

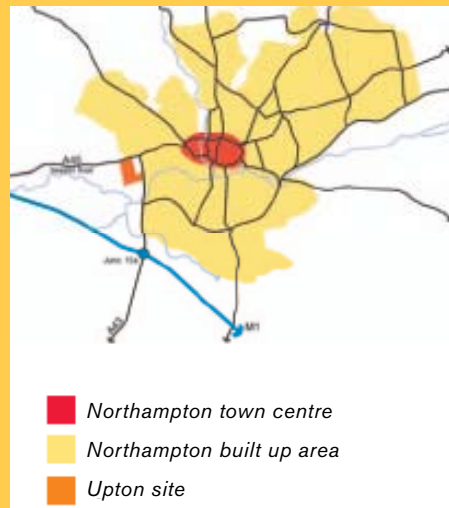
Upton Northampton Site A



Sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) is integrated with the street system.

Basics

- English Partnerships (the landowner) is leading the development of the site in partnership with Northampton Borough Council (the planning authority and highway authority) and Northamptonshire County Council (the highway authority when code was produced).
- Site A, comprising 220 units on 3.7 hectares, is the first completed phase of Upton, a 1220-dwelling, south-western extension of Northampton.
- Construction of Site A began in 2003 and completed in 2007. The developer is Paul Newman Homes.
- Tenure mix – 22 per cent affordable units are pepper-potted throughout the scheme.
- Gross density – 58 dwellings per hectare including sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) and landscaped areas.



Above: Site location in relation to Northampton.

Below: Central courtyard – semi public space entered from public streets or lanes.

Objectives and guiding principles of the scheme

Key aims included the integration of all movement systems in a connected network across the site; the provision of a variety of housing types and tenures at higher than usual densities for this type of location; SUDS to be integrated with the street system; and a hierarchy of street types which are the basis of a character area framework which achieves a legible environment in which all public and semi-public spaces are highly visible. For each of a number of defined street types, the code defines carriageway dimensions, sightlines, and the type of boundary arrangements with adjoining dwellings.

Car parking has been provided at an overall ratio of 1.5 vehicles per dwelling - some dwellings, such as sheltered housing, will have a lower ratio; larger dwellings will have a higher allocation. The single allocated space is provided in the rear courtyards or in garages, the unallocated spaces on the streets, lanes or mews.

Particular features of the development

The project demonstrates how a high-quality public realm design can be achieved by volume housebuilders through adherence to the principles of a code and careful monitoring of the implementation. Furthermore, a high environmental performance can be achieved by 'normal-looking' houses. This scheme of apartments and houses was designed according to a design code produced by a partnership of landowner and local authority interests, who also provided advanced site infrastructure. The code lays down the details of the public spaces but is much less prescriptive of the architecture, so later stages will have a different appearance. Where site A, the 'Upton One' development by Paul Newman Homes, is in a traditional 'Georgian' style, site C (by David Wilson Homes and HTA Architects) will be more modern. Site B (Cornhill Estates and Fairclough Homes) manages the transition between the two.

