

High rise and high density buildings sociology essay



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The subject of this research developed from a personal interest in the dichotomy between quality and the provision of housing in the U. K. In an interview with BBC Two news night the Planning Minister, Nick Boles, criticised the recent provision of housing. He states " People look at the new housing estates that have been bolted on to their towns and villages in recent decades and observe that few of them are beautiful. Indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, many of them are pig-ugly (the Guardian, 2012). This is a valid point and is at the core over the provision of housing as literature provides sufficient evidence based on negative feedback on housing especially with houses built in the post war periods of the 1960's. However using the term 'pig ugly' to describe the effort of others is perhaps too much of an exaggeration. Nevertheless, this develops interest in exploring further what the Minister considers to be 'pig ugly' and what can be done to make these buildings better.

With regards to providing housing for the community, Boles was pin pointing with particular criticism to the recent Harrison Wharf development in Purfleet, Essex, which he describes as an 'insult to the community'. The Planning Minister states that whilst more land is needed for development, the right to houses is 'a basic moral right, like health-care and education, there's a right to a home with a bit ground around it to bring your family up in' (the Guardian, 2012). With this criticism on a high density type of development consisting of 103 flats, not buildings of the 1960's either but a more recent development, raises curiosity as to what new developments offer in terms of quality in housing despite all the new policies and regulations in place. Exploring further research into the rights to houses will

develop further evidence as to what extent a right to 'a home with a bit of ground' is a necessity.

Other evidence pointing towards the ideology of an ideal home being that with a garden includes that of the town planner Professor William Holford, whom on a report of symposium posits the view that in British housing, a tacit assumption is that the ideal house for young family with children is a cottage, a villa, or a semi-detached house with a garden. From this, it can be argued that high rise and high density flats in particular have come to be regarded as what Sir William Holford describes as ' a regrettable necessity, forced upon us by the shortage of land' to accommodate the unfortunate who have to live in them Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Taking this into account, with consideration of the growing increase in high-rise and high density housing in the UK builds up controversy and develops the keenness to investigate further whether high-rise and high density housing really is a regrettable necessity or more satisfying projects can be achieved.

The ideology of an ideal home being that with a garden described above may just be one characteristic of what the consequences of high-rise and high density housing seem to have. Literature provides other numerous consequences associated with high-rise and high density housing whereas at the same time, other literature reviews suggests that high density housing is increasingly being seen as a solution for the high demand for housing. The Planning Policy Guidance note 3 (PPG3), which sets out the government's policy on different aspects of planning requires local authorities to avoid inefficient use of land, hereby referring to developments that provide less dwellings per given area (PPG3). It is therefore evident that the government
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does encourage accommodating more using less space, whether it is encouraging developments which are considered as 'failures' according to some literature sources, is a question that prompts further investigation.

There is much debate about what the future housing is offering as a solution with consideration to the government's restrictions on land use. With the main drivers to high density housing being high house price inflation, a cultural shift bringing about the desire to live alone and several other drivers discussed further in a later chapter of this study, there has been an increased rate of household establishment (Bretherton & Pleace, 2008). The effect of these price inflation in houses has led to what Hills (2007) terms as 'residualisation', where it is mainly the poor people adapting in the social rented tenure of housing. With this occurring in the last 20 years there is now a need to bring down this compactness of poverty and social exclusion. Evidence suggests that this solution can be brought about through high density housing that are affordable and of mixed tenure. (Bretherton & Pleace, 2008).

With particular reference to high-rise and high density development in the provision of housing as they are both designed on the basis of accommodating more in less space, the debate on whether better designed, affordable and mixed tenure housing can provide a solution that tackles the demand for housing to accommodate without derogating quality is the essence of what has developed interest in doing this research.

Aims and Objectives

The Aim of my research is to investigate whether high-rise and high density housing can provide 'good quality' homes while providing housing to cater for the increasing demand.

To aid my study of this aim, I will use the key question noted below.

The following objectives will help in achieving the aim.

Objectives:

To provide an overview of the Increase in high-rise and high density housing in the U. K

To identify factors that affect the quality of homes that will be used in this research

To explore the negative and positive design features with high-rise and high density buildings and their effect on occupants

Key question:

Can better designed, affordable mixed tenure high-rise and high density housing provide a solution for quality homes for the future?

