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residential satisfaction and place identity in  
Warrington New Town, UK.

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### Abstract

This study evaluates 'woodland in the ecological style' as a setting for contemporary housing by means of a case study of Birchwood, Warrington New Town, UK, using a postal questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to reveal residents' perceptions of the aesthetic and safety aspects of the woodland, together with its underlying meanings. Most Birchwood residents liked the visual appearance of their street, though they had both positive and negative feelings towards its 'trees and greenery'. Woodland in the local area figured prominently amongst the residents' favourite places though some feared that they would be the victims of physical or sexual

assault, or of robbery or intimidation from groups of young people in the woodland, and women felt particularly vulnerable. Whilst the woodland was significant for many residents it was not strongly identified with Birchwood as a place: the quality of the community as symbolised by the behaviour of local individuals, community groups and institutions was regarded as a more potent measure of local identity. Colourful and well-tended landscape interventions had the ability to act as signs of a caring community. The contribution of these findings to theoretical frameworks of residential satisfaction, restorative experiences and place identity is discussed: it is suggested, inter alia, that whilst signs of individual and collective care in the landscape contribute to communal place identity, individual experiences of wilder urban green spaces, including those of a restorative nature, are formative of individual place attachment. The implications for planning, design and management with ecological woodland are explored: urban dwellers should be able to choose their preferred way of interacting with the woodland, residential settings should accommodate a wide variety of user needs, and the vegetation on and around the streetscape should be proactively managed in consultation with the community.



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## Keywords

Urban forestry; Restorative experiences; Personal safety; Urban woodland planning, design and management

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