV model, the UTF and UWP sought to explore ways in which people could be encouraged back to the city. In the forward to the UWP, John Prescott said that:

“In 1998 we asked the Urban Task Force chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside, to examine the causes of urban decline and recommend solutions to bring people back into towns and cities. Their report confirms that urban policies are not just about bricks and mortar, but about improving people’s prosperity and quality”.

(DETR, 2000b:3)

The answer to these problems were policies such as creating Millennium Villages which aligned closely with UV ideals. Such attempts were routed in Labour’s policy agenda which was “closely aligned to the values of *communitarianism*. Communitarian views are premised on overcoming social fragmentation and the (alleged) breakdown of core aspects of communities” (Imrie, 2003:8). These arguments are similar to those being made by the UVG, which states that the social degradation of the suburbs can be eradicated by a return to city living. Indeed, the links between the UV concept and these reports can be witnessed in the UTF report that set out to “establish a new vision for urban regeneration founded on the principles of design excellence, social wellbeing and environmental responsibility within a viable and legislative framework” (DETR, 1999b:1).

Labour’s attempts to encourage people back to the city were not without their critics. Loretta Lees for example argues that these attempts can be seen as accepting and planning for gentrification, and were aimed at a distinct class of people (Lees, 2003). Furthermore she states that visions of street life in the UTF and UWP fail to acknowledge the varied role that street life can have aside from community building. She uses Fyfe’s argument that streets are “the terrain of social encounters and political protest, sites of domination and resistance, places of pleasure and anxiety” (Fyfe, 1998:1). The street she argues, is not conceptualised correctly in this policy. In spite of this, the UTF and UWP both made provisions for Home Zones (HZs) within their design, which “seek to make streets places for people not just traffic. They can provide traffic calming schemes; areas for children to play; or create meeting places for older residents and parents” (DETR, 2000a:70). According to Imrie, the objective of the HZ element of government policy was “to improve the quality of life in residential areas of England” (Imrie and Raco, 2003:20; ODPM, 2002). The idea of the HZ will be returned to in chapter 5.

The UWP contained a number of policy recommendations that were also part of UV visions for city life such as HZs. One of these recommendations was the role of the public within planning decisions, and the view that “people have a right to be involved in deciding how their town or city develops...everybody should be included” (DETR, 2000a:3). This idea echoes that of UV rhetoric about public planning weekends which would encourage the local community to take ownership of their town. All vision processes and masterplans should therefore “involve local communities in their development” (DETR, 2000a:41).

Also contained within the UWP was the belief in the role that public spaces have on the lived experiences of residents. The report states that:

“Access to green spaces reduces stress and promotes well-being. Parks and open spaces are among the most valued features of the place people live...The survey Streets as Living Space showed that people are more inclined to use their town and local centres if the urban environment is well cared for and pedestrian friendly”.

(DETR, 2000a:68)

The report echoed the UV principle of how public space can influence behaviour. This was also a theme that emerged in the *Millennium Villages and Sustainable Communities* report which stated that:

“The design quality (in the broadest sense) of a development is immensely important to the quality of life of the people who live in or use it. Public spaces can be a direct source of pleasure in themselves, provide for enjoyable public events and activities, and discourage crime, disorder and antisocial behaviours. Semi-public spaces can support and encourage community life and cohesion at the neighbourhood level. Private space can enable people to live comfortably and undisturbed, and express their own identity and preferences”.

(DETR, 1999:26)

This report also included ideas about legibility, personalisation of space and mobilities, all of which are key themes in UV rhetoric. There are close links between planning policy of the 1990s and UV ideals, which represented a high point for the movement. In the 2000s this influence diminished, however is still present in the work of the PFBE.

#### **2.1.4 The UVG in 2011**

By the early 2000s the UVG had started to disband as a formal organisation. At this point UVG members began to feed into other groups and organisations, taking with them the UV model, and design principles. As a result of this the “UVG kind of disappeared as a concept

at that point, and we were just the Prince's Foundation and our core principles were walkable neighbourhoods" (John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:8). Many of the people that were involved in the UVG, are now part of two interlinked groups which advocate improved urban design within the planning system based on UV principles. These two groups are the Academy of Urbanism, and the PFBE.

Many of those involved within the UVG now form part of the Academy of Urbanism including John Thompson who was the community-planning architect for Poundbury, and John Osborne who was involved with the original UVG report of 1992. The Academy is similar to the UVG because it is a mix of developers, architects, designers and academics, who use their influence to try and create developments based on UV principles. The second group to which UV members moved was PFBE. As John Carson, director at PFBE said:

*"What really happened at this stage [early 2000s] was the UV movement carried on and we still have the UV members. The developer network still carried on as part of the Foundation's network but really by that stage our focus had changed away from just working with developers to trying to get one or two things out of the ground".*

(John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:5)

The emphasis within PFBE however is slightly different to the Academy of Urbanism because PFBE has close links with New Urbanists who inform their work and are members of the board. In spite of this, both groups advocate UV principles, and therefore are the progression of the UVG.

## 2.2 Conceptualising the UV

### 2.2.1 *Reacting against placeless environments*

Neo-traditional planning is a response to the perceived failings of suburban growth and seeks to offer a 'cure' for the ills of this form of urban development. UV thinkers have been some of the foremost critics of suburbia basing their argument on the shortcomings of the suburbs in terms of architecture, social life and the built environment which breeds placelessness where people are alienated from one another. They argue that these developments often privilege the private over the public creating an individualised environment (Aldous, 1992).

Suburbs have been criticised for being "socially alienating, geographically dispersed and environmentally harmful" (Till 1993:709). The main fault of suburbia is seen to be the reliance of the car, resulting in the street being "a space from which to get from A to B, rather than a place to live in... For postmodernists, the street is a place designed to foster and complement new urban lifestyles" (Fyfe, 1988:1). The importance given to the road and the

hierarchy of the street is criticised because of the problems that a lack of mobility can bring. This is in part due to the individual nature of the suburbs and the fact that few good public spaces are planned for in suburban environments. Writing in the 1960s Jane Jacobs described suburbs as “helpless socially” and it is the social aspects of the suburbs which are so heavily criticised in neo-traditional and academic literature (Jacobs, 1961).

UV writers argue that this form of growth destroys a sense of community and sense of place. The social impacts of suburban growth have been well documented in Mark Clapson’s *Suburban Century*, and as such the focus of this chapter is not on this issue (Clapson, 2003). The dependence on the car, the homogeneity of its residents and its negative environmental impacts mean that UV thinkers “worry that the only thing more homogeneous than the architecture of the suburbs is their populations...many suburbs are easily characterized by the age and life-stage of the homeowners, their incomes, their racial and ethnic backgrounds, and even their professions. Such a population lacks diversity and richness and does not contribute to the development of ‘true’ community” (Al-Hindi, 2001:206).

### ***2.2.2 Elements of the UV concept***

#### ***Public space and the street***

Public spaces are the key to community interaction, within UVs and the physical form of an UV helps to create an urban environment in which residents can interact with one another on a daily basis. Public spaces are the setting for spontaneous interactions with strangers. According to Aldous, each village needs a unique character and identity with locally distinctive forms of building and layout of public space (Aldous, 1992). The overall aim is to create liveable spaces that foster civic pride and encourage community spirit. The UVG argues that providing social spaces leads to the creation of socially diverse and cohesive communities, unlike those found in suburbs. Civic public spaces impact heavily upon the sense of identity and social environment of a community and well-designed buildings and public spaces give a sense of identity to those who use them.

The street is at the heart of good urbanism that facilitates movement and structure through neighbourhoods (Neal, 2003). Jane Jacobs attacked modernist planners as anti-city and instead argued that a vibrant city life was a result of the organised complexity of the city (Jacobs, 1961). In accordance with the work of Jacobs the UV model sees the street as a solution to the social disintegration of the suburbs. For the UVG the street is the place in which interactions between residents take place. Design elements such as HZs are crucial in the design process to encourage interactions between people. A well-designed street also encourages walking and the increased opportunity for chance encounters between community residents. These chance interactions are said to bring a sense of identity between people and

the urban environment (Neal, 2003). The UVG report proposed a hierarchy of interaction spaces ranging from the boulevard and avenue to the street.

Drawing heavily on the work of Kevin Lynch and more specifically his notion of the legible city environment, the street is seen to connect people to areas of public space. Legibility therefore affects the form of the city environment (Lynch, 1960). A legible city environment will bring social benefits that improve the quality of life for residents. On-street parking is encouraged as a way of slowing down traffic speeds and narrow streets are encouraged. This works with the aim of providing a safer and more pleasurable environment for the pedestrian and also the cyclist. As such crucial to the UVG is the idea that the physical environment has an impact on human behaviour and how people interact with the environment that surrounds them. A good built environment will bring social benefits in the same way that the urban form of suburbia is criticised for bringing negative social barriers to residents.

### *Movement*

As cars rapidly became the predominant form of transport for Britons, pedestrians and cyclists were neglected in favour of cul-de-sacs and car-based city patterns (Aldous, 1992). UVG rhetoric sees high traffic levels as inhibiting public interaction on the street and calls for urban planners to design the urban fabric with pedestrians in mind. Before the dominance of the car, circulation was based around human scale and according to Aldous:

“To ensure a pedestrian-friendly environment the UV must cater for the car without encouraging its use. Planners and developers can now draw on an increasingly wide and sophisticated armoury of traffic calming measures and devices. These are, in a benign sense, double-edged weapons: they serve on the one hand to depress levels of vehicle usage and tame or civilise motoring manners; on the other hand, they extend and enhance the area of pedestrian primacy”.

(Aldous, 1992:30)

Overall the intention is to create a hierarchy of transportation within the UV, one that places pedestrians and cyclists at the top, with public transport below this but above the car. This idea was first developed in *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* in which Howard argues for the need for walkable and cyclable cities with easy access to the greenbelt for food and recreation (Howard, 1902). He believed that a strong and diverse social infrastructure was needed to combat the ills of city life. This belief manifests itself in new desires to build places that are walkable, human scale, diverse in population and tenure, and varied in use (Aldous, 1992). This link between mixed-use environments and the amount of travel needed by commuters was articulated in UV rhetoric where:

“The range of uses must be mixed within street blocks as well as within the village as a whole, and balance houses and flats against workspace so as to achieve a theoretical 1:1 ratio between jobs and residents able and willing to work. This does not imply total absence of commuting-some residents will choose to commute out to jobs elsewhere; some people living elsewhere will commute in to jobs in the village-but the mixed use nature of the village will greatly enhance opportunities for working within walking distance of home”.

(Aldous, 1992:30)

The UVG acknowledges that people should have the right to choose whether they use a car or not, however their use is limited to the peripheral areas of the city and in the central space of the city schemes such as the abolition of kerbs and placing of street furniture can lead to lower speeds of traffic and as a result better pedestrian access (Neal, 2003).

### *Mixed-use*

According to the UV movement in the 19th Century the process of separating, or zoning uses began (Neal, 2003). This resulted from the fact that people wanted to get away from the pollution and noise of the factories in which they worked. The predominance of zoning within urban planning also reinforced this division between the home, work and leisure, each of which was deemed to have a localised place within the city. The concept of the UV however argues for mixed-use sustainable development that has:

“Facilities like the local shop and pub just round the corner; if houses and flats, while of human scale, are sufficiently dense on the ground to enable people to walk anywhere within the neighbourhood in five or ten minutes; and if that neighbourhood has a strong focal point”.

(Aldous, 1992:19)

Mixed-use developments are believed to bring a sense of belonging with Prince Charles' Poundbury near Dorchester used as an example of this by the UVG (Neal, 2003). This development is believed to highlight the wider goals of the UVG by incorporating a mixed community with a variety of residential, commercial and community uses that bring constant round the clock use. A mixed use development will incorporate things such as homes, shops, cafes, bars, offices, studios, workshops and accommodation for industry as well as containing a cross section of people from the community within a localised neighbourhood area (Neal, 2003).

UVs are based around neighbourhood organisation and new structures of city life. Both of these movements place an emphasis on the rebirth of the city rather than simply trying to rebuild them. This is achieved through a regeneration of the existing social fabric developed over time and not through a process of comprehensive redevelopment (Aldous, 1992). The UVG report argued that compact neighbourhoods of housing, parks and schools should be placed within walking distance of shops, civic services, jobs and transit which are the key ideals of the UV movement (Aldous, 1992). As such successful communities need to be developed and nurtured through good urban form, clear social structures, economic purpose, and selected transport links. Accordingly:

“[a] balanced mixture of uses and tenures will enable the village to be a considerable degree self-sufficient. For daily shopping, basic health facilities, nursery and primary schools and some recreational and cultural facilities, its residents need not look beyond its boundaries”.

(Aldous, 1992:36)

Crucial to the UV literature is the notion of density. Density is believed to affect the vitality of urban life and thus affects human spirit. Increased building densities can enhance both of these things. Greater densities encourage people to work, shop and play within a single area (Neal, 2003). Increased densities of building also make the provision of community facilities, and public transport much easier for developers and planners as well encouraging people to walk to work or to the shops due to the proximity of the services to where they live. As such density provides flexible spaces of varying scale full of ‘incident’ and vitality (Aldous, 1992).

### *The design code*

The UV model points to the use of the design code to ensure quality in the built environment. The code dictates the micro-level detail of place, from the colours of buildings through to the materials that are used. It also has control on the architectural layout of the UV. The code therefore acts as regulation of the built environment and which therefore has controls placed on it. According to John Carson of PFBE, a code “is very specific because it talks about heights of buildings, materials, overhangs, and it is way more robust in terms of a mechanism for reviewing good and bad design than planning legislation” (John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:7). Elements such as pattern books and transects are therefore a new language of thinking about built form in the planning system. However, placing controls on the details of place is not new but as Carmona states “different forms of regulation of the built environment have occurred throughout recorded history. The use of codes, for example, can be traced back as far as Roman times. This can be seen in Roman street standards” (Carmona, 2006:214).

Within contemporary urban planning however, the use of design coding was not widespread in the 1990s when UV rhetoric was produced. The code can therefore be seen to fit “in with an emerging planning and design agenda that gives due emphasis to the importance of urban design or design-led approaches” (Carmona, 2006:221). In February 2003, the government launched the Sustainable Communities Plan for England, which detailed the ways in which the demand for housing provision would be met in the coming years (Carmona, 2009; ODPM, 2003). The plan was about creating “attractive places to live, offering a better quality of life to residents that many housing estates had previously been able to deliver. The plan argued that this involves raising the urban design quality of new housing and providing a better mix of uses” (Carmona, 2006:209). Part of this process was bound up in the use of design codes, with then, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott visiting flagship New Urbanist developments in the US, namely Seaside in Florida. John Carson of PFBE said that the UVG started to promote the “idea of design coding through practice, and I think was interesting that John Prescott visited a number of New Urbanist developments. He went on a tour of new urbanism and met a number of people and was impressed by the quality they had managed to achieve” (John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:5).

The use of design codes seeks to speed up the planning process by improving the relationship between the developers and the local councils. The design code therefore:

*“Improved the planning approval because effectively the council have signed off the code and because you are not having to take it back to committee and having detailed comments, that is in the code, and it has had an assessment through the panel. The design review panel are taking on a more rigorous version of what the planning process might do and it is not done in a sequentially reactive way, someone comments on the design and architecture, someone comments on the transport, you are all there in a room, everyone is tasked with their area. So someone is standing there counting car parking spaces checking everything, checking the railing heights”.*

(John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:6)

The UVG relies heavily on the concepts of materiality and embodiment. There are guidelines about the materials that should be used in an UV development as well as the form of the city environment. These codes are employed to provide residents with a better environment in which to live than current suburban developments provide. According to Carmona “the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that coding in the form of non-site-specific development standards is unlikely to provide the answer to delivering better urban design” (Carmona, 2009:2649). Therefore design codes need to take account of vernacular conditions and environments.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how UV ideas are not new, but can be seen as the latest in a line of utopian ways of thinking about the development of cities. Starting with Garden Cities in the late 1800s, these urban design principles have informed utopian models of city development through to neo-traditional planning in the 1990s. It is these historical forms of development, and community building that led to the popularity of the UV ideal from 1997 onwards, as witnessed by its influence on planning documents of that period. Ideas such as public space, the street, mixed-use, and density, which form a central core to the UV model, impact upon the ways in which our embodied and experiential understandings of place develop. Therefore the next chapter develops an academic approach to ways of thinking about embodiment, materiality, and sensory experiences of the city. Furthermore, how this impacts on the ways cities are researched is considered.



03

RESEARCHING  
THE URBAN  
VILLAGE

## Introduction

Chapter 2 set the context for the UV model, exploring the history of the concept from the 1900s to its highpoint at the turn of the millennium. Therefore it set the basis for thinking about the development of a vision based on UV principles and the key elements that TW drew upon for GUV. More widely this thesis is concerned with how a vision is used in practice to create experiences of place. As such it is about more than textual plans, but how ideas are turned into reality and how the vision changes by the process of making an UV.

This chapter draws on academic ways of thinking about issues of materiality, experiences and sensory engagements with place. These notions have received greater emphasis within cultural geography over the past decade resulting in the emergence of new forms of research, particularly a critical architectural geography. As such the first part of this chapter is concerned with theorisations of these issues within existing literature. These themes however, are directly related to how we research UVs and in addition to reviewing what the literature says this chapter considers the ways in which the authors undertake research. Part of this is bound up in the distinct methodologies needed to research issues of materiality and experiences, as expressed by Latham:

“The cultural turn has not equipped human geography to study anything but a relatively narrow range of social theoretical questions. We simply do not have the methodological resources and skills to undertake research that takes the sensuous, embodied, creativeness of social practice seriously”.

(Latham, 2003:1998)

New architectural geographies therefore shape the ways we reflect on the city, and conduct research. The purpose of this chapter is not to consider all literature developed from a critical architectural geographic framework, but to focus on the approach taken by key texts that will inform my research methodology and studies of GUV. The chapter begins by considering ‘more-than’ approaches to the city, and how as urban geographers we need to be engaging with notions of experience as well as considering landscape as a text.

Section 3.2 considers wider themes such as architects’ understandings of the human body, materiality, embodiment and sensory approaches to the city. Section 3.3 presents existing research undertaken on UVs and presents the ways in which ‘more-than’ architectural geographies can be applied to the study of neo-traditional developments. Section 3.4 considers the practicalities of this research and how the ideas presented earlier in the chapter are translated into a research methodology for studies of UVs.

### 3.1 'More-than' approaches to the city

This chapter presents an argument for 'more-than' ways of thinking about the city. In light of calls to rematerialize geography (Anderson, 2009; Lees, 2002) and the mobilities turn within social science research (Sheller & Urry, 2006), it is important to bring notions of experience and sensory engagements to the forefront of research. This chapter sets the case for a critical architectural geography engaging with experiential and sensory forms of research within urban geography. Such ideas are not new, but have their roots in urban geography and beyond throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent calls for 'new geographies of architecture':

“While claiming something distinctive, remain indebted both to older artefactual settlement geographies and more recent cultural geographies of meaning. Energized by the recent emphasis on embodied materialities, they share with older settlement geographies an interest in a building’s physical presence: its format and shape, architectural style and construction detail. Often the critical turn of these new geographies of architecture relies upon activating the voice of the user/occupant, in a revision of standard traditions of post-occupancy evaluation in architecture and housing studies”.

(Jacobs, 2006:2)

In the first section of this chapter I consider the antecedents of a critical architectural geography and the ways in which such ideas informed later work calling for experiences and use to be considered in addition to thinking of the landscape as a text that can be read.

#### *3.1.1 Foundations for a critical architectural geography*

As will be shown in this section, the ideas behind a critical architectural geography are not new, but instead are influenced by earlier authors. It is important to consider the influences on the work of those academics calling for a critical architectural geography and the work presented in this section emerged from a range of disciplines over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Urban sociology and experience*

This section begins by exploring urban sociological perspectives on the city and the role that peoples’ experiences of place should have within the research process. The focus of this section is on the work of Robert E Park and Louis Wirth, whose work emerged from the Chicago School during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Chicago school was based on the drive to understand the complexity of city life from the viewpoint of community (Park et al, 1925).

Such work was inspired by anthropological understandings of the richness of city life.

In spite of this, the work of the Chicago School is not without its critics. Whilst the debates about the Chicago School and its importance on contemporary urban and cultural geographies are not explored here, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge such debates. In 1998 Harris and Lewis wrote of the criticisms of the simplification of city life within some work which emerged from the Chicago School (Harris and Lewis, 1998). In particular they criticised the work of Ernest Burgess and his concentric model of city development (Burgess, 1925). This work emerged at the early stages of the establishment of the Chicago School, and according to Harris and Lewis this work misrepresented city life within American cities. In particular, it failed to acknowledge the role of the suburbs (Harris and Lewis, 1998). It is for this reason that this section focuses on the work of Park and Wirth, rather than wider scholars (such as Burgess) working at the Chicago School. In particular the broad, anthropological studies undertaken by the Chicago School are of direct relevance to this chapter. Such a decision was based on the scope and focus of this thesis, in particular sensory experiences of the city. At this juncture it is therefore important to consider the work of Park and Wirth and their writings on sensory experiences of the city.

Foremost it is the belief that the city is about more than the materiality of its existence that is important for studies of experience. According to Park, the city:

“Is something more than a congeries of individual men and of social conveniences—streets, buildings, electric lights, tramways and telephones...The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it, it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature”.

(Park et al, 1925:1)

Central to the work of Park, Wirth and other authors at the Chicago School, is the belief that urban research should be explored through observations of city life. Robert E. Park argued that community spaces in regeneration projects:

“Are intended primarily to elevate the moral tone of the segregated populations of great cities [and] should be studied in connection with the investigation of the neighbourhood in general. They should be studied, in short, not merely for their own sake, but for what they can reveal to us of human behaviour and human nature generally”.

(Park et al, 1925:9)

This view articulated by Park in *The City: Suggestions for the Study of Human Nature in the Urban Environment*, led calls for scholars to research human behaviour. In particular Park makes the link between design and its impact on “human behaviour and human nature”, and that we should not consider the design of community spaces and neighbourhoods in isolation, but rather we should also explore the human element of the built environment. Such explorations of the city, Park argues, should be undertaken from an anthropological perspective with the researcher experiencing and observing city life to understand the complexities of human behaviour (Park, 1925).

Park’s work also set an agenda for thinking about sensory experiences of place and the impact this has on human experiences of the city. He stated in *The City*, that “touch and sight, physical contact, are the basis for the first and most elementary human relationships” (Park, 1925:24). Such notions set into perspective later calls for thinking about the city, which along with a critical architectural geography include the sensory turn within geographic research. Such calls therefore cannot be seen in isolation from the work of Robert E. Park who set a basis for thinking about city life and sensory experiences of the city. As will be shown in the next section, research developed under a critical architectural geography seeks to further the ideas first proposed by Park and others at the Chicago School.

Louis Wirth, a colleague of Parks at the Chicago School also proposed new ways of thinking about the city, and in particular he argued “housing is a social activity” (Wirth, 1964:292). Whilst Robert E. Park argued that we should study the spaces of public interaction such as community spaces within neighbourhoods, Wirth stated that “it would be interesting to discover what adjustments people make in their housing in various stages of the family cycle” (Wirth, 1964:297). Such a call for research speaks to the ways in which residents’ appropriate design for their own experience and how they place meaning on the buildings they inhabit. These ideas are explored in chapter 7, which examines how race and ethnic identities are inscribed onto the design of GUV.

In addition to work on sensory and experiential understandings of the city, the work of Wirth and Park also alludes to the profound effect the city has on its residents. In particular, their work focused on the differences between living in cities and villages, and the sensory and social distinctions between the two environments. According to Park, conditions such as the “social forces in community life—forces like geographical conditions, human wishes, community consciousness...can be studied, described, analyzed and ultimately measured” (Park, 1967:143). This thesis attempts to support such a claim by offering narratives of community life within GUV, and in particular the relationship between urban design and experiences of the city.

In 1887 Tonnies stated that there was a difference in city life between the town and country. He stated that social relationships in cities were marked by “Gesellschaft” or “associations” between residents. In contrast the village was the location for “Gemeinschaft” or “community”. Such ideas retained a prominence within sociological approaches to the city and utopian planning approaches to the city, such as the work of Ebenezer Howard (Howard, 1898). The work of Tonnies and later of Park and Wirth classified the characteristics of places and arguing that the existence of dwellers shifted from community to individuality in the city.

Before continuing it is important to consider the notion of community (and the problematic nature of the term) and how it is utilised within sociological perspectives on the city. According to Wirth “community has been an expression that emphasized the unity of the common life of a people or of mankind” (Wirth, 1964:169). Within the writings of Park and Wirth, community is bound up in the common association between people. Importantly, Wirth considers community in relation to the effect of the built environment, and the impact that urban morphology can have on social relations between people. He argues, “the involvement of housing with community life is clearly a subject of long standing sociological interest. This connection between housing and community life arises out of the fact that at least in the urban community the house does not stand by itself but is part of a neighbourhood, a local community and the metropolis” (Wirth, 1964:298). In sociological understandings of the city developed by the Chicago School, community life is therefore affected by the number of other residents that dwell within the environment, whether that is urban or rural.

Early sociological works spoke of the notion of community which was found primarily in villages. The Chicago School however talks about the common association between residents due to the problematic use of the term community. Community “like other concepts taken over from common-sense usage, has been used with an abandon reminiscent of poetic license” (Wirth, 1964:165). Such notions were evident in the design of GUV where place and community were used as terms without definition and understanding by TW. They advertised GUV’s sense of place and community as a selling point without explicitly referring to what they meant by these terms. Instead place and community became terms that were used to sell houses to potential residents, and that GUV would be a place in which city life would merge with community.

In 1903 Georg Simmel wrote of the intensity of city life, arguing that the city provides a sensory overload for the individual (Simmel, 1903). As a result of this urban dwellers develop “blasé” attitudes towards city life and are detached from other city dwellers. According to Macionis, “to avoid being overwhelmed by such stimulation, the individual learns to discriminate carefully-to tune in what is important and tune out what is irrelevant” (Macionis, 2001:132). In sociological perspectives of urbanism, the city brings detachment in the social relationships between urban dwellers. The city is seen as “rational” and people are detached

from one another. According to Park, “the city, and particularly the great city...more than elsewhere human relations are likely to be impersonal and rational” (Park, 1967:22).

The city therefore has negative social effects creating individuals rather than communities. In spite of the large numbers of people that dwell within cities, “the contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental. The reserve, the indifference, and the blasé outlook which urbanities manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others” (Wirth, 1964:71). The social demographics of city life are also different to those of the village, with marriage being postponed in the city, which is also where a greater proportion of single people are found (Wirth, 1964). Such demographic changes affect experiences of the city, and force people to interact with one another creating an urban way of life.

Faced with the alienating environment of the city, dwellers create spaces of common circumstances, based on shared characteristics. Such characteristics can be socially based such as age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or culturally, based on shared and common interests. The city then is bound up in how it brings “together people in such a way that this makes a difference to what goes on between them” (Pile, 1999:1). According to Park, humans need the company of others, shelter and protection from the elements to survive (Park, 1967). In the city environment, people cluster in groups of shared association. The numbers of people congregated in cities, whilst providing a sensory overload and a sense of alienation, is boosted by the fact that the city is the location for a diverse type of people allowing urban dwellers to find groups of common association. According to Park, “the attraction of the metropolis is due in part, however, to the fact that in the long run every individual finds somewhere among the varied manifestations of city life the sort of environment in which he expands and feels at ease” (Park, 1967:41).

Sociological approaches to the city, as advocated by Wirth and Park, are predicated on characterisations of community and association in the city and the country. The city is portrayed as a sensory overload and alienating environment, which despite the large numbers of people is bound up in individuality. Such notions formed part of the UVG report of 1992 which utilised the social differences between town and country found in sociological writings.

### *Urban planning, architecture and experience*

To varying degrees, experience and the role of residents in making place has always been part of architectural theory and urban planning. Writers such as Le Corbusier, Lewis Mumford and Ebenezer Howard acknowledged the effect that the built environment has on the people

that dwell within cities. Mumford for example argued “a city, properly speaking, does not exist by the accretion of houses, but by the association of human beings” (Mumford, 1955:229). Such writers acknowledged that the city was more than a congregation of buildings, but rather was about the people that dwell within cities. During the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such ideas manifested themselves through a consideration of the cultural effects on the built environment and the social conditions from which architecture developed. Rather than being a purely aesthetic subject, in *Sticks and Stones*, Mumford argued that:

“If we are to have a fine architecture, we must begin at the other end from that where our sumptuously illustrated magazines on home-building and architecture begin—not with the building itself, but with the whole complex out of which architect, builder, and patron spring, and into which the finished building, whether it be a cottage or a skyscraper, is set”.

(Mumford, 1955:199)

In the 1960s architectural theorists and urban planners began to produce more nuanced accounts of experiences of the city. The focus of this section is on the work of Kevin Lynch, whose writings on imageability and experience of the built environment provided the backdrop against which more experiential accounts of the built environment developed (such as in the work of Jane Jacobs). In 1960 Lynch published *The image of the city*, which used the case study of three American cities, to evaluate city form (Lynch, 1960). Importantly, Lynch considered what the city’s form meant to the residents that live in Los Angeles, Boston and Jersey City. Central to Lynch’s work was the study of the people that dwell within these cities and he wrote of their sensory and experiential engagements with place. In particular he used mental maps to establish the spatial boundaries of their daily patterns of behaviour. Lynch stated that:

“Moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities are as important as the stationary physical parts. We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants. Most often our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation and the image is the composite of them all”.

(Lynch, 1960:2)

Lynch’s study considered the legibility of American cities exploring the visual and sensory experiences of design. His work focused on the ways in which urban dwellers construct mental maps of their neighbourhoods and surrounding environments. Such maps show the ways in which spatial experience of the city is constrained by certain elements of design, because city dwellers are able to recall with detail certain areas of the city, and neglect other

areas. Such ideas are relevant to this thesis, due to the focus on the ways in which residents develop an attachment to certain areas of the town, yet create other ‘no-go’ spaces.

Central to Lynch’s study is the role of movement and its impact on experiences of the city. The ability to easily move through the city and the subsequent affect on the experiences of residents is highlighted by Lynch who argues that “although clarity or legibility is by no means the only important property of a beautiful city, it is of special importance when considering environments at the urban scale of size, time and complexity. To understand this, we must consider not just the city as a thing in itself, but the city being perceived by its inhabitants” (Lynch, 1960:3). As such we can see that the work of Kevin Lynch calls for further studies on the ways in which the built environment has the ability to shape human behaviour and experience. Such ideas are central to a critical architectural geography which developed out of research conducted by writers such as Lynch.

Furthermore, Lynch’s work also contains references to the “practical and emotional importance to the individual” that urban morphology can have (Lynch, 1960:4). Such ideas which underpin Lynch’s work, are missing from new architectural geographies, as will be explored later in this chapter. *The image of the city* makes attempts to consider the emotional importance of urban form, and how “a good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. He can establish an harmonious relationship between himself and the outside world” (Lynch, 1960:4). In Lynch’s work this focus is achieved by focusing on visual way-finding elements of the built environment such as landmarks and the relationship between residents with the edges of settlements. Lynch identifies five key urban elements that shape our experiences of the city; paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks (Lynch, 1960).

These urban elements are central to the ways in which we experience the built environment and shape our sensory and emotional attachments to place. Later in this chapter I explore how Quentin Stevens developed the framework first set forth by Kevin Lynch in his study of play in the urban environment. Stevens, importantly utilises the work of Lynch’s urban elements but focuses on the sensory and playful interactions residents have with these elements. Such work forms the basis of the research undertaken in this thesis, as the experiences of the GUV edge, landmarks and key routes and nodes are explored. The thesis also utilises Lynch’s argument that “each individual creates and bears his own image, but there seems to be substantial agreement among members of the same group” (Lynch, 1960:7). Chapter 7 of this thesis explores shared experiences of GUV and the ways in which a community is developed based on cultural and social characteristics.

The work of Kevin Lynch was an important marker in the role of experiences within research, especially the ways in which residents experience urban elements. Whilst Lynch’s work

focused on the visual prompts in the city, his work is of relevance to a critical architectural geography, and has been utilised by authors advocating for alternative ways of research and writing about the city. Such work will be explored in the next section.

### *Humanist geographies and experience*

During the 1970s humanistic perspectives on research began to develop within geography. Such approaches to research were not new within academia, and had been applied by sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists since the 1930s (Relph, 1981). It wasn't until much later that this approach started to infiltrate the work of geographers and in particular those exploring the built environment. Work developed under a humanistic geography was far-reaching and set a tone for considering human interactions with place and space (Ley, 1978; Relph, 1976; Rawles, 1978; Seamon, 1979). In this section I consider one key text to emerge during this period, *Space and Place* by Yi-Fu Tuan (Tuan, 1977). This was the first text to offer a new humanistic interpretation of the built environment and as such is the focus of this section (Relph, 1981).

In 1977, Tuan wrote that “in the large literature on environmental quality, relatively few works attempt to understand how people feel about space and place, to take into accounts the different modes of experience (sensorimotor, tactile, visual, conceptual), and to interpret space and place as images of complex-often ambivalent-feelings” (Tuan, 1977:7). Tuan argued that existing research neglected the emotional and experiential qualities of place and the ways in which urban dwellers interact with the built environment. *Space and Place* was an important call to redress this lack of research and focus on the impact the built environment has on behaviour. The building, once completed “now stands as an environment capable of affecting the people who live in it. Man-made space can refine human feeling and perception” stated Tuan (Tuan, 1977:102).

Importantly Tuan's work considered the sensory engagement between people and the built environment. He also offered a definition of what it is to experience the city, whereby “experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality. These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to activate visual perception” (Tuan, 1977:8). Tuan's work therefore contains a number of ideas which, as will be shown in the next section, are utilised in the 2000s under a critical architectural geography.

In particularly it is Tuan's work on the sensory engagement with cities that is particularly relevant to this thesis. Tuan wrote that “the modern architectural environment may cater to the eye, but it often lacks the pungent personality that varied and pleasant odors can give, Odors lend character to objects and places, making them distinctive, easier to identify and

remember” (Tuan, 1977:11). Such notions of a sanitised urban environment devoid of a full spectrum of sensory experience are developed by Tim Edensor whose work echoes that of Tuan (Edensor, 2005; 2007). The aim of this thesis is to consider sensory engagements with place and how sense such as kinaesthesia, sight and touch affect our emotional and sensory attachment to place.

Tuan’s work, whilst setting the framework for future humanist research and a critical architectural geography, also built on notions developed in the 1960s, especially the role of movement within the built environment. According to Tuan humans learn to orientate themselves through kinaesthetic patterns of movement and learn to navigate through the built environment without maps. Such an ability to move and experience the city through visual landmarks and kinaesthetic prompts echoes with the work of Kevin Lynch explored in the previous section. Through kinaesthetic experience we experience and create meaning of the built environment and “when space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place. Kinaesthetic and perceptual experience as well as the ability to form concepts are required for the change if the space is large” (Tuan, 1977:73).

In this section I have presented the antecedents for a critical architectural geography which forms part of ‘more-than’ ways of approaching the city. Such antecedents are grounded in urban sociology, architectural theory and humanistic traditions of research. The collection of writings presented in this section provide a backdrop to research being undertaken in these disciplines during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their inclusion within this thesis is important, because they set frameworks for thinking about the experiential and sensory behaviour of urban residents and their interactions with the built environment. Attention now shifts to present attempts to consider experience and interactions with urban design as part of research under a new architectural geography.

### ***3.1.2 The city as a text and more: “new geographies of architecture”***

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s “some cultural geographers began to turn towards the interpretative techniques of literary and cultural theory, and hence to conceptualise landscape as text” (Wylie, 2007:71). A plethora of works emerged exploring the notion that landscape and the built environment could be read as a text, and issues of power, authority prevailed within geographic research (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988; Duncan & Duncan, 1988; Domosh, 1988). This focus on representational modes of research led James and Nancy Duncan to state that:

“One of the most important roles that landscape plays in the social process is ideological, supporting a set of ideas and values unquestioned assumptions about the way society is or should be organised...landscapes are texts which are read,

interpreted according to an ingrained cultural framework of interpretation”.

(Duncan & Duncan, 198:123)

It is not the contention of this thesis to disagree with such views that “landscape can be analysed as a text in which social relations are inscribed” (Duncan & Duncan, 1988:123). In *Landscape*, John Wylie provides a comprehensive account of the foundations of the notion of the city as a text (see Wylie, 2007), and for this reason the focus on this section will not be on the details of the idea of the city as text, but rather its relevance to this thesis. In particular it considers the importance of the idea of city as text in relation to plans and the development of a vision.

This thesis sits within a growing body of research that seeks to add experiential and sensory accounts of the city to notions of landscape as a text, emerging from the belief that “the reading and seeing of landscape-as-text was a limiting perspectival expression of social constructivism” (Lorimer, 2005:85). As such accounts of the built environment should be ‘more-than’ representational studies of the landscape as text, considering a full spectrum of sensory engagements with the city. ‘More-than’ representational geographies was a term first coined by Hayden Lorimer, who criticised the scope of research undertaken by those engaged in ‘non-representational’ research. Lorimer, instead prefers:

“To think of ‘more-than-representational’ geography, the teleology of the original ‘non-’ title having proven an unfortunate hindrance. It is reasonable to expect an explanation of what that ‘more than’ might include. To summarize lots of complex statements as simply as possible, it is multifarious, open encounters in the realm of practice that matter most. Greatest unity is found in an insistence on expanding our once comfortable understanding of ‘the social’ and how it can be regarded as something researchable. This often means thinking through locally formative interventions in the world”.

(Lorimer, 2005:84)

For Lorimer, research into city life needed to consider both the landscape as a text and experiential and performative ways of thinking about the built environment, and the two cannot be detached from one another. This thesis sits within a ‘more-than’ representational framework of research. As a starting point it considers the relevance of the city as text and chapters 4 and 5 examine the role of plans and the planning process in shaping the built environment. In particular the thesis is concerned with the ways in which theoretical notions of the UV get translated into the design (and subsequent implementation) of GUV. Of particular importance here is the idea of the vision, and the thesis examines how the notion of the city as a text retains its relevance when considering the developer’s and the local state’s vision of place.

The thesis does more than this however, and also considers experiential and sensory understandings of the built environment. Therefore the work undertaken in this thesis, considers the relevance of plans and planning documents in shaping the built environment but also its relationship and the subsequent appropriation of design by GUV residents.

Bringing sensory and experiential stories to the forefront of research formed part of the work of authors such as Paul Rodaway, who explored sensory geographies through the mid 1990s (Rodaway, 1994). However it was at the turn of the millennium that such work formed part of calls for a critical architectural geography. At the forefront of such a call was Loretta Lees responding to what she perceived as shortcomings within urban geography.

### *Critical Architectural Geography*

Lees' critical architectural geography looks at the ways in which architecture is a social product, dependent on political, social and cultural conditions from which its meaning is derived. Lees is one of the main proponents of this new approach aimed at addressing the imbalance between the representational and experiential in geographic research. Traditionally research has focused on the representational, and the meanings invested in the built environment whether they are classed, gendered or political (Domosh, 1988; Duncan, 1992; Ley, 1995). Yet these approaches produce narrow focused urban geography which ignores inhabitation, practices and experiences of the built environment because "architecture is about more than representation. Both as a practice and a product, it is performative, in the sense that it involves ongoing social practices through which space is continually shaped and inhabited" (Lees, 2001:60). Therefore she argues for a discipline that considers the built environment in relation to the experiential and sensory qualities of place.

Foremost amongst Lees' papers that call for new ways of thinking about the built environment is 'Towards a critical geography of architecture: the case of an Ersatz Colosseum' (Lees, 2001). In this paper Lees offers a political and cultural semiotic reading of the built environment, focusing on Vancouver public library. She explores the ways in which initial designs for the library were contested and the ways in which the public reacted to the design and the planning consultation process. However, in addition to this reading of the landscape and the meanings invested by architects and planners Lees also offers the reader an insight into the ways in which the library was experienced by its users after it was built. This additional focus of research on the experiential qualities of place makes claims to knowledge above those of form, design and function witnessed in traditional studies in urban geography. Therefore what Lees incorporates in this article is a double-bowed approach to research on the built environment, reflected in her methodology.

A critical architectural geography must “address itself to something beyond the symbolic – to questions of use, process, and social practice – important methodological implications follow” (Lees, 2001:56). Instead of representational and discourse based research methodologies traditionally employed by urban geographers, Lees’ work centres around the use of ethnography and interviews. Accordingly Lees argues that “ethnography provides one way to explore how built environments produce *and* are produced by the social practices performed within them” (Lees, 2001:56). Lees uses the terminology of Nigel Thrift in arguing that we must be observant participants rather than participant observers. This is the central concern of a new architectural geography, with a focus on experiencing the built environment. Lees uses informal interview techniques to talk to people in the lobby of the library. In addition to this she uses observations that capture some of the many practices that occur in the spaces of the library. Such observations and interviews were presented as a series of vignettes in Lees’ work, detailing the practices that were occurring and her own reactions and feelings. Such notions of research are developed in the thesis particularly chapter 6 which presents three walking interviews with GUV residents.

At this point however it is important to note that Lees does not totally abandon discourse analysis and argues “adopting an ethnographic approach to understanding architecture should not mean abandoning questions about the meaning of the built environments. Rather it means approaching them differently, as an active and engaged process of understanding rather than as a product to be read off retrospectively from its social and historical context (Lees, 2001:56). As such Lees argues that the practices and performances associated with the built environment are just as important as the meanings placed on it by architects and town planners. Rather than using an ethnographic approach or a semiotic approach to ‘read’ the built environment we must combine the two research methodologies. This argument informs my own research agenda. It seems detrimental to research if we neglect the experiential over the representational, or vice versa. Instead we must understand the meanings and ideologies placed on the built environment by architects, yet at the same time understand the practices, performances and experiences that subsequently occur in these spaces, only then will we create inclusive geographical accounts of the built environment.

Consumption and experiences of public space are a key focus for this type of research. In the same way that people derive identities from the consumption of products, they do so from consumption of the built environment. Meanings and identities invested in the built environment are shaped not only by architects and planners, but also by people using the space. Often this is done in the after-life of the building. As such Lees argues that a critical architectural geography must “explore the ways that the built environment is shaped and given meaning through the active and embodied practices by which it is produced, appropriated and inhabited” (Lees, 2001:58). These embodied meanings are central to the practices and performances that people undertaken on a daily basis.

Two years after this paper, Mark Llewellyn developed this framework when calling for a critical engagement with architectural spaces both contemporary and historical. He argued in his paper, ‘doing’ a critical historical geography of architecture that we must broaden the discourses we use to effectively analyse architectural spaces (Llewellyn, 2003). The most important way we must do this is by engaging in a “meaningful way” with the individuals that design and inhabit the built environment.

According to Llewellyn most studies of historical architecture are narrow focused, relying on research into the ways in which planners or architects design spaces rather than the ways in which this space is experienced. This process “typically considers solely the producers of architectural spaces, the architects or planners themselves as the valid object of study, to include an analysis of the ‘experience’ of architecture from the viewpoint of those who live, work and move in these spaces” (Llewellyn, 2003:265).

Llewellyn’s notion of polyvocalism draws on a consideration of the ways in which architecture is produced and producing. Llewellyn deems the idea of consumption of the built environment, as problematic given its association with passive acceptance of the meanings invested by architects, and prefers to “engage in a meaningful way with the complete and wide range of individuals who were implicated in the process of designing and inhabiting the built forms produced” (Llewellyn, 2003:264). As such, following Lees’ argument, we need to look beyond the simple form of a building, or architect’s viewpoint. To do this Llewellyn argues that we must use a polyvocal approach to the built environment. This “approach to analysing architectural schemes is successful in integrating traditional and innovative methodologies to produce new stories of space, and it is a methodology that is invaluable in attempting to write more nuanced histories of architectural geography” (Llewellyn, 2003:267).

As a term polyvocalism is attractive, and implies a focus on the multiple narratives of place. It moves beyond traditional methodologies to consider everyday life and practices in the built environment. Rather than focusing on the architect, a polyvocal approach shifts its focus to consider the life of buildings and turns its attention to the users of the built environment. Whilst this thesis sits within a critical architectural approach to the city, Llewellyn’s polyvocalism forms a part of this approach. The remainder of this thesis will speak of a critical architectural approach to research, however polyvocalism forms part of this approach, and both concepts are interchangeable in the way they advocate considering different voices and narratives of place within the scope of contemporary research.

These narratives of place “narrate a different history of architectural spaces than those put forward by architects or planners of such places, yielding a more complex and ‘thicker’ narrative of home, redolent with many different voices, telling often contradictory stories of

space” (Llewellyn, 2003:267). In his study of the home, Llewellyn uses interviews and archival research, and this methodology can be broadened out when considering contemporary case studies. Llewellyn focuses on historical examples such as Kensal House and uses oral histories to understand the practices that occurred there. As such a polyvocal approach gives flexibility in terms of methods, yet at the same time retaining a focus on the users of the built environment.

### *Experiencing the contemporary city*

Notions of experience within research have not purely been confined to a critical architectural geography. In this section I present a series of works which also consider experience, and the relationship between people and the built environment.

Preceding the calls of Loretta Lees for a critical architectural geography, Kim Dovey stated that we must think of places as the setting for diverse experiences of city life. In *Framing Places*, Dovey argues that the city becomes the backdrop in which everyday life takes place (Dovey, 1999). He argues that we must think of architecture and urban design as the “frame” to experiences of the city, and that “everyday life ‘takes place’ within the clusters of rooms, buildings, streets and cities we inhabit” (Dovey, 1999:1). Dovey’s argument reflects the relationship between experience and urban design advocated by a critical architectural geography. In Dovey’s work the city becomes an object of study, one which is shaped by the experiences of those that dwell within cities.

Dovey’s argument is persuasive and places the emphasis of research on those that dwell within the city and their effects on the built environment rather than vice-versa. Using Gidden’s notion of “agency”, Dovey makes claims about the ability of residents to shape the places in which they live. Such an ability to transform our own world through our experiences of place, is central to a critical architectural understanding of place. Dovey states that “the lived experience of the body-in-space is the primary relation from which all conceptions of space are constructed” (Dovey, 1999:39). Experiences therefore have the ability to shape place.

*Framing Places* sets the tone for thinking about the relationship between place and experiences of place and how the built environment is affected by these experiences. According to Dovey “places are necessarily programmed and designed in accord with certain interests – primarily the pursuit of amenity, profit, status and political power. The built environment reflects the identities, differences and struggles of gender, class, race, culture and age” (Dovey, 1999:1).

Whilst the influences on *Framing Places* are diverse, attention is paid to the phenomenological research perspective developed by Dovey, who cites the work of David Seamon as an influence on his studies of the built environment. Indeed, Dovey borrows the term ‘lifeworld’, which

becomes the setting of lived experience of the built environment (Dovey, 1999). Dovey however brings new perspectives to such a movement and argues that “phenomenology is a necessary but limited approach to the understanding of place. The key problem is that the focus on the lifeworld can involve a certain blindness to the pronounced effects of social structure and ideology on such everyday experience. From this view a focus on experience runs the risk that the ideological framings of place remain buried and hence powerful” (Dovey, 1999:44).

Dovey’s work is an important consideration for those undertaking a critical architectural geography especially his argument about experiences of place and their impact on the built environment. Such research acknowledges that we cannot consider representation and experiences of the built environment as detached from one another. Dovey however argues that whilst places have the ability to shape behaviour, lived experiences of place, and the “agency” of those that dwell within cities can also shape the built environment.

Another academic to consider experience within the built environment is architect and theorist N.J Habraken. In *Palladio’s Children*, N.J Habraken critiques the ability of architects to design for experiences of the city and consider the lived reality of place within their designs. He offers a damning criticism of the “ignorance among the profession of what has always made [architectural] fields work and stems from a lack of interest in human territorial needs” (Habraken, 2005:163). According to Habraken, use and experience need to be considered in the design stage. Habraken uses the example of planting within an award winning housing development on Borneo Island, Amsterdam.

In this development homes were designed to sit next to the street with no front gardens or semi-private space at the front of each property. Such a design inspiration emerged from the belief that this would encourage community interaction between residents of the community, a belief commonly held by the UVG, and more widely within urban design. Instead, the only thing providing a barrier between the street and the home on Borneo Island was the clear glass doors that were installed. Habraken witnessed on his visits to the development that people were pulling up the paving slabs outside of their properties to plant trees and shrubs. These residents, Habraken argued, were appropriating the design of the development to provide a barrier between the private internal spaces of their homes and the public outside space of the street. Habraken argued that “there needs to be a mediation between private and public” and that experiences of place are important to consider as they “provided one of the most prolific sources of architectural expression” on Borneo Island.

*Palladio’s Children* is an important call for the role of the design professional to consider the experience of place within design. According to Habraken the major challenge for architects is “how to meld large-scale intervention with daily living and working” (Habraken,

2005:110). Whilst he acknowledges that there are numerous stakes within the experience of place, Habraken's argument however, differs from that promoted by those who argue for a plural planning process in which numerous voices form part of the design of the built environment (as explored in chapter 4). Habraken instead retains the belief in the role of architect as creator of the built environment, who "create the flesh and bones of everyday environment. We design places for governing, working, worshipping, learning, healing, commerce, playing and living. What we build becomes part of a living organism larger than anything created by humanity. It is dynamic, vibrant and ever-changing" (Habraken, 2005:105). Habraken's argument however is based on the belief that what happens after the completion of a development is as important as the design. The city, according to Habraken, is a "living organism" which is appropriated by the experiences of those that dwell within it.

In 2008, Peter Kraftl and Peter Adey published a paper entitled "Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation: Geographies of Being-In Buildings" (Kraftl et al, 2008). This paper considered affective understandings of place and its importance for a critical architectural geography. According to Kraftl and Adey, a critical architectural geography should be concerned with engaging all actors in "architectural inhabitation". Such an argument is important and follows the work of those authors outlined in this section in calling for all those involved in the design and inhabitation of the built environment to be considered as part of narratives of place within geographic research. As such research into the built environment "requires attending to everyday, "banal", and material practices through ethnographic-style methods, yet retaining a sense of the critical politics of meaning-making so characteristic of earlier geographies of architecture" (Kraftl et al, 2008:214).

Kraftl and Adey therefore argue that it is important to retain traditional geographic approaches to the city (namely representational accounts of place) within research, yet also bring new narratives to the stories of architecture. They criticise attempts made by earlier writers that focused purely on the symbolic meaning of architecture because "purely 'reading off' symbolism does not attend to the tremendous amount and variety of work that is necessary to create or perpetuate those symbols, or to understand buildings more affective, tactile, sensual effects" (Kraftl et al, 2008: 214). The work of Kraftl and Adey therefore is an important contribution to thinking about a critical architectural geography.

Calls for new ways of thinking about the relationship between people and the built environment are also prominent in the work of Frances Morton and her article "Performing ethnography: Irish traditional music sessions and new methodological spaces" (Morton, 2005). This paper explores spaces of impromptu experiences and behaviour within the built environment. Morton's work therefore explores the link between space and social practices. In particular the work of Morton focuses on spaces of performance and the relationship between behaviour and the built environment.

Morton's work is important for a critical architectural geography because by focusing on "the liveliness and richness of real time, it is possible to negotiate access to the spaces which are created in the 'now'-for example, embodied and expressive ways of knowing, being and communicating *in situ*...These spaces of the now constitute a sense of belonging and understanding for many people who participate in the making. Although we cannot hold such spaces in our hands, nor is it possible to capture or represent them in their entirety, this does not make this methodological venture a futile one, in fact it makes it quite the opposite" (Morton, 2005:662).

Morton's work is of direct relevance to this study because of its focus on issues of providing accurate portrayals of the vibrancy and richness of place. Her work is concerned with people's performance within space. This thesis seeks to provide multiple narratives of the story of GUV, and the ways in which people interact with spaces of GUV. In particular how academics fully engage with performance and experience and subsequently translate this into vibrant accounts of the city is a theme dealt with by the work of Morton. Later in this chapter I consider the methodological perspectives on researching experience, however this is done from a broader perspective than the ethnographic framework proposed by Morton.

At this point it is important to consider the spaces in which studies of experiences take place. In particular much work undertaken as part of a critical architectural geography focuses on the public realm and its impact on experiences of the city. In particular this work examines the potential of public spaces to nurture a sense of community. The work of Leonie Sandercock and Ash Amin is important to consider at this juncture as it introduces new ways of thinking about the relationship between experience, the public realm and urban design.

In Leonie Sandercock's article 'Cosmopolitan Urbanism' she argues that we should use the "metaphor of the mongrel city to characterize an emerging urban condition in which difference, otherness, multiplicity, heterogeneity, diversity and plurality prevail" (Sandercock, 2006:37). The "social project" of her Cosmopolitan Urbanism is to encourage encounters at neighbourhood levels. Simply creating public spaces for exchanges and interaction between people, according to Sandercock, is not enough and we must take deeper sociological approaches to diversity and experiences of the city. Such arguments resonate with the debates about the relationship between design and experience proposed by the UVG, and the ability of design to foster community, particularly in diverse urban environments.

Sandercock argues that Global Cities such as London are bound up in stories and processes of immigration and ethnic diversity. She questions, "how can 'we', (all of us), in all of our differences, be 'at home' in the increasingly multicultural and multiethnic cities of the twenty-first century?" (Sandercock, 2006:38). The answer to this lies partly in the ways in which

difference and diversity are planned for and encouraged by “city-design professionals” and the experiences of the built environment by urban dwellers (Sandercock, 2006:38). Such an approach leads Sandercock to question the “possibility of living alongside others who are different” (Sandercock, 2006:38).

These ideas resonate with issues explored in this thesis, such as the role of race and GUV, and ideas of community and a multiplicity of relationships between residents of the Village. The UV literature is based on notions of building places that encourage interaction and encounters between people such as piazzas, squares and parks. This belief that design has the ability to encourage and nurture relationships between people is firmly embedded within policy literature that emerged in the 1990s including the UVG report and the planning reports that emerged at the turn of the century. According to Sandercock “another popular policy fix in the urban literature looks to the powers of visibility and encounter between strangers in the open or public spaces of the city. The freedom to associate and mingle in cafés, parks, streets, shopping malls, and squares (a feature of Richard Rogers’ recipe for urban renaissance) has been linked to the development of an urban civic culture based on the freedom and pleasure of lingering, the serendipity of the chance encounter, and the public awareness that these are shared spaces” (Sandercock, 2006:44).

Contradicting these arguments however is the belief that such sites become dominated by one particular ethnic group or because they are spaces of movement interactions are superficial with little engagement between people using these spaces (Amin, 2002). Furthermore Amin argues that housing estates are not the spaces that encourage multicultural encounters but rather these are community centres, schools and public spaces in which “people from different cultural backgrounds are thrown together in new settings which disrupt familiar patterns and create the possibility of initiating new attachments” (Sandercock, 2006:45)

There is an expectation placed on the design of public spaces that sees them as being devoid of confrontation. The marketing rhetoric for GUV, and more widely the discourses of community evoked by the UVG sees public spaces as the places in which people will congregate and develop a sense of community. Notions of spaces such as squares and parks, being places in which deep and meaningful encounters occur are utopian. James Donald for example argues that Richard Roger’s vision for the city is based on romanticised visions of community rather than the “aggression, violence and paranoia” that can occur in these spaces (Donald, 1999:135). Such conflicts are therefore inevitable in multicultural spaces with diverse cultures, values and practices (Sandercock, 2006).

### *3.1.3 Criticisms and limits of a critical architectural geography*

Critical architectural approaches to the city, as explored in the previous section, are influenced by preceding works such as those developed from urban sociology and humanist geographies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst such approaches are not new they are important when considering ways of understanding and presenting narratives of experience and interactions with the built environment. However, attempts to implement a critical architectural geography are not without their problems, and as such criticisms of the movement have developed. Such criticisms rest on two arguments, the role of theory in the research process and the lack of emotions within critical architectural geography.

Larry Ford argues that movements such as critical architectural geographies place too much dependence on the role of theory, and as a result neglect meaningful experiential fieldwork which is the basis of their claims. Ford states that:

“Heavy reliance on theory, absent the rich contradictions of place-based research, can also generate prepackaged interpretations. As temptations increase to critique the world through the lens of a particular theory, we run the risk of being ever more distanced from actual people and places. If we use an abstract conceptual framework to examine place characteristics that are themselves abstractions (inner city, class divisions, urban sprawl) we pile up sophisticated analyses that are far too internally consistent to capture the chaotic real world”.

(Ford, 2001:380)

According to Ford, we can begin to get bogged down in theory and trying to impart ideas on our research and neglect the ways in which we begin to know places through research. Ford writes passionately about his experience of the urban environment and spending hours walking the streets of American streets trying to understand and experience the cities of which he is writing. Such an approach is admirable, especially Ford’s commitment to presenting a faithful and realistic interpretation of the communities he studies, which was a major driving force behind this thesis.

It is important to note that Ford does not advocate abandoning theoretical frameworks for research, but that it should be used with “a grain of salt” (Ford, 2001:380). Instead Ford questions the ability of a critical architectural geography to adequately address notions of experience and sensory understandings of place if the present focus on theory prevails (Ford, 2001).

The second criticism of a critical architectural geography is that it fails to engage with emotions of urban dwellers and their emotional responses to their surroundings. According

to Rose et al, in existing studies of ‘new architectural geographies’:

“‘Feelings’ tend to be understood as emotions and are acknowledged rather than explored...what these accounts share is an acknowledgement of the human imbrication in building events, but none have given the human sustained attention and explored how the relation of human subjectivity to the materialities of big things might be complex, multiple or ambiguous”.

(Rose et al, 2010:337)

Critical architectural geographers such as Lees, Llewellyn and Jacobs, acknowledge the role of embodiment and emotions in shaping place, yet fail to bring out such experiences in their own research. Instead, Rose et al argue that affective understandings of place, which are rooted in phenomenological ways of researching the city, offer greater insights into emotions and experience. Their work proposes that feelings should be thought of in 3 ways: feelings *of* buildings, feelings *in* buildings, and feelings *about* buildings (Rose et al, 2010). To consider feelings and emotions within the built environment, we must understand and explore embodied experiences of the city to develop greater accounts of city life. The next section of this chapter turns to explore research that is rooted within embodied understandings of architecture. Following this the chapter presents research drawn from material and sensory approaches to the city.

## 3.2 Approaching the city

### 3.2.1 Embodied understandings of architecture

One of the ways in which embodiment is explored is Imrie’s focus on architects’ understandings of the body (Imrie, 2003). Imrie interviewed architects and university teachers to understand how architectural practices, theories and courses conceive of the human body. These were evaluated to see the implications this has on the built environment and its design. Imrie sought to gain an understanding of issues such as the context in which architects learn about the body, and whether they consider the body in their designs. The first stage of research for Imrie was to set up a steering group during which architects discussed these issues. The group also served as a network building exercise allowing for more in-depth interviews to occur at a later stage in the research process. In the steering group participants discussed the role of drawing in architecture and the representation of the body.

In addition Imrie included a survey to gain initial insights into the role of the body in architecture. By doing this Imrie explored how architects’ training affected how they conceptualised the body. Imrie also completed 41 interviews with architectural firms and evaluated drawings, plans and photographs from these firms. As such Imrie provides an important methodological

structure for research into the ways in which architects conceptualise the built environment. Whilst these methods are not innovative and new, they do provide a good starting point for understanding how the built environment is produced. Therefore these methods can be used to understand the meanings invested in the built environment by the architect, and how experience is conceptualised in the design phase.

Such methods led Imrie to conclude that architects seldom consider the people they are designing for or the embodied experiences of these buildings. Rather than being bound up in meaning and experience the relationship between the body and the architect is measurement and geometry. According to Imrie, “the human body was only important insofar that it provided the dimensions for deriving aspects of architectural style and form; the human use of buildings was seen as a secondary concern” (Imrie, 2003:49). As such architecture has been ‘decorporealised’, and sensory and experiential qualities of the body have been negated in favour of geometric measurements. For Imrie then architecture is about control and organisation of bodies through a focus on the material aspects of place. These material aspects, such as the location and size of doorways, lie more in relation to design than experiences of material landscapes.

Utilising Imrie’s argument as a starting point this thesis proposes that architecture is about the connection between place and people, helping to define community and as such the relationship between the body and landscape should not be neglected. My research develops from this strand of thought by exploring the ways in which people experience the material and textural aspects of UVs. As Imrie argues “architecture is indissoluble from the body, describing the grains, colours, and textures are surfaces as generating a sensuous geography created by a phenomenal experience of architecture” (Imrie, 2003:51). Often mentioned in this study were handbooks which offer guidelines on the dimensions that architects should work to. They offer a range of data such as the average body measurements for architects to use in their designs. Lance Hosey has shown the ways in which gender, race and the body are theorised in the work of one of these manuals: *Graphic Standards* (Hosey, 2001).

*Graphic Standards* is the main anthropometric handbook that architects use, and contains a host of data on the dimensions of the human body. The book is highly visual containing a number of diagrams and drawings of the body. However as Hosey argues, “when a single body is proposed to represent all people, the body is male” (Hosey, 2001:101). Since the first use of the Vitruvian model, the able-bodied male has been used by architects as the standardised unit to which architects design, and Hosey charts the ways in which the gender bias of *Graphic Standards* is played-out in the visual representations of the body. The vast majority of the drawings are of white, able-bodied males which are taken to be representative of the entire population that use and experience the built environment. Le Corbusier acknowledged that “Architecture ... must be a thing of the body”, but to echo the

question posed by Hosey, whose body? (Corbusier, 1968:60) If architects design the built environment from a narrow perspective this affects the ways people of differing disabilities, gender and race experience the built environment. Imrie also argued that the “body in this view is little more than an object with fixed measurable parts; it is neutered and neutral, that is without sex, gender, race, or physical difference” (Imrie, 2003:47). Therefore architects’ conceptions deal only with the fit or able-body and not with the disabled body. These themes are developed further in chapter 5, in relation to experiences of shared surfaces.

As has been explored architects conceived of a fixed and known body when designing urban environments and neglect bodily movements and other needs in their designs. Other approaches to embodied experiences of architecture focus on use of space rather than the design of space. From the perspective of my research this relates to how residents’ experiences change as a result of a unique urban texture and morphology associated with masterplanned UVs. Interest in the body is due to “the fact that bodily practices (eating, sleeping, washing, and presenting ourselves to others) dominates our everyday lives, [yet] the discipline of geography has been slow to address ‘the body’ as a significant location” (Valentine, 1999:329). The body plays a significant role in our experiences of place and affects the identities we derive from the built environment. For this reason it has received increased interest as part of geographic research, from the perspective of users of public space in addition to architects.

Foremost amongst articles focusing on embodied experiences is Monica Degen, Caitlin DeSilvey and Gillian Rose’s ‘Experiencing visualities in designed urban environment: learning from Milton Keynes’ (Degen et al, 2008). Using the example of the Centre:mk mall in Milton Keynes the article shows how shoppers interact with the built environment. As Degen et al state the mall is a “totally designed environment” which is therefore subject to particular claims on the landscape about the meanings and practices that can occur in these spaces. Given the emphasis placed on practice and performance by a critical architectural geography and non-representational theory, this article has steered clear from a representation of the intentions of the architect and an analysis of the ways in which the centre is designed for consumption purposes.

Instead the authors focus on the ways in which urban environments that are designed for a specific visual effect are experienced. In the case of the Centre:mk mall these principles are primarily visual, because the mall must have a certain look to encourage consumption. The existing literature on the nature of consumption shows us that Malls are highly visual and controlled spaces. This article researches the ways in which these principles affect peoples’ experiences of visual urban environments.

The authors state nine years after Lees' article "with very few exceptions there is one outstanding absence: the experiences of the people actually using these 'designed environments'. Few discussions of urban design appear interested in how people engage with these highly designed environments, or how these environments are experienced in the routines of everyday life" (Degen et al, 2008:1903). As such the authors explored how users of the built environment "moved through this space and encountered its displays in a variety of ways: giving a lingering glance to the cars, perhaps approaching one, touching it maybe even climbing into it" (Degen et al, 2008:1906). The displays that Degen, DeSilvey and Rose explore, include a Chitty Chitty Bang Bang car, an Italian market, craft shows, new car displays and Christmas displays.

I will focus in depth on the experiences of material landscapes later in this chapter, however I feel it crucial to highlight the fact that certain surfaces are designed for a specific effect. For my own study, planners and architects design UVs with the desire to create visual, and community cohesive urban environments. The UVG Report states that "our challenge is to create neighbourhoods that will be popular, productive and beautiful places to live both now and for many generations to come" (Aldous, 1992:86). Therefore there is an emphasis placed on the visual and also the use of the term neighbourhood. This is important as it shows that architects conceive of the built environment as something that can influence practice and performances of place. In the case of Centre:mk this effect is to create a visual environment conducive to shopping. The Mall incorporates advertising boards, public artwork and designed streetscapes all aimed at promoting a certain image or meaning of place. As such Degen, DeSilvey and Rose acknowledge the role that form and design have on the experiential qualities of place. They argue that there is an "embedding of design in the practices that animate urban spaces and visualities" (Degen et al, 2008:1910). In essence they argue that in the visually orientated environments in their study, design affects practices and performances. However as I have argued earlier in this chapter, practice should also inform design.

One of the ways to ensure that practice forms a crucial part of design is to study the embodied engagement between people, place and objects. Degen, DeSilvey and Rose argue that "sustained studies of how people experience designed urban environments are almost nonexistent in the critical urban studies literature" (Degen et al, 2008:1913). Given that there is little research within the social sciences that explores the experiential qualities of place, geographers have also neglected this important part of building design. As such the authors argue that their approach "shifts towards examining the way that embodied engagements animate the potential qualities of a specific space" (Degen et al, 2008:1914). They are therefore researching how people interpret and use these designed environments.

To achieve this, the authors focus on ‘moving materialities’ and the methods that result from this. The authors describe their methodological position as coming from psychogeography, phenomenology and ethnomethodology. Drawing on the work of Latham, whose ideas will be explored later in this chapter, the authors draw on a number of qualitative methods to attempt to understand the experiential qualities of a shopping mall in Milton Keynes. Primarily these methods were based on ethnographic methods of research such as observations. However in addition they also created photo-essays, audio diaries and research diaries in which to record experiences. The key point to make here is that these diaries were of their own observations and feelings in the shopping centre, and these would no doubt have been affected by their role as a researcher. They were however able to gauge the reaction and experiences of users of the shopping mall by using a go-along interview technique.

Such “methodologies capture the ways in which people, and the communities of which they are part, value places [are] becoming increasingly desirable to policy makers, planners and designers” (Ricketts Hein, 2008:1266). The use of go-along walking interviews is predicated on the desire to engage with people in the built environment, rather than the office of the researcher or another isolated place. Simmel argued that humans connect to place, and it is for this reason that the walking interview seeks to capture people engaging with the built environment, including their emotions and reactions to particular places and instances (Simmel, 1997). This sentiment also resonates with the core ideas of a critical architectural geography and the need to understand embodied interactions with landscapes. The walking interview is focused on the relationship between participant and the material environment that surrounds them and is an effective way to engage with the environment that people talk about in their interviews.

In 2006, Steven’s sought to show how people use designed urban environments for ‘play’ (Stevens, 2006). Drawing on Kevin Lynch’s study of urban public spaces, Steven’s looks at the ways in which people experience and behave in these spaces (Lynch, 1960). Stevens expands the framework developed by Lynch who looked at key elements of the city such as points, nodes and edges. Lynch explored these elements in relation to how they implanted themselves on the psyche of the users of the built environment. Lynch developed a technique of mental mapping which showed the ‘imageability’ of urban elements. The technique of mental mapping allowed Lynch to explore how class affected where and when people experienced a city. Again moving back to the work of Degen, Lynch looked at how visually adept places were and related this to how they were experienced stating that “the function of a good urban environment may not be simply to facilitate routine trips, not to support meanings and feelings already possessed. Quite as important may be its role as a guide and a stimulus for new exploration” (Lynch, 1960:109). Stevens develops this framework further by exploring the experiences of people in these spaces and the ways in which landmarks and urban morphology can create meaning and identity for users of the built environment.

In particular he looks at the concept of urban play and the ways in which this interaction between people and the material environment is played out in terms of the embodiment and sensory qualities of place (Stevens, 2006). Stevens uses a methodology centred on ethnographic observations and photography of people in public areas. He used these methods to compile a set of observations of the experiential qualities of public space in London, Berlin, New York and Melbourne. In addition to the ethnographic approach, Stevens conducted ‘observational surveys’, which totalled 70 walked circuits of the public spaces he was dealing with.

Stevens’s methodology was based around the authors desire to capture public play at differing times of the day, and days of the week. According to Stevens “any morphological features seem to support it [public play], the spatiality of social interactions, and the ways in which people’s bodies engage with built-form features. Observed behaviour was examined in relation to an analysis of the objective physical and sensory conditions under which it occurred (such as changes of level and lines of sight and movement, texture of surfaces, noise levels, light, and shadow)” (Stevens, 2006:806). Therefore Stevens’s work can be seen to be an exploration of the relationship between people and their physical environment. The methodology used by Stevens, focuses on the activity and practices people undertake in place. To attempt to understand these instances of public play, Stevens observed and interpreted the meanings of these practices in relation to the context in which they occurred.

As has been shown, to date most studies of urban morphology and urban environments focus on plans and architects perceptions of the built environment. Stevens article however focuses on what people are doing in these spaces and the performances that occur. He states that “rather than just perceiving existing meanings in the built environment, people add meaning to it, through playful interpretation” (Stevens, 2006:813). Showing how little research has been done on the experiential it is argued that “comparatively little is known about the role of urban structure in framing more impractical aspects of urban experience: the unexpected, unfamiliar, and incomprehensible, spontaneity, distraction and risk (Stevens, 2006:805). Therefore Stevens attempts to redress this by observing how people and more specifically their bodies engage with urban textures.

Stevens’ notion of ‘play’ is conducted through a bodily engagement between people and objects. These objects provide the potential for emotion, movement and sensory experience of the urban environment. As such this leads Stevens to call for “further research [which] could explore in more detail the microgeography of urban space, the way in which built elements structure human experience and movement within the scale of the body’s reach, the behavioural importance of particular properties such as slope, texture and temperature” (Stevens, 2006:815).

My research seeks to do this by placing an emphasis on the ways in which physical urban textures are designed and experienced. Therefore central to my own research are the debates around embodied understandings of the city, but also the interaction between bodies and objects. I turn now to look at the debates about the city and materiality and in particular to the ways in which the body can be used to explore material urban form. I have detailed above the need for a turn to understand the experiential as part of research into urban environments, and I now seek to show how to do this in relation to the urban fabric that exists. I have stated that urban design affects practice and vice versa, and as such I now seek to highlight how we can begin to think about the materialities of urban geography.

### ***3.2.2 Material approaches to the city***

A critical architectural geography places greater emphasis on the social practices that occur in place. As has been explored above this entails a greater understanding of the ways in which the human body is conceptualised and is central to experiences of people in place. The main way we experience place is through our bodies and as such practice and performance are at the heart of these new ways of writing. These non-representational forms of research are therefore concerned with how the everyday experiences of place are translated into practice and performance. As Anderson and Wylie state there should be a “focusing on meaningful practices of use and encounters with objects and environments... [and the] spatialities of the lived body, practice, touch, emotion and affect” (Anderson, 2009:320). As such there is a greater emphasis placed on the ways in which social practices are framed by material environments.

Carmona, Marshall and Stevens set out to review the literature on design codes that exists, along with the planning papers and guidelines (Carmona et al, 2006). Secondly they used the themes and ideas they had explored in the first stage to inform the questions in stakeholder surveys. Thirdly they focus on individual case studies where design codes have been used. Finally they follow this up with interviews and a workshop. The workshop was designed to get architects and planners to reflect on the use of design codes and look for experiences of their use and implementation. The omission of experiences of users of the built environment from this article means that Carmona, Marshall and Stevens did not set their work in the same framework as a critical architectural geography developed by Lees or Thrift’s Non-Representational Theory. However, in spite of this, the article develops some interesting thoughts on the ways in which architects and planners utilise design codes for certain purposes. Given that my research will not explore the experiential facets of the UV movement in isolation but will also consider urban design codes and the ways they theorise and control the design of UVs the work of Carmona, Marshall and Stevens is as relevant as that of Degen, DeSilvey and Rose for studies of the built environment.

Urban Design codes are usually a collaboration between planners, architects, and local government aimed at improving design standards in new build housing. They contain a set of guiding principles by which all parties or as Carmona, Marshall and Stevens term them ‘stakeholders’, must agree to. Design codes are developed to produce a certain kind of environment, be that for social or political purposes. The New Urbanism and UV movement which are central to my own study have been at the heart of the use of design codes through the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. These codes seek to regulate the ways in which the built environment is designed through a strict control on the form and function of urban morphology and textures. The use of design codes places an emphasis on the role of design-led approaches to planning rather than experiential ways of seeing the built environment. The codes seek to define the ways in which towns are designed by setting strict guidelines for the size, shape and design of urban textures.

The role of the body and its relationship with the material environment are a central concern to material geographies of the city. As such Latham and McCormack argue that “the immaterial needs to be understood more expansively so as to include the prepersonal force of a multiplicity of non-representational forces and practices and processes through which matter is always coming into being” (Latham & McCormack, 2004:705). Therefore what is being argued, is that the unreal and abstract accounts of immaterial geography must ground themselves more in the lived experiences of place. Practices, processes and performances are bound in the embodied relationship between the body and the physical environment. Latham and McCormack also draw on this relationship between the body and the ways in which we think about the materiality of the city.

Corporeal understandings of the city are affected by the configuration of the urban environment, and “textures and densities...thus act as sets of imperatives within and through which movement and sensation are inspired and performed” (Anderson, 2009:333). Therefore the material nature of the city affects the kinds of emotions and social practices we experience on a daily basis. For example Latham and McCormack use the example of how the car has reworked the physical configuration of the city. This has been done through the inclusion of parking spaces, paved streets, garages, and traffic lights and other technologies. They argue that design can shape the materiality of the car and its surrounding environment (Latham & McCormack, 2004).

This conceptualisation of the relationship between design and social practice is echoed by Lees in her paper ‘rematerializing geography: the ‘new’ urban geography (Lees, 2002). She argues that “unlike in, say, social and cultural geography, the turn to ‘representation’ in urban geography has centred on (the material) urban form. This focus on urban spatiality is not surprising given the city’s stark physicality, the obvious layering of economic, cultural,

political and social realms” (Lees, 2002:107). She also states that the interpretative tradition in geography has focused solely on representation rather than action, practice and performativity. Lees’s call for a ‘rematerializing’ of urban geography differs slightly from that of Latham’s because, according to Latham, it simplifies the relationship between the material and the immaterial. Latham sees these two terms as not being simplistic and argues that before we can understand and rematerialise urban geography we must understand what the term means. In addition Latham argues that Lees seems to pay less attention to the “empirical contexts that make the urban a productive and exciting area for research” (Latham & McCormack, 2004:703). This is due to Lees’ focus on the ways in which we experience the city, as opposed to the meanings bound up in the built environment.

The work of Latham is central to a study of the material built environment who argues for a specific research methodology to do this. In his paper on ‘research, performance, and doing human geography’, Latham argues that “reframing research as creative, performative practice allows the researcher to address some novel questions about the cultures of everyday urban experience that more conventional, representationally orientated, methods fail to address adequately” (Latham, 2003:1994).

Latham states that we must engage with complex and messy empirical work to fully understand the practices and processes that take place in the built environment. He draws heavily from the work of Nigel Thrift and the non-representational movement in exploring the metaphor of performance, and asserting that we need a ‘methodological hybrid’ which brings together representational and non-representational techniques of research. According to Thrift cultural geographers have “allied themselves with a number of qualitative methods...most notably in-depth interviews and ethnographic ‘procedures’... [w]hat is surprising is how narrow this range of skills still is” (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000:3). Latham seeks to provide an answer to this criticism by using an innovative research methodology to explore the dynamics of the street and its residents. Latham explores how the residents interact with the material environment such as cafes, bars and other areas of the city.

Existing studies of urban geography have focused on representational methodologies and downplayed the importance of practice and performance. Latham states that “if there is one thing the cultural turn should have done it is to have provided a route to understand and interpret the world of everyday social practice. And yet, in Thrift’s view, one of the roots of cultural geography’s methodological conservatism is its failure to take practice seriously enough” (Latham, 2003:1996). Consequently Latham’s research methodology reflects this need to move beyond the representational by using participant diaries, photo diaries, interviews and time-space graphs. All of these methods look at the embodied understandings of place and place-making, both central concepts in my own research. Latham applied these methods to one specific example, that of Ponsonby Road. He asked participants to write diaries which

included a commentary about their day, how they felt, what they thought about a place and where they went. These diaries were then read by Latham and used as part of follow up interviews. In addition to this Latham also sought to engage with the visual imaginations of participants by providing them with disposable cameras. He asked participants to take photos of interesting and significant places and events in their week. Finally Latham developed a technique based on a time-geography technique of mapping people's movements.

Thinking about performance and practice, Latham drew time-space graphs which detailed and plotted where and when people were in the city, how they travelled there and how they felt about this. The ways in which these methods are presented are innovative and unique. Latham argues that "rather than ditching the methodological skills that human geography has so painfully accumulated, we should work through how we can imbue traditional research methodologies with a sense of the creative, the practical, and being with practice-ness that Thrift is seeking" (Latham, 2003:2000). This has been achieved and the article researches the experiential in new ways, yet retains at its core traditional approaches to the city. There is an understanding of the meanings and discourses bound up and produced in city life, yet the article moves beyond this to issues of materiality, performance and practice. This is done through new forms of research methodology that are 'more-than' representational.

### ***3.2.3 Sensory approaches to the city***

People experience the material urban environment through bodily encounters and sensory urbanism. Senses such as sound, smells and touch are all as important as visual perceptions of place. Henri Lefebvre argued that urban dwellers need "to hear, to touch, to taste and... to gather these perceptions in a 'world'" (Lefebvre, 1996:147). Lefebvre argues that the form and design of a city (those things which have traditionally been researched by urban geographers) are not just observed but are also felt through the body and the senses. In essence there is a multisensory experience of the material built environment. Therefore to effectively portray experiences of place we must include a number of different approaches to research including different senses in our methodological framework.

One article that does this effectively is Kevin Hetherington's exploration of how touch is constitutive of place (Hetherington, 2003). Hetherington looks at the ways in which people make place through touch from the perspective of visually impaired people and the ways in which they experience museums. As such Hetherington's work is unique in cultural geography in that it focuses less on the visual performativity of place, and more on the importance of touch. Hetherington's study looked at the ways in which touch is 'constitutive of place' through an engagement with visually impaired people and their experiences of museum environments. The article is routed in the use of interviews and a touch tour that Hetherington went on with one of his participants. As such Hetherington's work provides an

interesting link with that of Rob Imrie that was explored earlier. It was argued that architects must give careful consideration to the experiential qualities of place and more specifically to the ways in which disabled people experience place.

The work of Hetherington shows one way in which this can be effectively done. According to Hetherington he positions his work in the non-representational framework looking at the ways in which practices and performance take place. He argues however that much of this work has centred on sight as being the main form of research into the social practise that occur in place. In geographical knowledge there has been a privileging of visual ways of thinking in relation to place. Instead he argues that “our embodied experiences depend on the ability to make use of such proximal and performative forms of knowledge in the making of place. Touch is one source of such knowledge” (Hetherington, 2003:1936). Therefore he argues that knowledge and experience are embodied and sensory, and as such we must look at all forms of sensory urbanism when considering the experiential. This will allow us to understand what we mean by place and the ways we think about and theorise the concept. It will also allow us to look at the ways in which place is experienced.

As such Hetherington poses the question “how might we come to understand the experience of space as a decentred and partially connected experience of the performing (and performed) body” (Hetherington, 2003:1935). He seeks to move away from existing accounts of place which focus on how people make sense of the world, because these focus too much on the visual narratives of place. In doing this Hetherington states that we must treat “the world as a series of surfaces that offer, provide, furnish (that is, afford) subjects a fulfilment of their embodied needs” (Hetherington, 2003:1938). This idea ties in with the debates about a material approach to geography, and the need to look at the physical urban environment in relation to embodied practices and experiences. Hetherington goes on to say that meaning is created not unconsciously “but through an interaction with the material world and subject” (Hetherington, 2003:1938). For this reason urban form and design are important considerations when framing a geographical approach to the city.

