Collaborative Planning and Development:
the opportunity offered by the neighbourhood planning process

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PEOPLE | PASSION | PLAN

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 The recently published Housing White Paper (Fixing Our Broken Housing Market) poses the question 'What changes do you think would support more proportionate consultation and examination procedures for different types of plan and to ensure that different types of plans work together?' It seems that the intention behind this question is to ensure that local plan making provides a basis not only to increase the allocation of land available for development, but more importantly to do so at increased speed.

1.2 Whilst there would appear to be a number of fundamental issues to address in relation to bringing the right volume and mix of housing forward in communities, it does appear from early evidence that a move to a more collaborative planning process can support an increase in the number and rate of houses being built.

1.3 Communities are not necessarily aware or interested in national housing policy. Many feel the disadvantages of an historic (60+ years) lack of connection with the way in which housing comes into being, and the effect this has on their lives. However, for many years there has been a growing number of communities voicing the need for affordable housing and a range of housing tenure options to meet the housing needs of their young people, their older people and those that just want to continue to live in their community. A significant number are also clear that space for job creation and employment, new and improved open and green space and improvements in infrastructure are vital to their communities' long term sustainability. Unfortunately, however, it also appears that the disconnect between somewhere to live and work and the way it comes about has, and is, all too often played out in the confrontation and antagonism around planning and development at the local level.

1.4 In recent years however, the advent of neighbourhood planning appears to have provided the opportunity to reduce the level of confrontation and antagonism. Whilst a full analysis of the drivers for involvement in neighbourhood planning remains to be completed, it is suspected that the disconnect many people feel with planning and development is a driver that is partly responsible for the growing interest in neighbourhood planning across communities in England.

1.5 The continuing rise in interest in neighbourhood planning indicates that more communities wish to *"choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided."* [1]

1.6 For many communities then, it is likely that the real prize in preparing a neighbourhood plan is not just about developing policy that influences the type of development that comes forward, but seeing the development they seek to bring forward happen.

1.7 Given the prize, the question is, whether neighbourhood planning will support communities to bring forward the development needed in their community. What is the opportunity and how might we realise it?

1.8 Whilst there is a myriad of ways in which local people can get involved in supporting their communities to become more sustainable and resilient, neighbourhood planning is a little different from most other initiatives, as, once made, a Neighbourhood Development Plan has statutory weight.

1.9 Alongside the production of a plan that has statutory weight, the framework of neighbourhood planning provides a recognisable strategic path with a clear process to follow, whilst at the same time allowing for creativity within the community. This leads to Neighbourhood Development Plans that are similar but not the same, as they are reflective of the local community that has prepared them.

1.10 This combination of strategic framework and clarity of process appears to provide an opportunity for systematic change in the ways in which communities can engage with the development processes. By following this strategic path and utilising the process communities, statutory agencies and developers should be able to find common ground, and in so doing reduce the confrontation and antagonism around development. Moreover, communities should be able to broker, facilitate and when appropriate, lead the process of development in their communities; this appears to be the as yet untapped opportunity of neighbourhood planning, and one that could result in communities seeing the development that they want, in the places they want it.

1.11 Knowledge and understanding gained through the preparation of one of the first Community Right to Build Orders [2] in England suggests, that the strategic framework and clarity of process offered by neighbourhood planning could be integrated with both development led by a community and community led development and how practical support could be aligned within a strategic framework to enable communities to grasp the opportunity to understand and create their own route through development. In this way it would also be possible for communities to share, for themselves and others, learning about the development they have facilitated or led and its myriad of connections with others.

1.12 The potential afforded by community involvement in development is far greater than the outcomes, and there now appears to be an opportunity to shape and define replicable processes stemming from the framework and process of neighbourhood planning, that may represent the potential local and national accelerator for all development led by communities.

