

How can local government build sustainable urban neighbourhoods?

Solutions
Lessons for policy
and practice

February 2012

What's the issue?

The UK needs many more and better homes. The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Network (SUNN) draws on direct experience of trying to build new communities that will stand the test of time. The report provides a series of tests and guidelines, backed up by research and case studies, including lessons from The Netherlands. It deals first with the product, then the process, and finally recommendations for government.

Designing sustainable neighbourhoods

- Healthy, strong communities cater for a balance of incomes and ages.
- They should be near jobs and services. They should have managed parking, safer cycling and walking routes, and well-maintained communal spaces. Shops should serve residents and 'passing trade'.
- Civic leadership is essential. Development agreements and design codes maintain design standards. Easy-to-develop serviced sites should be offered to smaller builders.
- Builders should be offered proven options for energy efficiency, and a market opened up for 'green homes' that cut energy costs.

Working together better

- Community councils or trusts can help ensure good neighbourhood management, with councillors acting as local champions.
- Joint venture companies can use public land as equity to get development moving providing sufficient infrastructure is in place.
- Waste can be cut by pre-testing new technologies, such as modular/off-site construction, and assessing locations objectively.
- Local Letting Plans and wider forms of tenure, such as co-housing, self-build, and market rental speed up occupation and help viability.

Ways forward

There are seven steps to achieving sustainable urban neighbourhoods:

- agree the spatial framework;
- facilitate public-private development partnerships;
- mobilise public undesignated land;
- attract private funding for infrastructure;
- open up housing markets;
- endow community stewardship;
- learn from what works.

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The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Network (SUNN)

Why Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods?

The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Network (SUNN) was set up in 2009 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and URBED (Urban and Economic Development) to explore first-hand the experience of developing new communities in England, following a feasibility study by Michael Carley and Nicholas Falk. Most SUNN new communities are urban extensions, mainly on brownfield sites, and some also involve estate renewal. Five out of the thirteen are in growth areas, and eight in regeneration areas where values are typically lower (see Appendix for members). At the outset of the project, each community was at least partially constructed and occupied. This provided a sound basis both for discussions during the project, and for the conclusions in the final report *Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods: building communities that last*.

Designing communities that last

A sustainable urban neighbourhood should have value as a place to live over many generations.¹ The lesson of the boom in estate construction in the 1960s and 1970s was that it was all too possible to get this wrong. The project therefore examined how new communities are being designed and laid out under four main themes: healthier and stronger communities, safer streets and living places, a greater choice of homes, and environmental features that add value to living in a new neighbourhood.

The provision of new housing in the UK has lagged far behind demand over the last couple of decades in terms of both quantity and quality - as successive reviews have pointed out.² The Coalition Government wants to promote new housing and shift control towards local neighbourhoods, but without knowing quite what is to replace planning guidance, or how to get building going again.

This Solutions paper, and the full *Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods: building communities that last* report (www.jrf.org.uk), shows how to build more homes and stronger communities based on direct experience of thirteen new communities in ten different English towns and cities. Learning from study tours and workshop discussions is set against a background of housing research commissioned by the JRF and others. The report also draws lessons from building new housing in the Netherlands, where the stock increased by 7.6 per cent between 1996 and 2005.³

Looking and learning

The formation of SUNN was supported by JRF, to improve practice and policy nationally and assist the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) to embed best practice and innovation in a new community on the edge of York called Derwenthorpe, now under construction.⁴ The terms of reference for the network were agreed at a launch meeting in the JRHT's model garden suburb of New Earswick in York, which provided inspiration. Key features of the network are:

- A membership who were all developing innovative housing schemes that have been started but are not yet complete in different parts of England;
- A commitment of members representing those communities to work together over a two-year period;
- Visits to new communities hosted by members, each with a study tour and facilitated workshops;
- Full and frank discussions on what does and does not work in community building; and
- A research team to prepare briefing material and follow-up reports (see www.urbed.co.uk for reports of visits).

What is a sustainable urban neighbourhood?

The Coalition Government committed itself to the overworked term 'sustainable development' in the draft National Planning Policy Framework – but without defining what it means. In SUNN we have used the term 'sustainable urban neighbourhood' to refer to new communities that are built to last in social and economic as well as physical terms. It is crucial that what is built stands the test of time, and there are five basic ingredients:

- 1. A wide choice of housing and facilities** to ensure long-term value and create a balanced community over time. A neighbourhood with some common facilities requires a minimum of between 500 and 1,000 units, with homes catering for a range of incomes and ages.
- 2. Well-connected to jobs and services** by foot and bike as well as other modes to cut travel time and costs. Creating connectivity so that people do not have to depend on their cars and can be economically active requires a location on a transport corridor or close to a town or city centre.
- 3. Places of different character** that appeal to different markets. Creating character or a sense of place typically requires a minimum average density of 30 units to the hectare (as in the early 'garden cities' and some of the New Towns⁵). Higher densities can support better infrastructure but call for higher quality design.⁶
- 4. Designed to save resources** and ensure that neighbourhoods are well looked after, and do not 'cost the earth'. Climate proofing a development includes provision of 'green infrastructure' to promote biodiversity and reduce environmental impact as well as measures to save energy.
- 5. Hands-on management and 'long-term stewardship'** by responsible local organisations, such as housing associations, development trusts or community councils, both during development and after residents have moved in.

