SOCIAL
LIFE

Never again

Avoiding the mistakes of the past

A discussion paper to kickstart the Future
Communities consortium

June 2010 (updated March 2012)

From the *projects* in Paris suburbs, to Chicago's Cabrini-Green, to Broadwater Farm and Park Hill in Sheffield, high hopes and dreams have soured as, over time, ambitious new developments have become the housing of last resort for the most desperate. In the UK, some new developments, like Fountainwell Place in Glasgow and the North Peckham estate in Southwark, have been demolished and replaced. Others, including Castle Vale in Birmingham and Holly St in Hackney have been regenerated and turned round through intensive effort and at high cost. In all these examples, professionals from different perspectives genuinely believed that they had found the answer to building at scale, creating housing and communities that would benefit their residents for years to come. We need to learn from these experiences, and make sure that never again is so much money and ambition wasted, so that people who move into new housing developments do not just get a home, but also the prospects of building a future for the long term, supported by a flourishing community.

The Young Foundation's *Future Communities* programme was set up to provide a space to explore and talk about what is known about the creation of thriving communities, and how this could be applied in practice to the creation of new housing settlements. The aim was to work with national bodies and local partners to develop practical initiatives to find new cost-effective and pragmatic tools and models to help the full range of stakeholders work together better to develop new housing developments that become flourishing communities of the future.

From 2009-2001 Future Communities worked in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agencies, Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID, now LGA), Aylesbury Vale District Council, Birmingham City Council, the Peabody Trust and the City of Malmö in Sweden.

This paper was published at the start of the programme in 2009, and updated in 2010 to reflect a rapidly changing UK policy context.

Our starting point

Although there is widespread understanding of the physical and environmental challenges involved in creating new settlements, there is still much to be learnt, from the UK and internationally, about what makes some communities succeed and others fail.

Skills in physical design are well in advance of skills in social design, and in the past we have seen that when pressure is high to deliver high numbers of new homes, concern about wider social issues can become lower priority. There is a fear now that the complexities of meeting housing need, against the backdrop of a developing localism agenda and a new planning framework, could mean that broader issues of social success may be overlooked. This is partly because building resident engagement and cohesive inclusive communities is genuinely challenging, but also because putting what is known into practice is difficult and requires working across professional and agency boundaries.

However if new homes do not become successful communities, the risk for the future grows: of managing the consequences of failure, and associated pressures on the public purse. Social design is an issue of public value as well as consumer satisfaction. It is important to find ways to avoid the mistakes of the past.

There is a need to build a practical understanding of what can be done to encourage the right mix of social engagement, networks, mutual support, public institutions, leadership and shared identities, as well as the other key factors that contribute to success.

Regardless of political imperatives or policy shifts there is, and will continue to be, a need to build more homes in the UK, in response to market demand, and to meet the needs of those who cannot find good enough housing without some form of subsidy. The number of households in England is projected to increase by nearly 4.5 million between 2006 and 2026. This translates to an increase of between 220,000 and 225,000 households each year. There is a backlog of more than half a million households needing social rented housing who are currently homeless, or living in overcrowded or other unsuitable housing. Government targets of 240,000 new homes a year will not be reached until 2016 at the earliest.[1]

The credit crunch and economic downturn have challenged existing social housing finance models and changed the nature of demand. New models of finance and funding are emerging after a relatively stable approach throughout the last decade. Cost pressures are increasing focus on efficiency within procurement and development processes. At the same time, more people are entering housing need as a result of increasing worklessness and scarcity of credit for homeowners.

Against this backdrop, the Young Foundation developed its *Future Communities* programme. This aimed to bring together a partnership of national bodies and local agencies to work together to find ways to build understanding of how to make sure that new housing developments underpin the development of communities that are sustainable in the long term. Our work has demonstrated that there is considerable interest amongst practitioners in finding practical ways to do this. While both policy makers and practitioners recognise that there is substantial thinking and experience to draw on, there is also strong support for trying different ways of working and generating practical solutions.

None of this is new territory. Practical attempts to achieve these aims go back to the 19th century Utopian communities like Robert Owen's New Lanark, through the philanthropic housing developments driven forward by Peabody and Rowntree; the garden cities movement in the early 20th century; the wave of New Towns built after the war and numerous subsequent attempts to build new housing settlements – Byker Wall in Newcastle, Park Hill in Sheffield, Poundbury in Wiltshire, more recently the Millennium Village in Greenwich and New Islington in Manchester, to give a few examples.

