

The Anatomy of the Village

Thomas Sharp

With an introduction by John Pendlebury

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THE ANATOMY OF THE VILLAGE

Thomas Sharp was a key figure in mid-C20 British planning whose renown stems from two periods in his career. First, he came to attention as a polemical writer in the 1930s on planning issues, including as a virulent opponent of garden cities. His prose tempered over time and this phase perhaps culminated in *Town Planning*, first published in 1940 and reputed to have sold over 250,000 copies. Subsequently the plans he produced for historic towns in the 1940s, such as Oxford, were very well known and were influential in developing ideas of townscape.

The Anatomy of the Village originated from a brief phase between these two periods when Sharp was seconded during the early war years to work for the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. Started as an official manual on village planning, it followed on from the *Scott Report*, for which Sharp had been one of the Secretaries. When the Ministry decided not to proceed with the publication, Sharp himself published it 1946. *The Anatomy of*

the Village became one of Sharp's best known works, with lucid prose and generous illustration by photograph and beautiful line-drawings of village plans. The aim of *The Anatomy of the Village* was to set out the main principles of village planning, especially in relation to physical design.

Anatomy became a key text in thinking about villages in the post-war period; a period when there was great concern that settlements should develop in more sensitive ways than inter-war ribbon and suburban development patterns. The problems of poor quality development, unrelated to settlement form, was to continue to stimulate books such as Lionel Brett's *Landscape in Distress* and campaigns from the *Architectural Review*. Reading the text today it still has much to offer: while some of its assumptions about the level of services a village might support clearly belong to another era, its beautiful and simple typological analyses of village form continue to be of relevance.

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INTRODUCTION TO *THE ANATOMY OF THE VILLAGE*

Introduction

The Anatomy of the Village, first published in 1946, is an unusual planning book. An affordable Penguin publication, but extremely attractively produced, it was very popular, selling in the region of 50,000 copies over the twenty-five years or so it was in print. And whilst the book celebrates the qualities of the traditional British village, it was no chocolate-box nostalgic paean to the past, but a firm assertion of the importance of modern, comprehensive town planning in the post-war period. Even more remarkably, the book, which is written in the lucid but highly individual style of its author, began its life as a civil service manual, prepared to be published as a government document but subsequently abandoned as such. The author was Thomas Sharp, an influential and at times brilliant voice in planning in the middle of the century, who rose from a modest working-class background to the heights of the profession, before disappearing for much of the later period of his working life into semi-obscurity.

Introducing Thomas Sharp

Thomas Sharp (1901–1978) was a prominent figure in British planning in the middle part of the twentieth century, both as an

opinionated writer on planning issues and as a producer of plans. From a working-class family on the south-west Durham coalfield, Sharp was one of the first planners trained as such, rather than entering planning via another profession. His reputation was first established through a series of polemical books before, as a planning consultant, in the 1940s he authored some of the most significant and best known war-time and post-war reconstruction plans with something of a specialization in historic towns such as Durham, Exeter and Oxford (Sharp, 1945, 1946a, 1948a), which in turn were influential in developing ideas of townscape.

He rather drifted into planning. With his mother insisting that he would not work in the pits, he secured an apprenticeship locally to a surveyor in Spennymoor. In 1920 he moved to Margate, Kent, and in 1924 he became a Planning Assistant to the City Surveyor of Canterbury. A little over a year later he moved to London to work for the planning consultants Thomas Adams and Longstreth Thompson and here became one of the first to join the Town Planning Institute by examination. In 1927 he became the Regional Planning Assistant to The South West Lancashire Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee. This occupied him for some four years, culminating in the large plan, *The Future Development of South-West Lancashire* (The South West Lancashire

Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee, 1930). This was the first significant professional work by Sharp. As was the tradition, authorship was assigned to the Joint Committee's Honorary Surveyor who had had little hand in its preparation. This enraged Sharp and the bitter dispute which resulted led to his resignation, which was followed by two and a half years of unemployment. But Sharp's period of notice from the Liverpool post had allowed him to start work on what was to become his first book, *Town and Countryside* (Sharp, 1932), which was both well reviewed and controversial, with its assault on prevailing garden city principles.