Designing sustainable urban neighbourhoods

Healthier and stronger communities

Consumer surveys have highlighted dissatisfaction in the UK with how we live, particularly in relation to wellbeing on housing estates.⁷ Most new housing is not affordable to those on average earnings. While some of the problems are due to inequalities in both wealth and earnings, (which are much greater than in Northern European countries such as Germany, Finland and The Netherlands⁸) they also stem from not building enough houses as well as from poor neighbourhood design. The UK has some of the highest house price inflation levels in Europe, combined with one of the lowest rates of house building over the last three decades. Private house building stayed relatively constant after public house building fell, and the gaps have not yet been filled.⁹

Three key issues affect new communities in particular. First, how do we engage communities, not just at the time when housing is designed, but also in the ongoing running of the neighbourhood and community facilities? Second, how do we create communities that work over time, and do not end up being stigmatised? And third, how do we create a proper heart to the community when resources are tight and people no longer shop and mix as they once did?

Our visits found that strong new communities, such as Orchard Park in Cambridge or Lightmoor in Telford, have benefited from good management from the start. The local school or health centre plays a key role in building a sense of community and local pride and therefore needs to be in place early on so it acts as a 'community hub' in bringing strangers together. The primary school at Orchard Park opened in the first year, with a Community Wing, by drawing on children from the wider locality. New residents also help support neighbouring facilities such as shops and pubs that will welcome extra trade.

Careful estate management pays off for all, and needs to be properly funded through appropriate mechanisms for stewardship. A community trust with a stake in the overall value of the new community helps add value to bricks and mortar. Imaginative small ideas, like personalising individual brick pavements and the involvement of artists in a new park in Walker Riverside, Newcastle, or planting a tree each time a child is born in Lightmoor, help build social capital at relatively low cost.

To meet the aspirations of the National Planning Policy Framework for 'sustainable development', four basic tests or questions should be asked of a design. (See Appendix B for examples of how the guidelines can be met.)

How far will the new neighbourhood offer its residents a better quality of life and strengthen both the community and the surrounding area?

Guidelines

- a. Balanced neighbourhoods** are the key to people enjoying where they live, and feeling comfortable. A good choice of homes catering for a range of incomes, along with neighbourhood facilities will encourage people to stay when their circumstances change, and build up long-term economic value and social capital. This is as important for areas undergoing regeneration, as it is for areas of growth, but will require different incentives. (See Appendix for case study 1.)
- b.** Careful design, letting and management policies will create '**lifetime neighbourhoods**' that attract people of all ages and incomes. Housing design should be 'tenure blind' to avoid stigmatisation. Local letting policies will avoid conflicts between those who have bought their properties and those who are renting, and ensure support for those who are vulnerable. (See Appendix for case study 2.)
- c. Total cost** approaches to neighbourhood budgeting, as part of the move towards Localism, should value living close to existing infrastructure and discourage further costly sprawl, particularly where the local economy is weak and people cannot afford to travel far. Funding must be provided for community development and facilities in the first five years. (See Appendix for case study 3.)

Safer streets and living places

A general criticism people have of new housing estates is the way public or communal space is laid out. Evaluations of new housing estates for CABI and others have been particularly critical of the public realm, which often looks hard and unwelcoming¹⁰. In particular it is important for children to play together outside in safety and comfort to develop their potential, and for residents not to depend on their cars for short trips.

Streets designed to foster traffic flow or to stop crime through cul de sacs reduce the pleasure of walking, which helps explain why too few people in the UK walk or cycle to local amenities, thus encouraging obesity. Public

open spaces, including children's play areas, often look arid and uncared for, with little of the greenery found in traditional villages where people prefer to live.¹¹

Key issues for new communities are the quality of public space, encouraging sustainable transport modes, dealing with car parking and assessing how and to what extent local shopping can be viable. Even where design codes had been drawn up, the public realm often lets the place down, partly because highway or utility engineers are not so interested in the way things look, and over-rule designers, and partly because of poor urban design.

How far will the layout achieve higher levels of walking and cycling than conventional suburbs, and result in lower use of the private car?

- a. Getting the location right**, close to jobs and services and on good transport links, will cut the time spent commuting, leaving more time for leisure and family. This is particularly important where many of the initial residents are likely to be young working families. The planning brief should include a thorough retail and employment strategy, which takes account of the sub-regional context. (See Appendix for case study 4.)
- b. The 'heart' of new communities may need to be located on a busy road on the edge of the development** to ensure sufficient demand for shops and services by combining local and 'passing' trade. Co-locating these with a new school, health centre and sports activities shares overheads. As they are catalysts for healthy communities, facilities should be provided early on, possibly in temporary premises. (See Appendix for case study 5.)
- c. Enough parking** spaces must be provided, but rented out through parking permits to keep cars under control. Well-designed spaces with covenants in leases, plus a 'Welcome Pack' should ensure that residents understand how the neighbourhood is intended to work. Car sharing and car clubs need to be properly promoted, for example through a community trust. (See Appendix for case study 6.)
- d. Cycling** has a much greater role to play through properly designed cycle ways to local shops and services such as railway stations, and adequate space to store bikes outside homes. There must be adequate room for pedestrians and cyclists to interact safely and not make movement difficult for older and infirm people. Dutch new communities offer inspiration and practical models. (See Appendix for case study 7.)
- e. Communal space** should be well managed and maintained by the community, with an appropriate governance structure, or parcelled out into individual gardens and allotments. Maximum advantage should be taken of natural assets such as water or trees. Statutory community councils can maintain high standards of stewardship, but care must be taken to keep charges affordable (which is where an endowment and voluntary action can help, provided too much reliance is not placed on it). (See Appendix for case study 8.)

