

# Residential Development in the Urban Fringe: A Conflict Interpretation

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*The countryside around towns is under increasing pressure for development as a result of the centrifugal forces which have characterized the capitalist urbanization process in the post-war era. Conflict between pro-growth and anti-growth interests is now endemic in many peri-urban areas. Land for housing forms a major battleground in the conflict between the opposing forces. This paper identifies the principal agents involved in the production of the built environment in the urban fringe and presents a detailed analysis of how divergent interests interact to determine the nature of the fringe environment.*

The transfer of land from rural to urban uses in the course of development is an integral part of the capitalist accumulation process. The physical manifestation of this transformation has been most marked in the dispersed developments scattered around US metropolitan areas, but a similar phenomenon has been experienced to a lesser degree in all Western societies during the post-war era. Some states have intervened to modify market forces in order to ameliorate the adverse social and spatial consequences of the capitalist development process. In the U.K. a sophisticated nationally-coordinated planning system has been created in an attempt to effect an equitable balance between private profit and public interest. Housing land forms a major battleground in the conflict between these two opposing forces. The growing number of disputes between developers and conservationists also serves to illuminate the difficulty of bridging the gap between policy formulation and policy implementation (Cloke, 1986). Nowhere is this more clearly articulated than in the urban fringe. Despite the central importance of this issue for the geography of contemporary metropolitan areas there have been relatively few detailed investigations of the public-private conflicts inherent in the production of the residential environment (Gregory, 1970; Denbighshire County Council, 1974; Blacksell and Gilg, 1981; Rydin, 1986; Short et al., 1986; Ambrose, 1986; Keyes, 1986; Rocke, 1987; Simmons, 1988; Shucksmith, 1990; Cloke, Phillips and Rankin, 1991).

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This paper illuminates the relationship between the major agents involved in the production of the built environment in the urban fringe and illustrates the processes involved with reference to detailed analyses of the struggle between private capital and public planning over development in Glasgow's greenbelt. The case study approach is favored because of its ability to deal with a full range of evidence derived from documents, interviews and observations. As Yin (1984, p. 20) remarks, the strategy has a distinct advantage when 'a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control'. While the particular balance of forces in the selected case studies is obviously unique the underlying principles, tactics, arguments and strategies employed generalize to a wider population. The paper is divided into four parts. In the first, the principal actors in the residential development process are identified with specific attention focused on the house builder and the local planner. In the second, the particular institutional framework for planning in Scotland is outlined and key issues identified. Within this context the regional strategy on residential development is then outlined, prior to consideration of the local case study dispute.

## PRINCIPAL AGENTS IN THE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Recent research in the Marxian humanist tradition by Harvey (1985), Scott (1980), Dear and Scott (1981) and Walker (1981) has illuminated the general processes of capitalist urban development and underlined the inherent contradictions between classes, factions of capital, and geographic areas within the capitalist mode of production. The explanatory power of macro-level structural principles is limited however and, increasingly, the focus of research attention is turning towards more detailed analyses of how these general processes operate at the local level, in particular geographical environments and at specific times. This requires study of the actors involved in the development process, not as independent voluntaristic agents but as forces operating within the parameters of the broader structural setting.

There is now sufficient empirical evidence (Clawson, 1971; Baerwald, 1981; Fleming, 1984; Short et al., 1986) to enable us to identify the major actors in the production of the built environment. The principal agents include:

- (a) rural producers—essentially landowners who are primarily concerned with the productive capability of their land, the most obvious group being farmers;
- (b) speculators—they may own land that is still in productive use but their basic interest lies in its appreciating value. Their decisions are based on factors such as depreciation rates, capital gains tax rates and the comparative viability of alternative investment opportunities;

(c) builder-developers—install basic infrastructure and utilities on the site and construct and sell houses on the prepared lots;

(d) households—can be either potential house purchasers or existing residents. Both groups are motivated by the same factors, i.e., the functional utility of the house as a place to live, and improvement or at least maintenance of the financial investment represented by their property. However, for existing residents these considerations may underlie an anti-growth stance;

(e) estate agents—purvey information between house buyers and sellers. As their rewards come from commissions charged on each land transaction completed, estate agents have a vested interest in promoting residential development and land transfers;

(f) financiers—provide the capital necessary to the development process. Their decisions are based on a combined desire to obtain the highest possible rate of return on loans and minimize or avoid risk;

(g) other facilitators—other professionals involved in the development process include lawyers who represent clients in disputes and consultants who advise the various actors;

(h) pressure groups—can be national organizations pursuing general policies (such as countryside conservation or the House Builders Federation) or local community councils and residents associations mobilized in support of a particular issue;

(i) government—all governments influence the process of urban development although the level of involvement varies. The state—central and local government—exercises both a direct (e.g., planning regulations) and indirect (e.g., taxation policy) influence on urban form. As we shall see in the case studies which follow, the influence of the state permeates issues of land use conflict in the U.K. In the context of power and conflict in the urban fringe particular importance attaches to the relationship between central and local government and, specifically, the degree of autonomy of the latter.