However research into architectural spaces must move beyond this to look at the ways in which we inhabit and experience these spaces. A critical architectural geography such as that advocated by Lees, but also incorporating additional directions such as sensory and material approaches to research moves beyond representation. Instead it turns its attention to issues of use, experience, practice and performance. As such what is developed is an understanding of the form and design of a building or town but also the ways in which it is experienced.

### 3.3 Existing research into UVs

Whilst existing literature on the UV concept has focused on perceptions of space (Till, 1993; McCann, 1995; Harvey, 1997; Fainstein, 2000), and conceived space (Talen, 1999; Al Hindi, 1997; Thompson-Fawcett, 1996; 2003), research into the experiences of UVs is lacking. Larry Ford writing in 2001 as part of a special issue of *Urban Geography* on New Urbanism argues that “we must begin to pay careful attention to how these neo-traditional features function in the urban scene” (Ford, 2001:284). Throughout this paper Ford looks at the ways in which urban form plays a crucial role in the making of neo-traditional developments. Ford’s paper focuses on alleys and the ways in which they have been implemented in UV projects. The key point to make here, however, is that Ford’s work is reminiscent of much research that has been produced on New Urbanism and UVs in that it focuses purely on physical form and not the experiential facets of place. Given that a critical architectural geography focuses on the ways in which places are experienced as well as looking at physical urban form there would appear to be a gap in the existing literature.

Ford’s approach loosely acknowledges the link between people and the built environment, however:

“Simply to proclaim that everybody is shaped by their surroundings in different ways because they ‘use’ a different range of places is widely regarded as insufficient by geographers who have (generally) sought to elucidate the complex relationships that exist between people and place. In this regard, a major insight of human geography has been to indicate that different people may experience the same place in very different ways according to their knowledge of that place”.

(Ford, 2001:38)

As such the main criticism of this approach is that Ford gives not account of the ways in which landscape is appropriated or experienced. He uses experiences in the same way as consumption studies, in that the resident or user of the built environment is a passive consumer, and openly accepts the meanings inscribed on landscape by architects, planners and marketers.

The physical urban fabric is important in Ford’s work however he does not approach this from a material perspective and look at the relationship between people and the material landscape. Instead Ford focuses his attention on the ways in which urban form can be used to sell an ideal of tidiness and control. Ford then explores the ways in which New Urban projects are marketed. He argues that New Urban architects sell an ideal of place which is attractive to homebuyers and businesses. Such ideas have been explored by Karen Till, and UVs sell a packaged landscape to white affluent populations, by excluding others from place

(Till, 1993). These landscapes make promises and are imbued with meanings inscribed on them by architects.

Till uses the example of Rancho Santa Margarita in Orange County, California and the ways in which town planners have created a sense of place in the town by distinguishing it from its surroundings. Till argues that town planners state they pay more attention to the unique nature of place and also to local histories of place. Borrowing the term from Hobsbawn and Ranger, Till argues that these are however, “invented” histories. These invented histories and traditions:

“never develops or preserves a living past, but instead occurs for three distinct purposes: to establish social cohesion within a group; or for the purpose of socialization-instilling a series of values, beliefs, and behaviours within different members of society; or finally to legitimize or to establish authority”.

(Boyer, 1996:310)

Till uses the example of a hierarchy of place, one which creates “an other” from which the UV defines itself. In the case of Rancho Santa Margarita this is done through a return to the past and the family heritage of the town and the surrounding area. Planners and architects therefore have incorporated certain shades of colour in their design and urban design code, as well as vernacular architectural styles and physical layout. Therefore they can market the town as an authentic version of what the area was like in the nineteenth century.

Till’s focus however remains on the marketing of towns rather than the experience of them. She looks closely at the ways in which meanings are inscribed on the built environment by planners and the ways in which they seeks to create the juxtaposition of meanings on the landscape. As with gated communities, UVs market themselves as safe, community-building and pleasant places to live. This is juxtaposed with the suburbs or inner city which is seen as unsafe and damaging to the social characteristics of place. However as with much of the work on UVs, this is put into practice through an interpretative and representational framework. The authors do not explore whether the rhetoric developed by planners and architects is actually put into practice. Is a suburb devoid of true community relations? Is the inner city perceived as dangerous and crime-ridden by those who live there? Are UVs as safe in practice as they are marketed? These are some of the questions that could be asked when thinking about the ways in which UVs are experienced and the practices and performances that occur as a result of this unique type of urban form.

Other examples of research into UVs and new urban projects come from Karen Falconer Al-Hindi who has written a number of articles on this subject. All of this work however, like those detailed above develops from an interpretative framework and one which focuses on

the narratives that are associated with UVs (Al-Hindi, 2001; Al-Hindi & Till, 2001). Emily Talen has also written a number of articles on the subject of New Urbanism (E. Talen, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; 2005), yet as with Al-Hindi, Talen's work has focused on the goals and aims of New Urbanism rather than its experiential qualities.

To date research into UVs has focused on the physical form of towns and cities that fall under the principles of the UVG. This research is also relatively non-existent in relation to other forms of planning such as gated communities or even New Urbanism. Therefore there is a need to focus research on the ways in which UVs are experienced, through research into the embodied performances that occur in these spaces. A critical architectural geography approach to New Urbanism would focus on the ways in which UV landscapes are experienced. However, the literature shown above indicates that at present most research focuses on the perspective of form and design. Rather than asking questions such as what types of practise and performances are occurring, or how are users of the public squares appropriating or even transgressing meanings of space, these authors are asking what meanings are architects, planners and marketers placing on the built environment?

### **3.4 New geographies of UV research: A methodology**

The literature explored above leads to the question "how then can we approach studying the ordinary, the everyday, in ways that actively engage embodiments of social practice...what kinds of methodologies should we employ if we are to be more sensitive to the creativity of practice?" (Latham, 2003:1999). What is needed are new ways of researching UVs that reflect the growing interest in embodiment, materiality and sensory urbanism in the social sciences.

#### ***3.4.1 Selecting a Case Study: GUV***

The aim of this thesis is to bring attention to the ways in which the everyday geographies of UVs move from conceptualisation to reality. In selecting a case study for this thesis, it was imperative to avoid following existing research that focuses on flagship UVs such as Poundbury and Upton in the UK context, and Seaside and Celebration in the US. Developments such as these show us nothing of the everyday pressures that are placed on a vision as it moves through the planning system. Selecting a mundane development, aims to break from usual ways of theorising UVs (Al-Hindi, 1997; Bond, 2004; LaFrank, 1997; Thompson-Fawcett, 2003), and therefore gives more meaningful encounters with the UV concept.

GUV was chosen as the case study for this thesis as it fits the above criteria. The Village was undertaken by one of the country's largest volume house builders, and therefore the Vision

was placed under pressures such as the desire for increased profit, as well as attempts to impose a standardised house type on the Village.

Processes such as the use of standardised house types and the lack of innovation within the volume house building industry have been explored elsewhere by authors such as Michael Ball, James Barlow, Chris Nicol and Alan Hooper (see Ball, 1999; Barlow, 1999; Barlow et al, 2003; Nicol and Hooper, 1999; Hooper and Nicol, 2000). Whilst the focus of these articles is primarily on the economic and managerial structure of volume house builders, their work provides a pertinent overview to the context of the volume house builder and their importance within the provision of homes in the UK.

Defined as having an output of 2,000 homes or greater a year, volume house builders and speculative developers produce 80% of new homes in the UK (Adams, 2004). In 2002, the year work began on GUV, TW completed 6238 homes in the UK demonstrating its importance as one of the country's largest volume house builders and therefore an important point of study for the process of how a vision moves from conceptualisation to reality. More widely the "domination of housing production by particular types of large capital" demonstrates the importance of volume house builders in potentially delivering models for city growth such as UVs (Nicol and Hooper, 1999:55).

In spite of this, Michael Ball argues that the 'innovation' required by volume house builders to deliver models such as UVs is limited due to their need to operate in different markets including housing, labour, land and planning, and material markets (Ball, 1999). According to James Barlow, innovation is defined as the introduction of technology and new construction techniques that refines the building process and therefore decreases the amount spent building homes. Construction costs are the greatest output for volume house builders in the building process, and reducing these can lead to greater investment at other stages of the development process (Barlow, 1999). Whilst embracing innovation will most likely be a way for volume house builders to release extra profit from the construction process, it provides the potential for resources to be targeted elsewhere in the development process. For example, the revenue saved from construction could be used to implement design details advocated by the UVG, particularly when these design elements increase the overall value gained by volume house builders from the finished development (such as increased house prices, and higher retail and commercial rental prices).

Reducing construction costs therefore has the potential to lead to greater investment and quality of housing design and choice for the consumer by moving away from the use of standard house types. In a survey of 171 speculative house builders undertaken by Nicol and Hooper (Nicol and Hooper, 1999), 90% of volume house builders used a standard house design demonstrating how homes have become a "mass produced product" (Barlow,

1999:25). Foremost, the use of standard house types, such as those used at GUV, is the result of the desire of volume house builders to save money, emanating from a “tradition in the UK house-building sector of focusing primarily on cost, rather than total value” (Naim and Barlow, 2003:601). As such the design quality of homes is compromised by the desire of volume house builders to increase profits at the development stage, a theme dealt with throughout this thesis, but at the forefront of chapter 4.

Volume house builders’ reliance on standardised house types is a result of their structure and as John Carson at PFBE states, “what a developer wants is certainty and they don’t want uncertainty because they are investing large amounts of money” (John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:8). Using standardised house types reduces the levels of risk and uncertainty associated with development due to the fact that they are cheaper to produce because of the prior knowledge of the product and the standard set of construction skills needed (Nicol and Hooper, 1999). Furthermore by using standard house types, volume house builders are able to reduce the cost of architects’ fees, reduce snagging problems and rely on the precedent set by local authorities in accepting a standard house type for planning permission (Nicol and Hooper, 1999).

The arguments for the use of standard house designs by volume house builders are also based on the social and cultural attitudes of consumers towards bespoke designs. According to Nicol and Hooper “if the risk of not selling a house is high, housebuilders are likely to steer clear of introducing new construction techniques or products. Building a unit that is known to sell clearly reduces risk” (Nicol and Hooper, 1999:66). Standard house designs therefore appeal to conservative consumer tastes and the desire for traditional house types that can be sold easier in the future (Ball, 1999). Such a “fear of change” to innovative forms of house building, does little to acknowledge the fact that 81% of house buyers wanted a greater choice over the initial design of their home (Ozaki, 1999). Booth (1982), Goodchild (1994) and Leopold and Bishop (1983) “have linked standardisation to the production of monotonous design and layouts, and much debate has taken place as to whether this is an inevitable feature of speculative housebuilding” (Nicol and Hooper, 1999:65). Whilst the focus of volume house builders remains profit and reducing costs at the development stage the lack of customised house designs is inevitable because “the commercial logic of providing a range of standard house types to meet the needs of the present market largely over-rules innovation in this area” (Hooper and Nicol, 2000:309). Ozaki argues to improve customer satisfaction volume house builders need to provide customised house designs with a high build quality (Ozaki, 2003). Such a move would allow people to stake an identity on their home, and create bespoke products, as explored in relation to notions of race and GUV in chapter 7.

It is not just the home that is subject to value engineering and a focus on costs, the public realm also suffers because “speculative housebuilding has been characterised by its commitment to a manufacturing rather than a design process, its minimal interest in the public realm, its disdain for urban design and local consultation, and its build-and-walk-away trading ethos” (Adams, 2004). Such a focus on costs means “housebuilders may be sceptical and fail to adopt new products” (Ball, 1999:4). As a result of the focus on building cost and profit, social and cultural attitudes towards house styles, and the risks of providing bespoke products the opportunity for volume house builders to implement the theoretical underpinnings of planning ideas such as those proposed by the UVG is limited. This results in the degradation of Visions and a lack of quality in the built environment.

One final theme to emerge from the literature on volume house builders that is relevant to the study of GUV, is the challenges facing volume house builders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the need to develop on brownfield land becomes greater and embedded within planning policy. PPG 3 sets the target that by 2008 “60% of additional housing should be provided on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings” (DETR, 2000a). Such a move “represents a significant challenge to behaviour and attitudes that have become well established in much of the speculative housebuilding sector” (Adams, 2004:601). This is due to the additional costs associated with brownfield land, such as building on contaminated land in the case of GUV. Furthermore urban design becomes much more important in brownfield locations and if volume house builders “are to make a significant contribution to brownfield redevelopment it is apparent that new competencies and strategies will be required. The problematic nature of many brownfield locations, for instance, means that developers will need to deliver value added directly from housing products rather than rely on gaining profits from inflation in land prices” (Adams, 2004:615). Volume house builders have profited from the focus on development in greenfield locations and the move towards brownfield sites of development presents new challenges to the structure of development and their attitudes towards innovation at the construction stage.

Due to these challenges facing volume house builders, and the call by the UVG to focus on brownfield sites for development, the selection of a case study UV was based on a development that was not a greenfield or urban extension project. The UV concept is a call for people to return to the city, and therefore it is important to explore the ways in which UVs form part of city life. Research which focuses on greenfield developments, moves away from the original intention of the UV. As such it is important to consider brownfield and infill projects and their role within the existing urban fabric. The land on which GUV sits is a former industrial space in West London, and this can tell us much about how it integrates into the existing community of Northolt. Finally GUV was selected as a case study due to its attempts to align itself closely with UV principles.

The decision to pursue a single case study thesis was based on the richness and intensity of research undertaken at GUV. The research involved unprecedented access to all stakeholders in the design process including all of the design team, consultants, local boroughs and developer as well as residents. In total 53 interviews were conducted with design professionals and residents that live in GUV and the surrounding community. Furthermore a vast library of documentation related to the development informs the work in this thesis ranging from beginning of the development in 1999 through to plans for the final phase in 2011. Furthermore personal ethnographic observations, and research diaries were conducted on numerous visits to GUV.

Drawing on life in GUV, this thesis sits within a framework of “more than” geographic approaches to the city. In this thesis such approaches are bound up in exploring the texts associated with the UV, the planning process, and the different senses associated with experiencing GUV. Foremost the methodology utilised in this thesis is about adding senses to the qualitative research process. Such methodologies are not new, but instead seek to engage with the difficulties of conducting research into the sensory experiences of the city. In particular the methods used in this thesis seek to examine the problems associated with researching senses and experiences.

Avoiding such difficulties is reliant on the relationship between researcher and participant. This section explores the practical elements of research such as participant recruitment and the ethics of the research process. Sections 3.4-3.7 detail the different methodologies undertaken in this research.

### ***3.4.2 Recruiting Participants***

At the start of the research process I was faced with the problem of recruiting design professionals to interview, some of whom had not worked on the GUV project for a couple of years, and some had left the companies they originally worked for. Through an initial scoping exercise of the materials available through the internet and planning documents, I began to build a picture of the main companies and people involved in the design process. From this list key people involved in the initial design stage were contacted, and generic emails sent to companies I had no specific contact for.

This process was initially very slow and unrewarding as I was met with few responses. My first breakthrough came when Susanna Livingstone, the Landscape architect for the project agreed to meet with me in November 2008. Following a productive interview, she gave me the contact details of others involved in the project during her time working there. This led to a further four interviews conducted in December 2008 and January 2009. After this point interviews were arranged through snowballing, with one participant giving me the

contact details of another, or by arranging interviews based on the contacts I was able to extract from the growing documentary sources I had collected. By the end of this process I had conducted 31 interviews with design professionals involved in the project from the initial designation of the site for development principles to the final phase of development. Interviews ranged in length from fifteen minutes to two hours, however most lasted one hour, and most were conducted at the offices of participants.



**E·S·R·C**  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

Royal Holloway  
University of London

## Grand Union Village: What's your experience?

I am conducting a research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) at Royal Holloway, University of London and would love to talk to you about your experiences and views of Grand Union Village.

The project involves researching the relationship between design and the experiences of design in Urban Villages. Grand Union Village is an important recent example of this initiative and as such I hope to conduct a series of informal interviews with residents about their experiences of the urban environment focusing on the importance of community in Grand Union Village. This work, I hope, will be of practical benefit in the design of future developments.

**Interviews will take place from April onwards and will be conducted at a time and in a location to you.**

**Any time you can afford me would be greatly appreciated and I would be very interested to hear from you.**

**If you are interested in taking part then please contact me at [a.nye@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:a.nye@rhul.ac.uk). Alternatively see Cathy Bowyer in the Community Development Trust for more information.**

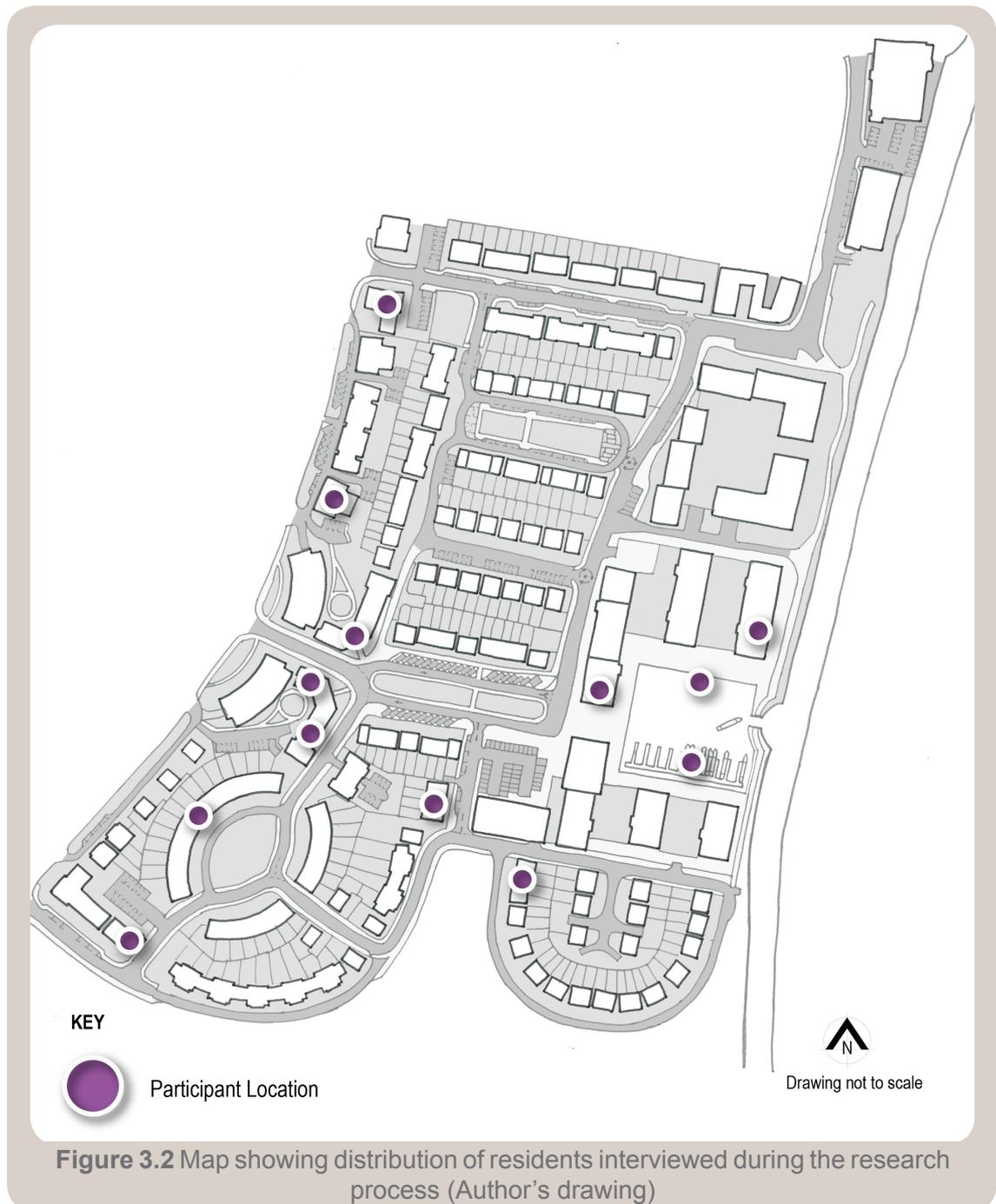
**Figure 3.1** Poster placed in the Village to engage with residents

Towards the end of this process attention turned to GUV residents and the ways in which they could be included in the research. Contacts were created within the CDT, the centralised social infrastructure for all residents of the Village. I placed a recruiting poster on the notice

board of the Costcutter convenience store, as well as on the Village notice board to raise awareness of the project (figure 3.1). To my surprise working through the CDT produced very little interest and exposure to my research for the wider community, emphasising how detached the CDT is from residents. Subsequently I attended a Neighbourhood Watch meeting and was allowed a five-minute slot to speak to residents about my research.

To coincide with this presentation a project information sheet was distributed to 300 homes within the Village. Distribution was conducted on a random basis, however many of the project sheets were delivered to houses in GUV, because of access problems to the flats which are behind locked doors. Using the contacts I developed in Trinity Estates, the management trust for the Village, I was granted access to some of the canalside blocks of flats to deliver project sheets. Both of these approaches worked better than the CDT, and I soon began to build contacts with residents wishing to be involved in my research. After a ten-month intensive period of research on the Village, interacting and speaking with residents, I had conducted 22 interviews (lasting between fifteen minutes and one hour) with GUV residents and members of the surrounding communities, and had a plethora of observation and experiential diaries to inform the following stages of my research.

Figure 3.2 is a map of where the participants live within the Village, showing how they were spread from around the Village rather than being congregated in one space, which would have produced partial results. I was able to undertake research with residents from different social, ethnic, gender, and age groups. Furthermore, I also undertook research with residents from different housing tenures including shared ownership, council housing, private tenants, and canal boat residents. This diverse group of people allowed me to gain a holistic narrative of GUV.



### 3.4.3 *The ethics of research*

Research ethics is an important consideration for any qualitative social science project. Frankfort-Nachmias identified a series of problems during which ethics may cause problems such as; the methods used, the research content, where the research takes place, the procedures required by the research design, the kinds of people involved and the data collected (Frankfort-Nachmias, 2007). The research undertaken for this thesis did not involve vulnerable groups such as children, or those with a mental health issues. Neither did it involve entering places such as hospitals or public schools where the research ethics would be more stringent. However ethical challenges and considerations did present themselves

through the course of the research process.

Social and Cultural Geography  
 at Royal Holloway, University of London

**Ashley Nye**

**ESRC PhD project: 'The Urban Village in British Planning'**  
**Department of Geography**  
**Royal Holloway, University of London.**

The project seeks to explore the ways in which architectural plans are translated into everyday usage and experiences of good and poor urban design. The Urban Village concept makes distinct claims about the relationship between residents and certain forms of the built environment. My research examines the revival of the Urban Village in the late 1990s and 2000s and attempts to explore its different expression in organisations and initiatives such as The Urban Village Forum (set up by Prince Charles in the 1990s), the New Urbanism movement and the Millennium Village movement.

Current studies of this subject have tended to emphasise the importance of physical form and of social structure. These will be important elements in my study of the urban village, but I also wish to explore:

- The concern of the Urban Village with details of design, the textures of building materials, and the creation of particular kinds of urban surfaces.
- The macro-scale urban forms, social structures and organisations (such as community trusts) but also the micro-geographies of the city such as the public realm.
- Residents' experience of the urban environment in Urban Villages.
- The ways in which the centrality of community cohesion within the Urban Village concept has influenced planners' and architects' approaches to the experiential qualities of cities.

I will use a range of contemporary case studies to explore the social impacts that the physical layout of a development has on the experiences of those living in Urban Villages. As such my research methodology includes:

- Examining architectural plans and policy documents associated with the Urban Village movement.
- Interviews with architects, planners and developers.
- Interviews with residents and community leaders.
- Ethnographic observations of everyday life.
- Visibility analysis of the streetscape in Urban Village developments.

30 September 2008

Figure 3.3 Project information sheet given to all research participants

With all interview participants I pursued informed consent, making them fully aware of the project aims, ambitions and outcomes when contact was first made and at the start of interviews. A project sheet detailing this was given to residents at the start of the interview, as shown in figure 3.3. At this point a consent form (figure 3.4) was handed to participants for them to sign detailing that they understood the project's aims, how the information would be used, and that they were able to withdraw their data from the project at any point. Participants were also made aware that they could terminate the interview at any point, and that following the interview, the recording would be transcribed verbatim and a copy sent to

them for their consideration. Participants were also offered full anonymity in the final thesis, an option that four participants took. No sensitive or private information was collected from participants and therefore ethics of this nature did not emerge in the project.





**Consent form for:**  
*Designing Sensory Urban Environments: An intensive study of Grand Union Village*

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 30/09/2008.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded (audio or video).

I understand that my taking part is voluntary: I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.

*Select only one of the next two options:*

I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.

I do not want my name used in this project.

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.

I agree for the data I provided to be archived at the UK Data Archive.

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs but my name will not be used unless I requested it above.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Researcher	Signature	Date

Contact details for further information: Ashley Nye, Royal Holloway University of London, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX, a.nye@rhul.ac.uk

Adapted from the ESRC data archive website (11 November 2008)

Figure 3.4 Table of codes and their links to other codes within the set

Observations presented more problematic ethical issues. Whilst my role involved covert observations of GUV life, residents were given sufficient anonymity in research diaries. General descriptions of people were noted, however, at no point could any other resident identify who was being described. Furthermore, my observations were of life in public spaces, and therefore practices and experiences were undertaken by residents who knew they could be seen by others.

Photography also presents ethical considerations, and no photographs were taken of residents without their consent. Tim Hall states that “it is less effective, or at least more challenging, when people are the object of the study...photographing people without their knowledge or consent is an ethically questionable practice” (Hall, 2009:455). Whilst it is true that children, and adults conduct ‘play’ in public spaces, as Hall states there are ethical considerations of taking their photographs without consent, especially children. Therefore the decision was made not to take photographs of children, but to use approved CDT photographs of play in public spaces where consent had already been obtained from parents.

There are also general ethical issues about taking photographs in public spaces and near some institutions, regardless of whether people are the subject of the photograph. For example, I was stopped by a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) within the Village because I was taking photographs near a police station. The PCSO questioned me about my reasons for being on GUV taking photographs and then asked me for identification to prove I was a student. As such there are wider ethical issues about who and what can be the subject of photographs in public space, because in this instance a building was defined as a space that could not be photographed.

Ethics is bound up in a constant consideration of the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Part of this involves us thinking critically about our own position within research, through positionality. According to Skelton “It is crucial in any research that we consider our positionality and what that might mean in relation to the ways in which we do our research, and how the people we work with perceive us. By positionality I mean things like our ‘race’ and gender...but also our class experiences, our levels of education, our sexuality, our age, our ableness” (Skelton, 2001:89).

#### ***3.4.4 A reflexive approach to research***

Urban ethnographic research and geographical understandings of place are concerned with the representation of people, places and practises. These representations are shaped by the relationship between the researcher and researched because “entangled in these stories are geographies of power” (Anderson, 2003:28). Self-reflexive understandings of urban ethnographic research involve academics understanding and taking account “of our position, as well as that of our research participants, and write this into our research” (McDowell, 1992:409).

Undertaking reflexive research, involves examining the context and circumstances of knowledge production (Lynch, 2000). This process involves understanding the social and cultural circumstances of the researcher, as well as that of the participants. Emerging from

the work of feminist writers, Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding, 'being reflexive' involves understanding the power relations between the participant and the researcher and a:

“recognition that one’s own position affects one’s own knowledge. Hence, the need in terms of Katz (1994:498) to strive for ‘conscious knowledge of the situatedness of our knowledge’. In other words, the ethnographer needs to be reflexive about his or her own cultural and intellectual position shapes his or her apprehension and discussion of data...ethnographies are as much about the culture of the student as they are of the studied”.

(Herbert, 2000:563)

The research process, particularly urban ethnographies and interviews, are bound up in transcending relations and differences based on gender, race, class and age (Haraway, 1988). Reflexive understandings of research therefore ask questions of the researcher’s background as well as that of the participant. Representations and knowledge are social products and observations and data are only given meaning by the researcher who interprets the ‘system of signs’ that exist in the research process:

“ethnographies are self-conscious projects of representation, interpretation and invention, Both the ethnographer and those being studied present, re-present and invent themselves across boundaries of different subjectivities and identities forged of class, nationality, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation”.

(Katz, 1994:496)

Therefore it is important to consider the relationship between the researcher and the researched because “power lies at the core of all social research” (Keith, 1992:551). Research needs to involve the subject in the research process and give them a voice (Smith, 1992). The use of walking interviews focuses on the voices of participants and their stories of experiences of the city, which distorts the unequal power relations of existing research and effective ethnographies make the relationship between the researcher and the researched visible (Rose, 1997). According to Gillian Rose and Ian Cook:

“academic and other knowledges are always situated, always produced by positioned actors working in/between all kinds of locations...All these make a huge difference to what exactly gets done by whom, how and where it’s done, how it’s turned into a finished product, [and] for whom”.

(Cook, 2005:16)

The power the researcher has on this process was described by Haraway as the ‘God trick’ (Haraway, 1988). My own research attempted to blur these boundaries by handing control

over some of the research process back to the participant, and also producing an output aimed at the participant rather than neglecting their input into the research process.

### ***3.4.5 Returning research to the community***

Due to the participatory nature of the research and the extensive part that participants played in data collection, it was important to feed the research back to the community. Furthermore, most of the design professionals that I interviewed asked for a summary of the thesis research, because it was unheard of for a design professional to study a development they had been involved with once it once completed, and therefore they knew little about the ‘after-life’ of GUV.

Therefore I produced a short ‘executive summary’ of my research reducing the key findings to a short booklet that was easily accessible to design professionals and residents alike. The booklet was a mix of photographs and sketches and short written summaries of key elements of the Village, with a relevance placed on presenting narratives of GUV life. This document was delivered to everyone involved in the research process. Furthermore, I gave the CDT numerous copies of the document allowing residents access to the research even if they were not directly involved with it.

## **3.5 Documentary sources**

As to be expected from a development that began in 1999 and is currently in the final stages of building, there is a vast amount of documentary sources related to GUV. These sources have been produced by TW, the consultants that worked on the project, the local boroughs, the Mayor of London’s office, and the ODPM. In total in excess of 200 sources were collected and read dating from the first documents produced in September 1999 to documents released in May 2011. Key sources were selected based on those with the most relevance to the general themes of the thesis and the research questions detailed in the introduction which reduced the list down to 119 documents. These documents were then hand coded using different coloured highlighter pens to derive different elements from the Vision.

It took three months to conduct a full coding process for all the selected documents, during which the materials were subject to an intense and close reading. Following this, patterns and similarities began to emerge in the documents and these were explored first, drawing out the issues and ideas that were often found in documents. After this was completed I worked through the documents collating what had been coded and arranging the material by theme and issues that emerged. It was from this process that the ideas and structure of the empirical chapters emerged. These were based on the key themes found within the

documents, but also how they related to research questions and ideas developed at the start of the research process.

### 3.6 Ethnographic observations

#### 3.6.1 *Observing experiences of place*

Undertaking ethnographic observations of a place and people, ethnographers are “committed to going out and getting close to the activities and everyday experiences of other people. ‘Getting close’ minimally requires physical and social proximity to the daily rounds of people’s lives and activities; the field researcher must be able to take up positions in the midst of the key sites and scenes of other’s lives to observe and understand them” (Emerson, 1995:1). My own ethnographic observations of GUV involved becoming absorbed in the daily lives of GUV residents, and I spent many hours at GUV observing and participating in the daily lives of residents and those using the Village.

I used the restaurant and shops, often sitting for hours observing people as they entered and left the premises, noting their behaviour and conversations they had with other people and the ways in which they used space. I also participated in conversations myself, speaking to people using the retail spaces, trying to gain a greater understanding of the ways they used the space and their reasons for it. I developed personal relationships with residents, often stopping to speak to those residents I knew, each conversation giving me a greater depth of knowledge into the life of GUV. I became involved with the CDT, attending their meetings about the running of the Village, observing classes and events they held in their facilities, and the annual summer funday on the large open space to the south of the site. Furthermore I participated in Neighbourhood Watch meetings, presenting my research back to the community as it progressed. Such meetings offered an invaluable source of contact with residents, and many of the people I interviewed were contacted in this way.

Ethnographic observation also involved spending time sat within the development, on benches throughout the Village and recording the ways in which people moved through the space. I noted places people stopped, their behaviour and actions within the space and their reactions to the built environment. My first interaction with GUV began in October 2008, and I subsequently returned to the development over 50 times for interviews, observations, meetings or to participate in community events. My time within the development ranged from a couple of hours to whole days. The time of day, and day of the week was varied so I didn’t experience limited aspects of Village life.

This intensive exploration of GUV was based on the desire to seek “a deeper immersion in other worlds to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important. With immersion,

the field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, how they do so. In this way immersion gives the fieldworker access to the fluidity of others' lives and enhances his sensitivity to interaction and process" (Emerson, 1995:2). The purpose of my ethnographic encounters with GUV was full immersion in Village life, as I sought to explore residents' articulations of place and sensory experience of place through the practises they undertook.

This immersion in the lives of GUV residents allowed me to experience the embodied and transgressive practises undertaken by residents that challenge the intended practices of the built environment. This echoes Goffman's belief that ethnographic observations involve "subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation" (Goffman, 1959:125). Immersion in research therefore involves the researcher experiencing events and social situations for themselves to avoid becoming a passive observer of events (Emerson, 1995). It is only through these experiences that we actively engage and understand the communities that we are studying as researchers. As such the researcher should not attempt to be "a fly on the wall", neither can they be completely neutral or detached from the people they interact with (Pollner and Emerson, 1988). My own experiences of GUV were shaped by the people I met and developed relationships with, and by my own experience of GUV because "in writing fieldnotes, an ethnographer not only remembers and envisions a scene, he also presents that scene from a selected angle which highlights some of its features more than others" (Emerson, 1995:52).

Throughout the research process I kept a diary that recorded my observations and feelings as I visited the Village, and the key things I saw when I was on site. Aside from conversations, or participation in some CDT events, I was able to record experiences of the Village by writing down notes as my experiences unfolded. To record my experiences of GUV I first noted on sheets of paper key feelings and experiences I had whilst interacting with the built environment and with residents. As I travelled home from GUV, I began to develop these notes further, making more detailed and extensive notes of experiences, things I had seen and interactions I had. Once I arrived home I transferred these experiences to a notebook, drawing up sketches and adding quotations from interviews that sat well with the themes emerging in my own observations. There were occasions when I took my notebook with me, however, often this was completed at home, based on observations from the day.

### ***3.6.2 Recording experiences of place: The architectural notebook***

What however is an architectural notebook? Simon Unwin states that "the fragments in a notebook have not been architected: they are the stock of materials and aspirations, ideas

and part sketch designs collected together and available for a building before it has been built” (Unwin, 2009:40). Unwin uses the metaphor of the building to summarise what the notebook is to him, which is a collection of ideas, drawings and other materials that have not been analysed but sit, waiting for further reflection. They are, to borrow Unwin’s metaphor, the foundations upon which the building, or thesis, is constructed. The notebook therefore acts as the basis of future research, something that the student can return to time after time.

Unlike Unwin however the focus of my own notebooks was not solely on the architecture of GUV, but rather the life and vibrancy of place. I tried to capture the rhythms and experiences of the built environment as well as the physical aesthetics of place. Figures 3.5 to 3.7 are three pages taken from my notebooks to show the ways in which the rhythms of place and sensory understandings of the city were captured.

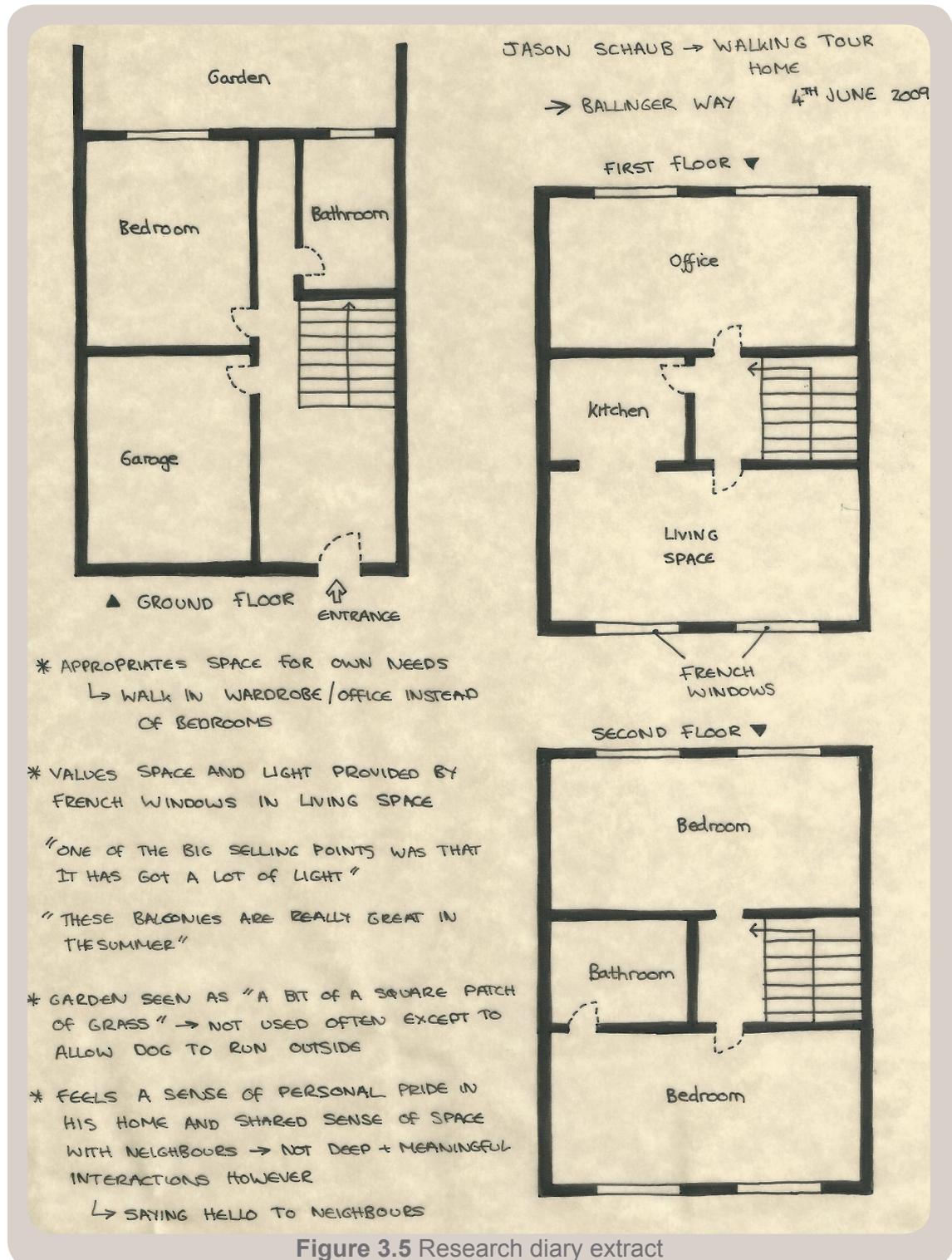


Figure 3.5 Research diary extract

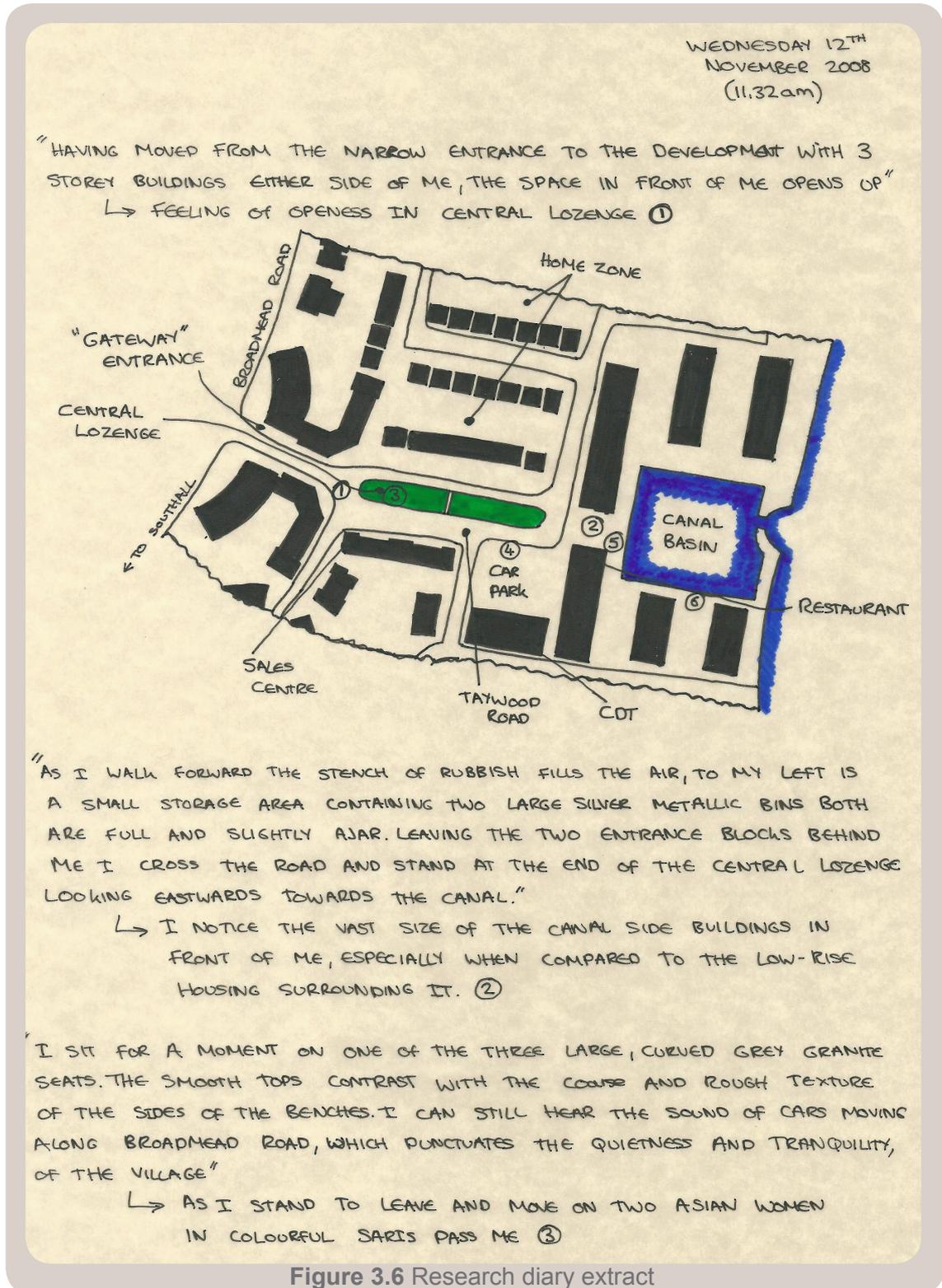


Figure 3.6 Research diary extract

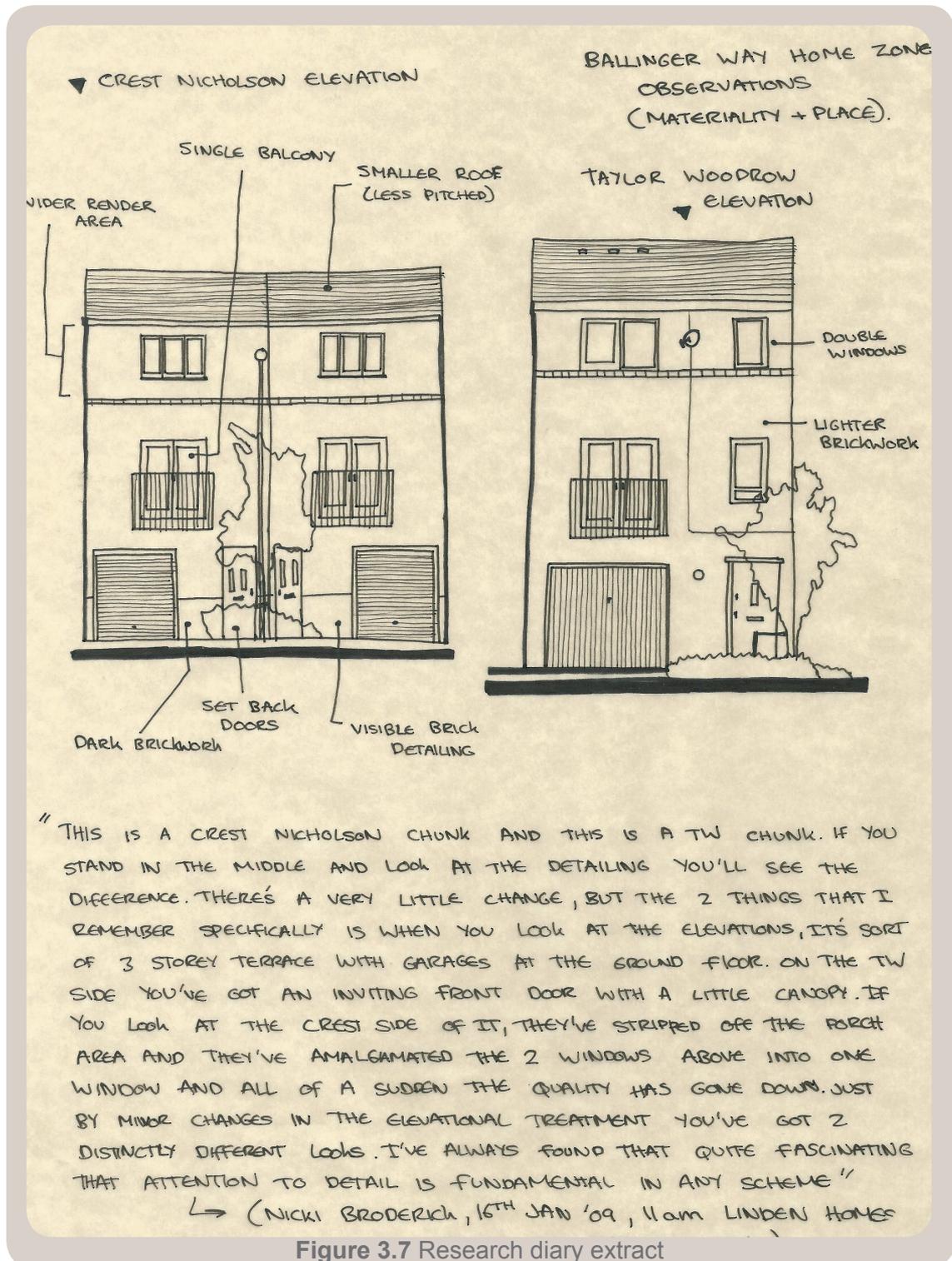


Figure 3.7 Research diary extract

My notebook and diary was not a representation of everything that occurred within GUV, but rather as Emerson states “writing fieldnotes from jottings is not a straightforward remembering and filling in; rather, it is a much more active process of constructing relatively coherent sequences of action and evocations of scene and character” (Emerson, 1995:51). Therefore notebooks are selective understandings of experience based on the researcher’s notes and their memory of the events. They may choose to ignore some aspects of experience, or fail to remember others. For this reason all of my observations were written-up within two days of the observation taking place. Initial notes, jotted down on site were elaborated on the train journey home as I quickly scribbled down recollections of experiences I was not able to write up in full at the time. The notebook assimilates and records selected materials that are relevant to what is being studied, and neglects those deemed unimportant (Unwin, 2009).

This links back to Pollner and Emerson’s assertion that researchers are never neutral (Pollner and Emerson, 1988). In this sense however, the researcher always views the event from their own perspective, with preconceived ideas about the concepts they wish to take from their engagement with the community. The notebook reflects this selectiveness and “prompts the searcher’s mind to discriminate. Not everything found is allowed through the door of its cover. Always in the searcher’s mind is the question: ‘is what I’m encountering at this moment worth recording (as a note, a quotation, a drawing)?” (Unwin, 2009:37). Whilst I tried to recall everything I saw within the Village, this selective gaze could have impacted upon what was written in my notebook.

The notebook acts as a prompt, and ideas emerge out of observations that are recorded and reflected upon at a later stage. According to Unwin “nourished by foraging and provoked by gestation, ideas emerge from a searcher’s mind like butterflies from their chrysalis. Left to themselves, loose they flit away; but unlike a butterfly, an idea’s life begins to prosper only when it is pinned down” (Unwin, 2009:38). Therefore the notebook nurtures ideas and issues that would otherwise be lost in the researchers thoughts. It acts as an “in-between: a holding pen where select material and ideas are corralled whilst the searcher’s mind ponders how they might play their part in an emerging sense of things” (Unwin, 2009:38).

The notebook acts as a “memory theatre” that “may for long periods be left in peace... but it is the searcher’s abiding intention to return and to disturb...A notebook maps the searcher’s labyrinthian wanderings; the notebook retains the traces of those explorations and evolving ideas like footprints in the sand” (Unwin, 2009:39). A notebook attempts to capture the essence of the vitality and experiences of place and store them, temporarily, until the researcher can return and disseminate the ideas to a wider audience. The writings within a notebook are deeply personal, and according to Unwin fragmented to outsiders who may pick the notebook up and attempt to read it.

### 3.7 The Walking Interview

At a basic level, the walking interview is “a form of in-depth qualitative interview method that, as the name implies, is conducted by researchers accompanying individual informants on outings in their familiar environments, such as a neighbourhood or a larger local area” (Carpiano, 2009:264). The walking interview is part of a growing movement within urban geography that has mobility at the centre of its methodology. The key benefit for this type of research is they “capture the ways in which people, and the communities of which they are part, value places [which] are becoming increasingly desirable to policymakers, planners and designers” (Ricketts Hein, 2008:1266).

The walking interview therefore is important for academics as well as those in policy as it seeks to understand the experiences, and articulations of members of a community. It was this focus on experience that led me to use this as the key method within my own research.

#### 3.7.1 *Distorting researcher/researched power relations*

Traditional sedentary interviews involve a distinct power relation between the researcher and participant, and often the participant will be interviewed in a space to which they are not accustomed such as the office of a researcher. Such spaces are positioned “as that of the ‘expert’” and therefore the participant may feel uncomfortable in this space (Elwood, 2000:649). According to Elwood “interview sites and situations are inscribed in the social spaces that we as geographers are seeking to learn more about, and thus have an important role to play in qualitative research” (Elwood, 2000:649).

Krueger advocates a “neutral” setting in which to conduct interviews, however the walking interview places the power in the hands of the participant by allowing them to dictate the location and route taken during an interview (Krueger, 2009). This allows us to study the connection they have with the built environment and the spaces they deem important in their daily lives. Therefore situating interviews in place allows the researcher to understand the processes going on and the participants’ experience of them. The mobility of walking interviews “takes the research process out of fixed (safe, controlled) environments and introduces a range of new issues to consider” (Jones, 2008:2). This disrupts and distorts traditional power relations which could inhibit the ways participant interact with the researcher. Where static interviews were undertaken with residents, the location for all of my interviews were determined by the participant, and all were undertaken within GUV. Furthermore the routes of walking interviews were dictated by residents and I followed them on their daily routine around the Village or to spaces that residents wished to express opinions about. There was a focus on some spaces of the Village particularly the marina and public space with the key advantage being that it generates “a cross section of responses to the same

spaces and, indeed, taking some respondents through areas they had not previously visited to record their first impressions” (Jones, 2008:2). My walking interviews took a semi-structured format, based more on conversation and ad-hoc questions than structured questions.

Whilst Denscombe is correct in that “where the interview is to take place in the field, the researcher loses much control over the arrangement. This means there is added danger that things can go wrong”, it is not true that “through whatever means, though, the researcher needs to try to get a location for the interview in which they will not be disturbed, which offers privacy” (Denscombe, 1998:119). The interactions participants have with other members of the community is just as valuable as those articulated during the walking interview. Their experiences of sights, sounds and tactile experiences during the interview creates a valuable understanding of place for the researcher that would not be possible in the sanctuary of quiet office.

As such the walking interview “provides an opportunity to increase the participation of a respondent. Given that the respondent serves as a ‘tour guide’ for the researcher, the go-along helps to reduce typical power dynamics that exist between the interviewer and interviewee” (Carpiano, 2009:267). This was true in my own walking interviews due to the fact that participants chose the route we walked, and the spaces they wished to speak about. Control was therefore in the hands of the participant, rather than mine as the researcher.

### ***3.7.2 External Influences on the walking interview***

The effectiveness of the walking interview is subject to elements that the researcher is unable to control. Working outside, weather is a key element to the walking interview especially if research is undertaken during the winter months. Research on site was primarily conducted in the spring and summer of 2009, and walking interviews were concluded by early October, and as such avoided many of these problems. There were however two walking interviews during which it rained, however the participants were willing to continue the interview during this period.

Furthermore, the physical health of participants also has an impact on the success of walking interviews because “an elderly respondent may be very knowledgeable about the local area, but physically unable to walk most of it with an interviewer” (Carpiano, 2009:269). Despite attempts to contact older and less able-bodied residents, I was unable to do so, primarily because there are very few of these residents on site. I did undertake walking interviews with residents pushing prams which inhibited their free movement during the interview, however “in this case, the respondent’s inability to walk may be telling about her/his sense of place” (Carpiano, 2009:269).

In addition to this, time of day is also important in the walking interview. This is because “the type and frequency of social activity may differ not only in different locations within a community but also throughout the course of the day” (Carpiano, 2009:269). Therefore it is important to conduct walking interviews during different periods of the day, and different times of the week to gain a broad understanding of place. Walking interviews for this thesis were undertaken on different days, including numerous weekdays and weekends. The time of day was also altered, with some walking interviews commencing in the early morning, and the latest starting at 8pm in the evening.

There is more at play here however, because time also impacts on the personal safety of the researcher and the participant. Whilst I felt safe walking through GUV at all times of the day, some residents expressed their displeasure at walking through the Village in the late evenings and night. Therefore it would not have been appropriate to ask them to conduct a walking interview during these times. Even during the day, female participants could have felt a sense of unease walking around the canal path with a male researcher they barely knew.

Unplanned elements of the walking interview can also have a positive impact on the outcome of the interview. During some of my interviews participants stopped and spoke to other residents. Whilst as Carpiano states, this could be a “great qualitative indicator of the cohesiveness of people who live in the local area” (Carpiano, 2009:270), it also shows that participants feel at ease during the research process. Participants therefore have a sense that they are able to talk to friends despite being in the middle of an interview, which resulted from the informal nature of the interviews conducted within the Village. Some participants spoke to other residents about personal matters, almost as if forgetting that a researcher was there. In this instance I had interviewed both residents and therefore there could have been a higher level of comfort in the situation than if I were meeting them for the first time.

### ***3.7.3 Conducting walking interviews***

Nigel Thrift states that human behaviour is bound up in experiences of space and time, and therefore argues for the importance of mappings developed by Thorsten Hagerstrand in 1970 (Thrift 2005). Walking and mobility are at the centre of these experiences and walking interviews follow this tradition of mapping experiences of place. Walking therefore offers the potential for rich qualitative data (Ricketts Hein, 2008).

My research follows a growing number of projects which “have been particularly interested in encouraging walking to better engage with or understand the space in which the participant is located” (Ricketts Hein, 2008:1273). The walking interview is a way in which the researcher immerses themselves in the sensory understandings of place. Semidor’s work uses the example of the soundwalk as being an ethnographic practice during which the researcher is

engaged in photographing, taking notes, recording and experiencing the built environment (Semidor, 2006; Adams, 2008). Walking interviews allowed me some of the same experiences of GUV that residents had, and to explore the environment in which their articulations of place occurred. Such articulations of place are closely related to embodied experiences of the built environment.

In total 15 walking interviews were conducted 12 with residents, and 3 with design professionals. I met the participant at their designated start point, often outside Costcutter or the sales centre. After going through the format of the walk, I explained how I wanted them to lead the route that we took. Residents based this on a route they often took through the development, such as Jason whom I followed whilst he walked his dog through the Village. After consent forms and project information sheets had been signed we began our walk through the Village. The interviews were recorded using two dictaphones and individual microphones to capture what I was asking and the participant's response. Using two microphones reduced the problems of interference from cars, aeroplanes or other noises within the Village. As we walked through the Village I asked questions on an ad hoc basis, based on the spaces we walked through and what residents said. It is through "asking questions and observing, the researcher is able to examine the informant's experiences, interpretations, and practices within this environment" (Carpiano, 2009:264).

Mobility and movement were a key benefit of this form of interview, allowing me as the researcher and the participant to explore spaces that would not necessarily have emerged in static interviews. The city is experienced differently when walked than it is when the participant is static and "by walking people are able to connect times and places through the grounded experience of their material" (Moles, 2008:3). The walking interview therefore allowed me to "capture people's understandings of places" (Ricketts Hein, 2008:1278).

There are two key elements of the walking interview, the first is the embodied interaction with the built environment and the second is the advantage offered by mobility in the research process. Hurdley argues that:

"qualitative researchers have long acknowledged that what participants say and do needs to be interpreted alongside the materials and sensorial settings in which they say and do it, and which play an active role in the shaping of emergent situations and encounters. Nevertheless, insufficient attention is often paid to the extent to which this emplaced and materialized meaning-making also mobilizes qualities that are displaced from our immediate sensory perceptions, in that they inhere to signifiers embroiled in wider organizations of cultural value and meaning".

(Hurdley, 2011:278)

The walking interview therefore provides a direct link between materials and location and experiences of place. Place is the key element to the walking interview, utilising mobility to explore the micro-geographies of place:

“place in this local, lived sense is something much more than landscape – the material topography of a piece of land (Cresswell, 2004:11); it is a hybrid product of biography and location(s), the one informing the other in a constant round of influence and interpretation. It is an animate geography, and living things do not stand still, they move. This is as true of places as it is of persons”.

(Hall et al, 2006:2)

I found that in my own walking interviews, residents engaged more with the micro-geographies of place than in static interviews. As we walked through the urban environment I was able to ask them questions about the materials or their feelings of space that would not have emerged in static interviews. Furthermore the materials and being in space acted as “material probes” for the participant reminding them of experiences and feelings (Ricketts Hein 2008:1278). Utilising walking interviews therefore allowed me to experience and gain an understanding of GUV that would not have emerged in static interviews. At the core of this is the process of movement and mobility because “what is new though, or innovative...is movement, or rather the possibilities offered by movement, not as a concept, but as practice” (Hall et al, 2006:2).

#### ***3.7.4 Coding the walking interview***

Coding was undertaken for all of my interviews regardless of whether they were walking interviews or sedentary interviews. This was a lengthy process, lasting three months and extracted themes and ideas that would otherwise not have emerged from the dataset. It is through the process of coding that I began to delve below the surface of the data and understand the practises and processes that take place. Coding was used to inform analysis, and helped organise thoughts about the materials and data. There is no detailed reference to codes in subsequent chapters, however coding was an important way of indexing materials. Therefore “analysing interview data is a multistep, sense-making endeavour. To make sense of interviews, researchers must engage in the process of coding data” (DeCuir-Gunby, 2011:137).

At a basic level codes are “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Huberman, 1994:56). Each interview was explored in-depth and codes assigned to sections of the text to break the data in manageable sections, which improves the “rigour of the analysis by validating (or not) some of the researcher’s own impressions of the data” (Welsh, 2002:30). Therefore coding helps the

researcher understand the data they have collected. Forty-three hours of interview recordings were collected as part of the research process resulting in over 1,000 pages of text being typed verbatim. The coding process sought to manage and explore every aspect of the dataset by “opening up avenues of inquiry: the researcher identifies and develops concepts and analytic insights through close examination of and reflection on fieldnote data” (Emerson, 1995:151).

### *The coding process*

Fifty-three interviews were conducted with design professionals and residents in relation to GUV ranging from those involved in its conception to those involved in the reality of the Village. The interviews lasted between fifteen minutes and two hours and each was recorded on an Olympus dictation machine and transcribed verbatim. It was decided that Atlas Ti would be used to code the interviews based on the amount of data collected from interviews and the potential it offered for geo-coding walking interviews. Transcripts were imported into Atlas from Microsoft Word and coded on-screen using codes that emerged from a series of pilot coding exercises using two interviews. Coding of interviews is not about imposing ideas and concepts onto a data set but rather allowing the codes to emerge from the data, and “hearing what the data have to say rather than splicing them into arbitrary units before searching for topics, themes or meanings” (Thompson and Barrett, 1997:60).

The process of coding involves the constant renegotiation of codes, and re-evaluating their relevance and use throughout the process. I began by testing the codes I developed on two interviews, before returning to the codes, considering their potential and altering them. This was to address if “these codes were addressing the research questions and to assess the robustness of codes” (Weston, 2001:387). This was done three times before I had the confidence that the current set of codes was robust enough to deal with the whole coding process.

It is important to note however “how researchers see data and the meaning attributed to it is what makes data useful, interesting, and a contribution to knowledge. On the other hand, our biases and perspectives influence interpretation throughout analysis—from how codes are developed to how results are interpreted” (Weston, 2001:384). To combat this codes also developed out of themes that members of the community being observed felt were important. As a researcher it is important to “also give priority to what seems significant to members, whether it is what they think is key, what looks to be practically important, or what engages a lot of their time and energy” (Emerson, 1995:157). Furthermore, the research questions, developed in chapter 1 of the thesis, were used as a reference point guiding the coding process because “applying codes to raw data enables the researcher to begin examining how their data supports or contradicts the theory that is guiding their research as well as enhances the current research literature” (DeCuir-Gunby, 2011:138). Linking back to

research questions kept the coding process structured on the key themes that my research deals with, and through:

“initial coding and memoing the ethnographer identifies many more ideas and themes than she will actually be able to pursue on one paper...Field researchers have different ways of selecting themes. One consideration is to give priority to topics on which a substantial amount of data has been collected and which reflect recurrent or underlying patterns of activities in the setting under study”.

(Emerson, 1995:157)

Coding was undertaken on two levels, open coding and axial coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Open coding was undertaken as the first stage where codes develop, in part, from the dataset. As such I developed a set of “data-driven codes” that were relevant for the dataset rather than trying to impose codes on it (DeCuir-Gunby, 2011:144). Following this, axial coding was utilised to examine the codes and the links between them and their relevance for the data.

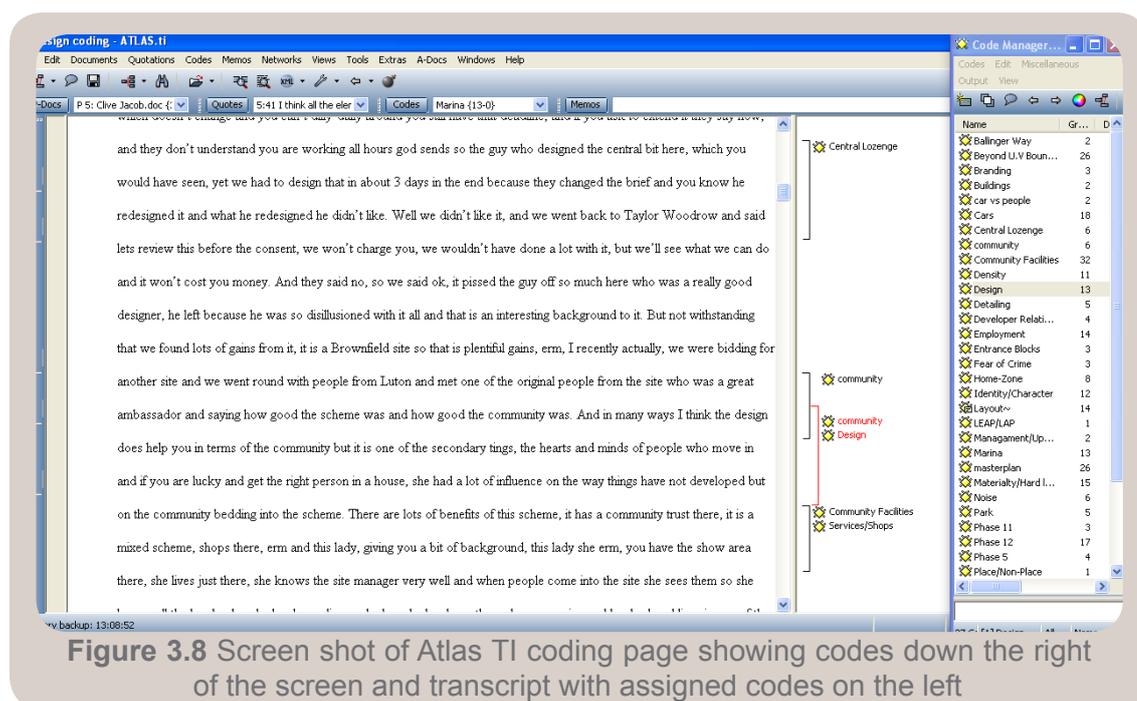


Figure 3.8 Screen shot of Atlas TI coding page showing codes down the right of the screen and transcript with assigned codes on the left

The process of coding was undertaken in Atlas and I considered each interview on a line-by-line basis, focused by the set of codes developed through a pilot of two interviews (see figure 3.8). Over the following three months I set about coding all interviews, before going back through the dataset to make sure that the codes were correct and that data had not been missed. This period of research however was “uncertain, since it is a matter not simply of “discovering” what is in the data but more creatively of linking up specific events and observations to more general analytic categories and issues” (Emerson, 1995:154). It is during this process that key themes for the research and chapters for the thesis began to emerge.

I found that this was helped by considering the links between themes and how a coherent narrative will emerge from them. Figure 3.9 is a table detailing the links between the codes I used for my own research.

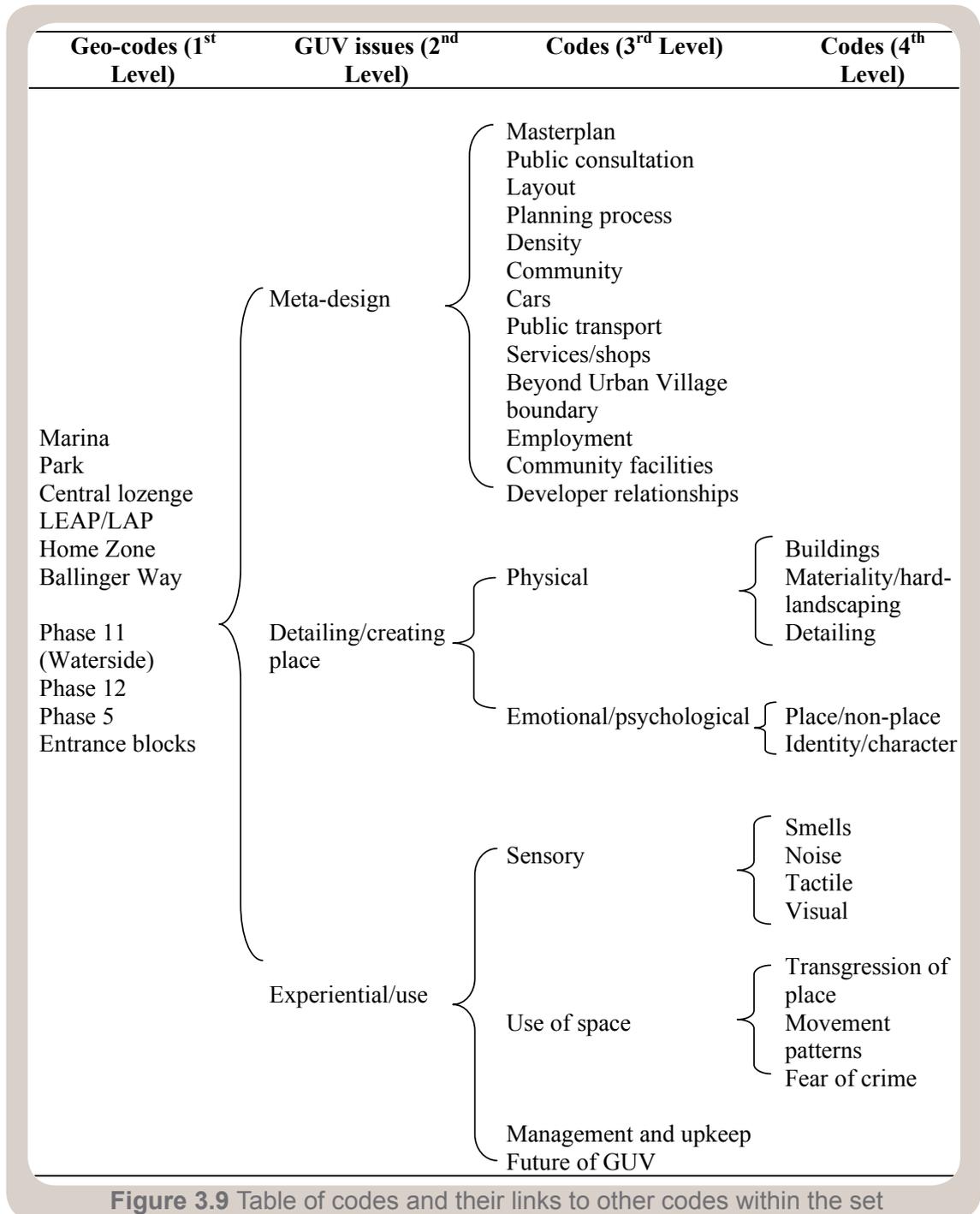


Figure 3.9 Table of codes and their links to other codes within the set

As figure 3.9 shows geo-codes were an important part of the coding process. To retain the placed element of research locations were coded and mapped alongside themes of place and experience. Geo-coding the interviews in this way, supplemented by maps showing the walks, retained the placed element of the walking interviews. This is a central concern of this thesis and maintaining constant links to Village locations helped establish the relationship between quotations, codes and geographic location. Once fully coded, queries and searches were run

and results exported based on subjects and themes that emerged from the dataset. Often quotations were exported in relation to a location such as instances where residents spoke about noise in relation to the central lozenge. Once completed, I moved on to consider the presentation of materials from the walking interviews.

### ***3.7.5 Presenting the walking interview***

“In addition to good interviewing skills”, writing up the narratives of walking interviews “hinges on the inclusion of adequate levels of location information to situate and ground the interview” (Carpiano, 2009:270). To locate walking interviews during the recording the researcher needs to make aural prompts to place the interviews. As we walked into a particular area of the Village I would state, for example “we are now entering the Ballinger Way Home Zone”, to help subsequent geo-coding of the transcript. In addition to this GPS was “used to record the location of walked interviews, allowing transcripts to be connected to the spaces in which the words were spoken. Analysis of the text will then assess the extent to which the environment acts as a prompt and whether a richer interview results” (Ricketts Hein, 2008:1278).

GPS locations were plotted using a handheld Garmin Etrex GPS device and taken every 30 seconds during the interviews. These were then collated and linked back to the transcript during the coding process. After every walking interview was completed I sat down with a map of the Village and plotted the route we had walked through and noted anything that had happened along the route. In addition I went back through the route that was taken noting down observations and taking additional pictures of key elements highlighted by the participant because “data can also be strengthened by steps taken at the immediate conclusion of a go-along. Consistent with traditional ethnographic approaches, detailed field notes or other observations by the researcher, which are either written/typed or audio recorded for later transcription, can also be advantageous” (Carpiano, 2009:270; Emerson, 1995).

My initial ambition was to record the walking interviews using a video camera, however following a pilot study it became apparent that this disengaged me from the participant. According to Jones, “Video can be somewhat disruptive and, particularly when the interviewer is trying to film, walk, and talk at the same time, the output can sometimes be unwatchably disorientating” (Jones, 2008:4). The video camera became a barrier between building a relationship with participants during research, and put the pilot participant in a sense of unease at being filmed. Therefore photographs were taken instead which involved a short distraction from the interview itself.

Rather than being generic photographs, they were used as a way of “looking with intention” (Sanders, 2007:181), and as a “way of collecting, recording and presenting data from the

landscape” (Hall, 2009:455). The use of photographs within walking interviews is important as they allow the researcher to capture the micro-geographies of place, particularly relevant for this thesis. There are however criticisms of the use of photographs because as Tim Hall states “no matter how many photographs are taken a photographic survey can never capture reality in its entirety. Photographic surveys will inevitably be partial and will represent the choices made by those responsible for their construction and the constraints they were working within” (Hall, 2009:456). It is for this reason that photographs were taken of elements dictated by the residents and what they spoke of, rather than through the researcher’s gaze. It is also true that photographs are not able to capture the true vibrancy of place, and it is for this reason that they were used to supplement the rich narratives presented in the walking interviews, providing a visual prompt when sat next residents’ articulations of place. Therefore photographs:

“can be produced by, or in association with research informants. A number of human geographers have utilized this approach in their studies of the ways that certain groups make sense and attach meanings to their environments...the photographs produced by research informants...provide clues to the ways in which informants view their environments and to the elements that they see as significant. Such photographs are commonly used in conjunction with interview with research informants, a process known as photo interviewing or elicitation. The key in these cases is that photographs are always situated and analysed with reference to the context in which they were produced”.

(Hall, 2009:457)

Photographs were used in the walking interviews to understand residents’ interactions with space, which would not be possible with sedentary interviews. Furthermore, the photographs taken in collaboration with the residents provide the context of the ideas they speak about in our interviews. Chapter 6 presents three walking interviews which utilise photographs, narratives of place, and GPS coordinates to place the walking interviews in their original context and retain the rich narratives of life in the Village. This is one of the key advantages of the walking interview, and particularly retaining the placed element of the interviews through maps and drawings.

### 3.8 Mapping experiences of the city

The visual materials contained within this thesis emerged from the walking interviews and the desire to focus on the experiential elements of the city. Chapters 4 to 7 contained maps and sketches drawn to reflect these experiences. The axonometric sketches and street scenes were prepared using a 3D model created in SketchUp. A camera position was then placed within the electronic 3D model and the view was exported as a 2D graphic before being used

as the base of the sketch by the author. Following this the sketches were then scanned back into the computer and coloured in Adobe Photoshop with the necessary detailing (such as shadows) added during this stage. The colours used in the sketches were taken from walking interview photographs to make the sketches as realistic as possible.

The masterplans in this thesis were drawn freehand based on documents collected through the research process. The final 2011 masterplan was hand drawn and scanned into Adobe Photoshop before being coloured. Where this masterplan is used as the base map (for example in mapping the location of benches), the masterplan was converted to greyscale in Photoshop before being exported to Adobe Illustrator to draw on the details of the experiences of the Village. Most of the details mapped in this way were collected from walking interviews, or personal observations of the site. The only exception to this is the noise map in chapter 7.

The aural experiences map was created by measuring sound levels within the development. I used a Testo 815/816 sound level meter to measure the decibel levels of sounds within the Village. These were recorded on a map of the Village, and points of measurement were randomised although the recordings covered all parts of the Village. To gain a holistic understanding of the experience of noise levels, three recordings were undertaken at different times of the day and different days of the week. However all three days worth of measurements were taken from the same point in the Village as the first. The first recordings were undertaken at 9am on a Monday morning, the second at 7pm on a Wednesday evening and the final measurement at 4pm on a Saturday afternoon. These measurements were then collated and an average taken of the 3 measurements for each point. The next stage in this process was to create bands of noise moving from the quietest spaces in the Village to the loudest. Once these had been decided these were mapped onto the 2011 greyscale masterplan and presented in chapter 7.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored existing research into the themes and ideas raised by a critical architectural geography. Such ideas allow us to explore and understand how the UV works and is experienced. Developing research undertaken on materialities, experience, embodiment and sensory understandings of place, this chapter argued for the importance of a mixed methodology when approaching these themes. Such a research design can allow us to deal with representational expressions of architecture, yet also present narratives of experience and city life. As such the next four chapters in this thesis present the narrative of GUV, and the ways in which the themes that emerged in this chapter, are used in the process of developing an UV.



# 04

## GRAND UNION VISION

## Introduction

*“Following long standing involvement by the local community, and after two years in planning, our vision is becoming reality. GUV will change the face of the local area, transforming the existing site into a vibrant, modern UV, complete with homes, offices, shops and restaurants. It will be a new neighbourhood that puts West London on the map”.*

(CDT, 2003a:1)

Set within a framework of increasing social responsibility the UV gained increased popularity during the 1990s. Along with other concepts that promoted a ‘new’ vision of city life (such as Millennium Villages), the UV concept became a major part of planning policy within the U.K (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Imrie and Thomas 1999). Earlier chapters have shown the ways in which the UV has been theorised, and explored the concept within an academic and policy context. However, what happens when the UV concept moves beyond a theoretical standpoint and is put into practice to build new communities? Can the UV concept transcend urban policy, and academic theory into reality? In other words what happens when the UV moves from ‘concept to completion’ (Biddulph et al, 2003)?

Biddulph et al use the analogy of the “life” of the UV concept and this is an approach developed in my own work. The following four chapters look at the “transformations which together constitute the processes involved in conceptualising, developing and finally living in the UV concept” (Biddulph, 2003:166). Furthermore, using the example of GUV, the chapters explore the “afterlife” of the UV concept looking at residents’ lived experience of the Village.

In adopting a critical architectural geographic approach these chapters explore “the ways that the built environment is shaped and given meaning through the active and embodied practices by which it is produced, appropriated and inhabited” (Lees, 2001:53). Chapter 4 explores the process through which a Grand Union Vision was developed for the site, and the inputs from various stakeholders into this Vision. Section 4.1 provides an overview of the site and the initial reasons why redevelopment was proposed. Section 4.2 explores how the developers, TW proposed the use of the UV concept as a means of alleviating the fears of the LBE regarding the loss of employment from the site. Section 4.3 examines how the development was envisioned and how these Visions evolved from 2000 to 2011 as a result of changes in national planning policy and the economics of the site.

Community consultation that was undertaken as part of the visioning process is the focus of section 4.4, which explores how the UV is different from traditional urban planning because it advocates a participatory planning process. Section 4.5 examines the social aspirations and limits of design at GUV, drawing out the key elements of the Vision that were taken from the

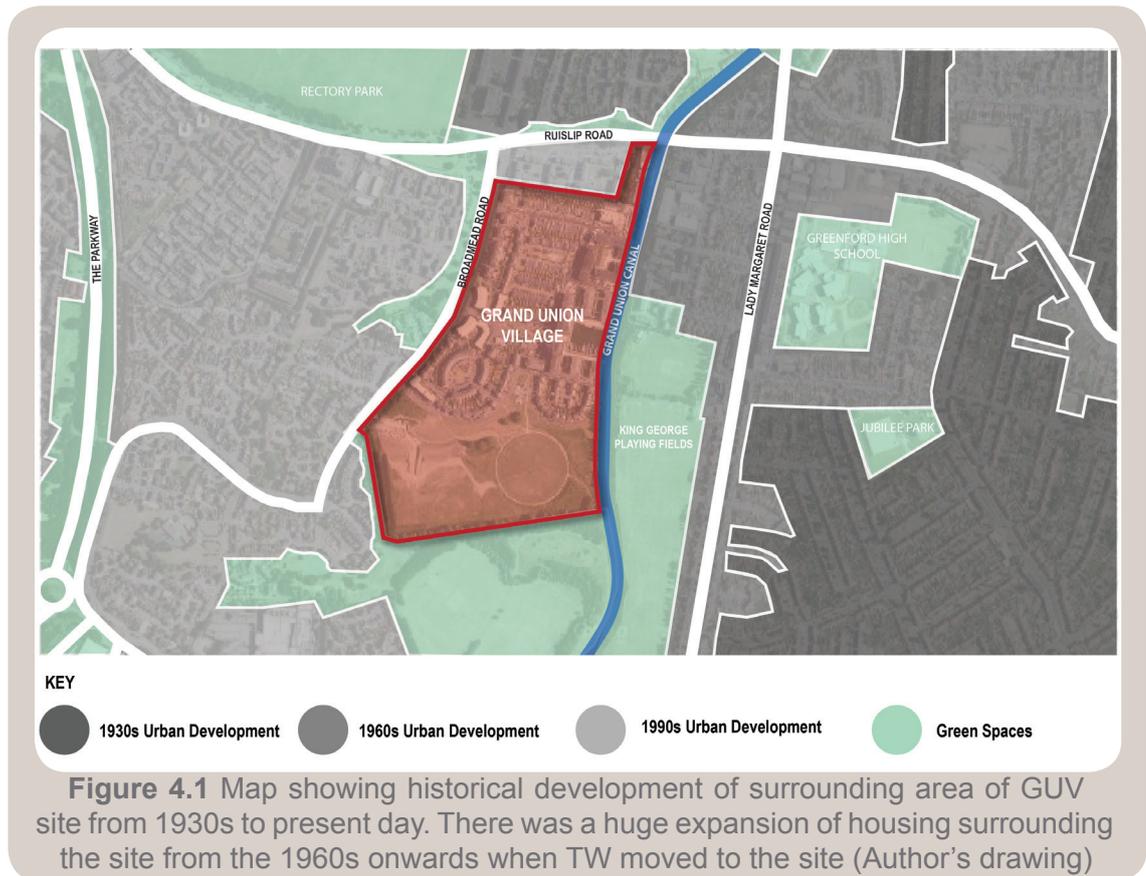
UV. Principles such as building community, mixed-use, movement, and car use are examined. Finally section 4.6 explores the implementation of the Vision and how the process of value engineering degraded the Vision.

