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Delivering Large Scale Housing:

Unlocking Schemes and Sites to Help Meet the UK's Housing Needs

September 2013



Policy Paper

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With 23,000 members worldwide working in the public, private, charitable and education sectors, the RTPI is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe. As well as promoting spatial planning, RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built and natural environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development. Everything we do is inspired by our mission to advance the science and art of planning (including town and country and spatial planning) for the benefit of the public.

Our policy and research work reflects this mission. In addition to this policy paper on large scale housing, we are developing papers on strategic planning, economic growth, transport infrastructure, and local budgets. Through our Small Projects Impact Research (SPIRe) fund, we have commissioned work

on housing need, regional growth, Local Economic Partnerships, and the impact of planning. In addition, our Policy Futures projects, to be published during the RTPI's Centenary Year in 2014, will take a long term as well as global view of planning and its role in responding to some of the major challenges we face in the 21st Century.

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Executive Summary

Housing in the UK is the focus of a lot of discussion at present. This report addresses the housing issue from a somewhat neglected perspective, that of planning professionals – the profession tasked with making development work.

There are many strategies needed to facilitate house building but locally-inspired large scale housing schemes – schemes and sites with thousands of units on – could play a significant role in the delivery of the large number of houses the UK needs. The experience of the last 20 years suggests that the level of demand for new homes over the next decade will not be met by piecemeal incremental developments.

Large schemes are often thought as being synonymous with Garden Cities, Eco-Towns or part of the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative. While standalone towns can play a part, we also need to consider large urban extensions and ensure that the discussion is as practical as possible in order to move things forward.

Commentators agree that we need more houses but the debate on how to get homes built is stalled. In England in particular, the debate seems increasingly polarised between two entrenched positions. One side believes that the planning system is too liberal, so developers will have a presumption to gain permission and build without respect to existing communities, design and infrastructure requirements. The other believes that the planning system is too bureaucratic and that red tape is blocking development. Despite their differences, both positions appear to make the same assumption that local communities do not want development, and both unfairly target the planning system. Neither of these positions is likely to promote the sustainable, consensual and, most of all, the well-planned housing we need.

At times this polarisation has created an artificial tension by pitching planners against developers, implying that the situation is impossible. Instead, the answer lies in utilising planners' abilities to bring together a large range of interests and factors. From this perspective, solving the housing crisis is about much more than simply house building; it is about creating successful places and communities in which people want to live.

The focus of this paper and its recommendations are different from many other reports. Firstly, it draws on lessons and examples from both England and Scotland based upon our understanding of the overall volume of housing need and the greater frequency of large schemes in these two nations. Most reports inevitably focus on the situation in England but this paper has the benefit of learning from a different nation with a different government and planning system, adding an important richness to the debate.

Secondly, the 15 recommendations contained in the report are practical ones, aimed at local authorities, planners in both the public and private sectors and national governments, to show that this is not an impossible situation. The recommendations focus on five key topics – community engagement, land, infrastructure, finance, and leadership and governance – as these touch on the most frequently cited issues for large development schemes. Importantly, the recommendations are rooted in a set of necessary components, namely the role of political leadership, collaboration, partnership building, place shaping and planning. These recommendations also incorporate the unique perspective of planners and how they can help to solve the housing crisis.

This report is part of a larger consideration of how we can house the UK Nations. Large scale housing sites and schemes are only one part of the solution. Other solutions include the role of small schemes and the critical importance of existing housing stock. This report is the first in our series of policy papers covering the critical issues we face today; other reports will also impact on the housing debate.

In the report, we identify the following barriers to delivering large scale housing:

- The loud voice of objectors
- Engaging with the silent majority
- Lack of engagement on the part of local residents
- Land ownership
- Public sector land release
- Lack of effectiveness of infrastructure funding mechanisms in the current economic climate



- Financial risk
- Lack of strategic planning at the correct spatial level
- Insufficiently bold leadership.

To overcome these barriers, we make the following recommendations:

Community engagement

Recommendation 1: Local and national politicians and campaigning groups as well as planners need to make the case for large scale housing schemes by emphasising the consequences for current and future generations of failing to build enough houses, and the opportunities represented by large scale schemes to delivery quality healthy communities

Recommendation 2: Local councils, practitioners and developers need to do more to ensure that community engagement reaches a wider cross section of the community, including potential future residents

Recommendation 3: Local authorities and developers should ensure that the pre-application engagement process and local plan consultation are of a high standard, which means that they should be comprehensive, straightforward, accessible and represent good value for money

Land

Recommendation 4: There needs to be public access to information on who owns land and who owns options on land

Recommendation 5: Local authorities should take a larger role in land assembly, for example by the use of existing powers of compulsory purchase

Recommendation 6: Share risks around potential future land uplift in land values more evenly between local authority, developer and landowner so as to bring sites to market now

Recommendation 7: Government departments and agencies should be required to dispose of their surplus land holdings in a way which takes account of the wider community value rather than maximising the capital receipt, and to do so with alacrity

Recommendation 8: In view of the longer lead-in times involved, central government should incentivise large

scale housing schemes, for example through financial mechanisms or national planning policy

Infrastructure

Recommendation 9: Link together infrastructure expenditure, policies and planning with policies and planning for housing in order to unlock potential sites, for example through budgetary processes or guarantees against future income streams

Recommendation 10: Local authorities should be empowered and encouraged to use existing or innovative funding solutions and utilise central government support through existing funding streams or policies. This could involve local infrastructure funding or forms of devolved pooled resources

Finance

Recommendation 11: Local authorities, infrastructure providers and government agencies should develop means to pool departmental and European resources in order to deliver the infrastructure which supports housing schemes

Recommendation 12: Where funding isn't available, central government should consider underwriting a certain proportion of the site investment

Leadership and governance

Recommendation 13: Where required, local authorities and agencies should be given much greater incentives to work collaboratively across borders to strategically plan for housing and infrastructure sites

Recommendation 14: Leaders, Chief Executives and Chief Planning Officers of local authorities need to use planners' skills more broadly in the design and delivery of corporate and LEP plans for growth

Recommendation 15: Governments need to explore how, where they are of national significance, proposed major housing developments should be acknowledged nationally and what special delivery processes may assist their delivery.



