INTRODUCTION

Early in 2001 Wimpey City appointed IDPartnership to prepare housing proposals for the former Gateshead Garden Festival site on the banks of the River Tyne. It is now 10 years since the first phase of this ground-breaking exercise in urban housing was completed.

It has been a momentous decade seeing an unparalleled boom, crash into "unfathomable bust", and much of the Design and Development criteria which defined its initial phase in terms of planning and highways design codes, has now been modified beyond recognition.

From the outset, this bold antidote to Wayne Hemingway’s article in the Independent, coining the phrase "the Wimpeyfication of Britain" caused a stir in housing and planning circles because of its uncompromising rejection of "Prince Charles’ Vision of Britain", and importantly, its search for a more contemporary and streetwise response to Urban Housing.

Wayne Hemingway had earlier railed against the "despoliation" of the UK by Volume House Builders, and Hemingway Design (HD) was rewarded by Wimpey with the challenge to join the Design Team and see if a more humane solution could be found. Wayne and Bernardine Hemingway joined the IDP Team with a view to finding a better route, and delivering an improved and much more relevant housing product.
Along the way, the Staiths Design Team (HD, IDP, Glen Kemp and Ove Arup) evolved a design philosophy that focused upon safe, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods that enabled children to "adventure in safety". The quest to rediscover a lost vision of "communality" encouraged communal gardens and play spaces adjacent to residents' clearly defined "defensible space".

The potential of encountering and actually greeting a neighbour on the way to and from communal parking, recycling points, and communal barbecues, was enhanced by the provision of a variety of informal seating areas within the public realm.

The meaning of "Play Streets" was redefined on Tyneside by the appearance of a table tennis table and various children's play structures within the public domain.

Hard and soft landscaping was, by the standard of the time, extremely generous, and streetscapes were closely considered, to deliver a characterful and attractive backdrop to "active street life" and neighbourliness.

Staiths became the talking point for northern architecture and planning students, - and fuelled by Wayne's uncompromising rhetoric; the potential of Staiths as a "Place to Live" became attractive to a diverse, creative and questioning community.
The release of the first phase for sale witnessed scenes of popular enthusiasm more typical of film premiers and book signings. Over 180 potential purchasers queued around the block overnight in their sleeping bags to snap up the first release of 110 properties the next day.

The Staiths scooped virtually all the available housing awards in its first year, including the "Best Housing Development of the Year" in the UK. It achieved notoriety for the advanced "traffic calming" and "communalisation" of car parking spaces.

Wayne and Bernadine lived for part of the week during the early build phases in their house at the Staiths, and contributed to the creative milieu of the scheme which is within easy walking distance of Newcastle/Gateshead Town Centre.

Staiths and its design values, became recognised nationally, and the project was used as an important precedent and case book study in many Local Authority UDP's the length and breadth of the UK.

Staiths seemed destined to be replicated within numerous inner city redevelopment areas in Manchester, Birmingham and London.

Then came the worst recession since the 1930's, and the slowest recovery on record. The Staiths was one of the few developments in the north of England not to be "mothballed" however, and the development is now practically complete. There has been a wonderful finale to the project, - the long awaited Neighbourhood Café and Bakehouse was opened in early 2015.

As the final phase is completed and the vandalised adjacent Coal Staiths, are reopened as a visitor attraction, it seems wholly appropriate to review this interesting and esoteric project and learn from its 10 years of innovation.
“Small schemes don’t prove the public’s design taste is changing, only that there are always niche markets. But big schemes of 250 or more homes prove new markets. The Staiths was the only such scheme for 100 miles in any direction since the Millennium.”