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1 http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/what-is-neighbourhood-planning/
2 http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/understanding-the-community-right-to-build/

2. Community Led Housing

2.1 The definition and benefits of community led housing are set out in two reports. Understanding the Potential of Small Scale Community Led Housing (2015) describes community led housing as follows, *"homes that are developed and/or managed by local people or residents, in not for private profit organisational structures. Organisational structure varies but governance is overseen by people who either live or work in the locality of benefit, or are direct beneficiaries."* [3]

2.2 Meanwhile, the Building and Social Housing Foundation report on community led housing in England states that the benefits are as follows, *"Provision of permanently affordable housing and other bespoke housing solutions which cater specifically to the needs of local people; Improved quality of housing stock through the renovation and reuse of existing buildings: Improved affordability through low carbon housing, reducing utility and energy costs as well as lessening the impact on climate change: Community ownership of assets and retention of local wealth enabling access to further funding: Support for local supply chains and improving the skills and employability of local people; and Strengthened communities with increased confidence, capacity and control."* [4]

2.3 Whilst the current scale of community led housing development is small relative to the housing need, the Smith Institute report 'Local Housing, community living: prospects for scaling up and scaling out community-led housing', notes that it could *"move from the margins to the mainstream"* in meeting UK housing need, stating that *"The sector is currently developing up to 400 homes a year, with indications that output is to rise over the next three to five years."* [5]

2.4 A Demos report concurs with this view and comments that *"community-led housing schemes could help to solve the national housing crisis, by encouraging greater local ownership over house-building."* [6] The report also goes on to note that community-led housing schemes could tackle NIMBY-ism by encouraging greater local ownership over house-building.

2.5 These three reports have several recommendations which if implemented would help to increase the number of community-led housing projects. The recommendations from each of the reports, that are felt to be relevant to the ideas explored in this paper, are set out below:

Understanding the Potential of Small Scale Community Led Housing (2015)

One clear finding of the research completed was that *"Interviewees overwhelmingly called for an end to the piecemeal policy approach to community led housing."*

The report states that *"If we are to create better places to live, to diversify who can own and manage housing, and to meet the demand for community ownership/management, we need to offer a holistic approach, tailored to local needs. We are calling for long-term, dedicated funding, capital finance and support for projects to grow."*

Local housing, community living: prospects for scaling up and scaling out community-led housing (2016)

The report recommends that: *"The sector should work with local authorities on how to make planning more accessible to community-led groups, bearing in mind their more limited access to support and resources."*

And, *"The government should review the neighbourhood planning process, with a view to simplifying the process and promoting community-led housing groups as affordable-housing providers."*

Community Builders (2015)

One of the findings of the research was that there is a lack of trust in the planning process…

The report notes that *"Proper consultation with a genuine dialogue (rather than a perceived 'listen and then ignore' approach) that explains the limits of what can be achieved will help to restore trust."*

The report also notes that *"The lack of trust in the planning process highlighted a tension between its democratic and technocratic elements. On the one hand, residents are encouraged to attend consultations and give their views, and elected councillors make the final decision on applications. On the other hand, decisions are ultimately made on technical grounds; the force of public opinion cannot be formally taken into account. However, local and neighbourhood plans, which set some of the conditions for which applications will be approved or rejected through, for example, establishing needs, do allow more of a democratic input. Neighbourhood plans, despite a very limited take-up so far, also allow communities to consider a much more immediate area, which our research shows people are much more concerned with than council areas."*

The recommendation stemming from this is that *"The Government should evaluate the role of local and neighbourhood plans, with a view to determining whether neighbourhood plans should be set by local authorities following neighbourhood consultation, if no parish council or neighbourhood forum does so."*

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3   http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Locality_Small-Scale-Community-led-Housing.pdf
4   https://bshf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Community_led-Housing-in-England_History-and-Context.pdf
5   http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/local-housing-community-living.pdf
6   http://www.demos.co.uk/project/community-builders-report/

3. The Potential of Neighbourhood Planning

3.1 Development and development pressures are all too often seen by communities as coming in from the outside, as are the policies that shape them. There is therefore probably little surprise in the increasing numbers preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans. Since the frontrunners scheme in 2011 around 1,900 communities have taken steps to take up neighbourhood planning.

3.2 From the research published in 2014 it is reported that *"The great majority of groups wanted to have a greater say in planning and development in their own areas and to help shape a future vision for the neighbourhood."*[7] This driver for involvement in neighbourhood planning is further illuminated by the quote from one respondent "*[The] neighbourhood plan... primarily dictates where the housing will go, what type and size...local people want homes for younger people when they leave home and older people to downsize. We want housing to be the right type, preferably in places we like... [and control] phasing of construction - rather than have it all in one go* [Int. 50]."