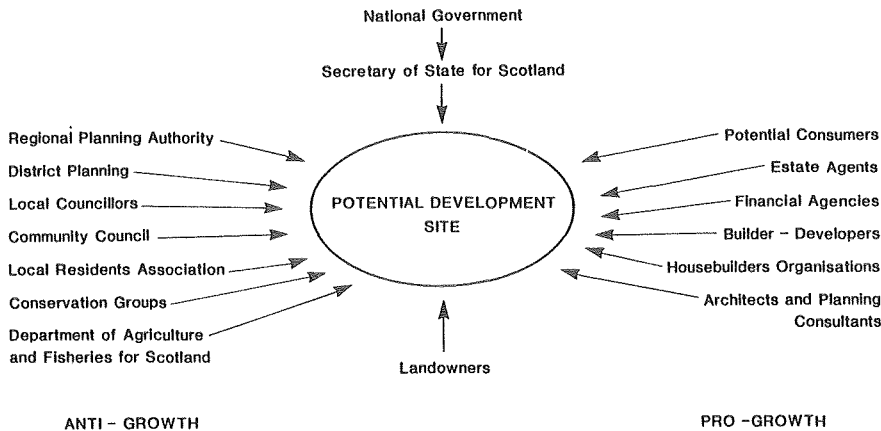
While writers such as Dear and Clark (1981) see the actions of the local state as highly constrained by central government, others such as Dunleavy (1980) assign significant discretionary powers to the local level. A basic fact which must be borne in mind is that the local state is a creation of the central state. It exists to further the aims of the state apparatus, has no independent existence and may be dissolved by the superior authority; the most recent case of the latter action being the abolition of the English metropolitan counties in 1986. The main channels along which central government directs its attempts to constrain local government are via legislation, circulars, planning and finance:

1. Legislation—the unitary system of government in Britain allows central government to impose specific duties and powers on local authorities. Application of the principle of *ultra vires* means that the lower tier can only undertake activities specifically approved by Parliament. This framework suggests strict legislative control over local government, but in fact there is considerable discretion in some areas.
2. Circulars and Guidance—in an effort to clarify central government intentions and legislation a constant flow of circulars links the two levels of government, supplemented by a range of informal contacts between central departments and local government officers. The main method of communication is the circular which may instruct or may be merely advisory or explanatory. Among the defects of this communication system are (a) the balance between coercion and advice varies widely with the result that the status and purpose of many communications is unclear, (b) the communication process has tended to be one-way, (c) many central government communications emphasize uniform national policies and ignore specific local circumstances which influence the effectiveness of policy implementation, (d) central government often involves itself needlessly in the detail of local government administration, (e) central government guidelines focus attention on the provision of services but give insufficient consideration to the effectiveness of different levels of provision, and (f) central government tends to take an individual view of different services instead of examining the inter-relationships between different policies and programs at the local level. The communication gap is arguably less in Scotland where circulars emanate from the Scottish Office rather than Whitehall.
3. Planning Processes—the role and efficacy of planning has been the subject of considerable debate since the structuralist or neo-Marxist critique of normative planning. In effect Marxism and planning are antithetical concepts. Marxists consider urban planning in capitalist countries to be part of the dominant mode of production, supportive of the status quo and therefore counter-revolutionary (Scott and Roweiss, 1977). Most planners would not accept the conspiratorial undertones of this view nor the impotence of their efforts to promote beneficial social change. Nevertheless, planning is a state activity and central government lays down a number of planning processes which control and influence the work of local authorities.
4. Finance—the fourth way in which central government exerts control over local government is through finance. The lower tier's funding is derived from local taxation, public borrowing on money markets, charges for services rendered (e.g., council house rents), and government grants. In the U.K. the majority of local authority income stems from the last of these, in the form of the Rate Support Grant. Until 1981 this was structured so that there was a

negative relationship between an authority's fiscal resources (rateable values per capita) and size of grant, and a positive relationship between its needs (the demand for services) and the grant. The formula was altered by central government in 1981 as part of its general attempt to reduce local government spending. Now, a target expenditure for each authority is set according to its centrally-perceived needs and a grant towards that expenditure is provided. Should the local government seek to spend over the target it is penalized by withdrawal of all or part of the Rate Support Grant. This clearly has major implications for local autonomy.

While the relative importance of these different agents in the production of the built environment is primarily a function of the socio-political structure of the state, the significance of each also varies with local context. (The suite of actors of particular relevance to the urban development process in Scotland is indicated in Fig. 1.) Two agents of prime importance at the local level are the residential housebuilders and the local planning system.

Figure 1. Major agents in the residential development decision-making process in Scotland.



### THE HOUSEBUILDERS

The structure and operation of the U.K. housebuilding industry has been detailed by Ball (1983). Here we are particularly concerned with the motives underlying the behavior of developers. The residential builder must progress through several stages in the production of the built environment. These involve land search and assembly, development design and application for planning permission, housing construction, and marketing and selling. The first two stages are

often most problematic and it is at these points that housebuilders and the planning system come into direct conflict.