- David Birkbeck, Design for Homes
THE SITE

Dunston Staiths is located approximately 2.5 km west of Gateshead Centre and Newcastle on the southern banks of the River Tyne and the northern edge of Dunston in Gateshead. Set against the backdrop of the spectacular listed Dunston Coal Staiths Structure, it is a distinctive residential neighbourhood of 635 homes set around pedestrian friendly streets and a series of communal spaces.
2 DUNSTON STAITHS - HISTORIC CONTEXT

Dunston is an area with a rich industrial history. The site was previously occupied by the Redheugh gas works for almost 100 years, and the works were demolished between 1971 & 1978. Staiths South Bank, takes its name from the more famous Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade 2 listed timber structure constructed within the river adjacent to the site i.e. Dunston Staiths. Following its industrial uses the site remained derelict for 12 years until it was acquired by Gateshead Council in 1980.

Dunston Staiths is believed to be the largest timber structure in Europe, and at its zenith, 5.5m tonnes of coal a year was taken by rail from the Durham coalfields and loaded from the Staiths onto ships waiting on the river. These ships transported coal around the British Isles and Internationally. The North Eastern Railway Company opened Dunston Staiths in 1893 to meet the growing demand to export coal and to save the rail journey to the docks at the mouth of the river. A second set of Staiths was built adjoining the first in 1903 and a tidal basin dug out, providing six berths in all, where colliers could be loaded regardless of tidal conditions.

Dunston Staiths fell into disrepair during the latter half of the 20th century, as the coal industry declined. It was fully restored in the 1980’s and the gantries were repaired and redecorated, but in a non-operational condition. It was used as a focal point for the National Garden Festival held in Gateshead in 1990, when the public could walk along the top of the structure and view the chutes and other machinery used in loading the ships. It was also a performance area and art gallery venue. A fire in November 2003 seriously damaged the monument, destroying a section which detached the eastern end to create an island.

In 2014, the owners of Dunston Staiths, Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT) in partnership with English Heritage, Gateshead Council and Durham Wildlife Trust, were given a grant of £418,700 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This funding, alongside that from Historic England (English Heritage), trusts and foundations, and public donation, has enabled repair works to conserve a section of the Staiths and to provide safe public access, to actively manage the Saltmarsh Garden, and develop a programme of activity to raise awareness and develop community ownership of the area. Restoration work in 2014 replaced fire damaged timbers in the first eight frames of the 526 metre long structure, strengthened and repaired a fire damaged section at the first gantry, and also repaired the top deck of the Staiths by replacing handrails, planking and beams underneath the decking. With public access restored, the Staiths celebrated its first opening season for 25 years in 2015. The HLF project also includes the reconnection of the Staiths with the surrounding saltmarsh and wider areas - allowing people to fully appreciate these special habitats, and providing an interpretation of the site’s history. A two-year education project for local community and schools has been set up, to include working with local youth groups and youth workers.
The area was remediated and regenerated in the late 80’s by Gateshead Council for the then Government Garden Festival Initiative. In 1990 the Gateshead Garden Festival took place on 200 acres of largely abandoned industrial riverside land (including the site of SSB). It attracted over 3 million visitors, with attractions such as public art displays, a Ferris wheel, dance, music, theatre and sporting events. Several modes of transport were provided around the site: a monorail which ran between Norwood and Eslington, a narrow gauge steam railway between Dunston and Redheugh, and a road train which covered the entire site. A ferry across the River Tyne, between Dunston Staiths and Newcastle Quayside, was also provided.

At the Riverside it was the Redheugh Gas Works, opened in 1876, which had to be cleared and the area was given a blanket of crushed stone and sand up to one and a half metres thick, with soil from the construction of the Ryton-Crawcrook bypass. Dunston Staiths was given a £1m makeover so that it could be used as a promenade and artworks platform.

The aim was to tackle inner city decay and dereliction, and was based on an Initiative which began in Hanover in Germany in 1951 - to reclaim bomb-damaged areas. The Gateshead site was divided into four festival areas - Norwood, Riverside, Dunston and Eslington Park. All areas required a level of remediation.
Following the Garden Festival it was considered that the site was unsuitable for housing for various reasons. The Council wished to protect the site for much needed employment in the area and the Environment Agency had serious concerns regarding the extent and nature of the remaining contamination. After almost a decade of marketing and false starts, Gateshead Council realised that there was no viable employment use coming forward, and the potential for housing was reconsidered.
Wimpey Homes expressed an initial interest in the site in early 2000 and they appointed a project team to carry out due diligence and pre planning consultation.