The Young Foundation's focus is on the social dynamics of new communities – how to make them work. While a lot is known locally and internationally about what works in social design, that knowledge and experience is not readily available to those who are practically involved in the design and development of new housing. The mainstream view of what constitutes a community is summarised in policy reports of recent decades which stress the idea of 'sustainable communities': with key dimensions including governance, transport, the economy, the environment. While all of these are important, we also looked at alternative views that highlight a different set of building blocks for a successful community, stressing the importance of contact between individuals living in close proximity, and the creation of local identity. Key factors are physical boundaries to promote geographical identity; rules and laws specific to the area (an example could be car-free areas); local myths and stories; visible leadership; strong social relationships, networks and bonds; rituals and rhythms; and shared belief systems (this could encompass the experience of past garden cities, and new proposed Eco Towns).

Where lessons are known, experience shows that the difficulty lies in translating these into practice. However, our work (particularly developing the website futurecommunties.net, with the Homes and Communities Agency, LGID (now LGA) and Development and the Chartered Institute of

Housing) demonstrated that practitioners, from a variety of different perspectives (planners, architects, housing managers, community development specialists) often articulate an intuitive description of what makes communities work. Success is described as moving communities from being 'stuck', characterised by unemployment, little mobility away from the area, and low expectations; to a more 'dynamic' state, where aspirations are more likely to be met.

Our work has been structured around 10 key principles which give us our starting point to shape the programme, drawing together what is known through research and practical experience.

There is a need to...

1. understand how people live and what makes them feel they belong
2. value the benefits of engaging and enabling communities
3. make sure there are the right facilities, structures and support
4. nurture social networks
5. create communities that work for everyone
6. allow space to grow
7. encourage 'green' behaviour
8. find new and radical business models
9. be brave about design
10. learn from the past, from what has and hasn't worked

Our principles

1. Understand lived experience

New developments are imagined and described as physical designs through masterplans or various documents relating to infrastructure and physical structures. They are also marketed, both to potential buyers through glossy images, or presented to future funders as offering commercial and social value. A key aspect, the lived experience of future residents, is more difficult to capture. Yet this is a fundamental first step in understanding how the people who are going to live in new developments will experience life in their new homes, and through this develop an understanding of how to turn a group of new residents into a community that is both sustainable and active.

This requires an understanding of individual aspirations – why people move to new housing developments, what trade-offs they make between their 'dream home' and their daily reality; capturing the tensions between what people want, and what they need; how people progress through different stages of life and their different needs; how people from very different backgrounds who have very different personal and family histories co-exist and develop friendships and feel that they belong in a new neighbourhood. Though it is impossible to second guess the aspirations of each individual and family considering a move to a new housing development, we can learn from past experience.

Writers disagree about the optimal state for people to live in to encourage good behaviour. In 1903 sociologist George Simmel wrote of the "mental attitude of metropolitans toward one another [that] we may designate, from a formal point of view, as reserve.[2] As a result of this reserve we frequently do not even know by sight those who have been our neighbours for years. And it is this reserve which in the eyes of the small-town people makes us appear to be cold and heartless."

Richard Sennett in 1970 argued the opposite view, stating that only in "dense, disorderly, overwhelming cities", with their rich mix of different classes, ethnicities and cultures, do we learn the true complexity of life and human relations: "the jungle of the city, its vastness and loneliness, has a positive human value." Sennett castigates the middle classes for retreating to the "secure cocoons" of the suburbs: "Suburbanites are people who are afraid to live in a world they cannot control."[3]

Much is written about how people are believed to experience different conditions – from living in cities, or suburbia, to living in tower blocks or mono-class areas – but practitioners often rely on assumptions about how people will live and what they want. It is as important to observe how people behave as well as to listen to their views, and to assess the evidence about what makes people happy as well as what they say they aspire to.