The problem with housing in the UK

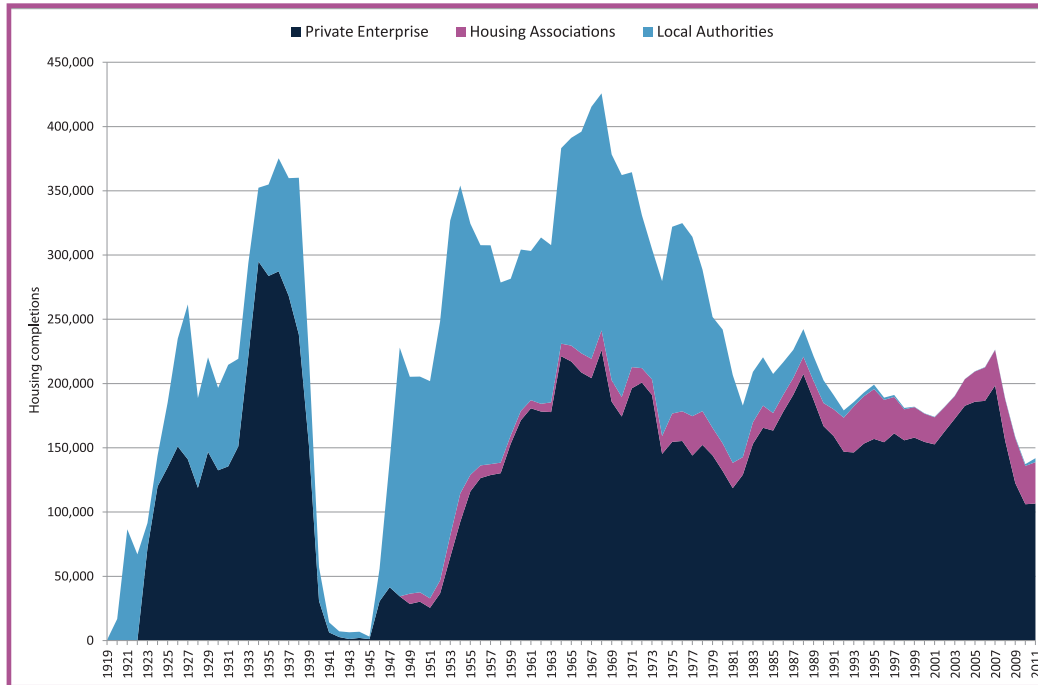


Figure 1 – UK housing completions from 1919 to 2011

Source: British Historical Statistics - Cambridge:1988 (years 1919-1948), Live Table 241 – DCLG (years 1949-2011)³

Rising house prices and a growing population and household formation has brought housing to the forefront of thinking for analysts, researchers and journalists. This section provides an assessment of the housing situation in the UK, and argues that the way forward is not through entrenched positions.

High prices and undersupply is not just a recent problem

At the forefront of analysis is the gap between the number of new dwellings required for the projected increase in households in the UK (current figures suggest we will have 265,000 new households each year¹) and the number of housing completions each year. Furthermore, the figure of 265,000 is the number of new homes that are required to keep pace with projections but, as RIBA highlight, to clear the backlog of two million houses as a result of decades of underinvestment, this figure may need to increase to between 300,000 and 330,000.² As can be seen in Figure 1, the figure of 265,000 new houses was more

readily achieved in the 1930s and in the post-war years and into the 1970s.

Whilst the 1920s and 1930s saw high rates of both public and private sector housing completions through more relaxed planning restrictions, inexpensive skilled labour and the availability of cheap credit, these came at a high price. Ribbon development straggled along road sides, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and ‘sterilising’ the land behind. Furthermore, development densities were low and homes increasingly became distanced from jobs and amenities.

In the post-WWII era, public investment was high⁴ which stimulated the sector but also laid the foundations for the private sector. Once credit and building materials rationing were relaxed, the private sector was able to take advantage of the public investment in infrastructure and entered the market. Combined with a culture shift towards home

¹ Aggregation of data from all nations: Household Interim Projections – April 2013, Statistical report on household projections in Northern Ireland, Household projections for Wales, Household projections for Scotland.

² RIBA The Future Homes Commission – Building the homes and communities Britain needs (London: 2012).

³ Data in pre-war period was calculated differently than today and so needs to be viewed with caution. Data on private house building in England and Wales between 1919/20 to 1922/23 is unavailable, as is in Scotland between 1919/20 and 1923/24 and Northern Ireland between 1919/20 to 1943/44. The data up to 1944/45 also doesn't include private houses of rateable value exceeding £78, houses built for government departments, war-destroyed houses or temporary houses.

⁴ Net public sector investment reached its peak of 7.3% of GDP in 1967 – House of Commons Library – Infrastructure Policy SN/EP/6594 (2013).



ownership as a way to secure pensions and savings, this meant that housing completions were high.

The key lesson from this period is that planners are not the problem – the public sector played a more strategically active role in the design, planning and delivery of new communities both within cities through comprehensive development areas and beyond green belts. Showing the necessary leadership and partnership formation required, the New Town Development Corporations, and to a lesser extent the Urban Development Corporations, were given greater freedoms, powers and resources in order to assemble and develop land best suited and required for more housing. For example, the New Town Development Corporations could acquire land at existing use value meaning they were able to finance their own infrastructure.

Public sector house building has decreased drastically as demonstrated in Figure 1. In addition, the private sector is not building the necessary number of houses required to keep pace with current household formation rates. Since 1980, while publically owned housing has decreased as a result of successive governments not allowing local authorities to replace

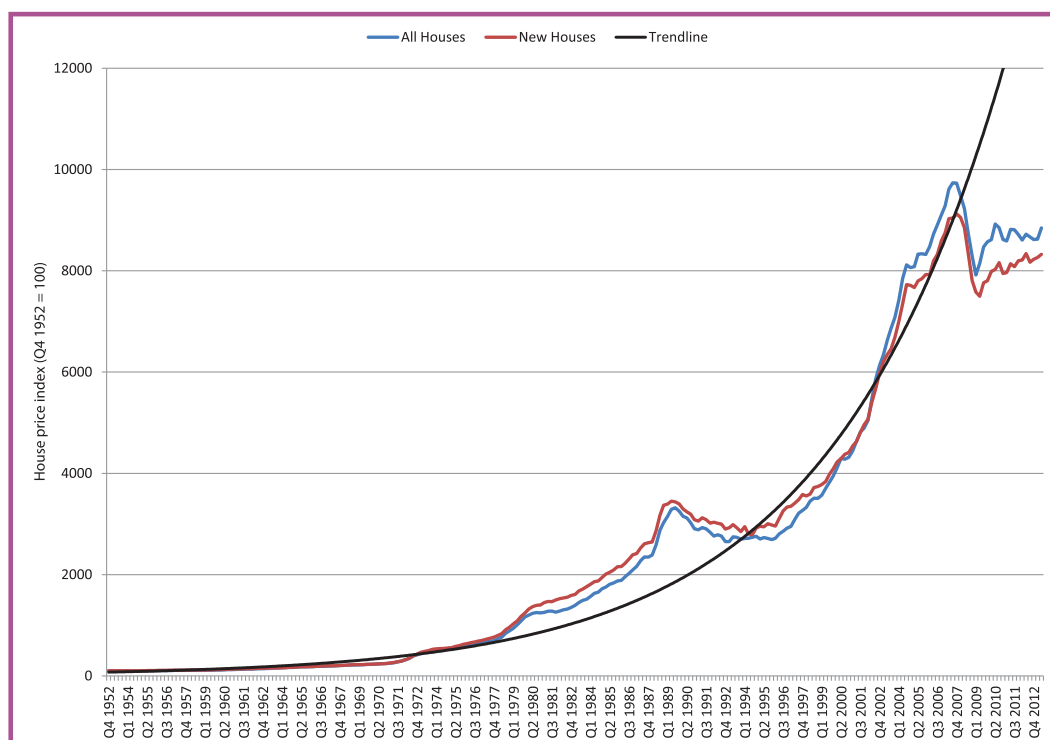
the stock bought by council tenants at a discount, the private sector (and to a lesser extent housing associations) have become the key agents of delivery. Importantly, given the emphasis on these sectors as the agents of delivery, the last time these non-public sector actors achieved the level of 265,000 housing completions was in 1937.⁵

As the supply of new housing has not kept pace with the increase in demand, and the credit restrictions post-1945 were relaxed (and further relaxed in the 1980s), house prices have increased at a fast rate.