The intention was to try and develop the site with gap funding but European laws in relation to subsidising development changed and the opportunity was lost. Wimpey soon realised that their traditional approach, low cost homes with minimal design input, would not work on this site. This coincided with criticism in the media from Wayne Hemingway regarding the “Wimpeyfication” of Britain. The MD of Wimpey had a meeting with Gerardine and Wayne and invited the Hemingways to work with Newcastle based architecture practice, IDPartnership, to prepare proposals for the site.
One of the arguments put to the Council in terms of justifying housing on previously designated employment land was the positive impact that new housing could have in terms of the wider area. To the north of the site is Clasper Village and to the south, Dunston, both neighbourhoods fell within the Housing Market Renewal area. The argument was that new housing at the Staiths would help with the Council’s wider aims for regenerating this part of Gateshead, and for providing more choices for residents in the area.
REMEDIATION AND SNCI CONCERNS

The Environment Agency had significant concerns with the contaminants on the site and with how these would be treated. In addition there were issues regarding the impact of remediation on the nearby Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). A comprehensive programme of sampling, analysis and risk assessment was undertaken prior to designing a reclamation scheme. AIG undertook to carry out the remediation with Ove Arup involved in verification of the completed work. AIG’s works also included removing many of the large buried obstructions which still remained from the earlier industrial uses and Arup’s completion testing included ensuring the bearing capacity of the remediated site was suitable for the intended use. Most importantly, the thickness of the proposed clean capping material was to be measured on completion to satisfy Wimpey and Gateshead Council that the work complied with the remediation design.
Sustainability
Staiths South Bank’s main success is in the non-built aspects of sustainability. The emphasis upon removing the dominance of the car extends to a 125% car parking space provision (one space per dwelling with one visitor space per four dwellings) and communal bicycle storage for the apartments within the scheme. There is also a system of cycle paths within the Staiths, which in turn link into the wider cycle network. Local buses stop on Team Street with pedestrian routes through to the residential development.

Toolkit
The most successful aspect of Staiths South Bank must be the people-friendly layout, which creates a vastly more attractive living environment, particularly in terms of creating a sense of a genuine community. With so many new suburban developments being aimed at the family market, the creation of homezones and safe communal spaces must be a strong consideration. With increasing pressure upon reducing car usage, the measures taken here also provide useful lessons, as does the communal refuse collection points which will arguably become more popular.

The more general lesson to be taken however is that of the value of good design. The argument that the British public only want to live in “traditional”, mock-historic housing is dispelled by the huge demand that the housing at Staiths South Bank has consistently generated.

8 THE HOUSING CONCEPT

The main principles for Staiths South Bank were:

- Good design at affordable prices;
- Home Zone design with an emphasis on pedestrian primacy and community living;
- Contemporary development;
- Connectivity - easy access for cycling and walking to Gateshead and Newcastle.

Design
The most exciting aspect of the development is the design of the streets. These ‘green links’ are focused upon the creation of homezones, where pedestrian movement has priority over cars and other vehicles.

Homes are clustered around communal courtyards. Further features are included within these spaces to encourage communal activities, such as barbecues and children’s play equipment. A strong use of planting also adds to the family-friendly feel of the area.

An immediately striking feature of the scheme is the contemporary design of the homes. The houses have a bold, fresh and ‘contemporary’ appearance, and this approach is extended to the internal plan forms, providing more open-plan living.

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The Hemingways had already been approached by Wimpey to become involved in one of their major schemes, following Wayne’s article on the “Wimpeyfication” of Britain.

They were particularly keen to work in the north of England, and elected to become involved with Staiths South Bank, rather than with one of the many (and potentially more prestigious) southern developments on offer.