Literature Review

Scope of chapter

This chapter will critically appraise the literature review, identify similarities of statements, commonalities and contradictions of the body of evidence. It is divided into the following five main sections

Definition of high-rise and high density buildings (300)

History and growth of high rise and high density buildings (500)

High rise debate

Evaluating the literature on the drivers and barriers of key features of good design in high-rise and high density buildings(2000)

Definition of high rise and high density buildings

High rise buildings:

While the most prominent name for tall building remains 'high rise', in Britain and several other European countries high rise buildings are sometimes referred to as 'tower blocks'. Various definitions are used to define high rise buildings as the terms do not have agreed definitions recognised internationally. Langdon and Everest et al (2002) affirm that it is not possible to define high rise buildings using absolute measures. Most sources define high rise building to suit the subject being studied, the definitions not always expressed in terms of number of storeys but rather in linear height 'feet and meters'. According to the Council of Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (1969), a high rise building can be defined as a building of 10 storeys or more. Craighead (2009) defines a high rise building as that which extends between 75 feet (23metres) and 100 feet (30 meters) or about seven to ten storeys depending on slab to slab distance between floors. For the purpose of this research the definition of high rise buildings is considered that of Langdon and Everest et al (2002) who believe that;

" In relative terms tall buildings are best understood as buildings whose planning, design construction and occupation is influenced by height in ways that are not normally associated with more typical, local developments".

High density buildings (might need adding more)

Literature suggests that measuring density figures is problematic as there are many differences in the approximations of determining density figures. A wide variety of measurements to density have been used since 1918 including: dwellings per hectare, persons per hectare, habitable rooms per hectare, floor spaces per hectare and bed spaces per hectare (Woodford et al., 1976 cited in Jenks 2005). Although the common unit recommended by the research for the government is the dwelling per hectare the rest of the measurement are also frequently used (DETR, 1998).

To give a base for the purpose of this study, density in housing is considered the ratio between the number of households or people and the land area they occupy, the government considers 60 and above dwellings per hectare and 140 persons per acre to be high density. As mentioned above the planning policy guidance 3 (PPG3) encourages high density building by setting requirements for more efficient use of land stating that new developments should aim for a density which is not less than 30 dwellings per hectare (Ibid).

Therefore where high rise housing is mentioned throughout this study, it is referred to that of which is considered to be of high density.

History and growth of high rise and high density buildings

According to Reddy (nd), the growth of a city is closely linked with the growth of high-rise buildings. In England, the tallest buildings that were above the skyline were always the cathedrals, churches, palaces, castles and public buildings. The stable skyline in England was primarily contributed by the locally applied height restrictions and lack of demand for housing. In Britain, high rise buildings were first developed after the Second World War in the 1930s (????). The high rise buildings construction went hand in hand with the demolition of Georgian and Victorian housing. The destruction of houses and drastic population growth were among the main reasons that led to the construction of high rise buildings. High rise buildings seemed to be a 'quick fix' to the population problem in order to accommodate more people at that time. Built in central locations with excellent views, high-rise buildings were welcomed as were seen as modern living. The construction of high-rise buildings was reckoned as the modern and most effective way to handle the demand for more housing issue and the shortage of land issue.

In addition to population growth after the war, the ageing 19th century houses also led to the growth of high rise buildings in the United Kingdom. High rise buildings seemed unpopular in Britain as the 'English houses' concept had dominated most parts of the country. However, the situation seemed to be different in Scotland, as tenements (staircase-access blocks of any height, but most usually 3 or 4 storeys) appeared to be the common urban type for most people. Along the 19th century, different types of flats arose in London and other English towns. The four to six-storeyed tower blocks became popular among the lower classes of people and was

subsequently seen developing in the west end of London as well (Glendinning & Muthesius, 1994). Up until the 1990s, an estimated 400, 000 flats in 6500 multi-storey blocks were built in Britain, with the most booming period being the late fifties to the early seventies. To that end, about 20% of all public housing constructed post-Second World War was provided in tower blocks primarily with 6 or more storeys (Ibid). Glendinning and Muthesius (1994) contend that the high-rise construction trend continued during the post-war years in London and the majority being built by the local authorities.

High rise and high density debate

The debate arising from whether high rise and high density buildings have brought more harm or benefits to its occupants and society is rather challenging. Tall buildings seem to be an important topic of debate in London more than any place in the United Kingdom. A scheduled debate to discuss the planning decision for a tower near Vauxhall Bridge was held in June 2005 after the House of Lords reckoned it to be as a possible threat to the London skyline. Both the benefits and the unpleasant outcomes of high-rise buildings were discussed.