Sharp eventually found work shortly after the publication of *Town and Countryside* as Regional Planning Assistant to the North East Durham Joint Planning Committee. He hated the job, but he found time to write. This included a treatise against the appalling conditions found in his native part of the county, *A Derelict Area* (Sharp, 1935a), a series of articles for the *Architectural Review* on the historical development of the English Town (Sharp, 1935b, 1936a, 1936b, 1936c), which became the book *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1936d), the *Shell Guide to Northumberland and Durham* (Sharp, 1937a) and a chapter in Clough Williams-Ellis' book *Britain and the Beast* (Sharp, 1937b). Sharp tolerated the Durham job for four years before resigning in 1937. After three months' unemployment he was invited to do some short-term teaching in town planning at the School of Architecture, King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne (then part of the University of Durham) and this led to a permanent position; one subject we know he taught was village design (Thomson, 1939). This can be seen as something of a turning point in his career. It was the end of Sharp's often unhappy days working for local government and the beginning of a period when new opportunities began to open up thick and fast, many as a result of war-time activity on planning.

Whilst the ten years before had contained many lows it had also seen Sharp established as an important commentator on planning matters. The next ten years would see him rise to the summit of the profession and established as an important writer of plans.

Sharp's most notable contribution during his first period working as an academic was another book, *Town Planning*, a Pelican paperback (Sharp, 1940), frequently cited as the best ever selling text on the subject. In 1941 he was seconded for two and a half years to the Ministry of Works and Buildings, as part of a small team with William Holford and John Dower. His work during this time included acting as joint-Secretary to the Scott Report on *Land Utilisation in Rural Areas* (Great Britain, 1942), undertaking work for a publication on villages, suppressed by the Ministry but later to emerge as *The Anatomy of the Village*, and as Chairman of a technical group that produced an appendix to the Dudley Report on the *Design of Dwellings* entitled *Site Planning and Layout in Relation to Housing* (Central Housing Advisory Committee, 1944). Once again finding working in a bureaucracy frustrating, Sharp returned to academia in 1943. On his return to Newcastle he devised a degree in town planning, but his proposals became mired in University politics and in 1945 he once again tendered his resignation, this time to strike out as a planning consultant.

He was already working on his first commission as a consultant for the City of Durham. This was to emerge in 1945 as *Cathedral City* and is the first of a series of 'reconstruction plans' on which much of Sharp's reputation subsequently rested, a number of which emerged as beautifully produced books from the Architectural Press. The triumvirate of his most significant plans is formed by Durham, Exeter and Oxford (Sharp, 1945, 1946a, 1948a). But these were frantically busy years; the

period between 1944 and 1950 also saw commissions for plans for Todmorden, Salisbury, Chichester, St Andrews, King's Lynn, Taunton, Stockport, Minehead and neighbourhood layouts for parts of Kensington and the new town of Hemel Hempstead.¹ Another significant commission in this period included the making of the first master-plan for the new town of Crawley. This opportunity for Sharp to realise his planning ideas in the form of a brand new settlement was again lost by resignation, following differences with the Chairman of the Development Corporation. A similar fate also met his commission by the Forestry Commission for a series of new forestry villages in remote Northumberland. Originally the intention was for eight complete villages. Ultimately only three were partially built, robbed of the social facilities and completed form so important to Sharp. This was a particularly precious commission for Sharp, making the disappointment felt at the end result all the keener.

Perhaps the principal cause for Sharp's subsequent drought of professional work was, somewhat ironically, the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. This adoption of a greater role in planning by the state saw a decisive shift in the undertaking of such work away from consultants towards in-house work by local authorities. Sharp was unwilling or unable to follow other consultants in seeking work overseas and he described his career from 1950 as 'a period of such intermittent and few small engagements as can be accurately described as a period of near-unemployment'.² He was only 49 in 1950. Initially his writings continued and *Oxford Observed* (Sharp, 1952a), widely acknowledged as a classic, was followed by a contribution to the government publication *Design in Town and Village* (Sharp, 1953), which effectively reprised material from *The Anatomy of the Village*, and a revised Shell Guide (Sharp,

1952b), now confined to the more obviously picturesque Northumberland. Thereafter, Sharp's professional writing more or less dried up, with the notable exception of his last major book, *Town and Townscape* (Sharp, 1968).