A primary concern of builders is to ensure that an adequate supply of land is always available. Because of different interpretations of what is meant by an adequate land supply housebuilders have become 'one of the major adversaries of the planning system' (Rydin, 1986, p. 28). The debate over land availability has intensified since the early 1970s with, in general, builder-developers arguing that the planning system restricts their ability to obtain a basic factor of production and that development controls inflate the price of land and, therefore, of houses. The main building pressure group, the House Builders Federation, has extended the argument on behalf of its members to contend that planners are frustrating household's home-ownership ambitions and threatening the livelihood of small builders, as well as hindering labor mobility and thereby hampering economic regeneration (House Builders Federation, 1985). The width of the gulf between builders and planners over the adequacy of housing land reflects their different motives. The goal of the planning system is to ensure the orderly release of building sites within an approved policy framework. In deciding on a regional and subregional housing allocation, structure plans take account of a wide range of demographic, social, economic and environmental factors. Estimates of future demand for housing are based on national and regional forecasts of population change, local studies of household formation, vacancy rates, and the net effect of improvement and rehabilitation programs. Some attempt is also made to match the scale of new housebuilding with the employment opportunities in the area (Herington, 1984). The intraregional distribution of the total amount of housing land required will reflect the importance attached to growth or restraint in different localities. The capacity of existing infrastructure networks and the cost of necessary improvements will be taken into account, as well as the need to protect agricultural land, high quality landscapes and historic settlements. In contrast to this longterm strategic viewpoint, the chief aim of housebuilders is to ensure a regular supply of land for development and to realize a profit. An adequate land bank is essential to maintain continuity of production. Planners and developers also diverge on the best geographical location for new residential development, the former generally favoring brownfield sites within the existing urban envelope, and the latter preferring greenfield sites which they regard as more marketable. The issue of the marketability of individual sites lies at the crux of the conflict between developers and planners. As empirical surveys of several English metropolitan areas have shown, in gross regional terms there is no shortage of land for building (House Builders Federation, 1981; Department of the Environment, 1978; West Midlands Forum of County Councils, 1982). The point at issue concerns the suitability of different sites and as we shall see, this debate occurs most fiercely at the local level.

## THE PLANNERS

As we have noted, the role and value of planning in capitalist society has been debated at length since the structuralist critique of positivist science (Scott, 1980). For Marxist analysts, planning is of limited relevance being merely part of the legitimisation apparatus of the state. Liberal analyses, on the other hand, underline the practical utility of the planning system in ameliorating the excesses of capitalism and reserving some of the benefits of development for the public. In the U.K. the public have accepted the implications of a strong system of urban planning initiated by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 (Cullingworth, 1982). The basic principle is that of private land ownership but public accountability in use, so that landowners seeking to undertake development first have to obtain permission from the local planning authority. The primary objectives of 'the 1947 system' were urban containment, protection of the countryside, and the prevention of scattered development. These objectives have dominated physical planning for most of the postwar period, and are advanced by local authorities through the twin processes of development planning and development control.

The allocation of sites for private residential development forms a major part of both development planning and development control. Development plans (structure and local plans) are essentially statements of policy. However, development plan maps do not indicate permission to develop. This must be applied for by the landowner and in reaching a decision on a planning application the local authority is entitled to take account of 'other material considerations', i.e., factors other than the statutory development plans. The development control power of the local authority is not absolute, however, since a builder refused planning permission may appeal to the Secretary of State who, along with the higher tier local authority, also has the power to 'call in' matters of regional or national importance. Furthermore, while in principle the 'other material considerations' clause gives the planner considerable discretion in applying development controls, in practice the 'working rules' are that (a) the onus of proof lies with the local authority, (b) each case should be treated on its merits, and (c) partly contradicting the previous guideline, precedent should play a part (Rydin, 1986). Each side in the contest seeks to employ these principles to support their own case. Thus, for example, an applicant can employ the onus on the local authority principle, can argue the particular merits of the case, or use the local authority's past development control record to support the application or weaken the authority's policy stance. The larger builder-developers are increasingly being aided in this practice by professional consultants. The local authority on the other hand can argue the particular planning demerits of a case or can seek to establish their firm strategic planning policy.

Following the electoral victory of the Conservatives in 1979 the traditional blanket opposition to residential development in the countryside has been modified by a number of government initiatives. Circular 9/80 introduced the land

availability study as a policy tool for assessing housing land locally in order to ensure an adequate supply of land over a five year period. This was followed by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 which gave powers to the Secretary of State to determine that local authorities carry out residential land availability surveys in which explicit weight is given to market criteria. While the absence and cost of infrastructure could be a legitimate reason for refusal of planning permission, circular 22/80 (SDD circular 22/84) advised that local authorities must not refuse planning permission without first negotiating with developers over the provision and financing of facilities, possibly under the terms of a Section 52 agreement (Section 50 agreement in Scotland) which regulates the development or the use of land. Extension of this principle creates the opportunity for 'planning gain'. As a result of these initiatives developers are now more directly involved in the land availability studies and local planners must actively consider the requirements of housebuilders when preparing development plans and during the development control process.