As Figure 2 shows, price increases rose sharply from the 1980s.

Many of the current proposals are not sufficiently comprehensive

As housing has been pushed up governments' agenda, the topic has become popular with think tanks and research organisations. Moreover, the topic has been picked up more by mainstream journalism whereas before the financial crash, rising house prices weren't viewed with the concern they are today.



Source: Nationwide house price index from 1952⁶

⁵ DCLG Table 241 - House building: permanent dwellings completed, by tenure (1949-2011).

⁶ Data from Nationwide [http://www.nationwide.co.uk/hpi/datadownload/data_download.htm].



Most commentators argue that the gap between the number of housing completions and the projected rate of growth of the number of households is unsustainably large. This has led to organisations from a diverse range of backgrounds arguing for more houses to be built.

Organisations such as Shelter, Crisis and the Resolution Foundation have called for more housing as dwelling standards and conditions have deteriorated with some occupants finding market rental rates and private debt too large.⁷ The National Housing Federation has called for more housing in England and has set up a campaign, Yes to Homes, to encourage local and national politicians to recognise communities that sign up wanting more houses. There is also a campaign called Homes for Britain⁸ which has built a broad consortium of partner bodies – Home Builders Federation (England and Wales), Residential Landlords Association (England and Wales), National Housing Federation (England), RIBA (England), Crisis (UK) and the Chartered Institute of Housing (UK), to name a few – further highlighting the broad consensus. Think tanks across the political spectrum have also called for more houses to be built⁹, while in Scotland the house builders' representative organisation, Homes for Scotland, has made a call for “bold, long-term action beyond budgeting rounds at both national and local authority level to help reverse the current downward trend”.¹⁰

While there is a consensus on the need for more housing across all sectors, there is a lack of agreement on both the problem and the solutions. As a result, there are a large number of recommendations to boost house building.

There have been suggestions of new financial methods for housing investment. These range from creating a national investment bank, to use local authority pension funds to invest and to channel housing benefit into housing investment.¹¹ Other

recommendations include prioritising current government funds allocated for housing (such as the UK Government's Get Britain Building and New Homes Bonus) to go to the most unaffordable areas.¹²

There have also been recommendations to reform the house building industry. These include allowing failed developers to become bankrupt and subsequently providing a public clearing house for their land banks and to ensure greater competition is present in the market.¹³

Land has also featured as a key issue for development with wide ranging propositions. For example, some commentators feel that land is designated at the wrong spatial level and that green belt land needs to be opened up for house building.¹⁴ There have also been calls for greater public sector land release¹⁵ and to encourage the imposition of strict build-out times.¹⁶

These show the need to take account of the wider context and for collaborative, joined up approaches. Often, there is a desire to create a new idea to act as a ‘silver bullet’ but this approach cannot possibly work with such a complex topic and large spatial variation. Planning has a critical role to play in bringing together conflicting interests and multi-disciplinary factors but when it is alluded to in reports it is often viewed with suspicion or contempt or is misunderstood.

The current debate needs to be taken beyond ideology

While commentators agree that we need more houses, the national debate on house building in England, in particular, seems increasingly polarised between two entrenched positions, neither of which is likely to promote the sustainable, consensual and most of all, the well-planned housing we need.

Today, on one side of the debate there are concerns that the planning system in England – set out in the

⁷ Shelter – Little boxes, fewer homes (2013), Shelter – Growing up renting (2013), Crisis – Crisis response to the consultation on the Mayor's Housing Covenant (2013), Resolution Foundation – Generation rent shut out of home ownership for a lifetime (2011).

⁸ Homes for Britain [<http://www.housing.org.uk/get-involved/homes-for-britain>] and Yes to Homes [<http://www.yestohomes.co.uk>].

⁹ Hull, A. and Cooke, G. – Together at home (2012) (London: IPPR), Hull, A., Cooke, G. and Dolphin, T. – Build now or pay later? (2011) (London: IPPR), Leunig, T. In my backyard: unlocking the planning system (2007) (London: CentreForum), Centre for Cities – Cities Outlook 2013 (London), Morton, A. – Why aren't we building enough attractive homes? (2013) (London: Policy Exchange).

¹⁰ Homes for Scotland website [<http://www.homesforscotland.com/251/article.aspx?Site=1>].

¹¹ Hull, A. and Cooke, G. – Together at home (2012) (London: IPPR).

¹² Centre for Cities – Cities Outlook 2013 (London).

¹³ Hull, A. and Cooke, G. – Together at home (2012) (London: IPPR), Centre for Cities – Cities Outlook 2013 (London).

¹⁴ Morton, A. – Cities for growth (2011) (London: Policy Exchange).

¹⁵ Hull, A. and Cooke, G. – Together at home (2012) (London: IPPR) Morton, A. – Cities for growth (2011) (London: Policy Exchange).

¹⁶ Hull, A. and Cooke, G. – Together at home (2012) (London: IPPR).



National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – is too liberal and that local authorities will be unable to resist development irrespective of the views of local people. On the other side, critics of the planning system complain that it is stifling development and that we need only to cut away 'red tape' to ensure a leap in new development.

Both of these positions seem to share a common assumption – that in the main existing communities will resist new housing development. The arguments state that either local people need to be 'protected' from the opportunity to consider new development, or effectively 'paid off' to accept it. In this respect, both sides risk undermining the meeting of local needs that they seek to promote.

Furthermore, this assumption that on the whole local people do not want to see development in their area has been picked up by the UK Government. Local communities are therefore being incentivised – in England these incentives include the New Homes Bonus, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments going to neighbourhood projects (if they have an agreed and implemented Neighbourhood Plan), and Get Britain Building to name a few. These policies are not sufficient to cater for the infrastructure needs of large schemes.

In Scotland planning is acknowledged to play a vital role in the solution to the housing issue. Much of this debate is being undertaken through the consultation on the new national spatial plan, National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) and the review of the key national planning policy document Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). While they recognise the need for sustainability and how the planning system can facilitate this, there appears to be an even greater recognition to form partnerships for delivery. For example, they have explored models that help to free up financing or re-phase financing to support house builders. This has examined ways in which planning authorities and house builders can work together more closely to share risk and reward and includes joint ventures companies, deferred payments for sites and using prudential borrowing to help stimulate private sector investment.

There is no single solution, but large schemes can provide an important part of the solution

The experience of the last 20 years suggests that the level of demand for new homes over the next decade will not be met by piecemeal incremental developments. There are many ways in which the housing crisis can be tackled. These include looking at the role of the existing stock, and considering how small scale development (for example, infill) can play a part. Responses should also encompass issues of housing mix, affordability, sustainability, demographic change¹⁷ and preparedness for an ageing population.