His work as a consultant was also sporadic. Specific commissions included advising on traffic issues in Vienna, a plan for Rugby, advice on proposals for tall buildings in Cambridge (in opposition to plans by the University, see Sharp, 1963), a holiday village design at Port Enyon on the Gower Peninsula and a report on a possible new town in north-east Berkshire (Sharp, 1967). No work was forthcoming from central government which he felt to be the result of an unofficial black-listing for being 'difficult'. Sharp used some of his under-employment in an attempt to further another of his ambitions, as a creative writer. He had written some poetry since his youth but turned more seriously to this about the age of 60. Some of the poetry made its way into print, and some was broadcast by the BBC, but most did not. He wrote two novels and some novellas, all of which remain unpublished. Thus much of Sharp's professional genius and creative abilities were ultimately to remain unfulfilled.

Sharp's early writings about villages and the countryside

The seeds of many of Sharp's planning principles can be found in his first book, *Town and Countryside*. Whilst he subsequently refined and developed his views and perhaps expressed them better in subsequent texts, the book set out core values which would be sustained throughout his career. In very brief summary, Sharp celebrated the planning achievements of the

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Enlightenment period as a source of inspiration (but not for imitation), for creating harmonious towns and beautiful countryside. In part his book fitted with the widely held concern of the period over the perceived desecration of the countryside, as motor traffic allowed the ugliness hitherto largely associated and confined to the industrial town to spill out into rural areas. In this respect, he was following a path beginning to be well developed by others, such as Clough Williams-Ellis in *England and the Octopus* (Williams-Ellis, 1928) and as represented, for example, by the formation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in 1926 (see Sheail, 1981 for an account of inter-war countryside conservation). However, rather more controversially, *Town and Countryside* was an assault on the then prevailing planning ideology of garden cities, which Sharp felt created low density suburbia:

“The crying need of the moment is the re-establishment of the ancient antithesis. The town is town: the country is country: black and white: male and female.” (p11)

The book laid a platform from which Sharp was to develop a particular brand of urbanism (see Pendlebury, 2009) and approach to planning the countryside. Indeed, the book starts by focusing on the countryside.

A significant part of the chapter “Buildings in the Landscape” is an analysis of the form and visual qualities of a series of existing villages. This section sets out a very significant foundation to the analysis reprised and developed in *The Anatomy of the Village*. Sharp identifies five historic village-form types: roadside villages, villages around squares, around triangles, villages creating places around T-junctions and villages morphologically

related to a castle or country house. For each type he sought to give two examples, although in the case of villages set around a triangle of land one example is hypothetical. Each village has a hand-drawn plan in the text and nearly all have a photograph. All of this closely prefigures the approach undertaken in *Anatomy*. The later work also has a typology of village-form, although it is evolved and modified. Furthermore, nearly all the villages featured in *Town and Countryside* appear again, alongside many new examples. Indeed, the beautiful hand-drawn plans, such a feature in *The Anatomy of the Village*, are very similar between the two publications and some cases look to have been directly re-used. It is noticeable that the photographs used are Sharp’s own for the villages in the north-east and Kent, whereas others of villages elsewhere are reproduced with permission, often from articles in *Town Planning Review*, suggesting he had not personally visited these.

Sharp’s analysis of existing village form was a prelude to arguing for the creation of new villages as the best way of building in the countryside, rather than the ribbon development then prevalent. However, whilst he enjoyed and valued the picturesque effects of traditional villages he regarded these qualities as generally being accidental, arising from long, slow processes of natural growth. In his view they could not be re-created in a new wave of village building. Rather, Sharp argued for a humble formality as

“The rural feeling of the village does not depend on any of those things that are popularly associated with it, flowering gardens, irregular, informal, and quaint buildings, and so on. It seems to depend on much smaller and more subtle things, upon a certain modesty, a certain lack of the

smooth, mechanical finish of the town, and above all upon the harmony of the *material* of its buildings with the countryside. There is nothing to fear, then, from the *planning* of villages in more or less formal patterns like the square and the triangle. And there is everything to gain, since only in this way can we stay the wholesale destruction of rural character by the ribbon.” (p67)