Wayne and Gerardine joined the core consultant team of IDPartnership, Architects, Ove Arup & Partners, Engineers, and Glen Kemp, Landscape Architects, and worked in close collaboration with the Consultants, Wimpey and the Council to develop the Staiths.

The Hemingways' involvement with the Staiths project was not particularly unusual as other "design icons" were also becoming involved in housing design, but the passion and commitment they brought to the project was unique.

Wayne and Gerardine brought a different perspective to the ‘design table’, much of which was informed by positive elements from their own childhoods. The sense of community, for example, had been paramount, and they both had very fond memories of adventuring in the “Rec”, communal areas adjacent to their homes in which all the local children could play safely.

The shared communal courtyards at the Staiths have "borrowed" some of these positive aspects - providing communal garden areas for the houses in the immediate vicinity - semi-private areas that are accessed and overlooked by 20-25 units around a series of courtyards.
Wayne and Gerardine had travelled extensively and introduced precedents from much further afield than the north west of England. These included the use of communal barbecues in housing schemes in Australia and more importantly, the contemporary designs of housing developments in Malmo, Sweden, Copenhagen and Amsterdam.

The fresh contemporary approach to the design of a large-scale housing development was unique for its time and has contributed enormously to the success of the development.

Gerardine joined the weekly 'design studio sessions' at IDPartnership's offices. This was HD's first foray into the world of large scale housing development, but Gerardine's contribution to the layout and appearance of the scheme was fundamental. HD constantly challenged the "standards" of the time and in so doing, the design team was able to "push the boundaries" in many areas.

Ralph Erskine had already established the principles of communality and pedestrian primacy with the Byker Wall development in Newcastle. This scheme had become nationally celebrated - its contemporary forms and landscaped pedestrian routes making it unique for its time, and a 'must' for all architects to visit from all over the world. The design team benefited from the lessons this scheme offered.
Staiths South Bank will eventually provide a total of 635 dwelling units across the site—a mix of 2 and 3 storey houses centred around shared landscaped courtyards and apartment blocks located alongside the River Tyne.

There is a wide mix of one, two, three, and four bed accommodation with landscaped courtyards and corridors focusing on play areas, all of which takes priority over the car and other vehicles. There is also a café/information point at the heart of the development.

There are two main vehicular access points to the site. Pedestrian and cycle routes are also provided from the riverside walkway connecting with Gateshead centre and Baltic Square via the riverside sculpture park, and which is part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 14, Keelmann Way. Bus routes are available within a 400m walk—connecting residents to Gateshead, Newcastle and the Metro Centre.

Car ownership is restricted to one car space per household, with 25% visitor parking. Reduced car ownership and careful design encourages low car speeds which enhance pedestrian primacy and play safety.
In addition to the landscaped courtyards, which provide semi-private spaces for the residents, the pedestrian links within the scheme provide for a variety of play opportunities in a safe environment. These areas are all very well overlooked and are equipped with a range of play features to stretch the imagination.

There are small seating areas to promote incidental interaction between neighbours. The routes are well integrated within the design to enhance communality, and reduced car ownership contributes to the overall feeling of inclusivity and pedestrian primacy.
THE STAITHS ‘POLEMIC’ CHALLENGES THE PLANNERS AND HIGHWAYS ENGINEERS

The Hemingways challenged all the ‘norms’ and encouraged the Council to look at things with a fresh approach. At the Staiths, this included not only the contemporary aesthetic but also the design of the layout – in terms of the Homezone approach, traffic calming, adoptions, car parking, cycling, refuse collection, and integrated play and landscaping. The normal standards were put to one side, and a fresh approach was adopted.

Gateshead Council enthusiastically welcomed the new initiatives and planning, highways, adoptions, and environmental health officers joined the weekly workshops and development sessions. They worked with Wimpey’s consultants to ensure that the principles would work in practice, and have contributed enormously to the success of the scheme.

The first phase at Staiths South Bank was the only wholly new-build scheme to attract Homezone Challenge Funding, which enabled the Council and the developer to embrace the new Home Zone design principles wholeheartedly. £485K of the £30M government fund contributed towards the scheme, one of 61 successful schemes from 237 bids from across the country.