The literature surrounding happiness and wellbeing demonstrates that people's satisfaction with their lives is not necessarily affected by the factors popularly thought to be influential, such as income, car ownership, or having a big house. Informal activities, including physical activity, volunteering and participation in civil society organisations, have an important influence on individuals' levels of satisfaction with their lives, and there is a strong correlation between knowing one's neighbours and higher wellbeing.[4]

In 2007, East Thames Group's Sustainable Neighbourhoods team piloted a new approach for working with existing communities based on assessing tenants' wellbeing. The organisation found this helped it to identify the tenants' priorities and provided a baseline from which to assess improvements. These wellbeing surveys canvassed the opinions of between around 30 and 90 per cent of the tenants living on each of the six pilot estates. Many of the surveys were undertaken by 'community champions': East Thames tenants who were specifically trained for the role. Using local people seemed to be particularly successful, perhaps because tenants felt more comfortable discussing their neighbourhood with other tenants rather than members of staff from their housing association.

Daniel Gilbert, an American sociologist, argues that although people invest time and money in planning for their future, we tend to be poor at predicting what actually will make us happy.[5] This tension, between what we think will make us happy and what will actually make us happy, plays out clearly in our choices about our home. The things people aspire to in terms of quality of design, type of neighbourhood and who they want to live next door to are not necessarily going to generate increased quality of life. A recent CABE report found that although the vast majority (nine out of ten) of new homeowners on new housing developments like their own homes, a significant proportion are unhappy with the wider community and neighbourhood. 45 per cent felt that neighbours "go their own way", rather than doing things together.[6]

The *Future Communities* programme has built on the Young Foundation's long history of carrying out detailed research into how people live their lives. We have carried out ethnographic work in new developments to help understand residents' aspirations and housing histories to help local agencies tailor their approaches to build community capacity.

The programme has also drawn on our work on belonging. We have developed a framework of understanding how people feel they 'belong' to different key aspects of their lives, including the local environment, political leadership and local social networks. We also have drawn on the knowledge from the Young Foundation's *Local Wellbeing Project* which has helped us to understand the practical ways that local agencies can improve quality of life.

2. Value the benefits of engaging communities

There is an enormous amount of material and guidance on how to engage, consult, empower and involve residents at all stage of the development

process – from design to long-term management. There is good experience across all sectors of finding imaginative ways to involve and engage residents, although activities tend to be front-loaded at the development stage, when it is easiest for agencies to fund and manage community development resources.

The benefits of involving residents in new communities flow from a number of different motivations: making sure that the design of new communities is supported by existing residents of the wider area; ensuring that new developments enhance rather than undermine, existing communities; building a foundation for communities to thrive long into the future; and ensuring that the diverse experiences of different groups of new residents are met in their new homes.

However, when money is tight, resources spent on engaging communities will be under threat as pressures to meet new homes targets put relentless cost pressure on every aspect of house building. This affects both the private and public sectors. The arguments in favour of continuing to invest in this activity tend to be based on broad beliefs and assumptions about how communities and individuals function, rather than hard evidence. Data about the problems caused by the lack of community building is however easier to find.

The phenomenon of the 'new town blues' – a loose grouping of mental health vulnerabilities experienced by New Town residents – suggesting a strong link between mental ill health and lack of social ties in a new environment, has been more recently evidenced in the experience of people living in Cambourne in Cambridgeshire. In Cambourne, the high levels of mental health problems among residents caused so much concern among GPs and other local professions that the PCT investigated. The Cambridgeshire PCT report recommends that decision-makers and developers must ensure that resources (including community facilities) are made available to promote social cohesion at the same time as building the physical environment. The report also argues for the involvement of existing communities in the planning of both new, and later phases of, housing settlements.[7]

There is some evidence about the social return on investment in community engagement, in both existing and new communities, but this is scattered and does not build the convincing picture that developers and the Treasury are likely to need in coming years. We have identified a need for in-depth research and analysis here, to build the evidence base to support investment in social sustainability alongside bricks and mortar.

3. Build the right social infrastructure for the long term

'Social infrastructure' includes the range of activities, organisations and facilities that can support the development and sustaining of social relationships in a community. Traditionally, social infrastructure is seen as including community centres, community developments, various activities (play groups, support groups), and residents' organisations.

Voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands growth area estimated that the cost of social infrastructure needed in new developments is about £700 per resident.[8]

All local publicly-used institutions have the potential to contribute to social infrastructure. Schools and GP surgeries can be important places for galvanising local volunteering for the wider neighbourhood and can offer space and facilities to support a range of activities. Creating the potential for 'dual use' and flexibility wherever possible is vital. But some privately-owned institutions, including cafes and corner shops can also become community hubs. The lessons of the revitalisation of rural post offices in Essex, in partnership with the County Council, can be more broadly applied.