More generally this chapter explores what Emily Talen defines as “macro-environmental” aspects of the built environment and how these impact on the behaviour of residents at GUV (Talen, 1999). Moving beyond the macro elements of place, chapter 5 explores “micro-environmental” elements of design utilising Lees’ argument that “architecture is about more than representation. Both as a practice and a product, it is performative, in the sense that it involves ongoing social practices through which space is continually shaped and inhabited (Lees, 2001:53). This approach also informs chapters 6 and 7 which explore the “after-life” of GUV and how the sensory and experiential qualities of the design were “appropriated and inhabited” (Lees, 2001:53).

#### 4.1 The GUV Site

GUV is located in Northolt, West London. The site on which the development sits extends to 21.78 hectares, including nine hectares which lie in the greenbelt between the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) and the LBE. The boundary between LBE and LBH runs through the centre of the Village with most housing located in LBE’s administration and the green space to the south in LBH’s control. The Village is located on the Paddington arm of the Grand Union Canal, 8 miles from Heathrow airport, 2 miles from Southall and Northolt and 4 miles from Ealing.

GUV is a brownfield site having previously been the headquarters of TW, one of the largest volume house builders in the UK, and a FTSE 100 company. In the 1930s they established their headquarters on the site. Figure 4.1 shows the increase in housing provision around the development site and how this increase occurred primarily after TW moved to the area. The map shows how the site, previously in a rural location became surrounded by housing development on three sides after the 1950s. The only green space is the greenbelt land in the south of the development. Housing that surrounds GUV is primarily post-war suburban estates similar to those criticised by the UV movement because they led to the disintegration of community (Neal, 2003). UV rhetoric seeks to create new communities of a differing social and physical order to post war suburbs (Aldous, 1992).

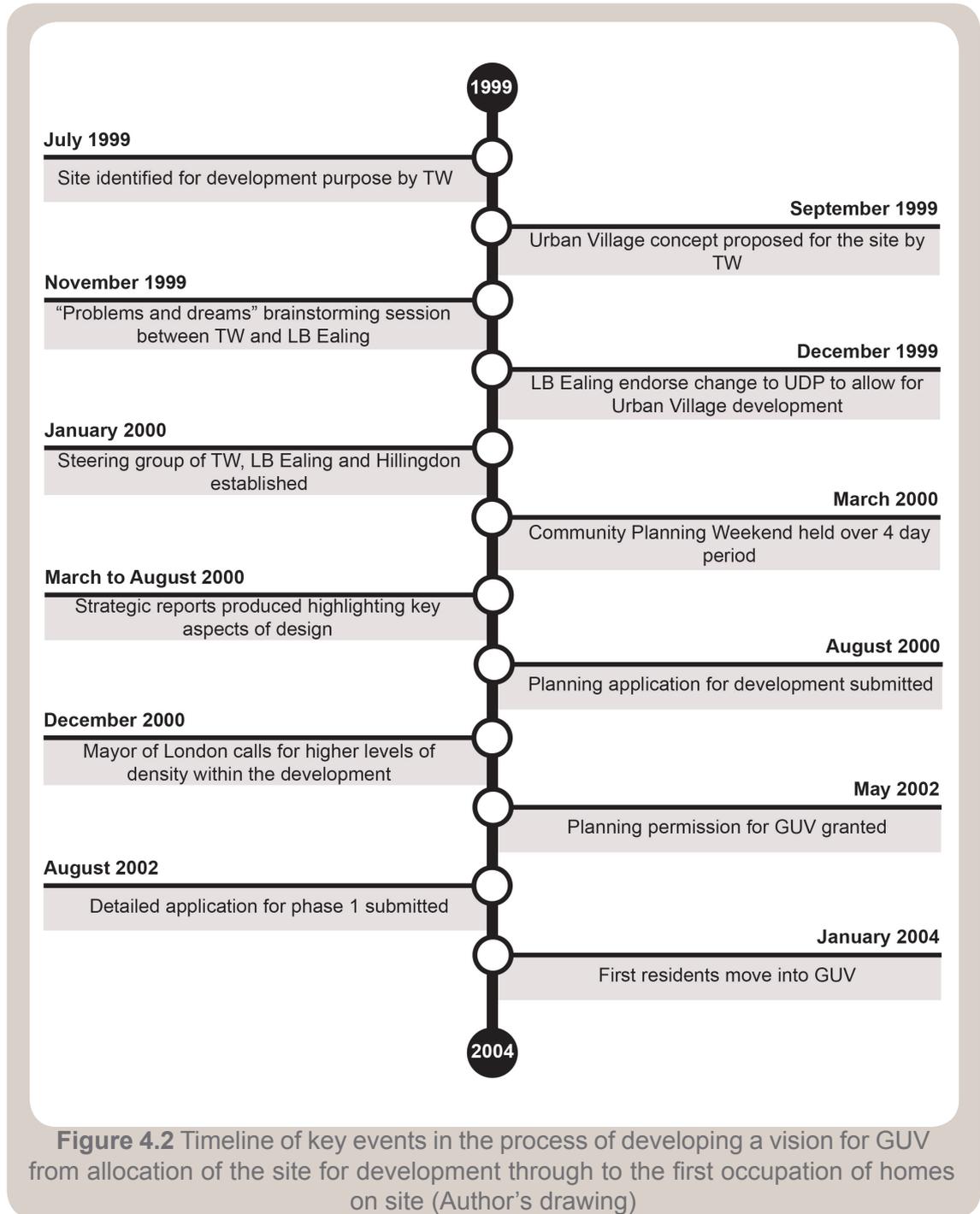


These suburban houses developed as a result of the numbers of jobs provided by TW. Many of these were provided in TW offices on the northwest corner of the site and in the mid 1990s 1400 people were employed here. By 1999 however, the numbers of people employed on the site dropped to 800. At this point TW decided that the site was no longer of value and they “needed to do something more productive with this site” (Terry Harwood, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:4). Productiveness was defined in relation to the perceived shortcomings of the TW headquarters which was largely redundant due to shifts in the structure of the company. The head office, pre-cast concrete yard, research centre and maintenance yards were all relocated. It was, however envisioned that TW would retain a presence on site as part of the development through refurbished office buildings to the northeast of the site.

## 4.2 The process of developing a Grand Union Vision

### 4.2.1 Proposing the UV concept

Figure 4.2 demonstrates the process from allocation of the site for development by TW in 1999 through to the occupation of the first homes. The timeline shows the key dates in the development of the Vision, and the elements involved in its negotiation and eventual granting of planning permission.



In July 1999 TW deemed the site suitable for “comprehensive redevelopment” and began initial consultation with the LBE and LBH regarding the possibility of regenerating the site with a housing-led strategy of development. However, because of the LBE’s reluctance to lose major employment from the area, this idea was rejected and TW accepted that they “had failed to establish a dialogue with the planners” (Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:1). It was at this juncture that the idea of an UV was proposed by TW, and new managers were brought onto the project.

Robert Stuart, who was part of the TW management team that took over discussions with LBE stated that the site offered them a “major opportunity to do something that was totally different...and have a go at creating an UV” (Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:1). The UV model was used to gain planning permission because it allowed a degree of flexibility in what they could deliver. Due to their initial approach for a housing estate, the UV concept was an afterthought for TW. In spite of this the process of developing an UV can be traced to September 1999, two months after TW decided to redevelop the site (Lennon Planning, 2000).

A report submitted to LBE in September 1999 by planning consultants Lennon Planning, stated that “the site has exciting potential to be redeveloped for a mixed development on ‘UV’ principles which, it is anticipated, could arrest the continuing decline in employment on the site and make a positive contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough, both private and affordable” (Lennon Planning, 2000:2). As a result of initial negotiations, the development team set about trying to alleviate the fears of LBE through a rhetoric which promoted employment on site as well highlighting perceived benefits to the surrounding community. TW’s position became one of an obligation to provide jobs for the local community and therefore they promoted the concept of a mixed-use UV.

Paul Nester who led the initial negotiation process for LBE stated that “one of the key principles, the council agreed with TW right at the start, was because the existing site was largely an employment site, there would be in the final development the same number of jobs on the site as there had been” (Paul Nester, LBE, interview, 2009:4). With this in mind, TW’s decision to design GUV within the framework of the UV movement was based on the desire to alleviate LBE’s fears about the loss of jobs whilst still getting the housing they wanted to make a profit from the site. At this point in the Vision process TW and LBE rhetoric was closely aligned because both sides believed the UV offered them the opportunity to obtain what they wanted from the site. LBE wanted a commitment to provide jobs whilst TW saw that the concept would give them a good selling point to the council and potential residents. As a result of this within the LBE “there was general support” for the UV concept “from the word go. And TW approached it well, because they talked about the UV principle and started hitting the right buttons” (Paul Nester, LBE, interview, 2009:10).

Such negotiations between TW and LBE reflect the urban political dynamics embedded within the development of GUV. Such perspectives have been widely covered elsewhere in the literature on urban politics (see Davies and Imbroscio, 2008; MacLeod and Jones, 2011; Ward, 2011). Much of this literature explores definitions of the urban and the relationship between national and local level states. Such an understanding and definition of urban politics is offered by Stoker who states that:

“Urban politics might be seen as concerned with politics in urbanized communities. Politics is a widespread activity which occurs in all arenas where human beings are engaged in the production and the reproduction of their lives. It involves conflict and cooperation, leading to the raising and resolution of issues through collective decision-making. Urban communities are to be found in towns and cities; urban politics is about the making of decisions that protect or undermine citizen well-being in such communities. These decisions are not necessarily spatially located in towns and cities”.

(Stoker, 1998, p. 119)

Nonetheless, this literature helps us to understand the political processes between actors operating at a local level of urban politics which is an important consideration for this thesis. As such the focus on urban politics within this thesis is on the relationship between different actors and agencies within the development of GUV and how urban politics in the case of GUV is bound up in the process of local scale decisions which form part of national level discourse. As Davies and Imbroscio state urban politics “is about authoritative decision-making at a smaller scale than national units...examples of urban politics are a mayor’s decision about what policy to follow in a city, the consequences of a neighbourhood participation exercise, or the decision of a locally important business to relocate away from an area, with a loss of jobs and income. In other words, urban is local” (Davies and Imbroscio, 2008:17). The planning of GUV fits into this framework due to the negotiations that took place between TW and the local boroughs, the community consultation exercises about the design of the Village, and the politics of TW leaving the area and the desire of LBE to keep jobs on the GUV site.

Urban politics therefore operates at the level below the state, and involves the continual negotiation between the local state and civil society. Within this thesis the agency and narrative of the local state in Northolt is told through a direct engagement with the perspectives of those who worked for LBE at the time. In spite of the importance placed on the local by Davies and Imbroscio, national policy still impacts on local decisions and the two cannot be detached. Planning for GUV was bound up in the implementation of national planning policy such as the move toward brownfield development, and the turn towards community planning and high density living within national planning guidelines.

Urban politics can therefore be seen as the “political processes producing urban space” (Ward, 2011:856). These processes rely on the relationship between different actors in the development stage, including those outside of government bodies who are involved in decision-making such as “community groups, housing tenants, voluntary organisations: all are increasingly part of a broader understanding of who is involved in urban politics” (Ward, 2011:855). Such processes are part of the GUV story which evoked a rhetoric which engaged

numerous civil society groups within the design of the Village.

The urban politics literature offers us important insights into who has a ‘stake’ in the design and development of the urban environment. Private organisations are having an increasing role within such decisions, and local councils regularly negotiate Section 106 agreements from house builders to pay for works that were traditionally undertaken by the state (see section 4.5.3). Urban politics is therefore:

“Customarily associated with a growing propensity for non- and quasi- governmental agencies and classically public–private partnerships, to orchestrate and deliver a range of functions which often times had previously been sponsored and delivered by the state vis-à-vis local and city government...contemporary urban governing is undertaken by a wide variety of organisations and institutions, operating at a range of geographical scales and mobilising a diversity of actors, including private-sector free-thinkers, designers, planners, architects, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporations and civil society groups, alongside the more traditional modes of local, regional or national government”.

(MacLeod and Jones, 2011:2459)

This “urban democracy” gives voices to all in the planning process and opens the process up to what Davidoff terms “plural planning”. In such a process the notion of the planner as the sole authoritative voice over the design of the built environment is rejected in favour of a process in which multiple voices contribute. The range of actors operating in the urban political arena includes “firms, developers, workers and social movements asserting the cause of, for example, women, gays, people of colour, youth, homeowners, tenants, squatters and asylum-seekers-orchestrate a variety of socio-spatial lines of engagement and networks of association” (MacLeod and Jones, 2011:2446).

There are two issues at play here. The first is an issue of scale and the ways in which different levels of planning engage different participants in the design process. GUV for example engages with international level urban politics and the transfer of ideas about the UV and neo-traditional planning. At a national level it feeds into national planning discourse of new forms of city life and a drive towards community within policy rhetoric. Finally at a local level, the local state (LBE) became excited about the chance to engage with the UV concept and use this to implement their policy aspirations for West London. LBE also saw this as an attempt in which to engage the local community within the design process.

The second issue is that urban politics is about more than the state. It is concerned with a range of actors and civil society groups and the ways in which they are represented within the planning process. In this sense Macleod and Jones’ argument about the vitality and impact of

the “firms, developers, workers and social movements” who have a stake in the development process is idealistic. At GUV, there is a deep sense of apathy held by residents with regards to the running and management of the Village. Furthermore there was little engagement with a diverse network of civil society groups during the design stage of GUV (with the exception of Friends of the Earth and Agenda 21). Such a reality contrasts with the rhetoric developed by TW, which mirrored that of Macleod and Jones, that a range of community groups and residents would be part of the design of GUV.

At a local level such ideas are therefore idealistic and urban politics is bound up in the relationship between the local state and companies (such as volume house builders) seeking to implement higher level planning discourse. This thesis is concerned with the rhetoric of plural planning but such relationships are most apparent in the negotiations between LBE and TW. Running throughout this chapter is the story of the rhetoric of community planning and the performative power of the community planning exercises.

This thesis examines the relationship between rhetoric and practice in the design and implementation of GUV. As such it is concerned with the ways in which pluralist planning is used as rhetoric and where it is put into practice. This chapter therefore considers the different levels on which pluralist planning operates. It will show how TW used the notion of plural planning to claim legitimacy to planning consent for the development of an UV.

By October 1999, following three months of negotiations LBE and TW reached a point where both sides were supportive of a development influenced by UV principles. Negotiations at this point focused on macro level elements about what was to be included within the development including; refurbished offices, employment uses, a range of house types, improved permeability and increased leisure opportunities.

On 26<sup>th</sup> November 1999, members of the local Boroughs and development team sat down for the first time to discuss their objectives and aspirations for the site and what were termed “explorations” of UV principles (LBE, 1999:1). They identified “problems with the existing site”, as well as offering “dreams” and “solutions” for future development. The idea of a dream evokes a strong attachment to the project, where each member has personal aspirations of what the UV would be. Ideas of attachment and commitment to the UV concept are developed in section 4.2.2. The 22 people who attended the meeting were asked to write down three aspects for each of these topics on a post-it note which were then collated. Figure 4.3 reproduced from the document of the meeting, shows the key elements that emerged from the discussions.

<b>Problems of existing site</b>	
• Isolation of the site from surrounding areas with lack of linkages leading to concerns about integration.	10 Post Its
• Transport and movement including encouraging public transport, reducing car dependency and changing culture of car use by existing office users.	9
• Creating a mixed-use development and thus avoiding being just another housing estate.	7
• Public attitude to development.	4
• Capability of existing infrastructure to cope	3
• Quality of existing buildings visually	2
• Involving local people	2
<b>Dreams</b>	
• Creating a successful community through participation and partnership.	9
• Creating an exemplary development through design excellence and process	8
• Fulfilling the Urban Village concept.	8
• Enhancement of the environment with particular reference to the canal's potential.	8
• Create a sustainable development.	4
• Create an integrated transport and movement system.	4
<b>Solutions</b>	
• Partnership - Local Authorities/developer/community/consultants/sharing technical information and spiritual objectives	18
• Involvement of local people	8
• Sustainable development	4
• Establish feasibility of delivering wider benefits to the community	3
• Flexible approach and open-mindedness to new ideas	3

**Figure 4.3** Table showing the key ideas to emerge from initial steering group meetings (Reproduced from LB Ealing, 1999b)

In December 1999 and emerging out of these discussions, LBE changed their Unitary Development Plan (UDP) to accommodate the development of an UV on the site. Previously the site was allocated for employment purposes and therefore the LBE were apprehensive about allowing a housing-led development. However TW asserted that “a great opportunity exists to ensure the long term and continuing association of TW with the area and provide a redevelopment framework for the site which will contribute to the area’s needs, in a way which supports established and emerging policy objectives at national, London-wide and local levels” which persuaded LBE to change the UDP (TW, 2000a:6). In effect this can be

seen as an attempt by TW to allay the two main fears of LBE; loosing jobs from the site, and loosing a FTSE 100 company from the Borough. TW rhetoric appealed to local and national planning discourse, and argued that GUV would fit into emerging patterns of built form as advocated in the Urban Renaissance.

Planning of GUV emerged in the context of the Urban Renaissance report prepared by the UTF as well as a plethora of reports, such as *Millennium Villages and Sustainable Communities*, all of which made distinct claims about the future development of British Cities (DETR, 1999a; DETR, 1999b; DETR, 2000a). The details of these reports have been explored earlier in the thesis, however their overall impact led to an increased desire to pursue socially equitable urban developments. GUV was often referred to by the development team as the “son of GMV” (Greenwich Millennium Village) which is a flagship urban development located south of the O2 centre in London. Much of the development team was the same for both projects with development of GMV commencing in 2000, the same time as the initial planning process began at GUV. Paul stated that GUV “was just symptomatic of the time, and so the Grand Union stuff was going on linking into that change of thinking generally. We did visit people involved in GMV, including some local residents...so we utilised those schemes to help support the development of GUV idea at the planning stage” (Paul Nester, LBE, interview, 2009:34).

TW and LBE plugged into national debates by considering local case studies that embodied national policy objectives that emerged from 1997 onwards following Labour’s election victory. As negotiations progressed in October and November 1999, the site was reallocated as a Special Opportunity Site in the review of Ealing’s UDP which was formalised when the UDP was published in 2002. Accordingly the new definition of the site was that:

*“The council will work in partnership with the landowner and the neighbouring Borough to facilitate continuing employment use (with levels of employment higher than at present), and a range of other uses including open space, housing, community and leisure uses in an integrated scheme following UV principles of sustainable development and high quality design. Measures to improve the visual and environmental quality of the area will be particularly important, especially associated with the Grand Union Canal and adjoining public open space”.*

(LBE, 2002b)

At this stage the idea of the UV with mixed-use principles was firmly established in local policy. Ealing had changed their UDP to accommodate for development on the basis that employment was retained on the site. This was emphasised in a committee report produced by LBE which declared that “the new policy for this site provides a context for the development of an UV, based on the principles of sustainable development and excellence in design. It also includes a commitment to safeguard, and indeed, increase the level of employment in

the former major employment location” (LBE, 1999:3).

Initial negotiations between LBE and TW played a significant role in how the UV was envisioned by both sides. Proposals for an UV emerged from a stalemate in negotiations to ‘soften the blow’ of losing a major employer from the area. The desire for employment on site and LBE’s association between the UV concept and the provision of jobs ultimately led to the contestation of the UV concept and how it was implemented which will be explored in section 4.6.

#### ***4.2.2 Committing to the UV concept and Vision***

The previous section showed how “there was general support” for the UV concept from within the LBE when approached for development on the TW site (Paul Nester, LBE, interview, 2010:10). The rhetoric of initial negotiations featured terms such as “dreams” and “aspirations” of design which implied those involved were excited by the GUV project and developing a Vision in the months and years that followed initial meetings.

How the Vision that emerged in March 2000 was supported by the various stakeholders in the design process and which elements of the UV concept excited them will now be explored. The Vision was, according to the projects’ planning consultant conceived at a two day community planning weekend after which all the consultants “went away to a fairly dingy hotel along the M40 and produced what was called a Vision to try and distil the various inputs that had come from that process” (Terry Harwood, Lennon Planning, interview, 2008:9).

From these humble beginnings, the Vision was promoted as the future development path of GUV and received the support of local councillors and Boroughs as well as the development team. For example, a local councillor who was involved in the initial Vision process stated that she “loved the [UV] concept and am a full believer in the idea that these places can be created if given enough thought and support” (Nicola Richford, Councillor, interview, 2009:9). Therefore Nicola argues that the UV concept can only work if there is a commitment from all stakeholders. According to an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) report on GUV, there was a commitment to the vision from both LBE and TW (ODPM, 2005a). The report was commissioned by the ODPM to explore the challenges of meeting housing demand in South East England. This was one of six case study reports, focused solely on “ways in which local authorities, residents, developers and other stakeholders can work together” (ODPM, 2005a:2). This is further evidence of how GUV plugged into national planning policy of the period.

The report stated “a strong ‘lead’ from LBE in driving the process forward was key to success” (ODPM, 2005a:8). This was demonstrated by Paul Nester’s involvement at LBE

which was central to the progress of the project and the development of the Vision. As the chief planning officer at LBE, Paul acted as the go-between for TW and LBE which is rather unorthodox. Traditional interaction between developers and local boroughs involve the developer talking to different departments within the council. Paul however was the single port of call for TW leading to positive relationships between both sides resulting in greater “active support from officer level and from members” at LBE (Terry Harwood, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:41). TW’s commitment to “achieving high quality development and investing time and resources in community engagement is acknowledged to be a key factor in successful housing delivery at GUV” according to the ODPM, which surpassed the normal expectations of a volume house builder (ODPM, 2005a:8).

In spite of this commitment, even the most ardent of TW employees would not claim that GUV was a philanthropic exercise on the level that was achieved at Bournville or Port Sunlight, because these developments as Ebenezer Howard claimed:

“represent pioneer work, which will be carried out by those who have not a merely pious opinion, but an effective belief in the economic, sanitary and social advantages of common ownership of land, and who, therefore, are not satisfied merely to advocate that those advantages should be secured on the largest scale at the national expense, but are impelled to give their views shape and form as soon as they can see their way to join with a sufficient number of kindered spirits”.

(Howard, 1965:106)

TW’s use of the UV concept was not born of a desire to be pioneers of community, rather they wanted to be seen to maintain their attachment to Northolt. This is emphasised by their assertion that “for more than 60 years this site had been home to TW’s headquarters. We’re proud to be maintaining our links with the area and having the opportunity to transform the disused site into a vibrant residential and commercial community” (TW, 2004:2). There seemed to be a genuine commitment to the local area because “the site had been going since 1942, [TW] wanted to keep the good feelings out there in the community” (Victoria Davies, TW, interview, 2009:1). An example of the way TW retained a presence in the final development comes from the naming of roads, which were named after people and things attached to TW such as Brick Lane, Brazier Crescent and Apprentice Gardens.

Therefore rhetoric employed during the planning process was one of care and commitment to the development and the surrounding community. As such TW needed to give back to the community because of this attachment. Raj Muller, for example, was given a job bricklaying after walking in off the street to project manager Alan Northfield’s office looking for a job. Local sixth form students were also employed by TW. Whilst on one level these stories provided TW with great PR opportunities to show they were including residents in

redevelopment, they were more than a gimmick. Furthermore attachment was not superficial but genuinely felt by its employees, illustrated by interviews conducted with TW employees such as Alan who said:

*“All the people that worked on it took a real interest in it. I worked five years on it and it was great...and, if people criticised it, I got very defensive. I found that with all the people who worked on it. There was a certain amount of pride in it, there were some very good staff that took a keen interest in the job”.*

(Alan Northfield, TW, interview, 2009:17).

As such the Vision was driven by members of TW and LBE because they believed in the UV concept. Another employee said that the evening before the opening of the restaurant and the marina, all of the employees stayed into the night completing the decoration, cleaning and painting. This emphasises the dedication to the Vision and the development. This view was also echoed by staff at LBE and Jacob Holman said “what I would have hoped was that we would have had a scheme that we would all have been proud of and I am sure there is a degree of pride there” (Jacob Holman, LBE, interview, 2009:11). However, whilst there was a sense of pride in the Vision, this faded away as the project progressed. This was due to a change in the relationship between TW and LBE, partly caused by Paul Nester leaving LBE and the strong link between the two parties being broken. Value engineering of the Vision also caused initial pride to diminish. The final section of this chapter examines how the Vision evolved, and how having reflected back on the process those involved believed it was inevitable that the Vision would change as it turned into reality. Now however, the evolution of the Vision after it developed in 2000 is explored.

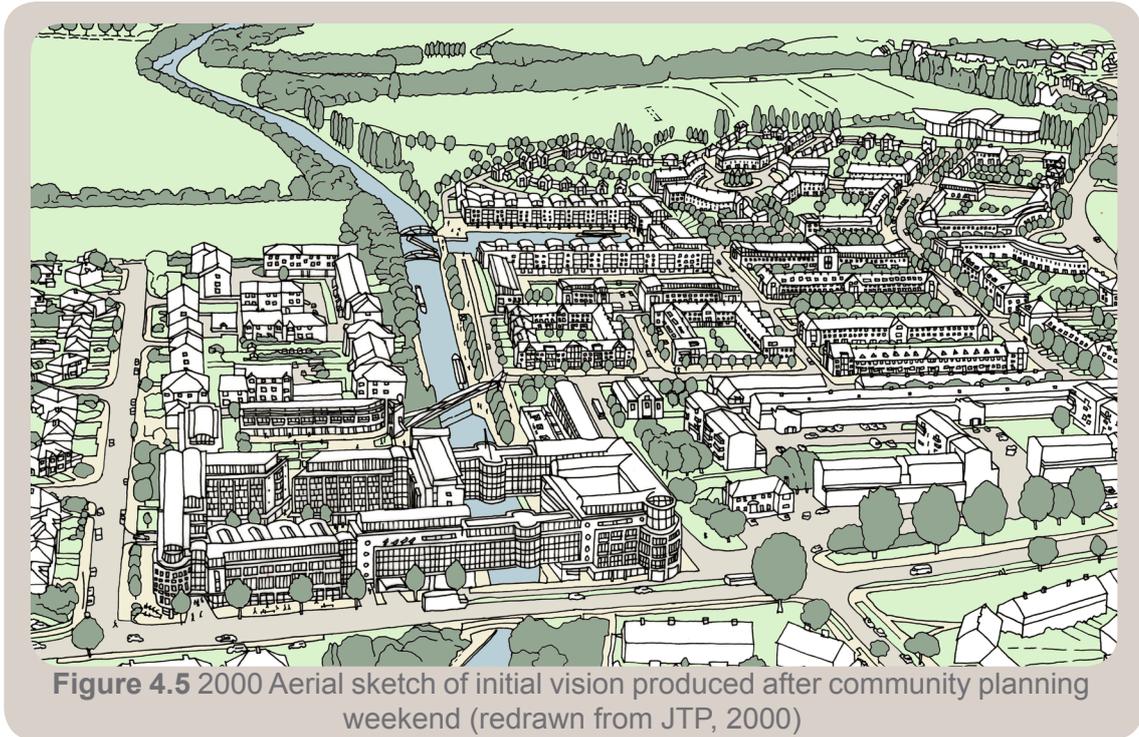
### 4.3 The evolution of a Grand Union Vision

#### 4.3.1 *The initial vision (2000)*

The first vision masterplan for GUV was produced in March 2000 and was drawn up by architects John Thompson and Partners (JTP) in the days following the community consultation exercise. This was subsequently presented back to the community in a feedback session on March 14<sup>th</sup> 2000. Figure 4.4 is a masterplan presented back to the community on the same day. Both of these drawings sought to represent ideas that emerged during the community consultation exercise as well as wider UV principles. This section explores the details of the first Vision and the ways in which it evolved over the following eleven years. Figure 4.5, an axonometric sketch reproduced from the Vision document of 2000, shows an aerial view of the proposed development (JTP, 2000a).



**Figure 4.4** Vision masterplan from March 2000. This masterplan was drawn up in the days following the community consultation exercise (Redrawn from JTP, March 2000)



**Figure 4.5** 2000 Aerial sketch of initial vision produced after community planning weekend (redrawn from JTP, 2000)

GUV was initially envisioned “with a mix of homes, employment and recreational activities” to create an UV that would generate “a balanced and sustainable community within the western suburbs of London” (JTP, 2000a:5). The Vision was a “place for people to live, work and play”, which would benefit the wider community without jeopardising existing social infrastructure (JTP, 2000a:55). This was important as the local community stipulated they did not want the development to be “a purely residential enclave”, neither did they want GUV to be “a threat to existing neighbourhood and community services” (JTP, 2000a:55). GUV needed to integrate into existing neighbourhoods and the surrounding community, and to achieve this a series of bridges and thoroughfares to existing communities were proposed.

The initial vision for the site contained a number of elements that were designed according to UV principles. The first of these was for GUV to be a mixed-use development and there was a large amount of employment included within the initial Vision. Looking at figure 4.5 the land to the north of the development which crosses the canal was to be a mixed-use centre. In this area, the offices of TW were to be refurbished and residential apartments built along the canal. This part of the development was also designed to have a series of public plazas and squares. Finally there was to be a bridge that would link the western and eastern areas of the canal to address issues of connectivity and access across the canal expressed during the community-planning weekend (JTP, 2000a).

The rationale behind this mixed-use centre was to create a “commercial core” providing a large number of jobs and services within the boundary of GUV. Amongst these proposed uses were; community, health and youth facilities, a hotel, training and enterprise centre,

workspace, restaurants and offices. According to the Vision statement, piazzas, and services would create an “innovative quarter”, borrowing rhetoric employed by the UV movement (JTP, 2000a:60).

The journey southwards down the canal edge was to be improved and envisioned as a “green link” through the development (JTP, 2000a:62). This link was to connect the commercial quarter to the mixed-use canal basin that was included within the design of GUV. The canal was seen as a “focal point” for the development and in contrast with the commercial quarter to the north, was envisaged as a “vibrant living quarter” with additional services such as “cafés, restaurants, workshops, chandlers and offices” (JTP, 2000a:64).

As with the mixed-use area to the north, connections over the canal were planned for the basin area of GUV to allow people to move to the cricket pitches and shops on the eastern edge of the canal. The route through the development began at a new “gateway” which led people from Broadmead Road through the public space and basin, over the canal to the other side, and formed the west to east link that was sought by local residents (JTP, 2000a). The basin which was seen as the ‘heart’ of the development, was located along this axial point from the gateway entrance, along the central lozenge through to the marina. The mixed-use element within this Vision was again based on the desire to fulfil UV principles.

To the south of the development the Vision was for the largest area of green open space within the development. Designed with lower density housing overlooking the green fringe the open space was designed for two football pitches and a cricket pitch as well as an extensive network of parks. In addition a sports centre serving residents and the surrounding community, was envisioned.

#### ***4.3.2 The Accepted Vision (2002)***

Following the community-planning weekend a process of review and change took place as the development team worked the masterplan and Vision to a point where planning permission was sought. Figure 4.6 illustrates the masterplan produced in 2002 and presents the revised version of the initial Vision from 2000. The 2002 masterplan contains greater detail than the initial Vision with residential blocks drawn in greater detail along with localised provision of public and private space. This masterplan was produced as part of the planning application submitted for outline approval to LBE and LBH.



There are a series of modifications from the 2000 Vision. First, is the role of the mixed-use centre to the north of the development. In 2002 the cross canal buildings were to be demolished and replaced by office blocks to the east and west of the canal. In addition the public plazas have been replaced by car parking for the office blocks, representing a significant change from the original Vision for this part of the site.

Moving southwards through the development it is evident that the buildings had also been changed to provide greater density along the canal. Whilst the frontage along the canal edge had been intensified, the links across the canal had decreased in this Vision with one of the canal bridges being removed. The residential part of this masterplan differs from the original Vision because there were a series of curves and crescents in the building line which had communal green spaces at their centre. In addition the layout also indicates that HZs were part of the design with narrower and smaller blocks than in the initial Vision.

Finally to the north of the site there were a series of small pedestrian and vehicular links through to the existing housing estate, Invicta Grove. This was an aspiration identified as part of the community-planning weekend and this desire informed this stage in the Vision process (JTP, 2000a).

#### ***4.3.3 Development vision (2003)***

By 2003 development of GUV had begun and outline planning permission for the development had been granted. As with all developments of this size, detailed planning permission was sought for each phase. Figure 4.7 is the 2003 masterplan which represented a shift from the 2002 Vision, due to value engineering.

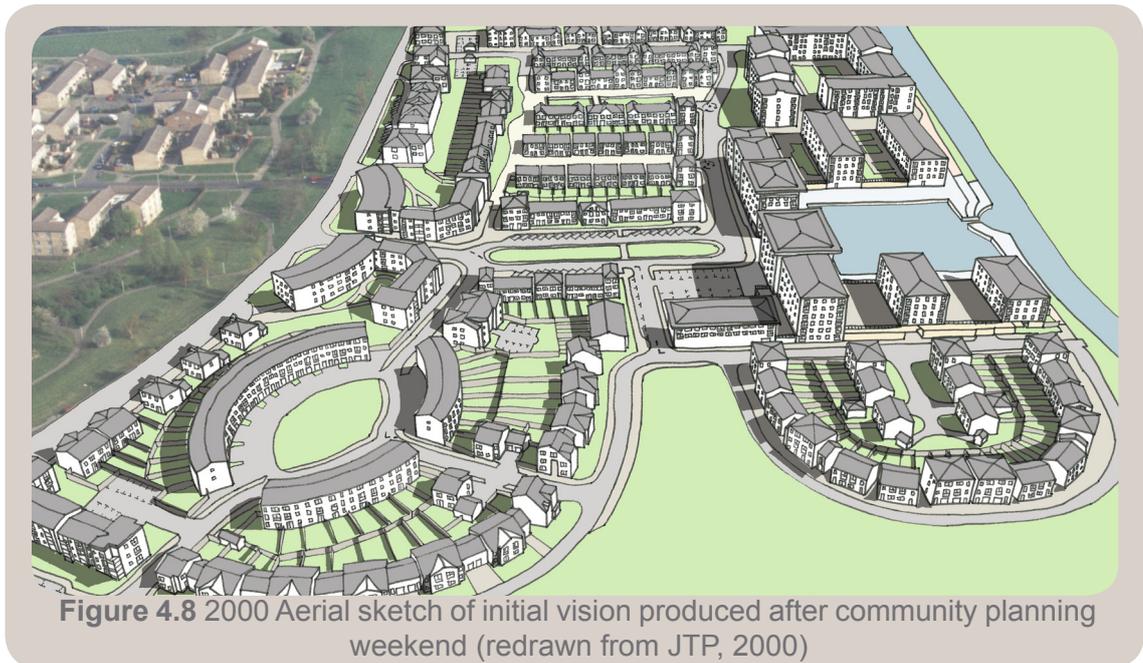
The first of these changes was the removal of two entrances to GUV from Broadmead Road. In earlier Visions there were two pedestrian links proposed, one north and one south, of the main “gateway” entrance to GUV. By 2003 these links had been removed from the Vision, and the only entrance to the development from the east was through the “gateway” leading people into the development through the central lozenge public space. In the 2002 masterplan the vista from the gateway to the canal basin was blocked by a building to the west of the canal. By 2003 this vista was eroded by the community facility on the central lozenge.



Other key changes to the masterplan from earlier Visions include the straightening of some terraced houses due to the greater cost of curved building lines, and the developer being able to get more houses on the development. The final change in this Vision, was the removal of the northeast section of the development from the masterplan. By 2003, TW struggled to find commercial residents for office accommodation and uncertainty about this part of the site resulted in its removal from the Vision of GUV.

#### 4.3.4 *Vision versus reality (2011)*

After eleven years the development of GUV is ongoing, with the final phase of the development left to be completed. This timescale has seen a number of changes from the original Vision, and this section will compare the 2000 Vision to the lived reality of the development. Division of the development by geographic areas is derived from those identified in the initial Vision document of 2000. Figure 4.8, an axonometric sketch of GUV shows the completed phases of the Village and the proposed final phase of development. Figure 4.9 is the masterplan for the built reality of GUV.





**Figure 4.9** The reality of GUV in 2011. This masterplan details the layout of development in 2011, with the exception of the planned residential uses to the north of the development (Author's drawing)

### ***Mixed-use centre***

As was shown earlier in this section the initial Vision for the northeast corner of the site was for a vibrant, mixed-use and commercial centre with a large level of employment, community facilities, shops and public piazzas. The 2011 reality is rather different. The land to the east of the canal was sold for the building of a nursing home and is no longer considered part of GUV. This represented a significant change from the initial Vision, due to the lack of jobs in this part of the site. In June 2011, demolition of the disused TW headquarters began, and this is the only part of the development yet to be completed, which has planning permission for conversion to residential accommodation. In spite of the lack of jobs in this area there is now a GP surgery.

### ***Mixed-use canal basin***

The canal basin has been completed and is surrounded by primarily residential accommodation. In the original Vision, the basin was intended to be mixed-use with shops, restaurants and cafes. However in 2011 there is only one restaurant which is on the western corner of one of the blocks. The layout of the basin remains the same, however the blocks have been realigned so that they now face the canal. The evolution of the Vision in 2002 and 2003 removed the vista from the west of the development looking eastwards to the canal basin, however in 2011 this vista has been restored.

### ***West to East links***

Following the community-planning weekend the west to east link was identified as a key aim of the development that would allow access that had not previously been possible (JTP, 2000a). Throughout the evolution process the route from a 'gateway' on Broadmead Road through the central lozenge and into the marina was established and maintained. This link has remained in the same place and relates axially to the canal basin and the cricket pitch. In terms of links to the existing urban fabric, there were plans to extend GUV north into Invicta Grove, however the social landlord was unwilling to sell to TW and this has not been pursued.

### ***Open space and sports centre***

By virtue of being situated within the greenbelt, development on the open space to the south of GUV is limited. In the original Vision there were plans for two football pitches and a cricket pitch to create a large open space. Whilst this open space has been preserved, the cricket pitch and football pitches have not been formally built into the development and the sports centre included in the original Vision has not yet been built.

### *Residential blocks*

The original Vision and layout of GUV incorporated 640 dwellings. Subsequent masterplans pushed this number up to 705, and in 2011 there are now 877 dwellings. This figure will increase to 972 when phase 12 is completed. As with the shape of the residential blocks this change was due to value engineering and the desire to increase profit which will be explored later in this chapter. This resulted in the straightening of blocks increasing the number of units on site, as well as a close-knit urban fabric associated with HZs, of which there are three within GUV.

#### **4.4 Public involvement: “It is essential for the community to be invited to participate at the earliest possible moment” (Aldous, 1992:38)**

In *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* Ebenezer Howard posed the question “your scheme may be very attractive, but it is but one of a great number, many of which have been tried and have met with but little success. How do you distinguish it from those? How in the face of such a record of failure, do you expect to secure that large measure of public support which is necessary [wh]ere such a scheme can be put into operation?” (Howard, 1902:112). Over one hundred years later UV rhetoric echoes Howard’s sentiments that public support is vital for project success. In *Urban Villages and the Making of Communities*, the follow up to the UVG Report, Peter Neal argues that:

“an UV project should go beyond the minimum levels required by the statutory process by actively encouraging the public and stakeholders to participate in the design and decision-making process. If local residents and future users of a new community are not supportative at the outset, the scheme is unlikely to succeed in the long term. Establishing an inclusive partnership between all the stakeholders, including local authorities, government agencies, the private sector and the surrounding community organizations, is now seen as crucial in establishing successful and inclusive development and regeneration process”.

(Neal, 2003:159)

If done effectively inclusive community planning not only allows the community to become involved in decision making, it brings local support for a development. This section focuses on the ways in which public consultation exercises were utilised in the early design stages of GUV. The call for UVs argues for participatory planning beyond statutory required levels and therefore involvement of the local community within the decision making process is explored, and what, if any impact they had on the decisions made about the design and layout of the Village.

How ‘effective’ community consultation was defined is considered, and whether the public consultation exercises at GUV truly engaged the community in design or whether they were performative. Furthermore the scale to which the community were involved at GUV, and whether this was taken to the micro-environmental level of materiality and experiences of the urban environment, or whether it was based on more narrowly defined macro-environmental decisions about place, namely movement and open space are explored.

In *Collaborative Planning* Patsy Healey advocates a move from rationalist, analytical policy processes to more interactive, deliberative and collaborative modes of engagement. Healey argues that traditional planning sees people as a “standardised unit” rather than individuals with different needs and uses of the built environment (Healey, 2006:99). Planners wanted to know how many people would live in a place, their age group and the numbers of services that would be needed to sustain this population. Planning therefore became a “scientific” discipline, based on demographics and population with the most extreme example of this being Le Corbusier’s modular man (Healey, 2006). Planning neglected experience and saw people reduced to a set of standard measurements, often at the expense of the disabled, gendered and sexualised body (Grosz, 1994; Imrie, 2001; 2003).

UV rhetoric however is different. Planning is about people rather than numbers and promotes alternative voices in the planning process. According to Peter Neal an UV should be “participative in the way it is planned and implemented, inclusive in whom it accommodates, and managed by its citizens” (Neal, 2003:63). This echoes a view held by Healey that people have a “stake” in the planning process because “as we think about what we need and what to do, we discover layers of stakes in place—places to live, places to work... places which symbolise aspects of our identity and culture” (Healey, 2006:95). UV rhetoric therefore argues that a participatory and collaborative framework should be implemented in the design phase. GUV fits within this model, which considers the experience and ‘stakes’ of users in the built environment rather than seeing people as numbers and standard units.

To organise these ‘stakes’ Healey argues that a “collaborative governance” should be developed, examples “of which can be found in initiatives in neighbourhood community development, in discussions on Local Agenda 21, and in some recent examples of public consultation in spatial plan-making processes” (Healey, 2006:13). Engagement between TW and the local community began with a planning weekend in March 2000 and continued through the Vision process.

Loretta Lees states that “to achieve a planning process that is sensitive to community and cultural diversity, planners need to listen to the voices of difference, to the multiplicity of publics, before they can imagine ‘togetherness in difference’” (Lees, 2001:67) In Lees’

response to her reading of Sandercock's *Towards Cosmopolis*, she argues that a diverse group of people must be included within the design process. Nowhere was this more important than GUV. GUV is defined by its location 2.5km from Southall, which has a profound impact upon the local community and the design of the Village. Geographic proximity to a large community of primarily Asian residents led the development team to engage the multiplicity of voices in the design process.

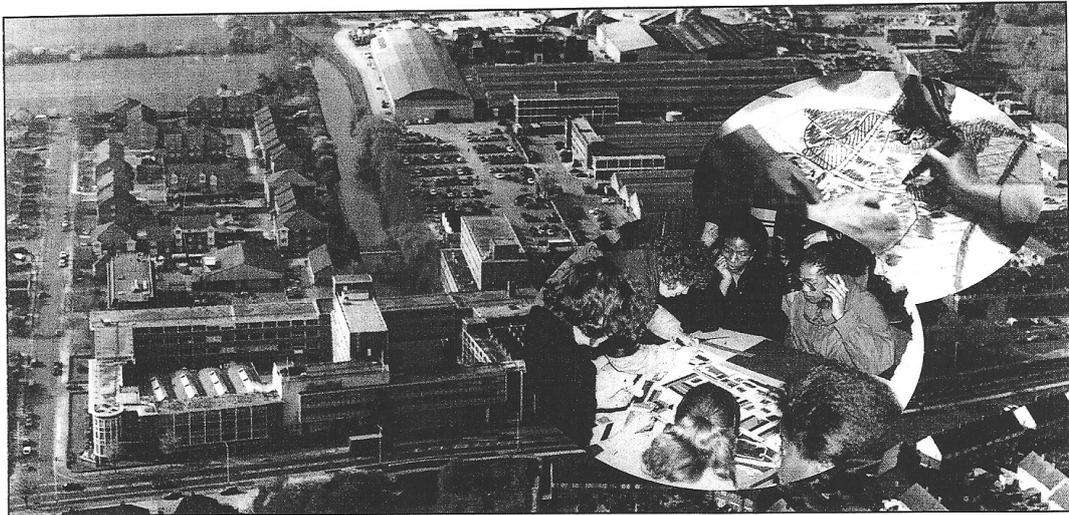
# GRAND UNION VISION

A new development opportunity centred on the Taylor Woodrow site, Ruislip Road, Southall

## Community Planning Weekend

Dates : Friday 10 and Saturday 11 March 2000

Venue : Taylor Woodrow Sports and Social Club, Broadmead Road, Southall



### Open Invitation

In partnership with the London Boroughs of Ealing and Hillingdon Taylor Woodrow invite you to participate in a Vision building process for a major development initiative centred on their Depot in Ruislip Road, Southall.

This is an opportunity to give your views and ideas on the creation of an exciting new neighbourhood with a mix of uses - homes, shops, businesses, sports and leisure facilities - and with access to the Grand Union Canal.

The project has the potential to bring significant benefits to surrounding neighbourhoods - Greenford, Hayes, Northolt, Southall and Yeading.

**So please join us - and bring your friends and family!**

### All Welcome

ہر فرد کو خوش آمدید

URDU

ਹਰ ਇਕ ਦਾ ਸਵਾਗਤ ਹੈ

PUNJABI

Witamy Wszystkich

POLISH

બધાને સ્વાગત છે

GUJARATI

सब का स्वागत है

HINDI

Qof walba waa uu ka soo qayb gali karaa

SOMALI

### Involving the Community

The programme for the two open days of Topic Workshops and Hands-on Planning is designed so that you can drop in for a short time or stay as long as you like. Interpreters will be available throughout the event.

At the end of the two days community planners, John Thompson & Partners will analyse and evaluate all the views and ideas and by Tuesday, 14 March, they will have put together a 'Grand Union Vision' for the 54 acre site.

The presentation of the Vision will take place at the Taylor Woodrow Social Club, Broadmead Road, at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, 14 March. Everyone is welcome!

**For more information please contact:  
Sue Hargreaves Tel: 020 7251 5135**

The Project is being promoted by Taylor Woodrow, in partnership with the London Boroughs of Ealing and Hillingdon. Consultants C.A.Lennon Associates (Planning) and John Thompson & Partners (Architecture, Urban Design & Community Planning)

Figure 4.10 Front page of the community planning weekend leaflet that was distributed to local residents to encourage them to attend (Produced by TW, 2000)

Figure 4.10 shows the poster that was placed around local housing estates, and posted through the doors of local residents to encourage them to attend the community-planning weekend. On the front page of the leaflet the phrase ‘all welcome’ is written in seven languages; English, Urdu, Punjabi, Polish, Gujarati, Hindi and Somali. From the beginning of the Vision process the diversity of the local community was recognised and encouraged within TW rhetoric. To further accommodate all members, multi-lingual interpreters were present at the planning weekend.

#### ***4.4.1 The Planning Weekend***

Since the Skeffington report of 1969, community consultation in planning has become more widespread. The purpose of this report was to “consider and report on the best methods including publicity, of securing the participation of the public at the formative stages in the making of development plans for their area” (quoted in Damer, 1971:217).

The UV ideal builds on this report and community engagement is seen as an essential and on-going process (Neal, 2003). TW believed that the local community:

*“played a significant part in developing the vision for GUV. The original public planning consultation involved over 270 people from the local community, as well as community groups. One of the issues that emerged from this process was for the community to have an ongoing role in the development of the Village. Many discussions followed and the concept of a Community Development Trust was felt to be the best way to achieve this aim”.*

(TW, 2006:2)

The community-planning event was held in March 2000 in the TW offices on site at GUV. The event was facilitated by JTP, and took the form of two days of ‘extensive’ consultation followed by a feedback presentation on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2000 where the Vision was presented to the community. The presented Vision was a masterplan for the site based on the culmination of the views expressed by the local population that had attended (JTP, 2000a). Over 200 people attended the feedback presentation event, and 270 attended the consultation exercises. JTP who took the lead at the planning weekend were employed based on their involvement in other community planning exercises such as the flagship development of Poundbury, and also Caterham Barracks, a development that some members of the local community were taken to visit.

The visits to Caterham Barracks and also GMV were undertaken in the autumn of 2000 by members of the steering groups for GUV (which consisted of local community members, the local Boroughs and the design professionals). The visits were organised by TW to show participants flagship schemes that had been undertaken in South East England. In addition to

staff at JTP and TW, staff from the consultants they employed, such as landscape architects Allen Pyke, Lennon Planning and Buchanan Consulting Engineers also attended. Figure 4.11 shows the timetable for the weekend.

# GRAND UNION VISION Community Planning Weekend Programme *Drop in or stay all day*

**Dates : Friday 10 and Saturday 11 March 2000**

**Venue : Taylor Woodrow Sports and Social Club, Broadmead Road, Southall**

<p><b>Young People's Workshops</b> will be held in conjunction with local schools</p> <p><b>TRANSPORT</b> <b>BUSES TO BROADMEAD ROAD</b> <b>E6</b> Hayes TESCO-Greenford Rd (Via: Hayes &amp; Harlington LU)</p> <p><b>BUSES TO RUISLIP ROAD</b> <b>E7</b> Ealing Bdy. Stn.-Ruislip Stn. <b>95</b> Shepherds Bush - Yeading (Via: S. Greenford BR and Hanger Lane and Park Royal LU Stns.) <b>282</b> Ealing Hsp.-Mt. Vernon Hsp. (Via: Hayes &amp; Harlington LU) <b>120</b> Hounslow Bus Stn - Northolt. (Via: Southall BR Station)</p> <p><b>SPECIAL TRANSPORT NEEDS?</b> Please contact us to book Community Transport Services.</p>	<p><b>Friday 10 March</b></p> <p>2.00 <b>Welcome to the Weekend</b> • Setting the Scene</p> <p><b>Topic Workshops</b></p> <p>2.30 <b>Surrounding Neighbourhoods</b> • What are the problems? • How can this project help?</p> <p>3.45 <b>Tea and report back</b></p> <p>4.15 <b>Social infrastructure</b> • Education • Arts, sports, recreation</p> <p>5.30 <b>Tea and report back</b></p> <p>6.00 <b>The Local Economy</b> • Jobs, training and enterprise • How can it be improved?</p> <p><b>Hands-on Planning</b> <i>Come and try Hands-on planning, working with us in small groups and using large plans of the area. Its an enjoyable process - and it works!</i></p> <p>6.00 <b>The Bigger Picture</b> • How can it all fit in? • What will the connections be?</p> <p>7.15 <b>Report back and refreshments</b></p> <p>8.00 <b>Session ends</b></p>
<p><b>Crèche</b> Facilities will be available please let us know if you wish to book a place</p> <p><b>Tuesday 14 March</b> at 7.30 pm</p> <p><b>THE VISION</b> Exhibition and Slide Show</p> <p>Venue: Taylor Woodrow Sports and Social Club</p> <p><b>Don't miss it!</b></p>	<p><b>Saturday 11 March</b></p> <p>10.00 <b>Welcome</b> • Setting the Scene</p> <p><b>Topic Workshops</b></p> <p>10.15 <b>Landscape &amp; Environment</b> • Wildlife and ecology • Biodiversity</p> <p>11.30 <b>Coffee and report back</b></p> <p><b>Hands-on Planning</b> <i>Come and try Hands-on planning, working with us in small groups and using large plans of the area. Its an enjoyable process - and it works!</i></p> <p>12.00 <b>Integrating New and Old</b> • How can it be achieved?</p> <p>1.00 <b>Lunch and report back</b></p> <p>2.00 <b>The Environment</b> • How can we enhance it?</p> <p>3.30 <b>Tea and report back</b></p> <p>4.00 <b>The Way Forward</b> • Fitting it all together</p> <p>5.00 <b>Session ends</b></p>
<p><i>The Community Planning Weekend is hosted by Taylor Woodrow in partnership with the London Boroughs of Ealing and Hillingdon. It is being organised by John Thompson &amp; Partners, Community Planners, Urban Designers and Architects. For further information please contact Sue Hargreaves at JT&amp;P Tel: 020 7251 5135</i></p>	

Figure 4.11 Back page of the community planning weekend leaflet outlining the programme of events to be undertaken during the weekend (Produced by TW, 2000)

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March three topic workshops took place simultaneously, including one for young people attended by students from Greenford High School sixth form centre. Two other focus groups entitled ‘homes and lifestyles’, and ‘health, leisure, open space, recreation and community facilities’ were run. On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March there were 2 workshops, one on ‘environment, movement and transport’ and the other entitled ‘education employment and training’. A hands-on planning group followed in the afternoon. The aim of the weekend was to identify the communities’ ideas for the future of the site and to see if these could be integrated into an economically feasible development. The economics of development were an underlying theme for the planning weekend, where there were tensions between high quality design and a mix of uses, and the economics of delivering these elements.

Resulting from this, many of the workshops and discussions were based around standardised concepts brought to the local context. For example the workshops were concerned with; creating a community, surrounding neighbourhoods, social infrastructure, housing, jobs, landscape, and movement. These are relatively broad issues, and whilst they speak to the key themes of the UV concept they do not bring clarification on micro-environmental elements of design. TW stated that planning consultation had the ability to bring significant benefits to the surrounding neighbourhood. As a result the subject matter of the workshops reflected this attention to broader issues and the ways in which GUV would directly impact upon the lives of community members living in the surrounding area.

#### ***4.4.2 An active or passive consultation process?***

Before the community-planning weekend, the planning consultants stated it “is open to all and is an important part of the process of deciding the future of the site. TW hoped this will enable local community interests to make an influential contribution to the evolution of proposals [for] its development” (TW, 2000a:9). However was this consultation a performative exercise or was the collaborative planning process based on legitimate claims to community support?

Peter Neal argues that planning weekends are valuable opportunities to identify and gain consensus with the local community about moving design decisions forward (Neal, 2003). Interestingly however, his book also makes distinct claims about what is acceptable public participation based on the rhetoric deployed. It states that “consultation involves seeking the views of individuals and organisations, but not necessarily involving them in decision making, whilst participation implies direct involvement and influence in the decision making process” (Neal, 2003:159). The GUV planning weekend was marketed as a consultation exercise and therefore by definition of UV rhetoric there was no need for the design team to involve them in decision-making. However, TW went beyond a consultation role of blasé attitudes towards local opinions about the development, yet they didn’t reach a participatory

level advocated by Patsy Healey. Whilst there was direct involvement in the Vision process, the influence of this was limited to macro-scale principles and the public's involvement in the design was also relatively limited.

UV definitions of community consultation lead to hollow interactions between design professionals and the public. If a community feels that their voices are not being listened to, the process of consultation becomes redundant. Despite the rhetoric employed within documents and promotional materials the GUV consultation sat between the two distinctions made above. To understand the reason for this it is useful to explore the relationships between the public and design professionals. How the interactions between those involved in the planning weekend played out and whether these were shaped by requirements for what TW hoped to be obtained from the site are now explored. Simon Innis who had overall responsibility for the planning weekend remarked it:

*“was nerve-racking from a company view as we had a blank site and were not sure how it would go. I almost pulled the whole thing two weeks before it was due to happen. The key thing about community consultation was to manage peoples’ expectations. There were some extreme requests and ideas from a community that was totally self-supporting to wanting 20-storey housing blocks, you just had to not let people get carried away, but most had reasonable expectations and understood the economics and viabilities of their requests”.*

(Simon Innis, TW, interview, 2009:2)

This idea of active engagement and offering the community a voice in the development of GUV was prevalent in rhetoric produced before and after the community-planning event. For example the planning consultants argued that community:

*“involvement has been encouraged and facilitated to the maximum possible degree in an active way rather than through passive consultation including through a community planning approach...The project design, involving diverse input from the wide range of professional disciplines, has carefully been co-ordinated to achieve an overall high quality and imaginative scheme for the redevelopment of this brownfield site. This has been achieved through the adoption of an inclusive process which has achieved a remarkable degree of consensus between the local authorities, other statutory bodies, representatives of local community organisations and individuals in the locality. Although by no means a new approach, the adoption of techniques to enable genuine participation by members of the local community and others in the evolution of the proposals and design for the scheme have been applied to this site to a more significant degree than has commonly been experienced elsewhere”.*

(Lennon Planning, 2002:3)

TW believed that the planning consultation was not shaped to produce results they wanted, but was “nerve-racking” indicating there was a level of anxiety because the event was

out of their control. This manifested itself in the decision to almost cancel the planning weekend. This rhetoric shows how the public were fully involved in an “active” process of engagement with Simon referring to a “blank site”, intimating that the developers came with no preconceived conditions on development, allowing the community to inscribe their ideas onto the urban fabric. Reflecting on this process in their corporate social report of 2003, TW stated that:

*“Consulting with local communities at the early planning stage of developments has long been a dilemma for developers. It is natural that in some cases there may be a mix of views, with some stakeholders being opposed to a development or to certain aspects of a development. We believe in engaging positively with local communities and to reflect local views when we are able to do so. The consultation process at GUV is a good example of what can be achieved”.*

(TW, 2003:8)

This was surmised by the ODPM report, that stated “it is agreed that the community planning approach and subsequent consultation through working groups was highly successful in helping to shape the proposals, deal with objections and smooth the path of the applications” (OPDM, 2005a:9). TW therefore believed they engaged actively with the local community. However they also acknowledged that active engagement is difficult for developers because of the time and cost involved. The “blank site” therefore comes with managed expectations that they don’t get ‘carried away’ because of TW’s reluctance to build elements that made them little profit. For example, one TW employee who was involved in the planning weekend said that “we had some quite frightening times from my point of view” because the community:

*“decided they liked the idea of an Olympic sized skating rink and it would have been easy to step forward and say you can’t have that, I can’t afford that. But we didn’t. I thought we would follow this thing through and I listened to them they talked through a wonderful facility for the area, it was going in the direction of an Olympic sized skating rink, and then someone said hang on if you do that there is going to be an awful lot of traffic arriving and leaving that will go on all night, and there are residents around the site. They all talked about it and then eventually decided it wasn’t the right thing and did that themselves so it was a very good design process to watch the fact that they went through all this and came out with their own conclusions”.*

(Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:5)

Agendas and meetings were therefore shaped by the desires of TW and the event involved bringing an agenda that had been agreed amongst the design professionals for the community to discuss. This led one local resident who was involved in the community-planning weekend to state that:

*“early on it enforced my views that a lot of this public consultation was a lot of box ticking. Under one of the planning legislation they were required to provide a public consultation but it seemed to be very much a case of well boys and girls this is the masterplan this is what we are doing, what are your views. There didn’t seem to be much willingness to take it on”.*

(Ian Gill, Steering Group Member, interview, 2009:2)

Opposing initial TW optimism was the belief from some involved in the process that TW brought with them preconceived ideas and desires of what GUV would be. The criticism levied here is that during the community-planning weekend, preconceived visions of place involved the subversion of recommendations and desires by local residents.

Biddulph argues that the UV concept provides a “perceived deeper legitimacy to the act of planning” (Biddulph et al, 2003:166). In many ways the process of community collaboration does the same. The act of engaging the community in design decisions gives the developer a perceived legitimacy to planning permission, arguing that they have community approval for what they are building. Following a question about why it was that community consultation was employed at GUV, Alan remarked it was a:

*“stroke of genius ((laughs)) Because when you go to a planning committee and you’ve got the members there, the members will only raise objections if they know people that vote for them are opposed to it. The secret to these is to get the community onside and if you get the community onside and they’re with you all the way it’s a breeze”.*

(Alan Northfield, TW, interview, 2009:7)

This enforces the view that the engagement with the community served the purpose of easing the pressure of gaining planning permission for TW. It was not the case that this was the only reason for the consultation because there was a genuine interest in the views of local residents by TW. On the whole, TW did engage actively with local residents yet their views could have been better incorporated into the final Vision.

#### **4.5 Social aspirations of design**

The following sections of this chapter explore the key elements of GUV’s design. These elements were drawn from the UVG report of 1992 which informed the Vision process from 2000 onwards. Each of the ideas explored, is based on a belief that design could influence behaviour. As part of the Vision process project architects JTP stated that “a key design objective is to create a high quality physical infrastructure that is both comfortable for people and which promotes a sense of well being” (JTP, 2000a:72). Under titles which were taken from the UVG report, this section explores the concepts of community, mixed-use development, connectivity and movement, and automobilty.

#### 4.5.1 Creating Community: *“The kind of urban environment which would encourage development of healthy communities” (Aldous, 1992:11)*

*“The workshops and hands-on planning sessions revealed a desire for the creation of a balanced community on the TW site”.*

(JTP, 2000a:55)

As part of the community-planning weekend, TW ran a workshop session entitled ‘creating community’ and posed the question ‘how do we do it?’. Unequivocally this established a belief that social problems could be addressed and eradicated through physical design. In other words the design of GUV would lead to the creation of a community on a site with no previous residential population.

In *Cities for a Small Country* Lord Rogers details the problems (namely social fragmentation) associated with suburban growth. This book written two years after Roger’s involvement in the UTF report, explores how community can be nurtured by good urban design and “a strong voice for residents” (Rogers, 2000:287). He surmises that architecture is about meeting human needs (Rogers, 2000). The UV however goes further with the assumption that architecture is about defining and influencing human needs based on the promotion of the concept of community. The ability to create a sense of community and improve behaviour is the essence of the design intentions of the UV movement (Neal, 2003). In the introduction to the UVG report, Prince Charles notes that “I have for many years been concerned about the harmful effect which a great deal of urban redevelopment has on the human spirit...its [UV] arguments and general conclusions present an important challenge to everyone involved in the planning, design, financing and development of civilised and sustainable urban communities” (Aldous, 1992:7).

Two key elements should be taken from this belief. The first is a claim that human spirit has been dissolved by the effects of suburban growth. Section 5.1 stated how GUV is surrounded by post-war suburban housing estates, like those criticised by Prince Charles. In this sense a link is established between design and emotional attachment to place where some contemporary developments are seen to neglect the communities that live there. Enforcing this belief in the relationship between the Vision and its emotional properties was:

*“the feeling that the residents that come to live on a site have the opportunity to develop a community, particularly in a dense urban area such as London. You can go into any street in the suburban area and unless there are facilities to create a community it’s very anonymous and you don’t get to know your neighbours or join community groups. For the health of people, unless they want to go to work, come home, eat, sleep, it’s better to have more in life than that. So it’s very much the aim to improve*

*the quality of life for the people that live in those housing estates which are just absolutely soulless. So it's creating a soul and a heart to the development".*

(Kimberley Nightingale, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:9)

The rhetoric employed here borrows heavily from that of the UV movement where a sense of community is seen to be derived from interactions with other people based on communal access to facilities and services. By creating a 'heart' for the Village the intention is that a sense of community will be developed. TW positioned GUV in contradiction to existing suburban housing stating the Vision offered more services and uses to sustain its population.

The second element is the promotion of the concept of "civilised" communities. In the UV model, the notion of community is seen to bring increased social cohesion and interaction leading to more meaningful relationships between people (Neal, 2003). The Vision called for a "balanced community", and established a link between architecture and community which Nicola thought was:

*"fascinating because of the idea of creating a community as well as just houses. I feel very strongly that a lot of new build today, is plonked into an area with no thought to how it fits the lives of the people. What I loved about this was it thought about peoples' lives and journeys' to work and what people were doing, it was focused around people, and I think that is so often lost. The endless boxes of housing that I pass on my way to work, these huge sprawls of boxy housing built in fields with no amenities, no public transport and everybody is driving around and I loved the fact that much thought was given to people living on the estate".*

(Nicola Richford, Local Councillor, interview, 2009:9)

Nicola draws on key UV ideals, namely people centred design, access to public transport and GUV's relation to existing urban development. In her view there was a dichotomy between the social elements of existing suburban growth and what was planned for GUV. Attacking the perceived placelessness of suburban growth, GUV was bound up with appropriating design for location. GUV therefore fitted into the UV ideal of "place sensitive design" (Neal, 2003). This concept was based on Raymond Unwin's argument about respecting the 'individuality of place', and 'maintaining the harmony of the whole' (Unwin, 1909). UV rhetoric borrows heavily from historically prominent urban planners, and Unwin's book *Town Planning in Practice* informs much of the social aspects of the UV movement. Specifically Unwin documents existing places, attempting to understand the ways in which they work. The design of GUV was based on vernacular public infrastructure plans and "focused around people" and "creating a community" in the context of Northolt. To incorporate this sense of community the CDT was developed which acted as "social infrastructure which is one of the key requisites in UVs. You have to have social infrastructure that enable the thing to function properly and the CDT is a key social infrastructure" (Clive Campbell, MPCs,

interview, 2009:16).

### *The CDT as Community Infrastructure*

The idea of a CDT emerged from the initial decision to put communal workstations into a community hall for use by the residents of GUV. The Trust had control of the layout of the community facilities and an architect designed them to their specifications based on what they believed the needs of the community would be. On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2003 the CDT was formalised as a charity and by December 2005 they had moved into their offices and took control of the community facilities from TW.

The mission statement of the CDT sets out the overall aim of the Trust as seeking “a sustainable and inclusive community for those living and working in the Village and surrounding areas, through supporting economic, recreational and environmental initiatives” (CDT, 2011). The CDT envisioned an extension of their influence beyond the GUV boundaries to the surrounding areas communities and beyond. Despite this only GUV residents are eligible to become members of the CDT, and pay £20 per annum to the Trust through the service charge on their home. In addition TW paid the CDT a sum of £140,000 at the early stages of development to support and sustain the Trust (MPCS, 2001). Board members are appointed from the residents of GUV, the local community, as well as councillors and tenants associations.

Emily Talen argues that membership “is the basis of an engendered sense of community” (Talen, 1999:1365). Membership she states involves “a feeling that one has invested part of oneself to become a member and therefore has a right to belong” (Talen, 1999:1365). In GUV this involves membership to the CDT, of which every resident is automatically enrolled when they move into the Village. However, as Talen notes, membership in this sense involves the construction of boundaries to achieve a sense of community. Those beyond the boundaries of GUV are unable to enrol in the CDT, which enforces Talen’s argument about membership being based on belonging to a spatial unit. UV rhetoric is therefore based on the construction of boundaries to provide a unit to identify with. In this way the CDT’s membership policy fits this model, with boundaries used to enhance community interactions.

Furthermore, to promote a sense of community in GUV, the Trust organises a series of events for residents of the Village. These are held at regular periods throughout the year and are open to residents of the Village and the surrounding community. Events held by the CDT in recent years include: summer street parties, Christmas parties, valentines and Halloween functions and a coach trip to France. The Trust also holds weekly activities aimed at children in the Village, including a karate class and playgroup. These events create a sense of “community capacity” through inclusion in community groups and activities (Biddulph,

2003). By creating groups of common interest it is hoped that residents will have a greater sense of community and emotional connection with the development.

Unlike land use, density and movement the creation of a communal identity through the use of a CDT is not directly linked to the idea that physical design can change behavioural patterns of residents. Rather, the CDT was set up to encourage social cohesion with the facilities given to them by TW acting as a meeting space for the community and income generator for the Trust.

In spite of this the location of the CDT was based on the relationship between design and behaviour. The CDT is at the geographic centre of the Village and “it was set up with a view to empowering the community of GUV and the local area to create a sustainable community. This is like the hub of the community, that’s what the Trust envisaged when they set it up that this would be the hub and events would be going on to get the community cohesion part of it” (Gemma Hunter, CDT Administrator, Interview, 2009:1). The location of the CDT above the shops overlooking the central lozenge on one side and the open space on the other was an attempt to place these facilities at the centre of the Village and would encourage people to use the facilities. However, criticisms have been made of this location based on the fact that the CDT is located on the first floor of Weaver House and is not publicly accessible unless a resident is allowed into the building through an intercom system. This restricts the everyday relationship with the CDT and it would have been beneficial for the Trust to be on the ground floor. Having explored social infrastructure within GUV, this chapter now considers the ways in which community was envisioned by TW.

### *A diverse community*

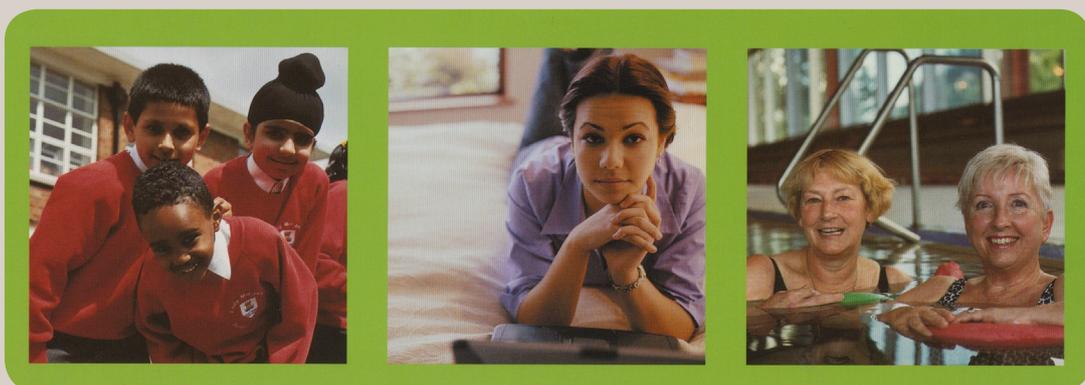
According to Talen “social and economic homogeneity are prevalent characteristics of actual (as opposed to theoretical) new urbanist developments” (Talen, 1999:1372). These are inhabited by a homogenous white middle class population as opposed to a “broad demographic and social structure” (Neal, 2003:83). This section explores the articulation of community within GUV, and how issues of race and social difference were envisaged.

Community in the sense of the UV movement is a call to combat the individualism of the suburbs (Young, 1990; Neal, 2003). Reacting against the perceived homogeneity of the suburbs the UV ideal looks to create socially and economically diverse neighbourhoods, which brings interaction with strangers and diverse communities (Aldous, 1992). Gemma Hunter, the CDT administrator said GUV has managed to establish a heterogeneous community, and that:

*‘It’s really, really mixed. It’s so diverse, that’s why I love working here... We get people coming in and saying can we hire it for a prayer meeting, a christening celebration, a pre-wedding ceremony. You’ve got three types of people in those three functions, Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim people that have to have two rooms, and because in the hall we’ve got a wall that goes across, you get a lot of people using that if they’ve got some kind of function where they can’t mix’.*

(Gemma Hunter, CDT, interview, 2009:17)

GUV’s location gives it an advantage to attempt to create a diverse community. The site is only 2.5km from a large Asian population in Southall as well as attracting a large amount of Eastern European residents. Gemma shows the way this diversity has manifested itself in the design of the community space at GUV. For example the community rooms have the ability to be separated through a moveable barrier that can be used to segregate people if needed. In addition there are five bedroom houses to the south of the development which reflect the presence of large Asian families on the site. Finally the inclusion of a halal butchers within GUV also serves a diverse community.



**Figure 4.12** Selection of images taken from ‘community’ page of GUV promotional material showing a mix of race, age, and gender which the developers saw as a diverse community (Bryant Homes, Water’s Edge Promotional material, February 2008:14)

Figure 4.12 shows a series of images taken from GUV promotional material for the canal side apartments and released in 2008. This view of a diverse community therefore appears relatively late in the Visions for GUV. However presented in these images are a diverse community, both in terms of ethnicity but also age. In contrast to this view Talen argues that rather than appealing to a sense of heterogeneity to generate community, homogeneity breeds greater social interaction (Talen, 1999). She refers to the work of Herbert Gans, who originally coined the term UV and suggests that community is formed on “the basis of social class and commonality of values” rather than difference (Talen, 1999:1370). Whilst groups of similar social class will generate greater initial interactions we should be moving beyond this idea to create diverse communities.

Despite this focus on creating community in UV principles, Iris Marion Young argues that appeals to the concept of community are anti-urban and often lead to further exclusions as opposed to true integration (Young, 1990). She argues that we should construct a “normative ideal of city life” rather than community, and contends that city life is:

“a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness. City life is composed of clusters of people of affinities-families, social groups networks, voluntary associations, neighbourhood networks, a vast array of small “communities”. City dwellers frequently venture beyond such familiar enclaves, however, to the more open public of politics, commerce, and festival, where strangers meet and interact”.

(Young, 1990:237)

The Vision sought a city life through communal associations with the Village. Part of this ideal is bound up in the CDT and their events which were designed as infrastructure for people to interact in. The overarching theme was that the Vision was based on increasing interactions between strangers regardless of class, ethnicity, gender or age. These attempts were bound up in the relationship between physical design and community, yet this approach is not without criticism. Biddulph et al note that community is “utopian, nostalgic and deterministic, as well as based on a flawed premise about contemporary constructions of community” and therefore echo Young’s argument (Biddulph et al, 2003:166).

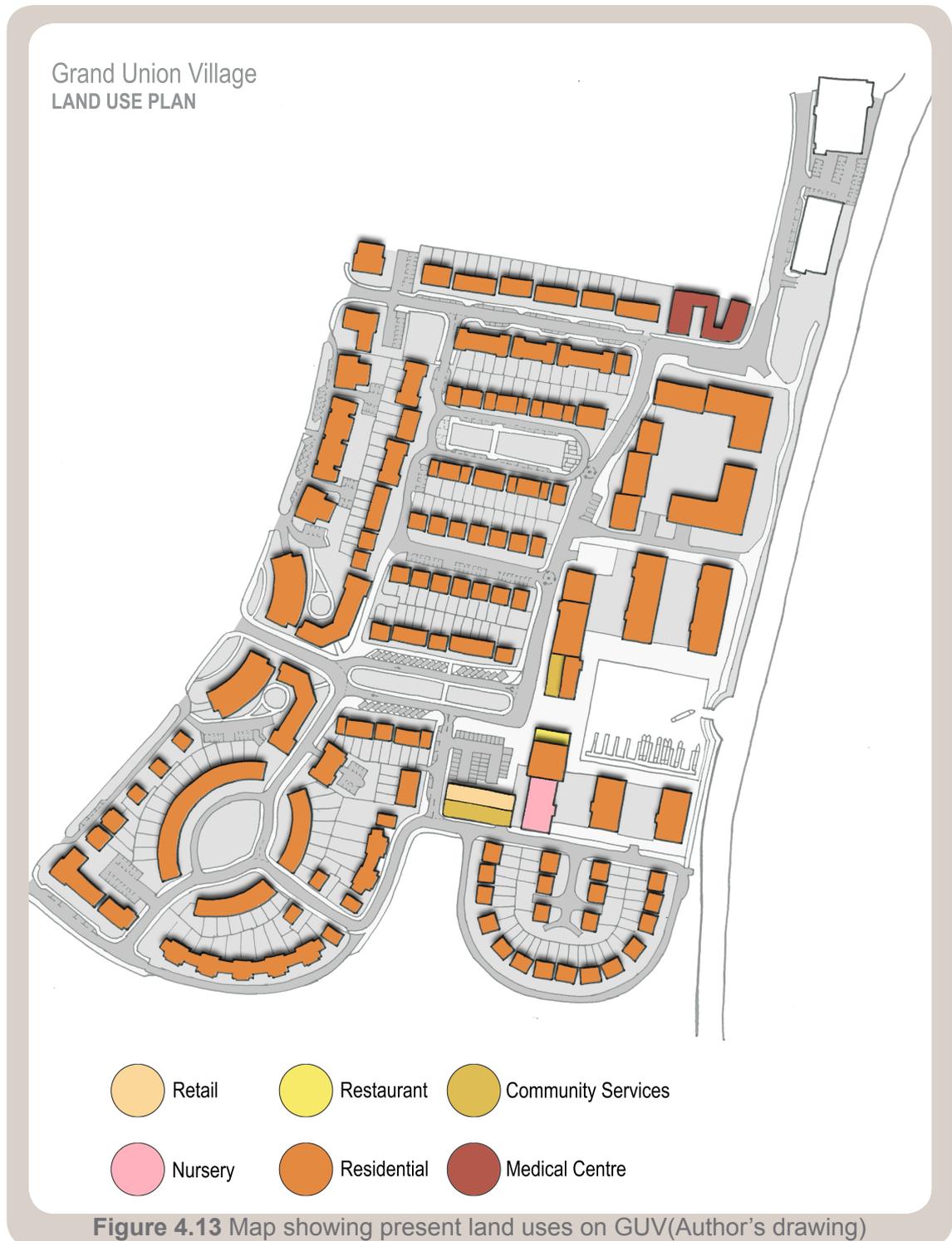
#### ***4.5.2 Mixed use: “A mixed-use town centre or neighbourhood can strengthen people’s sense of identity with a place and reinforce a community” (Aldous, 1992:24)***

Achieving mixed-use is regarded by the UV movement as a key aspect of social cohesion which creates vibrancy and use throughout the day (Neal, 2003). The ability to live, work and socialise within the boundaries of one urban development, reduces the need for excessive transport between places. The relationship between land use and social cohesion, community and automobility was first articulated by Jane Jacobs, and developed by Emily Talen who stated that where a:

“place of residence is juxtaposed with places to work, shop or recreate, social integration of different incomes, races or ages is encouraged since people will tend to walk more and drive less. With this kind of social integration, ‘the bonds of authentic community are formed’. The mixture of residential and commercial land uses creates a multipurpose space in which lingering is encouraged, creating

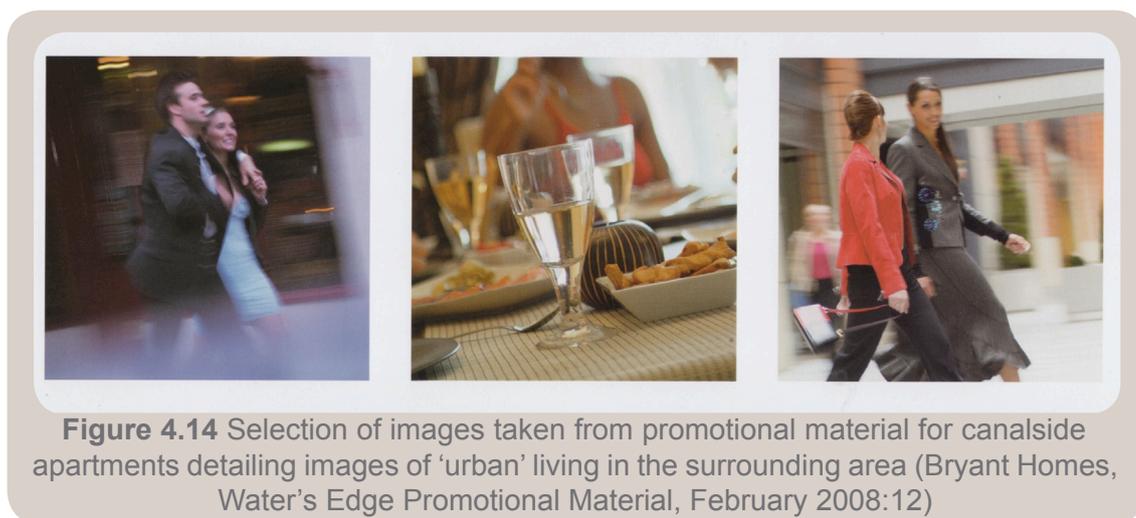
a setting for ‘repetitive chance encounters which, in turn, builds and strengthens community’”.