Good design and greater choice

Unlike buyers of cars or electrical appliances, house buyers in the UK generally go for the old or second-hand product, and many do not even consider buying a new home.¹² They are also very status conscious. This is different from on the Continent, where there is also a stronger stress on creating the 'socially integrative city' and sustainable neighbourhoods.¹³ The RIBA's research into attitudes to new homes for their Homewise campaign shows that there are major concerns about insufficient space inside with Britain building some of the smallest new homes in Europe.¹⁴ User surveys have also established complaints over transmitted noise, with higher densities not always suitable for family life.¹⁵ People over the age of 60 rarely move, and often occupy more space than they can afford to run in family homes that would suit those with young children better.¹⁶ The market is stuck.

How well does the development framework ensure the designs appeal to different potential markets?

- a. Civic leadership** is needed not just for making the case for building a new neighbourhood, but also for higher design and build quality. Community planning events can be used to secure local agreement to the basic principles. Building trust takes time, but will pay off in creating places that everyone values. (See Appendix for case study 9.)
- b. Development frameworks** enable agreements between landowners, developers and the planning authority over phasing and outcomes, thus allowing a greater degree of flexibility than masterplans. A design panel can help resolve conflicts and ensures quality is maintained. (See Appendix for case study 10.)
- c. Design codes** agreed between the developer and local planning authority should be as clear as possible, for example using photographs or drawings, to ensure that later phases are not 'dumbed down'. (See Appendix for case study 11.)

- d. **Easy-to-develop serviced sites** make it easier to secure the choice that both customers and communities want. To secure a balanced community over time, large sites should be split into different blocks of say 60 – 80 homes, built by a variety of builders in phases, as is common in The Netherlands. Design competitions in the first phase can test innovations, and promote early interest. (See Appendix for case study 12.)

Environmental features

Climate change is a serious issue. At the same time raw material costs are rising.¹⁷ Fast-growing economies like China are competing for a diminishing stock of natural resources.¹⁸ Most homes are not 'future proofed' to deal with shortages of energy, water and waste disposal sites. Utility bills are forecast to escalate, whether or not we go for renewable sources, as our energy systems are worn out and over-loaded.¹⁹ We lag behind countries such as Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden in building places that meet 'eco-town' standards.²⁰

Few neighbourhoods match the quality standards which SUNN members observed in a study tour to The Netherlands. British house builders are either unaware of what is now feasible or are deterred by the complexities and lack of ongoing government support. Where environmental initiatives have been taken the lessons are often not properly shared. Attempted ecological innovations in house building go unevaluated and practitioners lack time for learning. Professional development and implementation programmes have been cut back, including the closure of Centres of Excellence and local delivery mechanisms. In a complex and fast-changing world, open discussions are vital. SUNN workshops found that there are easier ways to save energy and carbon emissions than going for complex technical fixes.

How much of a positive impact will the development have in environmental as well as economic and social terms?

Guidelines

- a. **Sustainability appraisals** should ensure that running costs on new homes will be affordable to those on average incomes. The standards or code sought need to match local market conditions. The focus should be energy savings for an entire planned neighbourhood rather than the individual home, taking into account the emissions from household transport. Evaluation should embrace water use and waste generation as well as energy use. (See Appendix for case study 13.)
- b. **Sustainability plans** should offer a menu of options to house builders, with Energy Performance Certificates used to market the benefits of new homes. The support of estate agents and housing associations is also needed to ensure new residents know how both the neighbourhood and their home are supposed to work. Builders should be offered a range of proven options, as Urban Splash is doing in Manchester. (See Appendix for case study 14.)
- c. **'Green loans'**, as part of the Government's Mortgage Indemnity Scheme, should support installations that cut running costs (rather as the Green Deal for existing homes). Financial institutions that are supporting the Growing Places Fund should be able to help.²¹ Some of the cost should be factored off the land value to ensure homes remain affordable. Green features can boost community support and sales, as in Chichester. (See Appendix for case study 15.)

Working together better

Developing better neighbourhoods depends above all on working together in a more collaborative, less adversarial way.²² SUNN members, who include developers and housing associations officers, planners and architects, and housing practitioners and councillors, believe we need to overhaul the way we procure major new developments. The old model for house building is broken. The barriers to sustainable neighbourhoods can only be overcome progressively through working together to add value to new housing and control the costs and risks, as the best developments in the past have done. Working together better means responding to long-term demand not just immediate pressures, reducing development risk, minimising waste and making housing more affordable.

Respond to long-term demand

Planning is in turmoil. The Localism agenda stresses the importance of engaging communities in neighbourhood planning which, depending on how it is implemented, is likely to slow down development at the same time as developers are finding it hard to make any scheme viable.²³ Achieving positive participation is contentious and difficult, and requires better local leadership and follow-through. The countries in Europe with the strongest economies and cities are all ones where local authorities lead the development process, and where planning is not a political football.²⁴ New communities that often take 10 or 15 years to complete need to respond to long-term demand, not short-term financial pressures or special interest groups.

Is there a local management body with the incentives and resources to anticipate and respond to problems as they arise?

