

The Threat to the Suburb from Development

The Suburb is still a distinctive area of international importance in the history of urban architecture, that has great charm and is an outstandingly attractive residential area with a strong sense of community.

Over the last fifty years in a changing world the Suburb has found its place in a re-ordered and financially conscious society. The market value of the properties regulated by the Trust is probably in excess of 3 or 4 billion pounds and properties can change hands for millions of pounds. The importance of property not only to the financial portfolios of private individuals but to commercial companies has transformed the Suburb into a target for developers.

The stakes are high. The Trust, with an annual income of less than half a million pounds, is faced with planning applications for developments where the potential profits are several times that revenue. In an area where most residents, however prosperous, regard themselves as lucky to live here many of these proposals are quite out of keeping with the spirit even of a socially transformed Suburb. The conflict between private interests and the public interest shows itself on an increasingly large scale. Developers making such applications fail to understand the damage their proposals will do to the environment for others. In refusing such applications the Trust risks legal challenge. The outcome of litigation is notoriously uncertain. Victory may go to the litigant with the deeper pockets.

It is not, as some suppose, that such threats are confined to the roads of large houses. There are pockets of land and properties throughout the Suburb which have attracted commercial attention in ways which are unhelpful to the purposes of the Trust and damaging to the amenities of residents.

The increased complexity of speculative applications to the Trust and the protracted nature of some of the legal manoeuvres involved are putting the resources of the Trust under pressure. In order to manage this problem the Trust will need to increase its resources if it is to contemplate its future existence with confidence.