Since its inception in 1975 the House Builders Federation has actively pursued a less restrictive market-oriented assessment of housing land availability (Housing Research Foundation, 1982). Indeed the explicit objective of the Volume Housebuilders Study Group is to 'fundamentally alter the complexion of planning in favor of private housebuilders'. The effect of nearly a decade of pressure from the housebuilders lobby was reflected in the increased importance attached to market forces in landuse planning in the 1983 draft circular on land for housing (Department of the Environment, 1983). Public opposition, ably orchestrated by the Council for the Protection of Rural England, led to the eventual withdrawal of the circular (Elson, 1986). The replacement draft circular was less favorable to the housebuilders but still stressed a need for local authorities to provide sufficient land to satisfy the demand for housing. The final circular (Department of the Environment, 1984) made few substantive changes to the second draft, and effectively ensured that conflict between conservation and development interests would intensify at the local level. While the government's commitment to greenbelt policy was reconfirmed in a Planning Policy Guidance note (Department of the Environment, 1988), this has not reduced the pressure on local authorities to release more greenbelt land for residential development. Neither has it altered the government's determination to minimize any involvement in the operation of the land market. Such involvement 'must achieve some wider community good, whether achievement of socio-economic objectives or broader aims such as the wise use of resources and the protection and conservation of the environment; and it can only be justified when market forces would not give sufficient consideration to such interests' (Department of the Environment, 1988, p. 33). The net result of government modifications of the development plan-development control system since 1980 has been to shift the balance of power between housebuilders and planners; but within the constraints of the existing planning system.



## PLANNING IN SCOTLAND

While the spirit of policy and planning guidelines may apply throughout the U.K. the institutional, legal and administrative structure for policy implementation in Scotland is markedly different from that in the rest of Britain. The Scottish planning system is administered from the Scottish Office which oversees a number of agencies with delegated functions, which are independent of their English equivalents controlled from Whitehall (Pacione, 1990). Responsibility for town and country planning is vested in the Scottish Development Department which issues policy directions by means of circulars and the uniquely Scottish creation of National Planning Guidelines supported by associated Land Use Summary Sheets and Planning Advice Notes (Fladmark, 1988).

Since 1975, local government in Scotland has comprised a two-tier structure of nine regional councils, three island authorities and 53 district councils. The higher tier authorities are responsible for structure planning and (optional) regional reports, and the district councils for local plans. In general while district councils in remoter rural areas of Scotland, faced with the challenge of regenerating local economies, have tended to relax planning controls for appropriate development projects (Thomson, 1982) local authorities around the Glasgow conurbation have maintained a firm resistance to residential development on greenfield sites. This may be illustrated by comparing the proportion of greenfield to brownfield developments in the Strathclyde region in 1975 and 1985. At the former date, of the land with planning consent for owner-occupied housing, 84 percent was located on greenfield sites. By contrast, in 1985, 60 percent of private housing completions were on brownfield land, and of planning permissions granted 90 percent were for brownfield developments.

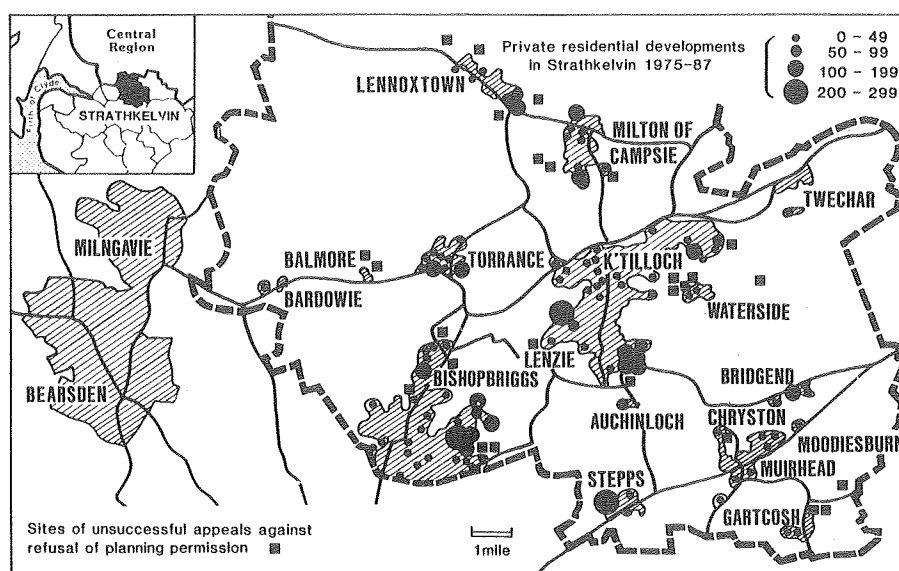
While these statistics indicate a significant policy change it is important to recognize that this has occurred 'only against a background of constant challenge by housebuilders' (Cowan, 1986, p. 6). Confrontation between capitals in pursuit of private profit and planning authorities striving to promote the public interest is an inevitable outcome of the differing emphases attached by central and local government, and by builders and planners to development and conservation in the urban fringe. The remainder of this paper provides a detailed examination of this conflict in the Glasgow urban fringe.

## THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

In the course of the last two decades much of the new private residential development in the Strathclyde region has taken place in Strathkelvin district. Within a declining regional population (due to a falling birthrate and outward migration) the resident population of Strathkelvin district increased by 31.8 percent between 1961 and 1971 and by a further 12.6 percent between 1971 and

1981. Analysis of the socio-economic status of the new population clearly indicates that this growth is directly related to the high rate of private sector house-building in the district over the period. Between 1971 and 1987 the proportion of owner-occupied housing rose from 48.8 percent to 61.2 percent, with a corresponding decline in local authority stock from 49.1 percent to 35.8 percent. As Figure 2 indicates much of this new development occurred in the northern part of Strathkelvin around the villages of Lennoxton, Milton of Campsie and Torrance.

Figure 2: Locations of new private residential development in Strathkelvin District 1975-1987.



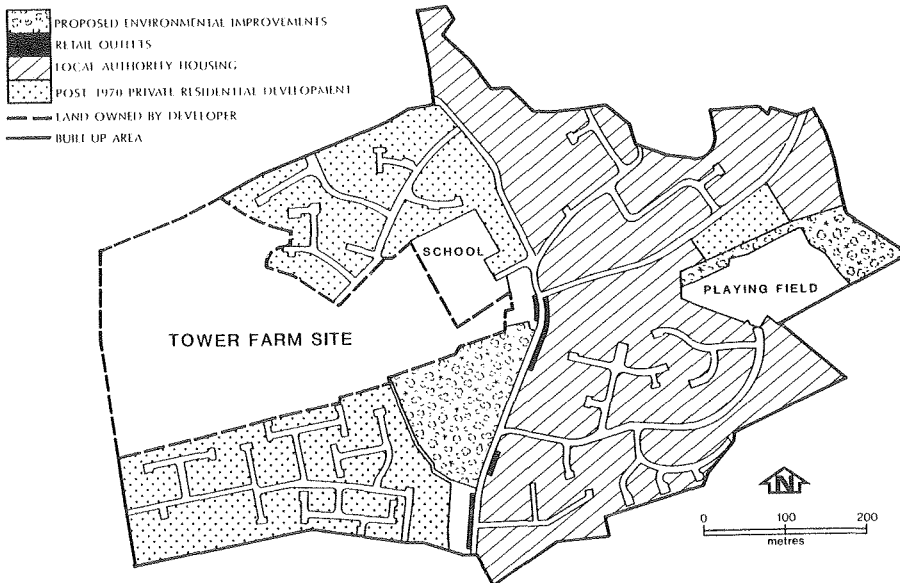
Consequent upon this period of sustained growth the local plan for the Campsie and Baldernock area, formally adopted in 1986, concluded with a categorical recommendation that no further growth should take place: 'The District Council will oppose any private housing proposals which would result in an extension of the builtup area beyond the greenbelt boundary or involve sporadic development within the greenbelt or countryside area' (Strathkelvin District Council, 1986, p. 10). This resolution is in line with the region's policy on residential development in the greenbelt, as detailed in the structure plan (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1986): 'The spread of builtup areas and the encroachment of development into the countryside within a greenbelt around the conurbation.... shall not accord with the regional development strategy' (p. 18). 'Residential development as infill or redevelopment sites within urban areas, excluding zoned open space but including land held by local authorities, new town

development corporations and other public sector bodies, which they have no realistic expectations of developing within five years, will take preference over peripheral greenfield sites' (p. 26). Despite these clear policy statements, the attraction and marketability of greenfield sites has sustained developer demand for further residential development. Over recent years particular pressure has focused on the villages of Torrance and Milton of Campsie (Fig. 2). In the remainder of the paper attention switches to this local level in order to provide detailed insight into the complex interplay of public and private forces underlying the production of the built environment in the urban fringe.

### CASE STUDY 1: TORRANCE VILLAGE

The proposed development site in Torrance forms a green wedge on the western side of the village (Fig. 3). The site was zoned primarily for residential use and public open space in the 1971 Development Plan prepared by the old county council prior to the reorganization of local government in 1975. It was on this basis that the developers purchased the site in 1973.

Figure 3: The Tower Farm site in Torrance Village.



A change in local authority residential development policy resulted in the rejection, in 1976, of the application by the developers for planning permission to construct new housing on the land. The dispute culminated in a public enquiry in September 1986. Significantly, the general arguments involved in the dispute

have been repeated with reference to dozens of other sites and thousands of proposed homes elsewhere in peri-urban Scotland.

In summary, the developers' case was built upon:

- (a) the shortage of sites for good quality private housing in the region in general and in Strathkelvin in particular;
- (b) the Tower Farm site was zoned for residential development in the 1971 Development Plan and was purchased on this understanding;
- (c) the proposed development represented a logical rounding off of the village;
- (d) the major infrastructural problem could be overcome by construction of additional sewerage capacity at the developer's expense (planning gain);
- (e) the land is of moderate agricultural value;
- (f) part of the site could provide sheltered housing and recreation facilities for the village (planning gain).