While there is no single solution, large scale housing-led developments could provide an important part of the response, as a large number of houses can be built whilst giving an opportunity for planners to design communities that people want to live in – with appropriate infrastructure, community services and green spaces.

There is no statutory or guidance definition of what constitutes 'large scale' housing development, however this can be taken to mean sites and schemes consisting of thousands rather than hundreds of houses, which either significantly expand a settlement or create a new one, and which have major infrastructure requirements.¹⁸

Indeed, Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, sees a role for such large schemes in housing delivery:

"We are working with a number of large locally-led schemes, ranging from 4,000 to 9,500 units in size, which in total will deliver up to 48,600 new homes. Including, among others, in Cranbrook, Fairfield, Northstowe, East Kettering. These sites have been held up for various reasons - cash-flow problems following the banking crash, bureaucracy and licensing issues, a lack of upfront investment for infrastructure - some for up to ten years."¹⁹

¹⁷ The RTP1 has also commissioned a small research project being conducted by the University of Cambridge, on recent changes in household formation rates and their implications for planning for housing, including at a local level. For more information see [<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/spire>].

¹⁸ However, the Taylor Review Group, in response to the publication of the Draft National Practice Guidance on the beta site, has recommended that new planning practice guidance needs to be produced on Garden Cities.

¹⁹ Deputy Prime Minister's speech to National House-Building Council – November 2012 – [<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/deputy-prime-ministers-speech-to-national-house-building-council>].



In England, it is also highlighted in the NPPF (paragraph 52):

“The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns”.

In Scotland, the recently published draft of the SPP document says that “[in] towns and cities, the majority of new development should be located within or adjacent to existing settlements” (paragraph 47) and the “creation of new settlements may occasionally be appropriate if it is justified by the scale and nature of housing land requirement and there are major constraints to further growth of existing settlements; or it is an essential part of a strategy for promoting regeneration or rural development” (paragraph 52).

The problem with the discussion on the scale of development is that, again, commentators fail to pay attention to the nuances. Commentators either subscribe to the notion that we need to expand many areas by a little – hence the micro policy formation of recent years – or that large schemes are synonymous with Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities.²⁰ The latter are part of the large scale housing ‘toolkit’; other tools include sustainable urban extensions and stand-alone (smaller) new towns near large cities²¹ with latent demand which could be useful where space is restricted.

To change the debate, we need practical solutions

In order to shift the debate away from the narrow focus on so-called ‘NIMBYism’ and micro policies, this report sets out practical ideas so that if places want and need to expand, they can do so by boosting large scale development.

The focus should now be on a ‘demand-informed’ approach which understands geographic variation, that not all places suffer from local resistance and that those people who oppose development aren’t all the same. Crucially, planners have the practical skills to bring together a range of factors within a local area and should be viewed as part of the solution to the housing issue.



²⁰ TCPA – Re-imagining garden cities for the 21st century (2011) and TCPA – Creating garden cities and suburbs today (2013).

²¹ Both IPPR and Policy Exchange have mentioned stand-alone new settlements in reports but without much detail as it went beyond the scope of those reports.



Practical solutions to boost large scale house building

Housing is a multi-faceted issue which impacts upon social, economic and environmental factors and planners can play a major role in solving the problem.

But its complexity also highlights how there is never going to be one 'silver bullet' or 'one-size-fits-all' policy that will bring about the delivery of housing in the UK. It will take a range of approaches with varying policies – in-keeping with the local area – to get houses built.

There is a place for highlighting the benefits of one of the approaches – large scale housing schemes – and offering a range of recommendations that will assist areas, decision makers and local communities who want to develop large sites.

Our practical recommendations²² for boosting delivery of large scale housing schemes focus on five key topics – community engagement, land, infrastructure, finance, and leadership and governance – as these touch upon the most frequently cited barriers. Importantly, our recommendations are rooted in a frequently forgotten set of necessary components, namely the role of political leadership, collaboration, partnership building, place shaping and planning.

This section will reveal the most frequently cited community barriers to development and offer practical solutions to overcome them and ease any potential tensions. We start with community engagement and the need to make the case for housing locally, through more active and inclusive approaches.

Community engagement

Barrier 1: The loud voice of objectors

A frequently cited issue that halts development is that of a group of local residents opposed to development. Reasons for the opposition are wide-ranging but include fear of over-stretching public services such as schools and transport, the protection of fields, countryside and other things about their localities they

care strongly about; and concern over future property values. In particular, there is often mistrust as to whether necessary new services and infrastructure will be delivered.

It should be noted that while these concerns are often reasonable, they can be over-stated and commentators can lose sight of the complexity of public opinion. A recent Ipsos MORI²³ poll showed that 80 per cent think there is a housing crisis in the UK but only 45 per cent feel there is a crisis in their local area and 52 per cent feel their local area needs more housing.

However, there are nuances in these statistics. Firstly, a higher proportion of people in London and the South feel there is a housing crisis in their local area (63 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively) while the opposite is true in the North (38 per cent). More importantly, however, the vast majority of people in the UK (77 per cent) feel it is harder for them to buy or to rent than for previous generations and 90 per cent feel it will be harder still for their children.

The experience of planners working on large schemes and people who are working with communities on their Neighbourhood Plans in England have shown that the groups of people who oppose development are actually often rather fragmented. There is a small group of people who will always look to oppose development regardless of how compelling the case for development is, but there is a larger group of people who initially fall into the objecting group but can understand the benefits of development because they are aware of rising house prices, the limited supply of housing for their children, the need for new public services and to preserve existing services such as shops and post offices.

²² These recommendations have been shaped by desk based research, six roundtable events in England and Scotland with expert participants, one-to-one interviews and the submissions to our online call for evidence. This list of recommendations is not exhaustive but contains ideas to solve the most frequently cited barriers to large scale development.

²³ Ipsos MORI website [<http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3129/80-per-cent-agree-UK-has-a-housing-crisis.aspx>].



Recommendation 1: Local and national politicians and campaigning groups as well as planners need to make the case for large scale housing schemes by emphasising the consequences for current and future generations of failing to build enough houses, and the opportunities represented by large scale schemes to delivery quality healthy communities

Planners and practitioners can appeal to the local community by communicating the advantages additional population can have if there is a wish to maintain local amenities and public services. For example, when a certain number of houses have been completed, the site is eligible for investment into public services such as a new school or a new road, which will ease the local strain on existing services.

Furthermore, the consequences of not building houses needs to be discussed on a local level. If we do not build enough houses, future generations' housing affordability and supply will be threatened and people appear to be aware of this problem. As part of this, national organisations such as housing charities need to consider the role they could play in making their data and intelligence on housing need available to local groups and networks.

Barrier 2: Engaging with the silent majority

The issue that can arise with any consultation process is that the people who come forward are a self-selecting group of residents and can particularly attract those with anti-development views. This is particularly prevalent when consulting on new development proposals. There is a significantly large group of people who do not take part in the process and so pro-development voices may not be heard – see Case Study 1. It can be argued that it is the responsibility of the individual to take part but when a decision rests with local politicians who are elected by the local community and only hear one side of the argument, development can be halted.

Consultation should also happen with people who are representative of those likely to move to the area and not just the host community. This will allow views of the potential residents, for example those who work in the area, to be heard and will help shape the development.