(Talen, 1999:1364).



Talen and Jacobs therefore argue that mixed-use encourages community interaction, and therefore it was incorporated into the Vision. The northeast of the development and canal basin were due to include a mix of offices, retail space, leisure and residential uses. This resonates with Jacob's argument developed in UV literature, that the diverse community at GUV were envisioned to interact in the mixed-use areas of the development (Neal, 2003).

Despite these initial attempts to create a community with access to a range of facilities the composition of land use is one of the key criticisms levied against GUV because much of it is composed of residential uses. Figure 4.13 is a map of the current land uses within the development showing that the only land use not associated with residential dwellings is located in and around the canal basin. These uses include a local Costcutter, Hair and Beauty Salon, halal butchers, restaurant, nursery and a small police station. Additionally there is a medical centre to the north of the development.



The limited mix of uses on site juxtaposes with the UV call for “a range of uses [which] must be mixed within street blocks as well as within the Village (Aldous, 1992:30). Figure 4.14 shows images of what mixed-use urban living was to be and how this was to take place outside of GUV in places such as Ealing. Rather than bring a dense mix of uses, as advocated by the UV concept, the mix of uses at GUV are limited in terms of variety and spatial arrangement.

### *Density*

The UV ideal alludes to increased social cohesion amongst residents, where proximity and density are cited as being key aids to movement and interaction between residents (Neal, 2003). Group formation, Talen states “is enhanced by: passive social contact (creating settings which support such contact); proximity (facilitating closeness by arranging space appropriately); and appropriate space (properly designing and placing shared spaces” (Talen, 1999). Thus density increases proximity resulting in higher levels of social interaction (Neal, 2003).

According to UV rhetoric, each village must have an overall population of 5,000 people (Aldous, 1992). During the Vision process it was decided however that whilst “the proposals for the site have indeed been drawn up taking account of the principles set out in the UV report” seeking “to achieve an arbitrary target of 5,000 residents within the development

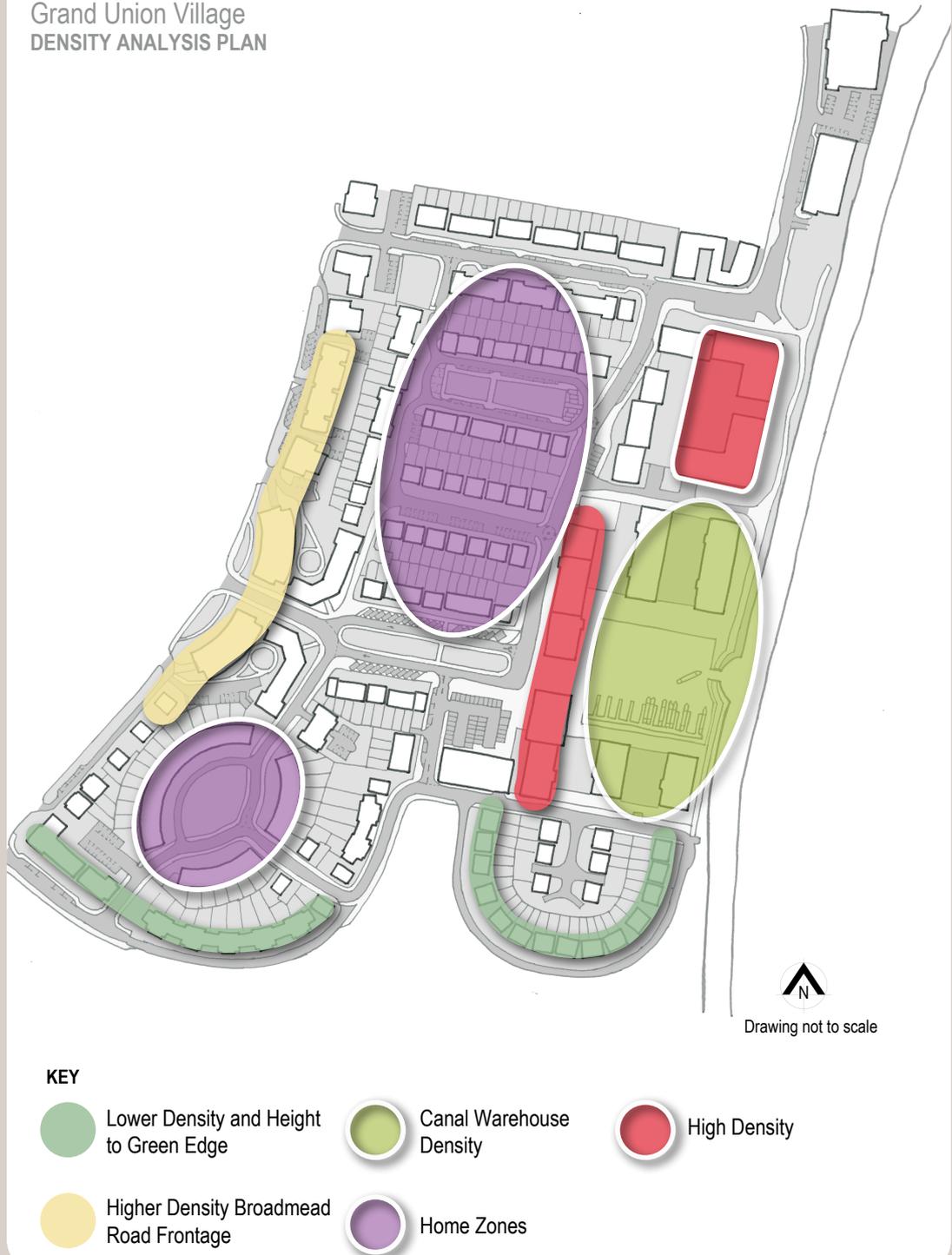
is inappropriate in the context of the development proposed and its location” (Lennon Planning, 2001:14).

During consultation on the development the Mayor of London raised concerns about the move away from a target population of 5,000 residents and pushed for high densities to reflect UV ideas. The developer and local Boroughs however wanted lower densities to fit into the suburban housing that surrounds GUV. After negotiations between LBE, the Mayor of London and TW, the Mayor suggested that a density of 400 habitable rooms per hectare should be achieved on the site to retain the effect of the UV principles.

In terms of planning policy GUV came at a time when low suburban densities were unfavourable and as such *Planning Policy Guidance 3* stated that densities over 250 habitable rooms per hectare should be encouraged. In the LBE UDP the maximum density at the time was 300 habitable rooms per hectare (LBE, 2002b). In the end a masterplan with 705 dwellings was accepted, which was an increase from the 640 that TW had originally sought to build. The GUV masterplan was developed at a density of 300 habitable rooms per hectare. By the completion of phase 11 the density on site will be slightly lower than this at 291 habitable rooms per hectare, and therefore not high enough to satisfy UV principles.

Figure 4.15 shows the spatial arrangement of the key densities within GUV. This drawing is based on the 2011 reality, yet echoes ideas developed at the masterplanning stage in 2000. It also shows how different parts of the Village were designed to have different densities. Figure 4.16 taken from the planning proposal for phase 12 shows the density of each phase of development including that of the proposed phase 12 residential blocks. The densities for the later phases of development and those along the canal are of particular interest. Phase 6a has a density of 408, 6b has a density of 491, phase 11 has a density of 521, and phase 12 has a proposed density of 525. As time passed national expectations of density requirements increased so that densities of between 200-300 habitable rooms per hectare would be perceived as too low by modern standards. In addition higher than average densities in these phases are due to their canalside location. Not only is this to capitalise on the increased value in these locations, but it is also to give the canal a “warehouse” and old industrial feel. Therefore the canal side units can be seen as achieving densities in line with the UV concept.

Grand Union Village  
DENSITY ANALYSIS PLAN



**Figure 4.15** Map showing distribution of densities on GUV. The drawing shows how density areas have been congregated on the site (Author's drawing)

<b>Net residential Density</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Habitable rooms</b>	<b>Density (Hr/Ha)</b>
Phase 1	0.833	232	278
Phase 2	0.872	197	225
Phase 3	1.209	248	205
Phase 4	0.662	113	170
Phase 5	0.825	200	242
Phase 6a	0.834	341	408
Phase 6b	0.854	420	491
Phase 7	0.657	150	228
Phase 8	0.605	168	277
Phase 9	0.882	188	213
Phase 10	0.832	161	193
Phase 11	0.96	500	521
<b>Overall density phases 1 to 11</b>	<b>10.02</b>	<b>2918</b>	<b>291</b>
Proposed Phase 12	0.491	258	525
<b>Resulting overall net density</b>	<b>10.51</b>	<b>3176</b>	<b>302</b>

**Figure 4.16** Densities of each development phase and whole development (redrawn from RHPC, April 2007:13)

Whilst density increases towards the canal it decreases towards the large open space and greenbelt to the south. This decision was taken to provide a softer, more sympathetic edge to the open space. Phase 3's density is 205 with phase 5 being built to a density of 242. In addition density increases towards the Broadmead Road which acts as a grand entrance to the development but also helps to buffer the noise from the Road.

In terms of density we can see a distinct pattern in the relationship between the residential units and key physical edges to the Village. The density varies greatly to bring differing character areas within the development and offer a distinct sense of place depending on where you are in the Village. Drawing on Jane Jacobs' idea of the relationship between dense neighbourhoods with a mix of uses and density, the UV model calls for greater densification of the urban environment (Aldous, 1992). Emily Talen notes that "social interaction is promoted by designing residences in such a way that residents are encouraged to get out of their houses and out into the public sphere. This requires a shrinkage of private space: houses are typically positioned close to the street, lots and setbacks are small" (Talen, 1999:1364) At GUV, UV densities were not achieved further enforcing the contradiction between rhetoric and practice.

### ***4.5.3 Movement and connectivity: “permeability is a crucial factor in creating attractive new urban environments” (Aldous, 1992:28)***

#### ***GUV and the surrounding area***

To generate a sense of belonging and community, a neighbourhood model of development is sought by UV advocates (Neal, 2003). This desire was made clear in the Vision for “a new neighbourhood that puts West London on the map” (TW, 2004:3). The neighbourhood model according to Christopher Alexander fulfils the social needs of people to find a spatial unit of which to belong (Neal, 2003). He states that residents gain an increased sense of pride and belonging by having their part of the city.

According to Ebenezer Howard the size of a community plays a major part in social organisation (Howard, 1902). The neighbourhood model was applied to GUV to generate a geographically defined community. The design team were handed a huge advantage compared to most schemes, because the site is a bounded space meaning that the development would have clearly identifiable edges. This was emphasised by landscape architect Susanna Livingstone who stated that:

*“it was felt that because the site was so defined, you’ve got the boundary of the canal, the open space and greenbelt to the south, the main road at the top, and because it had been fenced off for so many years it was an opportunity to create a new identity, a new character and a new kind of language of built form. If you’re trying to fit something into an existing town...[you] might have a bit more architectural clarity, or even heritage to it. Those issues didn’t really arise. So it was seen as an opportunity to create something new and fresh and more forward thinking at the time”.*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke Landscape Architects, interview, 2008:7)

Such ideas lend themselves well to the UV model because it requires this spatial fix to rejuvenate areas (Neal, 2003). It is viewed as providing a geographic community from which residents draw a sense of communal identification. Talen argues that “it is the sense of the ‘turf’-the bounded neighbourhood itself which residents identify with-that creates social cohesion” (Talen, 1999). These debates are bound up in a common identification with the neighbourhood unit. Providing distinct edges to the development results in the feeling that the space belongs to the community.

The definition of what sits within and outside an UV can however cause problems. Barnes et al declare that “in appealing to corporate activities, aesthetics and interests, the idea of the ‘UV’ provides a spatial fixity that suggests that the uncertainties, the undesirables and the unsightly are vanquished” (Barnes et al, 2006:338). This is echoed by Talen who argues that a boundary is central to the creation of membership to a community, creating exclusions

for those not deemed to be within the boundaries. Boundaries therefore “influence a certain kind of conformity which may not, at least philosophically, be embraced by new urbanists attempts to promote...heterogeneity” (Talen, 1999:1364). Boundaries therefore act as a form of social control, limiting interactions between a diverse population.

Community is seen by UV advocates to bring increased interactions between people of all social and ethnic backgrounds, conversely removing barriers whether physical or social that prohibit certain people entering the UV. Despite this rhetoric, residents of GUV exclude certain groups of people from the development through unwritten social narratives of who is “within” and “outside” the boundaries of the development which is explored in chapter 7.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, De Certeau argues that the dichotomy of inside and outside is created by the neighbourhood model. It appeals to the idea of the inside or the known whereby the neighbourhood is “almost by definition, a mastery of the social environment because, for the dweller, it is a known area of social space in which, to a greater or lesser degree, he or she knows himself or herself to be recognized...the fact that dwellers have their homes here, the reciprocal habituation resulting from being neighbours, the processes of recognition-of identification-that are created thanks to proximity, to concentrate in the same urban territory” (De Certeau, 1984:9). At the same time it also involves a “tension between these two terms, an inside and outside, which little by little becomes the continuation of an inside, that the appropriation of space takes place” (De Certeau, 1984:11). De Certeau’s argument speaks to the issues explored in this section about designing a spatially fixed unit to develop community. This enforces UV ideals that community is enhanced when a “visible edge and where appropriate, a clear boundary between the village and adjoining development” are provided (Aldous, 1992:81). Despite TW rhetoric promoting the development as permeable and open, they utilised boundaries to create an “inside” that the community can identify with to appeal to their Vision for a city life.

The UV, however is also predicated by the desire that design professionals need to consider the wider area, or “outside” that is affected by a village (Neal, 2003). A local councillor who was involved in the initial visioning process surmised this by stating:

*“what we were worried about was the effect of ‘them’ and ‘us’ of building a whole new sparkly Village with beautiful gorgeous houses next to an area of such deprivation. We were keen to counter that by the section 106 money and by trying to create a community that welcomed all in”.*

(Nicola Richford, Councillor, interview, 2009:5)

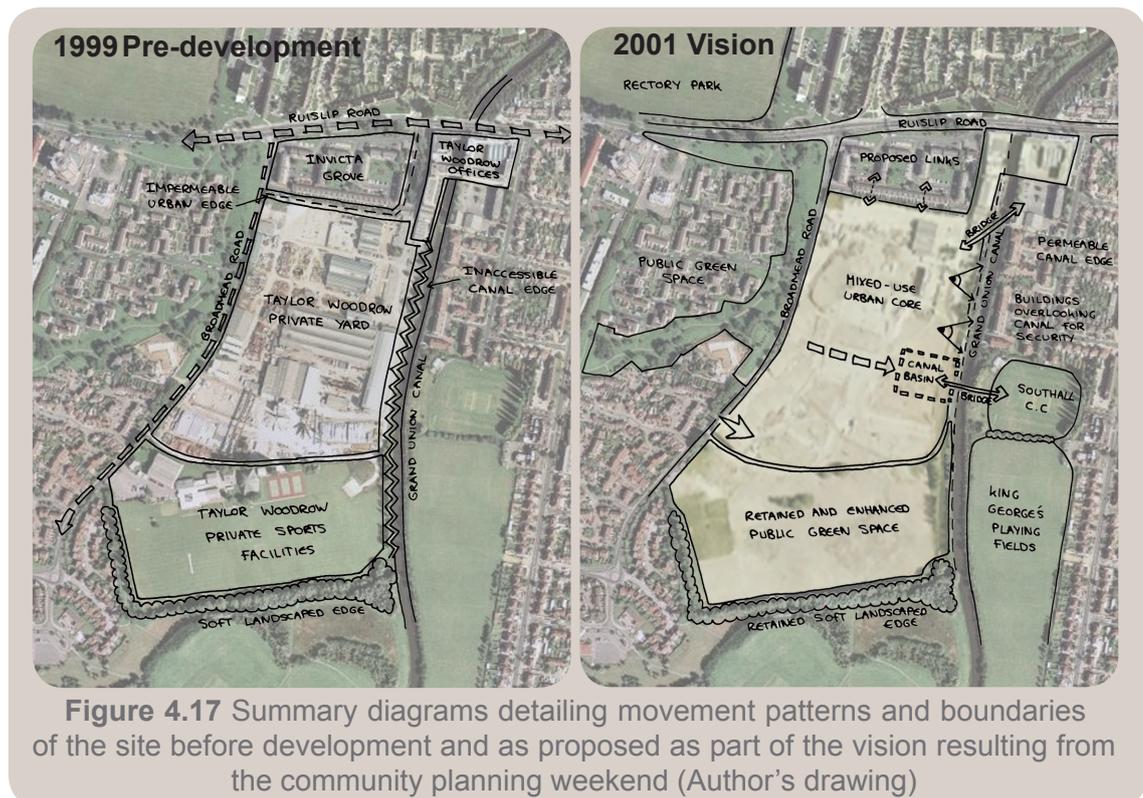
This highlights the tensions of developing brownfield UVs, especially in deprived areas, and the contrast between the existing urban fabric and GUV. The development team had differing opinions on how to integrate the development, and understanding the Vision for

GUV's interaction with existing communities lies in the ways in which the development was designed to bring change to the local area. Through "imaginatively designed new homes, attractive green open spaces and improvements in transport and the environment" GUV was to "ultimately redefine the local area" therefore extending its benefits beyond the boundary of the development (CDT, 2003a:1). As part of the Vision and subsequent rhetoric the "whole new sparkly village" was to be a "benchmark scheme in all respects. The community has been involved from the outset, setting the standard for other developers to follow". Our aim, TW stated was "to integrate old and new neighbourhoods to create a strong sense of place" (TW, 2004:11). In this way GUV was designed to bring benefits to local communities through investment in the area and a model of high quality design.

In addition the Vision provided access to GUV's benefits for the surrounding community within the boundaries of the development, as opposed to outside of the site. According to Kimberley, GUV:

*"was going to be an exciting project that would create a whole community and from the public consultation exercise at the beginning, the residents who came, talked about the great barrier that the existing site was causing between communities. The scheme was designed to be permeable to draw all members of the community into facilities around the basin, the medical centre and the sports facilities. So there was a lot of public uses which would tie all the communities together in one central hub".*

(Kimberley Nightingale, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:2)



Pedestrian movement was improved by greater east to west permeability, a desire of development proposed at the community-planning weekend in 2000. The designers sought to make it easier for the local communities to enter the site to interact within the boundaries of GUV. Figure 4.17 gives a summary of the definition of boundaries before and after development as based on the idea of retaining boundaries yet improving permeability and movement. The first image shows the problems of the site in 1999 when it was TW's headquarters. The second illustrates the design intention of GUV based on the 2000 masterplan. By 'opening up' the site TW sought to improve the interaction between the existing community and the community they intended to generate.

This idea is captured by Roberta Brandes Gratz in *Urban Villages and the Making of Communities* who states "everything is connected to everything" (Neal, 2003:22). This approach of incorporating the surrounding community was also thought to "improve an existing residential area of poor quality through the gradual introduction of some or all of the UV characteristics" (DOE, 1997:4). The Vision documents were based on this belief that it was not:

*"appropriate to treat the redevelopment of the site in isolation from its immediate surroundings and the communities which already exist there. In view of its past development and use, the TW site has been somewhat of a "void" separating the nearby communities of Greenford, Southall, Northolt and Yeadon. The opportunity is taken in the redevelopment proposals to seek to improve the interface between the site and its surroundings and to ensure that the redevelopment proposals respond to the needs of the existing communities, not just the new residents".*

(Lennon Planning, 2001:3)

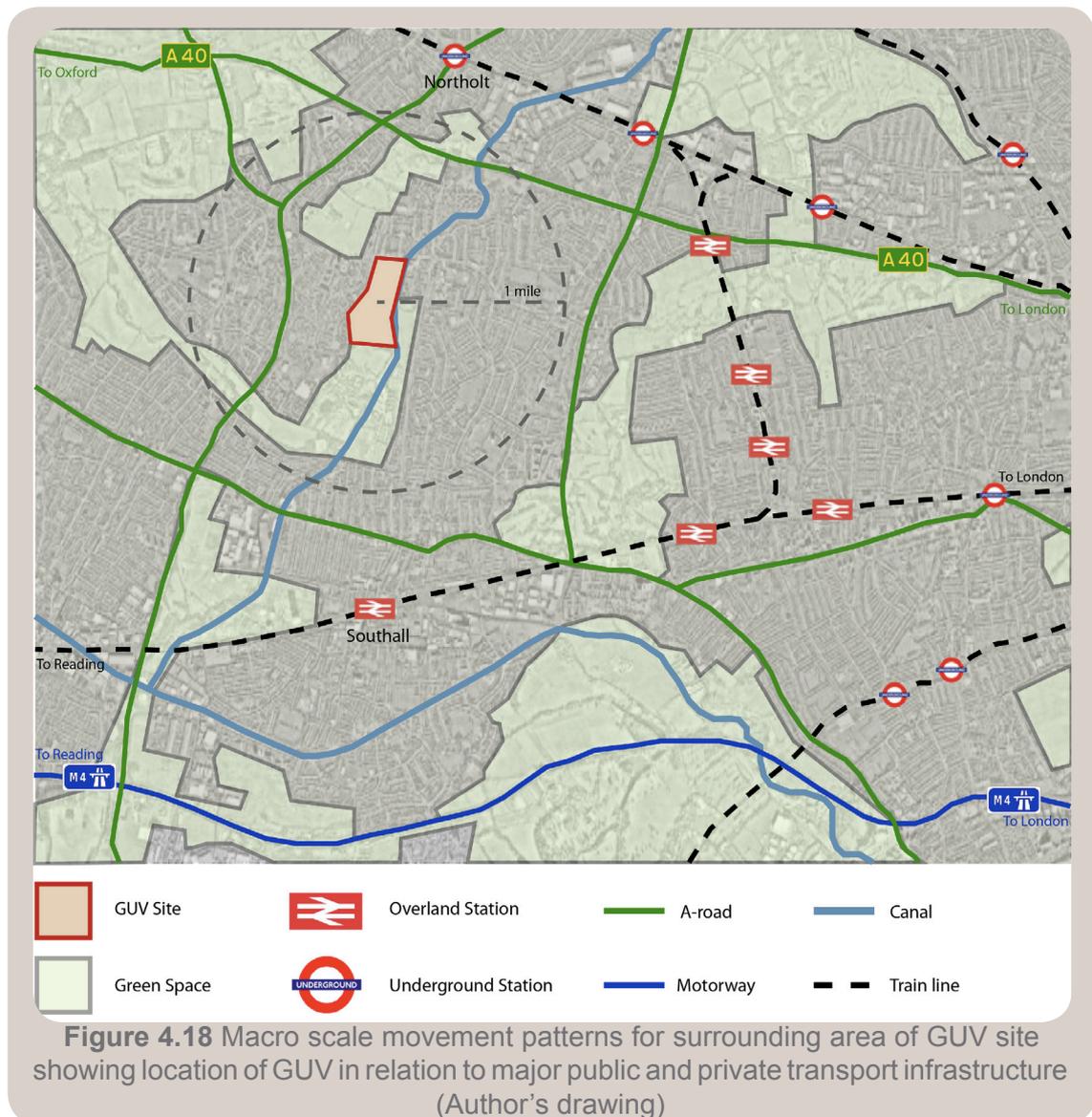
Tensions therefore exist in UV rhetoric. On the one hand the Village needed to establish boundaries and edges to create a fixed unit to nurture community. Juxtaposing this was the belief that GUV needed to integrate into its surroundings and be the permeable development that local communities wanted. Whilst the physical boundaries that define the site have been used to generate a sense of membership and unified identity with residents' surroundings, they have also been described as permeable giving the surrounding community access to previously inaccessible areas of the site. In this sense GUV enforced the idea of the 'other', separate from the GUV community, yet at the same time attempted to integrate the 'other' and redefine it in the image of GUV.

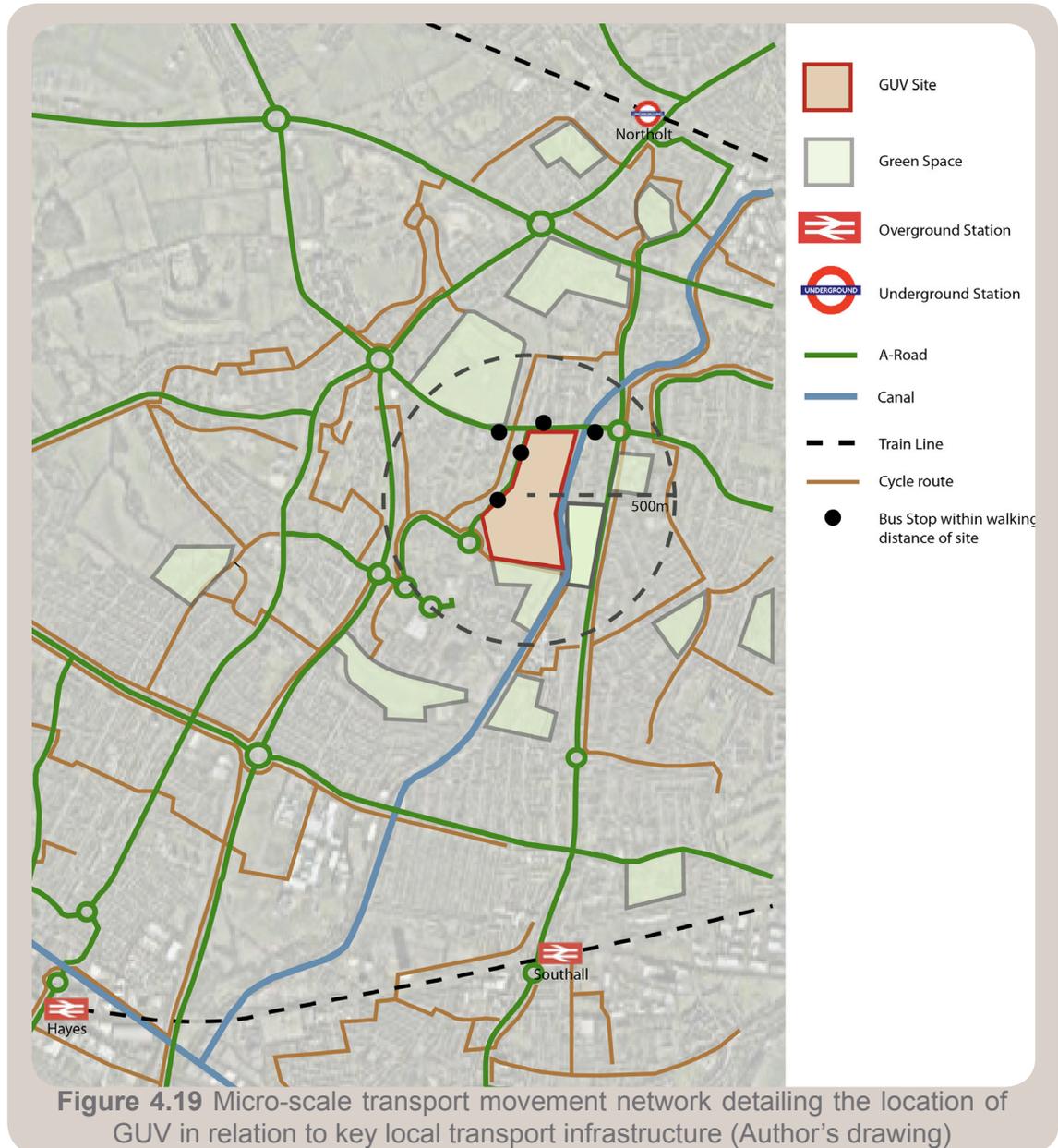
Therefore GUV can be seen to be variegated. The term variegated comes from *Urban Villages and the Making of Communities* and is defined as "offering a sense of local identity and belonging as well as access to opportunities further afield" (Neal, 2003:127). This term can be applied to GUV in that it was designed to have boundaries bringing a sense of belonging and identity to the residents, yet at the same time giving those residents and the surrounding

community access to opportunities beyond the development site.

Not only is the idea bound up in terms of movement, but also in terms of ideology about how modern urban living should be. GUV is not physically gated, yet in definition of the community that surrounds it neither is it fully permeable or integrated into the existing urban fabric. Using the idea of GUV as variegated, implies that social and ideological differences exist between GUV and what stands beyond its boundary, yet at the same time these boundaries are easily transgressed and subverted. Whilst GUV does not share the same ideology about built form as the surrounding suburban housing and estates, it is important that connections were made to these areas to stop the Village becoming a cocoon for the community, devoid of interaction between the two areas.

### Connectivity





**Figure 4.19** Micro-scale transport movement network detailing the location of GUV in relation to key local transport infrastructure (Author's drawing)

The UV model states that “no place exists in isolation...the crucial first stage is to understand an area’s context, the existing patterns of movement across the site and the way it connects into the wider regional patterns. The context of the area will have a direct impact on the final form of the place. On a broad scale, this means understanding the local hierarchy of settlement and connections” (Neal, 2003:109). Figure 4.18 and 4.19 show the relationship between GUV and the wider context. Figure 4.18 shows how the site is defined by its proximity to major routes such as roads and motorways, and public transport links such as overground and underground stations. These however, are 1.5 miles from the Village. Figure 4.19 shows the local level of road and cycle networks.

Advocate for the UV movement Peter Neal argues that “for regeneration projects in particular...the opportunity to restore routes severed by derelict sites; not only returns movement to the site but also improves the surrounding area, by allowing people to flow more

freely. Paying the right attention to movement and connectivity brings out and strengthens the existing character of the whole neighbourhood” (Neal, 2003:109). GUV is defined by its location within these patterns of movement and connectivity to the wider urban fabric. As will be shown later in this chapter, the desire to follow UV principles and reduce car use had adverse effects in the Village.

Connectivity however is not just defined by patterns of mobility and movement. Instead GUV was required to define its position in terms of a surrounding urban centre from which to derive its own identity. Figure 4.18 illustrates where the site sits within the urban fabric, geographically closest to Northolt, whilst retaining links to Southall due to the diverse community found within the development.

### *Movement*

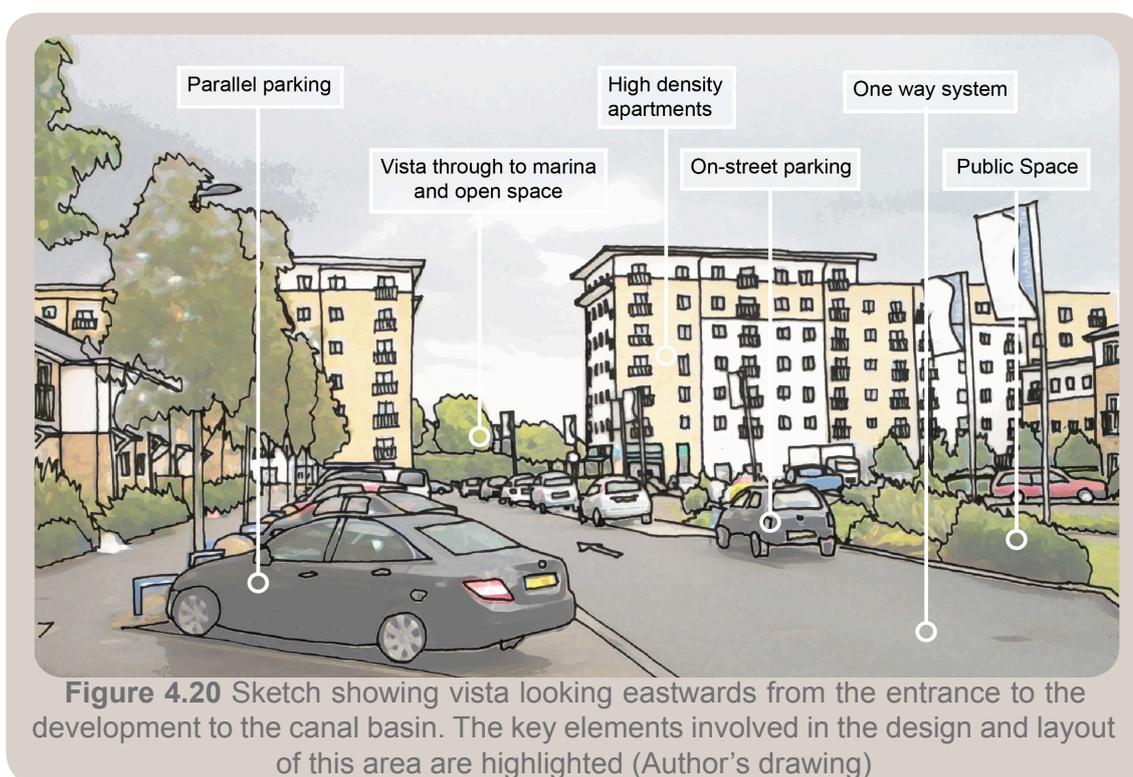
The history of the site was bound up in the movement of people and objects within and beyond the boundaries of the site. During the years of industry, bricks and other products would be shipped along the Grand Union Canal to London, with waste products returning to the site from the capital. However, its use as the headquarters of TW meant it was impermeable to local residents. As part of the commitment to the UV model, GUV sought to create internal patterns of movement enabling people to interact whilst undertaking journeys

The importance of movement is exemplified by Imrie who argues that “mobility and movement are core to people’s identities, life experiences and opportunities. This is particularly poignant for those whose mobility and movement patterns are constrained by wider social or situational circumstances over which they have little or no control” (Imrie, 2000:1641). This section explores the role of movement in shaping the experiences of GUV residents, examining how mobility and movement were built into the Vision masterplan. Aspirations of design for increased pedestrian movement hinge on the creation of social interactions and increased community spirit. Journeys, it is argued, should provide the opportunity for interest and human interaction which in turn creates social pride and citizenship (Neal, 2003).

In 1999 when the site was the headquarters of TW, it was inaccessible to people from the surrounding community. During the planning consultation weekend, people expressed a desire for GUV to be more permeable to allow access the canal and use the open space (JTP, 2000a; Lynch, 1960). The initial urban design framework for the site was based on the relationship between the public realm and permeability. There are a hierarchy of interlinked public spaces within the UV that provide legibility (Lynch, 1960). Large spaces such as the open space to the south, the basin and the central lozenge seek to act as strong orientation features, whilst smaller parks and play areas act as aids to movement on a micro-scale. Street

planting and the landscaping also aid legibility and seek to create engaging and interesting landscapes which encourage people to move through the space.

Figure 4.20 is a sketch showing the key east to west movement route running through GUV. This route has remained the same since the initial masterplan in 2000, and whilst the surrounding buildings have changed in scale and orientation, the movement pattern towards the canal has remained constant. The route begins with the design of the affordable flats that front onto Broadmead Road which are curved inwards to give a sense of entrance to the development. There are three routes into GUV, all with roads the same width, however this entrance courtesy of its layout and design make it the primary entrance. This decision was based on the desire to provide an easy route through to the shops and canal basin beyond, as well as to the open space to the south. The new canal basin was built so that it relates axially to the Taywood Road entrance and therefore you are able to see the Marina from the entrance to GUV. Figure 4.18 shows the key movement and permeability elements associated with movement from the entrance to the canal basin. The central lozenge also emerged out of this movement path from the Taywood Road entrance towards the marina.



**Figure 4.20** Sketch showing vista looking eastwards from the entrance to the development to the canal basin. The key elements involved in the design and layout of this area are highlighted (Author's drawing)

Traditionally movement patterns have been based on the role of the street. However “streets in cities serve many purposes besides carrying vehicles, and city sidewalks—the pedestrian parts of the streets—serve many purposes beside carrying pedestrians. These are bound up with circulation but are not identical with it and in their own right they are at least as basic as circulation to the proper workings of cities” (Jacobs, 1961:34). Chapter 5 focuses on the role of the street as more than a movement network, but as social infrastructure aimed at

generating social interaction prioritising the pedestrian.

According to Peter Neal “the main task of all urban planning and design should be the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use” (Neal, 2003:106). Shared use streets were included within GUV to allow people to move freely around the development at the expense of the car. However shared surfaces also lead to exclusion of some residents which will be explored in chapter 5.

#### ***4.5.4 Transport: “The UV must cater for the car without encouraging its use” (Aldous, 1992:30)***

“The car” according to Thrift “has become a common feature of everyday life itself, almost a background to the background...whole parts of the built environment are now a mute but still eloquent testimony to automobility” (Thrift, 2008:79). Application of the UV concept requires the role of cars to be reconsidered from the traditional urbanism described by Thrift and places them at the periphery of the transport hierarchy. Accordingly what is sought in UVs is a move from individual forms of transportation to the promotion of public transport. In particular localised patterns of movement are promoted over wide scale movements of people travelling for example to work or for leisure activities (Neal, 2003). How these principles were built into the Vision and subsequently applied at GUV are now examined, looking at the systems of movement associated with the development, especially those promoted by the developer. It will be shown how public perceptions and attitudes towards public transport as well as the lack of a major public transport node, created frictions between design and behaviour which challenged the ability to enforce visions of a pedestrian and bicycle dominated environment.

#### ***GUV and the role of the car***

GUV sits within a system of automobility, surrounded by motorways and A-roads linking the development to London in the east, and Oxford and Reading to the west. As part of the initial Vision a transport appraisal was undertaken in August 2000 detailing that the closest underground station to the development is 2.2km away and not classified within walking distance. Whilst it was envisioned that the nearest bus stop would be less than a five-minute walk for residents, the initial transport appraisal states that rail stations, retail and employment centres were not within walking distance (TW, 2000a). Therefore rather than simply providing the infrastructure to encourage people to use public transport, the developer acknowledged that the design for GUV had to respond not only to local context but also wider perceptions and attitudes towards public transport. In *Urban Villages and the Making of Communities* David Taylor argues that “in parallel with reducing the number of car journeys, the movement framework must give encouragement to other forms of transport...

this also entails a shift in public perception of the status of public transport, which often has a poor reputation and is for many considered the last resort. New public transport projects have begun to reverse this image, but this process needs to be given the highest priority to ensure that really good quality alternatives to the car are readily available” (Neal, 2003:113).

The Government’s *2009 British social attitudes survey: attitudes to transport* showed that 49% of people who did not use bus services stated that the convenience of the car was the main reason, whilst the time taken to travel was the second highest reason for not using buses (DfT, 2009a). These figures were echoed when related to rail service usage against car use where 35% of people stated that their reliance on the car was related to the location of a train station (DfT, 2009b). In the context of these figures “if public transport is not an attractive alternative to the private car, initiatives that attempt to successfully persuade car drivers to try public transport will only reinforce the individual’s prior belief that car transport is better” (Beirao, 2008:486).

Within the initial Vision a target was made by TW that 51% of all journeys made by residents would be by car, 23.5% by public transport, 17.5% on foot and 5% on cycle (TW, 2000a). The belief was that at least a quarter of all journeys made from GUV would take place on public transport, and half of all journeys would not involve the car. This was an overly ambitious prediction. Whilst the design team needed to “cater for the car without encouraging its use” the lack of public transport nodes within the vicinity of the Village made this unviable (Aldous, 1992:30). As the *British social attitudes survey* showed, time and location are key components in wider attitudes towards public transport and both of these elements are missing from GUV’s location. Despite this TW believed “GUV provides both the opportunity to implement philosophies suggested in *Places, Streets and Movement* and at the same time to effect a modal shift in transport habits from the private car, to more sustainable modes of travel such as public transport, walking and cycling” (TW, 2000a:11). There were two key elements contained within this aspiration.

The first is the role of the street within GUV and its presentation as a movement network but also as a social space. Chapter 5 explores the role of the street in greater detail focusing on the ways in which it was seen as part of an attempt to reclaim space for social interaction as opposed to being a movement network for cars. A series of HZs were developed within GUV that aimed to put pedestrians first and give them priority over the car. These HZs related physical design (such as smaller streets and the materiality of spaces) to changes in behaviour and precedence for the pedestrian. The second idea was the belief that the developer was able to impact upon the travel behaviour of the residents in GUV. The social aspiration of decreased car usage amongst residents was deemed to be affected by the design of the development and the provision of facilities available to those within GUV. This was achieved through the proximity of access to public transport, providing incentives for public

transport use, and making it more difficult to use cars.

TW sought to reduce the levels of car usage within the development in line with UV concept. Conceptually the UV movement states that good transport should be at the heart of all UVs with compact form and localised access to facilities (such as employment and leisure) resulting in the reduction of the need to travel. Therefore proximity to jobs and leisure activities reduces use of the car, and where journeys are required, public transport should take the bulk of responsibility for this (Neal, 2003). Aligned with reduced car use, a Village-wide travel plan was produced during the planning stages, informing decisions about transport. The aim of the plan was to encourage people to leave their car at home, or not own one at all. There were three approaches to reducing car use within GUV; public transport, and facilities, encouraging people to use public transport and discourage car use through physical design.

It was hoped the provision of public transport infrastructure would increase the availability of services for residents. The number of services of the E6 bus route was increased and as part of the Vision the route was intended to be diverted through the Village to four bus stops on the development, however due to the lack of completion of phase 12, this diversion is yet to happen. By increasing the visibility and availability of local bus services it was hoped more people would be encouraged to use them (TW, 2000a). In addition to increased bus services, a network of cycle lanes were developed which extended outside of the boundaries of the site linking the development with services and facilities (see figure 4.17). Finally a car-share club was established and available to any resident, who can rent a car for a period of time. It was hoped these elements would reduce the level of private car ownership.

To be effective TW's attempts to encourage alternative forms of transportation needed to move beyond a simple provision of transport to overtly encourage people to use these networks. Incentives were provided encouraging residents to use buses and trains to change "their travel behaviour and sustain these changes long term" (DfT, 2007:5). Such incentives included subsidised memberships to the car-share club and discounted rates of travel on public transport.

The final approach to reducing car-use was a series of systems that made the use and ownership of the car more difficult than public transport. *PPG 13: Transport* states "the availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice and means of travel and transport" (DCLG, 2001:10). TW provided a lower level of parking spaces (0.6 spaces per dwelling) making it difficult for people who owned more than one car to park in the Village, and "ensure that levels of parking will promote sustainable transport choices" (TW, 2000a:291).

On the rationale behind discouraging use of the car, transport planner Mark Forde stated “what we were trying to do here was not improve the highway networks so much that people wouldn’t use the sustainable transport methods...but when it got down to the detailed design, the [LBE planners] said ‘that doesn’t work’. Well we know that doesn’t work, but there is a reason we don’t want that to work because we want people to not use their car!” (Mark Forde, Buchanan Transport Engineers, interview, 2009:4). Mark highlights the link made between design and behaviour. It was perceived that the design of the built environment would influence car use encouraging people to use public transport. This approach was taken despite local residents arguing that “you are putting traffic onto the road, we already had traffic jams, sometimes I can’t get out of my road because of traffic” (Ian Gill, Steering Group Member, interview, 2010:2).

TW believed that utilising UV concepts of mixed-use and good transport links would reduce the levels of car ownership. However, criticism of this vision, and TW’s rhetoric came from a variety of groups particularly Friends of the Earth who questioned the ability of GUV to sustain lower car usage based on land use. Board director Anthony stated that:

*“They’re going to put a few shops in the middle, community facilities, and some commercial units but it was obvious that the majority of people were going to have cars and were going to go out of that site to do everything. There wasn’t a school so kids were going to be driven to school. Everybody was driving to Tesco, and going to work somewhere else, the number of people who were going to live and work there was minimal. It wasn’t a village, it was just a big housing estate with a few facilities and the majority of trips would take people out”.*

(Anthony Woods, Friends of the Earth, interview, 2009:7).

Moving beyond the development boundaries for daily leisure and shopping needs contradicts UV principles. Reducing car use is also about reducing the distance over which people travel for services by providing localised shops and infrastructure. Therefore there is an inherently geographic element to UV and GUV rhetoric about the ability to decrease car usage and increase public transport use. Primarily this is based on the definition of the compact neighbourhood form which encourages employment, and leisure usage within a single neighbourhood and the surrounding community. However in the case of GUV the prevalence of existing infrastructure orientated towards the car, coupled with the lack of a major fixed transport node has led to a wider context being set where car use is discouraged in favour of public transport or sustainable forms of transport.

## 4.6 Implementing the UV

As stated at the outset of this chapter, one of the intentions of this thesis is to explore what happens when the UV model moves from concept to implementation. Charles Knevitt argues that “it might take a miracle to build something embracing more than a few of the UV’s precepts” (Neal, 2003:13). Emily Talen goes further arguing that neo-traditional planning “is nothing more than intellectual profit-making in top-down planning fashion, where human subjects are sacrificed on the altar of utopian planning. More insidiously, it could mean that the social cohesion goals of new urbanism are simply an excuse by developers to squeeze more development out of less land” (Talen, 1999:1362). Could the UV concept therefore be unobtainable or a way to achieve greater profit through misguided appeals to community?

Critics of the UV show the perils of moving the concept from a theoretical arena to projects which are actually built. This section explores the process through which this happened, through two elements of UVs. The first is GUV as an exercise in philanthropic urban planning and the second is the role of volume house builders in developing UVs. It will be shown that GUV is the latest project “called UVs [which] were in fact ordinary estates adopting the UV label for marketing purposes” (Biddulph, 2003:166).

### 4.6.1 *The volume house builder*

Earlier this chapter illustrated the sense of pride and commitment towards the Vision. However this section explores how attitudes changed by 2011. Nathaniel Cochrane stated these “lofty ambitions were slightly eroded” for two reasons (Nathaniel Cochrane, BDG architects, interview, 2009). The first of these is the change in economic circumstances which made the viability of some aspects of the Vision undeliverable. Paul said “the original ideas were more akin to an UV. It’s just the circumstances that have meant that certain key elements have not happened or they’ve had to change which has led to a departure from those principles which is a shame, but to some extent was possibly always inevitable” (Paul Nester, LBE, interview, 2009:34).

The second reason for the changes to the initial Vision was the desire for developer profit and the structure of volume house builders, outlined by Susanna:

*“it is quite common to have ambitious design visions and using the term watering them down is quite harsh. The economy changes and markets change and housing developers are businesses and they have to respond to that but in my experience there’s a slight difference in what you say you’re going to do at planning and what happens on the ground and that is partly because you get changes in personnel as much as anything within the property developer because it goes from people who are dealing with planning to someone who is dealing with getting the thing built on site, that process*

*often results in a loss of the vision”.*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, walking interview, 2009:5)

It is common for the vision to become degraded due to the role of a volume house builder and financial shifts. Furthermore staff turnover means that developers such as TW cannot deliver UVs because:

“the structure of private house-builder organizations are unconnected with the team that buys the land, the team that designs the buildings and another team that sells them, which results in dislocation between the project’s inception and how it is finally put into practice. There is a need for clarity and understanding between parties, if these differences are to be reconciled, agreements reached and projects delivered”.

(Neal, 2003:173)

The criticism levied against volume house builders by the UV movement is that their organisational structure is not conducive to the delivery of UVs, namely non-profitable elements of the scheme because “commercial objectives of residential property developers are sometimes at odds with the aims of an UV project. The financial parameters are such that developers are not attracted to the responsibility for delivering the entire scheme, unless they have an unusually philanthropic business ethos” (Neal, 2003:172). Whilst it was shown how TW had a pride and commitment to the UV concept and the Vision, there was not enough philanthropic endeavour to deliver unprofitable elements which led to contestation between stakeholders.

#### ***4.6.2 Contesting the UV***

At the masterplanning stage of GUV 1285 jobs were planned to be retained on site, primarily in the office and light industrial blocks to the north of the site. From an UV design perspective that was the perfect location as they sat “at the thoroughfare or the intersection with the maximum drive-by traffic. This is advisable even if the resulting location is not at the centre of the site. Without traffic, the retail elements will fail to thrive” (Neal, 2003:98).

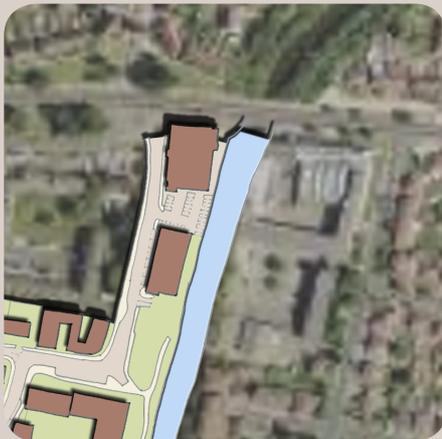
**March 2000** Initial vision of employment in eastern corner showing refurbished TW offices in mixed-use centre (Redrawn from JTP, March 2000)



**August 2000** Revised vision of employment showing removal of cross canal link and new offices in east (Redrawn from JTP, August 2000)



**2011 (Proposed)** Permission granted for flats in existing office block accommodation with winter garden (Author's drawing)



**Figure 4.21** Chronology of key visions for employment located to the north-east corner of the site, showing how this part of the site was downgraded in significance as a result of changes to the masterplan

TW stated “it is anticipated that there could be substantial employment levels retained within the Village even though some of the current activities may be relocated elsewhere” (TW, 2000a:7). Part of this employment presence would come from TW who were to partly remain on site. By 2003 due to restructuring within TW it was decided that the company would not retain a presence within the Village and that the land to the east of the canal would be sold off. Subsequently a care home was built which signalled the first step towards the removal of all employment from this part of the site. Figure 4.21 shows the evolution of phase 12 and its role within GUV.

By June 2003 attention shifted to the office blocks on the north of the site which TW stated they were trying to market for office accommodation. No tenant was found for the office blocks and instead TW decided to apply for permission to convert the buildings for residential use. This decision was contested by LBE who wanted to see employment on site and argued that:

*“the proposed development, potentially resulting in the loss of some 9,881 square metres of...office floorspace to residential use, would significantly undermine the potential vitality and viability of the identified Ruislip Road Special Opportunity Site removing the last potential source of significant employment floorspace within the GUV development. The proposal would be contrary to the basis of the original outline approval for the GUV which required the development to provide suitable facilities for on-site employment opportunities in accordance with the UV concept”.*

(Planning inspectorate, 2008:3)

The LBE rejected the planning request based on their desire to see employment on site and phase 12 represented the last opportunity to achieve this because the rest of the UV concept had not been fulfilled by TW. This decision was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate who stated that he believed “many of the objectives behind the concept for the GUV have been realised. Although the balance of land uses has changed the principles of a more sustainable development have been secured” (LBE, 2008:12). This contrast shows the subjective nature of UV principles and how “built examples...do not always match the vision, since in addition to giving substance to a ‘cloudy paradigm’, they are also subject to the whims of developers, the proclivities of residents, and the reality of economic and social forces” (Biddulph, 2003:166).

At GUV the need for developer profit forced changes in the layout of the Village and dwellings as well as the services on site. Whilst Biddulph refers to these changes as a “cloudy paradigm”, Kimberley refers to the negotiations of change as a “tussle” which heightens the contradictions and difficult decisions faced by developers as they grapple with the dimensions of development and trying to satisfy councils and residents. Kimberley said there is “sometimes a bit of a tussle with the developer to say, you’ve got to create the village

hall, you've got to do this and that, and they're going 'can't I have another three flats there?'" (Kimberley Nightingale, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:7). At GUV employment was a tussle that could not be resolved.

TW argued economic factors forced the main employment element of GUV to be abandoned, which was contested by LBE who argued that the offices were not promoted enough. Resulting from the lack of employment, some consultants began to question whether an UV model had been achieved at GUV, as expressed by Mark Forde who said that GUV "moved away from a proper UV, which was a shame because had we kept the commercial element it would have been a hub with people commuting in and out of it" (Mark Forde, Buchanan Transport Engineers, interview, 2009:3).

#### ***4.6.3 Degrading the Vision?***

Value engineering refers to the process where the vision is adapted to bring more profit from the site. This section considers the process of value engineering and how this changed the original concept of the development. Demonstrating the importance of profit for TW, Alan stated "the original aspiration on the masterplan wasn't getting best value for us" (Alan Northfield, TW, interview, 2009:1). This search for profit resulted in changes to the Vision.

In the 2000 Vision, 640 new homes were planned to be built. After initial planning exercises Broadway Malyan were brought into the planning team in place of JTP and "went through looking at each phases to get more out of it, in the general flavour of the original masterplan" (Ryan Dixon, Broadway Malyan, interview, 2009:3). Two years later, TW was granted planning permission for 705 dwellings at GUV. This figure represented an increase from the initial Vision, as density increased to bring the development in line with UV principles. By the completion of phase 10, the figure of 705 dwellings had been reached, and 172 more apartments were built in phase 11 bringing the total figure to 877. By the completion of GUV, 36% more dwellings were built than envisioned in 2000. Getting most out of the Vision according to an architect at Broadway Malyan was about "screwing the density up" because:

*"you had about 600 units, we got about 1000 now and we looked at every plot and the dimensions of everything even garden sizes, maximising coverage and being aware of the commercial market and not designing curved blocks with underground parking on the affordable blocks because you are only going to get a certain value".*

(Ryan Dixon, Broadway Malyan, interview, 2009:1)

As a result of these changes to the masterplan, an extra 237 homes were included in the design. The landscape architect for GUV said this increased density was a result of a "requirement

from the client to get greater numbers of units...the storey heights may be similar but there are more units overall” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, walking interview, 2009:3).

One area of the Village that this increase density was particularly evident was the canal edge buildings. The evolution of the Vision saw the canal side apartments increased in height and density to give the developer larger numbers of homes overlooking the canal and therefore increasing their profit. Susanna said “water is always very attractive to people and hence why you get higher values for properties overlooking water” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:21).

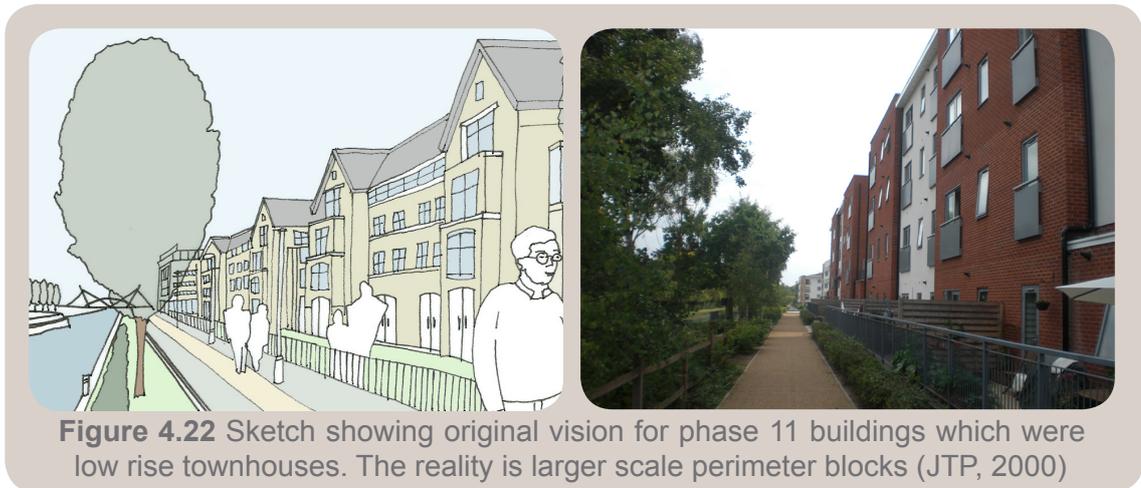
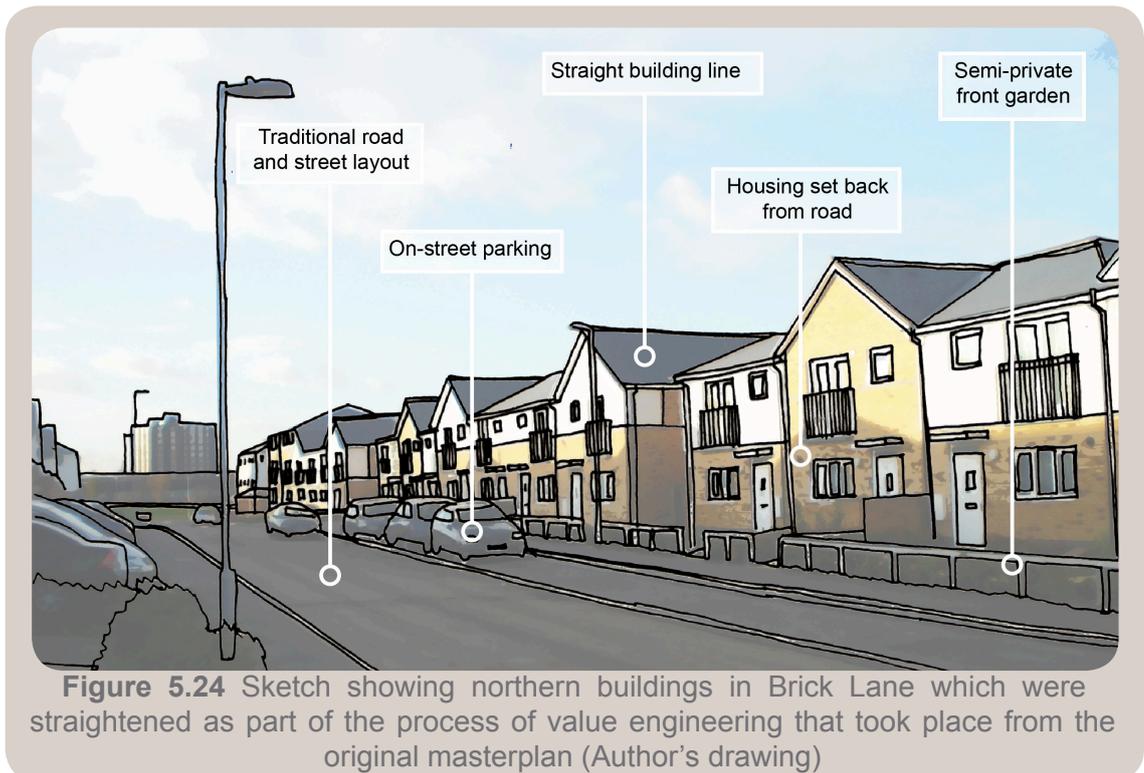
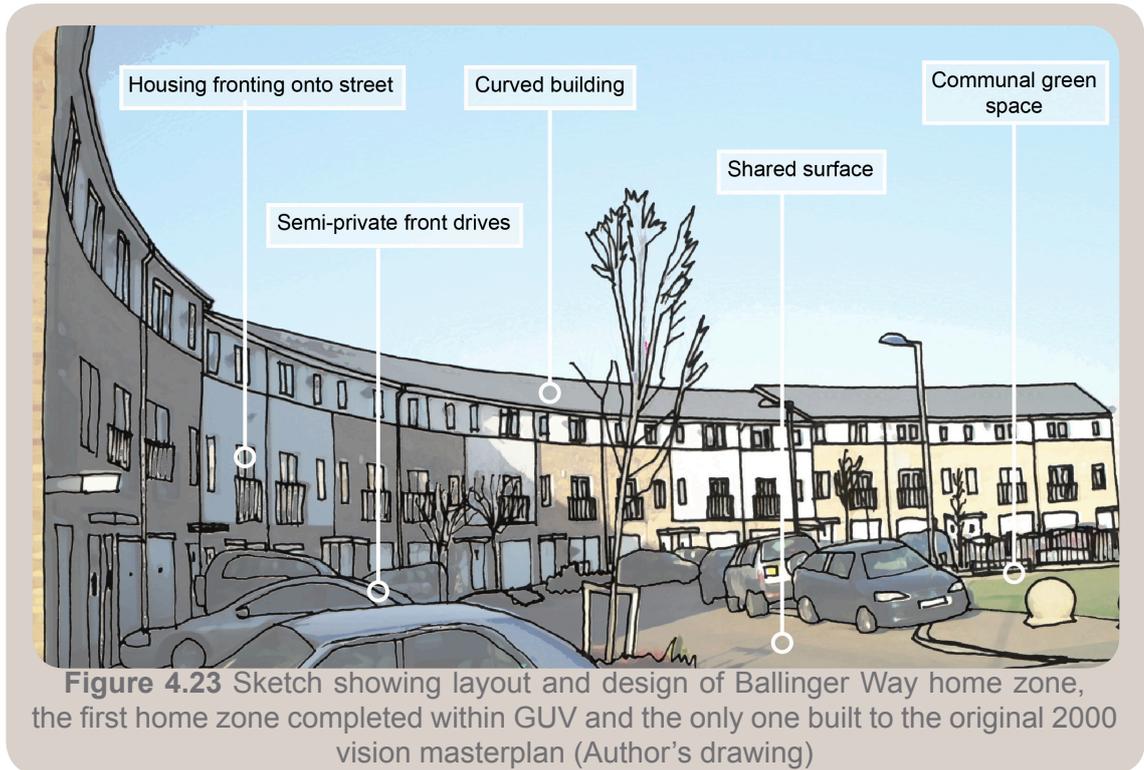


Figure 4.22 shows a sketch of the Vision for phase 11 and a photograph of the block that was built. Phase 11 was the last to be completed on the development and overlooks the canal. The sketch on the left envisioned lower scale apartments and townhouses along the canal. However, what were built were larger scale apartments increasing to five-storeys at the northern corner of the block. This increase was a result of desire for profit but also to create a “warehouse” feel for the canal edge, which was contained within the landscape strategy. An architect at Broadway Malyan said that in addition to the density of the housing on site, the architectural style was also subject to value engineering. He continued the “last scheme we did, phase 11, suffers from stripping right down, again we designed it I am not particularly proud of the scheme, but it has been a very rigid sort of plan but it has been engineered down to the bare minimum...it’s a bit of a shame” (Ryan Dixon, walking interview, 2009:3).



The second element of value engineering on site was the removal of buildings with curves that were a part of the 2000 and 2002 Vision masterplan. Figures 4.23 and 4.24 show the physical changes in the design of housing in GUV as the design moved from curved to straight blocks. According to Ryan, TW “had some affordable blocks which were curved and [had] underground parking. Two things you don’t do with affordable housing because it is expensive to do” (Ryan Dixon, Broadway Malyan, interview, 2009:2). Therefore the

Vision masterplan for GUV changed and these terraces were straightened and consequently increased the numbers of houses on site.

## Conclusions

This chapter has shown the process through which the Vision for GUV moved from conceptualisation to reality and the pressures that were put on the Vision during this process. TW only proposed the use of the UV model after their negotiations with LBE failed to secure an agreement for development based primarily on housing. Questions are therefore raised to the extent to which TW committed to the UV model. However both developer and local Boroughs embraced the concept and drove the Vision forward during early exchanges in 1999.

TW saw the UV as offering the opportunity to retain a commitment to the local area of which they had been a part since the 1940s. The UV model also appealed to the local Boroughs because of its calls for the development of a diverse community and the numbers of jobs created through the application of mixed-use development. These initial negotiations had a profound effect on the relationship between both sides over the 11-year building process that followed. Both sides started off with a sense of pride in the Vision and were confident of their ability to deliver an UV in a suburban and brownfield location. However, as is the contention of this thesis implementing the UV concept on brownfield land and in this kind of location, can put strains not only on relationships between the local Boroughs and the developer, but also on the expectations of the site.

Whilst both sides fully supported the UV concept, their intentions for the development differed, which put pressures on the development process. As a volume house builder TW has an obligation to its shareholders to make a profit from each site they develop. The local Borough however seeks to provide a high level of service within a limited budget. As a result of this both sides had differing ideas on the details of the Vision which impacted on the completed development.

The formal design process began with a community-planning weekend which emerged out of initial discussions between LBE and TW and sought to include a diversity of voices in the planning process. The interplay of power in the discourses of planning was played out in this community consultation during which the developer invoked a sense that they were bringing a 'blank site' to the local community. TW's claims that there was active engagement with the local community was disputed by a minority of local residents, yet they went beyond performative consultation. Whilst residents weren't involved in design work their opinions and ideas were incorporated into the Vision. The sense of unease and nerves that were portrayed in TW rhetoric and through my own interviews, would only have come from active

engagement that relied on the local community making proposals for the site.

In spite of this there are some criticisms that can be made of the collaborative planning element of the Vision. The first is that this process involved only macro-scale engagements with design and offered the local community constrained choices about what they wanted from the site. The second is that their choices were managed, either by the local residents themselves or by the design team. As a volume house builder TW were not going to build elements that did not make them money unless it was required by the section 106 agreement. Therefore certain elements of the planning weekend were rather superficial as some ideas that residents proposed were not going to be incorporated into the Vision.

The Vision produced in 2000 contained a series of key principles that closely align with the UV principle. These include building a diverse community, connecting the UV to the existing urban fabric, discouraging use of the car, and creating a mixed-use Village. TW designed spaces that encouraged residents to live alongside one another and interact with each other on a daily basis. Given the location of the Village, the demographics of GUV are extremely diverse, however an ethnic diversity of residents is particularly prevalent. There are however a notable absence of other forms of diversity, particularly elderly or disabled residents. Whilst Talen argues that homogeneity amongst people brings greater community interactions, a diverse population is needed to fully implement UV ideals. Therefore GUV “can also be seen as aligning themselves with the sociological tradition that asserts that sense of community is vital to human functioning (Talen, 1999:1365).

In the case of GUV, geographic fixity and construction of spatial boundaries were a key part in the social aspirations of design and the building of community. These defined the site in terms of movement, connectivity and automobility. There was a juxtaposition in the utilising of boundaries in the Vision. The process of design was bound up in the differentiation of GUV from the surrounding community to create something different from the post war housing estates that surround the development. On the other hand, these boundaries were deemed to be permeable, where the development would reach out to ‘redefine’ the local community and allow them access to the development. Therefore GUV is variegated because boundaries are constructed for certain purposes (such as membership, and being part of a community), yet subverted for others (such as integrating with local communities).

Attempts to re-engineer society and place through design invoked the belief that local responses could alter wider systems of behaviour. Talen argues that “the reliance on environmental factors in generating social contact and sense of community suggests that new urbanist doctrine has much in common with the ‘Chicago school’ of sociology. In this tradition, social contact is maintained by environmental characteristics and ecological explanations, including housing type, density and land use mix” (Talen, 1999:1364). At

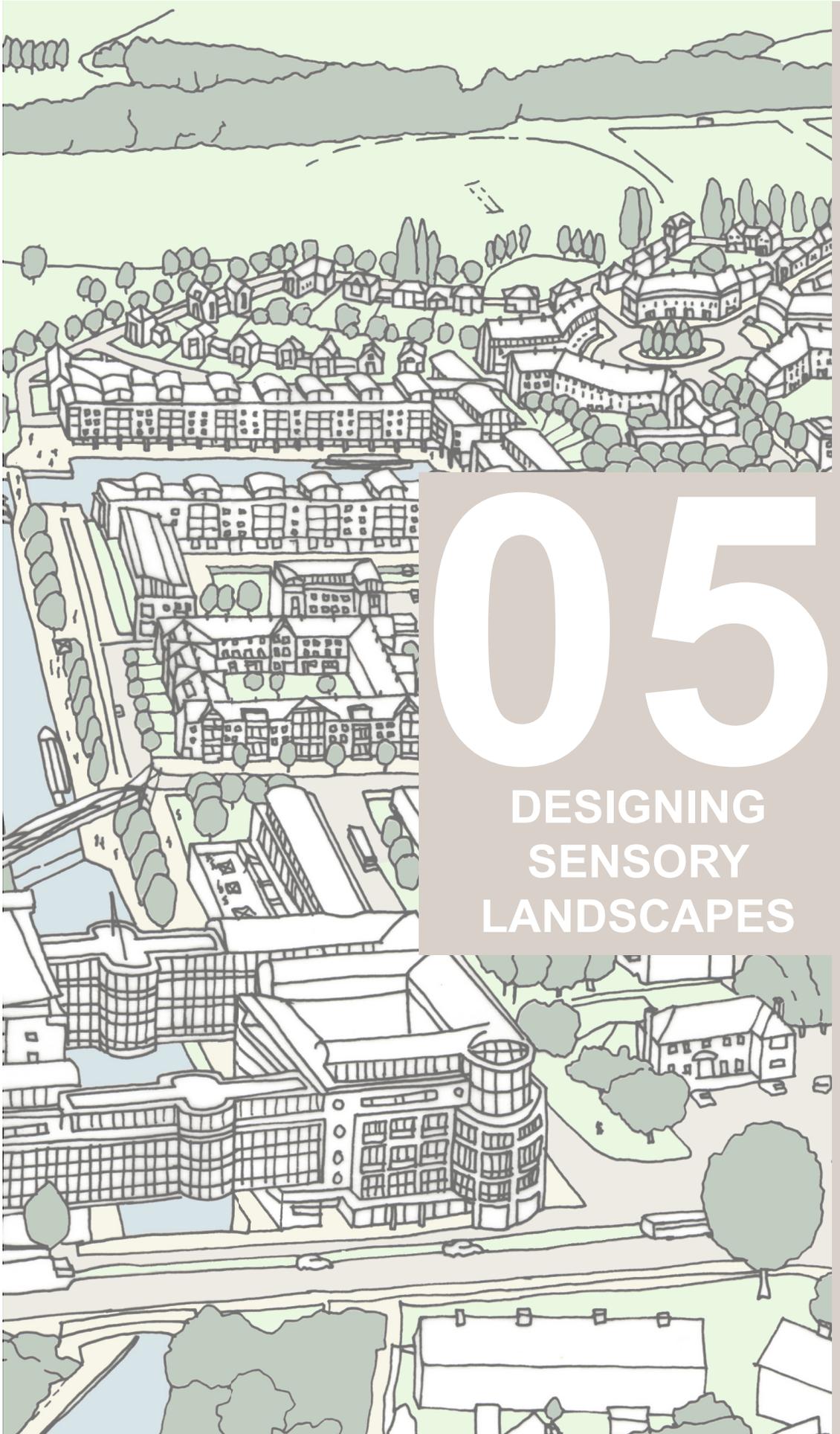
GUV the interplay between design and experience was expressed through a rhetoric which emphasised mixed-use and proximity to services and infrastructure.

In spite of this, the lack of a mix of uses is the key criticism of GUV and its implementation of the UV model. The plethora of services that were proposed at the Vision process have not been implemented and the Village suffers as a result of this. Primarily a lack of uses has impacted on the design team's attempts to discourage car use within the Village.

Furthermore, in the case of automobility, GUV was hindered by its lack of proximity to a fixed node of public transport, which when coupled with public perceptions of buses meant that these aspirations failed. Due to the lack of successful completion of a mix of uses and the ability to provide a fixed node of transport closer to GUV questions can be raised about the ability of volume house builders to translate UV ideals into reality which involves either philanthropic endeavour from house builders, or for them to forego profit for a large part of the building process.

However, philanthropy in modern volume house builders is limited and as such the masterplan for GUV went through a series of changes designed to increase profit by reducing building costs. However, the development was allowed to be prestige in some areas, and these were located in the main public areas of the site, such as the central lozenge and canal basin. The prestige elements of the development were retained to sell houses and increase profit.

The call for UVs appeals to a higher quality of environment in the city, from details of design, to the textures of building materials, and to the creation of particular kinds of urban surfaces. As such the next chapter examines the micro-environmental elements of GUV.



# 05

DESIGNING  
SENSORY  
LANDSCAPES

## Introduction

The previous chapter explored the emergence of a Grand Union Vision through the ‘macro-environmental’ elements of design (Talen, 1999). This chapter analyses the ways in which micro-environmental features have been integrated into GUV, examining the rhetoric behind the design and the ways in which materialities seek to impact on users’ experiences of place. Focusing specifically on how a sense of place and attachment to place were incorporated into the detailed design of GUV, chapters 6 and 7 examine the affective experience of residents, and how they interact with the design of GUV outlined in this and the previous chapter.

Using the GUV design team’s perspectives about placemaking and experiences of place as its point of departure, this chapter has three primary ambitions. First, it seeks to explore what sense of place the designers are articulating and how this notion of GUV as a place is based on defining the surrounding urban fabric as placeless. In achieving this it engages with UV rhetoric which contrasts neo-traditional developments with placeless suburbs. Second, it explores debates concerning the design of affective and sensory experiences of the city. Finally it analyses the impact of materials on the relationship between place and experience.

This chapter begins by detailing the use of a design code within GUV and how it relates to UV rhetoric regarding the control of the materiality of place and layout of public space. Although a formal design code was not used at GUV, the landscape strategy developed by the landscape architects Allen Pyke in August 2000 formed part of an informal design code which dictated the creation of character areas within the Village. Following this, section 5.2 highlights attempts made by TW to generate a sense of place within the Village through the creation of Engineers Wharf, a purpose built canal basin which was designed to be the ‘heart’ of GUV (Kimberley Nightingale, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:9). Terminology such as ‘heart’ of the Village links to embodied and affective understandings of the city (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Thrift 2008). Creating a sense of place therefore meant establishing GUV as a “destination” (Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:4).

Designing experiences of the city is prominent in the literature on UVs and section 5.3 demonstrates how TW sought to improve the pedestrian experience of the city through the creation of a series of HZs. These HZs were designed to prioritise walking as the main form of movement through the Village and increase social interaction between strangers. The chapter concludes by presenting the materials used at GUV and the ways in which these materials influenced the experiential qualities of the development.

### 5.1 The GUV design code

Within the UVG Report of 1992 is a short chapter entitled ‘Towards a benign environment’ (Aldous, 1992). This chapter provides details for how the physical characteristics of UVs should be built to provide residents with a “place in which to live, work and pursue their daily lives” (Aldous, 1992:44). The report’s authors argue that micro-level details such as materials and layout are key to generating character, which in turn creates interest in the built environment. Materials, the report states “will be precisely prescribed in a series of codes designed to support with detail the framework of an overall master plan” (Aldous, 1992:44).

The report proposes the use of four codes; infrastructure, urban, architectural, and public spaces that seek to establish the character of the urban environment (Aldous, 1992). The design code “has legal standing and is mandatory, unlike a masterplan which is illustrative and persuasive” and therefore reduces the length of the planning process (Duany in Neal, 2003:96). In the UK, the masterplan is initially considered by local councils for planning permission. If permission is granted, the developer then submits more detailed drawings of each development phase. The use of design codes negates this secondary process as it details the materials, architecture, and layout from the outset which is a commitment made by the developer to maintain the standards throughout the development process.

If the UV concept is to be attractive to volume house builders, there needs to be a reduction in the length of time it takes to obtain planning permission. Inevitably, if design coding, as John Carson senior design director at PFBE, told me “improves quality and can speed up the planning process” their use will become more attractive to developers (John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:7). In effect this argument is based on developer’s desires to avoid “uncertainty because they are investing large amounts of money and they want to get things through” (John Carson, PFBE, interview, 2009:8). UV rhetoric states that coding “should make the process of securing detailed design approvals easier and more efficient” (Neal, 2003:155) yet at the same time maintains that developers must be prepared “to take a longer, broader view than has hitherto been normal, envisaging a development process of up to 10 years, with most of the profit postponed until the middle or later stages” (Aldous, 1992:70). These arguments appeal to two key elements that are seen as inhibiting full investment into the UV concept; the period of commitment to the development and the costs of building.

Furthermore given prominence placed on the involvement of the local community in the design process by the UV movement, the design code is seen as a way of involving the public in detailed planning decisions. In spite of this the public consultation that was undertaken for GUV in March 2000 involved macro-environmental aspects of design rather than the detailed materiality of place. This was because no formal design code was used at GUV. Rather than seeing this as a problem, Susanna stated:

*“Design codes are now very common, they were very rare then, and it wasn’t on the agenda to produce one. But what we did as part of the outline approval, driven by these characters, was come up with a palette of materials in our strategy that was really basic but saying we want the central area to be more grey and black and stainless ‘steelly’ if you like”.*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:26)

As such Ryan stated “there was nothing set down” in terms of a design code, and instead it “was done subconsciously” (Ryan Dixon, BM, interview, 2009:15). Design codes were “rare” in 2000 when much of the planning of GUV was undertaken, primarily because they were not part of the national planning psyche until after CABE’s 2003 report *Building Sustainable Communities: The use of urban design codes* (CABE, 2003). Furthermore it wasn’t until May 2004 that the ODPM, allowed design codes to be tested in practice.

In spite of this, a lack of formal design code questions GUV’s legitimacy as an UV. As stated earlier, the UVG report argues that the materials will be “precisely prescribed” in a design code and it would be easy to suggest that the lack of a design code calls into question TW’s commitment to all facets of the UV model (Aldous, 1992:44). Whilst GUV has not suffered as a result of the lack of a code there is no doubt that by the latter phases of development, attitudes towards architectural style and materiality of the buildings was more blasé than in earlier phases. For example, the architect for phase 11 spoke of how they offered to do additional design work, free of charge, because they weren’t happy with the quality of the design yet this was rejected by TW. The architectural presence of phase 11 is therefore not of the quality it could have been.

Design codes “build upon the design vision contained in a masterplan or development framework and provide a set of requirements to achieve the vision” (DCLG, 2006a:7). The use of a design code at GUV would have helped transition from the design stage to the building process and avoided some of the “value engineering” explored in the previous chapter (Alan Northfield, TW, interview, 2009:1). Despite the lack of a formal code, the landscape strategy defined the character of each area. Whilst not as prescriptive as a formal design code, the design professionals felt that because UV rhetoric states that “codes will vary from village to village”, there was “no universal, standard prescription” laid down by the UV movement and therefore the landscape strategy would be effective (Aldous, 1992:44). For this reason whilst it was disappointing that a design code was not used, GUV’s claim to be an UV cannot be rejected on this basis.