Sharp's subsequent general planning books, *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1936d) and *Town Planning* (Sharp, 1940), add relatively little about the form and need for the new development of villages. The first reiterates Sharp's modernist leanings for new villages, anticipated to be numbered in thousands, and to be “frankly contemporary creations expressing their modern purpose with all the modern means that are available. There will be no romantic imitation in them of the unplanned villages of the past” (p113). *Town Planning* says very little specifically on villages but has a sharp critique against the insistence on using traditional materials for new countryside constructions – perhaps somewhat surprisingly so, given the quote from *Town and Countryside* above. A publication from a conference held in Spring 1942, when Sharp was seconded to the Ministry, but before work on the village design manual, is more revealing. Whilst Sharp's subject was ostensibly New Towns he diverted his talk into discussing villages, stating, for example, “The new villages ... should be clean straightforward streets of honest modern buildings, grouped in a square or a series of squares or similar formations, round a simple green or gravelled space where maybe the telephone box may take the place of the village pump” (Sharp, 1942: 116).

The writing and publication of *The Anatomy of the Village*

It is worth reproducing at length Sharp's own account of how he came to write *Anatomy*:

“The Planning section of the Ministry was growing ... and was anxious to publicise its own work. For this purpose it decided to have written and publish a series of handbooks, or manuals, covering the various aspects of town and country planning, the first of which, thought of as continuing an aspect of the work of the Scott Committee, was to deal with village planning.³ I was assigned to write this, in the intervals of dealing with the files that all the time circulated about the department. So in the autumn of 1942 I wrote a 40,000 word essay on this, taking as examples the plans of some 25 villages scattered about the country (and mostly chosen from an examination of ordnance maps, rather than from actual knowledge of them), with about 40 striking photographs of these and other villages as illustrations. When the manuscript was finished, the usual Civil Service custom was followed, and it was circulated among the permanent civil servants of the department (the administrative people) for their comments. This took months: far longer than the actual writing had taken. Everyone wrote an exhaustive minute on the thing, often remarking in no very flattering terms on the style of writing (I remember one comment by an assistant secretary as being ‘not the kind of thing the department should be associated with’). Not one of these civil servants had the civility to walk along the corridor to my office to have a word with me

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about the essay; and I was kept in complete ignorance for months about what was happening to it. At last I was told that the decision not to publish had been taken. After some time I requested to be myself allowed to find a commercial publisher for it, undertaking that the department would not be associated with it in any way. This was refused: I had, after all, written the thing in civil service time: and the work to which I had devoted some months and a good deal of both technical and general thought was to be consigned to a forgotten shelf in some basement to gather dust until it was finally committed to destruction in some furnace or other among a lot of other paper that could be regarded as waste. The thought of this did not delight me, and I continued the struggle to have my manuscript released even after I had left the civil service..."⁴

Sharp clearly underestimated civil service filing and retention systems, as the draft manual together with the memoranda written about it survive in the National Archive.⁵ In a memorandum of 31 August 1942, H. L. G. Vincent, a distinguished career civil servant and head of the Reconstruction Group (Cherry and Penny, 1986), asked Sharp about the feasibility of such a manual, as a follow-on to the Scott Report. The Scott Committee and Report, to which Sharp had been one of the secretaries and, by his own account, principal drafter of the report,⁶ was the government's attempt to get to grips with a series of rural issues. It focused, on the one hand, on rural economic depression and poverty and, on the other, on the incursions of the town and city into the countryside and the preservation demands this had generated. There were a number of recommendations on villages including "New villages and extensions of

villages should be planned, and should as far as possible be of a compact and closely knit character: no attempt should be made to recreate in new villages the irregularity and ' quaintness ' of old ones ..." (cited in Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, 1943: 105). Sharp replied to Vincent the next day with enthusiasm, sketching out roughly what the contents might be. Later in September he put the contents down more fully and estimated a word length of 10-15,000 words. The draft manual was circulated in January 1943 – although it had grown to well in excess of 30,000 words.