- a. To make management and governance logical neighbourhood participation should reflect **spatial boundaries** which make sense to local people, and where growth or regeneration is required. These may be oriented to a central shopping area, or in smaller neighbourhoods, a school or community centre.
- b. Masterplans should be matched by **management plans** to show how the new and surrounding communities are to be integrated, and what the service charges and other costs are likely to be. The principles for 'quality growth' should be agreed with service providers such as the police and health service, and published so that developers and residents know what is expected.
- c. **Statutory parish councils** have more permanence and authority than informal neighbourhood forums – too many of which have come and gone in England over the past three decades.²⁵ Members of Community Councils need help in developing planning skills. The skills of professional planners should not be ignored but directed to working with neighbourhoods.
- d. **Local champions** are needed to promote sustainable urban neighbourhoods, not just housing estates. In many areas, particularly deprived urban areas, neighbourhood planning has to address social and economic issues. Councillors need to spell out the economic and social benefits of new housing, such as better services, public transport and shops, and access to jobs and training opportunities for younger people.
- e. **Continuity** is essential and neighbourhood planning needs to resolve the relationship between participatory and representative democratic processes. Parish Councillors or Neighbourhood Forum representatives need to work with local authority elected members and officers over the long-term to achieve neighbourhood aspirations, without being hijacked by a single issue or interested party. By managing communal spaces well, as in Telford, conflicts can be avoided.
(See Appendix for case study 16.)

Reduce development risks

One of the best ways of getting building going again is to 'de-risk' strategic developments. With private confidence at a low, mortgages hard to obtain, and a deepening recession in the UK, a new business model for housing is needed. House-builders now want even higher returns to generate profit against a backdrop of reduced turnover to compensate for the risks, which have substantially increased. For example a major house-builder told SUNN they would now expect their profit margin to be 30 per cent rather than the 20 per cent of a few years ago.

Most people agree on the importance of supplying more 'shovel-ready' sites. However, there are insufficient incentives to bring suitable sites forward where land owners and developers wait for prices to rise. A great deal of effort and expense has been wasted on plans that never come to fruition, which makes planners cynical. Brownfield sites close to town and city centres such as Newcastle are going to waste. Problems arise around 'book values' and land banking. Developers often feel frustrated by all the 'red tape' that the Government has promised to reduce.

Are the risks and returns shared, and is the public sector doing all it can to reduce uncertainties and join up infrastructure investment?

- a. **Growth** should be focused where there is sufficient infrastructure already planned or in place. Masterplans should only be commissioned after the strategic land use frameworks and infrastructure investment plans are agreed to avoid abortive work.
- b. **Land as equity** should be used to make housing affordable, and thus boost supply, with payment deferred until homes are occupied or resold. Public land provision should be used to lever higher quality standards. Even in prosperous areas, such as Cambridge, local authorities need to work with developers from the outset to ensure financial viability and to have contingency plans, such as 'meanwhile uses' if things go wrong.
- c. **Joint venture companies** or other forms of public-private partnership should be used to bring forward larger sites, install infrastructure, and then sell off serviced plots to house builders, housing associations and self-builders.
- d. **Development finance** could be rethought, with local authorities raising finance for infrastructure at lower costs than the private sector. Options include borrowing against the New Homes Bonus, expected proceeds from rate income (Tax Increment Finance) and the transfer of property assets to a joint company with the private sector. Some local authorities are setting up joint ventures as limited liability partnerships. Lessons can be learned from The Netherlands and other European countries where this approach is common. (See Appendix for case study 17.)



1. Ancoats and New Islington, Manchester



2. Derwenthorpe, York



3. Dickens Heath, Solihull



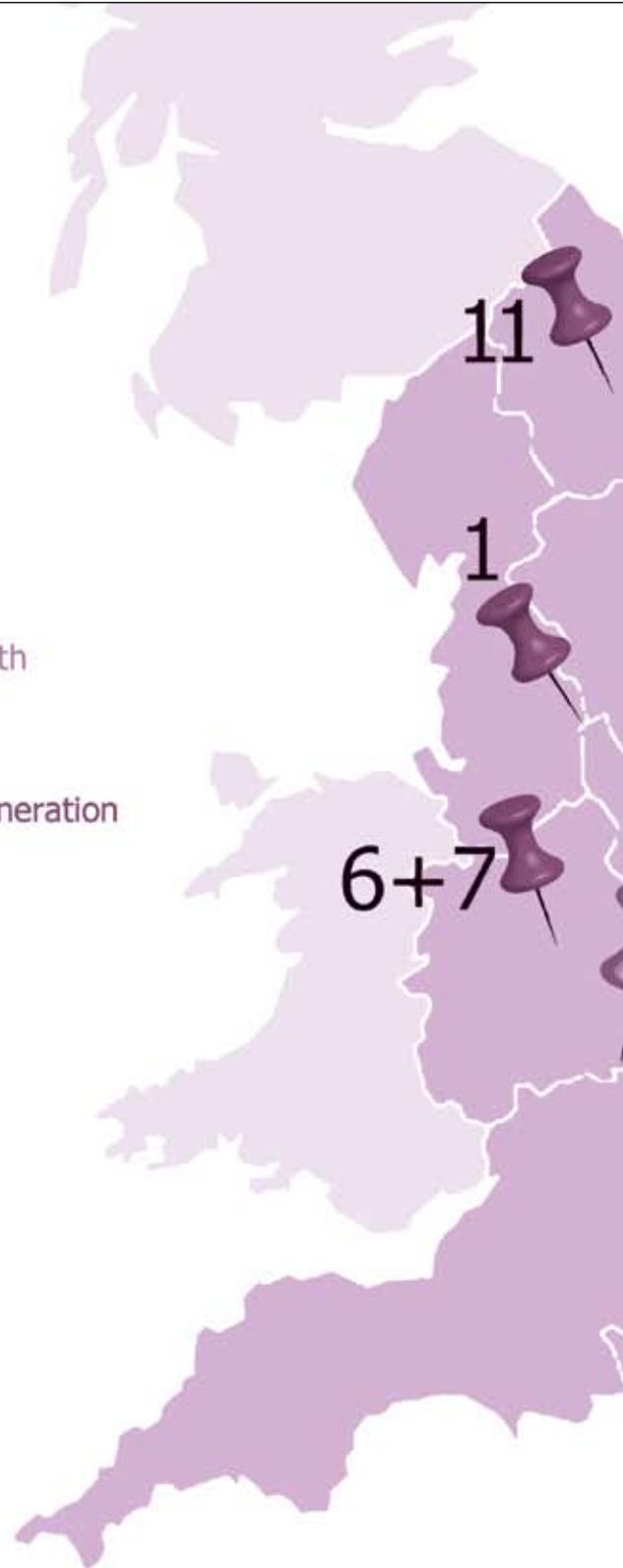
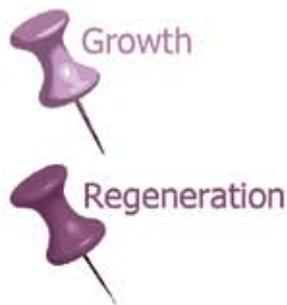
4. Grand Union Village, Northolt



