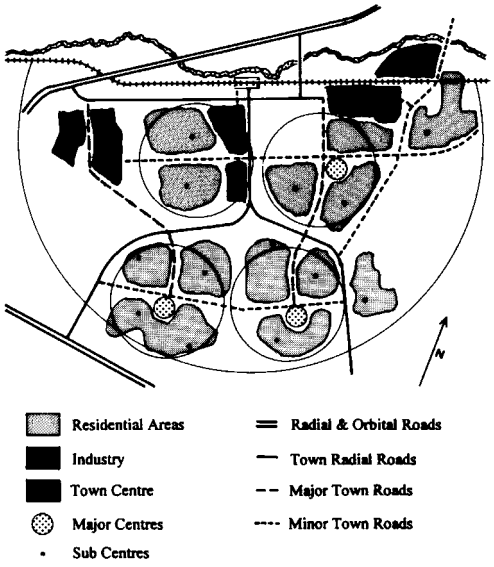

Figure 6.45 Harlow New Town, structure diagram (Gibberd, 1955)

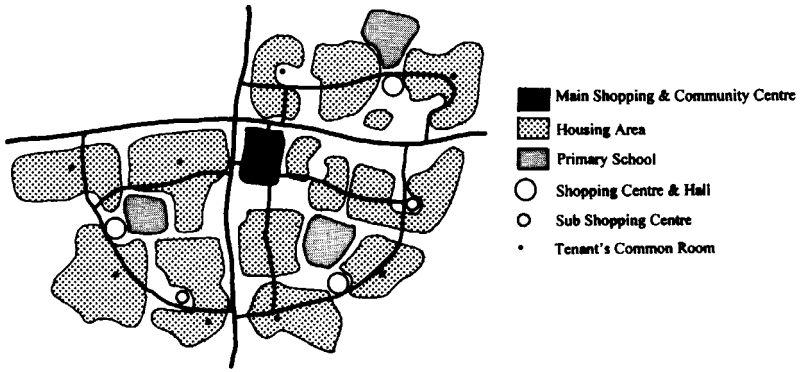

Figure 6.46 Harlow, neighbourhood structure (Gibberd, 1955)

Figure 6.47 Harlow, housing cluster

THE COMPACT CITY

The compact city as an ideal for sustainable urban form is the current orthodoxy both in this country and in the Republic of Ireland. The plan for Adamstown in the Republic of Ireland (see Figure 8.8) echoes the main features of the model outlined in the Report of the Urban Task Force, *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (Urban task Force, 1999) (Figure 6.48). These features include:

(1) High-density mixed use development with mixed tenure housing at fifty units per hectare.
(2) Development arranged around centres with most homes being within 10 to 15 minutes' walking distance from a centre.
(3) These semi-autonomous communities, self-supporting in daily needs, are connected to other centres and to the city centre by public transport routes.
(4) An important structuring element is a well-connected public realm of streets, squares, parks and other open spaces.

GAIA

Lovelock (1979), in his Gaia thesis, deepens our perceptions of the environment and man's place within it: he also broadens the possible scope and meaning of an organic model for human settlement. Gaia theory has, as its premise, the idea that the Earth is a superorganism which is actively self-regulating. Lovelock, however, rejects the notion that the Earth seen as a self-regulating organism is necessarily a teleological concept.

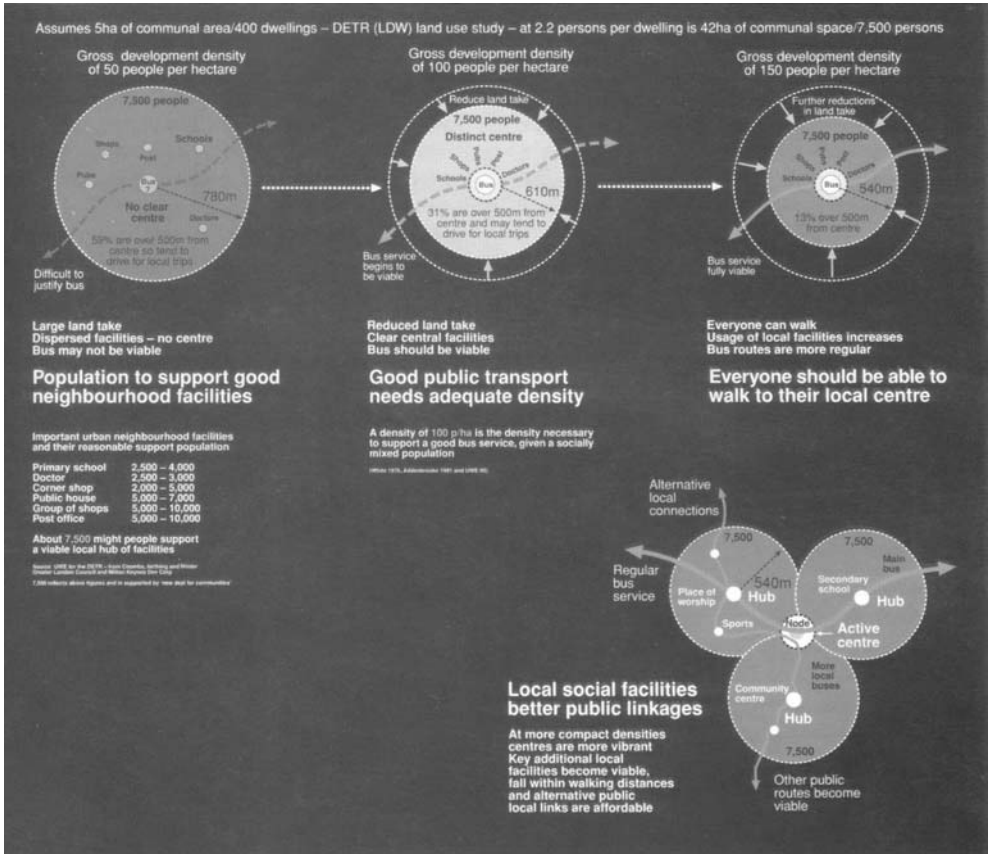

Figure 6.48 Land requirement. Communities of 7 500 and 22 500 people

He maintains that a self-regulating superorganism, such as his concept of Gaia, does not require a biota with both foresight and skills in planning.

Life on this planet is a paradoxical contradiction of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that everything has been, is, and always will be, running down to equilibrium and death. It is rather like a wound clock spring, which slowly unwinds until the clock stops. Natural processes always move towards an increase of disorder measured by entropy, a quantity that inexorably increases. The normal expectancy for a planet like Earth is an inert, lifeless mass such as Venus or Mars. Lovelock illustrates the paradox of life on Earth in this way: 'Yet life is characterised by an omnipresence of improbability that would make winning the sweepstake every day for a year seem trivial by comparison. Even more remarkable this unstable, this apparently illegal, state of life has persisted on Earth for a sizeable fraction of the age of the Universe. In no way does life violate the second law, it has evolved with Earth as a tightly coupled system to favour survival.'