The contents page of the draft manual, *Village Design*, is remarkably close to the eventual book, *The Anatomy of the Village*. Indeed the text of many of the chapters is close to the eventual publication. The main exception is chapter 3 which is much longer than the subsequent book and has much detail on the technical requirements of a whole series of different building types. This chapter has a hesitancy of tone unusual for Sharp and much rewriting had clearly gone on – so much depended on yet to be determined government policy – and this section was subject to adverse comment when the draft manual was circulated. This chapter was radically shortened in the subsequent book. Perhaps more surprisingly, the intended illustrations changed significantly between the manual and the eventual book. The manual was to have been even more lavishly illustrated, with many more examples of villages. Much effort went into identifying suitable examples with assistance sought from Ministry Regional Offices.⁷

Sharp's assessment of subsequent events is partial and downbeat but not wholly inaccurate. The memos written about the manual by the professional civil servants or the technical staff, such as Holford, often contain much praise for Sharp's efforts. In

particular the quality of the prose and analysis in the early chapters was well regarded, although there was seen to be something of a disjunction between these and the more technical material and Sharp's very particular views about the desirability of the terraced house form and about gardens (see below) were not always shared. The bigger problem was more presentational; was this to be considered a technical manual or a personal essay? If the latter should it appear as a Ministry publication or something under Sharp's name with some sort of Ministry endorsement? How would it relate to subsequent publications? Who, ultimately, was the audience? And so on; with the resultant inertia leading to the manual being put into "cold storage".

Finally released by the Civil Service to seek private publication, Sharp was in correspondence with publishers in late 1943 and early 1944.⁸ Initially it looked very much like Architectural Press might produce the book; Sharp wrote to Hubert de Cronin Hastings (owner and editor of Architectural Press and Review) in December 1943 and there is subsequent correspondence between Sharp and Nikolaus Pevsner (as commissioning editor). In May 1944 Pevsner confirmed that Architectural Press wished to publish the book, following an extended preview through a special issue of the *Architectural Review*. But relatively late in the day Sharp was in touch with other publishers in parallel. Faber and Faber rejected the text, but Penguin, publishers of Sharp's earlier *Town Planning*, expressed a wish to publish and an agreement was signed on 29 June for a book, "Village Planning". It is unclear why after extended but positive discussions with Architectural Press Sharp sought alternative publishers and ultimately preferred Penguin, but he was careful to write apologetically to Pevsner, attributing his choice to the wider circulation Penguin would receive and presenting *Anatomy* as a sister text to *Town*

Planning. Sharp's subsequent planning documents for Durham, Exeter, Oxford and Salisbury were published by Architectural Press as, rather later, was the 2nd edition of his *English Panorama* (Sharp, 1950c).

The relationship with Penguin over the publication of *The Anatomy of the Village*, a title which seems to have become settled soon after the publication agreement was signed, was not entirely happy as the book took an age to see the light of day. After much nagging by Sharp, it was finally published nearly two years later, in May 1946.

The Anatomy of the Village

The Anatomy of the Village is an attractive and accessible book. Well illustrated with photographs and plans, Sharp's prose is concise and lucid. Whilst a significant part of the text was given over to an analysis of the qualities of the English village, that this was no guidebook or academic treatise is evident from the Prefatory Note. This quotes the Scott Report, which anticipated considerable post-war development in the countryside and that such development should be attached to existing villages. The aim of *The Anatomy of the Village* was to set out the main principles of village planning, especially in relation to physical design. The subsequent text is divided into two chapters dealing with 'past and present' and three with 'future'.

Chapter 1, the English Tradition, sets out first to analyse the English tradition of village building. The early part of this chapter conveys much of the essence of Sharp's values towards place and planning more widely. He saw the English tradition as both informal and orderly, as combining the utilitarian with beauty or at least charm and pleasantness and he saw a precious tradition

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but in need of evolution; new village building should not simulate the old. The chapter then sets out a broad typology of village plan forms, revising and developing his work in *Town and Countryside*. His five categories from that work were here reduced to two. First, and most common, Sharp identifies the road-side village, sited at a crossing or on a single road. Critical to village character was that the road was rarely dead straight; thus the road became visually contained and formed a place. The second major plan form suggested is the squared village, though in practice the shape of the enclosure may take many different patterns – this effectively amalgamated four of the village types from *Town and Countryside*. Sharp considered that this type often had a more immediate visual appeal as the plan form was more readily appreciated. However, the principle of visual containment was shared with the road-side village, with roads generally staggered and not allowing any direct vista through. Two other less common forms of villages are added to the typology: seaside and planned villages. Seaside villages are characterised as often having a tortuous and huddling form for shelter against the elements. Planned villages are usually associated with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, whilst having a degree of formality, to be usually relatively simple in plan and comfortably fitting within the English village tradition. For Sharp, simplicity is a key factor in the distillation of village character and a distinguishing feature from small towns where a greater degree of complexity of plan form is held to exist. Finally, in the English Tradition, village community is again held to be characterised by simplicity of form, of an integrated, perhaps semi-feudal, social system.

