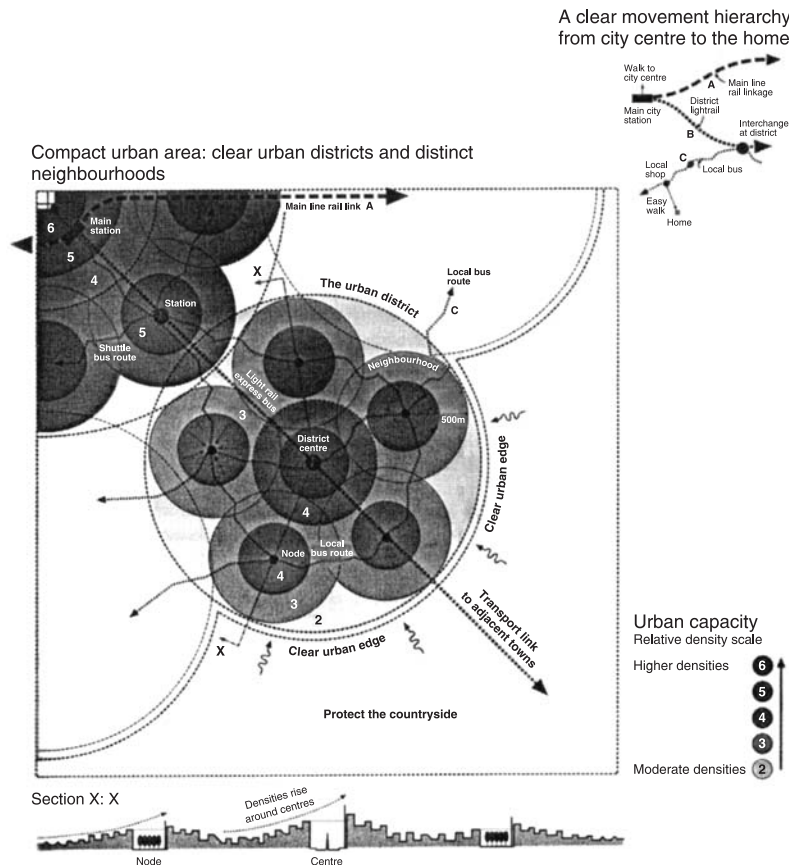


is no necessary connection between them, or, for that matter, between growth and Quality of life'. While this report welcomed the existing government's advice, it recommended a strengthening of the planning system – a process that has continued since then in the preparation and publication of further PPGs (Planning Policy Guidance) containing specific reference to issues of sustainable development. Other important official documents appeared in 1994: *Climate Change: The UK Programme*; *Bio-Diversity: The UK Action Plan*; *Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme*; and *Sustainable Development: The UK*

**Figure 1.1** Urban structure: the compact city



*Strategy* (Department of the Environment, 1994a–d). *Climate Change* outlines the UK programme of measures to implement the Convention signed at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. The section on transport reveals the philosophy behind the then government's strategy: 'As in other sectors a market-based approach is being used, and a key element of the programme is providing the right price incentives' (Department of the Environment, 1994a). Some might say that, fundamentally, this is still the approach of the present Labour Government. We have seen the weakness of this approach in the attempted implementation of the petrol price accelerator – a policy which was a direct outcome of this philosophy. The report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution was also published in 1994: it is a seminal work in the field of sustainable development spelling out in great detail the relationship between energy use, pollution and the built environment.

The Government published, in 1999, *A better quality of Life: a strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK* (DETR, 1999) and *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (Urban Task Force, 1999). In *Towards an Urban Renaissance* the report of the Urban Task Force very clearly sets out the thinking on the design of sustainable urban form. The current orthodoxy sees the sustainable city or, more accurately, the city that approximates to a sustainable form, as a compact and flexible structure in which the parts are connected to each other and to the whole, with a clearly articulated public space. The public realm connects the different quarters to each other across the city, while also linking individual homes to workplaces, schools, social institutions and places of recreation. Figure 1.1 shows a possible

structure for such a compact city and Figure 1.2 illustrates the linkages for the structure. Lord Rogers' Task Force describes the compact city in this way, 'Urban areas are organised in concentric bands of density, with higher densities around public transport nodes (rail, bus and underground stations), and lower densities in less connected areas. The effect of this compact layout is to establish a clear urban boundary, contain urban sprawl and reduce car use.' The main transport structure is an integrated public transport system, which requires, for reasons of efficiency and economics, residential densities much higher than the twenty to thirty dwellings per hectare now widely used in suburban developments in this country.

## POLITICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The meaning of 'sustainable development' is largely determined by an individual's ideological viewpoint. The present Labour Government in this country – and its Conservative predecessor, along with many major parties in Europe, on discovering the environment as a political issue – would consider itself steward rather than master. This view of man's relationship to the environment and the difficulties the world community faces is shared by the United Nations, the European Union and most of the scientific community, including many in the city planning and design professions. The stewardship perspective is the one that, in the main, has been presented so far in this chapter. It represents the views of those who believe that environmental problems

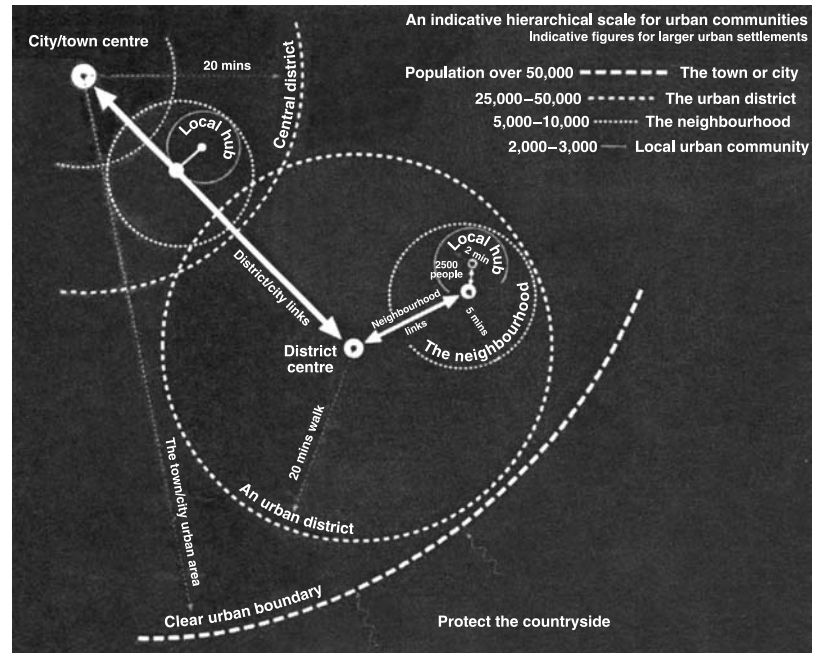


Figure 1.2 Circulation in the compact city

can be solved within the present political and economic system. It is not the only viewpoint. Dobson (1990) distinguishes two diametrically opposed views on sustainability and the environment. The establishment viewpoint he labels 'green' with a lower-case 'g', while those who believe that sustainability depends on the system being fundamentally changed he describes as 'Green' with a capital 'G'. The literature on the topic however, would indicate a spectrum of greens rather than a strict dichotomy: the ideology of all those shades along the spectrum of greenness is determined by their attitude to the environment. The 'Green' ideology or 'ecologism' takes *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows, 1972) as an axiom: 'Greens will admit that the report's estimates as to the likely life expectancy of various resources are over-pessimistic and they will agree that the Club of Rome's world