Fully integrated hard and soft landscaping promoted new traffic calming techniques, and standard Adoptions criteria were reviewed – to reduce traffic speeds, simplify services distribution and introduce low car ownership throughout the site.

Normal refuse collection policies were relaxed. Residents are expected to take their domestic refuse to communal Refuse Collection points provided in screened areas close to the landscaped courtyards. Most of the “internal roads” do not therefore need to accommodate large bin wagons with their demanding turning circles.
In addition to moving away from standard highway design, The Staiths development incorporates a number of other new ideas, which caused some ripples in the world of housing provision generally in the north-east.

The concept of upside down living was introduced. Houses with bedrooms on the ground floor, and living rooms and kitchens at first floor, with verandas and steps down to the rear gardens. Apartment blocks with decked communal areas for seating and social interaction – and car parking hidden below.

A range of standard house types is offered with many internal and external variations. The scheme meets (but does not exceed) current building regulations, and has not used advanced construction methods. It is built in brick and block with render and cedar cladding. Roofs and flashings are in aluminium as well as traditional tiling. Materials, including the different colours of brick, were carefully chosen to create a 'sense of place' throughout the development.

The construction allows some internal flexibility, such as bedrooms which open to the loft and first floor living. Interiors have varied layouts and are well-equipped at low cost. Public amenities are of a high quality and made from natural materials.
although the timber and woven-willow furniture and some other accessories have a limited life and will need managed maintenance.

Communal barbeques were introduced to the shared courtyards - causing some consternation when first mooted, but they are very popular with the residents. The success of this approach has been documented in the Arts Council on-line publication "The Power of the Barbeque".

Incidental street furniture - small seating areas and play facilities are introduced almost piecemeal into the landscaped 'pedestrian streets'. A ping-pong table and other games take their place in the general thoroughfare. These installations all contribute to the sense of place - each area providing a different set of experiences yet within a fully integrated whole.

There is no 'Percent for Art' contribution for this scheme. The incidental street furniture is the ART, and this was a conscious decision by the Design Team from the beginning.

A key feature of the scheme is the provision of public, private and semi-private spaces designed to integrate with the transport and circulation infrastructures. Each phase of the project has its own 'play strategy', which calls upon children's imagination by placing adventurous and unusual equipment within the streetscape.

The development continues to inspire imaginative responses to community engagement. The challenge presented by youths misappropriating the play areas resulted in an innovative community garden entry to the Chelsea Flower Show in 2009. This partnership, between designer Bernadine Herrin-Gray and Gateshead Council, engaged a group of local young people to create a show garden, intended to be re-sited as a permanent feature in their community after the exhibition. (The garden received an RHS silver award at the show.)
The initial Sales Release was launched at the Marriott hotel in Gateshead. The interest in the scheme was huge - mainly in response to wide media coverage based on the Hemingway's involvement with the development. Potential buyers queued for many hours through the night and the first launch was sold out within a few hours. Buyers were restricted to a maximum of two properties each to limit the number of speculators and developers and to encourage owner-occupiers buying into the scheme.
The success of the scheme has been enormous, and Staiths South Bank won a number of national and regional awards in 2005/2006.

These included:

- Housing Design Awards 2005 - Winner Large Housebuilder Category
- CABE Building for Life 2005 - Silver Awards and Best Residential Project
- Building Magazine – Best Housing Led Regeneration Project
- Northumbria in Bloom – Silver Gilt Award and Urban Regeneration Category Winner
- RICS North East Renaissance Awards 2006 – Residential Category Winner
- Housing Design Awards 2005 - Winner Large Housebuilder Category
- The Journal/Evening Gazette - Best Partnership Project 21st Century Living Awards
- The scheme was also one of only 3 schemes of 93 assessed in CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) 2005 Housing Audit Assessing the design quality of new homes in the North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humber which received the highest very good rating (a further 3 were rated good, 65 were average and 22 were rated poor).
Following on from the Housing Design Awards in 2005, Staiths attained a high level of publicity as a “Best Precedent Exemplar”. This was primarily to do with the, “at the time” innovative, Home Zone and traffic calming, as well as the unashamedly Scandinavian elevation treatment. Staiths is still thought of as one of the more successful Home Zone projects - and arguably, one of the few that does not compromise traffic calmed areas with individual car parking or garage entrances. Staiths utilises bin stores and play equipment to limit forward visibility and therefore traffic speeds, and delivers “Play Streets” wherein vehicular speeds are circa 5mph.
THE RECESSION YEARS

From 2007 onwards, the world economy went into a nose-dive, and the effect was particularly dramatic within the housebuilding world. The original developer, Wimpey City, was not the only casualty. Further rationalisations followed and the housebuilding industry lost approximately one-third of its staff. It may be because of this interruption in service, and the fact that many individuals who had been closely associated with the design and development of the scheme, were lost to the project, that subsequent criticisms of the scheme being "dumbed down" were raised. Unsurprisingly the industry concentrated on survival and throughout the development world, the product was rationalised and subject to stringent economies.

Nevertheless, the Staiths project kept going throughout the recession, albeit at a reduced level. Once again this earmarks it as "out of the ordinary" within the North Eastern housing market as virtually all development of similar scale was "sent into the sidings" and mothballed. It may be down to the inter-relationship of houses and flats within the development which enabled the development to continue by rationalising the mix and responding to areas of continuing work and demand such as simpler starter homes, suggesting that the Staiths housing mix was robust and particularly responsive to its immediate market.
21 THE GRAND FINALE

2015 is the 25th Anniversary of the Gateshead Garden Festival and the 10th Anniversary of the project winning the Best Large-scale Housing Scheme of the Year Award; it represents the North East's only Building for Life Silver Award Category, and also achieved the highest mark in a CABE study about the quality of housing developments. The recession appears to be over at last ... for the moment! - and large-scale urban regeneration projects within the North East and nationally are under consideration once again. It is particularly timely therefore to overview this Award winning scheme and list its qualities and its challenges.

Re-opening of the Staiths

In 2015, Staiths re-opened after 25 years, as a visitor attraction unique to Dunston, with superb views of the River Tyne and surrounding area. The structure is now stabilised and safe once again for
public access, enabling the community to wander at their own pace, and to perceive the Staiths from a totally different viewpoint. The Trust hope to restore more sections of the structure in future, should appropriate funding become available.

“The Southbank development is a key contributing factor in the success of the Coal Staiths restoration. Residents are ‘on-site guardians’, many actively supporting the project by joining the Staiths Friends group, with some becoming the key holders who enable public access for an education visit, afternoon stroll or sunset view, which is so crucial to securing the structures future”. (TWBPT - 04 August 2015)

“Art is in the air” once again and the potential for viewing public art and sculpture on the Pier is finally realising one of the early “wish list” items of the Design Team.

A coffee shop and “Bake House” have opened this year in the building which was originally used as the Sales Marketing Suite and had been intended as either a small neighbourhood shop or café.

The opening of the café by Staiths residents; Suzanne Hutton and Mark Hodgson meets both these objectives by providing not only the necessary de; ice; groceries, but also the ‘staff of life’ from the café’s excellent bake house.

The adjacent long distance National Cycle Route, Keelman Way, is experiencing unprecedented increase in cycles, both in a commuting nature in the morning and evening, and “silver” cyclists during the afternoon, utilising the route specifically for health and leisure. The Bake House provides an attractive and appropriate stopping off point along the route.

Later on this year the Saltmarsh Garden is opening and this will bring to a close the final phase of the Staiths development. The Saltmarsh Garden is a Designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS), previously known as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), which has undergone a comprehensive restoration. Taylor Wimpey have also committed £60k over three years to enable the Council (supported by Durham Wildlife Trust) to deliver an environmental community outreach project focused on the site and adjoining riverside habitats. This project will give local residents and the wider community the opportunity to take an active role in the care, management and appreciation of the site.