The district council's response to the developers' proposal to provide infrastructure and community facilities was that no formal approach had been made to them by the developers and that the offer might be construed as 'some sort of planning gain or, arguably, planning blackmail'. The council argued that such facilities should ideally be incorporated in such a residential development in any event and should not be used as a means of 'purchasing' planning permission. Further, the new facilities would require staffing and maintenance both of which would have implications on revenue expenditure should the district council assume responsibility. On similar financial grounds the council would not be prepared to take over the operation of an additional sewerage plant. In effect the 'planning gain' on offer from the developers was refused.

Support for the district council's opposition to the Tower Farm development came from the Region on strategic (greenbelt) grounds as well as from several national and local organizations. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland concluded that although it is not a viable agricultural unit on its own unless used for intensive activities (such as pig production), the land could form a useful addition to another farm and should remain under greenbelt zoning. The views of the local community as voiced by the community council, residents' association and individual petitioners were overwhelmingly antigrowth, with concern expressed over the loss of village character and scenic amenity, and fears of coalescence with nearby villages should the greenbelt policy be breached.

We are thus presented with a complex array of arguments supporting each side in the dispute. The Reporter at the public enquiry reached nine main conclusions regarding the Tower Farm site. Analysis of these sheds light on the reasoning behind the refusal of planning permission. They were as follows:

- (1) if one was to follow a plan for the gradual expansion of Torrance the Tower Farm site would be the logical location for the next state of growth. This

point was acknowledged by the district council. The counterargument centers on the strategic regional policy to effect the regeneration of existing urban areas, to apply greenbelt policies in support of this goal, to conserve agricultural land and the countryside, and to prevent the coalescence of towns and smaller communities;

(2) regional policy notwithstanding, housing need must be satisfied and individual proposals for development must be determined on their merits against the basic strategic policies. According to the Strathclyde Structure Plan, development in the greenbelt would be required to satisfy criteria related to economic benefit, specific locational need, infrastructural implications and environmental impact;

(3) designation as residential land in the old (1971) Development Plan does not carry a presupposition that this should necessarily be implemented. The decision to refuse planning permission had to consider not only regional strategic objections but the concern that the rapid growth of Torrance in the 1960s and 1970s had outstripped the service infrastructure and threatened the traditional quality of village life;

(4) the possible planning gain should not be overemphasized since the benefits offered by the developers largely related to schemes already scheduled for completion in the local plan, albeit over a longer timescale;

(5) a key question is that the attractiveness of the villages of Torrance, Lennoxton and Milton of Campsie is in danger of serious erosion if continued outward expansion occurs and there is need for a breathing space before further even limited peripheral expansion is considered;

(6) the internal regeneration of the village of Torrance should take precedence over peripheral development at Tower Farm. A complication is that part of the land identified in the local plan as in need of improvement and regarded by the district council as essential to the successful regeneration of the village center is in the ownership of the developers who, understandably, were not willing to sell. In these circumstances, the district council aired the possibility of compulsory purchase proceedings should their preferred development proposals be granted planning permission;

(7) while the need for additional private houses in the village may be dictated by new local employment initiatives this is not apparent at present;

(8) the installation of a package sewage treatment plant to serve the new development is less than proper provision and suggests 'a somewhat desperate and unsatisfactory expedient';

(9) the land is capable of productive agricultural use and provides an attractive green wedge into the heart of the village.

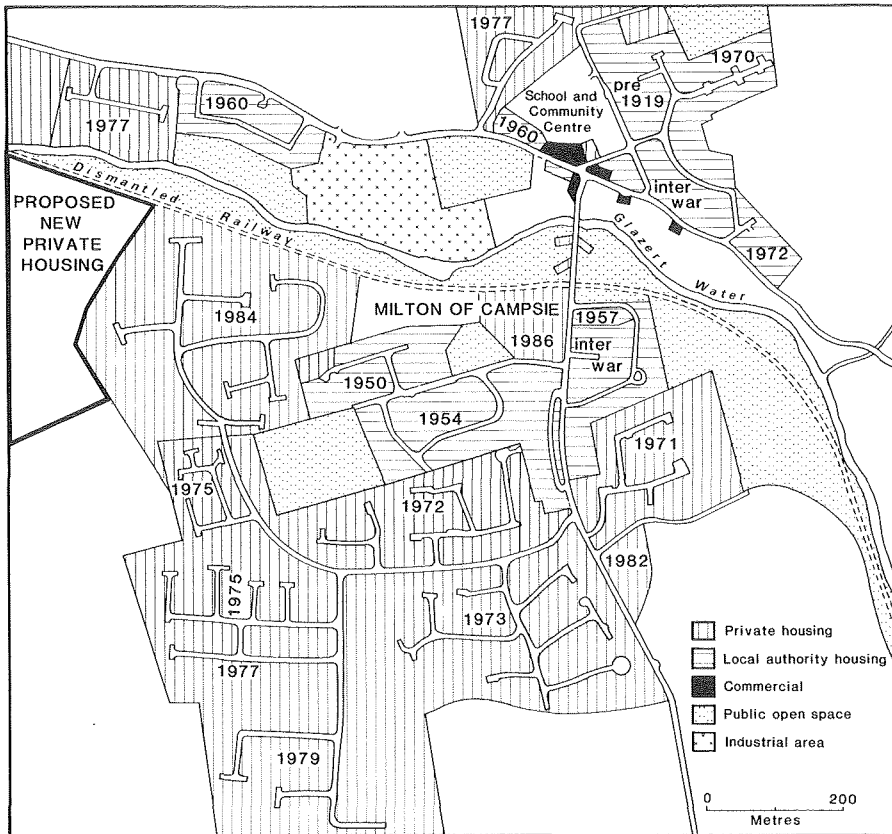
The Reporter's recommendation to refuse planning permission for the Tower Farm site was not accepted by the developers who exercised their statutory right