Chapter 2 considers the Village Today. Sharp set out a position that the ability of the village to naturally evolve and absorb changes had been lost in (then) recent times. Social structures based around

the rural economy had been disrupted by second-home owners and retirees. Physical form had been weakened by ribbon development and so on. New building in responding to the motor car and a demand for privacy had lost compactness. Understanding of village form and character had died, evident also in crude ‘environmental improvements’ by, for example, kerbing village greens. The key decision, for Sharp, was whether to create a whole new form for village planning (for example, suburban or truly urban) or whether to take something of the traditional essence of village form and develop from it in a contemporary manner.

The next part of the book sets out to consider the future, starting in chapter 3 with social requirements. Though villages might vary in plan form Sharp made no such distinction in terms of social form. Villages should have a diversity of occupations and social classes – he was critical of (then) recent land settlement developments on this as well as design grounds. The one future exception to this he anticipated was ‘holiday villages’. Sharp considered that the minimum size of a village should be related to its ability to support some basic social facilities and in particular a nursery and junior school (up to age 11). From this he extrapolated a minimum village size of about 570 catchment (including outlying farms) or about 400–450 village inhabitants, whilst acknowledging that declining fertility rates would cause this figure to rise. Towards the end of the chapter Sharp drifts into discussing design issues. Perhaps the most notable argument he advanced was that houses should have good-sized back gardens, for privacy, but at the front gardens were unnecessary – he considered a traditional narrow unfenced garden strip, or ‘flower strip’, better in functional and aesthetic terms.

Chapter 4 goes on to more directly discuss plan forms for the future village or extensions to existing villages. First, Sharp

considered whether detached, semi-detached or street houses (terraces) generally comprised the most desirable form of development and unsurprisingly, given his previous writings where he strongly advocated this form, concluded street houses to be optimum. Generally these should be straight but might sometimes be gently curved, perhaps following a topographical feature. In terms of plan forms for new villages he expressed a clear preference for the 'squared' type, with all its potential for diversity, such that 'in the future, as in the past, every village can be different from every other village, and that every village may be an individual place' (p63). To this argument Sharp identified potential dangers; the danger of producing an over-elaborate and over-sophisticated pattern, the danger of producing a completely rounded finite design, inhibiting organic change and the danger of designing over-large public amenity spaces. Spaces, he argued, should be closed for climatic, pictorial and psychological reasons (as a contrast to open country views).

The final chapter considers issues of building and planting character in the new or extended village. The chapter starts with a lengthy (and probably self-) quote from the Scott Report which argues against over-prescription in the use of materials in countryside building; quality and appropriate colour were considered important, use of traditional and local materials not, for 'the future of architecture does not lie in the easy direction of mere preservation and narrow conservatism' (p66). Though new buildings should not imitate those existing, Sharp argued for good neighbourliness, through such factors as height, street line, character and colour of materials. Good neighbourliness did not mean timid conservatism. One specific technique in achieving liveliness, Sharp suggested, was colourwash. Planting should generally be informal and simple with, for example, a few substantial trees –

for the 'simple robust utility' (p72) of the English village. The final sentence states 'And the essential basis of all village character is true simplicity' (p72).

After Publication

Anatomy was extensively reviewed. Sharp's own cuttings book⁹ contains 29 reviews from 1946 and early 1947, ranging from brief notes to lengthy descriptions in publications as diverse as the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Lady*, *The Architects' Journal* and *New Statesman and Nation*. There were occasional mixed or critical reviews, such as in *Official Architect* (October 1946) or by Geoffrey Clarke in *Town and Country Planning*, who was critical of Sharp for over-analysing and dissecting village character. However, most reviews were positive; some glowing. Clough Williams-Ellis, writing in the *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (September–October 1946), stated,

"I doubt whether the 72 pages could possibly have been used to better or more vivid purpose by anyone concerned to present an analysis of the essentials of our infinitely various villages and to show how so socially admirable a structure can be acceptably adapted to modern conditions that have certainly yet to find their apt expression."