A fitting legacy of this grand finale will be to overview the existing project, analyse the strengths, and weaknesses, outline the successes and the failures, and utilise these valuable “learnings” to deliver further World-Class housing within Newcastle / Gateshead.
22 TEN YEARS ON - LESSONS LEARNED

Qualities:

- It still looks striking and uncompromisingly northern European; responding to the North East’s close cultural and economic ties with the north European coast and the Baltic
- The residents are involved with the development on a day-to-day basis through the Residents Forum. This enhances the feeling of ‘Communality’, which is evident in the Home Zones and courtyards, and is supported by the Staiths Café
- There is an unusually wide range of house types which continues to provide a variety of living possibilities to attract future residents
- No wheelie bins littering the streets in a random manner, which is so commonplace in most housing estates these days
- The mature landscaping in the courtyards and within the Home Zone areas makes a real difference, and sets the scheme apart from most housing developments in the UK
- It’s now a popular housing location wherein properties change hands regularly and at a premium - a far cry from the poor values this area commanded over 10 years ago
- Its landscape and Home Zones, though originally thought complex, have been well maintained and are weathering well
- Generally, residents are extremely happy with it and relish the unique character of its buildings, public spaces, Home Zones and secure garden areas
- Its design and imagery have caught the UK’s imagination and it has been used as a design reference and precedent in over twenty-eight Local Authority Design Guidance Documents through the UK
- Although the project showed signs of having run out of steam during the recession, there is still a strong enough adherence to the ‘Visual DNA’ to have saved Staiths from becoming commonplace
Challenges:

• Its Home Zone thinking and interrelationship of houses, apartments and car parking is as relevant today in consideration of how a City Centre development challenges all the downside of car ownership.

• However, car parking levels achieved on Staiths will not be appropriate everywhere. IDP was subsequently invited by Norfolk County Council to design the Millennium Village in Kings Lynn where two car ownership is essential to enable residents to get to agricultural or food canning and processing jobs. Home Zones didn’t work in this instance - Home Zones and traffic calming need to be specific to the housing site’s location, demographic and socio-economic grouping.

• Potentially high maintenance costs for residents in the long term – either via Management Company costs for the site overall, or on individual building maintenance and replacements.

• The success of a scheme with high levels of landscaping and street “interventions” relies heavily on a proactive Management Company – and this needs to be borne in mind for the residents’ future benefit.

• Bin storage areas have not been well maintained in some areas, with inadequate screening of bins in others. Some of the refuse stores are not well managed by the local residents and fly tipping etc has taken place.

• Recycling does not work as well as it should as a result of contamination by the users. Recycling policies need to be more robust for future success.

• Staiths was an attempt to create a better relationship between accessible, affordable housing and apartments. Its density of circa 63 dwellings per hectare is delivered within the spacious Home Zone context. It was however followed by PPG3 (Planning Policy Guidance) which advocated “urban cramming”, and this tendency towards over densification became the norm within the UK’s inner cities in the early part of the 2000’s, leading to increased unallocated parking levels and causing stress amongst residents.

• Unfortunately the Staiths project has been wrongly associated with this “urban cramming” process advocated by Tony Blair’s Government to sort out the housing crisis within the M25 corridor.
APPENDIX 1
QUOTES FROM COUNCILLORS

Brenda Clerlland (Local Ward Councillor):

“I’m delighted to have this opportunity to comment on the Staiths development, an exciting concept to create a community which has exceeded expectations in my view. I’m proud to have played even a small part in its creation - when Taylor Wimpey sought planning permission to turn the designated community space building into more apartments, I met with John Forster to persuade him to let me try to find suitable tenants. But, in a sense, the Staiths community itself did the finding because it’s not only a collection of properties, it’s also a vibrant and thriving internet community - via Facebook, as new and as revolutionary a concept as the estate itself, and people were able to connect with others and, as a result, we now have a cafe/bar/shop at the heart of the community.