5. Graylingwell Park, Chichester



6. Ironstone

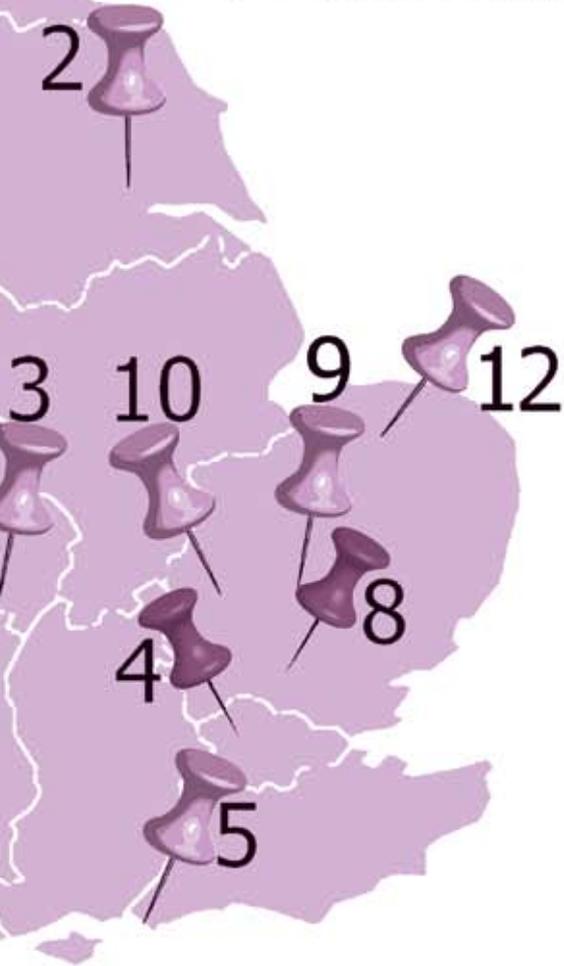




12. Yours South Lynn, King's Lynn



11. Walker Riverside, Newcastle



10. Upton, Northampton



9. Orchard Park, Cambridge



6. Lawley Village, Telford



7. Lightmoor Village, Telford



8. Newhall, Harlow

Improve the supply chain and cut construction waste

Not only is the house-building process slow, as the Barker and Callcut Reviews established, but it is also wasteful.²⁶ The house building process has changed very slowly in the UK over recent decades, relative to other industries. And yet materials needed are increasingly complex, for example new types of high-tech window or heating systems. As a result, components needed to meet higher standards are increasingly imported, adding to the UK's balance of payments deficit. Yet properly planned, the housing supply chain could get the economy moving again, and create jobs in areas of high unemployment - what the G20 Summit in London called Green Recovery.

Unlike Continental homes that are assembled by cranes from components made in factories, British homes are frequently built on site in bad conditions by building teams who may never work together again. Large amounts of material are thrown away, and work frequently has to be redone, with a premium charged for any departure from established ways of building, however out-dated.²⁷ The issue however is not how to prefabricate elements, but rather how to set up projects so the economies of scale can be achieved all the way down the supply chain, without depending excessively on imports.

Is waste of all kinds being minimised?

- a. **Pre-testing** of technology needs to be done at the national level, so that implementation at the local level is of 'tried and tested' technologies, not expensive and risky experimentation.
- b. **Modular construction** of new homes as a more mainstream building method depends on developing a better domestic supply chain. This issue has to be addressed at a national level or the business will continue to be taken by foreign suppliers.
- c. Changes that affect all developers through the **Building Regulations**, or the **Code for Sustainable Homes**, should help British companies secure the necessary economies of scale to invest in green technologies. In some cases, it may be better to allow local authorities to work out the best way of cutting energy consumption in their particular circumstances. For example, aiming for more than Code Level 4 in regeneration may represent poor value for money compared with upgrading the existing housing stock, and may simply result in fewer new homes.
- d. **Sharing of experience** across new communities would aid local implementation, including greater transparency on what new developments actually cost to build and to run. For example, the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust has undertaken demonstration projects and publicised the lessons. Through closer collaboration between the local authority and developer, and through different departments and professionals pulling together as a team, substantial savings can be made without any loss of value. (See Appendix for case study 18.)