Sustainability of social infrastructure is key. How to generate long-term resident champions, how to create parish and community councils that become vibrant parts of local democracy, how to build mutual aid and reduce dependency on state funding? This includes exploring from the outset how community-owned or managed assets can potentially generate income streams, and become the base for local social enterprises. It also means nurturing local leadership – setting up local bodies that give real power to residents (parish or community councils, local partnership boards) and supporting residents to take part, to stand for election, and to participate in local meetings and decision making.

However, many communities that have been most successful in the long term have been created without official support or sanction and become thorns in the side of local institutions, from squatting communities to the Plotlands residents, to the successful Coin St community campaign on London's South Bank. There is a balance between the creation of social infrastructure that nurtures yet controls communities – setting limits on problematic behaviour for example – and the need to let natural dynamism flourish.

The *Future Communities* programme has worked with local areas to understand how social infrastructure can be built that will have value in the long term, making best use of the assets of new developments and existing communities.

In Birmingham we looked at how the [Community Land Trusts model](#) can be made relevant to the needs of deprived urban communities.

We have use the findings of the Young Foundation's programmes on new web-based ways of helping people to connect with each other and local agencies – such as developing *[fixmystreet.com](#)* with MySociety.

4. Nurture social networks

There is a clear correlation between strong social networks and wellbeing – those who know more people in their local neighbourhood overall tend to be happier than those who do not. There is also a relationship between strong social networks and belonging; community cohesion; 'collective efficacy' (residents' willingness to intervene if they see problem behaviour taking place, for example getting involved if they saw someone hitting a child in the street). There is also a link to lower crime and anti-social behaviour, and lower perceptions of crime and disorder (as important in practice as actual rates of offending).[9]

Interactions with other people can be negative experiences, and many people have a neighbour they dread bumping into. Economist Fred Hirsch coined the term 'the economics of bad neighbouring' [10] to describe the underlying logic in relation to neighbourhoods. There will always be a risk of an annoying or unpleasant interaction with a neighbour or someone else in a public space. The more people in a space the more likely that a negative interaction will take place. So people withdraw behind the front door. This can lead to a vicious spiral where the only people left in the public space are the ones that no one else likes.

But experiments to force people to interact with their neighbours have not been a success. Choice is key. A massive study of the 1970's British 'good neighbours' schemes ended with a simple conclusion that 'good fences make good neighbours'. [11]

The notorious Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis in the USA, despite

winning various architectural awards when built in the mid-1950s, became plagued with crime and high vacancy rates. Researchers found that the design of the massive development of 43 11-story blocks appeared to foster problems, noting that "Pruitt-Igoe provides no semi-private space and facilities around which neighbouring relationships might develop".

In a perfect natural experiment, a mesh fence was put up around one of the Pruitt-Igoe blocks while contractors were working on it. During the six months of construction vandalism and crime fell, and residents began to sweep their hallways and pick up litter. Because of the changed character of the building, residents petitioned to have the fence left after construction work was completed, and this was agreed. Two years later, the crime rate for the building was 80 per cent below the Pruitt-Igoe norm, and the vacancy rate was between two and five per cent compared with the project norm of 70 per cent.[12]

Oxford University Professor of Psychology, and Young Foundation Fellow Miles Hewstone, has explored what happens to relationships between different groups in conflict areas. His research – in Northern Ireland, areas of Hindu-Muslim conflict in India and in former Yugoslavia – has established that when people have more contact with people from other backgrounds, understanding increases and hostility reduces. This challenges the more popularly accepted (within the UK) 'threat' theory which proposes that more diversity leads to more misunderstanding and competition, and increased prejudice. Hewstone's work suggests the opposite, that so long as there is contact (which isn't always the case) diverse populations can develop understanding and less discomfort between different groups.[13]

Social networks are created when neighbours get to know each other, through sharing a common interest or experience (being a parent, sending children to the same school, gardening, cycling, washing the car in the street). It is relatively inexpensive for local agencies to promote activities – local festivals, clean up days, street parties – that build social networks. In Denmark, new mothers are routinely offered a list of the email addresses of other new mothers living in the same area. It is up to them whether they follow this up, however the offer is there to help build new networks of support. The technologies already exist to map and understand local networks. The Young Foundation has experimented with a Social Network Analysis tool to analyse relationships in a deprived area in Kings Lynn.