## 5.1.1 Character areas

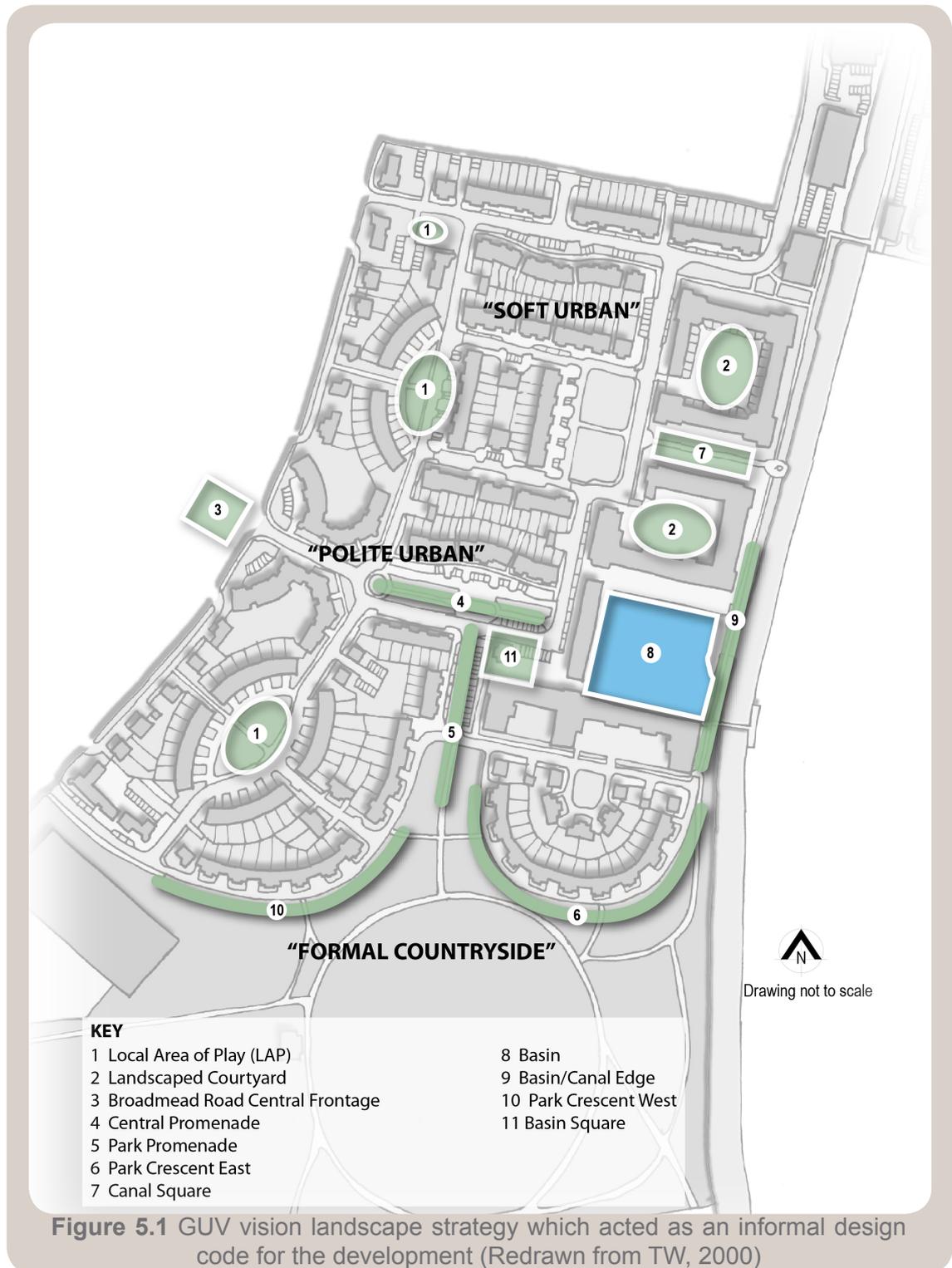
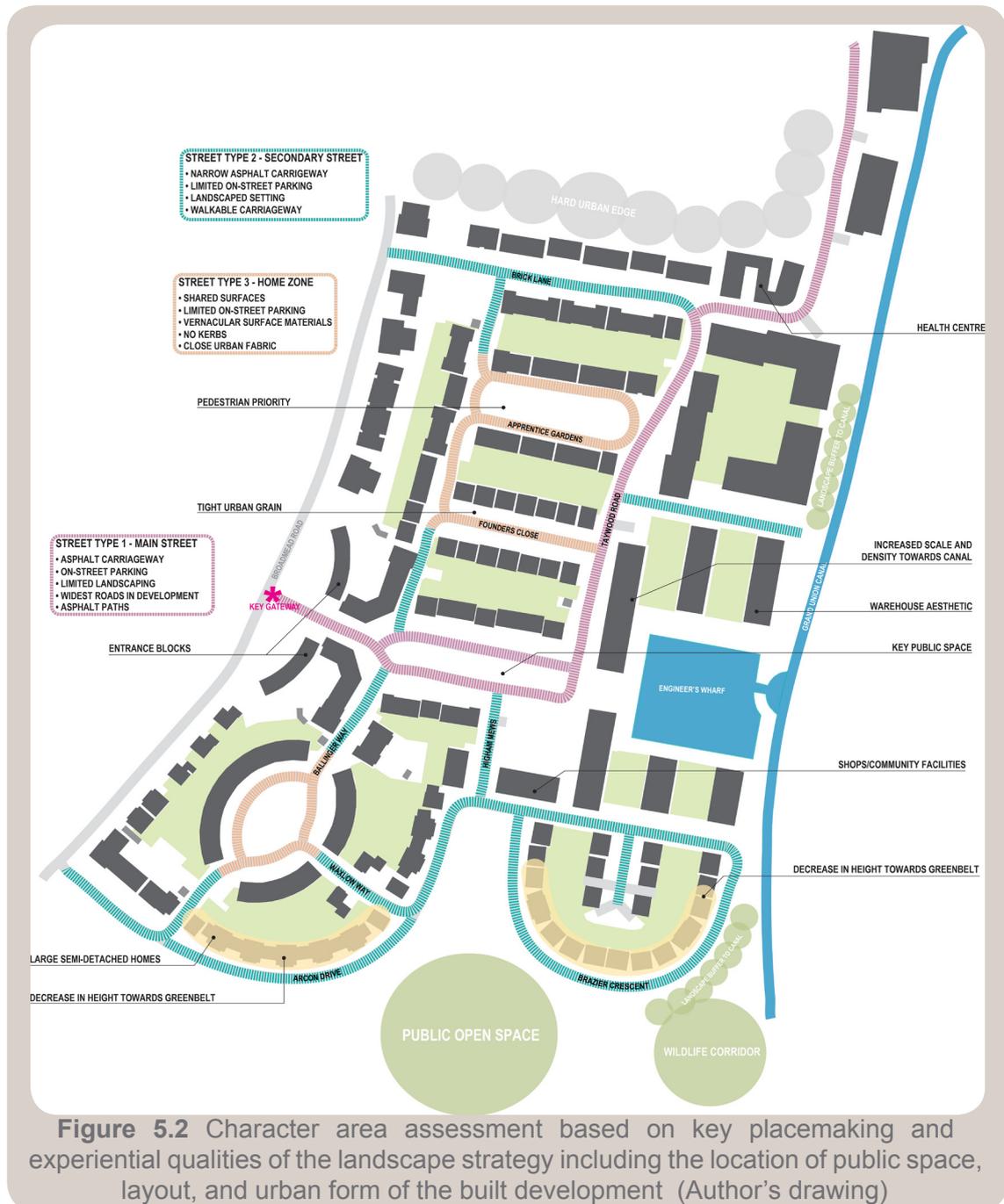


Figure 5.1 details the landscape strategy produced in August 2000 following the community consultation weekend, and whilst planning permission was being sought for the Vision masterplan. The plan shows the location of three character areas within GUV. The first, “Soft Urban” was marked by city living on a domestic and personal scale (TW, 2000a). The second character area, “Polite Urban” relates to the civic spaces and the relationship of the properties to the Broadmead Road. All of the shops, community facilities and public

amenities are located in this area which leads through to the “heart” of the Village. Finally, “Formal Countryside” forms the basis of the interaction between the development and the large open space located in the green belt. The materials and design of this part of the development intended to interact with the greenbelt providing a natural edge to the Village without compromising the feel of the open space.



**Figure 5.2** Character area assessment based on key placemaking and experiential qualities of the landscape strategy including the location of public space, layout, and urban form of the built development (Author's drawing)

Figure 5.2 analyses the character areas based on the 2011 reality, detailing the street types, materials, location of public space, buildings, and key facilities in GUV. This diagram amalgamates the ideas expressed in the landscape strategy, interviews with the design team and personal reflections on the design of GUV. It illustrates how the materials and layout of the final masterplan reflected these areas.

The character areas were led by the desire to create distinct neighbourhoods and “a good mixture of places on the scheme” based on density, architectural style and materials used (Ryan Dixon, BM, interview, 2009:21). The masterplanning team stated there was no existing character on site, and defined the surrounding area as placeless based on the desire to market GUV as something new and different from the existing urban fabric. This is summarised by Susanna who said the design of GUV was driven by character and attempts to:

*“Create a semi-warehouse feel which traditionally you get buildings coming out of the canals and it was to try and get that feel. We also felt that the frontage on the western side needed to be a bit more welcoming and inviting, and much more human scale. As you come in on the main bit you get a sense of arrival, and destination, with the tall buildings as you see them at the back, rather than having them at the front which would have created a wall effect which wouldn’t have been particularly inviting or appealing or desirable”.*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke Landscape Architects, interview, 2008:13)

This presentation was based on defining GUV as a destination with “gateway areas” so residents had a “sense of arrival when they entered the Village” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:22). This contrasts with rhetoric that was used at the start of the design process that spoke of the site and the surrounding area as placeless. Tim Cresswell argues, “non-places are sites marked by their transience—the preponderance of mobility” (Cresswell, 2004:45). The appeal to GUV as a “destination” was based on this intention to make GUV a place where people would come to, rather than pass through. Furthermore by labelling the pre-development site as placeless, the designers associated a lack of place with a lack of belonging and community. As Relph contends “to be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place” (Relph, 1976:49).

Pursuing this line of thought, to be “inside a place” denotes that there must be those living outside of place who do not belong. Chapter 4 examined the construction of boundaries, and chapter 7 explores the lived experiences of these boundaries. For the GUV designers, the placeless suburbs and estates were “spaces where people coexist and cohabit without living together” (Augé, 1999:110). Such places have no history or to use UV terminology are “soulless” (Aldous, 1992:24). The idea of a “sense of arrival” was a prominent theme throughout my interviews. It seemed important that people were seen to be entering a “place” as opposed to a space. This had routes in the desire to create a development with its own character, different from the surrounding area. Despite appeals to notions of place based on defining GUV as different from the surrounding area, place was never defined by the design team. Instead place became “a word that seems to speak for itself” (Cresswell, 2004:1).

## 5.2 Designing: Place

The provision of a water facility was central to the masterplan and dated back to the community consultation of March 2000, during which residents stated that they wished to see the canal used as a “much better asset than it is at the moment” (resident quoted in JTP, 2000a:34). In the past the canal had been disjointed from the site, and inaccessible to people from the surrounding area. The existing uses on site turned their backs to the canal, wishing to forget about it rather than utilise the social and economic opportunities that it could bring. At the planning weekend residents asked why not “open up the old canal and build round it?” (Resident quoted in JTP, 2000a:37).

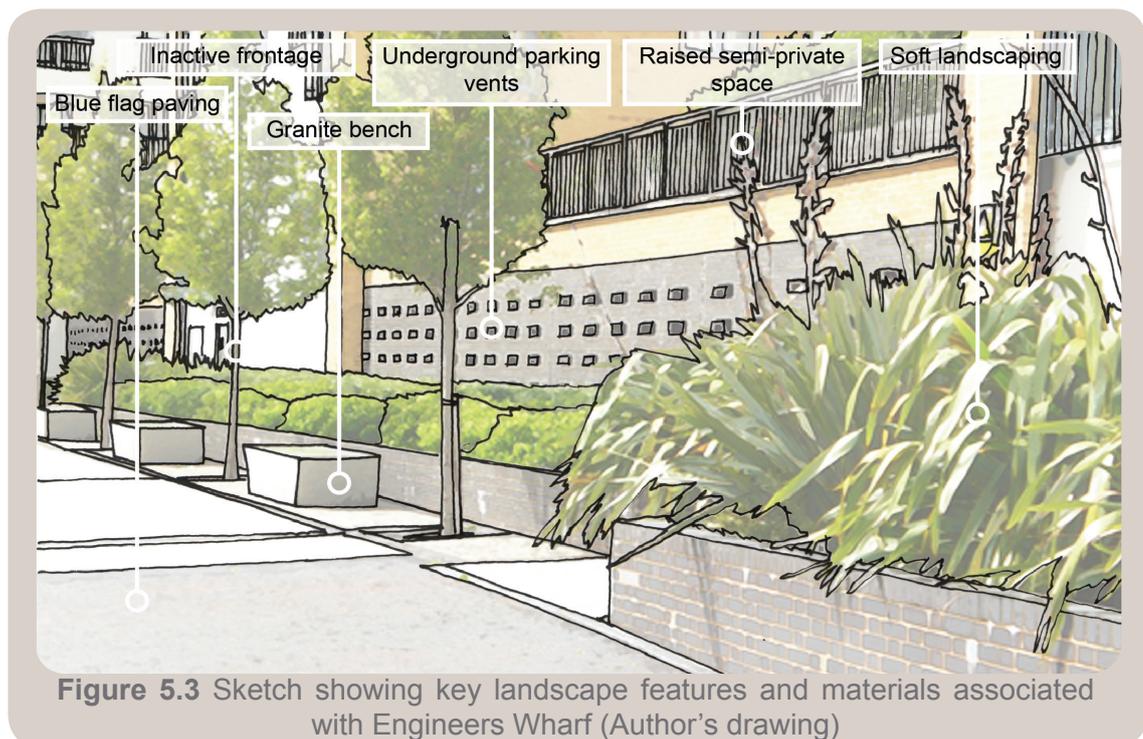
In response to this and calls from the UVG to build places that are “full of incident and variety...that people instinctively warm to and enjoy using”, Engineers Wharf was built (Aldous, 1992:27). This section investigates the design of Engineers Wharf, the purpose built canal basin to the east of the GUV site which was based on UV ideals about movement, the role of a ‘discernable centre’ and the development of place. As the first residents moved into GUV in 2004 TW stated, “we are creating a central vibrant, exciting hub around a new canal basin. With bridges over the canal and access to the canal side, this Village is enabling communities to come together, rather than separating them as the previous site use had done” (TW, 2004:11).

The canal basin has 23 residential canal boat moorings bringing all year round use of the basin through a fixed pontoon system. British Waterways (BW), who manage the canal system and had an input into the design through their experience of what was required for the marina to make it suitable for boats to moor. Despite early difficulties in negotiations between the developer and BW, a deal was reached where BW received £230,000 to allow TW to connect the marina to the canal and following its completion BW would manage the marina.

The design of Engineers Wharf fits UV rhetoric that states “the village should normally focus on a public square or place of sufficient size and quality to give people a sense of place. This is the heart of the village” (Aldous, 1992:48). The Vision for the basin was the “regeneration of a stretch of the historic Grand Union Canal” which TW rhetoric stated would be “one of the most exciting aspects of the scheme, [because] a new look canal basin will be created, with mooring facilities and accommodation overlooking the quayside. Street cafes, restaurants and shops will form the bustling heart of the Village while the creation of public footpaths, bridges and cycleways will open up the canal for the community to enjoy” (TW, 2000a:5). These quotations refer to the ‘heart’ of the Village, and therefore affective and sensory components of place building. As such the permeability of the development reflected this and Victoria said the design “lends itself to coming in from the main boulevard to the heart, so everything people would come out of their house to do, apart from the open

space is here” (Victoria Davies, TW, interview, 2009:7). Such ideas also speak to issues of mixed-use and vibrant urban environments.

Whilst the GUV facilities are located in the centre of the Village, there is a stark contrast between Vision and reality of the basin. Figure 5.3 is a sketch showing the effect of these changes on the frontages of the marina basin. UV rhetoric states that frontages “need to contribute to the liveliness of the street scene” and the completed basin doesn’t achieve this (Aldous, 1992:47). Much of this criticism rests on the lack of an active frontage which is crucial to the “vitality” of place (Aldous, 1992:48). Whilst the initial Vision would have created strong public frontages and vibrancy around the canal, the reality is different. As the sketch shows, the underground parking vents and seldom used entrances mean that vibrancy is lacking from the basin. Whilst “adequate parking must be provided if its component developments are to attract buyers and tenants” the way this has been implemented in the basin creates a negative “impact on the appearance and liveliness of [the] neighbourhood” (Aldous, 1992:60). Soft landscaping has been used to conceal the visual effects of the vents, and to minimise noise reverberating within the canal basin to some success.



**Figure 5.3** Sketch showing key landscape features and materials associated with Engineers Wharf (Author’s drawing)

The ability of the canal basin to act as a destination is compromised by the lack of a mix of uses around the canal. Whilst the vibrancy of the development was not as envisioned, the development of GUV signalled a change in attitudes towards the canal in the development of place. Whilst the surrounding urban fabric neglects the canal, the design of GUV sought to bring the canal into the development. Robert Stuart, who was responsible for managing the development of GUV argued that attempting to connect these two contrasting approaches to place making (by building bridges over the canal) may have been problematic. He said that

GUV:

*“Is a destination, it is well known and if you look at the suburban housing that was built to the west and south of the site 20 years beforehand we could just blanket the site with that and it wouldn’t have done anything. If you stand on the site and look across the canal you will see blocks of flats across from the basin area. They are all backing onto the canal where there are garden fences that are two-metres high and that whole canal path has no overlooking at all. TW built that, so TW 20 years beforehand were backing themselves to the canal because canals were not nice features, they were places people dumped shopping trolleys”.*

(Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:18)



**Figure 5.4** Attitudes towards the canal marked a change from existing development (bottom) to the development of GUV (top) which integrated the canal into the development (Author’s photograph)

There is a dichotomy between GUV as a place to visit compared to the surrounding suburban housing, which Robert uses as an example, to highlight the change in attitudes towards the canal with developers now seeking to respect the canal as a place through frontages onto the waterways. Figure 5.4 shows the two contrasting approaches to the canal and how GUV seeks to integrate the canal into the development to create a more pleasant environment. As an UV, GUV is placed above traditional suburban development in a hierarchy of places that respect the natural environment and create places that are ‘destinations’. According to the JTP Vision documents “there was a strong desire to move away from the existing suburban sprawl where ‘Tesco is all there is, and to create a place which could provide healthy living and life long learning by the canal” (JTP, 2000a:34). It is for this reason that GUV has a series of canalside paths and views to interact with the canal.

Thus far, this chapter has examined the design of the canal basin and how the rhetoric employed by design professionals evoked notions that the basin was central to creating a sense of place and establishing GUV as a ‘destination’, based on a dichotomy between existing urban form and what was being built under UV principles. Biddulph states “UVs would typically have a distinct architectural character which it is thought should contribute to residents’ sense of attachment to the place” (Biddulph, 2003:181). Therefore the form of an UV creates uniqueness and a sense of place juxtaposing existing housing developments that may surround it. Biddulph’s notion can be appropriated for the case of GUV, where a sense of place and attachment to place were derived from attempts to create a canal basin that provided facilities and a landscape unique from the existing built form, which the community could enjoy as their own.

This desire to create place through the design of the basin was led by community consultation and Robert stated TW learnt:

*“From the residents that there wasn’t an address, it wasn’t Greenford, it wasn’t Ealing, it wasn’t Southall, although we all called it Southall, it didn’t have an address and this lack of place was something that we thought about very carefully. Although it had large asbestos buildings on it, it was going to be derelict and if you got rid of all the buildings it was just a flat featureless site that had contamination and no features that you could say this is why the place is here. It was surrounded by suburban housing on all sides and the one thing it did have was the Grand Union Canal running down the side of it so we had the possibility of creating the canal basin...the canal basin was like taking a space of very valuable land and throwing it into the water which explaining that inside the company was difficult to justify. ‘You are going to do what?!’. But we said if you do that then we can justify higher density housing round the canal basin, we create a central place, a visitor destination. You can put shops and things round it and we can make this thing a place rather than another featureless housing site”.*

(Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:4)

Robert draws on key UV principles which were translated into the design of GUV. These include developing a sense of place through branding the development, generating community and attachment to place through community spaces, and finally the economics of developing place, all of which are now explored in greater depth.

### ***5.2.1 Place Branding***

Place branding, is based on a macro-level understanding of GUV's location and establishing the development as a place. Robert highlighted previously how the site was placeless and not part of Northolt, Southall, Ealing or Greenford. To overcome placelessness, place-branding was required which is "the process of applying branding...as applied to commercial products-to geographical locations" (Julier, 2005:873). Attempts to establish GUV as a place involved generating a unique character for the area. Place branding was a "naming thing, you're giving it an identity, that hub, and that commercial area, has been given an identity that people will belong to and will go to. That's the difference between this and other estates" (Alan Northfield, TW, interview, 2009:31).

The GUV brand was established through political involvement, with Tony Blair, Ken Livingstone and John Prescott visiting the site to hand over keys to key-workers. On his visit Tony Blair stated that GUV is "a truly impressive development which is bringing homes to more people in the area" (Tony Blair quoted in TW, 2003:7). There is no doubt that having the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Mayor hand over keys to new residents was a big boost to TW's attempts to "build the brand of GUV" (Victoria Davies, TW, interview, 2009:2). Through political involvement such as this, TW created local public interest in the development.

### ***5.2.2 Attachment to place***

Building the GUV brand had impacts on attachment to the built environment. According to Aelbrecht "the nature and conceptualizations of public space have been always associated with collective participation and socialization" (Aelbrecht, 2009:1). Public space is therefore the gathering place in which people interact and develop a sense of community and shared experience. In *On the Plaza* Setha Low examines the role of public space in shaping shared understandings of place, and how it is used to generate collective experiences of the city. Public space therefore "is an arena where diverse social groups and social classes appear together in a highly structured way, segmented by space and time, yet intermingling and interacting on the same site" (Low, 2000:35). Chapters 6 and 7 explore users' experiences of public space, examining whether they feel an attachment to GUV. This framework develops out of Low's work on public space and her observations of city life, and how narratives,

“memories, stories and personal reflections create places” (Low, 2000:35). This section considers how attachment to place was sought through design.

The UV movement promotes interaction “by providing more venues for social contact” and place attachment is based on social bonding through the use of public space and shared facilities. (Talen, 1999:1369). As such a sense of place is bound up in the environmental cognition of residents which seeks to provide “stability and a source of unproblematic identity” (Massey, 1997:316). This manifested itself in the design of the basin because people would “quickly sense you’re somewhere special, a place that’s been carefully thought about” (TW, 2006:3). It was to be the area in which people would interact with strangers and other residents to generate community and shared attachment to place.

Therefore sense of place was designed for micro-scale experiences of the built environment. TW saw place and experiences as being derived through communal daily interactions in public space. However, Talen warns that the “quality of this interaction may be limited to brief encounters...[and moving] beyond the level of neighbouring towards an affective notion of community is more difficult, unless sense of community can be directly tied to variation in quantity of social interaction” (Talen, 1999:1367). According to Talen then, superficial and limited interactions do not generate attachment to place. Whilst the quantity of interactions between residents does not automatically dictate a shared attachment to place, daily interactions between people, especially on a micro-level build affective experiences of community.

### ***5.2.3 Experiences of place***

Experiences of public space rely on the interaction of strangers in a communal place, such as the canal basin. Urban living makes the interaction between strangers possible because “the density and diversity of people gathered together in cities give urban social life a distinctive character: it is fundamentally about encounters and interactions among people who are different...it is within public spaces that many of these contacts occur” (Stevens, 2006:809). Appeals to urban forms of living contained within UV rhetoric are based on the desire to bring a diverse community to the development to broaden the experience of public space (Aldous, 1992; Neal, 2003). In effect, experiences of place rely not only on the amount of interactions but also the diversity of the community.

If experiences of public space are dependent on the stranger, then “our social life is structured by vast networks of temporal and spatial mediation among persons, so that nearly everyone depends on the activities of seen and unseen strangers” (Young, 1990:237). Whilst these interactions and experiences involve the meeting of strangers, they “have important personal meanings for individual users and urban residents...[such] meanings are constructed from

individual experience, social encounters, working conditions, political activities, memories and collective recollections, and from what is written and said about the plaza” (Low, 2000:238). Experience of public space is therefore determined by preconceived ideas about space. As such experiences of the Village are shaped by TW marketing the basin as the ‘heart’. This was expressed by Nicola who stated, “I love that space, we had some lovely events there” (Nicola Richford, local councilor, interview, 2009:15). Formal events are an opportunity for GUV residents to gather in the canal basin, emphasising notions of community. Furthermore the canal boats provide interest and vibrancy attracting people to the space, as Luke Harlow states, the basin wasn’t just:

*“A water space with no life in it because it wouldn’t have the same draw, whilst you have the boats there and people milling about it is something to interest passers by, so they might stop and have a look and if they stop they might want to buy a beer and sit for longer. Once that happens other people come along and it is like a crowd syndrome ‘oh what is going on over there?’. That is all about there being life on it and interaction between people inside the marina and outside on the land”.*

(Luke Harlow, British Waterways, interview, 2009:12)

An attachment to place was therefore designed through communal experiences of the marina. In *City Life and Difference*, Iris Marion Young argues for “city life” rather than appeals to the concept of community. City life she states is “a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness. City life is composed of clusters of people with affinities—families, social group networks, voluntary associations, neighbourhood networks, a vast array of small ‘communities’” (Young, 1990:237).

The ‘heart’ therefore leads to community and a collective sense of place based on clustering of people in one space. This desire to create a sense of place is a “component of [the] new urbanist social doctrine” which seeks to engage people with their surroundings and environment (Talen, 1999:1371). Talen argues however, that this preoccupation with a sense of place doesn’t necessarily lead to a sense of community, and that whilst this “may be promoted via resident interaction, such as through the creation of a venue for chance encounter...this approach does not necessarily promote other concepts such as place attachment or sense of place” (Talen, 1999:1367).

The previous chapter examined how a diverse community was envisioned for GUV, and how this was based on UV ideals about diversity within place. Talen states that “to move beyond interaction towards the affective dimensions of sense of community is problematic since the effectuation of a sense of community in these terms is usually only achieved via some

intermediate variable (for example, resident homogeneity, affluence)” (Talen, 1999:1367). A shared sense of place is most commonly associated with the neighbourhood model of development, as advocated by the UV movement.

However, experiences of public space are also based on personal narratives and how “meanings are understood by public space users and urban residents in a variety of ways—from emotional engagement with the place (place attachment) to a citywide struggle to define what the place should represent through its spatial relations and landscape architecture” (Low, 2000:239). Chapter 7 explores how residents engage with this sense of place in Engineers Wharf and other public spaces. This engagement is often based on a common association between residents as part of their membership to the CDT, and this common usage of public space is at its greatest during organised events such as the summer fayre.

This pursuit of place and giving GUV a unique identity however, was as much about profit and award winning spaces, as it was about creating urban experiences.

#### ***5.2.4 The economics of building place***

Earlier in this section it was shown how the directors of TW reacted with trepidation about the proposal for a canal basin in GUV because it was thought that it “was like taking a space of very valuable land and throwing it into the water” (Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:4). However rather than being an exercise in place building, Engineers Wharf added value to the properties that surround the canal. Not only could they “justify higher density housing round the canal basin” they were also able to sell canal basin properties for greater values (Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:4).

For example plot 729 is a second floor, two-bedroom flat located in Middlewich House, one of the “warehouse” style blocks that surround the basin. The flat sold for £229,995 when built in 2006 (Bryant Homes, 2005c). This is £12,000 more than an identical flat located on the other side of Middlewich House with no views of the canal basin. Further evidence of the increase in sales prices that TW gained from the canal comes from Brazier Crescent. Plot 210 a four-bedroom house overlooking the canal cost £360,000 when built in 2006 (Bryant Homes, 2005d). This compares to plot 719, which is an identical house, located the other side of the Crescent but with no canal views and was instead priced at £345,000. Views of the canal added between 5-10% on to the price of the property because:

*“Water is very attractive to people and you get higher values for properties overlooking water, it’s something a bit different. That whole area is quite interesting, because you’ve got the marina which is more of an area to walk around as opposed to gather. The original concept was to have more of a square outside of the shops and that is now a car park, and that was originally designed as*

*an open space which fed through and it was going to be much more of a communal space. Due to pressures of parking it became a car park which is a shame because you've got the crèche there, the shops there, yes they need parking to make them viable, but the idea was that everybody is within five minute walk, they shouldn't need to be driving there".*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke Landscape Architects, interview, 2008:22)

Two key concepts emerge here. The first is how increased sales prices for the flats were driven by views of the canal and residents paid more for something “different”. Just as important is acknowledging that the basin was more a space to “walk around” than to “gather” as a result of changes in the design from the original Vision. Therefore whilst residents paid extra for canalside properties, the amenities for social gathering and communal experiences weren't delivered.

Following Susanna's description of the basin, Robert stated that as part of the Vision, TW “decided not just to build houses but to try and build a community and so it worked in getting us the planning permission we needed, it worked financially, it worked in building a place” (Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:4). Therefore a place-based approach to urban planning as advocated by neo-traditional planning movements had financial benefits for TW. It would be unfair to suggest that the increased profits from canal basin flats were the sole driver for the development of the basin. The building of Engineers Wharf added not just economic value for the developer but also provided the added impetus to draw people into the site. The marina was designed to create a movement through the site, and bring life to the development as people move through the space especially because of attractions to water. The commercial elements to the development also lead people into this area and sought to bring vibrancy.

This thesis explores the UV concept and how it is utilised by volume house builders. As such the increase in property prices resulting from their location next to the basin was one of the defining factors for the creation of the basin. A by-product of the success of the canal basin was the award TW received from the PFBE, which was discussed in my interview with Robert, who stated that PFBE:

*“Decided to choose 10 schemes that they wanted to give commendation to. We weren't ranked 1 to 10, we were just one of the top ten, and we got the phone call to say we have been selected. Each scheme had a day when it was presented to Prince Charles which was very good, he came round and saw every scheme and talked to one or two individuals on each site, and we explained things to him. Our scheme was quite different from everybody else because everybody else's was a traditional design that Prince Charles likes. Ours was much more of a modern design, and we couldn't quite see why we were selected. And they have a panel of experts that select it, and after he had a little chat and*

*walked by right behind him someone came to us and said why they had chosen each scheme”.*

(Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:16)

It is interesting to note Robert’s surprise at being selected for the award based on GUV’s contemporary architectural style, which is not typical of neo-traditional architecture found at Poundbury or Seaside. Developments such as these appeal to historical forms of building, yet the idea behind GUV was “to try and create something quite new” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:14). GUV is based on everyday contemporary architecture and building forms, such as timber frames which are known for their quick construction times. GUV’s award was not for architectural style but rather because of the building of the basin. One of those people that was responsible for the decision was Hank Dittmar, who was then present of the Congress for New Urbanism. Robert said of the visit from Hank Dittmar, and others at PFBE that:

*“I was talking to this American professor, Hank Dittmar, and a couple of others who were on the panel and they said they thought ours was a larger more urban schema than a small town type thing, but they said they particularly liked the way we had grouped the high density flats round the canal basin, and I said ‘yes that is why we decided to build the canal basin’ and there was this shocked look on everybody’s face and I said ‘you understand the point that there was no central place, there was no destination whatsoever’, so we decided to create this we would build the canal basin. And they said ‘I don’t understand, you built the canal basin, wasn’t it there beforehand?’, I said ‘no, we built it’ and they were so stunned and said we didn’t realise you had built that, we awarded you this for the way you had built things around an existing feature we would have been much more impressed if we had realised you built the feature in the first place”.*

(Robert Stuart, TW, interview, 2009:17)

Two key issues emerge here. The first is classifying of GUV as an urban schema, and therefore an acknowledgement that it is very different from developments such as Poundbury, due to the size of the development but also the approach to development. The second, is the emphasis that Robert puts on the role of place when talking about the basin. Whilst it would be unexpected if he were to talk about the profit element to the basin in front of PFBE members, he clearly links a sense of place to the basin.

This chapter now explores another element of the micro-environmental design of GUV, designed to create an interaction between people and their environment. This involves the use of HZs, to create heightened experiences of the city.

### 5.3 Designing: Experience

#### 5.3.1 *The social experience of the street*

Streets “have always been the places where children first learned about the world and where neighbours met, the social centres of towns and cities” (Appleyard, 1981:1). In *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs argues that planners should seek to create an intensive and diverse street life (Jacobs, 1961). The street she states is central to experiences of the city. It is for this reason that HZs were developed to give precedence to the pedestrian over the car to evoke more pleasurable experiences of the built environment and to encourage social interaction.

Appleyard states, “traffic volumes themselves have been shown to reduce social interaction... some environmental factors may also operate. The distance from houses across the street or childrens’ play spaces, sitting-out places, communal back yards-and other social amenities could be clues to social interaction” (Appleyard, 1981:5). Appleyard’s book, *Liveable Streets* established a framework that sought to ‘humanise’ street life, by reducing the traffic in cities and therefore explored the impact of traffic on people particularly the elderly and children (Appleyard, 1981). This section considers the use of HZs in GUV, and TW’s attempts to generate a sense of community by prioritising pedestrian experience of the street over car use. It also examines how the concept of shared space, a central element of HZs, can exclude some people from these streets due to sensory impairment.

According to the 2005 Department for Transport (DfT) report *Home Zones: Challenging the future of our streets*, “HZs are residential streets in which the road space is shared between drivers of motor vehicles and other road users, with the wider needs of residents (including people who walk and cycle, and children) in mind. The aim is to change the way that streets are used and to improve quality of life, by making them places for people, not just for traffic” (DfT, 2005). This establishes the link between the street and experiences of the built environment. Furthermore the street plays a prominent role within UV discourse and should “lie at the heart of good urbanism...in their simplest form, streets allow people to be outside, and thereby undertake a plethora of social activities that contribute to the transformation of neighbours into neighbourhoods” (Neal, 2003:106). The street therefore is envisioned as more than a conduit for automobility and scenes of “conflict between living and access” (Appleyard, 1981:1).

HZs were integrated into the design of GUV as a way of reclaiming the streets giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists over cars (figure 5.5). The design of GUV aligns closely with the ideas expressed above by Neal and Appleyard. Whilst public space (such as Engineers Wharf) was envisioned as the location for micro-scale community building such as CDT organised

fundays, the street was seen as offering daily interaction between people. These interactions are based on removing the distinction between pedestrian and automobile spaces, through shared surfaces and “carefully placed seating and trees” to “enhance the scheme” (TW, 2006:4).



**Figure 5.5** Aerial sketch of Apprentice Gardens Home Zone showing key details in the design of the streetscape including centralised play area (Author's drawing)

To increase communal experiences of the HZs, TW sought to develop character areas and neighbourhoods which provided a particular kind of local identity with smaller residential enclaves making up the Village in the same way that Steen Eiler Rasmussen proposed London was made up of a series of small communities (Rasmussen, 1937). Architect Nathaniel Evans remarked that he thought “the HZ idea worked very well and gave a nice local identity to areas within the larger site and there are some very small identifiable areas. It is nice that they can have their small local community” (Nathaniel Evans, BDG, interview, 2009:21). HZs therefore fulfil the social ambitions of the UV concept by offering opportunities for increased experiences of the street and placed identity.

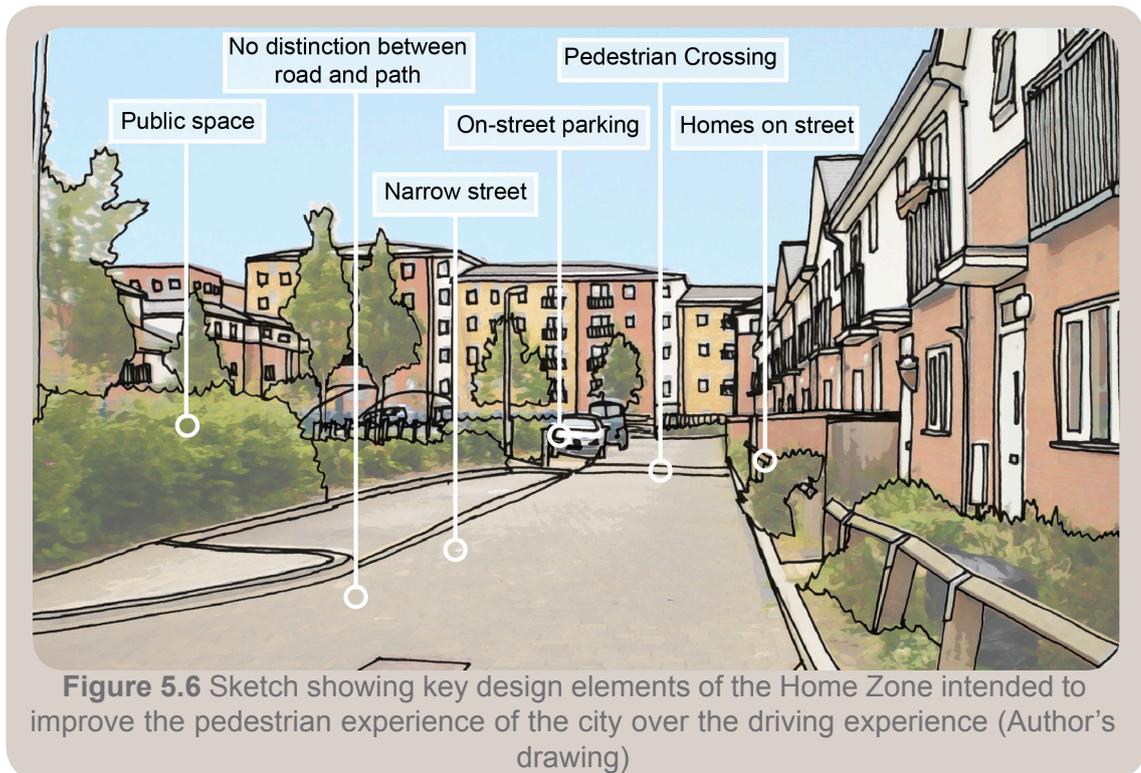
When the Vision for GUV emerged in 2000 the concept of HZs was not widespread in British planning, and the material supplier for the development stated they are:

*“A growing trend in the UK. It started in Holland, and then slowly came over here. The benefits are because of the road layout and colouring, the shared surface slows down speeding vehicles so it makes the whole area safer without having a speed limit. Speed limits have to be enforced otherwise they are worthless, but this way it is impossible because of the seemingly sinuous route, vehicles can't get up to speed, and the psychological aspect of it looking the same, ‘am I on the footway or one the*

*carriageway I don't know*".

(David Collyer, Charcon, interview, 2009:16)

David echoes a view first proposed by Appleyard that “speed limits must be reinforced by a road design that discourages speeds over the limit” and therefore encourages pedestrian use of the street (Appleyard, 1981:296). Figure 5.6 shows the design principles that have been used to slow cars and hand control of the street back to the pedestrian. These include; narrow streets, no distinction between path and road, on-street parking, and active frontages onto the street. Firstly, however this chapter considers the social and experiential benefits of HZs in GUV.

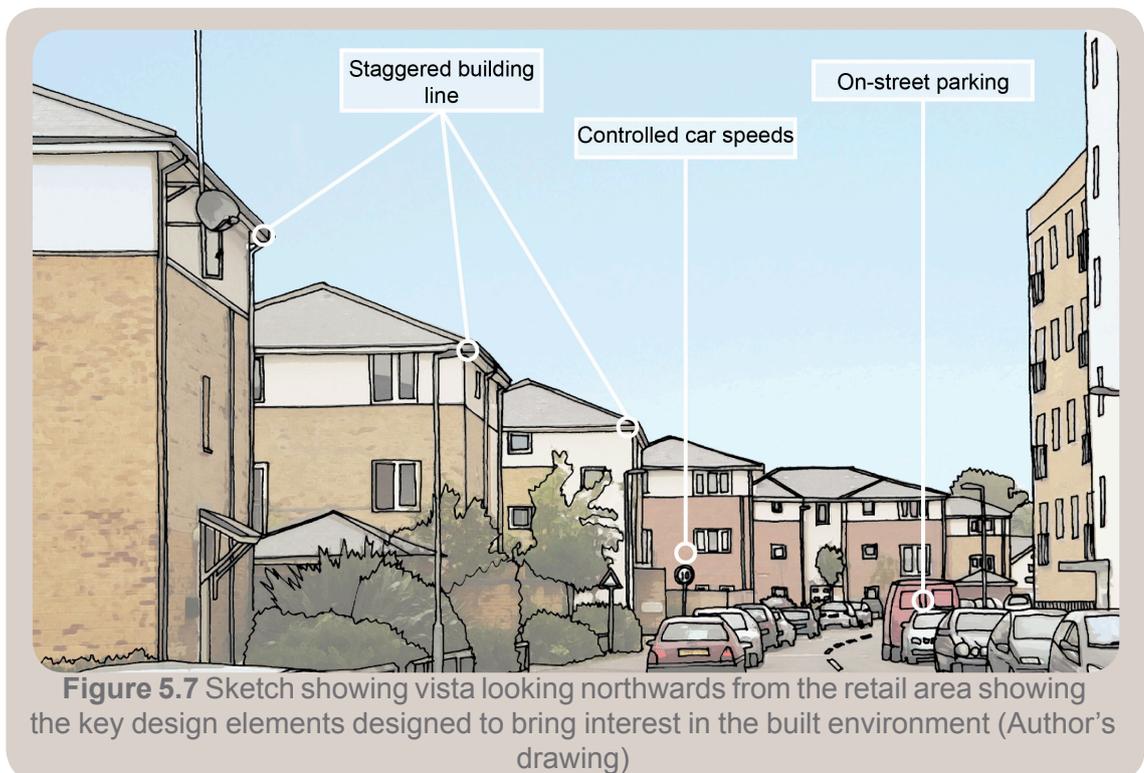


**Figure 5.6** Sketch showing key design elements of the Home Zone intended to improve the pedestrian experience of the city over the driving experience (Author's drawing)

### 5.3.2 Experience and surveillance in HZs

Streets in HZs are narrower than traditional street layouts to decrease the distance between housing and bring front doors on to the street. This allows people to experience “street life as people come and go from their homes”, whilst also providing for an “informal surveillance of the HZ environment by people that live there” (Biddulph, 2002:51). Notions of surveillance on the street created by active frontages echo the work Jane Jacobs and her notion of ‘eyes on the street’ (Jacobs, 1961:3). Jacobs argued that “there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their back or blank sides on it and leave it blind” (Jacobs, 1961:35).

Such forms of surveillance have been used to exclude ‘outsiders’ from social spaces in GUV, as will be explored in Chapter 7. Appeals to social infrastructure such as the CDT and Neighbourhood Watch enforced this control on undesirables within the Village. Security is also created by vistas and frontages which play a role in obtaining a vibrant urban environment, because the street “must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. Nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street” (Jacobs, 1961:35). Figure 5.7 is a sketch that shows how the vista northwards from the shops was designed as a visual prompt to encourage kinaesthetic experience of the street and subsequent use and surveillance advocated by Jacobs.



In addition to surveillance Appleyard states that residents prefer narrow streets because they slow traffic. In addition, “arrangements for parking, the provision of green strips and trees or play spaces, or simply widening sidewalks” also achieves this (Appleyard, 1981:301). Appleyard establishes an important link between experience, design and the role of the car. This is in part due to the major effect that traffic has on affective experiences of the city (see Thrift 2008) but also due to the ways in which we are able to design to “encourage walking wherever possible” (Aldous, 1992:112). Chapter 4 demonstrated that the Vision was based on reducing levels of car use. HZs were a part of this Vision, making it more difficult to own a car and drive around GUV. Whilst this intention has not yet been fulfilled, TW used HZs as a way of prioritising pedestrian experiences over driver experiences.

### 5.3.3 Pedestrian priority

The use of HZs places an emphasis on the pedestrian experience of place by giving precedence of the street to those on foot. The EU funded Shared Space Project, stated that existing development is too focused on the car which impacts upon the layout and use of public space. Shared space, would therefore lead to greater experiences of the city and community building, through increased use of public space on a day-to-day basis. The Shared Space approach focuses on how “public spaces form the heart of society” because “they are areas where you stay, where you meet others, where you relax, where you become familiar and part of the living environment” (Shared Surfaces, 2005:9).

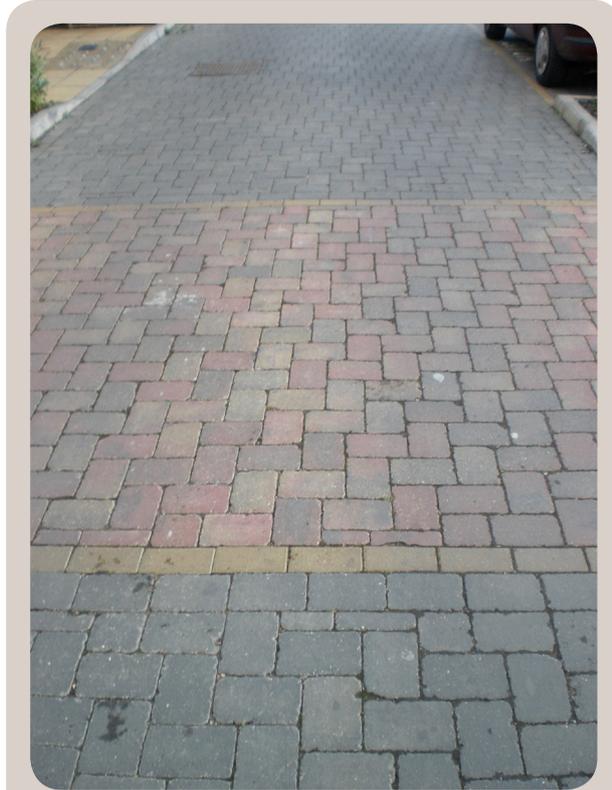
Experiences are therefore linked to the physical environment and how design can shape our daily lives. In GUV the design of HZs was based on the premise that people come first and giving pedestrian experience precedence over the car. Walking is prioritised as it is seen to offer increased experiences of the city when opposed to driving, as well offering increased opportunities for interaction with strangers and therefore increased community interaction and placemaking.

Walking is therefore regarded as the “principal mode of perceiving and living (embodying) urban places, and in this sense an aesthetic and insightful act. While walking, we sense and develop a sense of place... [and] strengthen our relationship with it” (Wunderlich, 2008:136). At GUV pedestrian movement through the site was carefully considered in the design process to strengthen residents’ interaction with the built environment and encourage an emotional attachment. The importance of designing cities for pedestrian experience is emphasised by Wunderlich who argues that designers:

“Need to design for the experience of walking to foster discursive and conceptual practices in urban places. [They must] design for the senses, particularly the haptic sense, stimulating and enhancing its performance; design for different kinaesthetic experiences, by facilitating purposeful bodily movements in urban place and using design to accommodate or stimulate slower or varying walking paces and rhythm, in this way enrich the experience of place whilst promoting spatial encounters and creative and critical engagement with spaces... furthermore, design for a particular character or sense of place may be informed by an understanding of the experiential dimension of walking in urban space. The different practices of walking offer experiential accounts, interpretations of relationships between everyday social, spatial and natural constellations of rhythms of place, as permitted and detected by the senses. In this way, the sensing of place through walking can inform and support a design process that responds sensitively to urban spaces”.

(Wunderlich, 2008:137)

A link between kinaesthetic experiences and the built environment was pursued by the design team. The use of HZs is a case in point for this argument because they attempt to reclaim the street for pedestrians from the car. Appeals to pedestrian priority are based on the perceived negative impacts of traffic on experiences. Traffic it is argued “is therefore seen as a much more widespread problem than crime” (Appleyard, 1981:5).



**Figure 5.8** Pedestrian crossing based on subtle colour variation rather than tactile paving (Author's photo)

In the case of GUV, the use of HZs was based on increased affective experiences of the street and its design means that the attack on car use was also fought through elements such as the car share club. The use of HZs was also bound up in increasing experiences of drivers because they force the motorist to experience the street more actively. The lack of differentiation between the road and path causes drivers to consider where they are able to move within the development. Figures 5.8 and 5.9 show how the difference between the road and path is based on subtle variations in the colours of materials. The confusion and experiences of shared surfaces was expressed by David Collyer, who said it:

*“All looks the same so you can't tell where the footpath is and where the road is so psychologically you tread carefully. [It's based] on that principle, that you've got a road that suddenly turns into pavement and off course the motorist goes 'enmm', it's alien and slows down, in theory, goes 'enmm', God this is not a road so I'll take care. I think I'm allowed to go on it'. That's how that works,*

*and then from the pedestrians point of view suddenly they'll perhaps come off of a paving flag onto a slight change in material but a smaller element because it's got to take the traffic...and they think 'ewww this is a different bit of materials I've got to change somehow'. That's a bit of play on the old tactile paving on pedestrian crossings".*

(David Collyer, Charcon, interview, 2009:15)



**Figure 5.9** Colour brickwork used to differentiate between road and path rather than traditional kerbs (Author's photo)

We can see how experiences of GUV were based on drivers' responding to road surfaces to which they are not accustomed. Building on the same principles of tactile paving which worked by harshly juxtaposing with the surrounding tarmac paths, shared surfaces rely on drivers' experiences being altered by the change in a street's colour and materials. However what happens when drivers become customised to these environments? Some drivers will use the shared surfaces on a daily basis and therefore become oblivious to changes in the street surface. Whilst these initial thoughts of discomfort may stay with the driver, over time they will be less cautious when driving on shared surfaces. The reliance of shared surfaces on the driver also creates a dependence on them to "follow the rules" which "they don't always do" (Richard Pelham, TW, interview, 2009:13). In addition using pedestrians to slow cars can be problematic as the following extract demonstrates:

*AN* What is the relationship between cars and pedestrians in the Village?

*ANo* Yeah there's a HZ through there and there. Well what's the definition of a HZ?

*AN* ..an area where...

*ANo* ...children are used as speed restrictors.

*AN* ((Laughs)).

*ANo* ((Laughs)).

*AN* where there are no paths, and they share a common area.

*ANo* Yeah, so there's a HZ through there, did they work? I don't think they did. There are too many cars, it's very well the council having these aspirations of no car ownership but in reality people don't do that. They own two cars. So a lot of these HZs they're covered in cars. You need to get tough and you start yellow lining it and put management in place.

(Alan Northfield, TW, interview, 2009:18)

However, the lack of effectiveness of GUV to reduce car use has been detrimental to the experiential qualities of the HZs. It would be easy to claim that the excess numbers of cars on site could not have been foreseen, yet many of the design professionals saw this as inevitable. Due to its location, GUV was not going to be able to maintain low car ownership and therefore this has impacted on the effectiveness of the HZs.

Questions also need to be raised about the effectiveness of a concept that appeals to increased pedestrian experience yet rely on the driver to deliver this. The shared surface element of the HZs would have worked better without the high levels of cars parking in these areas. To resolve this the first phase of parking enforcement began in January 2011 aimed at making GUV a more pleasant walking environment by eradicating cars from spaces they weren't designed to be in. If successful this policy will hand control back to the pedestrian and allow the experiential element of HZs to work as effectively as the surveillance element.

#### ***5.3.4 Designing for affective experience***

Designing for HZs and shared surfaces involves the removal of kerbs from the highway. Traditional street layouts evoke a “need to clearly indicate with tactile surfacing the entrances, safe areas, crossing points and through routes, and pointed out the problems that happen when drivers do not respect the designation through poor parking or irresponsible driving”

(Biddulph, 2008:126). Figures 5.10 and 5.11 show traditional street materials including 125mm high kerbs and tactile crossings. As has been shown in this section, shared surfaces attempt to blur the boundaries between spaces for the car and spaces for the pedestrian to “cause changes in the behaviour of drivers, encouraging them to be extra cautious as they negotiate the new road layout” (Guide Dogs, 2007:2). However, this practice of creating shared surfaces excludes those with sensory impairments from these social spaces.



**Figure 5.10** Traditional tactile paving crossing in GUV(Author's photo)



**Figure 5.11** Traditional 120mm curb height to the north of GUV (Author's photo)

The Guide Dogs Association states “the pedestrian environment must be inclusive and safe for all users” (Guide Dogs, 2007:2). Their ‘Say No to Shared Streets’ campaign argues that “shared surface street design...discriminates against blind and partially sighted people and presents access and safety implications for others” (Guide Dogs, 2007:2). The campaign consists of 43 disabled charities from across the UK, who united to argue that the design of shared surfaces excludes disabled people from experiencing the street.

GUV has a total of four shared surfaces located in the residential HZ areas. The design of these HZs varies, however there are no raised kerbs in any of them, and it is this design feature that is heavily criticised by the ‘Say No to Shared Streets’ campaign. According to campaign rhetoric, the kerb is the material feature from which blind and partially sighted people orientate themselves, either through the use of a cane or a guide dog. Within GUV the interaction between cars and pedestrians is based on “visual demarcation” resulting from subtle changes in the colour of the bricks used for the path and the road (David Collyer, Charcon, walking interview, 2009:15). Therefore whilst creating a freedom of movement to all parts of the street for some users, the removal of the kerb “creates a barrier to [disabled user’s] independent mobility” (Guide Dogs, 2007:2).

The call for the rejection of shared surfaces is predicated upon the link between experience and materiality of place. According to Lynch “the basic test of a good sensory world is how effectively it supports the functioning of our bodies. The prime requirement is that people be able to use their sense: to smell, see, feel and hear well...special priority must be given to the sensory requirements of the handicapped, the visual needs of the deaf, the aural needs of the blind” (Lynch, 1960:14). Rather than giving due consideration to the sensory requirements of all users of the built environment the ‘Say No to Shared Streets’ campaign argues that HZs discriminate against some users. The campaign argues that the removal of traditional 125mm kerbs and tactile paving creates a poor experience of the street for blind users. Their solution to this problem is “establishing a textured surface area consisting of granite setts or some other uneven paving material” (Guide Dogs, 2006:14). In their vision for a “safe space”, textured materials create tactile experiences for blind users of the street and those driving which creates a distinction between the road and path. The link between materials and experiences of place will now be explored.

## 5.4 Designing: Materials

### 5.4.1 *The importance of materiality*

The importance of materiality was highlighted by Nathaniel who said the materials were:

*“The long-lasting thing, you can change most other things but that is there forever. If you get that wrong it is always going to look crap”.*

(Nathaniel Evans, BDG, interview, 2009:20)

Setha Low explores the relationship between materials and experience of public space and how “we remain embedded in a material world and use it to create meaning and metaphors that transform our lives. Meanings encoded in the landscape are not passive mnemonics [but] are active translators of everyday practice and human experience” (Low, 2000:241). This section explores how materials were used for the purpose of place building and increasing experiences of the city. It examines the sensory experiences of materials, namely haptic and aural experiences of place. In addition the characteristics of the materials used, and how these sought to provide differing experiences of the city depending on your location are explored. This section focuses on underfoot materials because these provide the greatest amount of evidence of the link between materials and sensory experiences, and were at the forefront of TW rhetoric.

Whilst this chapter does not deal with residents affective experiences of materials (the following chapter does this), it examines experience from a design perspective and how:

*“There are many...agents who shape the sensory environment. Individual owners change their home grounds to make them more liveable and also to establish or to maintain their social position...The manufacturers of environmental components-vehicles, street furniture, pavements, wall and roof materials, lights – think about the look of their product...they certainly cannot imagine how it will appear in actual use in the urban landscape. When they consider how the object will work, it is from the viewpoint of the manager who buys it, to the ultimate use. The managers of the public space, whose domain is daily threatened by accidents, rubbish, breakdown, and disorder, are quite naturally obsessed with surfaces that are easy to clean or to mow”.*

(Lynch, 1960:11)

Lynch explores the design of the materials and the links made between design and use. The materials used in GUV underwent a careful selection process designed to give residents a unique urban environment. In *Places Streets and Movement*, the ODPM argued that “carefully

chosen materials help create a well looked after environment” (ODPM, 2005b:72). Care for materials is created when residents “have a feeling that the street belongs to them: if they see the street as an extension to their dwelling then well cared for spaces can be created” (ODPM, 2005b:72). This report links materiality to experience and establishing a sense of place and belonging. The Village was designed to have its “own statement and the design is different in every area. The trouble is you go to some of these developments and they look the same but here you have a bit of difference” (Connor Nesbitt, TW, interview, 2009:16).

The impact of materialities on the experiences of place has a profound effect on the feel of a development as exemplified by the story told by numerous architects on GUV in relation to the Ballinger Way area of the development. One side of the road was developed by Crest Nicholson and the other side by TW. However, despite being built to the same design the housing has a very different aesthetic and feel to it. On the TW side, there is a recessed detailing on every fourth brick which creates an engaging aesthetic and breaks up the large area of brickwork. In addition there is a small canopy over the front door and a double window on the top floor of the housing. On the Crest Nicholson side, none of these have been included and as such the materials used, including the colour of the brick has an impact on the experience of place.

This was emphasised by Ryan who was frustrated by the scabbing on some of the brickwork and said “you can design a really nice building but the detailing and the materials if they don’t look right, can make it look bad” (Ryan Dixon, BM, interview, 2009:6). Such is the importance of the materials selected, that it was stated in the section 106 agreement that “samples of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any part of the development is commenced...to ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings” (Grand Union Vision Ltd, 2007:14). These ideas however are concerned with visual experience rather than affective qualities of materials. This section, and the thesis as a whole, is concerned with a wider spectrum of experience to avoid “much of the work of culturally inflected human geography [which] has become too concerned with phenomena and processes that are not ‘anchored’ in the lived, material reality of everyday life” (Latham, 2004:704).

If this goal of exploring the lived and experiential design of materials is to be achieved, research needs to move beyond detailed classifications of materials as expressed by the UVG. In their report of 1992, materials are envisioned from a technical standpoint without a deep consideration of the experiential qualities of materials. Whilst the report acknowledges that materials are “crucial to perceptions of environmental quality”, there is not a rich description of their qualities (Aldous, 1992:44). For example their architecture and public space codes deal with materials in simple and technical terms. This approach would not do justice to the experiential qualities of the materials used in GUV. To some extent however

the rhetoric employed by designers about GUV's materials, mirrors the technical nature of the UVG report. Overall TW's rhetoric moved beyond technical classifications to affective understandings of design. As a result of this, this section is based on the rich descriptions of materials used by Steen Eiler Rasmussen, in *Experiencing Architecture*, which explores the tactile and experiential qualities of materials (Rasmussen, 1962).

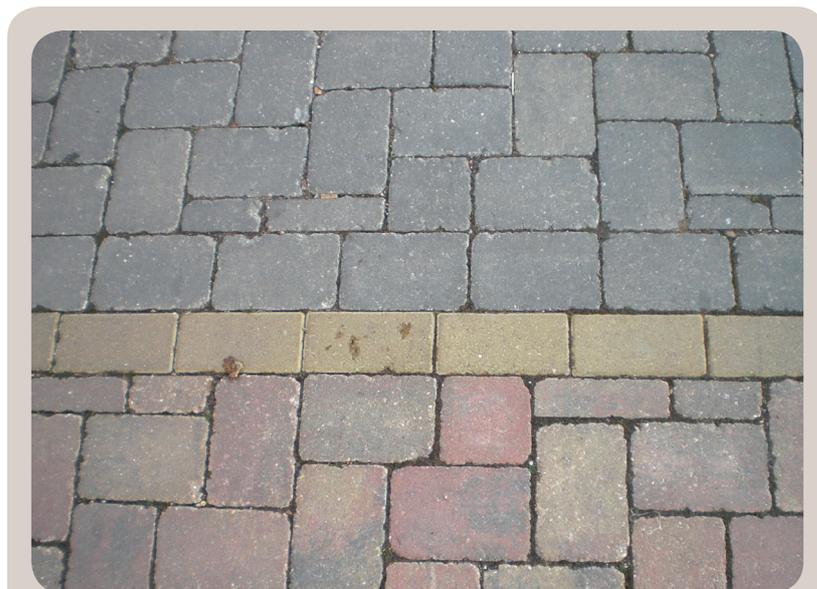


### 5.4.2 *The concept*

As explored earlier in this chapter, unlike other developments built under UV principles, such as Upton, a design code was not employed at GUV. Instead the character areas that were developed as part of the Vision landscape strategy in 2002 dictated the palette of materials used. Figure 5.12 is a plan that shows the location of the materials used in GUV including, timber decking, block paving and brickwork. The properties of the materials such as their colour, scale, texture and sensory qualities reflected the character area in which they were located. The association between character and materials was established as part of the Vision process with Susanna stating:

*“The northern and southern areas will be more of a beige-brown approach, there’s not a huge limit in paving terms that you can get. Things like lighting will be consistent throughout, so that will give you a unity and obviously in terms of the buildings where you use red brick or London stock brick or slate you address that as well. So we did come up with a palette of materials fairly early on, and that was one of the first things I did, and we stuck pretty rigidly to that and within the marina we used a very distinctive product which is now no longer available which was produced by one of the paving manufacturers, which was a silver grey slab with blue glass fleck in it to reflect the water...but the actual materials on the whole are what were envisioned early on...possibly with the exception of some of the tarmac which, we hoped would be paving slabs as opposed to tarmac, but to get the roads adopted, the local authority said they had to be tarmac”.*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:20)



**Figure 5.13** Subtle difference in colour of woburn paving from one character area to the next (Author’s photo)

Two themes are central to the GUV concept for materials. The first is how the materials were designed within a framework of character and experience. As Susanna states materials were used to create distinct neighbourhoods, yet the idea was not to have a “sharp dividing line between character areas, because it was the same product just using a different way of laying it. It was meant to be quite subtle, and I’m sure, if you ask one of the residents they wouldn’t say ‘oh we live in the brown area or the grey area’. It wasn’t meant to be like that, it was meant to be a kind of transition” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke Associates, interview, 2008: 21). This idea is demonstrated in Figure 5.13 which displays the dividing line between two GUV HZs and how this is achieved through differences in the colour of the brickwork.

The second theme is how the concept changed as a result of value engineering and pressures from the council. Whilst Susanna states that the materials “on the whole” are the same as the Vision, there were plans to allow the roads to be paved instead of tarmac. Had this occurred then the feel of the development, and its uniqueness would have been greater. Instead tarmac roads means the development feels more like a suburban street in some places. In spite of this certain colours became synonymous with areas of the development. Materials were used to highlight important elements of the built environment such as the blue glass flag paving in the marina. Important facades and frontages were rendered to give a sense of identity and ownership, rendering was also used to blend commercial properties into residential surroundings and integrate differing areas of the development.

As part of the original Vision a strategy emerged for the Village which associated certain materials with specific locations. This selection of materials was:

*“Developed around a series of principles namely quality, sustainability and management. Quality has been addressed in terms of place, space and materials:*

- *Quality of place relates to whole sensory experience*
- *Quality of space is developed through the relationship of buildings to each other and the spaces that are then created.*
- *Quality of materials are essential in creating quality spaces and places*

*The high-density development requires robust materials that will tolerate intense use. Quality in design will produce spaces and places with viability. Sustainability recognises the importance of the creation of places that people respect as part of their everyday life which encourages an emotional investment helping to create a sense of stewardship. The value that is then placed upon the shared, lived environment produces a viable sustainable urban setting”.*

(JTP, 2002:11)

The importance of materialities in creating places is exemplified by this quotation taken from masterplanning documents produced in 2002. What is interesting to take from this was the use of the terms “sensory” and “emotional investment”. Until specifically questioned about

it, the design team did not talk about the sensory engagement with place and materialities. Despite this, notions of emotion and sense played a role in the GUV design process. It is also interesting to note how descriptions such as these are entrenched in Rasmussen's approaches to materials rather than that of the UVG.

Charcon aggregates were appointed as the material supplier for the development. Working with landscape architects Allen Pyke, they sought to provide a portfolio of materials that would transfer the Vision of character areas into reality. The desire was for the materials to set high standards to provide a unique setting for the development. Reflecting on the process of placemaking and choice of materials, landscape architects Allen Pyke stated that:

*“Throughout the development of earlier phases at GUV, the careful selection of hard surface materials has been integral to realising the successful outcome of the original concept. The choice of materials and street furniture has been such that they respond to the differing characters created across the development whilst creating an overall integrated and harmonious feel to the Village. The principles of specifying robust and practical materials have been successfully combined with careful detailing of paving patterns, junctions between materials and good relationships to the built form”.*

(Allen Pyke, 2007:8)

The use of specific materials was driven by the ability to create place and experience. In particular David spoke about the materials used in GUV and their relationship to placemaking. David was Charcon's material supplier to GUV and had an input into the design of the materials and their location, which was explored through a walking interview in which he discussed the importance of materials and the selection of the materials for GUV.

The walking interview below followed a static interview conducted a few months prior, and was undertaken at GUV. The following section formed part of this walking interview.

#### ***5.4.3 A walking interview with David Collyer, Charcon Aggregates***

*We walk up Ballinger Way, one of the HZs where cars and pedestrians are supposed to mix harmoniously (figure 5.14). Firstly I want to get David's opinions on the materials in this part of the Village. We stand facing north with the HZ in front of us. The HZ in Ballinger Way is the only one to have been built to the Vision with a curved crescent on either side leaving an oval shaped public space at the centre of the housing which consists of three-storey townhouses, built using light brown brickwork, with white render on important facades. Each dwelling has a balcony on the first floor. Despite being built to the same design the two sides of the crescent have very subtle differences in their materialities and detailing.*



**Figure 5.14** Aerial sketch showing route taken through the Ballinger Way Home Zone as part of the David Collyer walking interview (Author's drawing)

*Being part of the company that supplied the materials for GUV, David helped make decisions about the types of materials used on site. In all of the HZs in GUV, a Woburn rumbled brick has been used on the shared surface that is now to our left. In front of us is a small play area and beyond this open space, half of which is paved in cream Malvern paving (figure 5.15). I ask David about the “rationale behind the colouring” of the paving and remark that this continues up to the front doors of those houses to our left. In response David replies, “it was very much shared space here. It is a larger area and it is a pedestrian and vehicle area, slow vehicle speeds because there could be pedestrians around and a lot of it is the psychological aspect of when you are driving your road colour changes, something is different, ‘do I go on it?’ does it look as if you should?”.*



**Figure 5.15** Photograph looking northwards to Ballinger Way Home Zone (Author's Photograph)

Here David talks about how the visual properties of brick paving can have an impact on experiences of shared surfaces. The differentiation between colours of the materials used on roads creates tension in the users mind about where they are allowed to drive. The previous chapter explored how reducing the level of car use in GUV was a social aspiration of the Vision. Interactions such as these were designed to give priority of the space to pedestrians by creating uncomfortable experiences of shared surfaces for motorists.

*As we walk slowly up through the housing, David talks about the sizing of the paving and how the smaller Woburn block paving was used more as a "technical thing to obtain a herringbone pattern which gives it strength". The strength of the paving is evident as today a number of cars are parked on the street, which gets worse in the evening when people return home from work. Parking is something I am keen to talk to David about. It is a very emotive subject in terms of GUV and many believe it spoils the effect of HZs. I have thought about this on my various visits to GUV and especially in this part of the Village. The HZ in Ballinger Way is one of the places in which there is the space for cars to park on the street, and often at night cars are parked anywhere a space can be seen, ruining the visual and social effects of the space. I ask David how he thinks the materials will be maintained by this constant use.*

*"The materials, I don't think suffer, but things could be a lot better. Again this is planning requirements, development costs verses aesthetics so where everyone would like their own parking space, you haven't got the space for it. Unless the planning authority says you must have the space for it and clearly here with vehicles parked up on the kerb this space is available outside your front garage. You could say one in the garage, one outside. So that could be the planning requirement and that is what you do rather than turning that play area into a car park. Again it is a community within a community and they get on which each other because they are doing the same thing, they have all got their three cars each and work it out amongst themselves".*

Within this exchange the relationship between design and experience is evident. The lived reality of design is something that will be explored in the next chapter, however in this context it can be seen that the original social aspirations of the Vision have not been implemented. Reducing car use was a key aspiration of the Vision, based on emerging ideas of sustainable transport use. It is also a prerequisite of the UV movement, where public transport and pedestrian patterns of movement are encouraged over ownership of the car. This tension between car ownership and movement also speaks to how GUV integrates into the surrounding urban fabric, as well as the viability of the mixed-use concept within GUV.

*We have reached the top of the HZ and turn back to look at the housing behind us. We turn our attention to the open space to the far north of the HZ, half of which is grass, half is paved with a cream Malvern flag paving, the pattern broken only by a line of Woburn bricks, two deep, at*

*regular intervals. At the entrance to the open space are large circular concrete structures about two-feet high. The ball shaped structures contain small pebble aggregates to give them a tactile finish and an interesting mix of colours. “What do you think of these structures here?” I ask. David replies that “they provide quite a lot of uses, little seats to play on, it is a bollard, stopping vehicles driving onto or over areas, a vehicle could just park on this bit if they weren’t there so it is forcing vehicles somewhere else so that pedestrians would have a walk through and a clear view, especially at a junction, you don’t want cars parked which would obscure any view”.*

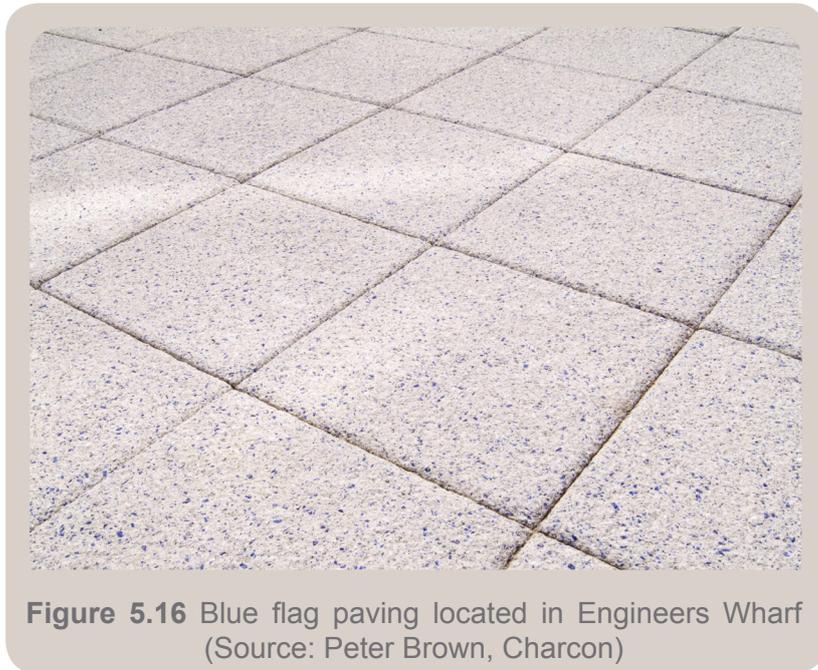
*As we move north through the Central Lozenge area I ask David about the interaction between the soft landscaping and hard landscaping and whether he believes the two blend together well. In response he states that “I think it can take a while to mature out, even though it is three years now these trees have got a fair bit to go and you have got to create the environment that was intended that you saw on the plan when you brought the house. It would be interesting to know how many people are still here who moved in on day one. That is the sign of a community, if you want to stay in the same place you might move around within that, you started off in a flat, now you’re in a two-bedroom and you want a three-bedroom in a couple of years time perhaps. Would you move around the same estate or do you go elsewhere? In which case you have got to ask the question is that a real community? Is that what you want from a community, the same people there, from the day they move in, to the day they die? Does a community cater for that vast range of wants and needs because when a lot of people moved here they all had little kids and all the little kids grow up and they get a car so it makes for a very quiet environment because all of the little kids have gone, but there are cars everywhere and then you will get another wave as parents might decide to move, downsize or whatever, and then you get another wave of kids coming in. That situation is where communities move around, but it is the community within the community. But it is nice and peaceful and tranquil here. I think a lot of it is softscape absorbs a lot of sound, and when you have got the normal situation of a road going through and houses on either side, any noise is bounced off from an exhaust or something. But if you have got a lot of softscape that absorbs the sound. And this benefits from that because there is a lot of softscape around and nice large open spaces”.*

David talks about the importance of landscaping and the materials of GUV in relation to higher theoretical ideas which underpin the UV movement. The first of these is the after-life of the materials and how the planting will ‘mature’ to bring the Vision into reality. In this sense, David talks about giving residents the Vision of the UV that they brought into. The second idea is that of community, which echoes elements explored in the previous chapter where a diverse community was envisioned for GUV. In this exchange David talks about the longevity of community and whether it is beneficial to have people live in the development for a long period of time. The ability to do this is bound up in the implementation of mixed-use planning and the availability and range of housing types. Finally in a bid to create an aurally pleasant environment, soft landscaping that absorbs sound has been used which exemplifies the impact that materials can have on sensory experiences of the built environment.

#### 5.4.4 *The materials of GUV*

This section now turns to explore the materials used within the development and highlight their key properties and characteristics. Each of these materials was used in different ways, and the ways in which the size, texture, and sensory qualities of the materials impact upon experience and placemaking will be explored. This section emerged out of interviews with those responsible for selecting the materials, TW rhetoric employed when marketing these products and wider UV rhetoric. The key materials used in GUV were: blue glass flag paving, granite benches, gravel, Malvern flag paving, Woburn rumbled block paving, and granite setts.

##### *Blue Glass Flag Paving*



**Figure 5.16** Blue flag paving located in Engineers Wharf  
(Source: Peter Brown, Charcon)

The first section of this chapter explored how Engineers Wharf is seen as the ‘heart’ of the Village. As such greater amounts of money were spent on paving in this area to generate a unique sense of place. Engineers Wharf is the location for the blue glass flag paving, which was marketed as the signature product of the development. Figure 5.16 shows the blue glass paving, and the way in which it is laid within the canal basin.

The blue glass flag paving was the “iconic” paving used in GUV (David Collyer, interview 2009:1). The product is a cream colour with blue coloured glass mixed into the slabs. The aggregate used in the paving included the broken glass of blue sherry bottles to give the colour. It feels rough underfoot, you can almost hear the crunching of glass as you rub your foot back and forth over the paving. This however is the precise effect created by polishing

the slab for safety yet still retaining the crisp edges to the glass. The blue glass flickers when you walk around the marina edge as each small piece catches the light one after the other. The design rationale for using blue glass was “to relate to the water and have something different because we did want to make the marina, quite a focus. Therefore it cost a bit more money and that paving cost a lot more money than paving elsewhere” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:21).

The slabs are precisely laid, their pattern broken only by the surrounding black brick border. It feels more expensive than standard grey concrete slabs, and the feeling of the glass heightens the underfoot-tactile experiences. Despite this the paving isn’t a pleasant tactile experience when you touch it with hands. It feels coarse, at odds with the more pleasant experience of walking over the slabs. The glass therefore acts as two surfaces; one that is visually attractive, yet at the same time is a rough tactile experience.

The materialities of the marina sought to bring character through the inclusion of blue glass in the paving blocks which was an attempt to bring the canal into GUV, and the civic and residential areas beyond. The sizing of the product is the largest flag paving within GUV, and is 400mm by 400mm to give the dimension of increased space which is also the rationale behind the light colouring of the paving. This provides the marina with a light and open feel, enabling interaction.

### *Granite Benches*



**Figure 5.17** Granite benches in Engineers wharf, with boat shaped design to reflect location next to water (Author’s photo)

A series of granite benches were commissioned for the marina area, and by virtue of their shape were designed to reflect the influence of the canal in this area. Rather than leaving the benches as a block, the bottom of the bench is tapered to create a boat shape and dissipate the heavy look that a rectangle would bring, as shown in figure 5.17. For longevity, granite was selected as the material for the benches, rather than concrete or timber. The use of granite also brings a greater sensory experience than concrete. On the top, the granite is smooth and polished, you can easily glide your hand over the bench without friction. The sides are rough by contrast and create an interesting juxtaposition between the two surfaces. The use of granite however also feels cold. The smooth surface and the light grey colour create an almost uninviting sensory experience. Even small flecks of stone in the rough edges, and the delicate pattern of the polished granite can't overcome this. Granite was used, according to Susanna:

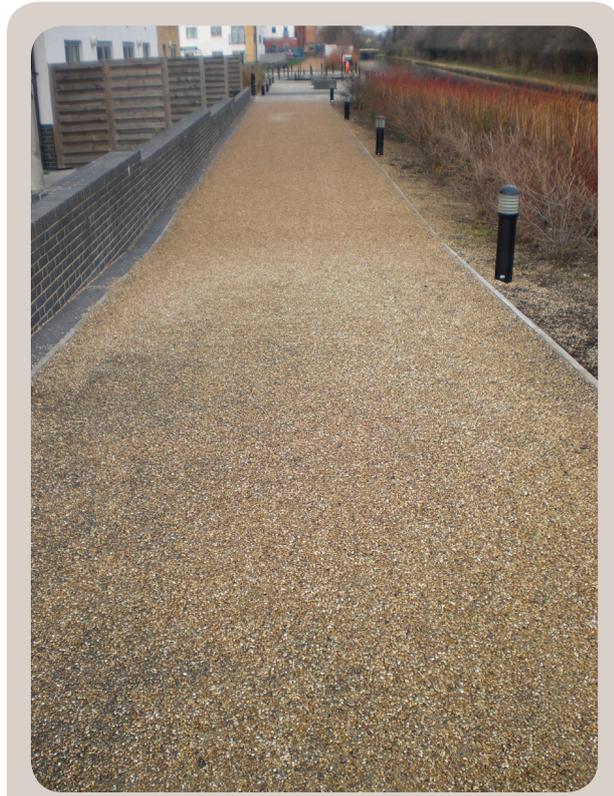
*“For its durability, and its aesthetics but it's also a very cheap and robust material to use compared to concrete or timber. But where we used timber benches it was trying to be slightly softer, but we wanted something very robust so it was as much about management and sustainability in the future so we didn't have to keep on coming along and treating wood, or replacing things and granite are going to be difficult for anyone to shift!”*

(Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:23).

Therefore the after-life of the materials and how they would be maintained was considered, as well as how they would be experienced. Susanna alludes to the threat of theft of the benches, which is eradicated by the heaviness of the material.

### **Gravel**

Figure 5.18 shows that gravel was used within the development along the bridle paths that runs north to south of the canal. The use of gravel was born of a desire for a natural edge to the canal, and to soften the effect of the housing on the canal. In addition to gravel there are timber terraces and decking along the canal path. No granite or other hard landscaping is used along the bridleway. The use of gravel is also rooted in the sensory qualities that the product brings. Flats are located on the ground floor of the phases 11 and 6 which line the canal, and their front doors are located two metres from the bridleway. The sound of gravel underfoot creates an aural experience for users of the bridleway, but also provides an aural warning for those that live in the ground floor flats.



**Figure 5.18** Gravel Bridleway to the east of GUV used to provide a soft edge and aural experience (Author's photo)

The underfoot sound is the most profound aural experience of materials in GUV. The crunching and crushing of the small stones is a delight and echoes along the canal. Every few steps a stone flies forward before coming to rest a few metres in front of your feet. Gravel is as much a pleasant sensory experience when touched with hands as it is when walked on. You can pick the small brown and grey stones up, running them through your hands as they return to the ground, making a subtle crashing noise as they hit other gravel stones. The individual stone is varied, some are precise by their polished and rounded effect, others are more coarse and firm to the touch. The gravel sits at odds with other materials, due to its kinaesthetic nature. You can interact with gravel more than other materials. You can't move the paving slabs or benches, you can't kick them along or feel the materials as they pass through your fingers.

Figure 5.19 describes the characteristics of the remaining materials used in GUV. These properties were taken from the Charcon website with details of size, colour and texture of the materials. The sensory qualities of the materials are not described on their website although this is a theme that emerged in interviews with the design team. The characteristics of the materials, including their sensory properties and how this interacts with ideas about place and experience examined in the previous two sections of this chapter are now examined.

***Malvern flag paving***

- “Colour, texture and size range complement existing landscapes or can create features in their own right”.
- Available in ground and textured finished.
- Available in grey and cream tones.
- “Acknowledged as the highest quality paving range available”.
- 400mm by 400 mm size.

***Granite Setts***

- Suitable for pedestrian areas and vehicular use.
- Textured finish.
- Available in grey shades.
- Can be laid in random patterns or to delineate areas.
- Small sizing from 100mm by 100mm, to 250 mm by 100mm.

***Woburn Rumbled***

- Suitable for use in residential areas.
- Subtle changes in shades between blocks. Available in rustic, autumn and graphite colours.
- Reminiscent of traditional sandstone setts.
- Range of sizes to “accommodate large scale formal space to more intimate areas”
- Can be laid in random patterns and to delineate areas.
- Rumbled edges which means the product has been made to look weathered or rustic through a machine wearing down the edges of the brick.
- Suitable for pedestrian areas.
- Smooth and ground finish

**Figure 5.19** Technical description of materials used in GUV, with descriptions taken from Charcon the material supplier for the development (redrawn from Charcon, 2008)

#### ***5.4.5 Sensory qualities of materials***

##### ***Size***

The sizing of block paving has a profound impact on the experience of a place, and affects the sense of space of an area. In terms of GUV an attempt was made to contrast the public areas from the residential areas. The size of the paving blocks changes in the same way that

the texture of the materials changed between differing areas. In the public areas these are 400mm by 400mm with the size reducing down as you move into the residential areas. This decision was made to give a greater feeling of space in the public areas, provided by wider areas of larger paving. In the residential and more private areas the smaller paving gives a sense of enclosure supporting the aims of the HZ and encouraging interaction between the housing and thus a sense of community.

### *Colour*

As explored earlier in this chapter the experience of place was affected by the colour of a material. There was a clear attempt to use a lighter palette of materials in the public areas, and a warmer palette of materials in the residential areas. In the outline planning application, the design of the “streetscape [was seen as] essential to the success and viability of the whole development and of the spaces with which they connect. The hierarchy of quality materials will develop the sense of place. Subtle variations in detail, colour and texture will provide distinct identities whilst utilising a family of materials, recognisable throughout the development” (JTP, 2002:12).

Within each of the HZs there were differences between the colours of the rumbled brickwork. The experience of residents was designed so “they [would] look and say it’s a warm brick, hence the Woburn which is a nice warm colour. It’s got that warm feeling about it. Over here it’s a large functioning square so I can use the grey or cream” (David Collyer, Charcon, interview, 2009:21). The way in which David describes colour can be linked back to Susanna’s comments explored in the first section about the desire to connect places in a subtle way. The use of warm tones in residential areas feeds into the civic square at the central lozenge which in turn links to the marina area. Colour is therefore important in the process of creating and connecting places.

David stated that the overall aim for GUV was to create “an upmarket area but I don’t want grey” (David Collyer, Charcon, interview, 2009:18). There was a move away from the large grey slabs which can be found in the surrounding estates and indeed across much of the country. Instead the materialities of GUV consist of subtle changes in colour throughout the development where no HZ is alike and the public space is marked by subtle changes in paving type and colour.