to lodge an appeal with the Secretary of State for Scotland. In January 1988, the Secretary of State dismissed the appeal on the grounds that there is no specific locational need for the kind of housing proposed at Tower Farm, and that demand can be satisfied by turnover in existing stock in the village and development of available sites at Bearsden and Milngavie, which are within the builtup area and in the same market sector as the proposed development. The Tower Farm site should remain within the greenbelt.

**CASE STUDY 2: MILTON OF CAMPSIE**

As Figure 2 indicates, much of the new private residential development since 1975 and pressure for further development has impacted on the land contiguous to the settlement of Milton of Campsie. One of the most recent areas to be the subject of development conflict is situated on the north western edge of the village (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: The Redmoss Farm site in the village of Milton of Campsie.



The Redmoss Farm site was purchased by the developers over twenty years ago at a time when substantial housing development was envisaged between the villages of Lennoxton and Milton of Campsie. The Strathclyde Region structure plan, approved in 1981, abandoned this concept in line with an increasing emphasis on redeveloping the existing urban fabric. The reversal of the earlier growth policy was reaffirmed in the 1986 and 1988 updates of the structure plan and in the relevant local plan. The builders, nevertheless, applied for planning permission in April 1988. The refusal of planning permission by the local authority in June 1988 stimulated an appeal by the developers in August 1988. A public local enquiry was held on the dispute in August 1989. As well as specific local considerations relating to infrastructure provision, the two major policy issues of relevance in determining the appropriate land use for the appeal site related to the key questions of housing land supply and green belt preservation.

As we have seen, the question of the amount of land available for residential development represents a major area of disagreement between public authorities and private developers. In the particular context of Strathkelvin district the Secretary of State, in approving the 1986 update of the structure plan, directed that the district identify sites to allow an additional 950 private houses to be built by 1993. The council planners calculated that this requirement could readily be met on brownfield sites currently available. The housebuilders have contested the figures and have continued to lodge planning applications and appeals relating to greenfield sites. Given this policy background, with reference to the Redmoss Farm appeal site the housebuilders argued that the development is necessary for three reasons. The first is to increase the range of housing available in the district and, in particular, to satisfy a local demand for upper-market housing. Second, it was contended that there was a shortage of residential land in Strathkelvin. Third, it would contribute to the 1993 housing land requirement as identified by the Secretary of State and thereby reduce development pressure on other sites. The builders also gave an assurance that the development would have no 'knock-on effect' as the balance of the Redmoss Farm site which they also owned would be returned to agricultural use. In response, the district council maintained that the housebuilders' evidence of a significant local demand for upper-market housing was largely anecdotal and that analysis of records of house transactions indicated a level of inter-district mobility which enabled demand for this type of housing to be satisfied by that available in the adjacent district of Bearsden and Milngavie (Fig. 2). The local authority also contested the claim that there was a shortage of residential land in Strathkelvin, and contended that, in its view, members of the Scottish House Builders Association had consistently adopted a negative attitude to potential housing sites identified by the local authority and had disregarded the policy preference for development on brownfield land.

The brownfield-greenfield debate represents the second major policy issue underlying urban fringe development in general and the Redmoss Farm appeal site in particular. Green belts have formed an integral element in national devel-

opment control and planning strategy for over forty years (Murray, 1991), and the Redmoss Farm appeal site forms part of the statutory green belt as identified in the local plan. The case advanced by the housebuilders for development on the site rested on five key contentions. The first is that the existing boundary of the green belt is indistinct and indefensible in the longer term. Second, the appeal site is both visually unattractive and unsuitable for agriculture due to poor soil quality and urban interference. Third, the green belt conservation policies of the local plan predate Scottish Development Department Circular 24/85 with its requirement for a review of green belt boundaries. Fourth, it is argued that the proposed development would not reduce the existing green gap between the village of Lennoxton and Milton of Campsie (Fig. 2). Finally, and most fundamentally, it was contended that the appeal site is not properly described as greenfield.