To begin with, several reviews and early studies seem to have concluded that high rise and high density buildings have not had pleasant outcomes to their occupants as compared to their advantages (Cappon cited in Gifford 2006). Some major contributions to the high-rise debate are the reports commissioned by the Corporation of London, Tall buildings and sustainability (Pank 2002) and by Development Securities PLC, Tall Buildings: Vision of the Future or Victims of the Past? (LSE Cities Programme, 2002). The two reports <https://assignbuster.com/high-rise-and-high-density-buildings-sociology-essay/>

both concur that high-rise buildings could for sure bring about an outstanding contribution to the inevitable new wave of redevelopment. However, the LSE report emphasises the need of highest standards of design for high-rise buildings whilst the Corporation of London report seems to be emphasising more on sustainable design.

ADD DEBATE ON HIGH DENSITY HOUSING

In terms of the societal level, high-rise buildings have been accused of exacerbating traffic problems, burthening existing services and infrastructure and in some ways inflicting damage on the character of neighbourhoods (Broyer cited in Gifford 2006). The attack that occurred in the United States of America in September 11th 2001 inflicted fear within occupants of multi storey buildings (Gifford, 2006). The fear that they may be attacked at any particular time raises questions as to whether high-rise buildings are good for people. This, according to sources, describes high-rise buildings as bad for its occupants people living fear of attack makes high rise buildings bad.

As for the positive side of high rise buildings, they offer excellent views especially to the upper-level occupants and not forgetting urban privacy. As mentioned above in the growth of high rise buildings, the views that high-rise buildings offered its occupants was one of the primary reason they became popular among the working class in London, therefore this terms high rise as good for its residents. High rise and high density buildings are often although not always located in central urban location, therefore their location seems to point out that they are preferable to those who like central

locations. Churchman (1999) highlights that the location of high rise buildings in central areas indicates that services and public transport systems are more likely to be near as well as a significant number of close neighbours therefore one may have greater choice of friends and acquaintances for support.

High rise buildings, according to Kunstler and Salingaros (2001) have to some degree deformed the function, the quality and the long-term health of urbanism. The public realms of the streets are being clogged by the infrastructure of high rise buildings. Krier (1984 cited in Kunstler and Salingaros 2001) referred to this as 'urban hypertrophy.' He further asserts that they prevent the organic development of new healthy, mixed urban fabric anywhere further than the centre.

On the other hand, Broyer (2002) suggests that high rise buildings which are at times thin buildings leave more room for green space and parks. High rise buildings have smaller footprints than the low-rise houses, therefore take up less land area than the low-rise housing units. He further points out that the unused land near high rise buildings has been seen to be a no-man's land and frequently used by dangerous elements.

ADD DEBATE ON HIGH DENSITY HOUSING

As seen from the above points, the high-rise debate has raised many questions as to whether they are good or bad. High rise buildings have both the good and bad side of them. However, the negative side of high rise buildings seem to outweigh the positive sides of high-rise buildings.

Drivers and barriers of key features of good design in high-rise and high density buildings

The increase of population has been considered to have negative outcomes from the past when cities and towns in the UK experienced rapid growth and urbanisation. The seriousness of the state of high population density now can be seen by looking at how far back density brought about consciousness to the government and the public in general. According to Jenks (2005), it was since the 1840's where London was considered a huge city with a population of 21/2 million. More recent statistics from the Office of National Statistics indicate that the UK population is already at its fastest rate in growth and is estimated to increase from 62.3 million in 2010 to 67.2 million in the next ten years, taking into account higher birth rates than deaths. A further increase of 73.2 million is projected in the next 25 years, an estimated figure which makes up an average increased growth rate of 0.6%. (National trust). Migration figures also published by the Office of National Statistics show figures in the year 2010 to be 575,000 immigrants, a figure which is said not to have broadly changed since 2004, shows the effect of rising population due to migration into the UK. (HBA, 2011) =??

Population Increase is regarded by many sources as the core driver towards the demand for housing thus as the UK population continues to increase the demand for housing grows strongly. In London, where population is predicted to grow to 10 million, a 2 million increase of Londoners will need housing over the next 20 years which means that 1 million new homes will have to be built (Housing and planning consultant). Despite this, the National Housing Federation (NHF) (representatives and campaigners for better housing in

England) point out that fewer houses are now being built than at any point since the Second World War. This gap between supply and demand in housing is a prominent issue in UK has instigated vast amount of research in this field.

With regards to space required for these new homes and taking into account the restrictions of protecting the green-belt, Colin Wiles, a house and planning consultant implies that " London has simply run out of space and its out-of-date green belt is the culprit"(The Guardian). With only 4, 000hectares of Brownfield land, it provides barely a fifth of the space required to build 1million new homes in London"(The Guardian). To be able to house Londoners, Colin Wiles insists " London must either build upwards or outwards" hereby highlighting the demand for high-rise developments to solve the housing issues (Ibid). Many other sources including Mark Fairwether (2000) agree on the increase in population factor with planning policies that encourage development on Brownfield sites to protect the green as major influences to the market for high-rise and high density housing.