In 1951 Sharp received a very appreciative letter from Arthur Holden. Holden had discussed *Anatomy* with Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright had apparently requested a copy. Sharp sent a copy to Wright and, also on the suggestion of Holden, a copy to Arthur Morgan, formerly of the Tennessee Valley Authority. After an initial burst of sales of 20,000 in 1946 *Anatomy* continued

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to sell respectably until it went out of publication around 1971, selling nearly 50,000 copies in total. In 1973 a company called the EP Group were interested in a limited edition reprint or possibly a revised second edition. Sharp thought a second edition unrealistic as he considered *Anatomy* quite dated by this time and favoured a reprint as a classic text, although in the end these plans came to naught.¹⁰

Sharp was subsequently to write further about village design in various publications, such as an article for the *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (Sharp, 1949c) and as a contributing author to a Ministry of Housing and Local Government manual on *Design in Town and Village* which belatedly emerged (Sharp, 1953). *Design in Town and Village* contains three chapters; Sharp on village design, Frederick Gibberd on residential areas and William Holford on design in city centres. For his contribution Sharp specifically states that his chapter was based upon *The Anatomy of the Village* and the *TPI Journal* article. However, in actuality it was an almost entirely new text, written in a surprisingly personal tone – Sharp makes more use of the personal pronoun and is more openly opinionated than in his earlier village writings – somewhat ironically as this was, finally, the official publication. The essay also contains many new illustrations and more worked examples of how villages should, and should not, be extended. Alongside these new plans one new interesting photographic illustration was of new rural housing by Tayler and Green. These modernist terraces are commended and work by Tayler and Green has subsequently been subject to critical appreciation and some listed (Harwood and Powers, 1998; Harwood, 2003). Sharp also included reference to his own designs for new villages for the Forestry Commission, although the construction of new villages was by then regarded as being uncommon.

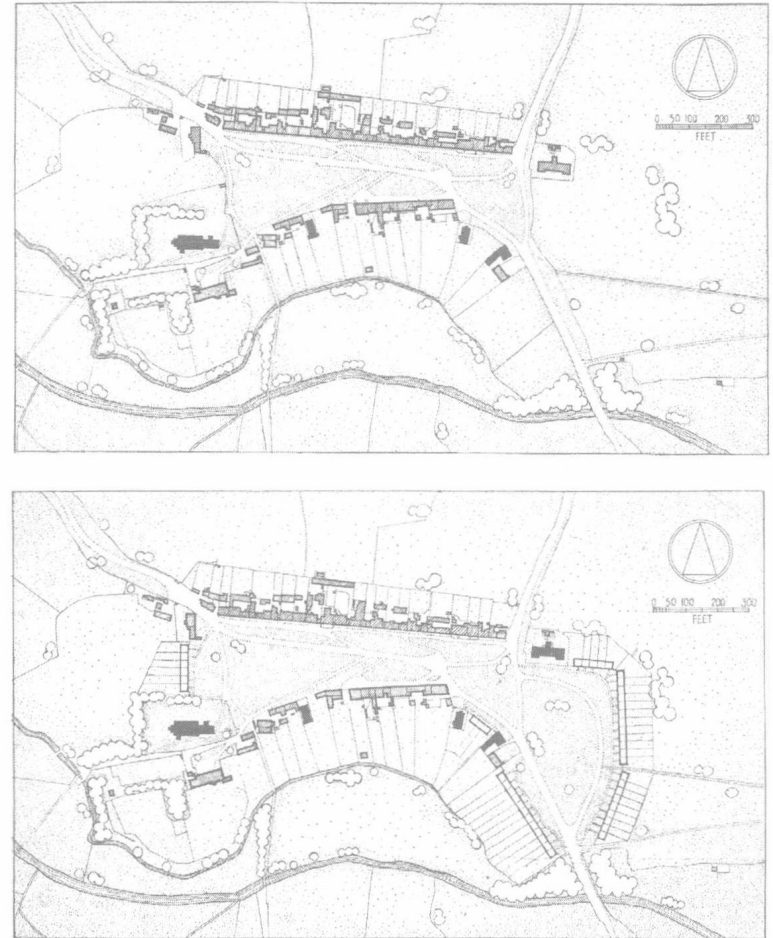


Figure 1 One of Sharp's demonstration plans for extending a village (from *Design in Town and Village*).

