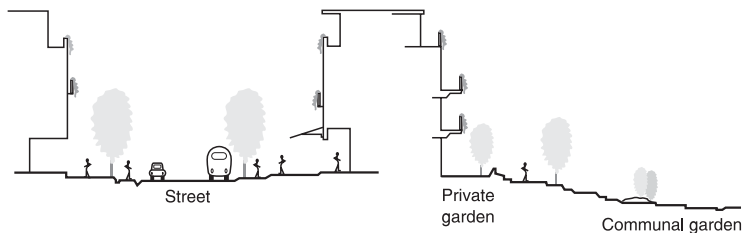


Figure 10.1 Density and Urban Form

walking distance of 500 metres from all homes. A public realm of streets, squares and open spaces link neighbourhoods to each other, the centre and the open countryside. This form of the compact city also follows the long British tradition which extols the virtue of a clear distinction between town and country aiming to contain urban sprawl.

Figure 10.2 Cross-section through a street of mixed uses



LOW-DENSITY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There is another school of thought which proposes low-density settlement as the best way to achieve a sustainable future for humankind. The ‘eco-village’ with its ‘back to basics’ philosophy has a long pedigree, its lifestyle representing a worthy aim. It is obviously a practical proposition for a small-dedicated group living in the countryside, but as a solution to the immediate problems of a highly urbanized country such as Britain it has strictly limited relevance. It is at an extreme end position of a scale or continuum of possible sustainable development strategies. At the other extreme of this continuum, is the very high-density compact city, as illustrated by Rogers’ (1997) thought-provoking project for *Lu Zia Sui*, an extension to *Shanghai* (Figure 10.3).

Closer to the mid point of this continuum of urban forms that purport to deliver sustainable development is the very British Garden City and its offshoot, the garden suburb. Those who advocate these forms of development point out that low densities have many advantages for sustainable development, such as the ease of installing solar heating for each home, the possibility of extensive vegetable gardens and allotments, and the recycling of organic domestic wastes. It is argued that, while the compact city may result in urbane landscapes, it does little to meet the cultural preference of the British public. The argument develops further by pointing to the centrality of public participation in the delivery of sustainable development, and surely the voice of the British public could not make clearer – both through the findings

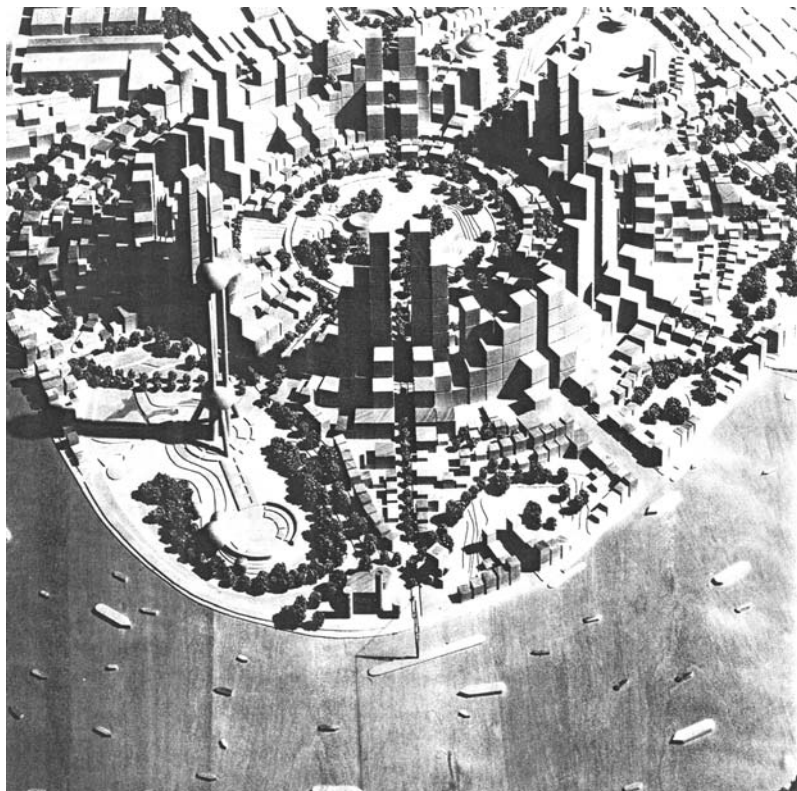


Figure 10.3 Project for Lu Zia Sui, Shanghai (Rogers and Gumuchdjan, 1997)

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of public participation exercises and by their market preferences – a strong preference for the home in its own garden. Sustainable city planning must come to terms with the vast suburbia enveloping most towns and cities that will survive for many decades. This existing suburbia is also determining the housing preferences for the next generation. In this country any move towards higher net densities will be slow if the views of the British people are taken into account (*Urban Design Quarterly*, 2004 Spring Issue).

Open green space in and around cities is important for a number of reasons. These include: the function of soil and its vegetation as a carbon sink; the function of the tree cover as an 'atmospheric scrubber'

removing particulate pollution; the function of green areas as protectors of flora and fauna; and the maintenance of biodiversity. In addition to these environmental functions, the green areas associated with cities provide areas for recreation, food production and economic tree cropping. The reasons for protecting the countryside and enhancing the landscaping in and around cities are manifold. An important by-product of caring for the natural landscape is the great aesthetic pleasure it affords the citizen. With such great benefits to mankind, there should be no problem with conservation of the landscape in and around cities, as Barton *et al.* (1995) point out: 'Nature conservation is not contentious in principle, but when