### *Haptic*

The textural qualities of materials have been used to give a distinction between differing areas of GUV. In the civic spaces around Engineers Wharf, outside the community facilities and through the central lozenge a sharp edged and smooth block paving have been used to

mark that space as a formal and public area. The “prestigious ground effect” used on the block paving in this area gives a civic feel, unlike other areas of the development (Charcon Aggregates, 2008). In the residential HZs the rumbled paving has been used to give the material an “oldy-woldy” feel where the softer edges of the product make the materials and therefore the landscape feel more rustic (figure 5.20). The rumbled and worn effect put on the brickwork gives the HZs a sense of definition distinguishing them from other HZs and the rest of the development.



**Figure 5.20** Woburn rumbled paving (Author's photo)

Therefore the texture of a paving block or brick can be used to highlight or mark out a certain area and define its usage. This is achieved not only through the ways in which a brick is treated once it has been made, for example through a rumbled effect but also at the manufacturing stage of the brick. For instance the aggregates put into a slab or brick have a huge impact on its colour but also the textural qualities that are felt underfoot. In *Experiencing Architecture* Rasmussen talks about how the rumbled effect of cobblestones is “firm and pleasant to the touch, smooth and definitive in form, absolutely precise in textural effect” (Rasmussen, 1962:174). Figure 5.21 shows the use of pebbles within concrete to discourage pedestrian use of one area of the development. Within GUV the desire was for the tactile characteristics of the product to aid sensory experience of the city (figure 5.22). Returning again to Rasmussen’s work, this is achieved through “two surfaces [which] are seen at the same time: an outer reflecting one and a rough inner one” (Rasmussen, 1962:175). In GUV there is juxtaposition between smooth polish surfaces and textured rumbled materials.



**Figure 5.21** Tactile paving used to discourage pedestrians taking a certain route (Author's photo)



**Figure 5.22** Tactile granite setts designed to discourage car parking (Author's photo)

Design decisions were made by the landscape architect in relation to the finish of each product. Decisions were based on whether a ground or polished finish would look and feel better in one area, and a rough aggregated finish would look better in other areas. These decisions were also made based on the architectural style in which the materials sit. As such a textured finish was chosen for the civic areas, giving the space a formal feel. As you move

through to the marina area this becomes more prominent due to the slip resistant properties of the paving when placed near the waters edge. In the residential areas much of the paving was ground down to give the HZs a softer feel.

### *Aural*

Rasmussen posed the question “can architecture be heard? Most people would probably say that as architecture does not produce sound it cannot be heard” (Rasmussen, 1962:224). However he acknowledges the fact that “differently shaped rooms and different materials reverberate differently...architecture is certainly heard” (Rasmussen, 1962:224). Therefore the materiality and design of a development has an impact on aural understandings of place. Rasmussen uses the example of a tunnel where “your ear receives the impact of both the length and the cylindrical form of the tunnel” (Rasmussen, 1962:225). This example can be extended to GUV where your ear receives both the layout and the form of the marina, and the sound over water and the reverberations of noise on the surrounding buildings create distinct experiences of the built environment.

Earlier this section explored the use of gravel on the canal bridleway and how this material was used partly for its aural properties. In addition to the use of gravel soft landscaping was used for its aural characteristics. Within the marina, planting around the edges of the basin seeks to absorb the noise that travels and reverberates around the basin. By virtue of its design with high-density buildings surrounding the marina on three sides, noise echoes around this part of the development. Chapter 7 explores the role of noise within the marina and its impact upon peoples’ experience of place, particularly those living within the canal basin such as the canal boat owners.

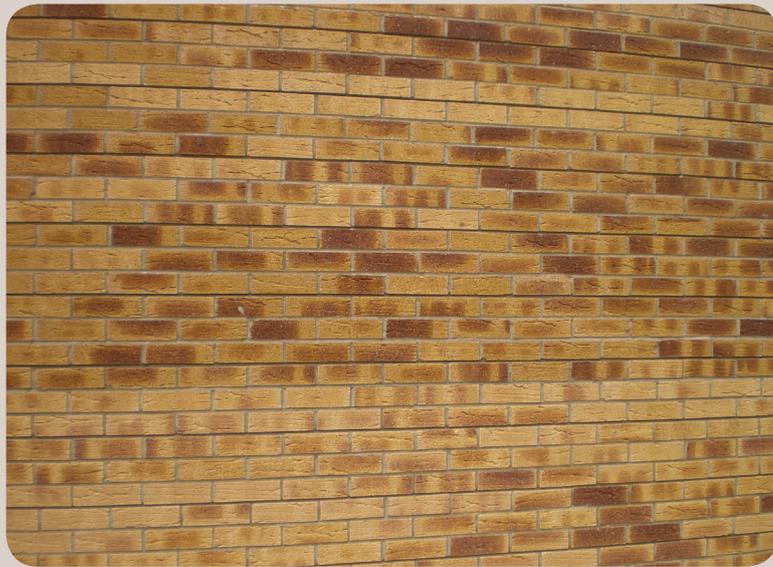
Despite the desire to alleviate the levels of noise within the canal basin, the aural properties of water “stimulates play” and “the sound and motion of the water and breezes stimulate the senses” (Stevens, 2006:809). Stevens explores experiences of the built environment and how the sensory qualities of the river, such as noise, can aid play. Chapter 7 develops Steven’s framework analysing the sensory experiences of the built environment and the relationship between design and the lived experience of place.

### *Visual*

According to landscape architect Susanna, “visual and aesthetic factors always influence design, that is what it is” (Susanna Livingstone, Allen Pyke, interview, 2008:30). Existing studies of the urban environment focus on visual experiences of the city, however my research moves beyond the visual experience of place to new understandings of the city, through aural and tactile experiences, whilst recognising the importance of retaining a sense

of the visual elements of urban design. Section 5.3 used the example of shared surfaces to examine how focusing on visual experiences can inhibit the experience of the city for those that are visually impaired. If design is an aesthetic endeavour however, then to neglect it from studies of the built environment would lead to partial understandings of the experience of the city.

The visual presence of brickwork Rasmussen states “should not only form the larger percentage of the wall surface but its material and colour should dominate; it should appear coarser and stronger than the filling” (Rasmussen, 1962:185). Within the design of GUV small breaks in the brickwork were included to provide visual interest from the monotony of the brickwork, as shown in figure 5.23. Ryan said this was “because the palette of what you can do is very limited and TW said ‘do we need that?’, and we said ‘yeah if the workmanship is good it will look nice and crisp and good. As architects we often don’t get much control on the materials because the housing developer knows better, because it is cheaper and he will find a brick that looks the same in his eyes” (Ryan Dixon, BM, interview, 2009:5).



**Figure 5.23** Detailing in brickwork in Ballinger Way Home Zone seeking to provide a visual break in the brickwork (Author’s photo)

Therefore the materials that were used underwent a process of value engineering, and the only way to preserve the desired visual effect was to include detailing that broke up the brickwork and created interest and vibrancy. There were however some parts of the development that were allowed to be prestige in the materials that were used, particularly the canal basin and HZs.

There was a belief amongst members of the design team that the materials used in GUV were better than those used on a normal housing estate. One TW employee stated that “if you look round at the quality of the slab paving, it is not the normal grey slab there is some

real good quality paving out there. I hope they really appreciate it ((laughs)) especially those that live here” (Connor Nesbitt, TW, interview, 2009). Chapter 7 explores the experiences of residents and their interaction with the built environment, in particular how they have appropriated some materials, and how these practices transgress from the design intentions.

Whilst there was a belief that the materials used within GUV were high quality, in addition to value engineering there were also limits placed on the materials that could be used by the local Boroughs. As a result of council policies, high quality materials needed to be used in areas of the development that weren’t going to be adopted by the LBE or LBH.

The key area in which high quality materials were used was in Engineers Wharf and the retail hub. “If you look round the marina area, the very expensive materials have been chosen for that” said one of the managers at TW (Richard Pelham, TW, interview, 2009). As the centre of GUV, UV rhetoric states that it should be “constructed to the highest standards”. The use of blue glass flag paving and granite benches in this area also reflects this need to mark this area as the centre of the Village. It also seeks to generate place through the use of materials.

## Conclusions

Experiences of place, and attachment to place were incorporated into GUV as part of the design process. Whilst a design code would have helped transition the development from Vision to reality, attempts to generate place were based on three approaches. First, the creation of a central hub to the Village, Engineers Wharf was designed to generate character through the creation of an environment in which people would congregate.

Establishing the basin as a hub should be seen as part of TW’s attempt to define GUV as a ‘destination’. GUV in this sense was a place to gather. Furthermore TW’s use of a dichotomy between GUV as a place and surrounding suburbs as placeless, links to Karen Till’s work on Rancho Santo Margarita (Till, 1993). Till argued that a sense of place was created in this neo-traditional development by appealing to “invented histories” and the creation of the ‘other’ from which the development derives its identity. GUV was marketed as something new and different from the ‘other’ that lives in the suburbs. In this way TW’s utilising of the notion of placeless mirrors that of Augé’s non-places which are marked by transience and a lack of community (Augé, 1995). TW however appealed to a GUV ‘city-life’ by designing spaces such as the HZs and canal basin that encouraged people to live alongside one another with a shared experience of public space (Young, 1990).

The design of community and interaction within GUV was based on the micro-geographies of community building. Localised public spaces, parks and areas to sit seek to bring people together. Residents’ experiences of Engineers Wharf were designed through spaces such

as the granite benches, the interaction with water, and a shared investment in the Wharf as a place to be proud of. Chapter 7 explores experiences of the built environment within GUV, including residents' experiences of Engineers Wharf. In spite of design rhetoric which argued that experience was the key driver behind the development of the marina, there were also financial benefits to building the canal for TW. Furthermore, experiences of the canal basin have been compromised by the lack of frontages and mixed-use. This led to local MP Michael Collins questioning whether the marina really is the 'heart' of the Village and how "the marina is a completely separate part of the development" (Michael Collins, MP, interview, 2009:5).

The second approach was to strive to enforce the experiential qualities of the city. The HZ environment is a call for a closer interaction between people and the built environment. These environments are based on increased sensory experiences of the city, in particular a kinaesthesia sense. Movement in GUV is predicated on prioritising the social effects of walking. HZs seek to give the street back to pedestrians as a way of making both driving and walking a more sensory experience. The street therefore acts as a public space in which strangers can interact. These environments are designed to generate a sense of community through appeals to Jacob's notion of 'eyes on the street'. Whilst it was the contention of section 5.3 that this type of informal surveillance has worked well at GUV, it could be argued that the overall experience of the HZs has been ruined by the numbers of cars parked in these areas of the Village.

Underlying both of these attempts to generate place and experience is the third approach, that of materiality. The materials used in GUV sought to aid placemaking and experience. Some materials, such as gravel, were included for their sensory qualities and the desire to have noise in some areas of the Village, yet remove it in other areas. The materials underwent a process of value engineering, similar to that explored in the previous chapter. There were certain limits placed on the materials that could be used by the local Boroughs and TW. The development however, was allowed to be prestigious in certain areas, namely the key areas of public space such as Engineers Wharf and the HZs.

Chapters 4 and 5 explored Visions of the macro and micro environmental elements in the design of GUV. The following two chapters turn to explore how these design intentions translate when the development 'beds-in' and residents moved into GUV.



06

WALKING  
GUV

## Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 detailed the process through which a Vision emerged for the Village and how this was implemented from 1999 to 2011. This chapter examines the lived experience of GUV, presenting three walking interviews undertaken with residents.

These walking interviews conducted in June 2009, involved following residents on their daily route through the Village, and this chapter presents their narratives and interactions with place. Primarily it focuses on design detail and the ways in which GUV residents experience this. This in turn leads to a focus on the micro-geographies of GUV and the nuances of life within the Village. Utilising maps, 3D sketches and GPS coordinates recorded during the walk, experiences and views of the residents are linked back to the locations where they were expressed, to retain the connection between the interviews and the built environment and 'place' these narratives.

As explained in chapter 3, walking interviews are an under-utilised and innovative methodology that allows us to understand participants' experiences and understandings of place. The research in this chapter emerges from growing interest in mobilities and movement within geography as advocated by Sheller and Urry (Sheller and Urry, 2006). This type of research has its roots in the work of Hagerstrand and his notion of 'time geography' (Hagerstrand, 1970). In this work, Hagerstrand mapped the routes taken by public space users over a set period of time, producing maps and graphs that reflected this use. However, this reduces experiences of place to a set of numbers and graphs, thus losing accounts of what residents feel about their experience of the built environment. This thesis moves beyond this scientific output. Whilst it retains the geographic and 'placed' element of Hagerstrand's work, it also seeks to offer the rich narratives of residents' lives in three walking tours.

Each interview focuses on one part of the Village, yet speaks to broader issues in the design and experiences of the Vision. The first interview is with a boating resident, and is centred on the canal basin (see figure 6.1). The second interview focuses on public space within GUV and how residents use this. The final interview explores the employment and mixed-use elements of the Village.

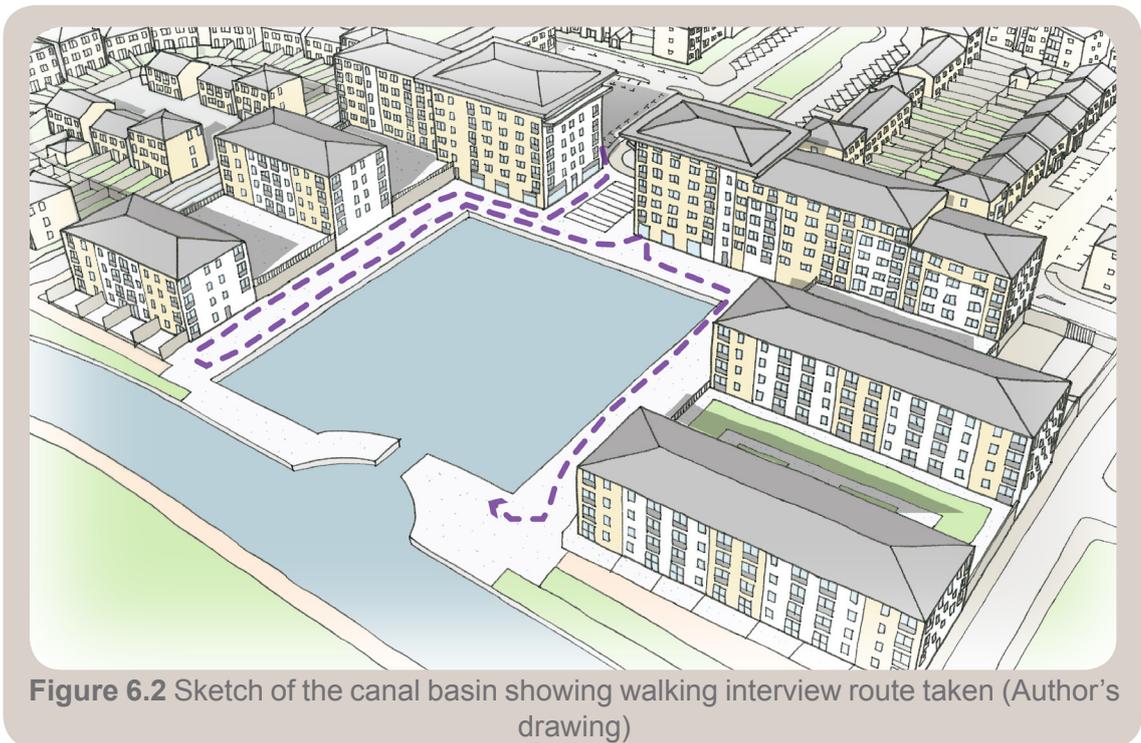


Figure 6.1 Map showing the route taken in walking interviews (Author's drawing)

### 6.1 A walking interview with Jennifer Eames, boating resident, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009

My first walking interview took place in June 2009. I wait outside the CDT facilities, the location I often meet participants before interviews (GPS position: TQ12478 82439). The building is a rather unremarkable three-storey brown brick structure and aside from the small parade of shops indistinguishable from other buildings in GUV. The facilities are located at the 'heart' of the Village above a small Costcutter convenience store and hairdressers. The halal butcher's shop (an indication of the ethnically diverse population of GUV and the wider area) and dry cleaners are both closed despite it being 11am. Their harsh dark

blue shutters contrast with the welcoming entrance to the convenience store. Next to this is a small nursery, and I can hear, as I often can in this area of the development, the noise of small children playing which reverberates around the space and gives it a sense of use. Occasionally someone passes me and enters the Costcutter and emerges with a paper or small grocery item. The sound from the Costcutter spills outside onto the pavement and I can see a shop worker joking with a fellow Asian man, both are in their 30s. The customer emerges shortly after and walks towards the north of the development.



Whilst the sky is overcast and the weather not as hot as it has been in the preceding days the sun pierces through the marina area to the rest of GUV. Jennifer, a middle aged white women dressed in a brown t-shirt and light blue jeans approaches me and after exchanging formalities we begin our interview. Jennifer lives on one of the twenty-two moored narrowboats in the marina of GUV and we begin by discussing why she chose to live here:

*AN How long have you lived in GUV?*

*JE Just over a year.*

*AN And do you like living on the development?*

*JE Yes it is very nice, I chose the marina and the Village came with it. It was quite a surprise and it has been very nice but there are always some snags.*

*AN What was it that drew you to GUV?*

*JE The location was one of the things because when my office moved I thought I was going to have to commute from West London, so this was a good choice and I wanted a secure marina and this is the most modern. I wouldn't say luxurious but the most featureful. I am speaking from the point of view of a boater rather than a resident although I'm a member of the safer neighbourhoods group. One of the key things for boaters is having your electricity, water and phone, and a pump out because we have to pump out our toilets and if you don't have one of these on site you have to go elsewhere. So the marina functionality was one of the main things, but having moved here I've got to like it because it is developing into quite a community.*

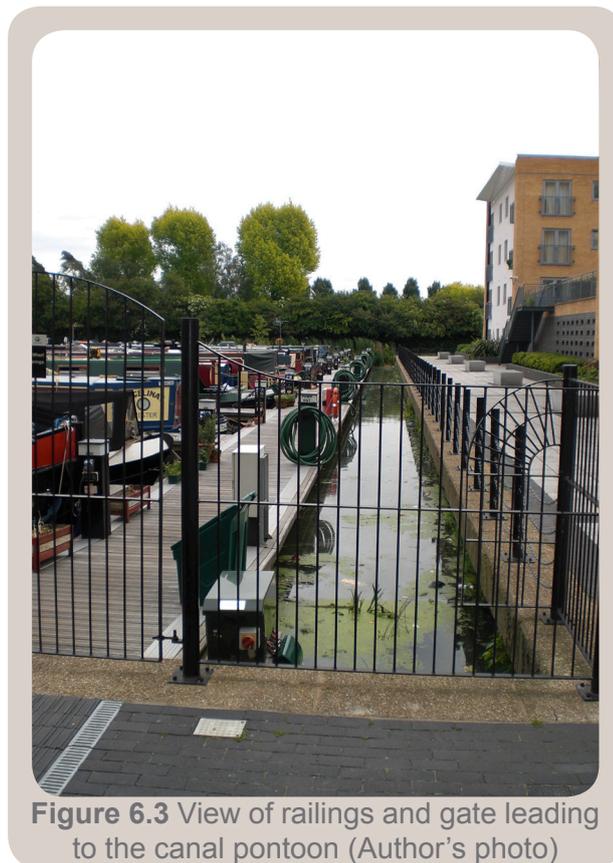
(Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.03am, central lozenge, TQ12516 82471)



When you first walk round the canal basin, the facilities required by residents living on the boats is furthest from your mind because you immediately take in the colour and vibrancy of the boats. However it becomes apparent that under the surface of the visual pleasure that the boats bring is a small community dependent on facilities that can't be seen. I was keen to explore Jennifer's interaction with the marina further and we walk slowly towards the basin which is a short walk away. We pass the nursery which is an impenetrable fortress of seven-foot high black steel fencing designed to keep people out. Inside is a different story and I can

hear the children singing from their classroom, a pleasant sound that echoes out onto the streets, but drowned out all too quickly by the sound of construction. At the entrance to the marina, builders are drilling to make way for the Greenford Broadway Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) offices which will be on site.

The entrance to the marina is through the middle of two, seven-storey blocks which rise out of the development and are the tallest in the Village. The mixture of brown brick and white render are found throughout the development yet are at their most impressive on these two blocks. We walk along the stepped slope made from light blue glass paving, perfectly laid and maintained and aesthetically pleasing. As we walk between the buildings the marina opens out in front of us. Directly facing us is a large blue sign with 'Engineers Wharf' emblazoned across the centre. As we briefly pause at the entrance to the marina I see all but two of the narrow boats are moored to our right (TQ12535 82472). The boats are an impressive sight, an eclectic mix of names, colours and personal possessions including a life size sculpture of a predator film character on one of the boats near the entrance.



**Figure 6.3** View of railings and gate leading to the canal pontoon (Author's photo)

In front of us are dark grey steel railings protecting people from the water. Behind these are three granite benches their pattern broken only by a row of trees, all nine-foot tall, perfectly spaced from one another, their dark green leaves blowing in the wind which sweeps over the canal towards us. To our left is a row of flowerbeds containing light green shrubs and darker green plants. The same can be said of the view to our right yet the shrubs are not as

pronounced. Along both sides of the marina are larger granite seats, set comfortably away from the waters edge so that people can wile away time.

The marina is a bright, spacious area because of the light brown brickwork used in this area. The sunlight enters through the only un-developed side of the marina which creates a bright naturally lit space, which despite being surrounded on three sides doesn't feel uncomfortable or overlooked. Nobody is in the marina area as we turn right, walking towards the section where most of the boats are moored. The sound of drilling punctuates this area and reverberates around the marina. As we walk slowly around the western entrance Jennifer explains her experiences of anti-social behaviour in the basin:

*“My boat is towards the far end. There are a few issues about this pontoon. When TW designed this with BW, they put a security gate but you can see that up the other end, you wouldn't think this, but the moat is jumpable by teenagers with attitude ((laughs)) or drunks with no fear. We sometimes get people on the pontoon, so up this end we've started to adopt a soft landscaping approach because we found that if we put window boxes on this edge they tend not to chance it because they are going to break an ankle”.*

(Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.08am, marina entrance, TQ12555 82441)



It is clear to see how people get onto the pontoon. As you approach from the entrance of the marina you are met with a seven-foot black steel fence with a gate to the pontoon which is an equally imposing sight, and with a clearly visible lock. As we walk round the marina this is replaced by a small-chained fence that stands three-foot tall, presumably to not ruin the aesthetics of the marina and create a barrier between the water and land. It is hard to believe that anybody would want to risk jumping the six-foot gap over the weed and algae filled part of the water to get to the pontoon, but maybe it is a personal challenge some teenagers and the intoxicated have.



**Figure 6.4** Distance between basin edge and canal boats  
(Author's photo)

We continue to walk towards the canal, and by this point the drilling has stopped and been replaced by the sound of birds singing. The quietness of the marina has always struck me. Despite being located south of the busy Ruislip Road and east of Broadmead Road hardly any noise reaches the marina because of the seven-storey blocks which surround it. As we walk around the canal basin, the subject of the surrounding flats emerges:

*AN* Do you like the housing that surrounds you?

*JE* I think the housing is quite good but there are issues about noise. Noise across water travels extraordinarily so we have discussions at some of the meetings, they're not about today but there are a few children who call across all the time to get peoples' attention and that can get really annoying. But the design is fairly trouble free [A young Asian child calls out from the balcony] Oh they've started now, they'll probably start screeching at us in a minute. There are some issues about the parking vent which I suppose are there for reasons like letting out the fumes, plus vision, so people can be seen moving about, but they provide a nice climbing frame and children climb up the outside of the car park. That wasn't thought about. Even if it has anti-climb paint I can tell you it doesn't work ((laughs)). In the summer that is festooned with children.

(Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.13am, southern canal basin path, TQ12575 82441)

The noise of children screeching is something that I had not experienced in this part of the development. In Apprentice Gardens I had sometimes been greeted by the noise of a toddler calling from the balcony of the flat they lived in, but up to now the marina had seemed quiet in comparison. On this occasion the child is slightly older, about four years

of age. She shouts for a minute and returns to the living room of the flat. I wonder if this primarily occurs during the summer months when people have their balcony doors open allowing for noise to leave their flats easier and penetrate the surrounding tranquillity.

The issue of how noise carries over water is important to the residents of this area of GUV, and Jennifer seems perturbed by the noise made by a small Asian child who squeezes a toy whilst being pushed by his mother who is elegantly dressed in a brightly coloured sari. The sound of the pushchair dissipates as the mother and her child move towards the exit of the marina and Jennifer and I walk alongside the narrow boats back towards the entrance of the pontoon (TQ12613 82442).



**Figure 6.5** Sketch showing view from the canal edge west towards the entrance to the canal basin, and the poor frontages to the blocks (Author's drawing)

We walk past the ventilation ducts that Jennifer spoke of a couple of minutes beforehand, which are two bricks high and three wide. The walls are at least ten-foot tall, and on this side have a staircase leading up the side of the building to communal gardens above. On the other side of the development flowerbeds and trees protect the vents but on this southern side the beds and shrubs are smaller.

As Jennifer talks the young child again calls from the balcony prompting her to turn around. This draws her eye to the entrance of one of the smaller buildings that sits adjacent to the canal. Whilst built in the same architectural style and colour scheme as the larger blocks, it is less imposing because of its smaller size. The idea of providing active frontages onto the marina was a key part of its design and it is important how Jennifer considers this to be the back of the building when there is no distinguishable feature from the other entrance to the flats.



**Figure 6.6** Pump out facilities outside of the restaurant  
(Author's photo)

We continue to walk along the side of the marina and Jennifer stops near a small black brick shed, making it stand out from the white flag paving used for the path of the marina and the brown brick of the flats. The shed is attached to the side of the restaurant, and has a locked black metal door on the front. In passing I thought this was a small rubbish disposal shed, but it becomes apparent that this is more than that:

*AN Are the materials an adequate quality for what you need it to be?*

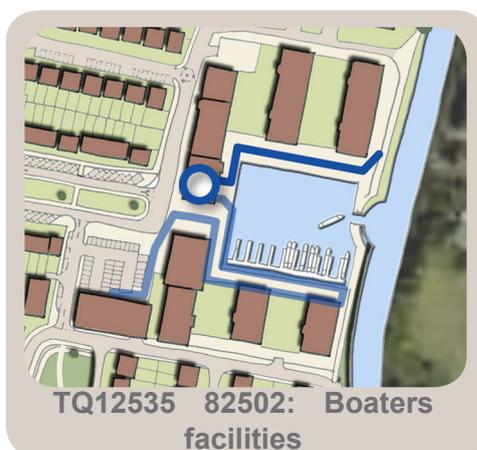
*JE Yes. Although we had a hard winter and lost our water supply because it froze. The pontoon is the responsibility of BW and there is a bit of an issue at the moment about the pump out. Do you see that little black shed straight ahead of us?*

*AN The one outside the restaurant?*

*JE Yes. When we pump out there's been some badly designed drainage in there so we're asked not to pump out, when the restaurant is open, because there becomes a bit of a smell. It is to do with the installation and it doesn't smell all the way down there, but something has gone wrong with the TW build for the drains and BW and the estates people are in discussion about how they are going to fix that. There should also be a heat lining, like a little electric blanket that has a heat sensor on the waterline that runs under the pontoon but there isn't so we ran out of water for a couple of days over the period which is not good.*

(Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.19am, Blue Green restaurant, TQ12536 82441)

Occasionally a call from the child pierces the marina and echoes around us bouncing off the buildings. The design of the marina means that sounds echoes around until it moves over the canal and the fields beyond. We continue past the entrance to the marina and stand outside the boating facilities. I ask if Jennifer believes the marina is well used, especially given the fact that we have just discussed how the smells of this area would put people off using this space for anything other than a cut through. I have often sat in the marina for periods of 20 minutes without seeing anyone else. She says without faltering that “*Yeab, there will be people coming round and people walking their dogs. It is a bit early and not as warm as it was yesterday but people sit out on these benches which are quite well used*” (Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.21am, entrance to marina basin, TQ12555 82472). The benches are the grey granite seats designed for users of the marina to sit and look out over the water. Despite the weather we are the only two people in the marina at this time.



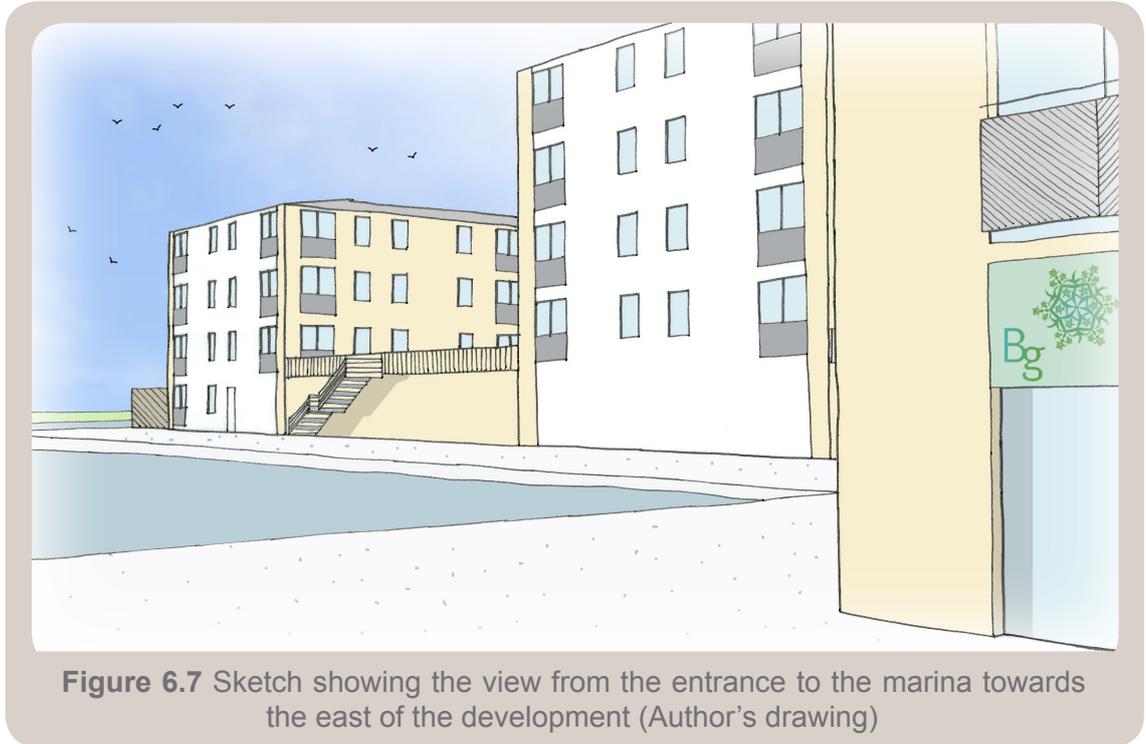
Jennifer asks if I would like to look around the boaters’ facilities provided by BW. We enter the building through a glass door, either side of which are 24 black mailboxes, aligned perfectly and each bearing the berth number of their owner. We walk into the reception area which is decorated with pale cream painted walls and similar tiles underfoot:

**JE** *All boaters have a key to this. We have wet rooms, showers, loos and a laundry room. The other thing is that BW are not the ones that decide whether a mooring should be residential or not. That is down to the local authority and when this was discussed between BW and the LBE, BW bet to themselves that out of 24 spaces, they would be given 12 and the rest would be leisure or visitor moorings. For visitor moorings you charge for an overnight stay, so they needed an office. They built this but it has never been occupied because to their surprise LBE wanted them all to be residential moorings. [We walk into another room] This is our locker room. Sorry it is so warm but they keep the heating on in the whole building. We all have a locker, and the reason this is full of bikes, is that the bicycles are safer in here under the boaters key than being in the car park. This is a bone of contention, I can barely open my locker because of people parked in front of it. But this is all part and parcel of our life.*

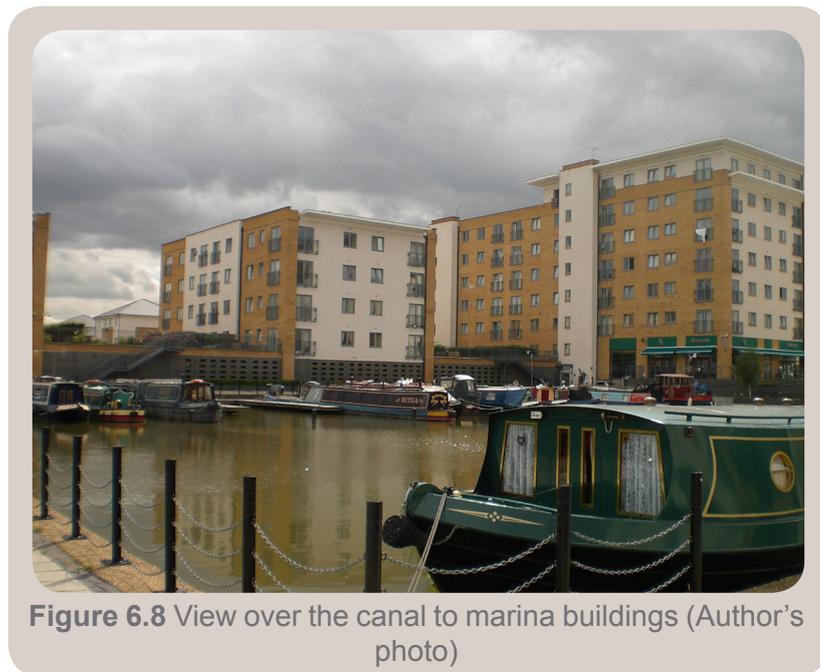
*AN* Would you get these types of facilities in another development?

*JE* No, not discounted anyway.

(Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.27am, boaters' facilities, TQ12535 82502)



**Figure 6.7** Sketch showing the view from the entrance to the marina towards the east of the development (Author's drawing)



**Figure 6.8** View over the canal to marina buildings (Author's photo)

Shortly after this we leave the facilities and walk to the northern half of the marina, where there are only two boats, and unlike the other side, no fences. I ask Jennifer if she believes railings are needed at this point, to which she says *“it is adequate at the moment but there are issues about falling in. I am the only person who has ever fallen in the marina, on the coldest night of the year and we are in discussion with them about getting some ladders because of safety...I think fences are a mixed blessing, you do need them on the danger points round there but it ruins the amenity if you have them all the way round”* (Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.31am, northern path of canal basin, TQ12573 82503).

By this time the child has disappeared from her flat and the only noise comes from the birds which fly overhead. We walk towards the canal entrance and behind us hear the door to Hertford House slam shut. In this area the blue flag paving is less maintained with small plants and weeds emerging from the gaps in the flagstone. Given that these flagstones were a key feature of the design of GUV we talk about their upkeep:

*“The only thing about these nice, white grey slabs is they very quickly start to look scruffy if they are not clean. Some of them already have. It means killing these plants but it is the only way to maintain their aesthetic. But I think they look quite nice. I didn’t realise they had blue glass in. I see that now you mention it, and the grey I think is quite nice. I think the marina from the boaters’ perspective is very pleasing”.*

(Jennifer Eames, walking interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009, 11.33am, northern exit to marina, TQ12631 82505)



## 6.2 A walking interview with Brandon Wilson, GUV resident (private tenant), 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009

I approach Brandon’s house on Ballinger Way from the south of the development and walk over the red rumbled paving to get to the house (TQ12344 82405). To the right of me two cars are parked next to the black railings that surround the communal green space at the centre of the two crescents of terraced housing that make up Ballinger Way. It is 11.30am

and a warm sunny day, and there are a couple of young children playing on the grass, their laughter reverberates around the crescent. This part of the street has been designed as a HZ with no distinction between the road and path. I approach Brandon's house and ring the doorbell. The house is three-storeys high, a mix of yellowy-brown brickwork and white render. The bottom floor is the location for the garage, outside of which sits Brandon's car, a large 4x4. Located above me is a double balcony with a smaller window next to this. On the top floor are two large windows, separated from the lower levels by a row of single black brick that runs the length of the terrace.



As I wait for the door to open, I look left and see a small area of plants and a six-foot high tree that sits between Brandon's house and his neighbours. This is a small front garden that they share. Although only a small patch of green, these spaces add something to the frontages of the housing and when there are cars parked outside the garages they subdue some of the harsh aesthetics of the cars and the stark white garage doors. Brandon opens the door, and after a brief introduction we leave the house and walk east towards the open space at the south of the development.

Today I am accompanying Brandon as he takes his dog for a walk around GUV. This is a journey he makes twice a day due to the large size of his dog which needs regular exercise. As an academic he often works from home and therefore sees the development at all times of the day on his walks around the Village. I let Brandon lead the route and we begin by talking about his move to GUV:

**AN** *To start, how long you have lived in GUV?*

**BW** *Just a year. We purchased the house last summer, but it was the longest purchase in history.*

**AN** *What was it that drew you here as a place to live?*

**BW** *Part of it was the location because it is close to the A40 and I work in High Wycombe. My partner works in inner city but is moving to work outside of London so that is quite helpful.*

**AN** *Does your partner commute by public transport?*

**BW** *No, he drives in.*

**AN** *Is that because of the public transport links from here?*

**BW** *That's part of it. The other reason we brought it was because we were planning on getting her [the dog] and it's quite close to a couple of things that we could take her too. I work from home, so it's easier for me to be able to manage having her. She takes quite a bit of time! We have to take her out a couple of times a day and I get bored with places I can't go walking. One of the good things about GUV is the location to the canal and a couple of the parks round here.*

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.32am, Ballinger Way, TQ12344 82405)



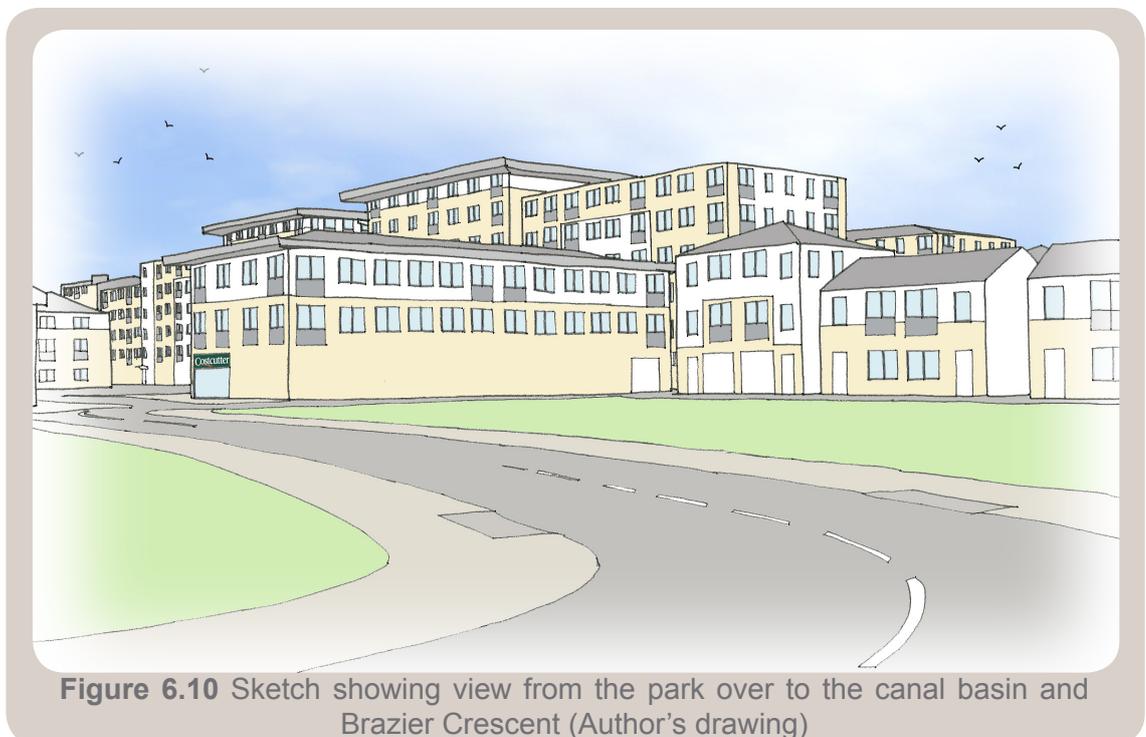
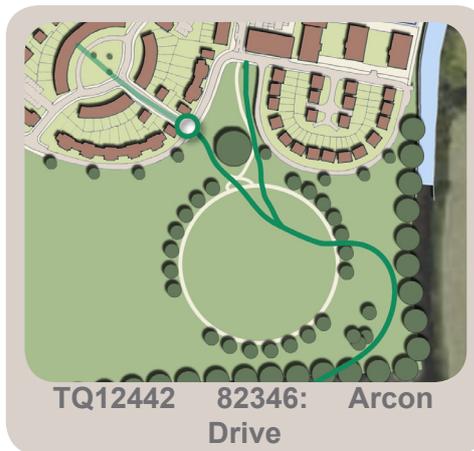
**Figure 6.9** View of Ballinger Way park and play area (Author's photo)

As we walk over the cream block paving at the centre of the grassed park and play area, the noise of cars from the Broadmead Road pierces the silence. The children have now gone back into their house and there is no one else on the street. We walk up three steps and between the break in the crescent. At this point the entrance to the park comes into view and we walk the 30 metres towards it discussing the role of the open space and its importance to Brandon and his partner. Primarily this use rests on the need to walk their dog, but also

provides the benefit of social activities and gathering spaces for Brandon and his neighbours:

*“We use the green spaces but the children’s areas we don’t use because we don’t have any kids. She gets so much attention that there is no point because when we try to come through, people stop and want to pet her. By background I’m a social work manager, so when we came to look at this area I said I wouldn’t live here because there were too many kids. I felt all I’d be doing is working. I have since moved into academia, but during the school year you don’t notice it as much. During half term it is quite busy with kids. The kids are pretty well behaved so they wouldn’t be the type of kids I’d have to take into care anyway!”*

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.36am, Arcon Drive, TQ12442 82346)



By this point we are now approaching the entrance to the park. Either side of us are two identical houses, the largest in GUV. They are five bedroom houses and both have large gates surrounding their front gardens. Such is the preoccupation with security in these houses that the house to our left has a white CCTV camera above the front door. As we cross the road at Arcon Drive, the development opens up in front of us. The road we walked along was narrow and confined, but now there is a vast expanse of space to our left and right. To our left is the back of the CDT building. Across the park and directly in front of us is Brazier Crescent, a street of large semi-detached townhouses. These are of an identical style and appearance to Brandon's house yet on a larger scale. Their beige brickwork and white render seems more imposing than the housing we have come through, and for the first time I notice the grey tiling on their roofs.

Blocking our view to Brazier Crescent is the largest play area in GUV, located on the northern tip of the park and overlooked by the houses on Arcon Drive, Brazier Crescent and the CDT. The play area is impressive in its size and play equipment, yet at present there are no children using the park. Brandon says his *"neighbours are pretty good with the open space in front of the houses, it is quite good to let children out there so that they can play and still be looked at by their parents"* (Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.39am, Entrance to play area, TQ12480 82378).

Brandon leads me through the gate in the black metal railings that surround the park and the play area. The gate creaks as it opens and slams shut behind us. To our right are seven-foot high temporary grey metal railings, placed into concrete bases in the ground and therefore easily moved. Three of the fences have been pushed over, either by the wind or by someone wishing to gain access to the large mound of soil dumped during remediation works for the site:

*"This is our normal route. One of the drawbacks is it looks like there is still development going on. It's inconsistent about the way that they are keeping it up, like the fences being knocked down you're not sure if you are supposed to go in there or not, some kids just tear them down and that's one of the issues. And there is no easy access to the canal so you have to go in through the park"*.

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.40am, park, TQ12462 82315)





**Figure 6.11** View of the temporary fences in the park some of which have been moved (Author's photo)

In the future it is envisioned that this will be opened up as an extension of the park. To our left is a large tree, bountiful in deep green leaves and dwarfing the three-storey housing either side of the park. We walk between the tree and the fence and I hear and feel the gravel stones crunch beneath my feet. As we walk further into the park we hear children shouting and laughing. Brandon and I look north towards the CDT facilities and see two teachers leading a line of 20 children around the development. They are about three years old walking and holding hands in pairs. I have often seen these children walking around the development during the day, who come from the Snowflakes day nursery & Montessori school next to the Costcutters. Many of the children are of Asian ethnicity, and they cross the road to avoid the cars parked on the pavement blocking their route:

*AN* How big an issue is car parking?

*BW* In the past it has been quite an issue. We have a spot that is out in front of our house, it's ours. We also have an internal garage that isn't big enough to fit a proper sized car, I mean an American sized car. That doesn't really work, I don't know anybody who uses it to put their car in because they're too small. People park in front of that play area, but there has been a few people letting their house out and if there are too many people there are too many cars. There was a speight a while ago of a lot of work vehicles, big transit vans. It is the kind of thing that neighbours get fused about, that if I was in the real world I wouldn't care but if you come home to it at the end of the day and the neighbours go 'he has got that bloody van parked out there', for whatever reason it seems to set everybody off. (Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.42am, Park, TQ12502 82164)

We are now walking across the edge of what was originally the cricket field, a circular patch of grass surrounded by a gravel pathway. However because of the location of Southall Cricket Club, and their resistance to move across the river to GUV to play cricket, this is now the main park of the development and is not used for any formal sporting activities. The park is a pleasant environment, and an escape, if residents want one, from the built development. Trees surround us on three sides, and TW has created an enclosed space by piling remediated soil around all edges of the park which has been grassed over and trees and bushes planted. Brandon walks through a small wooden gate, located in the gap in the mound of soil that encircles the park. As we continue walking along the side of the canal which is to our left, the sound of gravel crunching begins again, and I hear the clink of the gate as it shuts.



**Figure 6.12** View of the cricket pitch park (Author's photo)

We walk south, past the small wildlife reserve with overgrown vegetation and species of plants designed to encourage use of this space by different types of animals. I am keen to get Brandon's opinion on community life and how he feels about living in a neighbourhood especially given his American roots:

**AN** *Do you find that there is a good neighbourhood feel and interaction between people?*

**BW** *I come from the States originally and I never wanted to know my neighbours, that is a very uncomfortable thing for me to have to speak to people and where we lived before in a small flat complex, we didn't know our neighbours at all. Here the first day we moved in they all came out to greet us and asked us over for drinks so it is much more of a neighbourhood, [Brandon turns right onto another path] we'll go through here and I will show you what I mean with regards to open spaces. Have you been through here before?*

*AN Not this part.*

*BW We know our neighbours that are closest to us, that's the way it works and they're really nice and very polite. I have to say when we first moved here I was quite worried that we were moving out to suburbia and would they be homophobic, and would I have poof sprayed on the side of the car? The neighbours have been fantastic, really great. There can be sometimes a difficult mix of older children that either aren't in school or are off from school. But we don't tend to get any slack from them other than occasionally they [Brandon points to a small path] we'll go this way, ride a scooter that they are probably not supposed to be riding.*

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.44am, Wildlife area, TQ12560 82225)

Brandon turns right off the canal path and along a narrow space which is not a formal path but a desire line. This was not designed as a route through the south of the Village but has been created by the use of this as a pathway by residents and users of the Village. I follow Brandon along the path, and he must sense that I am intrigued by where he is going as he jokes that “*it looks like I am taking you back here as if I am going to kill you. You poor person you are probably terrified*” (Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.45am, canal path desire line, TQ12600 82164).



**Figure 6.13** Unplanned desire line path located away from the canal edge (Author's photo)



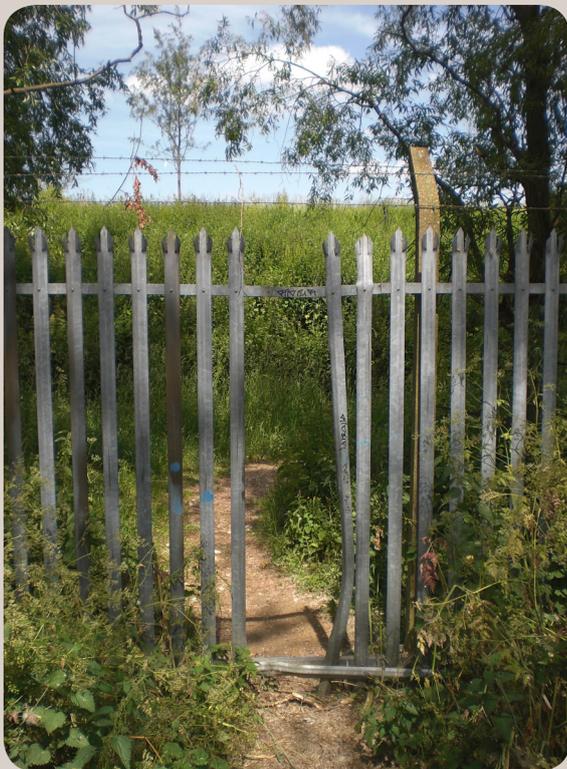
We continue along the path with bushes brushing against us. After a minute of walking I can see an eight-foot tall grey fence to our left. The fence is barely visible through the trees and bushes, however I see the sharp edges on top of the fence designed to keep people from climbing over it. As the path wound towards the fence I see Brandon walk through a gap that has been created by someone prising the metal bars apart. This has not been done by hand, and would have been done by someone with a metal bar to pull the bars apart. We stop on the other side of the fence and turn to look at the fence:

**BW** *This is something that has been done for as long as we've lived here and it isn't supposed to look like that. As you can see, everybody uses it as a route to get into these parks which is where most people take their dogs for a walk. Have you been here?*

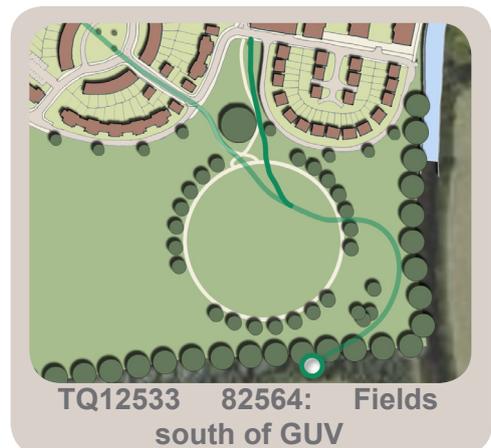
**AN** *I've walked around here, but I went back to the main road to get into GUV. I didn't realise this gap was here.*

**BW** *I have to say, it's great there is a route by which we don't have to go to the road, because there is a lot of foot traffic and she takes up half of the pavement anyway. But this is the space I wanted to show you.*

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.48am, Fields south of GUV, TQ12533 82564)



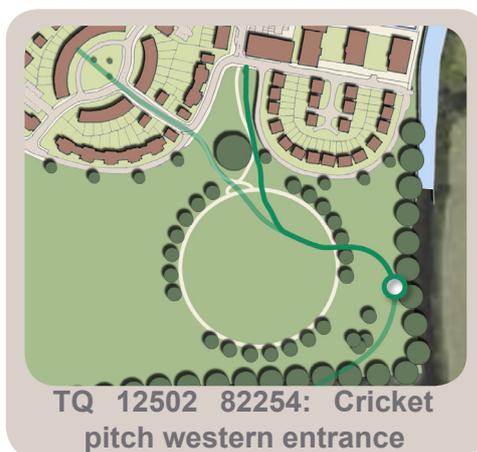
**Figure 6.14** Break in the fence created to improve the route to the south of the site (Author's photo)



We walk to the fields to look over the large mass of grass before us, then turn back, and climb through the gap in the fence and into GUV. I can still hear the gentle hum of cars travelling on Broadmead Road in the background, however it is drowned out by the sound of birds congregated in the trees above and in the nature reserve to our right. We join the gravel pathway again and walk north back along the path we walked along ten minutes beforehand. The sound of gravel underfoot begins again, and is prominent given the quietness of the grass and mud path that we had just walked along. We soon reach the wooden gate and it clinks shut as we walk onto the grass of the park:

*“One of the key things that sold this to us, was that we are this close to the park and that we can get onto the canal, and go down the canal, because we used to live in Brentford so we go all the way down the canal. That’s one of the reasons why we liked it. The marina, we don’t use very often because there is not much going on around it and you feel like you are on somebody else’s doorstep. Willowtree marina has a pub and there is a nature reserve right next to it and you are walking through the marina so you feel like you are not encroaching on anybody’s space when you are there. The other thing is that the flats overlooking it feel like they are staring down on you and that’s a bit disconcerting. But I have to say if there was a better restaurant there we would probably use it more often”.*

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.52am, Cricket pitch park, TQ12502 82254)



We begin slowly walking across the park and eventually find ourselves besides the giant tree once more. Brandon stops as his dog smells around on the grass beneath our feet. Having moved closer to the road, the noise is more pronounced here. Looking back towards the park Brandon says that this is *“really great this round circle area because people go jogging here. They bring their dogs here, and it’s nice because it is completely enclosed”* (Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.53am, cricket pitch park). I ask Brandon about transgression of this space:

**AN** *Is there a lot of antisocial behaviour in GUV?*

**BW** *There is some tagging but not very much, and it is located away from our homes and this area. On the buildings towards the front there is some tagging that goes on there. I lived in the centre of London for a long time, so antisocial behaviour to me is people coming up and smacking you or throwing a needle at you. People not moving out of your way on the footpath, out here in suburbia backs off the young mums but to me it doesn't fuss me all that much. The thing that I would say is that occasionally people drive too quickly, particularly if they are doing roadworks on Broadmead Road, they use the route to cut through because there is so much traffic out there and they're trying to pick up speed and they go quickly.*

(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 11.51am, Cricket pitch park, TQ 12480 82347)



As we turn and face the CDT the sound of an aeroplane fills the sky momentarily drowning out any other noise. We pass Brazier Crescent on our right and walk north in the park. I ask Brandon about the architectural style of GUV, and the aesthetics of the development. His response is that:

*“I was annoyed that we decided to buy a house that almost looks like it could have been made in the United States. For an American to come here and buy a house that looks like it has been plonked out of Pittsburgh or something. I said I am not going to live here forever because it is not a house that looks like an English house. It is either a starter home or a place people are going to live when their kids are young and then move somewhere else. For the people we know that's true. But it's not gruesome, as with a lot of planning it is pleasant, in both the positive and negative sense. You almost hoped that it would be a little bit more esoteric but then if it had personality I may not like it”.*

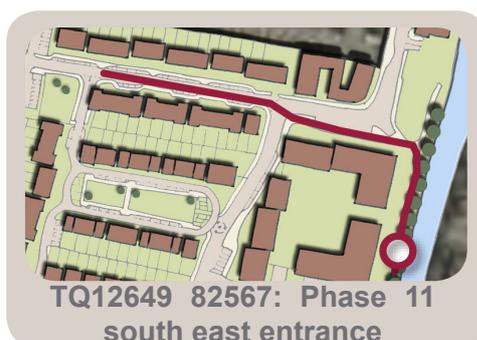
(Brandon Wilson, walking interview, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 12.02pm, play area, TQ12479 82408)

As we leave the park through the northern gate, the school children pass us again and the sound of shouting fills the play area. This is immediately countered by a TW construction truck that drives past the CDT facilities and around the park to our left towards the exit of the development onto Broadmead Road. We wait momentarily to allow a car to drive past and cross the road before walking past the CDT facilities leaving the park behind us.



### 6.3 A walking interview with Elizabeth Garrett, GUV resident (Shared ownership tenant), 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009





Today I am meeting Elizabeth Garrett, a resident of one of the shared ownership flats on the Broadmead Road frontage to GUV. We meet outside the now defunct sales office which is an unwelcoming mass of white shutters, and its closure indicates that all of the properties in GUV have been sold.



**Figure 6.16** View towards closed sales centre in central lozenge (Author's photo)

We begin by talking about her initial experiences of the development:

*AN* How long have you lived in GUV?

*EG* Just over 4 years now. Yeah, May 2005.

*AN* That's quite a long time in terms of the life of the Village?

*EG* Yeah, it was fairly new back then. I live in that block, one of the shared ownership flats.

*AN* And how are you finding it? Do you like living in GUV?

*EG* It's not my cup of tea really, it's not where I would choose to live, it's more affordability

*and I suspect that is probably the same with most people who live in Northolt or people who live in social housing here. So it is hit and miss ((laughs))*

**AN** *Aside from affordability what were the other reasons for choosing to live in GUV?*

**EG** *It was shared ownership. We were both living and worked in West London at the time, so we wanted to be in West London although this isn't, it's Middlesex, but we wanted to stay in that area, and this is what we could afford. Neither of us had ever heard of Northolt apart from the airbase, so it was literally a case of 'oh, all these shared ownership properties have come on the market let's go and have a look' and they were quite big and spacious so we brought one.*

**AN** *And what do you think are the benefits of living in GUV?*

**EG** *Very little to be honest, I haven't got that much to say. Well I have got plenty to say about it, but not necessarily good ((laughs)). From our perspective it is poorly served by public transport. I don't drive, my partner drives but I have to commute so commuting issues are a real problem. It is not near any shops ((laughs)). There is only so much money you can spend in Costcutter. As you are aware Northolt doesn't have any centre so there is no social cohesion, there is no high street, there is no centre of town or anything like that so it is very disjointed and this has been plonked in the middle of it. I am trying to think of my benefits, proximity to Heathrow and my partner's work. It's handy for the M4 to get out of London. We went to Windsor and it was 10 minutes away. Oxford is 30 minutes up the road*

(Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.03pm, central lozenge, TQ12420 82469)

Elizabeth is presently on maternity leave and has been for seven months. This excerpt from our interview begins as we are walking along the canal path besides phase 11 which is nearing completion (TQ12649 82567). Phase 11 is the final block on the development to be completed, and is a six-storey canal side block of flats. Of all the buildings on site, this is the one with the most diverse external aesthetics, a mismatch of red and beige brickwork and white painted render. The balconies on this block are different to the rest of the development, almost prison like in their appearance because of a shear grey sheet of metal that covers half of the windows. As a result of this it is hard to see how light enters the properties. Elizabeth tells me she doesn't *"like this block. It's not particularly attractive. The shared ownership ones are a lot nicer because it is only three-storeys. It is almost like they ran out of ideas by the time they got round to these but these have just recently been built, they could be anywhere, they haven't even got proper balconies. They are not great, a lot of it is not very innovative"* (Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.28pm, canal path, TQ12648 82598).

An aeroplane flies overhead before moving onwards in the distance towards Heathrow, and the canal path returns to the quiet space it normally is. To our left are small three-foot fences that mark the edges of the patios to the flats on the ground floor of the block. We walk slowly on the gravel path, and Elizabeth pushes her baby in her pram as we discuss community life in GUV and its relationship with the surrounding area:

*AN* How do you feel the CDT has worked in terms of the day-to-day running of the Village?

*EG* I think that was set up as part of the section 106, and I know the developer funded it and it's meant to do a lot more than it does. There is only one person working there as far as I'm aware, and I think their remit has completely changed, and they were more about training and employment initiatives than to try and integrate with the wider community and I don't think they do that now. It is more of a case of running little small events.

*AN* And do you feel that GUV is self-contained or does it reach out?

*EG* No! Not at all, it is completely inward looking. Just because of where it is and because of the transport issues and also the planning for the rest of Northolt, it is a load of housing estates, and lots of green space which serves to make it even worse. I don't think it would be possible, with all the best planning in the world to reach out to the wider community, I think it would be very hard, from a planning perspective anyway.

(Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.32pm, phase 11 canal path, TQ12648 82629)



We continue to walk north along the canal path and soon reach the northeast corner of the block. In front of us are large boards blocking any further movement north because this is where the temporary cabins that TW personnel have been using are located along with the disused TW headquarters (TQ12666 82629). We turn left and walk along the northern edge of phase 11. The path is yet to be completed, and will eventually be a smooth tarmac path. For now however, it is rough and coarse, and the pram jolts about as Elizabeth pushes it. To our left some of the ground floor flats have bamboo fencing for added privacy on their

small external patios.

We stop and look north towards the boards that mark the entrance to the TW offices, both past and present, and to the west of this the boarded open space that is due to be the location for the health centre. I am keen to discuss this part of the development with Elizabeth as she would have been part of the original wave of residents who were sold the initial Vision for a mixed-use UV with a health centre, gym and office space, most of which was to be located in this area. This vision of vibrancy is a far cry from the current uses of the space which is uninviting:

*AN How well does GUV stick to UV principles in terms of a mixture of uses?*

*EG There is not much here, and very little in terms of business. There is a hairdresser that has opened and closed and there is a Costcutters. That is very little, so in some respects it could just be classed as another housing estate.*

*AN And in terms of employment there was supposed to be the office development at the top, which is now going to be housing...*

*EG ...but nobody is going to come here are they? ((Laughs)). It is just in the middle of nowhere.*

*AN In terms of serving the community what would you liked to have seen on the site?*

*EG The sports centre would have been nice. A Waitrose ((laughs)). There is so little in Northolt it is hard to know where to begin. It is not just this site it is outside of this site, there is nothing. The library is 15 minutes away on the bus, the cash point you have to pay to use, there are no banks near. There's nothing. What would I like to see? Perhaps a bit of life. I know the section 106 agreement, some of the money went to improving schools outside of the Village but how about something on the Village. There are all of these people and there really is nothing, which is going to be a massive problem in the future.*

(Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.35pm, north west of phase 11, TQ12589 82658)



**Figure 6.17** View northwards towards the disused offices and open space (Author's photo)



At this point I hear the cars in the background, the noise seemingly moving along Brick Lane towards where we are standing. This is a poignant reminder of the importance of the car, and how movement is bound up in the use of the car. It seems to be that this lack of public transport was the main reason for the failure of the mixed-use concept.

We begin walking again and cross the road into the entrance to Brick Lane which is the most northern road within GUV. We have to take a significant detour to cross the road due to the large height of the kerb and the lack of a dip in the path to cross for prams or wheelchairs. On both sides of Brick Lane are two-storey terraced houses, grouped in blocks of five homes. The houses are a mix of beige brickwork and white render. On-street parking is provided by parallel parking bays, however these often become full, and even during the middle of the day all of these spaces have been taken. We walk west along Brick Lane and the plethora of cars located in the street brings up the inevitable issue of car parking within the development. According to Elizabeth, car parking:

*‘Is the burning issue sadly. When we moved here, my partner had a moped, we didn’t have a car, so we were quite unusual in that respect because everybody has got a car. We used the Car Club*

*quite a lot and it was only £3 an hour at the time, and for what we used it for it was perfect, day trips, trips to the supermarket or just weekend driving. Then it went up to £5 an hour and then his moped got stolen twice and then I got pregnant so we said lets buy a car. So we brought a car. We were probably the only people that didn't have a car because everybody has got a car, and we managed well without it to be honest, and there is a massive issue with parking because as you can see the whole place looks like a car park. I understand that there were plans for more parking at the planning stage then they decided to build more flats. The shared ownership development 60% of the units have parking and we got allocated a parking space, but it's a terrible problem, people parking in other peoples' space. There are only six spaces at the back of our flat, and people park wherever they want because there is no parking enforcement which is a real bug-bear of mine but just walking around with a pram for instance people are parked up on the pavement and you can't get passed, the concept was a good idea but you can't build in a place like Northolt, in the middle of nowhere and expect people to leave their cars behind. We were probably the only people who used the Car Club as our first car, and even we have capitulated and brought a car. Life is a lot easier round here with a car".*

(Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.38pm, Brick Lane, TQ125560 82688)



**Figure 6.18** Cars parked on the pavement impacting on the mobilities of residents (Author's photo)



As we walk along the path, the role of car parking becomes evident and the impact that it has on the lives of those that have some form of impediment on daily mobility patterns. I walk beside a car that is parked with two wheels on the pavement and therefore blocking most of the path. At this point Elizabeth tells me *‘I’m going to wheel the pram this way or I’ll scratch someones’ car, you see this is the problem or one of the problems*” (Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.28pm, Brick Lane, TQ12531 82688).

She takes the pram into the road and round the car before rejoining the path on the other side. It is fortunate that the kerb height is lower than before and therefore she can push the pram over the edge of the kerb. This however leads me to question what would have happened had I been walking along this path with a participant in a wheelchair. They would not have been able to drop off the edge of the kerb and the return to the path on the other side of the car. Instead they would have had to have doubled-back on themselves, returning to the drop in the kerb we had come from before travelling along the road until they found another drop in the kerb to rejoin the path. As Elizabeth and I walk along the path I see that there are no further drops in the kerb because the path was not designed to be driven over. There is no doubt the misuse of the path by cars inhibits the movement of people on a daily basis.

As we walk towards Broadmead Road the noise of cars becomes more pronounced. Occasionally a car drives past us on Brick Lane as it enters the development from the main road. The plethora of cars leads me to ask Elizabeth about the use of public transport by residents:

**AN** *The E6 was intended to run through the site, it hasn’t yet because of the works to phase 12. Do you think it would be beneficial to do that, are people more likely to use the buses?*

**EG** *I hope they are not going to run it through the site. This is one of the things they were talking about to make it more inclusive, and I am not sure what benefit the E6 trundling through a very small UV would have. What is wrong with it going where it is? ((Laughs)). The bus stop is there anyway, if it runs through the Village there are going to be more problems. You’re going to get more people hanging around, the noise and mess associated with people hanging round at bus stops, more pollution and no one will use it as they have all got cars and it goes nowhere of any relevance ((laughs)). I believe a lot of people objected so I am hoping that has been shelved that idea. If you know any different please tell me, and I’ll start creating hell ((laughs)).*

**AN** *As far as I am aware it is still going to happen.*

**EG** *Yeah, it hasn’t yet and it’s not particularly beneficial. Perhaps if you are disabled and it*

*is a problem to get to the bus stops over there, but I don't know any other reason why it would be of any use for anyone.*

(Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.45pm, Brick Lane, TQ12511 82687)



## Conclusion

This chapter has presented three walking interviews which demonstrate the lived experiences of place by residents on their daily interaction with the Village. ‘Placing’ these narratives to fixed geographic locations within the Village allows us to explore emotional investment in parts of GUV. Furthermore this approach retains the rich descriptions of place offered by the residents. The focus of this chapter has been on the detailed design of place and the micro-geographies of GUV. It has shown how residents’ experience design and shape materialities through their use of the built environment. Therefore it is in chapter 6 and 7 that residents’ narratives come into my story of the life of GUV.

At this juncture it is important to present the themes that have emerged throughout the three walking interviews. These themes will be developed and explored in greater detail in the next chapter. Firstly, there is a narrative emerging of the everyday life and rhythms of the built environment which focuses on the people of GUV as opposed to the physical design of place. This is bound up with how a vision works in reality and the everyday experience of the detailed design of the vision. For example Jennifer spoke of the use and vibrancy of the canal basin and its role as a community space. Furthermore, all of the walking interviews follow GUV residents as they move about their daily lives and inhabit spaces of the built environment.

Secondly, these rhythms are also bound up in peoples’ experience of the built environment and their transgression from the design intention for GUV. Brandon guided me through a tour of the park in GUV that transgressed the intended movement patterns of residents, and blurred the boundaries between what is considered part of GUV and what is not. In addition, in numerous walking interviews we walked on desire lines, created not by the design professionals but by the movement patterns of GUV residents.

The third theme to emerge in the three walking interviews in this chapter is the sensory experiences of place. There is a contrast running through these interviews between design and the lived reality of place based on sensory understandings of the built environment. Jennifer for example spoke of the tension between having an aesthetically pleasing canal basin full of boats, and the impact this has on the sensory experience of the basin. Therefore there is a contradiction between the Vision for boats and the full sensory experience (especially olfactory experiences) that they can bring. Furthermore, noise emerged from these chapters as an issue for some residents, namely Jennifer in relation to the canal basin, and children calling from the balconies of flats. As such TW's attempt to build a sterilised sensory urban environment has made noise and smells a more problematic part of GUV experiences of the Village.

The fourth theme to emerge from these walking interviews was the experience of community and a sense of place within GUV. At times residents used possessive language when referring to elements of the built environment and this emotional attachment to place is developed in the next chapter. However, a sense of community was a theme that emerged in all of my interviews. Brandon for example spoke of the welcome he and his partner received when they moved to GUV which allayed any fears they had about moving to the development, and a suburban location. The notion of community is also bound up in the ethnic make-up of the population as witnessed by Brandon and I when we watched the diverse population of the Montessori nursery children walk by. Chapter 7 also explores the politics of race within GUV, which is primarily bound up in the experience of South Asian residents.

The final theme to emerge from these walking interviews is one which runs throughout all of the preceding themes, and is the role that the car plays within GUV. The car subverts the use and experience of the UV model in GUV. Elizabeth for example had to alter the route she could take within Brick Lane due to cars parking on the pavement and prohibiting her movement. The next chapter demonstrates how excessive amounts of cars within the Village are not only a result of the location of GUV but also impacts on the mobility of residents within the Village and their movement in the surrounding area.



# 07

## EXPERIENCING GUV

## Introduction

Chapter 6 examined the relationship between residents and the Village through the narrative of three walking interviews. This chapter develops these themes concerning the experiential qualities of the city, which emerged from the Vision and existing research into experiences of the city seeking to counter Degen's claim that within geographic research:

“There is one outstanding absence; the experience of the people actually using these ‘designed environments’. Few discussions of urban design appear interested in how people engage with these highly designed environments, or how these environments are experienced in the routines of everyday life”.

(Degen, 2008:2)

In answer to Degen's claim this chapter focuses on GUV residents and their interaction and experiences of decisions made during the planning process. The chapter commences with an exploration of the everyday life routines of residents, and how these rhythms of experience relate to the Vision and generating a sense of place and community. It also explores how the Vision moves into lived reality. This is achieved through an exploration of everyday patterns of movement and practices that shape the built environment. Finally how the sensory understandings of GUV shape the built environment is explored by moving beyond a narrow exploration of GUV's aesthetics to consider the whole spectrum of sensory experiences.

## 7.1 Public space and community

Chapter 4 examined how TW articulated a Vision for city life where people would interact in public spaces, foremost the canal basin, the HZs and the central lozenge. This section examines the lived experience of these spaces, and how practices contest and transgress the Vision.

### 7.1.1 *Experiencing the canal basin*

Chapter 5 explored how the canal basin was built to generate a sense of place and increase the value of properties around the canal edge. Subsequently the basin became a draw that encouraged people to move to the Village. Some residents moved to GUV for “the canal, otherwise I wouldn't have moved round this area”. (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:1). The basin was designed as the Village's ‘heart’, and residents remarked that it is a space in which “you can forget about all the hustle and bustle” of the surrounding environment (Miranda Hass, resident, walking interview, 2009:4). This section examines residents' use and experiences of the canal basin.

Iris Marion-Young states that city dwellers often interact in spaces where residents can meet strangers, through a collective attachment to place (Young, 1990). The essence of her City Life is to experience and interact with spaces such as the canal basin, encouraging attachment. This attachment is bound up in the presentation of self to outsiders, as evident in Shreya's experience that "on a day like this we will come and sit, or if I have family or friends visiting me, we might walk down the canal" (Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009: 3). These experiences of the basin are the result of its quietness compared to areas of the development closer to the roads. The basin serves as a sensory escape from noise, hence residents' use of the space. It also acts as an escape from the development itself, and Abigail spoke of how:

*"I come down here with my grandson, he absolutely loves it. He feeds the birds ((laughs)) and for me it is great because I come from Devon and I miss the sea, so I love being here by the marina, it's really tranquil and the boats are really attractive".*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:2)

Abigail's experiences of the canal are shaped by recollections of her previous home and she associates water with happiness and shares this experience with her grandson. Furthermore this engagement moves beyond an appreciation of visual aesthetics, to how the basin feels, which are shaped by the tranquillity of the canal.

This raises the issue of the vibrancy of place and there is a contradiction between the tranquillity of the basin experienced by residents and the Vision for a vibrant mixed-use centre containing shops and cafes. These accounts illustrate that whilst residents interact in the basin, it transgresses what was envisioned. The lack of a mix of uses and poor frontages has shaped this space as one of relaxation rather than activity. However, residents do not want to see more activity surrounding the canal "because people want a quiet place to live, they don't want a lot of activity to pass on through" (Dylon Bartlett, resident, interview, 2009:9).

There is a tension between following UV principles for a heart that has "ground floor premises occupied by shops, bars, restaurants and other lively public uses" and maintaining a residential environment (Aldous, 1992:48). In spite of this the call for a central public space is based on "presence, vitality-life pulses from it into the surrounding areas" (Aldous, 1992:48). Set within a suburban location however, UV ideas about vibrancy become problematic. In GUV there is a tension between providing a lively central space and the negative impact this has on the residential uses that surround it. The Vision became degraded partly to appease residents who see a mixed-use basin as something that is out of place within this location. A key element of UV ideas therefore has little purchase in this location. This is bound up in wider issues about the ways residents experience the UV and their sense of the concept.

Importantly, residents define the basin and GUV as a residential space rather than a mixed-use UV.

Tensions between a vibrant space and dwellings are played-out in terms of the relationship between boaters and the surrounding buildings. Boater Justin Trowbridge said it is “nice that people can come out, they can open their patio doors and they are looking out onto the basin. As a boater living in the middle, my mother describes this place as living in a goldfish bowl, which you can see that” (Justin & Hannah Trowbridge, residents, interview, 2009:9). Broader issues emerge here about ‘defensible space’ and ‘eyes on the street’ (Newman, 1973; Jacobs, 1961). Informal surveillance becomes problematic within GUV as residents struggle to live with others in close proximity. The problem of surveillance and feelings of encroachment into peoples’ personal space is a reflection of GUV’s suburban location. Crime rates are low in the Village and the lack of everyday experience of crime and anti-social behaviour leaves residents detached from the principles behind surveillance within the basin.

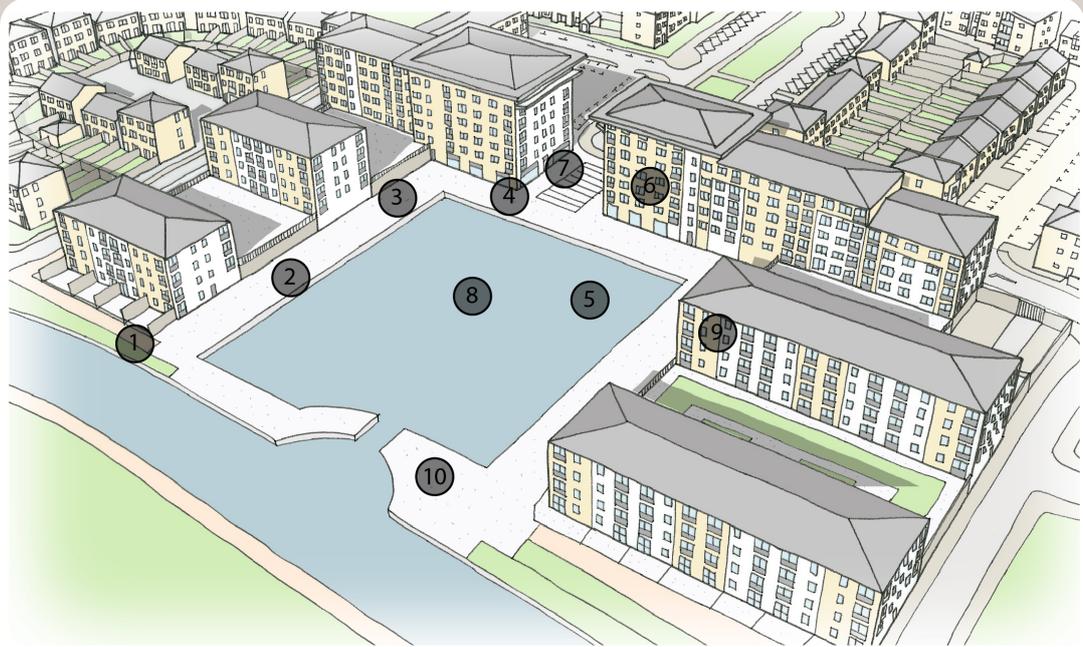
In chapter 4 it was shown how TW won a PFBE award for the design of the Village and the canal basin. Hank Dittmar and others at the PFBE were impressed by TW’s creation of the basin as a central space of the Village. Despite this residents’ do not see it as an award winning space, but as a tranquil space that puts people in touch with nature. Rishi for example said that he doesn’t “use the marina, I just walk around it” (Rishi Chopra, resident, interview, 2009:2).

Residents therefore create a dichotomy between use of the canal basin and being in the space. They walk through the marina to get to other spaces in the Village rather than going to the basin to socialise. Part of this is bound up in the opinion that Willowtree Marina in Yeading brings a more pleasant experience for residents and they often use that marina, leaving the Blue Green restaurant in the basin under-used:

*I have visited the restaurant on six occasions. The décor is relaxed and comfortable, and quirky chandeliers hang from the roof. The cleanliness of the restaurant is good, however this is the third time I have been the only person inside. I wonder how the restaurant survives as I have never seen it busy, not in the evening or now on a Saturday afternoon.*

(Personal observation, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2009)

Elizabeth elaborated on this point saying that “in terms of use I don’t come here to sit, I walk around it, the boats are nice but there is another marina up the road which is nicer” (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:5).



- ① "I don't use the marina as such I just walk around it" (Rishi Chopra, resident, interview, 2009:2)
- ② "You can forget about all the hustle and bustle of that side and just come here and wow, it is better" (Miranda Hass, resident, walking interview, 2009:2)
- ③ "It is nice and quiet and after a day of work you really need to come somewhere that is nice and quiet" (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:2)
- ④ "There are lots of noise issues around the restaurant as well" (Dylon Bartlett, static interview, 2009:8)
- ⑤ "I definitely feed the swans and the ducks at the weekends" (Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:2)
- ⑥ "My mother describes this place as living in a goldfish bowl which yes you can see that " (Justin Trowbridge, resident, static interview, 2009:18)
- ⑦ "To be honest the only problems you would get are people sitting outside drinking after the pubs close because I don't think people realise how much sound covers over water" (Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:7)
- ⑧ "I can say to people that come and visit us that we have a marina here, and they go 'oh that is terribly glamorous', but that is about it, it doesn't go further than that" (Isac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:12)
- ⑨ "I wouldn't come down here because it does feel like I am being peered at" (Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:9)
- ⑩ "In terms of use I don't come here to sit but I walk around it" (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:4)

Figure 7.1 Resident's experiences of the canal basin (Author's drawing)

Figure 7.1 is a sketch of the canal basin showing resident's experiences and articulations of place. Aside from fleeting interactions such as feeding ducks or walking around the basin at weekends, experiences are limited. This is due to perceptions of the space as a residential environment rather than a lively public space, which makes residents uncomfortable within

the basin. Riya said, “I’d like to see more people using the marina, but it’s all very modern, very nice, but very cold” (Riya Sen, resident, interview, 2009:48). The feeling of being cold is related to experiences of the marina and the basin being an unwelcoming space which creates limited use and leaves it devoid of life:

*“You see the occasional mother walking round with a pram, but you don’t see people sitting here at the weekends. You don’t see that many people sitting in the bar outside and I thought there would have been a bit more”.*

(Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:7)

There are contradictions between award winning public spaces, and residents’ views of the basin as a place for limited engagement with other residents and the landscape. This is as much a commentary on the community of GUV as it is the design of the public space. UV literature states the central public space “needs to be pleasant to use, environmentally friendly, well lit, and with planting and paving designed and constructed to the highest standards” (Aldous, 1992:48). The canal basin provides all of these elements, yet moving public space from vision to lived experience involves embedding the space in residents’ affective experience which has not been fulfilled at GUV.

### 7.1.2 Contesting public space

#### *The 24-hour city*

Residents’ use and experience of public space is based on acceptable temporality where some parts of the Village are deemed no-go areas during parts of the day. Much of this centres around the canal basin and the play areas. Despite being designed as the areas for social interaction, these spaces are devoid of life during the night. The perceived unsocial use of these areas is based on behaviour that is deemed unacceptable for GUV due to the noise created by people. Overall this impacts on the sense of security some residents (both male and female) have when walking through the marina and parks during the evenings.

Residents stated that unacceptable noise is “the biggest problem late at night or early hours of the morning, people sit on the benches and sometimes at 2 o’clock in the morning there can be a group sitting there talking” (Justin & Hannah Trowbridge, residents, interview, 2009:2). Ironically, the design intentions for the canal basin have been fulfilled with people sat talking and interacting on the granite benches. However, in a suburban location such as this, there are unwritten temporal rules about interaction due to the impact on the lives of other residents.