The thing that I think is so brilliant about the Staiths community is its vibrant, thriving online community - via Facebook. Just last week, someone had a problem with a wasps nest; someone else, a perfect stranger, went round to help; someone needed extra chairs for a birthday party; again, a perfect stranger offered some; someone lost their dog - five people, all strangers, went out to help look for it.”

Pauline Dillon (Local Ward Councillor):

“...”

Councillor Gary Haley (Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure, including Community Safety):

“Most of my working life has been in Newcastle and Gateshead and as a regular cycling commuter between my home and the city for more than 30 years I have memories of the site now occupied by stunning new homes first lying derelict, then transformed during the 1990 Garden Festival before standing silent once again until the development of Staiths South Bank.

The approach to the city from Staiths has to be one of the most impressive and most improved post industrial landscapes in the world and the architects, developers and residents of this outstanding community are right to have a great deal of pride in what they have achieved. The quality of the built environment that has been created at Staiths has been hugely significant in improving how this part of Gateshead ‘feels’, but it is the people who have chosen to make their homes here who bring the vibrancy that brings the community to life. I am proud to have played a small role in helping to be part of this.”

- Councillor Mick Henry, Leader of Gateshead Council

“Gateshead has always been an innovative Council that likes to encourage creativity to find solutions. I shared Wayne’s concerns about standards of design in some modern housing estates and so I welcomed the opportunity to work with the Hemingways and IDP to bring forward something different, which challenged and refreshed the thinking around new housing design. I know Gateshead’s residents enjoy living at the Staiths and we’ve been able to use some of the principles of the good design there to influence other new housing development in Gateshead.”
APPENDIX 2
RESIDENT'S VIEWS

Molly Sendall (Resident):

"I moved to the Staiths as a "downsize" in preparation for my retirement. I liked the idea of creating a wildlife friendly garden, which in the eight years we've been here, I hope I have achieved. I have found though that it never felt like much of a community and I thought perhaps I had been expecting too much. Since the Staiths have become a project many people have formed a community bond around this and I think since the cafe opened this has developed further and this has all created a real sense of community. We hope to go further and take control of the care of our estate and any improvements we can make to enhance all of our lives. I like living here!"

Graham Hollingworth (Member of Residents Association):

"Who would have thought that on the edge of Gateshead by the Tyne you could live somewhere where you can spot seals basking by the river, families of otters, herons, swans, foxes, water skiers, rowers, jet skis, historical local landmarks, enjoy a drink in the Cafe and live within a variety of different building styles, colours and features, topped off with our own play parks and table tennis table!"
APPENDIX 3 PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS

Seasons
- Bede Courtyard
- Parson Courtyard
- Trinity Courtyard
- Dobson Courtyard
- Davison Courtyard
- Team Street
- North Side
- Shrove Pass
- Easter St
- Valentine Way
- Micheal Mas St
- Sunny Side South
- Fall Pass
- Autumn Drive
- Fall Pass
- Winter Pass
- Patcha Way
- Winters Pass
- August Courtyard
- April Courtyard
- May Courtyard
- June Courtyard
- July Courtyard
- August Courtyard
- September Courtyard
- October Courtyard
- November Courtyard
- December Courtyard
- Christmas Place

Taken from Newcastle Business Park
- Staiths Café
- The Armstrong
- The Stephenson
- The Grainger

Saltmarsh Garden
- River Team
- Ash St
- River Team

Newcastle Business Park
- North West Side
- North Side
- North West Side
- North Side
- North Side
- Shrove Pass
- Easter St
- Valentine Way
- Micheal Mas St
- Sunny Side South
- Fall Pass
- Autumn Drive
- Fall Pass
- Winter Pass
- Patcha Way
- Winters Pass
- August Courtyard
- April Courtyard
- May Courtyard
- June Courtyard
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Staiths Café
- The Armstrong
- The Stephenson
- The Grainger
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