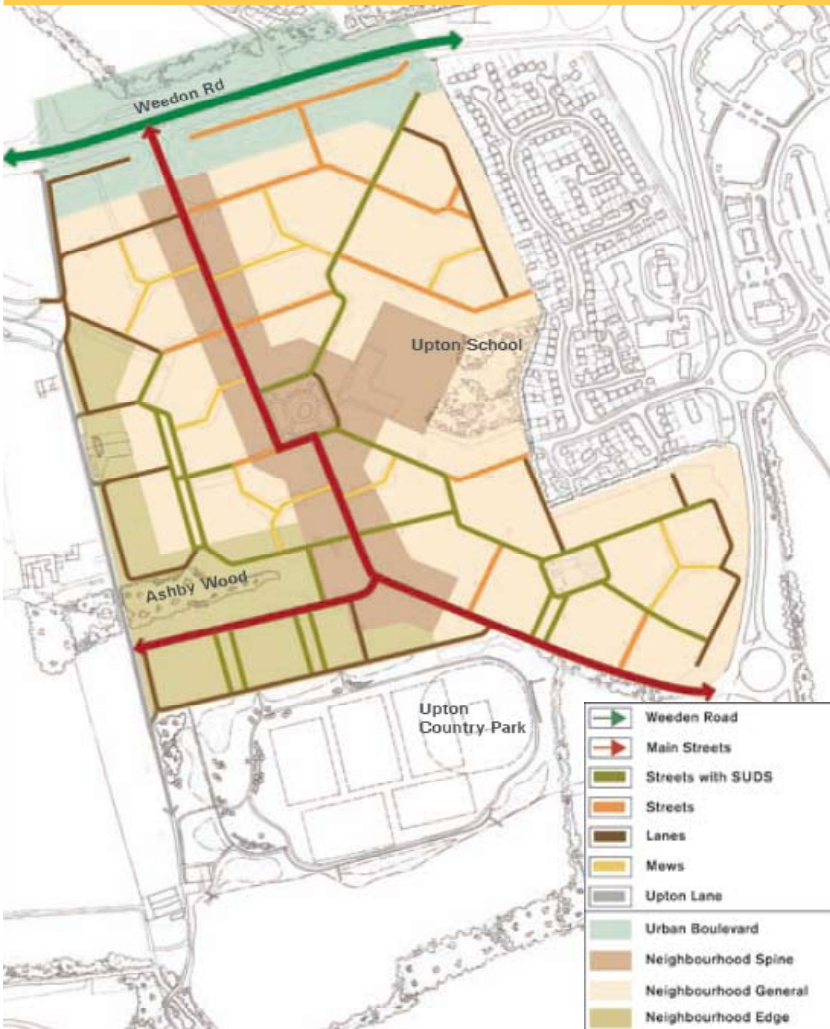
Flood attenuation measures are a strong landscape component. Car parking courtyards and many of the adoptable lanes and mews have permeable blockwork paving to store run-off. Rainwater then passes to a piped drainage and swale system close to the housing.





Above and overleaf: Car parking has been provided with an overall ratio of 1.5 vehicles per dwelling, with unallocated spaces on the streets, lanes or mews.

Masterplan showing street types.



Process

The first planning application was made in 1997 for a scheme based on cul de sacs off distributor roads and local services at its centre. In 2001 English Partnerships, the landowner, together with the Prince's Foundation and Northampton Borough Council, which constitute the members of the Upton Partnership, conducted an enquiry by design exercise, which resulted in a radically different proposal which formed the basis of the urban framework plan (UFP) on which the code is based.

The UFP differs from the earlier plan because of its connected network of streets and the shifting of local facilities - except the primary school - from to the edge of the new development, where it will create a link with adjoining neighbourhoods and integrate with the rest of Northampton.

The code is realised through a bi-monthly steering group, made up of representatives from Northampton borough council officers and members, English Partnerships, the Prince's Foundation, Upton Parish Council and residents. Consultants are retained as advisors, while a working group assesses developments against the code every week or fortnight.

For any application, there is a two-stage tender process: schemes are evaluated against the design code and the brief before shortlisting, detailed design submissions and land value bids. Selection is made on the basis of 70 per cent per cent for design quality and 30 per cent per cent for land value. Each phase has achieved planning permission within eight weeks, thanks to the design code.

Outcomes

The connections within the scheme work well already. Even though the adjacent phases are not finished, the block structure offers alternative walking and cycling routes to the recently opened primary school. The connections to the adjoining existing housing work less well. There are pedestrian and cycle links but no vehicle connections – space has been left for these once hostility from the existing inhabitants has subsided. It has been reported that satellite navigation systems direct vehicles to Upton through the cul de sac scheme and they then have to reverse and find their way out. Therefore, paradoxically, this lack of connection might be more of a nuisance to the existing house owners than a proper vehicle connection. There are no pedestrian connections across the A45 Upton Way which runs along the eastern edge of the site, and the exit from this side does not enjoy the same degree of surveillance as the rest of the scheme.

Surface water from adopted streets (responsibility of Northampton Borough Council) and from buildings (responsibility of Anglian Water) is discharged into the SUDS. These performed well in the floods of summer 2007.

Lessons for elsewhere

While codes tend to be regarded as an automatic route to the production of a quality environment, Upton demonstrates that there are other important factors to be considered:

- The continuing involvement of the landowner in the marketing, design and building of each phase of the project
- implementation through a housebuilder selection process, which puts a high priority on the quality of the design
- a monitoring system for the implementation of the project
- a reduction in the number of traffic signs and street markings
- tighter horizontal road geometry.

On the negative side, parking provision will probably be inadequate once all the dwellings in the first phase are occupied – this has been acknowledged by a higher provision being required in future phases.

Review by: Phil Jones Associates.

For inspiration visit:

www.cabe.org.uk/streets



Images: Ivor Samuels