Recommendation 2: Local councils, practitioners and developers need to do more to ensure that community engagement reaches a wider cross section of the community, including potential future residents

Local politics plays a big role in decision making, particularly on potentially contentious topics such as new development. Evidence showing support for development is required by local politicians in order to make the case for the project. As this support is often not volunteered, planners, local authorities and developers need to find innovative ways to consult with the 'silent group'.²⁴

Case study 1: Canterbury and Ipsos MORI

In order to engage with a wider range of the community, Canterbury City Council commissioned Ipsos MORI²⁵ to undertake a survey on their Local Plan and attitudes to local development. One of the findings showed that just under 60 per cent of local residents supported new development in principle - with only 22 per cent in opposition – and support increased to 77 per cent if it meant young people would stay in the area. These results have shown a wider range of views and have facilitated the breakdown of perceptions.

²⁴ For example, Planning Aid England (PAE) actively supports communities to engage with the planning system, from development schemes to community-led planning initiatives such as Neighbourhood Planning (which allows the community to create their own planning policies). PAE has numerous resources around community engagement and actively participating within the planning system, see [<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/planning-explained/online-resources/>]. In addition, PAE's Neighbourhood Planning pages can be found at [<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/neighbourhood-planning/>].

²⁵ Ipsos MORI website [http://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/SRI_IpsosMORICanterburyFutureDevelopment_Report_300412.PDF].



Case study 2: Auckland, New Zealand and visualisation²⁶

Through a series of workshops, consultation events and a modern, accessible website, the council have received over 22,700 submissions on their Unitary Plan. An innovative approach to make the provision and planning of housing sites more accessible, they created an online 'housing simulator' which allows people to experiment with different housing scenarios (location and height) for the estimated additional 400,000 houses required in the Auckland region.²⁷ With an overall target number of houses required to keep pace with expansion, the trade-offs about which type of housing is used becomes apparent.

Early engagement with a fair representation of local views on Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans in England, and Local Development Plans in Scotland (as well as on specific development sites) will help shape the development, give local politicians a more balanced view and will mean that development schemes do not come as a surprise to local residents.

Barrier 3: Lack of engagement on the part of local residents

The timing of consultation and engagement with local residents is important. If people feel that engagement in the past has happened too late for their views to be implemented then they may well cease to continue their engagement. If the goal is to ensure people both feel comfortable with development and can see the benefits of it, any process that generates disengagement will stall the site. Local councils, practitioners and promoters need to be aware that many local residents are time-poor.

Recommendation 3: Local authorities and developers should ensure that the pre-application engagement process and local plan consultation are of a high standard, which means that they should be comprehensive, straightforward, accessible and represent good value for money

The pre-application process between developer and local authority is an important one. It means that through conversations, developments can take shape and all parties understand what the key issues and priorities are. Furthermore, it can speed up the

application process by ensuring understanding, cooperation and partnership has been encouraged from the start.

Case Study 3: Pre Main Issues Report Engagement

In February 2012 Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS) ran a series of engagement events on behalf of East Lothian Council. The planning authority was keen to involve communities, local businesses and developers from a very early stage in the development plan process – and notably, the authority was keen to go beyond the statutory minimum requirement. Working with the planning authority, PAS developed and delivered a series of workshops and forum events across East Lothian, to ask people how they want to see their local area develop over the next 25 years; effectively a pre-Main Issues Report (MIR) engagement exercise. The Main Issues consultation period is due in September 2013 with the adoption of the Local Development Plan to be enforced in August 2015.

Case study 4: Holland Park, Spalding – South Holland District Council and ATLAS

The main challenges to the 2,250-dwelling Holland Park site in Lincolnshire were determining a good place-making response to an awkwardly shaped site and the necessity for partnership with key stakeholders. With limited public resources, the Council worked with ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications) to ensure all parties were involved from the start. Workshops between the Council and the developer were held so the vision for the site was shared, key issues were highlighted and a timeline for specific tasks was agreed. A Memorandum of Understanding between the developer and Council was agreed and regular project meetings with expert advisory groups were held to iron out specific issues around infrastructure, community engagement, design and overall site vision. The pre-application process meant all issues were tackled early and the priorities of the Council were communicated.²⁸

²⁶ Auckland Council 'Shape Auckland' website [<http://shapeauckland.co.nz/>].

²⁷ 'Shape Auckland' website [<http://shapeauckland.co.nz/shape-auckland-housing-simulator/>].

²⁸ ATLAS case study [<http://www.atlasplanning.com/object/download.cfm?lib=liDownload&id=703>].



However, it has become apparent through our English roundtable discussions that pre-application processes by local authorities vary in cost and quality. The best local authorities can offer this contact early on and for reasonable costs without the need for further forms to be completed.

In Scotland processing planning applications relate specifically to the scale of the proposed development. There are three categories of development - local, major and national.²⁹ Planning applications for major developments (for housing this relates to schemes of more than 49 houses) must go through a 12 week Pre-Application Consultation exercise which should include a public event.

The same issues regarding effectively engaging with the local community apply to the Local Plan process.

Land

The housing problem cannot be analysed without understanding how the land market works. In our roundtables, land availability, ownership, valuation and release were all frequently cited as key issues stalling development. Surprisingly, this issue is less frequently touched upon in either political or journalistic debates, with the attention instead focussed on the planning system, planners, developers, finance and other issues.

Barrier 4: Land ownership

Land is obviously a crucial component to all development and land owners are the gatekeepers to new sites. Owners of land vary in size ranging from single or family ownership to pension funds, trusts, institutions, educational bodies, developers and the public sector. The need for the private and public sector to maximise returns on the sale of the land is often the key determinant in whether land becomes available on the market. Limited availability of land can come about by private owners sitting on land for a long a time or by developers who have bought land as an investment activity and have no immediate intention to build. This has consequences as the social benefits to more land becoming available for a greater number of new houses – such as better quality housing, people not living in cramped or unhealthy conditions, flexibility and access to jobs markets and growing local economies – are often frustrated in favour of private gain.

However, this 'land-banking' is not always unreasonable. Developers buy the land (or option on the land) in order to demonstrate to their shareholders that they have land available in the future to continue house building, so making them a worthwhile investment. The public sector is also a large land owner (although its holdings are rarely described as 'land banking'), and it is important that it releases land for sale and development in appropriate places for sustainable communities. The key is to ensure that these land banks are not excessive, that developers are incentivised to build and the public sector can see the benefits of releasing land.

The answer is not as simple as 'release more land' however. Some land is of a higher value than other land because of a range of factors stemming from public investment. If land near a high demand area has public investment - for example infrastructure – on it then this land is of a higher value than land without investment. While it is true that some homogenous areas on the margin might benefit from greater land release and competition, there will be a collection of similar sites where the private sector and public sector remain in a standoff on infrastructure investment. Therefore the discussion on site viability is more about the partnership between private developer and public investor rather than simply releasing more land for developers to buy.

Nor has the answer come from the National Planning Policy Framework in England. The key statement is found in paragraph 173 (bold added):

"To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable."

