

Garden Village developments take young people's needs into account

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Summary

Geographical research into children and young people's experiences of planning and development in new towns and "Garden Villages" has helped inform and improve large-scale property developments in the UK

Challenge

Successive Governments have carried out large-scale plans to build homes and create extensive new urban developments across England. This entails rapid development and the creation of new communities and environments. The impact on children, young people and their families – "a major population group with distinct needs" – needed attention during the planning process to ensure new communities fulfil the needs of all those who live there.

Solution

Professor Peter Kraftl and Dr. Sophie Hadfield-Hill researched the everyday lives of children and young people in the New Labour government's flagship [Sustainable Communities Plan](#) for the UK. The 2009-2013 project '[New Urbanisms, New Citizens](#)', undertaken with academics from the Universities of Leeds, Leicester and Northampton, then investigated the experiences of children in the fast-developing Milton Keynes/South Midlands region.

With funds from ESRC-IAA, Kraftl and Hadfield-Hill sought to inform the development of new Garden Villages ([announced in 2017](#)) based on their programme of research with children and young people. The impact project '[Garden Villages of Tomorrow](#)' involved relationship building with Local Planning Authorities, workshops and bespoke recommendations for individual projects and developments. These activities all helped inform the planning and implementation of Garden Villages in the UK.

Benefits

Policy insight

Key findings from the *New Urbanisms, New Citizens* project related to young people's participation in the design of their local areas, specific requirements for their safe movement around their communities and their interactions and perceptions of sustainable urban architectures.

These findings have informed policy and design of new Garden Villages in the UK across 11 Local Authorities, influencing the master planning of 88,200 homes which is estimated to affect more than 202,000 people. The research also underpinned the approach taken by [Homes England](#) to the development of child-friendly urban places in the new garden communities.

Raising awareness and improving understanding

The research by Kraftl and Hadfield-Hill promoted safer, more accessible and well-designed developments, and a more inclusive planning approach. A series of [free educational resources](#) encouraged students to think about how to design new communities.

Better decisions

The briefing report "[Garden Villages and Towns: Planning for Children and Young People](#)" (2018) highlighted shortcomings and barriers to effective design, as well as examples of best practice and policy recommendations. These were used to offer feedback and advice on the policy and design of new Garden Villages in the UK.

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The researchers advised Local Authorities, and in some cases developers, on the involvement of young people in various aspects of the planning process. They also had direct participation in Garden Village design review panels, were invited to contribute to Extraordinary Growth and Development Board meetings, and were involved in Garden Village funding applications with Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Further reading

[Garden Villages and Towns: Planning for Children and Young People](#) (2018) – briefing report from the research projects

[Resources and information about garden cities](#) from the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)

Housing shortages in the UK [continue to be a major policy issue](#), and from 2010 to 2019 the [number of social housing homes provided fell significantly](#). [This Parliamentary briefing paper from 2018 summarises some issues](#) around housing supply.