5. Be inclusive

New developments will inevitably house a range of people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, social class, ages, life experiences. The rhetoric of mixed communities is still undermined by the number of new housing developments that continue to be built where subsidised social housing and unsubsidised housing can be easily differentiated. Although these divisions are blurring with the increased popularity of intermediate renting models (with lower subsidy than traditional social housing), which may dilute the division between those who move into an area because it is their only option (less true, but still applicable, to those who move through choice-based allocations schemes) and those who buy.

Evidence is mixed about whether people support the notion of living in mixed communities. A 2006 IPPR report claimed that owner-occupiers expressed negative views of social housing, and conversely those living in social housing were concerned that others might 'look down' on them. However these views were not shared by people already living in mixed-tenure developments.[14] A more recent JRF study found slightly different results, and that in the eight schemes studied, both owner-occupiers and low-cost home owners felt that their neighbourhood was less desirable because of the presence of social housing tenants. Social housing tenants and subsidised home owners felt stigmatised when their homes were physically separate from mainstream owner-occupied homes. This research also found an uneasy fit in some areas between new developments and surrounding neighbourhoods.[15]

Most people want to live in a community of people who share and reflect their own values. If people feel that they are living in a community they wouldn't choose for themselves and their children (had they been given a choice) there might be a danger they opt out of the social interactions crucial to a thriving community. However the reasons why mixed tenure neighbourhoods have become popular – to increase community cohesion, to stop the creation of future concentrations of deprivation and to underpin social mobility and opportunity – will remain as policy aspirations for the foreseeable future.

New communities need to be inclusive enough to meet the needs of changing populations. New residents tend to include a disproportionate number of families with young children, who 10 years down the line will be teenagers with very different needs and demands. Everyone ages, and most housing is still not built to meet needs over a lifetime. The needs of an ageing society are not just about the interiors of homes. They are also about

public spaces, which should feel safe and enable everyone to enjoy a sunny day in relative peace; about facilities which are likely to work best if they cater for different groups at different times of the day. Older people may want a day centre during daylight hours, while teenagers are in school. Younger children can use the same building after school, teenagers in the evenings.

However, some of the biggest challenges are about encouraging social networks to be built between people from very different ethnic, cultural, religious and social class backgrounds. Developers, and housing managers, still struggle with the perceived problem of reconciling the needs of vulnerable people who may be housed in social housing because the council owes them a statutory duty, and other residents who are more self-sufficient. Tensions can occur about behaviour, and different views of what are acceptable lifestyle choices (for example to keep the front of your house and garden tidy and well maintained, or use the area for ramshackle storage).

Haringey's Area Assemblies (local consultative forums) piloted sessions where different communities give presentations about their experience of living in Haringey, their history and the circumstances of their arrival in North London. The key motivation was to find a way of attracting the communities that do not usually engage with Council activities or consultation processes.

Assemblies are structured so that there is a tea break at the halfway point, to encourage people to talk to each other. Food became a feature of the new initiative, being aware that many people have strong traditions of hospitality on the one hand, and that food is often a barrier between different races on the other. The new agenda slot was called "meet the neighbours".

Established community organisations are invited to come along and to make a short presentation about their origins, the motivating factors that brought them to Tottenham, the things that concern them and their aspirations for their families. The neighbourhood manager pays for organisations presenting to bring along a selection of snacks from their own culinary traditions. This is presented as the community organisation bringing along some food for their neighbours to share.

The Young Foundation piloted the [Neighbourhood Taskforce](#) model in two areas of inner London. This aims to help tackle entrenched neighbourhood-level conflict. The approach – intensive and flexible rapid consultation followed by tightly facilitated action planning – has proved a good model of enabling different views to come together and find consensus. One pilot in Limehouse explored tensions between new more affluent residents, and the long-standing communities of largely social housing tenants. This approach could be applied to tensions between different groups of new residents, or between new residents and long-standing residents of nearby areas.

6. Allow space to grow

The types of housing that appear to hold their value and popularity over generations are those that can flex and change to adapt to different lifestyles. Victorian terraces and 1930's semis are both designs that can be adapted for different uses. Some Victorian terraces in Notting Hill in London were not used for the purpose they were originally intended – as family housing – until the 1970s. The property market in the second half of the 19th century could not support selling these as complete homes so they were sub-divided instead. This continued until the area gentrified in the 1970s and people on high incomes saw the value of these building as intact homes.

