

Table 15.2
Density standards (dwellings per
hectare) in the UK, 1918–2000.³

Date	Houses		Houses and flats		Flats	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
1918 (Tudor Walters)	20	30				
1944 (Dudley)	25	25	40	60		100
1952 (MoHLG)	15	35			40	70
1962 (MoHLG)	30	75	50	75		115
1970–1980 (Local Authority Development Plans)		35				
1999 (Urban Task Force)	35	40				
2000 (Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG 3))	30	50				

hardly changed at all from the 1944 Dudley Report. Table 15.2 compares standards over this period (1918–2000), and it can be seen that the new standards for higher densities are in fact rather tame, and certainly not quite as radical as many would have us believe.

Same arguments, different forms?

If the advocacy for standards appeared to have such limited impact, then what was it about the arguments that encouraged government to persist? Today the arguments are well known for increasing the density of development and creating more compact forms, consequently ensuring a mix of uses, the containment of urban ‘sprawl’ and achieving social and economic diversity and vitality (Jenks *et al.*, 1996; Urban Task Force, 1999). Despite their current currency, the debate is strangely familiar.

Analysis of a selection of relevant UK Government publications since the 1950s shows a consistent trend for the promotion of higher densities, predicated, perhaps, on a modernist anti-suburban agenda. In the 1950s, key guidance on *The Density of Residential Areas* showing increases in density standards was based on the premise of ascertaining ‘the least amount of land required to satisfy needs in an urban residential area’ (MoHLG, 1952, p. 64). In addition to the concerns over ‘losses of agricultural land resulting from urban expansion’ (p. 66), appropriate densities should allow for: a variety of dwellings; enough space for amenities; convenience to shops, schools and other facilities and a close relationship to the existing town or city. The standards were related to different contexts from rural

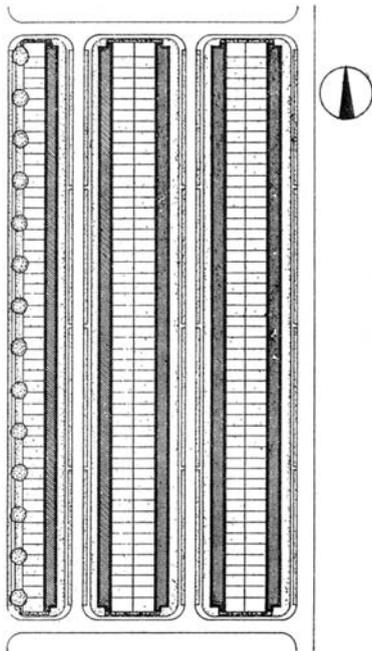


Figure 15.6
1952 – 2-storey houses at 30 and 20 dwellings per hectare, respectively.
(Source: MoHLG, 1952.)

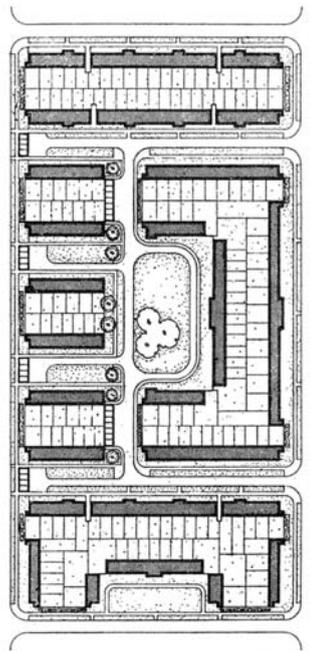
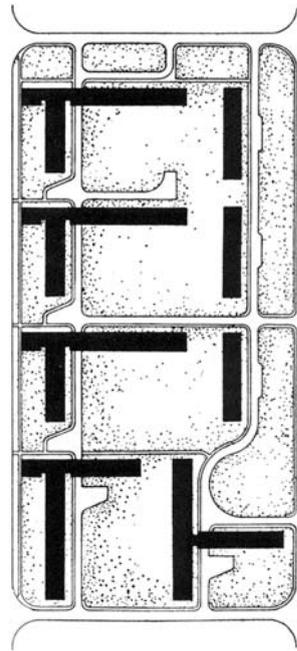


Figure 15.7
1952 – flats at 70 dwellings per hectare. (Source: MoHLG, 1952.)



to urban, and different forms of development were illustrated, some representing good practice, some showing limitations. For example, the high-density form of 2-storey terraced housing in streets with little or no open space was seen as excessive and liable to produce monotonous forms. A lower density was preferred with the implication that this was good practice (Figure 15.6). Development of flats was typical of its time (Figure 15.7), but it was the design ideas for mixtures of houses and flats that were given pride of place in the publication (Figure 15.8).

In the next decade similar arguments were reinforced and some were added. Central to the guidance on increased density was 'the preservation of good agricultural land, the prevention of urban sprawl and the protection of the countryside – all of which point to the need for compact development, closely integrated with existing development and making the fullest use of available land' (MoHLG, 1962, p. 8). Again, illustrations were provided to show what government had in mind for higher-density development (Figures 15.9–15.11). By the 1970s it was noted that factors advocating higher densities included 'nearness to the central area, place of work, transport facilities or an open space', and that within an overall density standard