The term 'competitive returns' will mean very different things depending on the time at which the land was purchased and is inevitably subjective. It raises many questions: Is a competitive return for someone who bought at the height of the market in 2007 the same as someone who bought land in the 1950s? Or does it refer to the value of the land at existing use value,

²⁹ Circular 5/2009 Hierarchy of Developments [<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/03153122/0>].



after planning permission is granted, or when public infrastructure is in place? What if the land owners are not 'willing'?³⁰

Recommendation 4: There needs to be public access to information on who owns land and who owns options on land

Transparency of land ownership is important for accountability. It would benefit the local authorities, who would then be able to see who owns strategically important sites; developers, who would then be able to demonstrate how much land they have bought and; the public, who would then be able to see if private owners are stalling development.³¹ It will also provide a useful tool for land assembly where local authorities are innovative in doing so (see recommendation 5).

Importantly, the issue is not just about land ownership but is also about knowing which developers have bought options on the land. Our roundtable discussions shed light on how little local authorities know about the owners of land options in their area. Land options give the purchaser (a developer) the right to buy outright once planning permission has been granted. The issue is that an option on land affects the market without any transaction of the land having taken place. Here, transparency of land ownership is not as useful as knowing who owns the option during the planning process. This will allow local authorities to see which developers are buying options on land and how fast they are bringing development to conclusion, making for a better market.

Recommendation 5: Local authorities should take a larger role in land assembly, for example by the use of existing powers of compulsory purchase

There is a need for local authorities to take a greater role in land assembly if they are to realise their vision for their local economy. At the simplest level, local authorities can bring together landowners of a strategic site to pool land and discuss how to sell to a developer. From here, a discussion between the landowners (now acting as one entity), local authority and developer can unlock the site and bring the necessary infrastructure investment required.

There is an obvious role for Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) in this although there has been a reluctance to use these given issues of compensation, complexity and often a lack of experience on how best to take them forward. The Scottish Government has been attempting to promote the use of CPOs and has drawn up new guidance on this.³² However, this has only met with very limited success and there appears to be a need for more leadership, creativity and boldness in the use of CPOs in future.

Case study 5: Sleaford West, Central Lincolnshire - The Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (CLJSPC)

Central Lincolnshire took a proactive role in land assembly by bringing together landowners for a development site. After a number of smaller sites were promoted in the SHLAA it was identified as a strategic opportunity by North Kesteven District Council through the public consultation on the informal Sleaford Forward Masterplan. It became apparent that in order to bring this land forward for development and to allocate it in the Core Strategy as a Sustainable Urban Extension, the land owners needed to be brought together. The CLJSPC initially brought together two of the landowners who were then able to bring the other landowners on board. From here, the CLJSPC together with representatives of the both District and County Councils have worked with the landowners to develop a common action plan for the possible development of the site. The landowners have developed between themselves the details of the working arrangements they will need to put in place to bring the site forward. They have recently commissioned the Leeds office of town planning practice, Peacock and Smith, to provide strategic planning advice in respect of the proposed urban extension, and to co-ordinate the team of other consultants required to address the planning policy implications of development of the site for housing, employment and supporting community uses, working closely with the Central Lincolnshire Authorities.

³⁰ The UK Government has addressed the issue in the draft National Planning Practice Guidance on viability, released for comment on a beta website in August 2013 [<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>]. The guidance refers only to England.

³¹ The Land Registry has 23 million titles registered in England and Wales but has stated that this does not cover the entire area. This is because compulsory registration is only triggered after a transfer of property or legal charge of a property (for example a mortgage).

³² Scottish Planning Series - Planning Circular 6 2011 - Compulsory Purchase Orders [<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/10/21133522/21>].



Furthermore, the CLJSPC and North Kesteven District Council have worked with another landowner on a further development site in Sleaford to bring forward an application for the second Sustainable Urban Extension so that the infrastructure – both transport and social – can be coordinated between both sites to deliver a greater level of development over time. This leadership and vision will provide a better planned community.

Local authority land assembly involvement can go further and there are various models worth highlighting, from the municipality involvement in Germany and the Netherlands, to tax ideas from France.

Case study 6: Land assembly in other parts of Europe

Germany - Land pooling / readjustment

Germany uses a legally binding process of land pooling or 'readjustment' called Umlegung. The process starts with the municipality determining the area of the site for Umlegung and the rights and claims of all individual plots are added together. The land designated for streets and other public space is then appropriated from the total area. The remaining land area is then returned to the original land owners according to their share of either the original value or land area. If allocated by land value then the landowner has to pay the uplift in value - between the original land value and the new land value – to the municipality as public investment in infrastructure makes the land more valuable. This means the municipality can recoup the costs of infrastructure. If the area of plots is allocated as the share (which only works well if the size of plots are similar) then the municipality retains up to 30 per cent on greenfield land and 10 per cent on inner-city land.³³

France

France has a similar system to Germany whereby land pooling or readjustment happens but it is done on a voluntary basis rather than by a legally binding mechanism. Large housing sites are brought together with the infrastructure plan ensuring that infrastructure

is in place ahead of development which de-risks the site and brings certainty.³⁴ France has a national employment tax which is hypothecated on financing infrastructure provision and it also has a regional investment, the Caisse des Dépôts, where personal savings and pension funds can be channelled into specific long term investments, including housing and infrastructure.

The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the municipality would buy the land of a site at existing land value – often just a little above agricultural value as it tends to be land owned by farmers. It would then service the land by putting in infrastructure – social, transport etc. It then parcels the site into smaller plots and sells them to developers at a price that in total would cover on-site infrastructure costs, off-site infrastructure costs and plan making. If this generates a surplus then the municipality would keep the revenue, but if it generates a deficit then central or local government would have to subsidise it.³⁵

Recommendation 6: Share risks around potential future land uplift in land values more evenly between local authority, developer and landowner so as to bring sites to market now.

Our roundtable discussions highlighted a problem where land owners are holding out for a large sale price in the future but the homes are needed now. A useful mechanism might be a variation of the Deferred Development Contribution model (currently used on Section 106 agreements in England). A landowner could sell for a smaller amount immediately but then get paid after a certain number of houses are built and sold, capturing a larger amount through land value uplift. The key here is that it brings land on to the market, shares the risk between landowner, developer and local authority and the landowner captures the uplift in value from investment rather than projected forecasts.

³³ Connellan, O. - Land Assembly for Development – The Role of Land Pooling, Land Re-adjustment and Land Consolidation FIG XXII International Congress (2002).

³⁴ Monk, S. et al – International review of land supply and planning systems (2013).

³⁵ Golland, A. and Oxley, M. 'Housing development in Europe' in Golland, A. and Blake, R. - Housing Development: Theory, Process and Practice p307-8 (2004) (Routledge: London).



Barrier 5: Public sector land release

As one of the largest owners of land in the UK³⁶, the public sector is an important source for land release onto the market. Furthermore, as government departments look to streamline their operations, it will be important to know which public sector department or organisation owns which areas of land.

Recommendation 7: Government departments and agencies should be required to dispose of their surplus land holdings in a way which takes account of the wider community value rather than maximising the capital receipt, and to do so with alacrity

Public sector landowners are obliged to hold out for the best price on land. While rational, this requirement needs to have regard to the role the public sector can have in developing successful places that people want to live, work and thrive. Cross departmental and border collaboration will allow neighbouring sites to be brought together to provide a large site which could be used for a large number of houses and necessary infrastructure.