The message of this is that it is difficult, at any given time, to foresee how different areas will need to change because of the economy, or changing lifestyles, or expectations of home. But that adaptive resilience is key to future success.

Writer and activist Jane Jacobs, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, set out a strong critique of the urban renewal policies of the 1950s. Jacobs argued that these destroyed communities and created isolated, unnatural urban spaces. Jacobs advocated the abolition of zoning laws and restoration of free markets in land, which would result in dense, mixed-use neighborhoods and frequently cited New York City's Greenwich Village as an example of a vibrant urban community.[16]

In the late 1960s in London *Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom* was published as a special issue of New Society. It was a collaboration between the urban geographer Peter Hall, the design and architecture historian Reyner Banham, the architect Cedric Price, and Paul Barker, the magazine's Editor. Like Jane Jacobs' work, it attacked attempts to impose rigid planning from above.[17]

American sociologist Saskia Sassen has argued in favour of keeping *terrains vagues* – under used spaces – and that we need to value them as respite from the massive architecture and dense infrastructure of many cities.[18]

This stream of thinking can be experienced as a direct attack by planners and developers, used to constructing masterplans and extensive infrastructure strategies. However others argue that in this country, masterplans are amended and changed as soon as they are agreed, and that we need to find a way of planning in a more organic way that reconciles a bureaucratic need for order with allowing space to grow.

The Northern European tradition of masterplanning, allowing different services and disciplines to come together to co-design new areas, may offer lessons. This is complementary to local authorities' place-shaping role, and the local government sector's ambitions to take a wider strategic role. Many within the planning profession are interested in moving planning into this more positive space.

7. Encourage 'green' behaviour

Meeting climate change targets will be critical for all new developments, not just for those labelled 'eco towns'. There is a technical fix to this: building zero carbon buildings, creating good public transport links and designing in layouts that encourage walking and cycling rather than car use. However this will need to be bolstered by encouragements for people to adopt behaviours – recycling, buying local food, turning down the central heating, cutting down on car use – that will reduce their carbon footprints.

Encouraging community participation and pro-environmental behaviour can flounder on the gap between people's aspirations and what they will actually do in practice. The 2005 Home Office Citizenship Survey found that whilst nearly two thirds of us say are willing to invest time necessary to influence change at the local level, only 38 per cent were actually involved in 'civic participation' in the previous year.[19] There is a similar gap between our professed ambitions to be green, and what we actually find the time and resources to do in practice. These tensions may play out starkly in new settlements that explicitly aim to be environmentally sustainable (such as Eco Towns) and any that expect community participation. Whilst many will be attracted to these values, others may move for more pragmatic reasons, for example because they are in housing need and keen to take up an attractive social housing offer, or are first-time buyers. They may be

grateful for a home, but not necessarily willing in practice to change their lifestyle.

In January 2009, villagers in Great Glen were asked whether they supported the plans for a 15,000 homes eco town site in Pennbury, 99% voted to reject the plan.[20] ADD WEson green

There is a need to make sure that being green is seen as something for everyone – Eco Towns are not just for a green-minded elite to live off-grid. The Young Foundation's *Local Wellbeing Project* explored the overlap between pro-environmental activities and what makes people feel better in their lives, to challenge popular presumptions that tend to equate being green with denial. We found that community-based greening activities, like planning local parks, community gardens, allotments, both helped to reduce CO_2, build social networks and involve people who may not be in sympathy with the green movement, slowly building their consciousness about wider issues. Mental health can also be improved by gardening, digging, being outside, exercising, again activities that increase happiness and social relationships.[21]

Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm – planned to house over 30,000 people by 2015 – is a good example of the Swedish 'green welfare state' approach to Eco Towns and shows how it can promote sustainable development, new jobs, growth and welfare into the future. As well as being ecologically innovative, it is also socially ambitious, in line with the Swedish government mandate that all citizens should be provided with a decent, safe, affordable home that will be sustainable in the long term.

There are parallels to crime prevention – it is possible to design out crime by putting in more and more measures to survey communities, to make things indestructible; or find ways to encourage ownership of public spaces so that communities wish to use, enjoy and protect assets and feel safe. Similarly, communities can put sanctions in place to encourage recycling and reduce car use, or can find ways of bringing residents along with this broader agenda.