Make housing more affordable

A final concern is how to enable people to get on the 'housing ladder' without taking on debts they can never repay. In its housing strategy, the Coalition Government makes clear its desire to get the UK building again, with a 'New Build Indemnity Scheme' and social housing intended primarily to meet the needs of 'vulnerable people'.²⁸ The question is whether the strategy matches the complexity of the problems identified in previous reviews, and our members' direct experience. In terms of new housing, earlier policy statements had stressed the need to boost output. The Local Growth White Paper concluded by calling for 'House building-enabling infrastructure. It is no accident that investment in housing output in the UK is among the lowest in the developed world'.²⁹ The problem is not just the high cost of providing infrastructure in the UK, but also the increasing number of requirements for new housing which meets sustainability standards.

There are huge differences in affordability and provision up and down the country depending on the state of the housing market. In Newcastle and Manchester, housing associations have been driving renewal, but can no longer carry the burden now that grants have been withdrawn. The Housing Market Renewal Programme was cancelled, with only some limited funding areas available for regeneration. In other places, including Cambridge, Northolt and Solihull, buy-to-let investors have taken over housing intended for owner occupiers, creating the danger of over concentration of transient tenants. Hills warned about this in his review.³⁰ Fortunately in these cases there are robust management arrangements, but these by themselves do not deal with the way housing is allocated.

How accessible is the housing ladder?

- a. **Local letting plans** should be agreed when Registered Providers are appointed, so that the new supply can enable the local housing market as a whole to function better, for example by people taking larger or smaller properties to suit changing circumstances.

- b. Co-housing and self build** should be used not just to make housing more affordable but also to build a sense of community and take forward innovations in saving natural resources. Enough land (say 10 per cent of a large site) needs to be made available for these. (See Appendix for case study 19.)
- c. Market rental** has a larger role to play, perhaps copying the approach in countries like Germany or the USA, where it is much easier to move. In these places the housing owner provides the minimum of services to keep costs affordable. Alternatively, occupants may own and manage a block, to keep service charges down. By increasing the range of choices in terms of both design and tenure, and developing a sustainable urban neighbourhood with a strong sense of community stewardship, growth can be promoted even in a difficult financial climate, as Yours South Lynn is illustrating. (See Appendix for case study 20.)

Leading the way

The final section builds on its findings to make recommendations for restoring confidence in the housing market and getting development moving towards sustainable communities. It stresses the importance of leadership at all levels. The seven recommendations are in summary:

Agree the spatial framework – Agreed regional and sub-regional spatial and transport investment plans are essential to give confidence to markets to bring forward plans for sustainable communities which take years and even decades to come to fruition. The report recommends that the Departments for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) should work with Local Enterprise Partnerships to agree priority areas for growth and regeneration that can be reinforced in concordats or ‘quality deals’ covering a number of years.

Facilitate public-private development partnerships – Partnerships bring together the best skills of the private sector in finance and development with the commitment of the public and voluntary sectors to long-term community development and sustainability. The Homes and Communities Agency should issue guidance on setting up public-private development partnerships for agreed priority areas in a way that will simplify the process and avoid unnecessary legal costs.

Mobilise public undesignated land – Land cost is a key constraint on UK housing provision, and the easiest way to encourage house building is to use publicly-owned land positively. Sustainable urban neighbourhoods can create value out of neglected land, and will pay off over a business or property cycle. Development needs to be kick started by putting the land into joint ventures on a ‘build now, pay later’ basis. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors with support from CLG should promote more rigorous approaches to land valuation and disposal to get larger sites moving.

Attract private funding for infrastructure – To support community building and private investment, advance infrastructure is needed in terms of public transport provision, energy, waste, water and green space. The report recommends that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (with DECC, the Department for Energy and Climate Change) should ensure enough funding is available for local infrastructure particularly where long-term energy consumption can be reduced.

Open up housing markets – The process of seeking planning permission needs to be streamlined with advance planning and local leadership taking responsibility for approving housing sites which make good sense. A wider range of house builders, registered providers and self-builders then need to move on site and build with maximum efficiency. This means, for the sites selected as optimum, a presumption in favour of development. The Housing Forum, with support from the Local Government Association, should promote the idea of ‘housing careers’ which enable more people to get on the housing ladder and later move home when their circumstances change without losing their ‘social connections’.

Endow community stewardship – To promote community development and build up social capital, development agreements need to cover the way the new community is managed. Social infrastructure is as important as physical infrastructure, and so should be budgeted for accordingly. The CLG should work with Locality (the former Development Trusts Association) and the Association of Parish Councils to facilitate community trusts in new developments.

Learn from what works – To ensure the necessary skills and attitudes are in place, investment must be made in training and education. Websites, good practice guides, and conferences, however well done, are no substitute for people sharing experience, and ‘looking and learning’ first-hand. Arrangements that used to do this, such as the Regional Centres of Excellence, have largely gone. The Housing Forum, with support from the house-building industry and Local Government Association, should promote local networks that share experience.

Notes

1. Rudlin, D. and Falk, N. (2009) *Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood: building the 21st century home*, Architectural Press
2. See, for example, the reports of Barker, K. (2006) *Barker Review of Land Use Planning*, London: HM Treasury and (2007) *The Callcutt Review of House Building Delivery*, London: Department of Communities and Local Government.
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Appendix A: Case studies

1. Walker Riverside, Newcastle Cross-subsidising regeneration across a range of sites is sometimes possible for a national developer, but for not for Registered Providers operating in areas suffering from economic decline. The closure of local agencies involved in the delivery of schemes such as the Housing Renewal Pathfinder or Bridging Newcastle Gateshead has threatened valuable work in changing perceptions and tackling social problems. It has further angered local people who have had to live with demolition and unfulfilled plans.