The Scottish Government's policy statement on architecture and place³⁷ includes an action to "work with Scottish Future's Trust on processes and initiatives that help to promote the benefits of the whole place approach and deploy strategic design to facilitate innovative investment." This is a useful step but more needs to be done in the near future.

Recommendation 8: In view of the longer lead-in times involved, central government should incentivise large scale housing schemes, for example through financial mechanisms or national planning policy

Governments must play a role in incentivising large scale housing schemes so that the focus isn't only on small scale, more readily-developable sites. The necessity for five years' land supply for housing in England and Scotland means that local authorities have to allocate sites for a deliverable amount of land for a minimum of five years at all times. Whilst this ensures that land is reviewed and allocated on a regular basis, it will tend to favour smaller housing sites because they are more deliverable within shorter timescales.

As a result, the UK and Scottish Governments could take a different approach to incentivise local authorities to plan for large housing schemes – for example, if land is allocated for houses that will be deliverable in years six to ten, then there could be a proportion of land that is taken off the required allocation for years one to five (but not all, otherwise no building would occur). In Scotland, the process could be through designating a number of large housing sites that maximise sustainability as National Developments in the National Planning Framework (see Recommendation 15).

Infrastructure

The role infrastructure can play in unlocking sites is large, particularly as many sites are currently under review or renegotiation as a result of funding for infrastructure. This section will provide some recommendations to help alleviate this issue.

Barrier 6: Infrastructure funding mechanisms are not effective in the current economic climate

Our roundtable events showed that infrastructure funding is a major barrier on many sites. In particular, the deliverability of funding mechanisms in England via Section 106 (s106) agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 75 in Scotland in the current economic climate has decreased. The problem arises where planning permission was granted before the financial crash for the private sector contributions towards social, digital and transport infrastructure but is no longer viable.

But the issue of infrastructure funding touches upon a wider issue which existed before the financial crisis – the extent to which a stalemate occurs because both the public and private sector expects the other side to be contributing more. The public sector can be unrealistic in its expectation that the private sector could (and should) foot the bill while the private sector in turn can leverage power as the site is stalled until the public sector finds resources.

Recommendation 9: Link together infrastructure expenditure, policies and planning with policies and planning for housing in order to unlock potential sites, for example through budgetary processes or guarantees against future income streams

³⁶ Office of Fair Trading - Homebuilding in the UK (2008).

³⁷ Scottish Government - "Creating Places" (2013) [<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/98111>].



The deliverability of housing schemes is often determined by the infrastructure investment agreed. The German, French and Dutch approach is for local authorities to buy the land, front fund the infrastructure investment and then sell the land in parcels to developers and keep the land value uplift to fund the initial costs (see Recommendation 5). This raises two important questions for the UK, firstly how extensive should the public sector's role be in infrastructure funding, and secondly is this a central or local government issue? A more joined up approach between infrastructure investment (which includes large, national projects), planning, housing policies, Local Plans, Strategic Development Plans and Local Development Plans which will unlock large sites by decreasing the risk on private and public developers who can then deliver houses.

In Scotland, the Infrastructure Investment Plan sets out why the Scottish Government invests, how it invests and what it intends to invest in up to 2030 by sector. However there is a need to better link infrastructure investment to development and so there is a need for the Infrastructure Investment Plan to be more explicitly linked to NPF3. This would allow the NPF3 to influence how infrastructure will be developed and how this can be best used to ensure that housing is developed in the most sustainable locations. If infrastructure provision was viewed in this wider way, it would also lead to associated rises in land values which could be used to support funding of housing and other developments.

Recommendation 10: Local authorities should be empowered and encouraged to use existing or innovative funding solutions and utilise central government support through existing funding streams or policies. This could involve local infrastructure funding or forms of devolved pooled resources

Different places face different challenges and so financial agreements on infrastructure should also reflect this. Local authorities should explore ways in which funding mechanisms and ideas can be tailor-made for the area and/or simplified.

Local authorities should also be aware of the range of mechanisms brought in by the UK Government that could help unlock funding further. For example, in England, City Deals were designed so that local areas could make a deal with central government for funds in return for a demonstrable expected increase in output or delivery. Here, there may be scope to include local infrastructure funding or some form of devolved pooled resource in order to kick-start development.

Our forthcoming policy paper on infrastructure will look in greater detail at how especially nationally-significant transport spending could be more effectively deployed to maximise the role it could play in delivering major housing schemes. Both airport and rail investment seem currently to operate in an environment where these considerations receive short shrift.

Case Study 7: West Lothian Council Infrastructure Fund

The West Lothian Local Infrastructure Fund was set up in 2009. This is a rolling fund with the council funding infrastructure and recovering costs from developers. The developer income is used to replenish the fund so that other projects can be funded. The Council invited developers to submit bids for funding which led to £2.4 million being allocated to help fund two primary school extensions and a new primary school in Armadale. Developers are contributing £2 million so the council's contribution is around 55%. The council aims to recover its financial contribution by 2015.

Case study 8: Flat dwelling tariff – Milton Keynes Partnership

For the allocated expansion areas of Milton Keynes, a tariff regime operates where developers have agreed to a standard contribution of £18,500 per residential dwelling and £260,000 per hectare of commercial land. Milton Keynes was able to borrow money - as a result of the tariff's simplicity and certainty of projected revenue - in order to put in infrastructure. The houses were then built and the debt would be paid off over time. This brought clarity and simplicity to the contribution from the development for the provision of infrastructure.³⁸

Finance

One of the biggest barriers to development of large scale schemes is finance. However, the economic climate and government cut-backs have made finding new financial resources an even greater priority. As finance, infrastructure investment and housing planning need to work together, it is imperative to find practical ideas to access extra funding de-risk development and unlock sites.

Barrier 7: Financial risk

The decision to invest on a site comes down to the risk taken and the potential reward gained. On a large scale housing site, there are potential rewards for the landowner (through the sale of land), the developer (in the form of house sales), infrastructure providers (through sales) and the public sector (through the social benefits of creating a well-planned, sustainable community and local economy). As there are benefits for all parties, there needs to be greater understanding that risks and rewards need to be shared and partnerships formed.

Recommendation 11: Local authorities, infrastructure providers and government agencies should develop means to pool departmental and European resources in order to deliver the infrastructure which supports housing schemes

Where possible, local authorities need to work across departmental budgets, with neighbouring authorities and upper tier authorities in order to pool resources to invest in large scale schemes. Any opportunity to switch from revenue expenditure to capital expenditure and use local authority prudential borrowing to invest in schemes will help de-risk schemes. If there is a way to de-risk development by front funding a proportion of initial houses built then this will give the developer and buyers more confidence. However, local authorities do need the support from central government to do this (see recommendation 12).

In England, working with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) on development sites could provide a slice of the European funding streams such as JESSICA (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas), ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) or ESF (European Social Fund) that could unlock potential sites. Working with the planned development and amending it to fit the criteria

of European funds – for example, looking at the role of mixed use schemes – can unlock further funding for investment if the timescale for this funding is aligned.