Creating Villages

Sharp's best chance to design the new villages he often wrote about came in 1946 with a commission from the Forestry Commission. He was engaged to masterplan eight villages (ten had initially been suggested) for its forestry workers in the remote and wild country of north-west Northumberland, each of which would house between 350 and 500 people. The forests of Kielder, Wark and Redesdale were undergoing massive expansion and it was anticipated a large workforce would be needed close by. Sharp and others argued that rather than scattered small groups of houses, which had been the policy of the Forestry Commission up until that time, houses should be grouped into villages of sufficient size to sustain community facilities. This was to be a phased work; the Commission decided they immediately needed 150 houses which Sharp recommended be divided between three sites: Kielder (60 houses), Byrness (50 houses) and Stonehaugh (45 houses); though these settlements would be incomplete he considered that they would be of sufficient size to give some community and village character.

There were already a number of buildings at Kielder. Most significant was Kielder Castle, historically a hunting lodge of the Duke of Northumberland, and various houses, some built in the inter-war period for the Forestry Commission. Though Kielder was an obvious place to develop a village, at the outset it was seen to be challenging because of the scattered and disparate existing buildings. There was a debate over whether village extension should take place around Kielder station on the Border and Counties Railway, but Sharp was firmly of the view that it should be on the virgin site of Butteryhaugh. Byrness and Stonehaugh were new sites. Comb was to have been the fourth village, again a virgin site, with a linear plan running along an isolated ridge in the Tasset Valley.

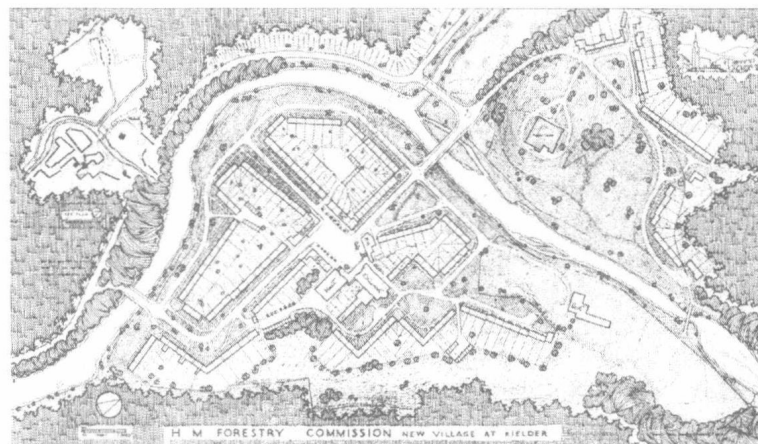


Figure 2a Sharp's plan for a village for the Forestry Commission at Kielder, Northumberland (Sharp Papers, Special Collections, Newcastle University Library).

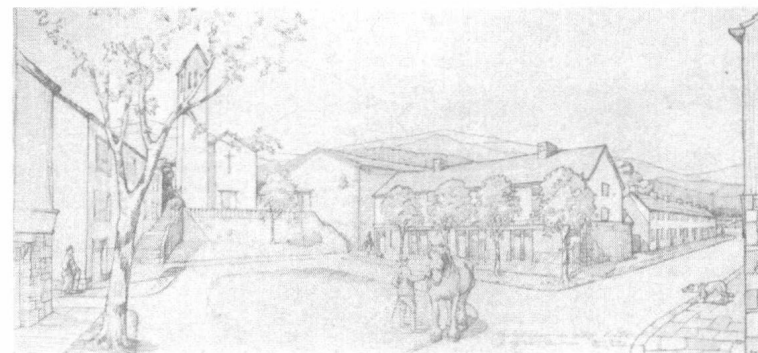


Figure 2b Sketch of village at Kielder (Sharp Papers, Special Collections, Newcastle University Library).