2. Ealing Council's Golden Transfer Scheme is being used in areas with high amounts of Council housing, such as at Northolt. To qualify tenants need a clear rent account for 12 months before application, no other breaches of their tenancy agreement for the previous 24 months and no anti-social behaviour record. 10 per cent of allocations annually have gone to existing Council tenants under this scheme. Recently the Council was successful in bidding for funding to build 80 new homes. Most of these new homes went to Ealing council tenants who are currently under-occupying their home or are overcrowded. 10 per cent formed part of a local lettings policy for local tenants in the same ward as the new schemes.

3. Lightmoor in Telford is to be a second 'Bournville' and the Bournvillage Village Trust (BVT) is paying particular attention to providing social facilities which strengthen quality of life. The heart of the community is a new primary school. Facilities, such as playing fields, changing rooms and an IT suite are owned and managed by BVT for the benefit of the school and the neighbourhood. The school buildings are rented to the local authority during the day, and there are separate entrances for children and the local community.

4. Orchard Park in Cambridge has been built on the route of the new Guided Busway which extends out past the planned new town of Northstowe to Huntingdon. Ever since the Structure Plan for Cambridgeshire was agreed, the different local authorities have worked together with a shared ambition to accommodate growth where there is sufficient infrastructure. Building more homes is seen as vital to sustaining economic growth as house prices in Cambridge have risen to 8 or 9 times average incomes.

5. Dickens Heath near Solihull has everything going for it in terms of prosperous residents in a well-planned community with a very attractive looking village centre but shop vacancy and turnover is high. As Dickens Heath is not far from out-of-town malls and superstores it is unsurprising that local shops are suffering. The 'high street' suffers from insufficient parking which pits shoppers against residents for the limited number of spaces. But the alternative of 'acres of free parking' is unthinkable in the centre of a new community.

6. Grand Union Village's residents in Northolt, West London were ignoring well-laid plans for undercroft parking (enclosed but at ground level), and using the street and pavements instead. Redress, five years after the first residents moved in, has required a multi-agency initiative of yellow lines, permits and booklets. The lesson is that 'we should have done it a long time ago' before 'residents got into bad habits'. Parking arrangements not only matter greatly to residents but also largely shape what places look and feel like. Undercroft parking under a green communal area is only likely to be viable at densities of over 90 to the hectare (i.e. over four stories), where land values are relatively high, and where parking controls are respected.

7. Houten near Utrecht in Holland is a prosperous Dutch new town and one of the most popular places to live in the Netherlands. As most people work outside Houten, the masterplan made it attractive to cycle or walk to the railway, which is what most people do every day. As in the rest of the Netherlands, cyclists have priority over cars at intersections, and a separate system of cycle ways makes it safe for people of all ages to get on their bikes. Space under the main station is now given over to a cycle park and repair facility, where bikes can also be hired inexpensively. A school with housing above is only accessible by bike or walking. Most of the parking is on street, often in side streets separate from the cycle ways.

8. Ancoats regeneration on the edge of Manchester city centre involves the renewal of an historic industrial area next to a failed council estate. Regeneration is being achieved through major investment in the public realm, including new canals in neighbouring New Islington. The urban designers recognised that the grid

pattern of streets needed to be retained to keep the area's character but speeding traffic needed to be tamed. There are three components: a new public square at the heart of the community on the site of some run-down sheds; minimum signage with paving materials indicating the hierarchy of road types with intersections that slow speeds and street parking to narrow some roads; and an arts programme celebrating the area's long history to reinforce a sense of community between old and new residents.

9. Graylingwell, Chichester, was a redundant mental hospital in 36 hectares of wooded parkland about 20 minutes walk from the city centre. The site was taken over by the Homes and Communities Agency (formerly English Partnerships). Originally proposed for business development, with permission for only 154 dwellings, work on the local plan led to a Supplementary Planning Document, with inputs from a Local Forum and action planning events. The resulting application won local support for a new 'quarter' of 750 dwellings, of which 40 per cent are to be affordable, as well as commercial and community facilities, and a care home.

10. Orchard Park, South Cambridge, is an example of where the local authority and developer worked closely together to ensure that the Design Codes for the area were financially realistic from the developers' point of view. This resulted in a common vision, and subsequently enabled design changes to be agreed that reduced costs in the downturn. The Cambridgeshire Charter for Quality Growth (www.cambridgeshirehorizons.org) and a Quality Panel of outside experts ensure that basic design principles are retained when new applications come up for approval. When adverse market conditions stalled development, giving rise to negative media coverage, the lead local authority worked quickly through the local development partnership to tidy up the public realm and get development moving again.

11. Upton, Northants, is an example of a site owned by the Homes and Communities Agency that has used design codes to secure a higher quality of public realm than would normally be found. Similarly Newhall in Harlow shows how better housing can be secured when a private landowner insists on quality through design codes and competitions. In both cases higher quality developments are helping to rebalance areas that had previously been stigmatised because of monotonous post war design.