In Scotland, there is a need for spatial planning to link more effectively with Community Planning and Single Outcomes Agreements. This would connect decisions on investment to particular places which, in turn, could help communities gain a better understanding of the implications of Community Planning for their area.

Recommendation 12: Where funding isn't available, central government should consider underwriting a certain proportion of the site investment

Part of the risk that comes with development is the funding for building the first houses on a site as these houses are more risky to sell than houses at the end as the site is further from completion. Another risk point comes at the agreed threshold of number of houses built where there is an infrastructure investment due. For example, there are agreements where after a certain number of houses are built a school or road is expected to be funded. However, because the risk of not selling enough houses afterwards to help cover this cost is high, there is a potential for house building to stall just before the threshold. In these situations, it might be beneficial if central government underwrote the house building – which doesn't put all of the cost onto the balance sheet – which will allow development to continue. This might be preferable to shoring up demand with preferential mortgages as it actually addresses supply problems.





Leadership and governance

The ability to look beyond the administrative boundaries is crucial for large housing sites and schemes as the benefits are potentially far reaching. However, ensuring the correct tier of authority has the decision making ability at the right spatial level is often confused and needs political leadership.

Barrier 8: Strategic planning at the correct spatial level

A frequently cited major barrier to large scale housing development in England is the necessity for some form of 'larger than local' planning and strategy. This is needed in order to understand the wider benefits of development as well as provide some necessary political cover for local politicians. The current situation in England involves local authorities being expected to work together under the Duty to Cooperate set out in the Localism Act but there may also be a role for the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)³⁹, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).⁴⁰

Recommendation 13: Where required, local authorities and agencies should be given much greater incentives to work collaboratively across borders to strategically plan for housing and infrastructure sites

Planning and investment at the correct spatial level is important as it can bring together resources for both sites and schemes that have beneficial results across borders. Moreover, it is important to have cooperation between local authorities as single administrative boundaries don't always reflect where people live, work and travel. For England, the LEP areas might provide a useful way to look at new geographical areas as they are supposed to represent functional economic areas but it is up to local authorities to work together.

In Scotland, the four city regions have Strategic Development Plans which set out a vision for the long term development of the area focusing on issues such as land for housing, major business and retail developments, infrastructure provision and green belts. A strategic development plan is drafted by a Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA)

Case study 9: Cambridge Futures – Cambridge

Cambridgeshire is one of the most economically successful places in the UK but local authorities' recent drive and ambition for expansion has not always been forthcoming. The change came with the extensive and wide-ranging ambition of Cambridge Futures which brought together local authorities, academics and businesses to form a genuine partnership. This isn't to say there weren't tensions – namely of South Cambridgeshire District Council whose members largely represent small village interests – but through cross-border collaboration and direct and strong leadership from Directors and Leaders, cooperation happened, planning was coordinated for the benefit of the wider area and growth was achieved.

which comprises of all of the planning authorities in the designated area. Each SDPA is under a statutory duty to publish and then update its strategic development plan at least once every five years. Each strategic development plan must be accompanied by an action programme which sets out how they anticipate the key proposals being delivered which must be updated at least once every two years.

Barrier 9: Leadership is insufficiently bold

Delivering large scale housing needs clear vision, political leadership and the effective use of planning resources. While we disagree with the current debate that appears to target the planning system for the shortage in housing, there are things the professionals within local authorities can improve.

Recommendation 14: Leaders, Chief Executives and Chief Planning Officers of local authorities need to use planners' skills more broadly in the design and delivery of corporate and LEP plans for growth

The role of planners has changed from their initial design, from a role of big picture vision that brings together a myriad of issues and interests for development to one of small scale, development control tasks. While there are limits to local authority budgets, Leaders, Chief Executives and Chief

³⁹ The HCA has broad powers as listed in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The HCA can become a Local Planning Authority (LPA) if so designated by the Secretary of State – it could then operate as an LPA (for development management purpose not policy making) and therefore is subject to the same controls the LPAs are. It can also acquire land and issue CPOs.

⁴⁰ In England, the draft National Planning Practice Guidance released for comment on a beta website in August 2013 included draft guidance on the duty to cooperate [<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>].



Planning Officers can use this as an opportunity to show leadership in ensuring planners are better and more frequently used in higher level strategy which should have greater benefits for the local community and economy.

However, budget constraints often mean expertise is lost or missing from the team and Chief Executives need to recognise this gap and be willing to use expertise from other sources for a short period of time, such as ATLAS in England (see Case Study 4). This will plug the knowledge gap and provide a more efficient use of resources, particularly for large housing proposals which aren't common to many local authorities.

Recommendation 15: Governments need to explore how, where they are of national significance, proposed major housing developments should be acknowledged nationally and what special delivery processes may assist their delivery

Large scale housing has the ability to deliver a large number of houses while offering the opportunity to plan areas people want to live, work and travel. Cross-boundary collaboration and a locally-led and designed development will always be preferable as it helps to create sustainable communities.

However, it is also important to recognise that some housing sites become available as a result of large infrastructure investment but also that the housing site itself helps make the case for the initial investment. Infrastructure of national importance takes a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process where decisions are made at a central level. There may well be housing sites of a certain large size or as part of a nationally significant project of mixed uses, particularly where they will make a large call on national funding, that this route may offer possibilities for. This would be one option to ensure that housing can command a nationally significant status. It would also provide national leadership, decision making and vision for particular sites and could link the planning of national infrastructure projects to the planning of housing, which will create better planned places (see Recommendation 9). Lessons should also be drawn from the planning approaches to the delivery of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics site, which covered multiple local authority areas, multiple legacy

sites, and where the ODA is projecting that 11,000 new homes will be delivered over a 20 year period.⁴¹

In Scotland there is a clear planning hierarchy which distinguishes between national, major or local development. National developments are contained within the country's national spatial plan – the NPF – which sets the context for future development over 20 to 30 years. Developments designated as 'national developments' are of national importance and priority will still require planning permission but Ministers may intervene at any stage of the process to ensure that decisions are made expeditiously. Currently, none of the 14 National Developments is a housing project but there may be scope for large scale housing developments to be included.

Final remarks

The UK faces a profound challenge in providing the homes that we know people need now and will need in the future. The use of data has highlighted this gap but now the debate must move towards practical solutions – assisted by planners – to boost the building of these homes.

This report has focussed on large scale housing sites and schemes because they provide the opportunity to design successful places that people want to live and work in, while simultaneously providing a large number of houses to combat the current crisis and future need. Planners must play a leading role in this. This does not mean that better use of the existing stock and smaller scale development do not have their own vital contribution to make to meeting overall housing need, both now and in the future.

The housing issue is a large and complex problem and as such, further work on associated topics needs to be done. In particular there needs to be more work on the role infrastructure can play in unlocking development sites. There also needs to be further work on strategic planning, ensuring decision making takes account of 'larger than local' considerations. The RTPI will be publishing work on these topics in the coming months.

⁴¹ [<http://www.londonlegacy.co.uk/news-and-resources/the-legacy-of-the-olympic-park/>].



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The views in this report are these of the RTPI and not necessarily those of the roundtable participants.



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