The play area to the south of the development, located between Brazier Crescent and Ballinger Way is cited as being a space where people, often teenagers, do not respect the experiences of other residents. Rishi whose house overlooks the park told me that:

*“a couple of times I have witnessed very horrible fights and people shouting at 1 o’clock in the morning. Young crowds obviously drunk. The play area is not an enclosed space so people from surrounding areas filter in and come and use the facilities here”.*

(Rishi Chopra, resident, interview, 2009:4)

Rhetoric about unacceptable use of these social spaces is often articulated around the teenager. Residents expressed concerns about how some teenagers were seen to be hanging around in these spaces and impacting on their own experiences of place. Negative experiences were placed on people who live outside of GUV entering the Village causing trouble. Later in this chapter the informal network of surveillance that residents employ to watch people from the surrounding area, particularly teenagers, who enter the Village will be explored.

### ***Contesting social rules of place***

Residents experience and interpret public space in different ways leading to contestation over their use. According to Holloway “the production, occupation and control of place is caught up in an ongoing struggle between different groups and individuals” (Holloway, 2001:209). Some residents transgress behavioural rules within the public space of GUV through the practice of play. According to Stevens “playful activities which occur in urban public space often arise as a dialectical critique of the stability and rationality of much of contemporary urban life” (Stevens, 1997:23).

Transgression is a way of challenging established order of place dictated by design professionals or other residents. Play therefore “embraces a variety of ways in which people test and transgress the limits of their social existence” (Stevens, 1997:29). The micro-geographies of children’s play for instance are highly controlled within GUV. Within the HZs there are signs stating that no ball games are to be played in the street or play areas. Children however, transgress this by playing football, and in some areas have scraped the lettering from the sign.

Furthermore in the canal space, there are ‘no fishing’ signs to stop residents using the canal for this purpose. In spite of this children often transgress this rule which can lead to conflicts with the boating community especially if children are fishing near the entrance to the basin. Therefore the “unintended consequence of making space a means of control is to simultaneously make it a site of meaningful resistance” (Cresswell, 1996:163). Children contest and transgress the rules of public space through play. These practices sit within Foucault’s notion of power and the idea that “power is not something that is acquired seized

or shared, something that one holds onto or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points” (Foucault, 1981:94).

It is however not only children that contest public space, adults do so by parking cars within Apprentice Gardens HZ. In one car parking spot a traffic cone is placed with a sign reading “Disabled bay in 24 hour use. Please don’t park night or day”. As such this resident stakes a claim over a parking space based on a lack of mobility. The highly controlled space of the UV with codes and social rules dictating behaviour is transgressed and contested by the lived experience of residents and power relations in public space become blurred as residents’ playful activities transgress intended patterns of behaviour.

### **7.1.3 Public space and props: engaging with the materials of GUV**

GUV residents and members of the local community engage with public space through embodied experiences of the materials of the Village. They interact with props within the urban environment, which are “objects which have been added to public settings with the intention of making them more comfortable by contributing to their function and aesthetics”, yet are appropriated for alternative forms of movement (Stevens, 2006:811). Whilst material features act as landmarks, guiding residents through public space, props engage residents in embodied and tactile experiences of the city (Stevens, 2006). People engage with public space through playful interpretation of props which they use to give meaning to the built environment.

#### ***Play areas***

Due to excessive noise, children’s activities are often confined to the play areas because GUV residents discourage children’s play in streets and around houses. In these spaces they encounter the textural qualities of the built environment which are perceived primarily through the body. Play areas act as meeting points for children who congregate and interact with children from other parts of the development. Children use play areas to define a space of GUV as their own and engage in playful activities of public space.

The play equipment within these areas is used for a series of social acts, some of which are based on the intended use of these spaces, yet some transgress the Vision. Foremost the play areas are spaces that children use to interact with one another, using the play equipment as a material prop to facilitate play. Often young children were observed running around play areas and climbing up the metal frames whilst their parents stood at the sides and watched. Suraj said that his two children both “use all the play areas. We have a small park so they use that, and the big park is also there and we go around, and fly kites”, therefore using the space as intended (Suraj Rao, resident, static interview, 2009:2).

However, it is the reliance on hard materials that makes the play areas less engaging particularly for older children who transgress the intended use of these spaces. The GUV play areas are dominated by play equipment that inhibits imaginative play through limited appropriation of the materials, as expressed by Holloway:

“based on assumptions that children are socially incompetent and cannot handle the rigours of navigating public space in an era when the streets are depicted as inherently dangerous, children are largely restricted to occupying designates and designed playgrounds. These playgrounds normally contain a collection of single-function play equipment which is essentially safe and predictable and although there is opportunity for children to use them for imaginative play...they are essentially sterile environments”.

(Holloway, 2001:211)

Children are therefore unable to appropriate props due to control within these spaces which limits the extent to which children can make this space their own. Steering group member, and Playgroup Alliance member Emily Yates said that in GUV:

*“Instead of all that metal we would have preferred to see a more natural set up. This is obviously not multi-age, or an interesting environment for the older children. We would have preferred to see a natural set up, more wooden and having more mud so that children can create. What we have here is limited in the way of children being able to use their imagination”.*

(Emily Yates, interview, 2009: 8)

Issues are raised here about the ways in which the Vision conceived of age and childrens’ use of space. The play areas are good urban spaces for children up to 10 years old, yet above that age childrens’ practices and behaviour become problematic. Abigail said that her child “is too old for the play areas. They are fantastic for little children, but there is nothing for older ones” (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:5). UV literature calls for new communities to be “designed and planned to put the safety and mobility of children at the heart of the design” and “make them feel very much a part of urban street culture” (Neal, 2003:124). The spaces in which it conceives of this are childrens’ play areas and notions of play in the street through HZs.

It is problematic to think of childhood as being all encompassing, and different spaces need to be provided for different age groups as demonstrated by Gemma who wanted to “have a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) down there. That is something I think could do well on the open space because you’ve got all the soft surface, the cage, the basketball and the football” (Gemma Hunter, CDT administrator, static interview, 2009:43). Spaces such as these would broaden the appeal of the development, and provide for those over 10 years old. Presently,

the Village focuses on the archetypal child, who follows the strict controls prescribed by the play areas. Unlike developments tied to a transport node which often have few families, GUV is a place for families. In spite of this its design is grounded in notions of the good family, and is less willing to think about other ages. For older children and teenagers there is nothing for them to do in the Village and therefore they appropriate it for their own purposes through practices such as skateboarding.

### *Skateboarders*



**Figure 7.2** Transgressing the intended use of the granite benches by skateboarders (Author's photo)

Skateboarders use the granite benches to practice jumps and grinds, and “contest the everyday functionality of urban design features” (Stevens, 2006:811). Figure 7.2 shows how skates grind along the edge of the benches wearing down the corners of the granite. Teenagers therefore appropriate the benches for their own practices. Their kinaesthetic experience of the granite benches contradicts the design intention of the spaces as places for static experience of the built environment. As Stevens contends:

“Skaters’ experience of the city is compressed in time and space. Skaters’ velocity demands constant focused attention and precise coordination; the sense and the body are stimulated by rapid, intense engagement and sudden encounters. Skaters have a heightened awareness of the city’s surface geometry”.

(Stevens, 2006:90)

Skaters' transgression of place is therefore based on a heightened interaction at an increased pace to normal practices of sitting. It is interesting that skater's activities are concentrated in an under-used and confined area of the development set back from the central lozenge, demonstrating that this is personal practice, rather than one for public exhibition.

## 7.2 Community and GUV

This section turns to explore residents' experiences of community and their relationships with other residents. It draws on Craig Calhoun's notion of multiplexity to examine how residents' interactions with one another are superficial and based on limited meaningful engagements. Whilst UV literature acknowledges that "the making of community is far more complex than a purely architectural activity", it fails to explore the problematic notion of community, appealing to idealised notions of place (Neal, 2003:83).

### 7.2.1 Residents sense of themselves as a community

TW sought to generate a sense of community based on UV ideals about the relationship between people and the erosion of community in suburbs. According to David Gilbert "the idea of community has retained a conservative association with a traditional past, evoked most often with a particular way of life is seen under threat" (Gilbert, 1992:32). Idealised notions of community were at play within GUV, and the lived reality is that residents' relationships with others are often superficial:

*"I don't know any people on the Village to be honest. I just go to the safer neighbourhoods thing. I don't really go down to the pub which they have on site because sometimes the people in it don't look like the type of people I would want to associate with".*

(Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:12)

Residents relationships with others in the Village are limited because "some people keep themselves to themselves [and] other people have their own clique of friends" (Miranda Hass, resident, walking interview, 2009:5). Where it does occur, interaction is confined to localised neighbourhoods, in particular the HZs or boating community. According to Gilbert "there is a direct relationship between the geographic size of a settlement and the density of social relationships within it" (Gilbert, 1992:37). Therefore the most meaningful relationships between residents are found within subtly contained character areas and micro-scale communities, because of the shared attachment to place.

Within GUV, residents do not know people they don't see on a daily basis, and Ana told me that she doesn't "know the people living the other side of the basin" (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:1). Whilst there are "a small proportion of Village residents that do have a sense of community, but it is still quite a small percentage of the people that live here" (Dylon Bartlett, resident, static interview, 2009:3). Therefore there are no complex and meaningful relationships between people, but rather superficial relationships:

*"Apart from my niece, I have made one or two friends and, if it is a familiar face I just say hello and carry on. When some of the houses had been built, TW organised street parties, but once everybody moved in it became a thing of the past".*

(Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:3)

It is not just adults that do not have interactions with others within GUV, Abigail said of her daughter that "she doesn't really socialise there is nothing here for her to do" (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:4). As will be explored in the next section, social infrastructure, particularly the CDT has a part to play in the nurturing of community and encouraging more meaningful relationships between people, as demonstrated by Isaac:

*"You really want to try and get people out from where they are, and get them having some kind of communal activity here which would involve them dealing with one another and building a relationship. The whole premise of having a CDT is there is a community here to develop so they need to try and do that ASAP".*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:17)

Through membership of the CDT "individuals are linked to social groups [which] are incorporated into a systematic order. The best example is extended kinship, where membership places a person in a large hierarchy of social groups where the relationship between the component groups is rigidly defined" (Gilbert, 1992:36). Residents also share a link to social groups through a common association with place, such as through an identity with a particular neighbourhood. Isaac said that:

*"if you look at the way it is laid out it is a self contained entity but the way people live you will find that most people are not around here for large parts of the day so you will have to try and create that spirit and I think TW should have done a little more in trying to create that spirit. There are people here who are social tenants, private tenants, and the shared ownership side of things. So there's scope for people to come together in one space and that's a good thing but the problem has been those who are managing the communal spaces in this development, the likes of the PCHA and Trinity Homes don't do enough for the community. Obviously they engage with their own constituents so to speak because they collect money but outside of that they don't do it and this is*

*the problem”.*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:14)

Residents have a shared attachment to community through membership of the CDT and shared use of the facilities. Despite the Vision for a community with a multiplexity of relationships, residents’ interaction is superficial. Multiplexity “refers to the extent to which individuals who are linked in one type of relationship are also linked in others [such as] kinship, co-religion, co-residence, and economic interdependence” (Gilbert, 1992:37).

Whilst there are a series of levels on which relationships and links operate between residents, these are not meaningful enough to be considered a sign of a true community. Canal boat resident Jennifer said that:

*“we all see each other and say hello and that sort of thing. I don’t think there is interaction, other than what the CDT organises, which boaters go to as well as residents. I don’t think there any daily interaction”.*

(Jennifer Eames, boating resident, interview, 2009:10)

This lack of meaningful interactions is bound up in the tenure of the residents that live in the Village. There are a large number of buy-to-let properties which contributes to a transient population and a lack of commitment to the community. This view was expressed by Ana who said that:

*“We get on very well with our neighbours and they’re very friendly and when you are renting, you never see them or know them, they are never here. But it is different when you own your own flat and you need to know who lives next door and be helpful and look out for each other. When they are on holiday you check their flat and stuff”.*

(Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:4)

In spite of this there were a few individuals particularly associated with the CDT and the Neighbourhood Watch who have sought to generate a sense of community. Abigail told me that she was “determined to make this place have a good community spirit but it [would] take [her] an awful long time” (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:5). She acknowledges that at present there is no community spirit but rather “a few bunches of people that stick together” (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:6). Therefore Abigail’s aim was to develop this community:

**AN** *The idea of building a community was central to what was being done here. Do you think it is possible to build a community?*

*AC Yes I do, a lot of people are disheartened by it and they say it is a very transient thing and everybody is from different backgrounds it is not possible to do it. I completely disagree with that I grew up deep in the countryside where there was strong community spirit. I know that we can make this community work, it's just about having faith in that and having the right communication tools. As soon as you have got that, people will listen, they want the community, people move here because they want to be a part of the community but then they don't know how to get involved. I am very proactive and it has taken me all this time. Just imagine those people that don't have good English skills, They don't have a hope really of becoming involved".*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:6)

To some extent attempts to generate community have worked. In contrast to the surrounding community, GUV is seen as having more of a community feel to the development. Riya said that “where I was living the other side of Northolt it was horrible. It was going downhill. But here it's a new lease of life. Neighbours get on with everyone, and everyone's so polite. I haven't had no issues with no one” (Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:34)

### 7.2.2 *The CDT*

The CDT was formed as social infrastructure to develop a sense of community within the Village. In spite of this it doesn't have an impact on the lives of residents, but rather is seen as detached from them. People “don't use the community centre because they are a little bit like an ivory tower...it is definitely disjointed from the people here” (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:5). Part of this dislocation is bound up in accessibility issues to reach the community centre which is:

*“behind a locked door. You have to ring a bell to get in. A lot of people don't understand that. It is not welcoming...[you have] to be able to have a proper entrance for people to walk in, but you can't do that because of the flats above”.*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:7)

Furthermore, GUV suffers in its attempts to promote its facilities due to the location of Yeading community centre located 200 metres south of the Village which is why “people tend to use that facility which is obviously a much longer established centre” (Harry Ledley, CDT board member, static interview, 2009:5).



**Figure 7.3** CDT run events engage the community to interact with one another (CDT photo)

The CDT therefore needs to do more to engage with residents to generate a sense of community within the Village. The facilities given to the CDT by TW are part of this process, but more importantly it is bound up in the need to engage the community in events and meetings, giving the residents ownership over their neighbourhood. An example of this comes from the Alice and Wonderland themed event run by the CDT, as shown in figure 7.3. This idea was also explored by a resident who said:

*“I don’t think the real potential has been realised yet, there are a lot of people living here, and the numbers turning up to events are relatively small. There is an issue about communicating this energy to the residents. People just don’t see things, so putting a poster up in the shop window is going to have nil impact, it needs much more high profile advertising. I think a lot of people living here still have no idea about the UV concept and the role of the Trust. That is made more difficult because a lot of people don’t have an investment living here because there is a lot of rented accommodation and absentee landlords”.*

(Dylon Bartlett, resident, static interview, 2009:3)

To generate a sense of community the CDT must actively promote the work they do, making it relevant and accessible to residents. Part of this is through communicating ideas to residents through the Village newsletter, originally named “In Touch”, but after resident consultation renamed “Village Vibes” in 2010. This newsletter however is rarely distributed, and the website of the CDT is sporadically maintained and updated. Isaac said that:

*“In Touch was good but it didn’t get updated for 6 or 7 months and these gaps once they get wider and wider they become more of a problem, especially for agents that are trying to interact with*

*people. The wider the gap is, the more difficult it is to interact with us and vice versa”.*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:9)

The newsletter and website are the primary communication infrastructure the CDT has to promote their work and events, yet these are not utilised to their full potential. As a result of this Neighbourhood Watch and CDT meetings are poorly attended by residents. Rishi told me that “the last neighbourhood watch meeting I attended, there were about 4 people there” (Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:4). Residents only engage with meetings when there are issues that personally affect them to be resolved. On the 29<sup>th</sup> July for example I attended a Residents’ Association meeting where there were not enough seats for everybody in the largest room of the CDT facilities. Over 50 residents attended due to the focus of the meeting being the resolution of car parking restrictions within the Village. I was later told by the chairwoman, Abigail, that it was far larger than the normal turnout of people they had for meetings.

This engagement also needs to extend to the annual CDT event that is held on the open space in July. The events are the foremost way in which residents interact with one another, and:

*“bring out the community spirit. We don’t see all the people, but we meet a few. These events bring out the various people that we had met during the course of one year and we see most of them together in that event. It was something that we felt we were part of a community”.*

(Suraj Rao, resident, static interview, 2009:4)



**Figure 7.4** Local police and fire department were involved in the CDT event in 2009 (Author’s photo)

The events are beneficial for the community because they bring residents together in one space through a shared experience of stalls and games, as shown in figure 7.4. The surrounding communities have the opportunity to participate in these events and therefore it is one of the few occasions when the Village extends beyond its boundaries. The summer funday, as well as Christmas parties and other festive events organised by the CDT offer residents the:

*“chance to bond with people. Everyone gets to know people, mother and toddler groups as well, that’s like a bonding session. Like today we had Polish people in there and Muslim lady in there”.*

(Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:35)

Due to a diverse population, there is an ethnic theme to some events, and always an ethnic element to the summer funday. On 24<sup>th</sup> July 2011 for example, the summer funday had Caribbean and Thai food served through the afternoon. For many residents however, this engagement remains one of the few they have with other members of the community. This interaction is limited by the lack of people that come to the events in particular the summer funday. The following exchange demonstrates how this lack of participation is bound up in communication and perceptions of the event:

**AN** *In terms of the organisation of the CDT. We spoke earlier about their fayre, how well do you think they get involved in the community?*

**VG** *I don’t really know much about it, we get a lot of posters put up for events. I don’t know if they are restrained by budget but you could do much more here. If you thought outside the box you could really get the community involved but it takes a particular type of person to be able to do that, and a well-organised team of people to be able to do it. I think it is great, but once a year this funday is it really doing much? Perhaps it is...*

**EG** *...I don’t think so, a couple of bouncy castles and a couple of teenagers dj-ing doesn’t really do that much does it?*

**VG** *But these are quite deep social things and how do you get people from everywhere, which essentially this development is quite multicultural how do you get them together? There was the Big Lunch that was a nationwide thing but nothing happened here which is a shame. Little things like that would make it great, if they built a couple of barbecues in the space that you could go and use. You just have to encourage people to come out. I am sure there is a nice little community around the playgrounds and the mums and dads, and kids of similar ages but that seems to be about it really.*

(Vad Grzesik, Elizabeth Garrett, residents, walking interview, 2009:11)

The use of the green space is greatest during the CDT events with hundreds of people using the space over the course of the afternoon. The following are residents' reactions to the 2009 funday:

*"We didn't spend much time there but we went round to see it, they had barbeques there and fire-fighters and police cars and helicopters later on".*

(Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)

*"The last two years I attended those events and I liked them. There was a lot of attendance from all the residents, they even had a helicopter coming and fire engines, and music and bouncy castles. That was very good actually. We felt that we are living in a place where people are coming together to make a community".*

(Suraj Rao, resident, static interview, 2009:4)

*"I lived here for three years and I didn't go to the previous two summer fundays. I went this year and it was really, really good because it wasn't only the Village, other people came over from the surrounding area and it was really vibrant, everyone was laughing, joking and you could see a lot of time and effort went into it".*

(Miranda Hass, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)

In spite of this there is a perception that the CDT events are primarily aimed at a certain demographic of people. Foremost residents without children are unlikely to participate in the funday because of the perception that there are few elements for them to enjoy, with the focus being on children's activities rather than events that adults would derive any meaningful interaction with. Shreya elaborated on this during our interview:

**AN** *Do you attend the social events that the CDT runs?*

**SM** *No.*

**AN** *Is there any reason for that?*

**SM** *It just doesn't interest me. Do you mean, for example, like what?*

**AN** *About a month ago they had a summer funday.*

**SM** *Oh for children, family type things? No I don't go to them. I don't have kids anyway.*

(Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:4)

This perception of the CDT events as family events leads some residents to feel obliged to go to them to be good community members. Foremost they often went to the events for the sake of their children, rather than for their own interaction with neighbours. Elizabeth, described how she felt that had to go to the funday in 2009:

**AN** *The CDT are holding a funday on Sunday, have you attended some of their events?*

**EG** *To be honest I am probably a bit older than the sort of person who lives here, I would say the demographic of people is about 25-35, I am 39 and have only recently had a baby, prior to that I didn't take a lot of notice. I would get on a tube and meet my friends in Central London. I didn't really tend to go to things like that although I have been to a couple of the meetings at the Trust. Now I have got her [baby], my partner keeps saying we have got to take her on Sunday. I am like, 'do I have to', but I will do, particularly if we are here for a while I will have to get involved in things like that. Under duress ((laughs)).*

(Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:6)

As well as families, there was also a sense that events were primarily attended by older members of the community. Rather than young couples attending the CDT events, it was families and older couples who tended to participate in the events:

**AN** *Are you members of the CDT?*

**JT** *No. I didn't know it existed.*

**HT** *That was the one that Abigail was talking about the other day but I didn't know it was something you could join.*

**AN** *Ok, and along those lines they have social events for example they had a funday on the open space...*

**HT** *...yeah that's right we went there. They are having a sausage sizzle next month ((laughs))*

**AN** *((Laughs)) I'm not quite sure what one of them is.*

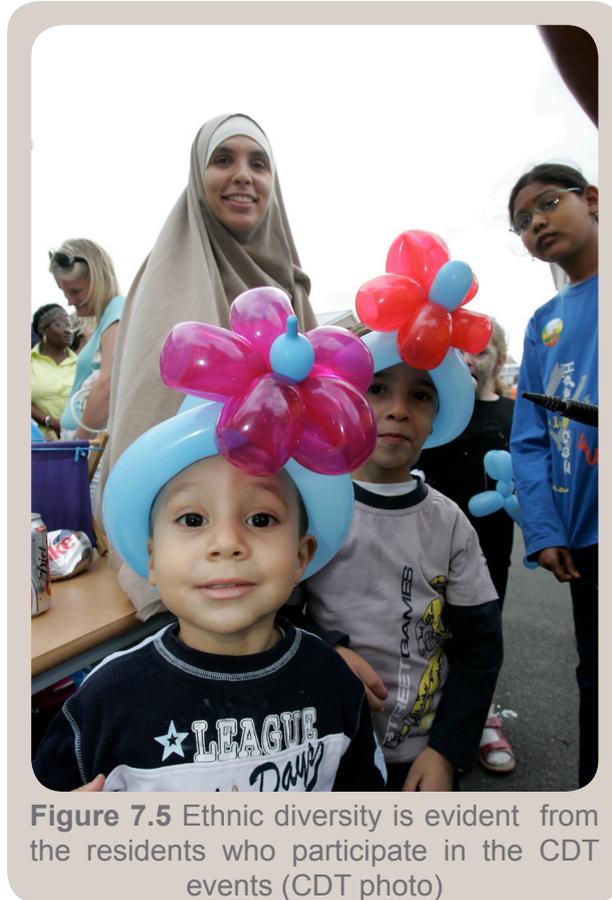
**HT** *It is just like a glorified barbecue I think. But we shall be partaking.*

**JT** *I am not being funny Ashley but people of our age will participate in things like that. It is the younger members that won't, there are people that don't even belong to our own boaters group.*

*HT It is all our age group.*

(Justin and Hannah Trowbridge, boating residents, static interview, 2009:11)

### 7.2.3 Community and race



**Figure 7.5** Ethnic diversity is evident from the residents who participate in the CDT events (CDT photo)

Experiences of GUV are bound up in the identity and ethnicity of residents living in the Village. Due to its location close to Southall, the Village has a diverse ethnic population with South Asian, Eastern European, African and White British residents, as shown in figure 7.5. According to 2001 census data over 75% of the population of Southall is of an ethnic minority, primarily of Indian descent (Ealing PCT, 2006). Furthermore ASRA, one of the housing associations on site at GUV, focuses on Asian needs with 30% of their housing having an Asian specialism and 72% of their tenants are non-white. This creates “inter-cultural encounters” within the public spaces of GUV (Nasser, 2003a:27). This section explores the role that race has on experiences of GUV, and the ways in which different ethnicities impart their own cultural understandings on the design of the Village as well as the contestation of identities.

The story of race and GUV is part of the narrative of race and suburban living within multicultural West London. According to Nasser politics of race and ethnicity within this location was based on the ways in which a South Asian diaspora integrated into the urban

fabric of British cities (Nasser, 2003b). Early tensions between South Asian residents occurred as they tried to define place through their places of worship which impacted on the aesthetics and lived experience of British architecture. However, the move towards multiculturalism and an acceptance of ethnic minority imprints on the city, allowed these groups to retain their own identity. South Asians no longer had to attempt to conform to traditional British architectural styles but instead could impart their own forms of building and living onto the urban fabric (Nassar, 2003). In essence this story is bound up in the relationship between insiders and outsiders, an important theme that runs throughout narratives of experience within GUV.

Nasser states that the “engagement of Muslim South Asians with British multiculturalism has brought an inherent contestation of identity” (Nasser, 2003b:10). She argues that there is a tension created by attempts to racialise elements of the built environment as a result of multi-racial encounters. As South Asians have settled, she argues they “have adopted, utilised and given new meanings to the built forms of an established British urban tradition. Thus, South Asian culture has undergone a transformation in which everyday practice, social processes, relationships, experiences and understandings have been negotiated in the new context” (Nasser, 2003a:26). As such there is a tension between integration and the extent to which South Asian practices and processes are adapted to fit with the British ways of living.

If we focus on architectural style for the time being, GUV has a contemporary and neutral style of aesthetics. As Brandon commented on page 239, the development lacks personality that would for example come from ethnic practices. As Nassar contends “creative stylistic expressions of South Asian communities have been ‘domesticated’ to preserve the ‘Britishness’ of the urban landscape” (Nassar, 2003a:34). South Asian identities therefore have not been imposed on the built form of GUV. This may be something that occurs in the future as people extend and adapt their properties. In spite of this there are a number of 5-bedroom houses on the development which would not have been built without the presence of a large Asian community.

Foremost GUV sits within Nassar’s framework that place building by ethnic minorities is done through practise rather than physical buildings. Nassar employs Bordieu’s notion of habitus to explore how South Asians develop a sense of place through their practises and rituals rather than architectural style. Ethnic identities are bound up in the places in which experiences and interactions occur as highlighted by Huw Thomas:

“The construction of [ethnic] categories or identities involves, simultaneously, the construction of place, the latter term referring to the physical locations imbued with human meaning. This involves:

- using the built and natural environment in a certain way;

- perhaps having the right (legal or customary) to be in certain place and do certain things;
- less tangibly, it means feeling comfortable in certain place, feeling ‘at home’ or, simply, not ill at ease”.

(Thomas, 2000:35)

The first of these practises is the role of religious spaces within GUV. There is no mosque on site, and Muslim residents go to nearby Southall for worship in the large mosques that serve the local population. Neither is there a church on the development, which was often cited as a key element to being a Village:

*“If there was a church here it would be great. There are churches in villages with 200 residences so it’s a shame that they couldn’t think of putting one here with 1000 residencies”.*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:11)

However on a micro-scale Asian residents change the experience of the CDT facilities for their own purposes through the practice of worship, and the CDT facilities have been designed with the ability to adapt the space to provide separate spaces for males and females. This “modification of the space for religious practices stems from a need to create one space for congregation as well as imbue new meanings to these spaces” (Nasser, 2003a:30). As such the CDT facilities allows:

*“things like prayer meetings and the odd Sunday school but if you were looking at a proper Village, we have everything but a school and a church”.*

(Gemma Hunter, CDT administrator, static interview, 2009:45)

The CDT facilities therefore take the place of religious institutions such as a church or mosque. This is important to affirm ethnic identity which:

*“Is considerably easier to sustain as a lived social reality if there are places in which one can meet others who affirm the same ethnicity; in daily life one sees a range of spaces being used in this way, such as places of worship, places of entertainment, schools (and their related activities), shops and so on”.*

(Thomas, 2000:35)

The facilities provide a place for worship regardless of religion with the ability to adapt to accommodate for Christian and Muslim prayer:

*“because we’re open at 8am, and it’s a Muslim community, when Ead was around they were*

*praying early in the morning, and we were able to accommodate them”.*

(Gemma Hunter, CDT administrator, static interview, 2009:6)

As such Gemma states that this multiplicity of uses of the CDT indicates a vibrant UV. Therefore the ethnic diversity of GUV produces a “very, very mixed community. It is so different, the nationalities” (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:4). Due to the adaptable space of the CDT facilities (such as sliding partitions) there is a mix of cultures and practises. South Asian experiences of this space are therefore different to that experienced by children who use the facilities for nurseries, or adults who go to self defence classes within the hall. Furthermore, South Asian residents also experience the community space in different ways depending on whether they are using the space for worship or participating in other social activities.

These experiences are bound up in the politics of worship within West London which required the “large scale conversion of space for religious and cultural use... [which] accompanied the settlement of women and children and the sudden increase in size of congregations. The need to establish places in which cultural values and religious practices could be perpetuated became the primary concern” (Nasser, 2003a:29). For South Asian residents there is the option to worship within the CDT facilities and then travel to Southall to a Mosque.

Asian burial practices have also impacted upon identity and experiences of place within GUV as the follow exchange from Justin and Hannah shows:

**JT** *The design of the entrance to this basin acts like a magnet, any debris coming down the canal follows the line of the wall which is scooped in at the entrance. The next thing you know plastic bottles and coconuts, and all the rest of it are in the basin.*

**HT** *Oh the coconuts I haven't seen any lately.*

**JT** *Do you know the story about the coconuts?*

**AN** *I don't.*

**JT** *It's a Hindu tradition after someone's funeral to place, it is either whole coconuts...*

**HT** *...sometimes they are half a coconut and they will put the ashes in the coconut and then seal them and wrap them into a piece of cloth and chuck them in the water, because all water leads to the Ganges according to the Hindus, it's a religious thing. We are always getting coconuts in the basin, coconuts of all descriptions.*

(Justin and Hannah Trowbridge, Boating residents, interview, 2009:5)

Place-making therefore occurs through burial where the ashes of a relative are placed in the water of the canal. Furthermore, South Asian culture and practises have been utilised as community building events. Mosques act as a social and community building space for residents, in much the same way that the CDT does for GUV residents. In the autumn of 2007 the CDT held a Diwali festival event in the CDT facilities which was open to all residents. The advert for the event described it as an opportunity to:

*“come and celebrate the Festival of Lights! Come dressed to impress – have a taste of Indian cuisine and a dance at GUV. This is a ‘Taste of India’ on your doorstep! Bring your family and friends come and enjoy”.*

(CDT newsletter, September 2007:2)

This event could be seen as an attempt to integrate two cultures through a shared experience of Asian culture. It is also a commercialisation of Diwali aimed at generating income for the CDT. In spite of this the event offered residents the chance to participate in a shared activity, and therefore develop a sense of community. In addition to spaces of religion, spaces of consumption have also been key in the relationship between race and identity. According to Nasser, “major South Asian high streets tend to be teaming with people buying and selling goods in the public space” (Nasser, 2003a:17). This can be witnessed in West London, by walking down Southall high street with its vibrant atmosphere, street stalls and throngs of people on the pavements. This area is a highly sensory experience through olfactory, aural and visual encounters with places and people.

This however contrasts with the lack of vibrancy within GUV, despite all of the shops being South Asian owned and run. The restaurant for example has an Indian menu, and one of shops next door to this is a halal butchers. Therefore there is a racialisation of the services and shops within GUV focusing on an Asian specialism. This is not to say that these business are targeted at an Asian population:

*“Because of the make-up of the Village, the ethnic groups, the hairdresser said to us that a lot of people who are in the Village don’t have their haircut, they don’t necessarily go to beauticians ((laughs))”.*

(Harry Ledley, CDT board member, static interview, 2009:11)

Experiences of GUV are bound up in residents’ ethnic identity. Whilst there is no racial conflict within the Village, people live different lives and experience the Village differently. Multiculturalism therefore pulls apart community spirit as people engage in different practices, rather than a shared sense of place. The main way in which ethnic minorities have sought to generate a sense of place in GUV is through “their own actions and decisions, [which] are

setting new precedents, as they project an agency of their own design, reshaping parts of the city into novel and heterogeneous communities” (Nasser, 2003b:19). These encounters generate a mixed and vibrant community which is nurtured through CDT events that seek to integrate all cultures. GUV is multicultural through an acceptance of practices undertaken by all ethnic minority groups.

#### 7.2.4 Village versus estate

This section explores the ways in which residents articulate their experiences of the idea of the village, and in particular their sense of themselves and GUV as a village and what village living means to them. Foremost ideas of the village were based around the provision of services rather than notions of community, which are more traditionally associated with village living.

The lack of a mixed-use core for GUV led to negative impacts on its image as an UV. One resident said that when she and her partner were buying their house they didn’t think “of it as an UV...you just think of it as a housing estate because there are not enough amenities here to call it a village, urban or otherwise” (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:7).

There is an interesting contradiction here with UV literature which associates the city with services and infrastructure to sustain a community, whereas the village is associated with increased community experiences. For GUV residents however, the village is associated with a range of services to sustain the needs of the community. This was evident in ideas expressed by Isaac who said:

*“the more facilities that are put in place, the more reasons there are for people to interact here. A sense of identity will develop and the more likely it will become a village. I mean what is a village? You use the post office together, the corner shop, and the same doctor. The more that happens here the greater the spirit will be”.*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:15)

The range of services provided by the village is therefore the setting in which community come together and interact. Foremost, these village services according to Isaac and other GUV residents are key social infrastructure such as doctor’s surgeries, post offices, the corner shop and the church. When interviews were conducted the doctor’s surgery was in the initial stages of being built and only the convenience store was seen as a traditional village service. Residents therefore do not view GUV as a village in the traditional sense of the term, and neither do they believe the Village is an UV as expressed by Elizabeth who said GUV:

*“is a bit smaller than an UV, but it has been designed with the same concept in mind. I think a typical UV would have more in terms of shops and community things. They are building a doctors’ surgery, they were going to build a sports centre but that is clearly not going to happen because they are building one next to Northolt tube station”.*

(Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)

Proximity to other services was also important in residents’ articulations of community. Whilst each village would have its own localised services Elizabeth states that location is important in defining the needs of the Village. Rather than being a localised village with its own services and unique identity, GUV residents use existing local services to fulfil their everyday needs. Residents’ notions of village living are defined by preconceived and often idealised and utopian visions. Many residents said they had never lived in a traditional village and therefore their assumptions about village life were based on wider discourses, primarily paintings and television shows. Rishi expressed the believe that he doesn’t:

*“know what the definition of a village is, I have never lived in a village. I have always lived in London. I don’t know whether to call it a village. For me it is just a name given to the development. I mean I always imagine a village with green fields around it and cattle and obviously there is none of that here!”.*

(Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:3)

Rishi’s sense of the village is therefore is based on the materiality and physicality of place such as the farm and the green fields. UV rhetoric however utilises the village in more of a psychological way, arguing that emotional wellbeing and community cohesion are key elements of village life. Importantly Rishi states that village is just a name in the context of GUV, used by TW to sell houses and attract people to the development. This notion of the village being a meaningless word applied to GUV was echoed by Abigail who said that:

*“It’s a name at the minute, it’s definitely not a village because no one is brought together. I think in ten years time it might be more of a village. I think a village has to have shops, and perhaps a chapel. It should technically have a church”.*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:12)

Location and proximity to other village services is again evident in Abigail’s account of place. As with many other residents she sees village life as being the provision of physical services and infrastructure rather than the cognitive intentions of the UV concept. In spite of this, there were affective understandings of the Village and emotional responses in particular to the naming of the development:

*“It is a housing estate and it’s funny when we have the SNT meetings, you get the PCSOs [Police Community Support Officers] coming in and they call it an estate and some of the residents get on their high horse and say it’s not an estate it’s a development. But strictly speaking it is an estate”.*

(Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:4)

Some residents demonstrate their attachment to place by defending the Village when it is referred to as an estate. Whilst many residents don’t see GUV as a village, there is a stigma attached to the concept of the estate and residents defend GUV’s name and image. Therefore there is an emotional investment in the imageability of the development and in particular the naming of the development. Furthermore, residents’ understandings of village life are based on sensory understandings of place, foremost on tranquillity and a lack of aural experiences. Ana told me that she doesn’t think GUV:

*“feels like a village, I haven’t lived in a village but for me it is going to be somewhere quiet, my side is quiet but here, I can’t say it feels like a village because it doesn’t”.*

(Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:5)

Ana defines her experience in relation to sensory and affective understandings of place, on what the village feels like. Rather than discarding GUV as a village based on physical infrastructure, GUV is too loud and does not have the feel of traditional village living.

### **7.2.5 Mixed-use**

As was shown in chapter 4, GUV was designed as a mixed-use UV. However the ambitious Vision for a mixed-use centre to the north of the development and around the canal basin was not implemented and as a result there is a limited mixture of uses within the development. Therefore “there is not much here, and very little here in terms of business” (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:3). This section examines how residents contest and experience the notion of GUV as a mixed-use UV.

The mixed-use element of GUV is concentrated in the central lozenge area which is the location for Costcutter, smaller shops and the nursery. The Costcutter convenience store is the primary mixed-use element and is used by residents for everyday grocery items. Ana told me the Costcutter is:

*“very handy for running out of milk or something, and it’s open till late as well. It’s one of the good things that we have and Tesco is 5 minutes drive away”.*

(Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:5)

Despite the on-site Costcutter store, residents travel out of the boundaries of GUV for more extensive shopping experiences, primarily to Tesco. The attraction of the Costcutter store however, is the hours that it operates and the sense of convenience it offers residents who do not need to travel to buy grocery items. The Costcutter “was even open on Christmas day” showing the opportunities it offers on a daily basis (Harry Ledley, CDT member, static interview, 2009: 7). Furthermore the Costcutter is positioned as advantageous for the residents because of the locality of services, offering them a way to stay within the Village to shop. Shreya said that she thinks “the Costcutter is an advantage to this development because you need a little shop and the timings that it is open are pretty good” (Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:5).

In spite of this there is also a sense from residents that GUV has not fulfilled the Vision because the facilities that were promised had not been delivered, and when they:

*“brought the property all the marketing collateral said was there was going to be a gym, a health centre, a small urban community and that hasn’t materialised. The Costcutter is more expensive than anywhere else, you keep hearing things about the gym being built and there are no updates on whether it will be built. By all accounts the health centre will be here soon, but we don’t get any updates. I was expecting more to be honest so I’m a bit disappointed”.*

(Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)

This demonstrates how the Vision for GUV contained a series of elements that were designed to enhance residents’ experiences of place by providing social infrastructure that would encourage them to socialise within the boundaries of the Village. GUV was designed to “provide a lot of facilities that buying a house on an ordinary build doesn’t, for example the restaurant, the marina, the supermarket and there’s going to be a GP practice and a gym, but I haven’t seen any of that yet” (Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:1).

Whilst the health centre has been built since this interview was conducted, facilities such as the gym remain undeveloped. There was a sense in my interviews that residents who moved into the Village relatively early in the building process were disheartened by the lack of a mix of uses and elements of the Vision that were promised to them when they were looking to buy within the development. This is emphasised by one local community member who said TW:

*“promised a marina, and it is very nice. They said they were going to have shops, bars and restaurants which would have been nice, but all they have done is build flats. They did talk about a school and a health centre because of the amounts of people”.*

(Charlie Bentley, local resident, static interview, 2009:5)

Residents associate a vibrant mix of uses with community and social interaction which they believe the UV concept should bring. Therefore residents have to travel beyond the boundaries of GUV to shop and for leisure activities. According to Vad:

*“the main drawback for me is that there is nothing else around. They seemed to have developed this and to do anything more exciting you have to go quite far away, I suppose as far as amenities are concerned, there is a supermarket quite close, but that’s about it there are no cafes. Places, like this would have done better to be a café, a nice coffee shop or a bakery. It’s pretty much empty all the time”.*

(Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:2)

The main area in which the mixed-use concept has not been fulfilled is in the northeast corner of the site which was earmarked for offices and shops as part of the original Vision. It is testament to the lack of uses on site that one resident said that he “would not like to see office blocks in a residential area” (Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:9). Furthermore, another resident said that:

*“You don’t want it to have too many things going on because I think it would draw...It is meant to be where we live, it is our home. We don’t want to see too much activity around the area otherwise you could start to draw the wrong type of people or too many people”.*

(Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009: 5)

GUV is defined as a residential space by residents rather than a vibrant mixed-use UV which was the intended Vision. In this sense GUV “could just be classed as another housing estate” (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:3). Therefore the lived experience of place is different from the intentions of design. The aim for GUV was to create a hub for surrounding communities to interact with GUV residents. Instead residents don’t want a wide mix of uses which would mean that GUV becomes a hub for local communities because it would attract people to the development. Instead they define GUV as a residential space distancing themselves from the UV origins of the development. UV aspirations for “compactness with variety, so there are shops, pubs and cafes or restaurants round the corner” are unobtainable in suburban locations due to the economics of delivery but more importantly because residents contest this vibrancy as ‘out of place’ in favour of a residential environment (Aldous, 1992:31).

### **7.2.6 Residents’ sense of the surrounding area**

According to marketing rhetoric from Bryant Homes GUV was designed to “redefine the local area”. Despite this some members of the design team also acknowledged the need to be wary of an ‘them’ and us’ effect when the Village was completed. This was also present in

residents image of place with Isaac stating that he didn't "want a scenario where the Village is an oasis in a desert" (Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:15). Residents said the surrounding areas needed to reflect what GUV had brought to the area and "get up to speed because there are a lot of properties, even a development next to GUV. They are outdated they are not up to speed, this does shine out" (Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009: 11).

GUV therefore is seen by residents in stark contrast to the surrounding communities. The Village's contemporary architectural style contrasts with the 1960s suburban housing that surrounds it and the architectural layout of the housing estates to the north of the Ruislip Road. Due to poor integration with the surrounding community, Isaac said that:

*"by default if you are going to create that kind of village environment there is almost a sense of us and them. When people talk about the blocks opposite to the north and the west, their names escape me, but a lot of people live there. Probably the same amount of people that live here, even more on some estates and we are supposed to be part of the same council ward and the same community. You will have a scenario when other people who live across the road come to use Costcutters and the facilities and that might engender some kind of activity but that is really really superficial and I think it is a bit dangerous to have a scenario where you have one brand spanking new development in and amongst a load of other 1960s blocks that haven't been maintained at all. That is the problem".*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:15)

Residents articulated tensions with the surrounding communities and part of this is bound up in the architectural presence of the estates. GUV's failure to connect with local communities is the result of the design of the development, and articulations of the development as bounded with physical edges on all sides of the Village. Whilst this is deemed to be following UV principles it has led to a distinction between the existing community and GUV residents.

The edge acts as a geographic and cognitive structure that defines GUV as a community. It is a spatial unit that people belong to, and derive their identity as a community from it. These ideas fit within Newman's notion of 'defensible space', and how "defining and protecting the boundaries of an environment...keep[s] strangers, and therefore the risk of crime, away" (Mandanipour, 1996:82). By utilising notions of the surrounding urban fabric as inferior to GUV, residents distance themselves from outsiders to preserve the safety of the Village.

There is a territoriality to residents' experience of local societies, structured by UV rhetoric which calls for a "visible edge and...clear boundary between the village and adjoining development" (Aldous, 1992:83). The creation of edges and boundaries emphasis the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Northolt is constituted by a series of estates which

causes contestation over different spaces of the city as explored in the following observation:

*I listen to a conversation between a young teenage girl and her father. She excitedly tells him that the previous Sunday a man was stabbed in one of the GUV courtyards near Broadmead Road. She says that no one knows if he was a resident or how long he had been there. She carried on and relished in telling him that the air ambulance had landed on the grass bank across the Broadmead Road. As the young girl got into her father's car she remarks "that's why no one will live here!"*

*This echoes an encounter I had one evening after the resident's association meeting. I was sat at a bus stop on Broadmead Road listening to two black teenagers talking. One was telling the other how he was offered £20 to go onto one of the neighbouring estates but refused as he would have been stabbed. Whilst I never felt at risk, I was uneasy as I sat next to the teenagers waiting for the bus. As the bus approached, another teenager arrived, and told them not to get on the bus as they had "stuff" to sort out on a surrounding estate. After a brief conversation all three teenagers got on the bus.*

(Personal observations, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009)

Furthermore in GUV these articulations were related to behaviour of people from outside the development. Ideas of the safe Village in contradiction to the surrounding estates is not based on gated boundaries to the development, but rather, as proposed in chapter 4, a variegated approach. According to Mandanipour:

*"in the anonymous space of metropolitan areas, what is needed is a medium-density, defensible space, where residents are in control and hence prevent criminal behaviour. By the use of mechanisms such as real and symbolic barriers, strongly defined areas of influence, and improved opportunities for surveillance, the design of the residential environments can be effective in crime prevention".*

(Mandanipour, 1996:82)

When talking of the relationship with GUV, local community member Charlie said that due to the large mounds of soil that TW have piled up to the south of the development they:

*"have put a barrier up. Us and them, Ealing and Hillingdon. There is no integration and the park would have been ideal, but they have put the fence in there, and all that soil is building up and I am sure they are not taking it away because I have seen even more being dumped there. I thought the fence would come down to be honest, for integration".*

(Charlie Bentley, local resident, static interview, 2009:13)

The disjuncture between the planning imagination as advocated by the UV ideal calls for a development to integrate into its surroundings. In this exchange the resident speaks of a

missed opportunity to integrate the GUV community with the surrounding societies. This lack of integration is, according to Charlie due to the design of the Village, and namely because of the detailed planning decisions made during completion. In the same interview, Charlie said that GUV and local societies were like “separate estates, it hasn’t brought anyone any closer together. “It is just another estate that has been built and it is not as they promised it would be” (Charlie Bentley, local resident, static interview, 2009:3). This further enforces Charlie’s belief that the Vision was not implemented effectively and that it has enforced the barrier between the site and local societies that existed when it was the location for TW’s headquarters.

At this point it is also interesting to contrast the similarities in attitudes between local community members and GUV residents regarding the ‘outsider’ entering their space. The first quotation is from a local community member and the second is from a GUV resident:

*“I have had a bit of criminal activity towards the cars and they have come from over there [GUV] because I have chased a couple of young kids and they went over there, they were definitely from that area”.*

(Charlie Bentley, local resident, static interview, 2009:5)

*“A lot of people from outside the local area are coming and standing in groups especially behind Costcutter, especially with fierce dogs An area of improvement would be to monitor the people who are down here, especially in large groups. Of course anybody can come, it is an open area but outsiders coming, large dogs and 20 people, standing in a group for nearly one hour or something that scares me”.*

(Suraj Rao, resident, static interview, 2009:4)

Therefore the outsider is seen to bring unacceptable forms of behaviour into the community. There is a tension between existing societies and the new community created at GUV, where the interaction between both communities is not as envisioned. In spite of this elements of integration do exist, particularly the CDT organised events that seek to encourage all members of the community to interact with one another.

This section has shown how aspirations of a vibrant community within GUV have not been met, and the relationships between residents and the surrounding societies are superficial. There is not a sense of affective understandings of place and community apart from small neighbourhood clusters on a micro-geography scale. As a result place and public space are not key elements to GUV residents. Residents move beyond the boundaries of the community for all aspects of their lives and therefore the lived experience of community is limited. There are tensions between trying to engender community and the relationship with surrounding societies. Whereas the UV model believes both relationships are possible, the lived reality

of GUV is different. Mixed-use UV elements also stand in tension to suburban life with residents looking for a residential setting in which to live. The Village is unable to escape its suburban location and community which “are frightened of the idea of mixed-use centres... which they see are inviting crime and undesirable elements into their neighbourhoods” (Neal, 2003:43). Furthermore residents establish boundaries defining themselves in contrast to surrounding societies which they seek to escape.

### 7.3 Residents’ patterns of movement and flow

This section considers the kinaesthetic experience of GUV, specifically focusing on the ways in which residents’ patterns of movement and flow create place within the Village. The car plays a crucial role in defining these patterns of movement, especially beyond the boundaries of GUV but also inhibiting residents’ rhythms. Furthermore, due to its design and the social rules of place controls are placed on the movement of some residents inhibiting their free movement within and beyond the Village.

#### 7.3.1 *The local area and car use*

The car subverts the UV model and its implementation in GUV. Chapter 5 examined how the numbers of cars parking in the Village in HZs had damaged the effect of the design of these areas, with 95% of GUV residents owning a car (RATC, 2010). Justin stated that “I think they started off with the right Vision but because of the problems with the cars and the design of some of the places I don’t think that Vision has been fulfilled” (Justin & Hannah Trowbridge, residents, interview, 2009:20). This shows, how the overall Vision had been compromised by the numbers of cars parking in the Village. This leads to the question, are experiences of car use the result of failed management of cars by the design team, or a lack of understanding of the Vision by residents?

The answer to this question partly lies in both answers, car parking was not well managed by the design team nor enforced early enough. However there was a sense that some residents did not understand the initial Vision when they moved to the Village. This is surmised by Isaac who said TW:

*“didn’t manage the fact that this is a development that wasn’t supposed to be a high user of cars. It wasn’t managed at all, it was a good idea but managed badly because I think people assumed in the beginning that they had spaces to park their cars but they have now found with increasing numbers they don’t have”.*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:5)

There is a contrast between Vision and reality, and the problems that arise if the Vision is not conveyed to residents when they move into the Village. Of all the UV principles followed by TW, car use was the key area in which residents failed to understand and adhere to the Vision. Subsequently car parking is deemed to be a major issue in GUV, and one the management company is having to address with LBE and LBH through parking enforcement. There are however difficulties of implementing a vision for reduced car use in suburbia. Chapter 4 explored how GUV lies at least 2.5km from the nearest fixed node of transport. When coupled with attitudes towards the ease of use of public transport, cost and length of journeys made, this element of the Vision was difficult to enforce. However, had the design intention been made clear to residents when they moved to the Village the impact of cars would have been reduced.

Within GUV car use has subverted UV appeals to the use of public transport, which is exaggerated by the lack of proximate transport nodes. Many residents still own multiple numbers of cars, and use these on their daily commutes to work or to socialise, thus counteracting UV claims to integrate into the surrounding area. Whilst many residents have not altered their patterns of car use some residents have, as demonstrated by Gemma:

*“Steve and Yvonne Yates they’ve done it, they’re private residents in Arcon Drive. They had two cars and they got rid of one, they’ve got two kids that they take to and from school so they’re not just a couple. He goes to work on a bike and if he needs to go to a meeting he’ll use the Car Club”.*

(Gemma Hunter, CDT administrator, static interview, 2009:27)

Overall however there is also the problem of events held in the CDT facilities which cause increased numbers of car parking in the Village and subsequently the “weekends are always chock-a-block here” (Riya Sen, resident, walking interview, 2009:29). The role of the car therefore impacts on the mobilities of residents within the boundaries of the Village and their movement outside of the Village. Within the Village car parking is seen as chaotic because:

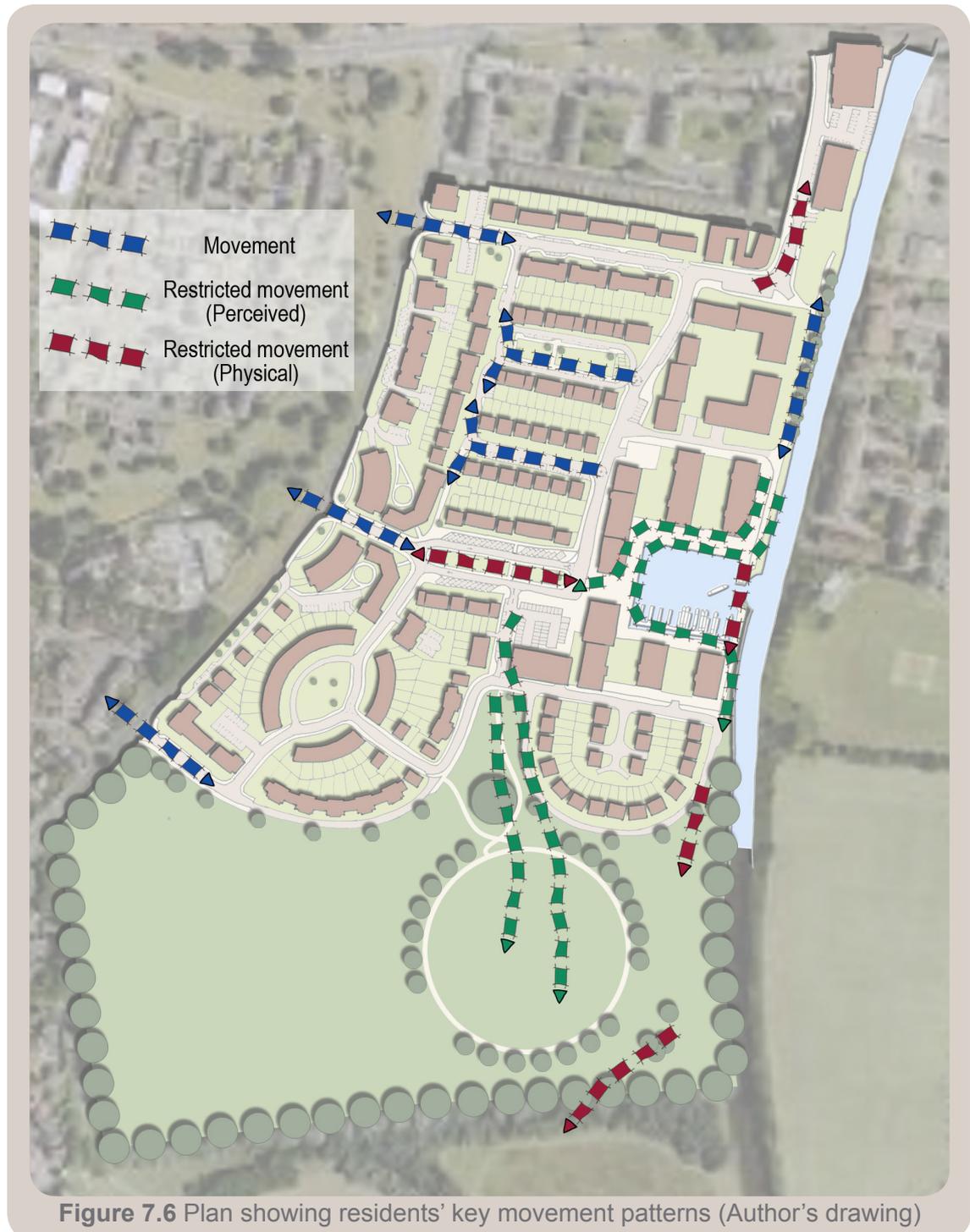
*“people park everywhere, some of the flats don’t have parking and they need to get a residents’ permit. It’s a bit mad at the moment because of the parking in those three blocks people choose to park on the street and not inside because of safety reasons and there are a lot of cars around”.*

(Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:9)

Furthermore residents view with trepidation, attempts to make public transport more visible by running the E6 bus route through the Village as intended in the original Vision. Shreya said that she “wouldn’t want to see a bus route coming through GUV. I think that will draw too much more people” (Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:10). Whilst the bus would provide better transport links it is perceived to bring problems such as excessive noise

and people entering the Village. A resident who lives on Taywood Road and therefore the bus would pass in front of his house said that “bringing in the bus route is going to bring more vehicles through the Village and give additional traffic hazards and noise pollution” (Dylon Bartlett, resident, static interview, 2009:9). Furthermore, Elizabeth said “I can’t stand the [E6] bus, since the development was built they increased the services but it is a small bus and it doesn’t go anywhere of use” highlighting the lack of adequate public transport links” (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:3).

### 7.3.2 Patterns of mobility and movement



Within GUV a series of movement patterns emerge that show popular routes through the development. Figure 7.6 shows these routes, taken from interviews and personal observations regarding the ways in which residents move through GUV. The map shows that residents have a series of perceived and physical constraints on their movement. These are based on entrances to the Village and movement within the HZs. The canal space is utilised as the primary movement space, popular with residents who wish to take a leisurely walk through the development.

In particular the canal is popular with families and residents with young children because of the engagement it offers with the natural environment. Residents use the canal path for walking which is a social activity undertaken with family or friends, as demonstrated by Vad:

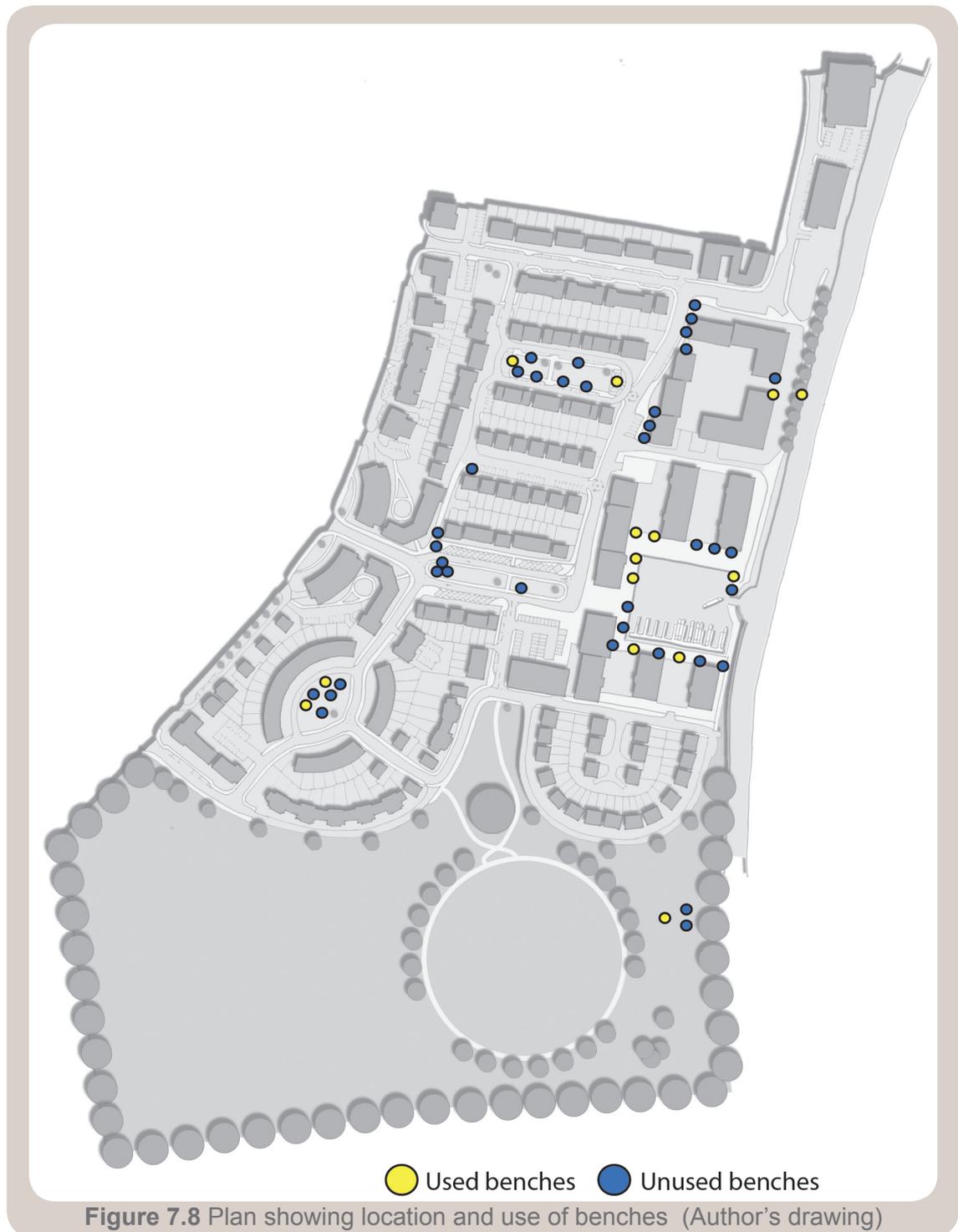
*AN* In terms of where we are stood now, the marina area, do you tend to use this area a lot?

*VG* We come for walks with her [baby], down there, there is a nice sort of meadow. It's really quite pretty and you wouldn't know you were in Northolt to be honest ((laughs)) it is quite nice and it's quiet and you can get away from the general noise that a development like this can bring.

(Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:5)



**Figure 7.7** Residents sit and use the benches in the marina (Author's photo)



Use of the canal path is therefore based on the desire to escape city life. Foremost it focuses on the ways in which tranquil spaces are considered desirable relaxation spaces because of the escape they offer from other parts of GUV, as shown in figure 7.7. The canal is therefore a space that residents use to impress those from outside of the development. However, rather than being a space that residents engage with, the canal basin is a space that many residents simply pass through. This limited interaction with the canal basin contradicts the original Vision which was designed to be a vibrant “destination” that people would come to visit. The lack of mix of uses in this space has created an area in which people sit for a short

period of time and take in the surroundings before moving on through the development. More broadly figure 7.8 shows how there is a micro-geographic clustering of benches within GUV producing areas of use and lack of use. Clusters of benches are found in the marina and at the centre of HZs. At this level there are also micro-geographic networks of behaviour and use of the benches. Whilst the marina and canal side benches are utilised, those in the central lozenge are not.

This lack of use is also bound up in the time that residents have to use the space with many articulating a belief that they would use the marina more if they had the time. Ana who lives in a canalside flat, said that her job in central London meant that she went “for a walk along the canal and then we go to the park. But that is only at weekends when you have got a minute to walk around” (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:3). In contradiction however, Jennifer who is a narrowboat resident said that she walks round the development:

*“quite a lot, particularly when I have been working from home, I have walked round on my lunch hour to get a bit of fresh air and I use the open areas and I think they are very nicely designed”.*

(Jennifer Eames, boating resident, walking interview, 2009:9)

Therefore use of these spaces and movement through the development is dictated by the lives and behavioural patterns of residents. Echoing Jennifer’s statement about how often she is able to use the canal, the following exchange between Suraj and myself shows how he feels it is important to use the development regularly to take his two young children for walks:

*AN Do you tend to use the community spaces, and parks?*

*SR Yes everyday.*

*AN And how do you use them?*

*SR Everyday we go for a walk throughout the Village and use one or two of the open areas.*

(Suraj Rao, resident, static interview, 2009:1)

There is also a seasonal element to the movement patterns of residents, with many spending most time moving through the development for social purposes in the summer months when the weather is better. One resident said “I will go for a walk down the nature area just down there and during the summer we will go down to the cricket pitch” (Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:5).

Residents' patterns of movement are affected by their understandings of the legibility of place. During our interview, Ana wrongly believed that one of the HZs is "a dead-end, I think from that side too" (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:6). This demonstrates the poor legibility of place which led Ana to believe that she was unable to walk through the HZs to connect to the other side of the development. As a result of this she tended to stick to Taywood Road, the main road which runs from north to south in the development.



**Figure 7.9** The tree to the south of the site acts as a landmark for movement patterns (Author's photo)



**Figure 7.10** The TW statue has been relocated as a landmark as people enter the site (Author's photo)

Legibility according to Lynch can be aided by the inclusion of landmarks to guide residents through place and provide memorable experiences on route (Lynch, 1960). As shown in figure 7.9 residents used the large tree in the south of the site as a landmark from which to derive locations and movement patterns, especially when explaining routes to residents

from outside the Village. There are also more formal landmarks designed to add character to place such as the large TW statue that was placed at the entrance of the development in spring 2011 (see figure 7.10). Formal landmarks such as these however are dependent on residents' understandings of the Vision which affects their movement patterns around the development.

### ***7.3.3 Bodies, movement and the Village***

This section considers the ways in which residents move around the Village. Primarily it focuses on the ways in which their movement is inhibited by social rules or physical barriers. According to Imrie architects conceive of the “mobile body...in terms of independence of movement...a body without physical and mental impairments” (Imrie, 2000:1643). As was shown in chapters 4 and 5, UV rhetoric and marketing for GUV was based on the desire to promote ease of movement within the Village but also to surrounding areas regardless of physical impairment. For example in considering the access and movement of disabled users the material supplier for the Village told me that “visually it looks fantastic and practically it does have all the disability requirements [tactile paving, ramps, and lifts] that are required” (David Collyer, Charcon, interview, 2009:17). This ideal clearly speaks to removing issues of the physical barriers placed on the movement of disabled users of the built environment.

Despite this chapter 5 explored the issue of shared surfaces in GUV, and how these spaces were designed to increase experiences of the built environment, mainly for residents who are “able bodied and relatively young and find it easy to get around” (Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:15). Therefore spaces in GUV exclude some users from interacting and utilising the built environment. Wunderlich argues that “motion is also a basic attribute of our bodies and a particular aspect of walking. Together with touch, it influences the perception and appropriation of environmental features, landscape appreciation and social participation” (Wunderlich, 2008:128). Movement within the built environment is therefore important for experiences of the city and barriers to movement as examined in this section degrade these experiences.

Restrictions on people's everyday mobility and use of the built environment also come from social and cultural attitudes to what is an acceptable use of GUV's social spaces. This resonates with the debates discussed earlier in this thesis about whether environmental elements can affect the social outcomes of everyday life.

### ***Children***

The first of these is the movement of children within and beyond the boundaries of GUV. Imrie speaks of the inability of children to freely move from one place to the next using the

example of air travel, or the everyday design of heavy doors or high counters which inhibits their relationship with the built environment (Imrie, 2000). In terms of GUV, childrens' movement is inhibited by the perceived social threat of moving beyond the boundaries of the development, because "concerns over safety seemingly inform the way that parents allow their children to venture into different settings unaccompanied with friends or with siblings" (Holloway, 2001:211). Riya spoke of how her children aren't allowed to "go outside the Village, because I know that it's perfectly safe in the Village" (Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:35).

In this instance social barriers are placed on the movement of children rather than physical barriers. Riya later said in the interview that "they [children] all stick together, they stay together and they stay in the Village and they know the boundaries. You know your child is safe playing around in this Village" (Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:46). There are no gates to stop children moving beyond the boundaries of the Village, instead there is a social expectation that their movement will be conducted within the boundaries of the site unless accompanied by an adult. Whilst younger children are kept in the development by invisible social boundaries, residents attempt to construct social (and sometimes physical) boundaries to keep teenagers out of the Village. Rishi said that the developer "can't put gates on the entrances but that [movement of teenagers] is a concern" (Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:3).

In this sense there is a creation of the unsafe 'other' that lies beyond the boundaries of GUV which contrasts with the perceived safety found within its boundaries. Riya said that the residents "haven't seen a lot of gangs like what you normally do on estates so you can feel safe walking down on the streets here" (Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:33). In this instance "the Village experience becomes positioned as a safe, secure place in the city" (Barnes et al, 2006:344).

Notions of the boundary impacts on childrens' movement patterns and the dichotomy between the safe Village and the unsafe outside was evident in my own observations of GUV:

*I pass over the subtle boundary between Founders Close HZ and move into Apprentice Gardens, the larger of the two HZs. The boundary consists of a change in the colour of the bricks and I now walk over a beige coloured Woburn brick. It is a warm, sunny afternoon and there are numerous children playing in the HZ that I have just left, and I can hear the sound of children in front of me. As I walk northwards, three children cycle towards me. The first is a girl, about 9 years old and wearing a yellow t-shirt and light blue shorts. She stops about 10 metres in front of me and drops her bike to the floor in the middle of the street and walks towards a house to my left. Immediately I see her mother come to the already open door and begin shouting. The mother is dressed in an old,*

*off white T-shirt and jeans, and shouts loudly at the child despite the short distance between the two. "Sophie you left the fucking house without your fucking phone again. I've told you that before", she screams at the child who immediately retorts with the excuse that "it was dead, so I left it to charge. I told you that". Still shouting the mother says "I told you to come home in 20 minutes, and I know you left the fucking Village when you're no supposed to. I need you to go to the shops for me so get your arse in here now". The mother turns and walks back into the house and the young girl follows, leaving her bike in the street. The two other children who were standing and watching whilst this exchange occurs turn and cycle back towards the play area of the HZ".*

(Personal observations, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2010)

The mobile phone is therefore seen as a sense of security for the mother that she can contact her daughter when she needs to, and is clearly angered when her daughter does not take it with her. Furthermore, the boundaries of the Village are defined as the safe edge to which the child can travel, and no further. During this exchange, the mother reminds her daughter that she is not allowed to leave the Village and establishes boundaries to her movement.

Importantly the social barriers placed on the movement of children also extend to teenagers from the surrounding area entering into GUV. GUV "only allows certain members of the public into an area, those deemed to have the 'appropriate' behaviour derived from an implicit moral code" (Edwards, 2008:120). According to Gemma there is an informal surveillance network used by parents on the site to ensure that "you don't get the groups of people hanging round together" (Gemma Hunter, CDT administrator, static interview, 2009:44). This desire for large groups of teenagers not hanging around in the park, the play areas, or the marina is based on notions of safety and security. In all of my interviews where this issue arose it was conceived of in terms of children from outside of GUV coming into the boundaries of the Village and causing social problems.

Residents who were involved in this network would call another "person and say right coming towards your direction, and that one will phone the other person, so if it is suspicious to call 999" (Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:42). Therefore the unsafe 'other' is allowed within the boundaries of GUV on strict conditions and their movement is impeded if suspicion arises amongst residents that unwritten social rules are broken. At this point it is worthwhile noting that these issues speak to the creation of a geographic community created by the enforcement of clearly defined 'edges' of the Village and anyone moving into the boundaries of this community (especially large groups of teenagers) is subject to increased surveillance and limits on their movement. Chapter 5 explored Jane Jacob's notion of 'eyes on the street', and how this was applied to the design of the HZs in GUV. Jacobs argued that control of undesirable elements of urban living was reduced by visual surveillance and created by strong public and residential frontages onto the street (Jacobs, 1961). Within GUV, surveillance of children's movement is based on visual modes of control so that residents

“know where [their] kids are playing, you’ve got an eye on them and vice versa. It’s trust” (Riya Sen, resident, static interview, 2009:32).

Furthermore the geographies of childrens’ spaces they can inhabit are reduced by restrictions placed on their movement within the Village. After 8pm children are not allowed into the Blue Green restaurant regardless of whether they are eating with their family. In addition their behaviour is constantly monitored with a sign at the entrance to the restaurant warning that there is to be no shouting or running around in the restaurant space. Childrens’ movement into the restaurant and their experience of community activities is therefore restricted by social rules designed to make adults experience of the restaurant more pleasurable based on the belief that children are unable to adhere to what is deemed as correct behaviour.

### *The canal edge*

Despite this creation of a dichotomy and “othering” of where is safe for children to freely move around the built environment, social problems also exist within the boundaries of GUV which inhibit movement. First, the ground floor parking areas are deemed unsafe due to their lack of lighting which causes car crime and inhibits movement into these areas particularly at night. These covered parking areas are deemed no-go spaces for people to park their cars and therefore cars are parked on the street protected by the informal surveillance network discussed above.

The canal edge acts as space of no security that prohibits movement along the towpath especially when it is dark. A resident said that if she “was to come more round here late at night I would be quite edgy because some areas are quite dingy” (Miranda Hass, resident, walking interview, 2009:1). Her movement along the canal edge is bound up in an acceptable temporality to use of the space, and she feels safe during the day but unsafe in the evening. This was further evident in the following exchange with Shreya:

*“I feel relatively safe. I don’t feel unsafe. I don’t practice to come home late anyway, but there are times when I do have to come home late. I think the central lozenge where they used to have lights in the middle that makes you feel a bit safer and sometimes those lights work and sometimes they don’t. I think better lighting would help especially in that area”.*

(Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:7)

Residents’ sense of security and movement is bound up in vision and the ability to see others. Light becomes positioned as a key indicator of safety and therefore the ability to move through the space. As Zaharias argues:

“The qualities of artificial lighting in pedestrian areas can have a significant effect on the willingness of people to walk in public areas after sunset. Lighting patterns have a major influence on perceived friendliness of such areas. The perception that such areas are safer, particularly for vulnerable groups, also promotes their use, which in turn deters crime and disorderly behaviour”.

(Zacharias, 2001:11)

There is however a contradiction in the call by residents for the use of lighting within the central lozenge and canal tow path. Lighting makes the space more secure and welcoming, allowing people to use the space. However, the presence of lighting also encourages kids to sit and use play areas and the marina, and make noise and behave in ways deemed inappropriate within the Village.

The unsafe nighttime city environment is further exaggerated by the presence of the canal, a space that is traditionally seen as an unsafe environment especially for women walking alone at night. Canal boat resident Hannah told me that:

*“Security wise it is not too bad. The other night we were out at the meeting and there was no trouble anywhere it was quite quiet. I don’t think I would like to go out on the estate on my own. I don’t think many people do. But during the day I would walk anywhere”.*

(Hannah Trowbridge, boating resident, static interview, 2009:17)

Overall there is a gendered aspect to feelings of safety and free movement. Whilst most females felt the development was unsafe at night, many of the males that were interviewed would only be uncomfortable in specific circumstances, particularly when there is a group of teenagers using the space:

*“the only times I wouldn’t be safe are at night when there are people causing noise down at the marina, but I don’t think many people would feel safe about that. It is obviously a bit different if you are male, but I’ve not had any problems in the development so far”.*

(Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:9)

To some extent the impact on mobility during the evenings can be alleviated through mechanisms designed to increase surveillance on the space and therefore make those using the canal path more comfortable during the evenings. A resident stated that she thinks the developers need to address the “whole issue of needing more CCTV, just to make it more secure” (Miranda Hass, resident 1, walking interview, 2009:1). The presence of visible CCTV creates a space that is more accessible to women through the constant surveillance of the canal path. Unlike informal surveillance networks created by having flats overlooking the canal, the resident articulates feelings that CCTV offers more security.

The movement patterns of other people within GUV also impacts on the sense of security that residents feel. There was a sense that the imminent opening of the SNT police station in the central lozenge would make the development “a little bit safer” (Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:8). This is the result of police officers constantly moving through the development on bikes and in cars acting as a visual deterrent to undesirables within the boundaries of the development, “that will definitely make a difference and once people know they are established there they will make the whole area better” (Miranda Hass, resident 1, walking interview, 2009:6).

### *Desire Lines*



**Figure 7.11** Formalised gap in the fence to allow residents to move south of the site (Author's photo)

There are also instances where physical barriers to movement put in place at the planning stage have been overcome by residents to create greater ease of movement between GUV and the surrounding area. On page 237 I followed Brandon on his walk beyond the development edge and he explained how a metal fence has been forced open to provide residents with access to the parks south of GUV, stating that “everybody uses it as a route to get into these set of parks” (Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:4). Actions such as these transgress barriers to movement put in place at the design stage and blur the edges of GUV as residents seek to create entrances into the surrounding network of parks. As shown in figure 7.11 by 2011 this gap had been formalised through the removal of part of the fence

either by TW or a resident. Whilst the boundary inhibits movement, residents transgress these boundaries and are “sometimes pushing against them or attempting to move beyond” (Stevens, 2006:808).



**Figure 7.12** Desire line created by residents' transgression of the space of GUV (Author's photo)

As figure 7.12 shows the creation of desire lines within GUV is an example of the ways in which residents transgress intended patterns of movement. Rather than walking through the Village on the paths intended, residents have created a network of informal paths. The smallest of these are in the central lozenge where a one-metre desire line has been created through a flowerbed. Whilst the mobilities of some residents were initially inhibited by the location of parks, the creation of desire lines through the plants within the central lozenge area has had an impact on movement resulting from the transgression and contestation of the Vision put in place at the design stage. This transgression of the space fits within a framework of resistance where:

“The simple act of walking [is] resistive, describing it as a ‘process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian’...Pedestrians can reclaim the streets through improvisational tactics, with their footfall fleetingly appropriating spaces that have often been rendered ‘sterile’ by engineers, planners and architects”.

(Holloway, 2001:218)

Residents therefore appropriate the space of the Village for their own movement patterns transgressing the intended uses. According to Sarah Pink the creation of desire lines and our use of paths:

“is intensely personal as by walking them in specific ways we appropriate urban space, as such constituting (multilocal) places through our movement and thus through our emplaced sensory practice. Paths are clearly not simply functional routes that connect one place to another, but meaningful sensory and imaginative places in their own right that interact with and are contextualized by the urban sensescapes of which they form a part”.

(Pink, 2007:70)



**Figure 7.13** Former boundary of GUV transgressed by residents movement patterns (Author's photo)

Residents articulate their own routes through the Village by transgressing restrictions to movement, particularly soft landscaping such as grass and trees. Figure 7.13 shows how the boundaries of the development become extended as barriers are removed. They create new networks of paths which are based on desired routes through the development rather than prescribed formal routes created as part of the Vision process. Jennifer said that not considering movement patterns of residents within the Vision is a:

*“town planning mistake. At that end they have got flowerbeds, they should have waited to see where people walked, and paved that bit of it, because people are walking through the plants because it is nice to walk down the middle, but when it comes to the end you have to walk through a flowerbed to get out of it”.*

(Jennifer Eames, boating resident, walking interview, 2009:11)

Residents' desired movement patterns are inhibited by elements that were not implemented such as the bridge that was due to be built and cross the entrance of the canal. Accordingly Hannah said that:

*“there are a couple of ladies that work at Tesco and they both said they were looking forward to having that bridge built because it would have accessed their work better and they weren’t very happy that it wasn’t built”.*

(Hannah Trowbridge, boating resident, walking interview, 2009:8)

This bridge would have made the movement from north to south along the canal path much easier for those simply passing through GUV. However, the lack of a bridge means residents must walk further into the development and round the canal basin.

The narratives in this section show how the desire of freedom of movement within and beyond the boundaries of GUV are limited for some demographic groups by social pressures and unwritten social rules. For children, the elderly and mobility impaired “it is the accessibility of the walking environment that poses the greatest challenge to their frequent and extensive use. Removal of barriers is an effective means of raising the presence of older people overall in public space” (Zacharias, 2001:11). Often there is a temporal element to these movement controls, with night being associated with crime and the creation of no-go areas especially around the canal edge. Foremost these limits of movement are bound up in the role of the car whether it is through areas such as the underground car parks or the parking of cars on pavements. Chapter 4 discussed how environmental factors sought to change the lifestyles of car-dependent residents within GUV. Despite the design of GUV being predicated on the ease of movement, some groups of residents can be inhibited by not only site specific social attitudes (such as the informal surveillance network) but wider concerns about the social problems associated with high density living, canal side areas and urban night life.

#### 7.4 Sensory experiences of GUV

This section explores the ways in which residents’ sensory experiences of GUV shape their experiences of place. These experiences are bound up in the ways that the design team incorporated a spectrum of sensory experiences into the built environment. By limiting sensory experiences in places such as the canal basin, olfactory and aural encounters become more pronounced and perceived as ‘out of place’. Figure 7.14 details the narrative of sensory experiences of GUV. It is clear that most of these understandings are focused on the central space of the Village, such as the marina and central lozenge, away from the everyday sensory experiences of the home that residents have got used to and therefore neglect to mention.