12. Vathorst, Amersfoort NL, is one of many rapidly-growing new communities that are 'branding' different neighbourhoods within an overall masterplan, and development agreement.³¹ The basic infrastructure is efficiently procured in advance, and costs are kept down through a faster rate of development than in the UK. Sites are sold off to different builders, further adding to diversity, and boosting sales, and sites for affordable homes (30%) are passed to the local authority, and on to a housing association.

13. Upton, Northants, has generated interest because the Homes and Communities Agency has sought to apply the principles set out in its Urban Design Compendium not just to the homes but also to the landscape. Green 'swales' hold water from sudden showers before it is released gradually in a 'sustainable urban drainage system' (SUDS). This reduces pressure on the sewers, and creates a 'living landscape' that makes Upton look distinctive.

14. New Islington, Manchester's designated 'Millennium Village', has sought higher environmental standards. The Sustainability Plan sets targets with options on how they could be achieved, through, for example:

- combined heat and power (CHP);
- higher fabric insulation standards;
- better solar orientation with buildings arranged in fingers around the sun's path;
- borehole sources of water and rainwater draining into the canal;
- waste management through pre-sorted waste collection for recycling, with 'separation facilities' in every dwelling;
- fewer defects through modular construction and prefabrication where appropriate.

15. Graylingwell, Chichester, is one of the UK's first zero energy schemes with some homes built to Level 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. The development as a whole meets Code 4, so it is far in advance of general practice. This has been achieved not only through high levels of insulation in houses that are timber framed, and partly timber clad, but also through the use of a gas-fired CHP system. This supplies all the homes with heat through insulated pipes. All south facing homes have photovoltaic (PV) panels built into their roofs, and these generate electricity, with the surplus being sold to the national grid. The energy generated from the PV panels offsets the carbon emissions from the gas used in the CHP system.

16. Ironstone and Lightmoor, Telford, are managed by the Bourneville Village Trust (BVT). Owner-occupiers sign a deed of covenant which commits them to an annual maintenance charge. The agreement extends a degree of environmental control over the estate, for example in Lightmoor green spaces cannot be paved over for car parking, and hedges are maintained. Three stewardship officers work hard to ensure every new resident understands the benefits and responsibilities of stewardship. Current funding for these posts is a combination of charges and subsidies from both BVT and developers and the service charge will cover costs after an initial five years of subsidy.

17. Vathorst is being developed by a joint venture company. Amersfoort municipality initiated the development by setting up the Vathorst Development Company (OHV) with a consortium of private developers and landowners. Risks and rewards are shared. Like many European countries, the Dutch municipalities have their own bank (Bank Nederlandse Gemeenten (BNG) which funds drawing up plans, assembling complex sites and installing basic infrastructure. A builder was appointed on a fixed price to install the roads and services. The land was pooled and sites allocated to different developers who pay a proportion of expected sales value, ranging from 20-30 per cent.

18. Elm Tree Mews, New Earswick, York, was the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust's first venture into 'sustainable housing'. It was designed to meet the Eco Homes Very Good Standard, with the expectation of achieving Level 4 standard of the Code for Sustainable Homes when construction was finished in 2008. A sophisticated timber panel system for fabric insulation, communal ground source heat pump system, and solar water heating were key elements. The project was monitored prior and post occupation. Although residents were pleased with lower heating bills, actual heat loss was 54 per cent higher than predicted. Occupiers, builders and architects/consultants were all doing something unfamiliar, which did not deliver the expected results.

19. Almere Poort, NL, is a neighbourhood in a fast-growing new town as large as Milton Keynes to the North of Amsterdam, where self-build has taken off on a big scale. 2,000 homes have already been built on a site, which will eventually provide 14,000 homes. The idea of self-commissioned housing enables many more people to afford their own new home. The local authority drew up the masterplan, and put in the basic infrastructure. Individuals, and in some cases groups, agree to buy a plot at a price based on its size. They then appoint an architect, in some cases choosing a design that is already approved, and select contractors, usually small builders.

20 Yours Kings Lynn lies on the edge of Kings Lynn's historic centre, and is East Anglia's Millennium Village. A key element has been promoting a sense of community. For example, the Nar Sure Start Children's Centre in Yours South Lynn provides support for families with children under the age of five living in South and Central Kings Lynn including childcare, child health clinic, job information, access to higher education, or just 'somebody to talk to'. There is also a new school, and the community benefits from its proximity to existing and planned shops and services.

SUNN members

Neighbourhood/Town	Planning Authority	Homes planned	Area (hectares gross)	Completed towards end of 2011	Location Growth or regeneration
Ancoats, Manchester (see also New Islington below)	Manchester City Council	1,800	8	632	R
Derwenthorpe, York	York City Council	540	21	0	G
Dickens Heath Village, Solihull	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	1,672	57	1,615	G
Grand Union Village, Northolt	Ealing and Hillingdon London Borough Councils	962	22	800	R
Graylingwell, Chichester	Chichester District Council	750	36	110	G
Ironstone Lawley, Telford	Telford and Wrekin Borough Council	3,300	107	410	R
Lightmoor, Telford	Telford and Wrekin Borough Council	800	72	192	R
New Islington, Manchester	Manchester City Council	1,400	13	179	R
Newhall, Harlow	Harlow Council		110	500	R
Orchard Park, Cambridge	South Cambridgeshire District Council	1,120	32	739	G
Upton, Northampton	Northampton Borough Council	1,400	37	245	G
Walker Riverside, Newcastle	Newcastle City Council	1,067	35	184	G
Yours South Lynn, Norfolk	Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk	109 (900 South Lynn Millennium Community)	49	109	R

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