8. Find new and radical business models

The dominant business model for new housing development in the UK puts significant powers in the hands of private developers. The recession, and shortfalls in private investment have had the effect of increasing the public

purse's contribution to many developments (including unblocking some gaps in finance), and has also galvanised the search for new ways of financing development that change the balance of power between different partners, and spread short-term costs over a longer period.

There is a dislocation between the budgets that are required to invest upfront in community development, and environmental sustainability, and where the benefits of this spending fall. For community development, some of the benefit (if the intervention is successful) will be felt by housing management, some by criminal justice agencies or broader social welfare agencies. For environmental sustainability measures, much of the financial benefit will be to householders through lower bills.

'Pay as you Save' programmes, operating in the US and being piloted in the UK and Ireland, are a mechanism that enable homeowners to install energy-saving technologies at no upfront cost. In the UK this is being piloted in Birmingham, Sunderland, Stroud and Sutton. Pilots will give households the opportunity to invest in energy efficiency and micro-generation technologies in their homes with no upfront cost. Repayments will be spread over a long enough period so that they are lower than their predicted energy bill savings, meaning that financial and carbon savings are made from day one.

The Young Foundation has developed a model of Social Impact Bonds which enable services to contract with central or local government to deliver prevention services – to prevent youth crime or hospital admissions for example – on condition of delivering outcomes, whilst ultimately sharing in the long-term savings to the state.

9. Be brave about design

There is a stark visual contrast between the new housing developments that win awards for cutting edge new design, and the majority of new build houses that conform to very conventional designs.

In the past radical design has been experimented with to varying levels of success. The housing that needed the highest levels of maintenance in Milton Keynes was, to the delight of traditionalists, the most radical in its design. Later developments in Milton Keynes, delivered by the private sector, tended towards more conventional styles.

However modern design can prove popular, but sometimes after consideration, not on immediate viewing. When existing residents in

Beswick, part of New East Manchester, were offered a new house in either of two developments, one more modern in design and one more traditional, the majority initially opted for a traditional house, but changed their preference when they actually saw the houses being built. A recent JRF study of eight new high density affordable housing schemes found that modern architecture could produce a sense of 'space' within high density developments, and in fact most respondents did not feel that they were living at unusually high density.[22] However, it has been reported that in some areas, cutting edge design has become equated with social housing and that the aspirational housing type is the more traditional executive home.

Architect Irena Bauman has argued that "instead of pursuing vanity projects, architects need to learn to ask the right questions before settling upon the solutions. If we are to have an active role in creating briefs and overseeing procurement processes, we require new skills such as an understanding of governance and policy, a grasp of economics and community dynamics, and an ability to recognise and design drivers of change. We need to learn the language of business planning, engage in political life and nurture our listening skills...". [23]

CABE argues that "good design can deliver in-built flexibility to meet the demands of changing patterns of use, both in public service delivery (through schools and hospitals, for example) and in social formation (of housing, streets and the public realm). Buildings come to fruition over 15-20 years and exist for 50-100 years – good design can help to ensure that they remain relevant and functional, even at a time of rapid developments in society and public service provision. CABE would also argue that ignoring physical capital as a wider asset leads to additional costs. It is a massive missed opportunity. Ignoring the opportunity of physical capital dissipates public investment and fails to capture its full potential value. It inhibits the effectiveness of other policy responses, for example where poorly designed hospitals undermine health outcomes, or badly maintained public space exacerbating crime and the fear of crime; and it risks creating new problems such as the danger of building tomorrow's slums".[24]

Good architecture can enrich and enhance our lives. Architects have thought and written extensively about the ways in which people experience design. Norwegian architect Christian Norbert-Schulz has written about the 'genius locai' – the character of place and its meanings for people, the protective spirit of place, the distinctive atmosphere.[25] German architectural psychologist Riklef Rambow believes that "architect's practical work considerably influences the environment in which human

experience and behaviour develop". His work on architectural communication centres on the perception and use of architecture and public space and strategies for the communication of architecture to a wider public. Rambow has written about 'light' – how different people can perceive a building as uplifting and beautiful, whilst others see something stark and threatening.[26]

10. Learn from the past

Although practitioners and policy makers repeatedly discuss the need to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, it can be difficult in such a complex field, with so many competing interests and pressing imperatives from the market and government policy, to find time to reflect.

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