In Tim Edensor's article 'Sensing the ruin', he explores the relationship between the contemporary built environment and sensory understandings of place and argues cities have:

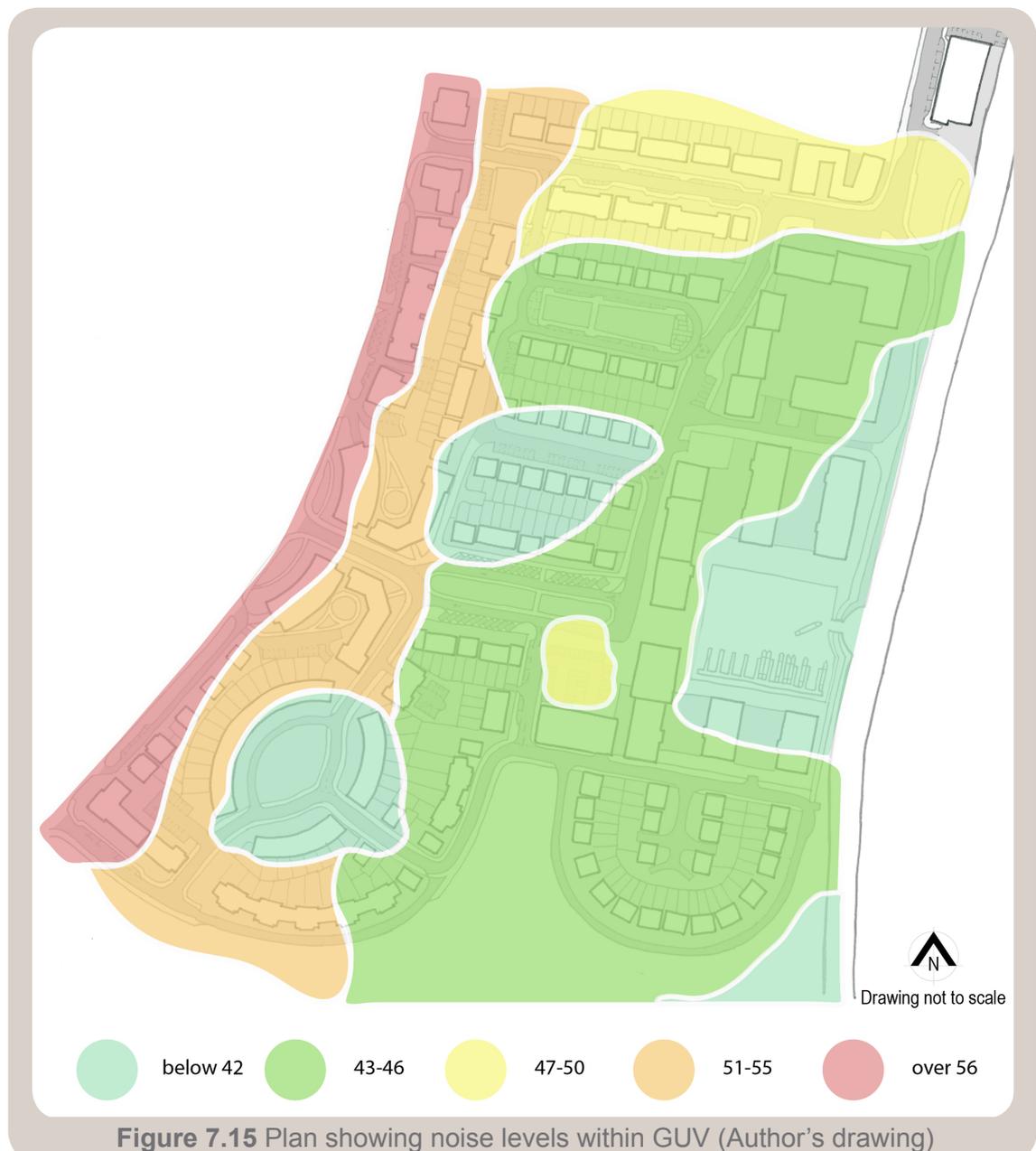
“become progressively desensitized. Regulatory measures have been enacted through planning, policing and commodification of space that have minimized the early modern flux experienced by Simmel and his contemporaries, and, accordingly, present-day sensual experiences is more typically conditioned by entrenched forms

of urban habitus”.

(Edensor, 2007:218)

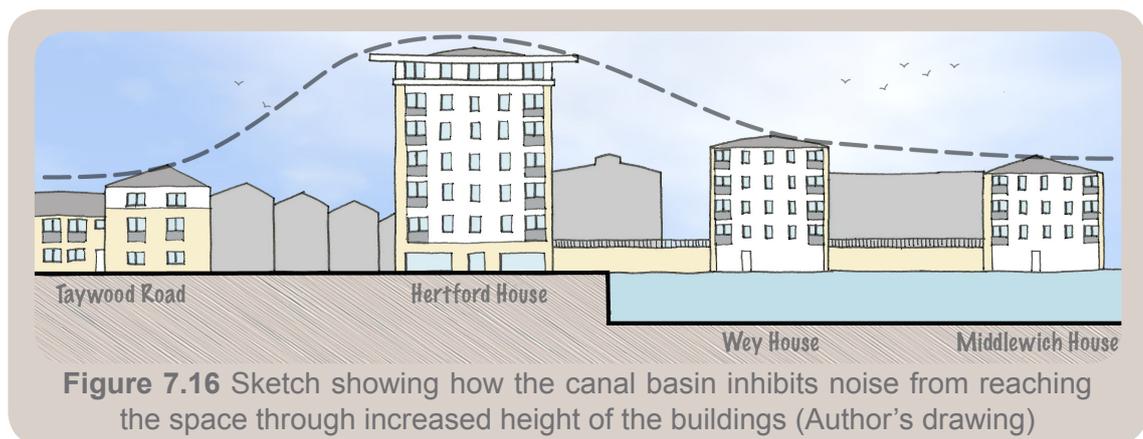
Regulation of the senses in this way has created environments with a limited array of sensory experiences. This notion of a desensualised city environment was evident in the design of the Village. In contradiction to the vibrant city life experienced by Simmel and earlier theorists of city life, the built environment has therefore become devoid of sensory encounters between people and their surroundings (Simmel, 2005). The importance of sensory experience is that it “also provide[s] a strong sense of place and belonging” (Adams et al, 2007:206). As such this section examines residents’ sensory engagements with the built environment focusing on aural, olfactory, visual and tactile encounters with GUV.

#### 7.4.1 Aural experiences of GUV



It is possible to map the quantitative aural experience of sound within GUV by measuring sound levels. Data for this map was collected in 2009 as explored in chapter 3. Figure 7.15 is a map of the decibel levels of noise within GUV showing that the eastern edge of the Village is quietest, and the western edge is loudest. However experiences of sound are bound up in residents' affective and embodied relationship to them. This section considers these experience in different settings of the Village.

### *The canal and noise*



Section 7.1 explored how the canal basin was viewed as a quiet and tranquil place by residents due to the lack of a mix of uses surrounding the canal. The canal basin was therefore designed to be a place with limited aural experiences, and buildings protect the basin from road noise. Figure 7.16 is a cross section of the eastern part of the Village showing how the height of buildings rises at the entrance to the marina before dropping down at the canal edge. Hertford House acts as a buffer to protect the marina from noise. Reflecting on the lack of noise within the development, I observed that:

*The marina area is the quietest place on the development and is incredibly tranquil and calming. The silence of the marina is only punctuated by the conversations of people in the adjacent flats, and the wind blowing through which rustles the leaves on the trees.*

(Personal observations 10<sup>th</sup> August 2009)

In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Juhani Pallasmaa argues that this lack of aural encounters can be profoundly experiential. He states that “the most essential auditory experience created by architecture is tranquility...when the clutter of construction work ceases, and the shouting of workers dies away, a building becomes a museum of waiting, patient silence” (Pallasmaa, 2005:51). According to Pallasmaa, buildings are silent and noise is created by vibrancy and use of the space. Ironically, due to the design decision to define the canal basin as a tranquil place with limited aural experiences, noise becomes exaggerated within the basin, and increasingly disruptive to residents. An example of this was shown on page 225 where Jennifer became

annoyed at children shouting from balconies which echoed around the canal. The contained design of the basin therefore increases the impact of noise as it echoes around the marina.

Pallasmaa also argues that “hearing structures articulates the experience and understanding of space” (Pallasmaa, 2005:49). Sound is therefore received whereas sight is static. In the canal basin sounds move around by echoing off the walls of the buildings that surround the canal. Furthermore, the presence of water increases the extent to which sound is carried. Pallasmaa argues that the “the echo of steps on a paved street has an emotional charge because the sound reverberating from the surrounding walls puts us in direct interaction with space; the sound measures space and makes its scale comprehensible” (Pallasmaa, 2005:51). Echoes therefore allow us to gain a sense of space and the dimensions of the space that we are in. Sound echoing around space is profoundly experiential and bound up in the temporal experience of the city.

For example, the echoing sound of steps on a paved street produces different experiences if a resident walks through the canal basin at night. At night, the echo of the steps creates an unease and fear for the security of the resident. Pallasmaa however believes that “most contemporary public spaces would become more enjoyable through a lower light intensity and its uneven distribution” (Pallasmaa, 2005:49). This is due to the fact that we often close our eyes to heighten our sense of touch and smell. Darkness can therefore “create a sense of solidarity” (Pallasmaa, 2005:49).

The presence of echoes also alludes to a lack of vibrancy within the canal basin. Pallasmaa states that you can sense the “acoustic harshness of an uninhabited and unfurnished house as compared to the affability of a lived home, in which sound is refracted and softened by the numerous surfaces of objects of personal life” (Pallasmaa, 2005:50). The lack of use within the marina, and people using the space increases the impact of noise echoing around. There is an “acoustic order” within GUV that defines a lack of loud and noisy sounds as ‘out of place’.



- 1 "I think it is quite smart, and quite nice, but it seems to be under used, and I would like to have seen more people walking around and I don't know why they don't" (Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:18)
- 2 "Look at it, the cars, it's completely sort of marred it" (Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:18)
- 3 "I don't know why that was put there, those cobbles, because you can't walk on them, it is actually not very comfortable to walk on so they are clearly there for the cars" (Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:18)
- 4 "I wish they would take the flags down, it is about time, I mean they have sold most of them now" (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:18)
- 5 "I suspect that as soon as Taylor Woodrow move out of here the whole place will fall apart" (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:14)
- 6 "I liked the flagpoles because they were very nautical and coming from the sea I loved the sound of them. It was lovely they really added something and really gave it a sort of stamp and identity" (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:14)
- 7 "I love it, I really love it. What I am frustrated by is the fact that the lights are never on" (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:14)
- 8 "It was a good little space, you could see how it would work as well because the gardening was well maintained. Now obviously it is being used as a giant car parking space" (Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:12)

**Figure 7.17** Residents' articulations of their experiences of the central lozenge  
(Author's drawing)

The marina basin was the main area in which residents identified how the use of the space at certain points of the day negatively impacts on their daily lives (see figure 7.17). Foremost people leaving the Blue Green restaurant at night and teenagers sitting on the granite benches making considerable noise is deemed problematic. Both of these experiences are based on the sensory impacts of people in the basin which impacts on the lives of other residents. These ideas were due to negative sensory impacts that noise has when carried over water.

One resident who lives in a flat overlooking the basin stated that the main problems:

*“you get people sitting outside drinking after the pubs close. I don’t think people realise how much sound carries over water, and the pub may be sound proof but whenever you have got people after a few beers standing outside drinking, smoking and roaring it can be quite annoying because the sound bounces off the walls and all the way up as well”.*

(Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:7)

This resident articulates his experience of the canal basin during some evenings through the negative sensory impact of people using the restaurant on the edge of the canal basin. He explores the relationship between design and experience where one of the few facilities that was provided by TW on the canal basin creates a negative experience of place. Chapter 5 showed how the canal basin suffered as a result of the lack of active frontages along the canal basin and the lack of a mix of uses in this area. It is interesting to note that residents however feel that this creates a more homely environment for those living in the boats and in the surrounding flats. During my interviews a number of residents said that a wide mix of shops and services in the canal basin would have created increased noise in this area of the Village and been aurally damaging.

Abigail who lives closer to Broadmead Road said she thinks “the location of Blue Green is a bit unfortunate because it leads people to behave badly in that area and there is a lot of noise created there. I don’t think they realised how much it would echo, and they have a lot of problems with noise” (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:11). This explicitly refers to TW and the design team and how a design intention, based on UV principles, has created a negative experience of place. This experience is based on the negative sensory aspects created by the restaurant. There is a tension between providing services for residents to use, and their impact on the lives of people that live near them. Experiences such as these are bound up in the geographic location of residents. For example, a resident that lives in a different part of the Village would view the lack of uses within the basin in negative terms as they don’t have to experience this noise on a regular basis. Furthermore this was echoed by one resident who said “although we love our house we don’t really like living here that much and that might be because of where we are right on the spot where there is most noise pollution. We might have a different experience living here if we were in a different part of it’ (Dylon Bartlett, resident, interview, 2009:5).

### **Road Noise**

Experiences of GUV are punctuated by an array of aural encounters which impact upon residents’ articulations of place. The impact of the car on residents’ mobilities within GUV has been expressed in section 7.3.1, however the car also has an affect on residents’ aural

experience of the Village. Negative aural senses of place are created by vans and cars moving through GUV during the early morning. Dissatisfaction over encounters with early morning traffic were expressed by a resident who said that GUV:

*“is high-density accommodation which brings in problems like traffic congestion, so sometimes it feels like one big car park. There is a lot of noise pollution and people get the brunt of it living on Taywood Road. Every morning between 5.30 and 6.30am there is a fleet of diesel vehicles leaving the Village and it is all the people that park their vehicle up in the Village. The Village acts as a natural amphitheatre so it’s very noisy, in the early hours of the morning. I think as well that a lot of people living here don’t realise the amount of noise they are making particularly if you get a group of people out on the street up to midnight, 1 in the morning, talking and laughing”.*

(Dylon Bartlett, resident, static interview, 2009:2)

The ‘white van’ hints at the working class and manual labour jobs undertaken by some members of the community, however there are deeper sensory issues at play here. The van is louder and more imposing than the car, especially given the time that it moves through GUV. These encounters with road noise are transient, lasting for a short period of time before the van has moved through the space and out of the Village. Therefore there are times during which the noise is more prominent. These negative reactions to the design of GUV can be seen as a consequence of living in a dense UV with narrow streets and a large population. Such articulations of place are based on aural encounters and experiences with other residents, and the cars and vans they drive.

Conversely, other residents expressed the view that the design of GUV eliminated road noise from some parts of the Village, Abigail stated “we are so lucky where I am because it is so peaceful the way that it is set up” (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:10). The layout and design of the Village therefore screens houses from excessive road noise from Broadmead Road. Therefore there is a spatial element to road noise which impacts on those living on Taywood Road, who have to contend with the noise from vans and cars leaving the Village. On the other hand, those residents such as Abigail who live away from the main routes out of the Village are protected by the noise from these vans, and the road noise from Broadmead Road. Soft landscaping impacts on encounters with noise as explored by Isaac who said that:

*“you don’t really hear that much I have got to say, it is well insulated maybe it is because of the high hedges. Obviously you get the odd speeder but apart from that you don’t get that much noise pollution from cars”.*

(Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)

Unlike car parking therefore which is problematic for the whole Village, road noise is only problematic in some areas of the Village, such as the main route out of GUV. Coupled with the lack of a shield from the Broadmead Road traffic, the central lozenge becomes a 'noisy' space for aural road traffic pollution. This usage however has a temporal element, and noise is heightened during the early morning and rush hour traffic. Whilst this may prove problematic for those trying to sleep, rush hour noise was not deemed a problem for some residents because of their daily patterns of movement. Brandon said "we don't hear very much at all because during the time when it would be really busy we are inside getting ready, we are not going to spend time in the garden during rush hour" (Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:10). Therefore road noise only becomes problematic when it impacts on the daily routines and experiences of GUV residents.

### ***CDT and shop noise***

The location of the CDT facilities and its proximity to the surrounding flats is seen in negative terms because it limits the extent to which the Trust can operate its facilities. There are limits on the noise and the hours that the CDT can operate due to the flats located above and adjacent to them. Abigail, runs self defence classes in the CDT facilities and illustrates the problems of its location:

*"There is residential above and so you can't make any noise. If you sneeze the noise limiter will go off, so the youth club are not able to relax. I couldn't put music on because we are afraid they are going to disturb the residents so that is really tricky and I think if they had been able to sort out the sound between the ceiling and the people above that would have helped a lot".*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:8)

The CDT noise limiter which flashes when a certain decibel of noise is reached, is designed to control the aural impact of CDT activities on the surrounding flats and houses. There is an acceptable level of noise that those in the CDT facilities can make before the limiter is set off. Despite this, noise from the CDT impacts upon those who dwell in the surrounding streets, demonstrated by Rishi who;

*"didn't realise when [he] brought this house that the room above the Costcutter is a community centre which people hire on weekends. Especially in the summer months when you tend to leave the windows open, noise is a problem".*

(Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:2)

There was therefore a miscommunication or misunderstanding of the location of the facilities to Rishi when he purchased his house from TW. Rishi also has problems with the noise from the Costcutter convenience store, specifically the delivery of food to the shop.

He stated that:

*“traffic noise is a nuisance for me. Big lorries come to deliver stuff for the supermarket and they park just outside my house. So that is a nuisance but these are things that you don’t think about when you buy a house. It sounds very nice having a supermarket right next to your home but you don’t think about the problems and that is one of the problems. There is a delivery every other day and unfortunately their goods entrance is just on this wall so it’s a real problem”.*

(Rishi Chopra, resident, static interview, 2009:9)

Mixed-use therefore creates problems of noise through the hidden geographies of servicing. There is a balance between providing a range of shops and services and the reality of maintaining them. It is widespread practice within urban design to service shops at the back of a building, or in what Goffman terms the “back stage” (Goffman, 1959). The “back stage” allows behaviours and practices to occur that would be deemed unacceptable in the “front stage”. Practices within the “back stage” of GUV include the servicing of the Costcutter that many residents don’t see yet impacts on their daily lives. Whilst the “back stage” of the facilities is hidden from the main route through the Village, the noise impacts on those residents in Brazier Crescent.

Within the central lozenge, car parking impacts on the servicing of the shops by inhibiting the movement of lorries into GUV, which echoes fears about the diversion of the E6 bus route through the Village, and Gemma explained how the:

*“turn around design is not brilliant because of the big lorries. Costcutters downstairs, get the juggernauts, originally when it was first opened they had these big lorries coming down, and there was no way on earth they’re going to come round there and turn round, with the amount of cars that get parked there. So for whatever reason I think Trinity got involved and they started directing lorries around a different way but it was just impossible because the loading bay is at the back and you’ve got a thin road there, and although it’s got two sides it’s still reasonably thin. There’s a lot of turns and twists in the Village so either it needs to be that the convenience store is at the front so you’ve got a main road to deal with or maybe they don’t put a convenience store in the middle of the Village”.*

(Gemma Hunter, CDT administrator, static interview, 2009:26)

The noise and mobilities of servicing the shops in GUV creates unacceptable aural encounters between residents and delivery lorries that bring goods with them to replenish the Costcutter store.

*Play area noise*

Small, localised play areas are placed within all character areas, designed to allow children to interact with one another. However, these play areas are subject to contested accounts of what is acceptable behaviour within these spaces, and this section focuses on the noise that children make within these areas and how this impacts upon those people that dwell near these spaces.

Children's aural experiences of the play areas are deemed unacceptable by some residents as it impacts on the experience of their home environment. Noise transgresses the boundaries of properties inside of which residents try to establish their own identities and practices away from the community. Shreya said that:

*“the only problem I have when it comes to noise is the children, they make far too much noise and there is a lot of play areas and green areas for them to play in, and instead they will play outside people's homes and sometimes I come in from work and I just want to relax I don't want to hear any noise in my ears and I think that some of the parents don't have much respect for others, they don't consider that some people don't want to hear noise. I don't have a problem with children but they do play all day. Sometimes on a Saturday they will be out from 11am right up to 9pm. They are about 8 or 9, they are not teenagers, they are my noise problem with the ball and the kicking of the ball and it's just noisy”.*

(Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)

The noise of play created by children is therefore seen as inappropriate when it passes boundaries and moves from the public realm of the play areas into the private areas of people's homes. Childrens' practices within the play areas are therefore marginalised by some residents who deem them as being out of place within GUV. Noisy play by children and adults who use the play areas is viewed as a behaviour that sits outside of the unwritten social rules and sensory practices allowed within the Village. The transgression of noise from the play areas into people's homes blurs the distinction between public and private space. This is seen as inappropriate by some residents such as Shreya, whereas others (often with children of their own) deem it an acceptable use of space and blurring of boundaries as highlighted by the following exchange between Elizabeth, Vad and myself:

*AN* Do you get much noise from the play areas?

*VG* Well that doesn't really bother me to be honest I don't really notice it.

*EG* We've only got the small bit next to the car park, and the kids do play out there but we don't really notice it.

**VG** *But that kind of noise for me is all right.*

**EG** *Yeah I would rather have that than major noise.*

(Vad Grzesik, Elizabeth Garrett, residents, walking interview, 2009:4)

There is a contradiction in the idea of major noise within the play areas. Residents such as Vad use it to mean the aural experiences that result from anti-social behaviour and use of the play areas such as teenagers during the night. Another example of ‘major noise’ is a female resident who:

*“lets her dogs out up to 2 o’clock in the morning. It is a small kiddies play area, so she shouldn’t have the dogs in there anyway. She doesn’t pick up the dogs mess, and it is a really antisocial thing for her to do, the dogs bark there up to 5 hours a day and it is really awful because it does disturb everybody”.*

(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:9)

Children’s use of the play areas is deemed acceptable by residents because they are not transgressing the rules of the play areas, unlike the women in the above story who takes her dogs into the play areas despite clear signs that state that no dogs are allowed. Whereas children transgress the unwritten social rules of acceptable behaviour within the play areas, this resident transgresses overt controls on the use of space by allowing her dog to use the play areas. Whilst they also create a distinction between anti-social noise and children’s play, residents such as Shreya see major noise as something which encroaches into their personal space interrupting their private practices and routines. This includes children playing in the play areas outside of their flats.

### ***Internal noise***

Residents’ experience of higher density living and proximity to other residents is often articulated through aural encounters with neighbours. This is based on the impact of noise that neighbours make which affects the lives of GUV residents. Residents’ expressed negative experiences of place in their own flat because of the noise created by others. Vad said that the flats:

*“look pretty smart but the impact sound from up above is really bad. We had a problem with neighbours for about 2 years, they laid down carpet but even then it didn’t make any difference”.*

(Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:4)

The visual presence of Vad's flat masks the ways in which the materials, in this case carpet and laminate flooring, were inadequate to perform the task of reducing noise from neighbours. Proximity to others is deemed in a negative terms, unless aural experiences are eradicated through the use of materials that stop sounds from other flats. Primarily this dissatisfaction focused around the shared tenancy ownership flats on Broadmead Road. GUV residents viewed their flat as an escape from the community and others within the Village. Their flat was their own space, and therefore they were able to disconnect from the outside world when inside. The encroachment of other residents' noise into their personal space was deemed problematic, whether this be people talking or the impact of road noise into people's homes. Abigail said that she can hear "the noises that the residents above make when they walk, I can hear them really easily. I can hear them opening and closing drawers. Their washing machine makes my dishes rattle in the cupboards. It is really loud" (Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:8).

#### 7.4.2 Olfactory experiences of GUV

Olfactory experiences of place are limited in the modern built environment. Tim Edensor argues that there is a contemporary trend for producing environments that are devoid of smellscapes which creates the "desensitized realms of much urban space" (Edensor, 2007:218).

On page 226 Jennifer spoke of the discomfort and inconvenience that the boating community experience due to the smells created by the pump out facilities within the canal basin. This was something that I experienced in my observations of the marina:

*Normally the marina is distinguishable for the lack of smells which can be sensed in this area, even when the restaurant is open. No smells of rich Indian food penetrate into the marina to entice people into the restaurant, and indeed often I walk through this area and notice nothing of substance. Today however I wish this was still the case. There was a strong smell of faeces in the marina area, the smell was disgusting, overpowering especially around the restaurant, I have to move on quickly and walk hurriedly past the restaurant to the other side of the marina.*

(Personal observations, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009)

Therefore there is a contradiction between wanting the Vision of a vibrant canal used by boats, and the lived reality of the boats being in the basin. The daily need to pump out the boats creates a smellscape that goes against the desensitized basin. The lack of smells within the Village creates heightened olfactory experiences when they do occur:

*"TW have got some major problems with the drains. It stems from where the main sewers go under the pavement across the front of Blue Green. They had the pipe work up a couple of months ago*

*but it doesn't seemed to have sorted it and the previous owner to Blue Green asked the boaters not to pump out after 12 o'clock which is when his restaurant opened. That is not always practical, yes we try as much as possible. That owner has now gone and someone else owns Blue Green and for a time there wasn't a problem with any smell but we have noticed it recently".*

(Hannah Trowbridge, boating residents, static interview, 2009:7)

Tim Edensor argues that this transgression of the normal sensory encounters with the city is something that will always occur and cannot be planned against. He states that "sensual order may be confounded in the course of everyday life. An intensive maintenance must be persistently mobilized to minimize the impact of strong sensations, but this is insufficient, for the smell of drains and body odour, car screeches and alarms, lurid clothing and outmoded artefacts, crumbling pavements and spilling rubbish can cause us to stop in our tracks" (Edensor, 2007:222).

An example of this comes from bins which are provided for all GUV residents and are stored to prevent the smell of rubbish. In spite of this design attempt to reduce smells, the experience of the bins is different to the design intention as the following extract shows:

*"the communal bins are too close to the living spaces. There was an instance here where maggots somehow got under the doorway and into the communal space and I found it quite hard for someone to come down from pest control and deal with it. They didn't know what was happening because the problem you have here is that if you look at the two bin spaces they are obviously right on the main road so you have got fly-tipping. You can see a TV over there from people who live around here. Mixed with that you get a scenario where people leave around the bins, soft waste, food waste, liquids so all of this gets mixed and 2 years ago there was a bit of a problem with the heat wave, they still haven't dealt with it because they used to have doors but they took the doors away but it makes no difference at all. There is a real problem in that respect about having a health and safety issue particularly with maggots and smells coming into the communal area".*

(Isaac Wilkinson, GUV resident, walking interview, 2009:10)

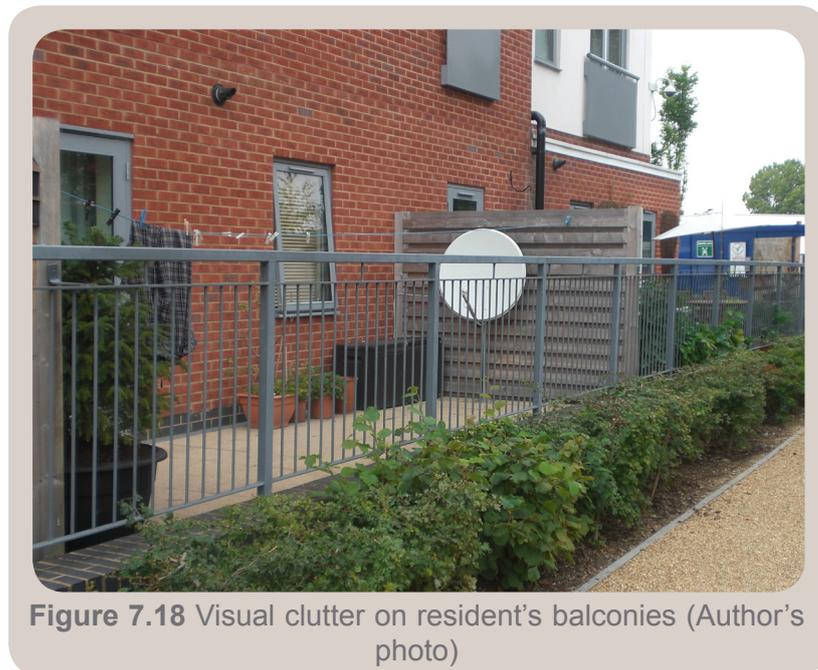
Therefore the smell created by the bins is deemed out of place within GUV, and restricting normal olfactory practice within the Village.

### **7.4.3 Visual clutter**

GUV is symptomatic of contemporary urban development in that it sought to create an environment that had very little visual clutter. Tim Edensor argues that in "urban and domestic realms, the sheer smoothness of space, the constant maintenance of space and objects through cleaning, polishing and disposal effectively restricts and regulates sensory experience, minimizing confrontations with textures, weight, and other material agencies"

(Edensor, 2007:226).

Residents' sense of GUV was that it was a clean and crisp space visually. Vad told me when he first arrived he "thought it looked smart, it looked promising is probably the word...the canal, it just looks quite nice doesn't it?" (Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:1). Part of this notion of GUV as 'clean' is bound up in the lack of clutter. Everything has its place within the development, for example, the bins are designed to be stored away in locked brick sheds, therefore reducing the visual impact of large industrial metal bins on the residents. It is for this reason that clutter on balconies, and satellite dishes is deemed problematic because they are visual clutter (see figure 7.18).



**Figure 7.18** Visual clutter on resident's balconies (Author's photo)

Furthermore, GUV is a neutral space, designed to be appealing to all. When asked about the aesthetic qualities of the marina blocks a resident said:

*"I think they are pretty nice, the interior reminds me a bit of halls of residence when I was at university because everything has got the magnolia paint but that is just to make sure that everything is neutral to make it easy for everybody".*

(Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:5)

The neutral aesthetics of the blocks are therefore pleasing to the eye for residents and are unimposing in their design. There are however critics of the placeless and contemporary architectural style of the Village, such as resident Elizabeth who said that:

*"architecturally I don't think it is very good, I think they could have done a lot more and I have seen pictures of developments where they have done a lot more and it's 21<sup>st</sup> century living. This, is*

*just the same as anywhere else I have seen. They have just slung it up very quickly and they haven't put a great deal of thought. They changed the designs on properties so it is different designs, but variations on a theme. There is nothing that stands out for me. My sister doesn't know much about these things but came here and said 'oh it looks like Brookside', and it does. They could have done more. It's a shame, but it's not bad. The shared ownership I guess it's not unattractive".*

(Elizabeth Garrett, walking interview, 2009:14)

## 7.5 The lived experience of materials

### 7.5.1 Appropriating space and materials

Residents establish a unique sense of identity and experience through their interactions with the materials of GUV. Foremost they appropriate these materials and spaces for their own purposes, marking certain spaces of their Village as their own. This is achieved through practices which impact on the materials of place. Some of these practices are undertaken in public spaces transgressing not only the unwritten rules of GUV, but in some cases the law.



**Figure 7.19** Residents appropriate their balconies with washing, bamboo and satellite dishes (Author's photo)

According to Thomas “we use space in important ways to present ourselves we ‘do up’ our home or our office, we vie for the ‘best kept’ village award” (Thomas, 2000:36) In GUV residents appropriate their own balconies and patios for their own needs and uses (see figure 7.19). Some residents leave their bikes on their balconies, a result of the lack of security in

the communal bike stores and the numbers of bikes stolen. Other residents place washing to dry either on lines they have erected themselves between the edges of their balconies, or draped over the front metal railings. Both of these seemingly innocuous acts however, transgresses the rules of some tenancy agreements they have signed with social landlords, primarily Paddington Churches Housing Association (PCHA).

Residents transgress these controls placed on the aesthetics of balconies and patios by appropriating the space for their own, regardless of the controls on what they are allowed to do on their balconies. This has caused tension within the Village, often in the name of visual deterioration of place that some residents argue occurs when people undertake these practices. Abigail for example stated that she doesn't:

*"like to see people's washing on the balcony. Things like that brings the place down and I think the PCHA could be sharper with being on top of that. There is no need for people to break the rules like that. It spoils it for everybody and the PCHA need to address those issues. And it's not just PCHA because in some of the Trinity blocks it is worse because you get people leaving mattresses on their balconies and exercise bikes and all sorts of things that shouldn't happen because they are too lazy or too inefficient to get on top of the situation and keep things looking nice. To me the aesthetics does make a huge difference as to how people treat a place. If it is kept on top of, there will be less vandalism, people will have more respect because they know it is a nice area. So it's common sense to keep on top of the situation".*

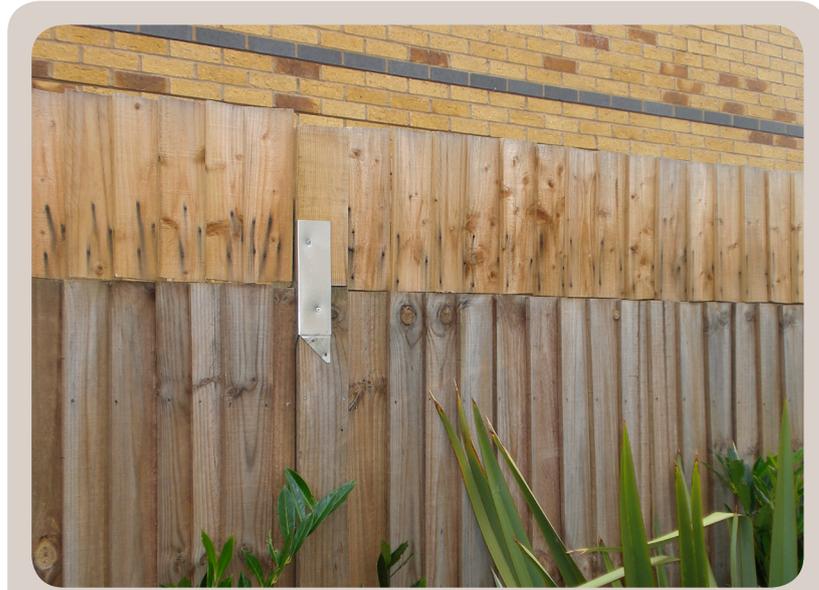
(Abigail Clouter, resident, walking interview, 2009:9)

These processes therefore provide a visual problem for those walking around GUV who deem this type of activity as messy and detrimental. Furthermore, the installation of satellite dishes on people's balconies adds to the ways in which people wish to appropriate their own balconies, but has also caused problems with how people perceive the Village. Some residents, especially those on the ground floor, seek to create a clear distinction between public and private space. They create a sense of privacy from the outside by placing bamboo sticks across the edges of their patios. By doing this they are marking the space as their own, and attempting to create a visual buffer between themselves and anyone using the canal paths or roads.

Small private spaces such as patios are important to the everyday social routines of residents who use these space to relax and socialise. When asked if she used her private patio, Ana said:

*"Yes, everyday ((laughs)). I would not move to a higher floor, one of the things I wanted was a patio. We needed a small garden or think we had one, that you can open the doors and then come outside".*

(Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:8)



**Figure 7.20** Residents appropriate their own residential boundaries to inhibit movement (Author's photo)

Residents therefore value the role that private space has on their wellbeing as much as they do the public spaces. Figure 7.20 shows how a resident of the Founders Close HZ has sought to extend the height of their back garden fence for privacy. As the occupant of the end of terrace house the resident has sought to limit access to outsiders and undesirables who may wish to enter the property either to steal or escape the police, as was the case in another property in Ballinger Way, and Brandon stated:

*“shortly after we moved in they [the burglar] got in through the back door and our garden backs onto other gardens so somebody had to jump over two or three sets of seven-foot fences and then break into our house and they nicked a pretty decent sized telly which was great because that just meant that I got to get a bigger television ((laughs)). But I thought that was odd that they were able to do that, I mean that takes quite a feat to be able to climb over a fence, in the middle of the night”.*

(Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:10)

Therefore by increasing the height of their back fence, the resident of Founders Close seeks to limit the movement of the type of people described by Brandon. Furthermore they are marking the boundaries of their property through the use of materials, and appropriating the materials that already exist. Figure 7.21 shows residents articulations of experiences of the materials in the HZs.



- ① "I don't see the point in it to be honest" (Vad Grzesik, resident, walking interview, 2009:13)
- ② "It does feel very crowded that area" (Ana Ronal, resident, walking interview, 2009:4)
- ③ "Aesthetically it breaks up the uniformity of the Village" (Trevor Richardson, static interview, 2009:9)
- ④ "This is kind of odd. It sort of marks the boundary I guess of the next bit of development" (Jennifer Eames, resident, walking interview, 2009:10)
- ⑤ "I notice they used different bricks for different areas and I was sure somebody thought about that and why they would do it, but some of them are mismatched. I think as they have got two different coloured bricks in the same one" (Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:13)
- ⑥ "Yeah I do like this area" (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:10)
- ⑦ "I am led to believe that they have not really worked that well, if you get scenarios where people park in front of other people's cars that could be a problem" (Isaac Wilkinson, resident, walking interview, 2009:3)
- ⑧ "I think the fact we haven't noticed the change in colour means it doesn't work" (Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:13)
- ⑨ "There is quite a lot of planning gone into this so that you are being herded into one direction or another when living here" (Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:16)

**Figure 7.21** Residents articulations of experience of the Home Zones (Author's drawing)

Whilst not widespread in GUV the practice of graffiti takes place in some parts of the Village. According to Holloway graffiti is "a sign of disorder and act of resistance" (Holloway, 2001:220). Seeing the materials as a blank canvas, those responsible have transgressed the rules and behavioural patterns of GUV residents and sought to mark a part of GUV as their own. Therefore young people "through various practices try to create spaces of significance to them and exploit what is available on their terms" (Thomas, 2000:37). Often the graffiti consists only of a tag, however figure 7.22 shows how one person wrote "welcome to Apprentice Gardens" on the doors of an electric store. No form of graffiti however is

accepted in GUV and in the same way that Abigail articulated her belief that the visual clutter of the balcony brought down the Village, resident Shreya Mistry said that she “also had to call Ealing council to get graffiti cleaned off the walls of flats” (Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:12).



**Figure 7.22** Transgressing place: Graffiti in the Apprentice Gardens Home Zone (Author's photo)

There is a less serious form of tagging and appropriation of space that occurs within GUV as the following extract from my research diary shows:

*I sit down on one of the grey granite benches at the centre of Ballinger Way with my back towards the open grassed area, and facing the play area. Despite the hot weather and summer holidays, no children are using the space today and it is eerily quiet. The only noise I can hear is two young males talking, and I look up to see them stood on one of the balconies to my right. As I look back down something on the pavement catches my eye. Even though it is smudged, I can make out the remnants of chalk on the dirty block paving beneath my feet. Children have been using this space to draw pictures and write on the paving. I can make out some kind of horse and the word hello written in white chalk a metre from where I am sat. I think about the contradiction between this form of marking the street, and how upset residents are by some of the graffiti that occurs. In many ways the only difference between the two practices is the innocence of youth, and lack of permanence in the use of chalk”.*

(Personal observations, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2010)

Children therefore use the materials as a blank canvas on which to draw and write in much the same way they would use a blank piece of paper to paint. The clean surfaces of the block paving in Ballinger Way provides an ideal surface on which to make their own presence and mark on the Village, yet in a less permanent and socially acceptable way to graffiti.

### 7.5.2 *Maintaining and experiencing materials*

Residents experience the materials of GUV on their daily routines around the Village, interacting with the blue flag paving, the gravel paths and granite seats. Some of these interactions however differ from the intended Vision of the materials used, as residents appropriate materials for their own uses. One such example comes from the granite seats located in the basin. These seats are the location for contestation over public space especially during the evening when teenagers sit on them creating noise that impacts on the lives of those in the canal boats and surrounding flats.

Canal boat residents have therefore sought to limit this use of the seats by creating barriers to stop the use of the seats, namely by making them unusable as demonstrated in the following exchange:

*JT* These lights up here at the end are magnets to the youngsters. We appreciate there have got to be lights there for health and safety but it is the type of lighting and the timing they are on. They are on all night so we can get people up there at 2, 3, 4 o'clock whenever...

*HT* ...to be honest with you last year particularly on a Saturday night I would be filling our water tank which is in the bow of the boat and don't ask me how but the bench immediately at the end of the wall here they tended to get rather wet ((laughs)), to discourage people from sitting down there.

(Justin and Hannah Trowbridge, boating residents, static interview, 2009:13)

This shows how light encourages people to use the benches, although residents discourage this use by practices such as spraying water on the benches. Residents therefore transgress the intended usage of the seats and make them spaces that other users of the canal are unable to utilise. This appropriation of the materials is bound up in the aural experience of the marina and how use of the materials during this time is deemed inappropriate.

Furthermore, teenagers that are using the canal space during this time also appropriate the materials for their own benefit. The gaps in the brickwork for the underground parking acts as an informal ladder which children can climb up as Hannah and Justin demonstrate:

*HT* You see these walls on the car parks, the kids like climbing up there.

*AN* Really

*HT* You often see police officers scrambling up there and chasing someone.

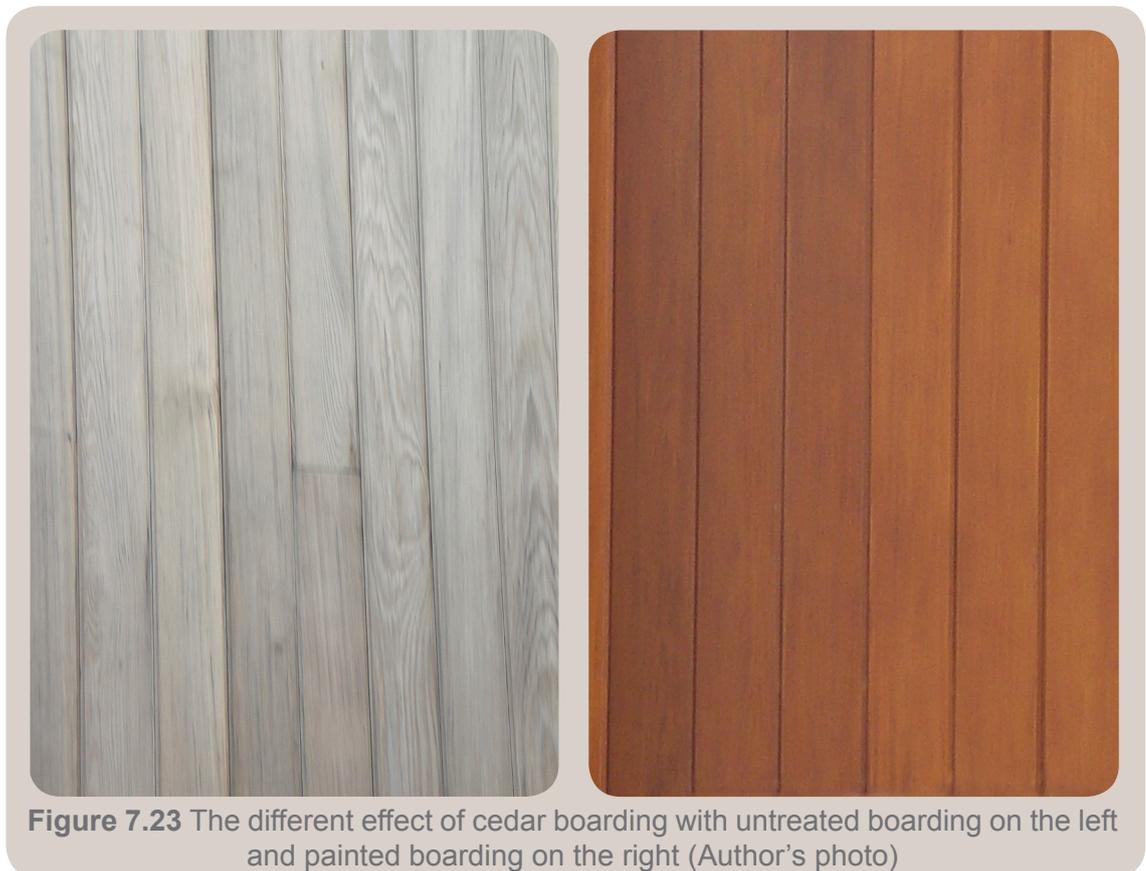
*JT* It is design aspects like that, I'm sorry they shouldn't make those sorts of mistakes.

*HT* You often see a crowd, and I don't mean teenagers I mean 9, 10 year olds scaling those walls up and over. Lovely footholds they are.

*JT* Yeah they get up as easy as anything.

(Justin and Hannah Trowbridge, boating resident, static interview, 2009:20)

Children therefore use the materials for their own personal challenge, to see how high they can climb up the wall. Older teenagers also appropriate the vents for their own use, to escape the police and climb up into raised public space area above the marina. As such the materials of the canal basin are bound up in a process of contestation and appropriation of use, detached from the original Vision for this space.



One of the ways in which the residents also depart from the intended use of the materials is through their maintenance and transgressing the intended aesthetics of the wooden cedar boarding (see figure 7.23). The cedar board was designed to soften over time and fade to give a natural look, however many residents have painted these boards bringing a different experience of place. Elizabeth explains how the materials have been maintained, whilst others have been excluded from maintenance:

**EG** *On the shared ownership properties they have used wooden cladding. I don't know how well that is going to be maintained in the future but all of this is not bad. This is some sort of marble...*

**AN** *...Yeab, it is granite...*

**EG** *...I mean that is not bad. I suspect things might tend to look a bit tatty in years to come it really depends. The materials are ok, but it just depends on the maintenance and as you can see there are weeds coming up but probably the best thing would be the planting they have done pretty well with I think. But materials they could have done a bit more to make it look a bit more attractive.*

(Elizabeth Garrett, resident, walking interview, 2009:8)



**Figure 7.24** Residents appropriate space in Brazier Crescent by changing the original use of their driveways (Author's photo)

As shown in figure 7.24 the materials are also a way in which residents derive a sense of identity and meaning from their environment. The interactions with materials provide residents with a chance to 'show-off' to friends who visit them, and therefore there is a sense of pride in the materials. This was demonstrated by Shreya who said:

*"the setting is nice, most people who come to visit me do like what they see and I like it, just like I liked it when I first saw it. It is nice, I just hope it remains nice. My only concern is how long will*

*it remain nice and be maintained”.*

(Shreya Mistry, resident, walking interview, 2009:7)

There was a sense that the materials offered residents a way to present themselves and their community. A well-maintained Village was seen as a presentation of the community, and of a population who cared for their environment. Therefore a resident said “it would be nice to see that it is kept clean regularly and maintained otherwise the place will start to look run down” (Lewis Ashton, resident, walking interview, 2009:2). The built environment can therefore impact on behaviour, and a well maintained built environment leads to less problems within the Village. Holloway states, “litter, graffiti, vandalism and poor maintenance of open space might all indicate that a place is not looked after, suggesting it is more vulnerable to crime. While this is not to imply that these environmental cues cause crime and criminality...it does suggest that people’s perception of place is crucial in shaping the way they behave in that place” (Holloway, 2001:56).

The role of maintenance within the Village is the overall responsibility of Trinity estates, the management company for the development. Residents however also have a part to play in the maintenance of the materials, as expressed by Jennifer on page 229 in relation to the “green haze” on the basin.

According to UV literature “rubbish, graffiti, broken pavements and bad street lighting not only have physical ill effects on the environment but also have deep psychological effects on communities too. In short, poor maintenance sends out the simple but graphic message that nobody cares” (Neal, 2003:128). Accordingly the experience of materials is bound up in affective understandings of place. For example Abigail said she thought “the seating is nice, I love the granite it is really nice” (Abigail Jones, resident, walking interview, 2009:2). Therefore there is an emotional attachment between Abigail and her environment.

There is also a contestation over materials and who owns what materials within the Village and is therefore responsible for them. Between each house in Ballinger Way is a small area of soft landscaping which means that:

*“There is no clear definition about what we can do to the front of our house because there is a small patch there, and there is this idea that we are not supposed to do anything to the front of the houses, the small garden, because one of the neighbours has been told that she wasn’t supposed to change it. She put plants in there. So you’re not sure if you can keep it up, if it’s your responsibility. I’d be happy to spend more money on it, it’s one of the things they have in front gardens which we can manipulate”.*

(Brandon Wilson, resident, walking interview, 2009:12)

## Conclusions

This chapter has explored the lived reality of GUV and the everyday life rhythms of the residents that live within the Village. Foremost to emerge from these experiences were narratives of movement, sensory experiences of place, and transgression and contestation of the Vision by residents. Such themes are concluded in greater depth in the next chapter, however some concluding thoughts are offered here.

As explored in chapter 6, the story of GUV is bound up in the role of the car, and this is the main element that has subverted the implementation of the UV model. The car inhibits the movement and mobilities of residents within the Village and beyond the boundaries of the Village. Car parking is a major issue for residents due to the lack of spaces for parking, especially if people have more than one car. The design intention therefore to have less than one car on average per household has not been fulfilled mainly due to the problems of location and public transport. Overall, the car has had the most profound impact on residents' experiences of the built environment.

Experiences of GUV are bound up in where a resident lives, and the extent to which they 'buy' into the UV model and a community way of life. Such experiences of community sit within the framework of ethnicity and multiculturalism within West London. There is a striking contrast between the initial Vision for a vibrant canal basin and the tranquil space that now exists. Many residents see the canal basin as a space in which they can relax, devoid of any activity and noise that is experienced in other parts of the Village. As the 'heart' of the Village, the canal basin should be full of life and vibrancy for much of the day. However, residents have limited experiences and attachment to public spaces particularly the canal basin, partly due to it being a 'cold' space, and devoid of life.

The next chapter turns to provide conclusions to the issues addressed within the thesis and the process of moving the UV from idea to reality.



# 08

DELIVERING  
URBAN VILLAGES

## 8.1 The importance of the ordinary

To understand the process through which a vision moves from initial conception to lived reality, this thesis has provided a comprehensive consideration of the implementation of the Grand Union Vision. This process is bound up in the contestation of the UV model and what it represents, and throughout, the thesis has shown the nuances of how the UV was articulated from the initial design process to the ways in which residents experience the concept. This chapter draws together the narratives of UV life presented in the preceding chapters and offers some thoughts on the future of GUV, and the UV as a whole.

The chapter begins by considering the methodological distinctiveness of the thesis' research and how this furthers calls for urban geographers to engage with a critical architectural geography. Following this, the chapter considers the extent to which UV principles can move from theoretical conceptualisation to the lived reality of place, and the keys elements that make this possible. Informed by the initial research questions presented in chapter 1, the overall contention of this chapter is that it is not possible for volume house builders to deliver projects which fully implement UV principles.

### 8.1.1 *New claims to architecture*

The call for a critical architectural geography is an important one for urban geographers, architects and urban designers. It challenges us to move beyond a representational mode of thinking to engage with the rhythms and experiences of city life. Existing research into the built environment is devoid of social practices and use, and according to Loretta Lees "important methodological implications follow" (Lees, 2001:56). The research undertaken in this thesis furthers this call for a critical architectural geography by exploring the experiential and sensory engagements with the UV concept. In contradiction with traditional urban geography which negates the relationship between people and landscape, this thesis focused on residents' experiences of the built environment.

### 8.1.2 *New methodologies of UV research*

The methods used in this thesis are part of a growing research movement which considers the lived experience of place through active engagements with the built environment. Such methods seek to bring the notion of sensory experience into qualitative research methods. Whilst these methods are not new, they represent a turn to "more than" forms of research, based on understanding the process of development. Mobile methods break with traditional research methods which focus on static and sedentary interviews. When exploring residents' experience of place it is vital to be able to move within the place to experience the sounds, smells, sights, touches, and tastes that the resident is trying to convey.

One such method seeking to bring the relationship between senses to the foreground of qualitative research is walking interviews. According to Steve Pile, walking is “the pre-eminent spatial practice for experiencing the city...Walking is significant not just as a means of experiencing the city and of assessing the mood of the city, but also of making deliberately imaginative...connections between different parts of the city” (Pile, 2005:5). It is through the practice of walking that we connect with other urban dwellers and experience city life and extend our knowledge of the city beyond our own neighbourhoods and villages. Utilising walking and mobility is therefore an important part of research into social experiences of the city. The walking interview allows the researcher to experience the city and aids the process of adding senses to the research process.

The research conducted in this thesis adds to the growing literature of works which use ‘mobile methods’ to explore experiences of place (Evans 2008; Evans & Jones, 2011; Jones, 2008; Ricketts Hein, 2008). Such methods have been central to the work of James Evans and Phil Jones. This thesis however develops this approach to mobility within social science research, and joins a growing body of work that utilises walking as a detailed social research practice that has the ability to assist on policy (Middleton, 2009; Middleton 2010; Middleton, 2011; Pooley et al 2011). Whilst walking can therefore be about research and exploring narratives of place (as in the work of Evans and Jones), it also has policy implications. These policy implications are not just limited to transport decisions, but connect to wider issues about the implementation of urban design theories and ideas, such as the UV. Walking interviews therefore allow us to “capture the ways in which people, and the communities of which they are part, value places [which] are becoming increasingly desirable to policymakers, planners and designers” (Ricketts Hein, 2008:1266).

Central to this form of research is the need to locate the research in the built environment. The research in this thesis utilised technologies including GPS devices to ‘place’ the transcripts within the context of GUV. Using maps, photographs and sketches also allowed the research undertaken to retain the rich narratives of life within GUV that residents expressed. These methods initially developed by Hagerstrand, have been adapted to retain the narratives of place rather than statistical use of place. Walking interviews allow the interviewer to experience place as residents do on a daily basis, and were more productive in bringing the greatest response from residents and witnessing how they engaged with the built environment. Residents responded to events that happened on the walks, which often prompted them to remember some element of their experience that would otherwise have been neglected in a sedentary interview, highlighting the importance of being in place whilst interviewing.

## 8.2 Delivering UVs

This section considers the ways in which key UV principles have moved from theory in UV literature, through to the Grand Union Vision and the ways in which residents experience these principles on a daily basis.

### 8.2.1 Community

#### *Community participation in design*

The UV model calls for public participation in the vision process because “it is often an advantage to show community leaders examples of best practice” (Neal, 2003:161). UV ideals about involvement in design focus on the macro-scale elements of community building rather than the micro-geographies of place. UV rhetoric states that:

“An UV development offers a good opportunity to involve the public from an early stage. This can include such basic matters as the mix of uses, the layout of the village, conservation of existing features, the kinds of amenities to be provided, and most importantly of all – how the village will relate to the surrounding area”.

(Aldous, 1992:40)

This form of community consultation was followed at GUV during a planning weekend that ran from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> March 2000. This event focused on large scale and theoretical concepts. In this sense the GUV community participation was performative because there was no engagement with physical elements of the design. Following UV literature on community participation in design largely achieves little as the community get a sense that they weren’t involved in many of the later decisions about the UV. As was the case in GUV residents felt they weren’t listened to and that the developer had preconceived ideas about what they wanted to take from the site. This belief however was not portrayed by TW employees many of which expressed their nerves in the days leading up to the event as they were not sure what the event would bring. Planning consultant Terry Harwood said that:

*“Developers historically regarded the community as being an obstacle to be overcome. Whereas that was not the approach adopted here, it was actually we’ll welcome your views, come and tell us what you want”.*

(Terry Harwood, Lennon Planning, interview, 2009:47)

UV rhetoric regarding the role of the public in planning decisions is utopian, and the reality is that public engagement is often futile because participants don’t feel empowered and that their opinions are reflected in the final development. This was evident in the design of GUV,

where some participants felt they were not listened to and their ideas were not taken seriously. Figure 8.1 contrasts residents' opinions of the site when it was TW's headquarters in 2000, and residents' experiences of similar aspects of GUV in 2011. Although some residents felt their involvement achieved little, TW expressed a desire to involve the community throughout the development process. To rectify this conflict between both sides, the public need to feel more valued in UV projects and gain the sense that they have contributed to the final design which would enhance the relationship between the developer and the local community.



**1999 Pre-development**

“The nearest bank is in Greenford – the nearest cash point’s at Tesco. But how can you get to the cash machine when Tesco is closed?”

“The Community Centre isn’t really known about”

“We need links across the canal”

“Let’s encourage people to walk through the estate – it enhances the atmosphere and improves security”

“There’s too much traffic and too little public transport”

“Parking is already a problem in the area”

“There’s a lack of facilities within walking distance”

“We want the housing to overlook the canal”



**2011 Reality**

“I’d like a cash point, the cash point you have to pay to use in the Costcutters, there is no banks near, nothing”

“People don’t use the community centre because they are a little bit like an ivory tower...it is definitely disjointed from the people here”

“they were looking forward to having that bridge because it would have accessed their work better and they weren’t very happy that it wasn’t being built”

“We don’t want too much activity otherwise you could start to draw too many people and it’s our home”

“I can’t stand the E6 bus they have increased the services but it is a very small bus and it is packed and doesn’t go anywhere”

“There is a massive issue with parking because as you can see the whole place looks like a car park”

“there are all of these people and there is nothing, there really is nothing”

“My mother describe this place as living in a goldfish bowl and I can see that”

**Figure 8.1** Residents articulations of place, movement and services contrasting views from the community planning weekend and the lived reality of GUV (Author’s drawing)

### *Creating Community*

Planning for communities in UVs involves the creation of places that are not “engineered for a single use, age or social group. They are a cross-section of people-families and single people of different ages” (Aldous, 1992:17). The UV movement calls for the creation of diverse population of communities, based on ethnic identity, age, and social circumstance. This is pursued through a neighbourhood approach to city creation which establishes a defined space to which the community belongs. A shared use of facilities within the neighbourhood is seen to help community interaction and therefore:

*“The nurturing of community must go beyond the simple provision of shops, health centres and community buildings to meet the needs of a broad demographic and social structure. In addition to the central role played by schools within the community, the needs of children should be appreciated and met through imaginative and safe opportunities for play and established routes for walking and cycling”.*

(Neal, 2003:83)

Establishing communal social infrastructure is seen as the key way in which these diverse groups of people should come together to interact. As such “the promoter should seek to stimulate the establishment of a community development trust. This gives members of the community a chance to become practically involved in the creation of the UV” (Aldous, 1992:42).

In spite of this UVs are often the homes of the white middle class with little diversity in their population. The Vision for GUV was to reverse this trend and attract a diverse population, particularly due to its proximity to Southall. A CDT was set up to encourage communal ownership of the Village, and the plethora of promotional material released to attract buyers to the Village showed a diverse community in terms of age and ethnic background.

Community within GUV is bound up in its suburban location which creates tensions between the UV concept and what is deemed to be good suburban living. Residents are looking for a quiet residential setting which conflicts with UV calls for a mixed-use and vibrant urban environment. Therefore within the suburban location there is a tension between residents’ desire for their own home environment and the Vision for a development that encourages people to congregate in areas of mixed-use within the Village.

In UVG rhetoric and GUV promotional material an emphasis is placed on the ability of design to develop a sense of community and nurture experiences of the city. Such ideas were explored in chapter 3 in relation to debates about diversity and the public realm made by Sandercock and Amin. This thesis has explored the relationship between public

space and experiences of the city, in particular through TW's appeals to community and increased sensory experiences of the city. Such ideas are founded on a romanticised notion of community and place, in which these terms speak for themselves rather than having any true meaning.

It is not enough to simply provide public spaces and expect that these will encourage communities to develop around them, nor that they will provide a multiplicity of community interactions. Instead developers must invest resources to implement the public spaces effectively. In locations such as Northolt and Southall with diverse ethnic populations, appeals to a sense of community simply through the common use of public space is naïve, yet is how diversity and difference were planned for by TW.

GUV has a diverse ethnic population, consisting of Asian, eastern European, White British, and Black African residents. This cultural diversity means that (with rare exceptions such as the summer fayre) residents do not participate in shared and common events and experiences of public space. As a result of this the cultural diversity pulls apart the community spirit of the development. This is not to argue that there is a racial conflict within GUV, but rather that people live different lives within the development due to their ethnic identity. According to Amin, visions of the ability of public spaces to encourage interactions between diverse groups of people are romanticised, and instead such spaces are often dominated by one group (Amin, 2002).

Instead, Amin argues that social infrastructure is the best way to plan for diversity within cities. At GUV, the CDT has a large role to play to bring different ethnic identities together by providing the social infrastructure that encourages people to interact with one another. At present, the CDT does not fulfil this role and therefore the opportunity for meaningful and complex relationships is limited. Whilst residents do have a series of engagements with other residents, such as communal use of the shops and occasional shared connections in CDT events, these are superficial connections and do not result in a true community. As the case of GUV demonstrates, simply providing public spaces for interaction based on the belief that they will encourage diverse populations to develop into a community is flawed.

Instead, a sense of community can exist around localised spaces, as was shown in chapter 7. Public places only matter to residents when all aspects of their lives are bound up in it. As a result of most residents leaving the Village for social activities, shopping and employment, residents develop little attachment to GUV and its public spaces. This plays out in the Village being called an estate, and a location where people do not really know their neighbours. Whilst there is some interaction on a micro-geographic level, namely in HZs, this is limited within the Village. As such whilst utopian UV calls for a diverse population have been created in GUV, the relationship between these groups is limited. Therefore UV rhetoric also needs

to focus on the quality of interactions rather than simple demographic structures.

### 8.2.2 *Mixed-use*

The UV movement conceives of mixed-use as key to the social experience of the city. As such each Village should provide “a degree of compactness with variety, so that there are shops, pubs and cafes or restaurants round the corner, a cinema, a sports centre, a swimming pool or even a theatre a few blocks away” (Aldous, 1992:18). Planning for a range of uses within the boundaries of an UV reduces the scale on which residents live their lives, providing more local patterns for leisure, social and employment purposes. The call to provide mixed-use is a shift from the segregation and zoning experienced under modernist planning which neo-traditional planners deem to have a detrimental social impacts on the lives of city dwellers. Such planners argue that a mix of uses can:

“Strengthen people’s sense of identity with a place and reinforce a community, single-use often weakens them. People’s lives are in a sense splintered: the neighbourhood they live in is not the neighbourhood they work or shop in or go for entertainment. The faces are less likely to be familiar ones; the sense of belonging, and therefore of responsibility, is weakened”.

(Aldous, 1992:24)

Residents feel a greater sense of place and community, or multiplexity, if their daily lives are bound up in interactions within the village. These ideas were manifested in the early design stages of the Vision for GUV with TW proposing a total of 1470 jobs in new offices, retail, workspaces, live/work units, the management estate, cafes, restaurants and a sports complex. Mixed-use would be located in two differing spaces within the Village; the northeast of the site would be the location for the office blocks and headquarters, and the canal basin for a vibrant and lively café and restaurant space.

However GUV failed to achieve this number of jobs, with the actual number provided on site closer to 50; 10 in the police station, 15 in the doctor’s surgery, 3 in the nursery, 3 in the CDT, 3 in the management estate, 4 in the café, and 10 in retail. GUV’s suburban location played a large part in this degradation of the Vision and despite an extensive marketing campaign it became impossible to find businesses to relocate to Northolt and therefore the office accommodation was scrapped.

Furthermore, there are ambiguities of thinking and implementing the ‘urban’ and the ‘village’ in suburbia. Vibrancy and mixed-use work in very different ways in this setting to central London or city settings. Whilst the contemporary wharf-style architecture can be transferred from central London to suburbia, context is important in the range of uses that can be

provided in suburban UVs. For example, following the lead of UV rhetoric, a vibrant mixed-use ‘heart’ was designed as the focal point for GUV, however this did not work in suburbia and therefore plans for cafes and restaurants were dropped due to residents defining the canal basin as a tranquil space and not wanting to see a range of uses within the space.

Residents’ experience of GUV is bound up in the ways in which they see GUV as a space, and their involvement in the earlier stages of the Vision process. For many residents GUV has become a residential space, and therefore attempts to create a mixed-use canal basin are unwelcome due to the negative sensory experiences it will have on residents in this space. As such the canal basin is devoid of life during parts of the day, creating a contradiction between the Vision for the canal basin and the lived reality of place. The canal basin is a space for residents to relax and escape from city life which is in stark contrast to the Vision for this space.

As a result of this residents’ sense of community within the Village has suffered because their daily lives are not bound up in the Village and they often leave to socialise, shop and for leisure activities. Whilst residents argue that they do not want too many shops and restaurants in the Village, sticking to the Vision would have made GUV more of an UV and encouraged a greater social connection between residents. The limited uses on site therefore means that GUV fails in this aspect of the UV model.

### **8.2.3 Public Space**

According to UV rhetoric public space is the arena in which community interaction and experiences of the city occur. Therefore “each village should focus on a public square or place of sufficient size and quality to give people a sense of place...the buildings round it need to be higher than most in the village, to include some of real presence and architectural distinction” (Aldous, 1992:48).

At GUV this UV principle was adapted through the development of the canal basin and open public space to the south of the site. Such spaces were designed to offer residents a chance to interact with one another by providing physical infrastructure, as well as a sense of place through the materials used. However, due to the nature of community relations within the Village, residents do not want to engage in these interactions. There are temporal elements to experiences of place, such as residents defining the canal area and play areas as no-go spaces during the evening. This lack of use, along with the lack of designed sensory experiences leaves parts of the Village as placeless and sanitised versions of what an UV should be.

Sensory engagements with place also become problematic in suburban UVs. Noises and smells in particular are deemed out of place within the Village due to the design which seeks to provide an environment devoid of sensory encounters. This, however only heightens residents' sensory interactions with place whether that be through experiences of children's noise in play areas or the smells created by having the boating community in the canal basin. Furthermore residents experience the materialities of place in different ways to the intended Vision, shaping and appropriating public space and private materials for their own purposes and staking a claim on place. It is through these practices that residents create their own areas of GUV, and give meaning to the development by appropriating it.

Neo-traditional planners make distinct claims about the types of environments that UVs should create. There is an emphasis on the textural and sensory experiences of the city within UV rhetoric, which calls for the creation of a built environment in contrast to suburban spaces. The award winning materials used in GUV, such as the blue flag paving and granite benches, create a unique environment, and set GUV apart from the surrounding estates. However, some residents don't experience the materialities of public spaces in the ways they were intended, such as those residents who had not noticed the difference in colour between character areas. Furthermore, residents transgress and contest the materials of GUV, appropriating them for their own purpose, and staking a claim on place. For the UV concept to be successful, the relationship between residents and materialities needs to be highlighted at the planning stage, with residents involved in their selection, which will further affective experiences of the UV.

Residents' meaningful experiences of GUV are also bound up in their kinaesthetic experience of the Village. The story of movement in GUV is bound up in the role of the car, and this is the main element that has subverted the implementation of the UV model. The car inhibits the movement and mobilities of residents within the Village and beyond the boundaries of the Village. In spite of this residents' movement through GUV is bound up in social rules about who can move freely within the Village. Residents' movement is therefore a way in which they control aspects of their own experience, by transgressing the boundaries of the development, or appropriating movement patterns for their own purposes.

### 8.3 The future of UVs

The UV movement is the latest in a long line of utopian town planning models designed to provide better city environments. Principles behind the UV model can be traced back to Ebenezer Howard's notion for the Garden City and 20<sup>th</sup> century attempts to improve the city environment. However, these attempts to create new forms of city life fail without wider social change and the UV model is no different. Wider attitudes towards car use, notions of community and interactions in public space and volume house builders attitudes towards

profit all degrade the effectiveness of the UV model, as demonstrated by GUV.

The focus of this thesis has been on the development process of GUV from initial conception to lived experience. What is implemented in 2011 is not an UV but rather a pale shade of a true UV. GUV disappointingly, but not unsurprisingly became another housing estate in Northolt, albeit with a couple of local shops, a CDT and a network of expensive public space. However, there is more to the GUV story than this, which is bound up in developer profit and location of the development. As such the complexity of GUV extends beyond theoretical UV principles. Chapter 5 showed the Vision for a dynamic UV on the site of the former TW headquarters with a mixed-use quarter in the northeast of the site and around the basin. TW however tried to pursue too many UV principles at this Vision stage and ended up implementing very few of them. Therefore there is a tension between the Vision for a dynamic UV and the housing estate that has been built.

In 2000 TW's Vision for the site tried to incorporate; lower car use, a mix of uses, high quality materials, community and civic pride, high quality public realm, and micro-geographies of place including HZs and character areas. Encouraged by LBE and the Mayor of London TW also pushed for higher density living and the original masterplan moved from 640 homes on the site to 705. Furthermore, at the Vision stage TW wanted to provide one car parking space per dwelling and two for larger homes (JTP, 2000b). This number was reduced by LBE and therefore TW were forced to encourage lower levels of car use on the site. The result was 1100 homes with 839 parking spaces available.

Whilst this ambition should be commended, especially from a volume house builder, the result was a wasted opportunity. Volume house builders are unable to achieve everything and by making so many grand claims at the start, TW promised more than they were able to deliver. Developers need to identify key elements and pursue these rather than trying to provide everything. Reflecting back on this process, Nicholas Clark a TW employee said "the main lesson really is that whatever you envisage upfront in the planning process needs to be implementable during the build stage so that it can be realised and worked through" (Nicholas Clark, TW, interview, 2009:36). A large part of the degradation of the mixed-use concept was the sale of the land to the north east of the canal in 2003 which was the one space that GUV residents would have welcomed a mix of uses due to it being set away from the residential areas of the development. After this point meaningful levels of mixed-use become impossible in GUV.

GUV is too small to fulfil all UV elements which require a village to be 40ha in size and have a population of 5,000 people. The GUV population is half this size as is the hectare size of the Village. Furthermore a third of the GUV site is not available for development because it sits in the greenbelt and therefore it was not an option to build in this area. Whilst TW felt

obliged to provide something for the existing community when they left the site, they have not achieved this. Indirectly GUV has provided benefits to the local community, namely through increased property prices.

In the case of GUV house prices of residents in the surrounding area were greater than that for those areas outside of the influence of the Village. As a whole the UB5 postcode to which GUV belongs, saw house prices drop on average by 3% over the past 5 years (Zoopla, 2011). However the average price for a house in the streets surrounding GUV rose by 6% to 7%. For example Blisworth Close and Braunston Drive both saw increases in their prices of 6%, whilst Hazeltree Lane saw an increase of 7%. If compared to streets on the eastern side of the canal, which have less interaction with GUV, there was a smaller increase. For example Jetstar Way (3% increase) and Ascot Gardens (4% increase) both saw a smaller increase in their house prices. Therefore there was a correlation between increased house prices and proximity to GUV.

Key UV claims were not just included in the *Report of the community-planning weekend* but were formalised in August 2000 in the *Supporting statement* prepared by JTP and submitted to LBE and LBH. As such this shows that TW attempted to provide these at the early planning stages. In spite of this these big claims rapidly dropped away during 2001 to 2003 as the initial excitement that surrounded the planning weekend dissipated and the harsh reality of developer profit and deliverability kicked in. For UVs to be delivered by volume house builders there needs to be a formal commitment to the concept bound up in the planning application, as demonstrated by the following exchange between CDT members Harry Ledley, Gemma Hunter and myself:

**HL** *I think the planning system lets us down when it comes to trying to build UVs because has happened here and on other UVs, an application goes in and the applicant says we're going to build all this residential and we're going to build this...*

**GH** *...we're going to do everything...*

**HL** *...commercial and we're going to build this retail, and we're going to build these leisure facilities...*

**GH** *...and they don't have any money...*

**HL** *...and they say all these things they're going to do. The local authorities, planning department looks at it and say...*

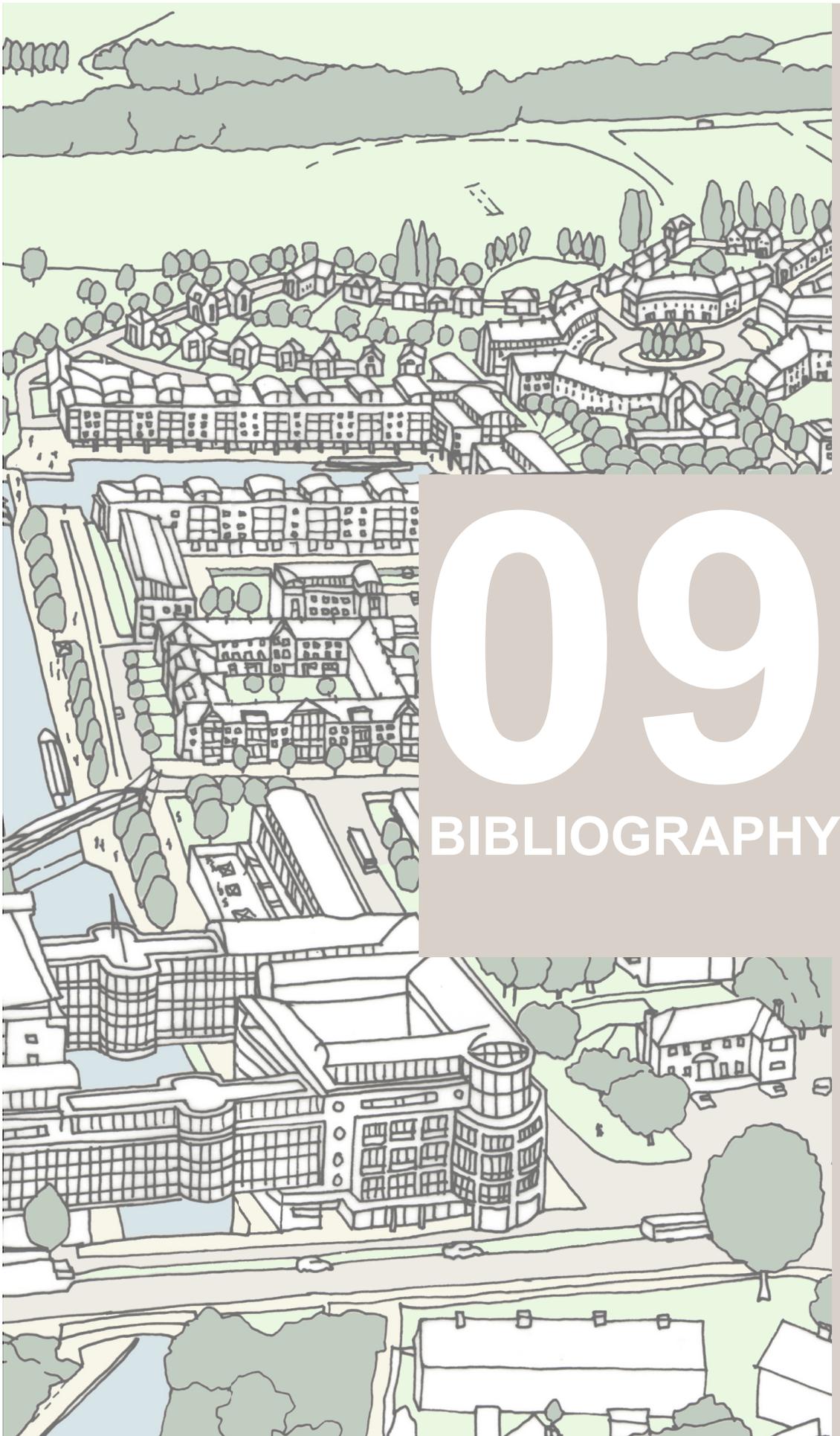
**GH** *...wow...*

**HL** ...that would be wonderful. But once they get the planning permission very often it's easy for them to get out of doing all the bits they've applied for unless it's really tied up in the section 106 agreements, and that often doesn't happen. Where it goes wrong is the developer can cherry-pick, and say, 'oh yeah that bit makes me lots of dough so I'll build that bit, but that bit doesn't actually make me any money so I'll just forget about that'.

(Harry Ledley, Gemma Hunter, CDT, static interview, 2009:34)

Location also plays a big part in the story of GUV, and it was not just TW profit that subverted the UV model. Delivering an UV in suburban West London away from good transport links is almost impossible. Aspirations for reduced car use became problematic because people did not have a local transport node to utilise. This in turn increased the numbers of cars parked in the Village which had an effect on the usability of public space and HZs. Furthermore it impacted on the ability to deliver mixed-use elements of the Vision and encourage companies and businesses to locate to GUV.

As a development model it is very difficult for the UV to work outside of flagship and philanthropic projects. The example of GUV demonstrates how developer profit and location make delivering the UV problematic, and what remains are developments that resemble housing estates rather UVs. Where the UV model can be delivered is through collaborative projects involving a series of developers, which reduces the burden of profit versus UV principles. However, in the 19 years since the UVG was formalised, few projects have been completed under the guise of UVs and the movement looks set to become the latest in a line of utopian planning experiments whose contribution to planning rhetoric outweighs the impact they have on the ways people dwell within the city.



09

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### ***Interviews***

Abigail Clouter (26<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.

Adrian Cox (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009) *Trinity Estates*, Trinity Estate office, GUV.

Alan Northfield (16<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *Taylor Woodrow*, First Base offices, Soho.

Ana Ronal (19<sup>th</sup> September 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.

Andrew Hughes (24<sup>th</sup> February 2009) Manhire Associates, Manhire offices, Surbiton.

Anthony Woods (2<sup>nd</sup> June 2009) *Ealing Friends of the Earth*, London Victoria station.

Benjamin Hunt (11<sup>th</sup> June 2009) *Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment*, PFBE office, Shoreditch.

- Brandon Wilson (4<sup>th</sup> June 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Charlie Bentley (9<sup>th</sup> October 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Clive Campbell (24<sup>th</sup> April 2009) Mark Patchett Consultancy, MPCS office, East Ham.
- Connor Nesbitt (10<sup>th</sup> March 2009) *Taylor Wimpey*, TW offices, GUV.
- David Collyer (7<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *Charcon Aggregates*, Charcon Aggregates office, Erith.
- David Collyer (19<sup>th</sup> June 2009) Charcon Aggregates, walking interview, GUV.
- Dylon Bartlett (19<sup>th</sup> September 2009) *GUV Resident*, Blue Green restaurant.
- Elizabeth Garrett (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Emily Yates (4<sup>th</sup> June 2009) *Steering group member*, walking interview.
- Gemma Hunter (13 January 2009) *Community Development Trust*, CDT office, GUV.
- Hannah Trowbridge (18<sup>th</sup> September 2009) *Canal boat resident*, resident's boat.
- Harry Ledley (13<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *MP*, CDT office, GUV.
- Ian Gill (24<sup>th</sup> September 2009) *Steering group member*, CDT office, GUV.
- Isaac Wilkinson (15<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Jacob Holman (22<sup>nd</sup> April 2009) *London Borough of Ealing*, London Borough of Ealing offices, Ealing.
- Jennifer Eames (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- John Carson (11<sup>th</sup> June 2009) *Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment*, PFBE offices, Shoreditch
- Justin Trowbridge (18<sup>th</sup> September 2009) *Canal boat resident*, resident's boat.
- Kimberley Nightingale (16<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *Lennon Planning*, Linden Homes offices, Caterham.
- Lewis Ashton (10<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Luke Harlow (27<sup>th</sup> February 2009) *British Waterways*, British Waterways Office, London Paddington.
- Mark Forde (27<sup>th</sup> April 2009) *Buchanan Consulting Engineers*, Buchanan engineer offices, Basingstoke.
- Michael Collins (18<sup>th</sup> June 2009) *MP*, walking interview.

- Michelle Risdale (30<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *Hann Tucker Associates*, Hann Tucker office, Woking.
- Miranda Hass 1 (12<sup>th</sup> August) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Nathaniel Evans (30<sup>th</sup> March 2009) *BDG Designs*, BDG offices, Colchester.
- Nicholas Clark (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009) *Taylor Woodrow*, Marylebone.
- Nicola Richford (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009) *Community Development Trust/MP/Genesis Housing*, Barbican Centre.
- Paul Nester (7<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *London Borough of Ealing*, Maidenhead.
- Richard Pelham (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009) *Taylor Wimpey*, TW office, Finchley.
- Rishi Chopra (5<sup>th</sup> June 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Riya Sen (13 January 2009) *GUV resident*, CDT office, GUV.
- Robert Hassell (15<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *Richard Hodgkinson Consultancy*, Richard Hodgkinson Consultancy offices, Pinner, London.
- Robert Stuart (24<sup>th</sup> February 2009) *Taylor Woodrow*, Addlestone.
- Ryan Dixon (6<sup>th</sup> April 2009) *Broadway Malyan*, BM Reading office, Theale.
- Ryan Dixon (15<sup>th</sup> July 2009) *Broadway Malyan*, walking interview, GUV.
- Sam Ferguson (4<sup>th</sup> February 2009) *John Thompson and Partners*, Telephone interview.
- Shreya Mistry (11<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Simon Innis (28<sup>th</sup> January 2009) *Taylor Woodrow*, Chislehurst.
- Steven Norton (13<sup>th</sup> February 2009) *John Thompson and Partners*, JTP offices, Clerkenwell.
- Suraj Rao (10<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Susanna Livingstone (28<sup>th</sup> November 2009) *Allen Pyke Associates*, Kingston upon Thames.
- Susanna Livingstone (4<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *Allen Pyke Associates*, walking interview, GUV.
- Terry Harwood (18<sup>th</sup> December 2008) *Lennon Planning/Rob Huntley Planning Consultants*, RHPC office, Crowthorne.
- Vad Grzesik (15<sup>th</sup> August 2009) *GUV resident*, walking interview.
- Victoria Davies (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009) *Taylor Woodrow*, Blue Green restaurant, GUV.

*Ethnographic Diaries*

Personal observation (*Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008*)

Personal observation (*Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009*).

Personal observation (*Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009*).

Personal observation (*Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009*).

Personal observation (*Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009*).

Personal Observation (*Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009*)

Personal observation (*Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009*).

Personal observation (*Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009*).

Personal observation (*Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009*).

Personal observation (*Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009*).

Personal observation (*Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009*).

Personal observation (*Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009*).

Personal observation (*Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2009*).

Personal observation (*Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2009*).

Personal observation (*Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009*).

Personal observation (*Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2009*).

Personal observation (*Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2009*).

Personal observation (*Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2009*).

Personal observation (*Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2009*).

Personal observation (*Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009*).

Personal observation (*Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009*).

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