Demographic changes in everyday living is yet another factor that is seen by many sources to be influencing the demand for housing. Without going further beyond the scope of the research, the following other factors are worth iterating when identifying the drivers to more housing in a place where land is very limited (parliament)=??

Increasing number of one-person households

Life Expectance Rates

Desire for city Living

Cost of housing

Housing trends

Overseas influence

Housing rights and Eligibility

Add on more drivers

Increasing number of one-person households

Cost of housing

Research Methodology

Statement of research Aim

It is vital to analyse the different strategies of research therefore understanding the difference between quantitative and qualitative, knowing the different sources and techniques of data collection and the ethics involved is what this chapter aims to cover.

Having identified a topic and considered the purpose of study, a way of which this study is going to be performed has to be identified. It is important to determine the appropriate methodology and how to use it in order to carry out an investigation into living in high-rise and high density housing. It is by conducting this methodology that a conclusion will be arrived at (Peter, 2001). Getting to this conclusion however has to go through several steps

which include collecting and analysing data that is relevant to the purpose of study (Naoum 2007).

The choice of the methodology will depend on the kind of subject which has to suit the methodology that goes with it. As it may be possible to conduct the research for the subject of study without having knowledge of the various methods, having detailed knowledge of planning an investigation will give you an insight into different ways of doing so and also enhance your understanding of the literature (Bell 2010). The main importance is to make sure that the research maximises the chance of realising its objectives (Fellows 1997).

It is important to first understand what research is about before actually conducting and planning the research. Although research can serve many purposes, the most common and effective ones are exploration, description and explanation (Babbie 2010). Exploratory research is used when only limited amount of knowledge is known for a particular subject or when a new interest is examined by the researcher. Research therefore is being done to explore more about the topic (Naoum 2012). Description serves the purpose of observing situations and events and then describing what was observed by answering questions such of what, where, when and how while explanation in the other hand tends to explain things answering questions of why (Babbie 2010).

Foundations in Research

As the type of research in this case is that of social research, it is essential to first consider the underlying of social research in order to prepare the way

into which the research will be approached. Understanding and considering the two elements of science which are logic and explanation will mean that the findings have to first make sense and also correspond to what has or can be observed. These two important elements relate to three major aspects of social science representations; theory, data collection and data analysis. The theory deals with the aspect of logic in science, data collection deals with observations while data analysis analyses patterns achieved in the observations and compares what was logically expected to what was actually observed where necessary (Babbie, 2010). The order in which these three aspects can be approached is what differentiates the two important methods of reasoning in research which are; inductive and deductive.

Inductive and Deductive

Deductive theory takes the process of having a theory, reasoning it by deducing it into a hypothesis, testing the hypothesis which then gives you a pattern of observation which will help you confirm whether or not the theory is right or wrong (Deduction and Induction, 2006). Whilst deductive theory breaks down from the more general to the more precised, inductive reasoning works out the opposite. It moves from measured patterns of general observations which lead to the formation of tentative hypothesis that can then be explored into a general conclusion or theory. In understanding the social effects of living in high rise buildings, these two approaches both are effectual approaches which when both work together can provide more accurate and complete understandings.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research uses a scientific approach and is objective in nature.

Naoum (2007, p. 37) defines quantitative research as:-

'An inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a hypothesis or a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the hypothesis or theory hold true.'

Quantitative research therefore based on the above definition is strong and can be reliable. When there is presence of a theory and testing is needed to determine whether it holds true, a quantitative approach is to be considered (Naoum, 2007). It can also be used in the collection of known facts and studying the relationship between one set of facts to another evaluating them in numerical data (Bell, 2010).

In the case of investigating living in high-rise and high density housing, whilst finding research from data and facts that have been collected previously, testing and analysing the variables and measuring it in numbers may contribute to achieving a conclusion. Whether the findings only achieved from this method of research will be enough is highly doubtful thus other strategies of research may need to be considered.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is more concerned and seeks to understand the purpose of study based on opinions and feelings of individuals' perceptions of the world (Bell, 2010).

'Qualitative research is subjective by nature. It emphasises meanings, experiences (often verbally described), description, and so on.'(Naoum, 2007, p. 40).

The information obtained from this strategy of research falls in two categories;

a) Exploratory research

b) Attitudinal research.

In order to explore more about a subject, Interview technique is usually used to collect data so as to diagnose a situation, screen alternatives and discover new ideas. Attitudinal research is used to evaluate opinions of people towards a particular 'object'. The 'Object' in this case refers to an 'attribute', a 'variable', a 'factor 'or a 'question. (Naoum, 2013). Babbie (2010) defines variables as 'logical groupings of attributes' whereas attributes are 'characteristics of a person or things'.