The local authority's response to each of these points was first, that the inner edge of the green belt as defined in the adopted local plan remains appropriate and has been reaffirmed by the regional council as being sustainable in the longer term. Second, the builder's dismissal of the agricultural potential of the site was considered to be inaccurate. The D.A.F.S. classification of the land did not exclude uses such as sheep grazing or even cereal cropping. The problem of urban interference was considered to be overstated. Furthermore, even if the greenbelt boundary was to be redrawn, residential development was not the only possible land use for the site, which could accommodate tree planting aided by the 1988 Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme. Third, considering the validity of the green-belt boundary, the 1986 update of the structure plan approved by the Secretary of State included the review of green-belt boundaries required by the S.D.D. Circular 24/85 and was particularly concerned to avoid coalescence of small settlements in sensitive areas. The Campsie and Baldernock Area local plan was adopted only in 1986 since the Secretary of State had prohibited its adoption until the issue of housing land in Strathkelvin had been considered in the second review of the structure plan. In addition, the District's green-belt policy was debated fully during the Campsie and Baldernock Area local plan enquiry and sustained by the reporter. Fourth, although it was correct that the proposed development would not encroach any closer to Lennoxton than housing within the current built-up area of the village, the existing houses have little visual impact, being screened by protected trees to the west. Finally, contrary to the claims of the developers, the appeal site conforms to the structure-plan definition of greenfield land, i.e., land outwith an urban area in use or generally capable of being brought into active or beneficial use for agriculture (including forestry) purposes. It is significant that the definition of a greenfield site does not require an agricultural use to be economically attractive. Furthermore Strathkelvin was not one of the districts listed in the structure-plan as locations where greenfield release would be an acceptable addition to the land supply. Neither, it was argued, can the appeal be justified in terms of structure-plan policy RES 2A—which allows for additional greenfield release if it can be satisfied against the



three criteria of: (i) evidence of demand and lack of effective supply in terms of quantity, quality and location; (ii) infrastructure implications; (iii) impact on greenbelt policy and the countryside around towns, since the site is within the green belt and the housing-land supply in the district is considered to be sufficient for seven years (Pacione, 1991).

The polarized nature of the argument between builders and planners ensured the intervention of an arbitrating authority, and a public inquiry on the developers' appeal against refusal of planning permission took place in August 1989. The particular sensitivity of the case and the importance of the judgement for the more general production of the built environment in the urban fringe meant that, in this instance, the task of the Reporter was to evaluate the information presented by the various interest groups (Fig. 1) and provide his recommendations to the Secretary of State for final disposal. Two of the 'findings of fact' identified in the enquiry report referred to the key issues of housing-land supply and the green belt. On the first of these, the reporter reached three conclusions: (i) the approved structure plan required the district council to bring forward a range of opportunities to enable the provision of 950 private houses in addition to the agreed 1986 supply by 1993; (ii) the structure plan did not specifically identify Strathkelvin District for greenfield-land release prior to 1993; (iii) since it is likely that the 1993 total is achievable on brownfield sites, the adequacy of the housing-land supply therefore hinges on questions of choice and location. The second main finding referred to the green-belt designation of the appeal site. It was concluded that the site lay within the designated green belt as identified in the adopted local plan and conforms to the structure-plan requirement for a strategic green break between Lennoxton and Milton of Campsie. It was also considered that the site was correctly described as a greenfield site according to the structure-plan definition. It followed that if the green-belt boundary were held to be correctly drawn, the proposed development should be evaluated against the criteria listed under structure plan policy GB1A, namely, evidence of economic benefit, specific locational need, infrastructural implications and environmental impact.

In April 1990, the Secretary of State issued a decision letter in which he dismissed the developers' appeal against refusal of planning permission for the Redmoss site on the grounds that it was not justified either in relation to housing need or in relation to the detailed characteristics of the green belt at the location.

## CONCLUSION

The countryside around towns is under increasing pressure for development as a result of the centrifugal trends inherent in the urbanization process under capitalism. The case studies presented in this research report reveal the wide range of factors which operate to affect the development process in the metropolitan

fringe. The issues are complex. Builder-developers cite a number of economic arguments to support residential development in the green belt. The first of these concerns the need to meet demand for housing in fringe locations. Failure to do so, it is argued, discriminates against first-time buyers and smacks of 'exclusionary zoning' on behalf of residents. The second argument is that new construction would provide jobs and aid regeneration of the local economy as well as providing housing for migrant workers. Thirdly, it is contended that in times of financial stringency in the public sector the housing developments agreed under 'planning gain' arrangements between developers and local authorities allow the provision of needed facilities in advance of their scheduled development in local plans. These considerations must be weighed against the social costs identified by planners which include: (a) short-term planning which may carry with it longer-term financial implications for local authorities charged with the maintenance of facilities; (b) the loss of agricultural land, amenity value, scenic quality and the diminution of the rural character of a village; (c) infrastructural problems related to overcrowding of existing facilities; and (d) opposition to greenfield developments which is directly related to the goal of regenerating existing urban areas and the strategy of preferred development on brownfield sites.

The task of government is to adjudicate these divergent interests and at the same time resolve its contradictory goals of maintaining capital accumulation and promoting social legitimation. In the case studies examined the decision fell in favor of the 'public interest'. The complexity of the decision-making process is such, however, that a change in any one of the factors involved could produce a different outcome in a similar situation. This paper highlights the key agents and complex nature of the decision-making procedures which underlie the production of the built environment in the urban fringe. Such information contributes to academic debate on rural land-use change, provides guidance for those responsible for the management of urban fringe environments, and illuminates a socio-spatial process which is of increasing importance in peri-urban areas throughout the Developed World.

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