The two ways in which data can be collected are primary data collection and secondary data collection. To investigate the living in high rise and high density buildings, using exploratory research would be beneficial to the study to personally question the residents using interview techniques hence getting their opinions of the effect of living in the schemes.

Naoum (2012) describes primary data as that of which is collected at first hand coming directly from the source, while secondary is data that is obtained from other sources using desk study approach. Using both primary and secondary methods of collecting data may be useful, with secondary <https://assignbuster.com/high-rise-and-high-density-buildings-sociology-essay/>

data helping to back up the views and opinions of people collected from primary sources which may be in question.

Whilst the primary research method technique will be interviewing personnel, an awareness of any restrictions or requirements to be considered is worth knowing. Lutz (cited in Bell 2010) who writes about ethnographic research suggests that some type of 'contract' should be established with the associated field, 'contract' in this case referring to the set of restrictions and requirements that a researcher is to consider. Many professional bodies and organisations have set their own ethical guidelines as Lutz (cited in Bell 2010) stresses, it may well be that whilst investigating about living in high rise buildings issues such of care needed when involving children, manner of conducting the interview, rights of the interviewee, voluntary participation, what subject may or not be examined and more need to be considered before research is being done. The research being done in this case will represent an intrusion into people's lives, knocking on people's doors for them to participate in interviews perhaps is a disruption in the persons regular activities. Moreover, the information required may be personal and often not known to people associated to them let alone a stranger intending to research. Therefore it is worth reiterating that understanding the importance of ethical agreements about what is proper and improper when conducting research need to be considered beforehand. (Babbie, 2010, p. 63)

The studies were carried out by Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace who were greatly supported by Kathleen Kelly and Alison Darlow who managed the project on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree foundation.
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Case Studies

This chapter will discuss three case studies. One in the North West of England, one in London and one in Scotland. The case studies will briefly describe the characteristics of the case study schemes, their design, location, number of storeys and their tenure mix. Subsequently, the case study schemes will also consider the following:

Reasons as to why the occupants of the case study schemes moved in.

The report findings on the attitudes of occupants towards living in the case study properties.

Finally analyse the lessons learnt from the study that can towards establishing quality housing for the increasing demand.

Case Study 1:

Case study one is located in the North West of England and was completed in 2001. The developer of the scheme was a housing association. The size of the whole site was 0.49 hectares while the whole scheme was of 120 units per hectare built between four-to-six storeys including both accommodation and work sites. This scheme provided 75 flats set around a communal courtyard including:

14 one-bedroom flats

42 two-bedroom flats

19 three-bedroom flats.

An on-site meeting room was also available on site. The primary focus of the scheme was providing social housing for rent and had a high level of involving the occupants in management. The main aim of the scheme is connected to urban regeneration as the entire area was being redeveloped. Other developments have come up around the area since the construction of the scheme. The design, however, is rather uncommon in trying to adhere to an outstanding architectural style in a user-friendly modern development (Bretherton & Pleace, 2008).

Case Study 2:

Case study 2 is located in London and was completed in 2003. The developer of this scheme was also a housing association. The size of the whole site is 0.53 hectares with 122 dwellings per hectare; this had the highest density compared to the other case studies. The site had about 70 units per hectare, made up of:

31- one bedroom flats

12-two bedroom flats

16- three bedroom houses

6- Four bedroom houses.

This scheme was built on brownfield and a large shared communal area around it. The whole site was affordable, providing social rented housing, key worker Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) and renting and LCHO.

Accommodation for people with support needs was also available which was

designed for easy access. The scheme was fundamentally designed as an example of low-cost housing in a very pricy part of the country within the remit of it being high density, energy economical and advanced in construction with a balanced sustainable mixed community (Bretherton & Pleace, 2008).

Case study 3:

Case study 3 is located in a large urban area in Scotland and was completed in 2000. The size of the whole site is 1.6 hectares while the whole scheme was of 75 units per hectare in a two-to-four storey perimeter block with a community centre, surrounded by terraced gardens and enclosed by allotments for use by the occupants of the scheme. The development was made up of 120 flats including:

35-one bedroom flat

46-two bedroom flat

39-three bedroom flat.

The tenure mix was chiefly balanced towards social renting, covering 70% of the flats, with most of the remainder being LCHO through shared possession. Some of the flats had been constructed for market sale owner occupation. Similar to case study 2, some of the flats were particularly designed for people with support needs. In contrast to the other case studies, this one was designed to be car free, ther