3.3 The above tends to suggest that whilst communities want a say in what development takes place and where new development goes, most communities will inevitable seek to limit growth. There is however evidence that indicates that participatory involvement in policy development at the community level leads to a change in behaviour in favour of the policy. If this is the case then this could mean that neighbourhood planning processes lead to more housing for local people in the places communities want it, and don't limit growth. In this respect the following are worth noting:

3.4 Jackson[8] (2005) argued that behavioural change in favour of sustainability must be a social process, and that motivation for sustainable consumption must include building supportive communities, promoting inclusive societies, providing meaningful work and encouraging purposeful lives. Jackson (2005) notes that there is a need to research and explore how such community based participatory processes work by testing them in our communities.

3.5 As a methodology, participatory problem-solving, (helping people understand the issues and inviting them to explore possible solutions [Kaplan[9], 2000]) is worthy of further exploration. Participatory problem-solving is like several of the more active participation methods. These are the methods or mechanisms that;

a) Are inclusive, allowing all members of the public an opportunity to participate,

b) Require active public input and are at the high level of empowerment end of the continuum – they are not just simple consultations,

c) Offer extended involvement and promote active participation,

d) Need to be well designed and facilitated.

3.6 Meanwhile, Myers and Macnaughten[10] (1998) suggested that people do not identify, or at least find it very difficult to identify, with global views and so will not engage in policy development that works at this level. However, the converse of this is also suggested. This means that people are able to identify with issues that affect them personally. The implication is that they will engage in very local policy development that supports them to resolve the issues that are pertinent to them locally. Planning and development has an effect, for good or bad, at the very local level.

3.7 The research evidence argument above suggests that policy that is developed by the community it seeks to serve (the bottom-up approach) may be more beneficial in supporting behaviour change than policy developed without the engagement of local people. Whilst there is a need for comprehensive research as to the drivers for communities seeking to engage in neighbourhood planning it would appear that the delivery of housing, and specifically affordable housing, is clearly of interest to many groups (Qualifying Bodies) seeking to prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans. What this suggests is that rather than limiting growth neighbourhood planning could provide a mechanism for stimulating development.

7   http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/user-experience-of-neighbourhood-planning-in-england-research/
8   Jackson, T. 2005. Motivating Sustainable Consumption – a review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change. Centre for Environmental Strategy. University of Surrey.
9   Kaplan, S. 2000. Human Nature and Environmentally Responsible Behaviour. Journal of Social Issues. 56, 3, 491-508.
10 Myers G, Macnaghten P, 1998, «Rhetorics of environmental sustainability: commonplaces and places" Environment and Planning. 30, 2, 333 – 353.

4. The Current Role of Neighbourhood Planning

4.1 Once made, Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) have statutory weight. This means they should provide a greater degree of certainty about the scale and nature of development that can take place in a community. Whilst this is clearly the prize for local communities, it should be equally (if not more) attractive to developers.

4.2 The argument in favour of neighbourhood planning therefore appears to be strong; there is a need for processes that are more collaborative, inclusive and help build consensus and community when developing planning policy and determining where development goes. These are needed at the very local level, and are likely to result in development coming forward. This point is argued by DEMOS in their Community Builders report *"giving communities more power over local housing developments is not only good for democracy, but can actually help to get more homes built by creating a positive local political environment in favour of development. With greater control, residents might become active supporters for new development, rather than exhibiting the antagonistic behaviour often characterised as 'NIMBYism'."* [6]

4.3 In seeking to identify if there is evidence of development resulting in areas with made Neighbourhood Development Plans, the following are to be noted:

4.4 The emerging evidence from the number of communities engaged in neighbourhood planning tends to indicate that for many the development of housing is a key issue. Research published in June 2014 indicated that *"58 per cent were definitely seeking to allocate sites for housing in their plan, and a further 17 per cent may allocate sites for housing."* [11] At the time of that report there were an estimated 1,000 groups either preparing or considering preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan, and currently the figures show 1,939, with over 200 made plans.

4.5 In terms of the impact (and progress) that neighbourhood planning is having on housing delivery, a paper published in October 2015 indicated that for those Neighbourhood Development Plans that had been in force for more than six months, and which had allocated housing sites, 11% more housing was allocated within the Neighbourhood Development Plan than by the relevant Local Plan [12]. Whilst there is clearly a need for review of the plans now made, this indicates that land is indeed being allocated for development through neighbourhood planning processes.

4.6 Neighbourhood Development Plans should look at all aspects of the area's environment, economy, housing, community facilities and infrastructure. They should be used to guide appropriate and high quality development that is locally (and globally) sustainable and suggest things that really need to be improved locally. To determine how a neighbourhood meets these issues in a sustainable way, community members must talk to each other, have access to the experts (including the local authority and other statutory agencies), and work in a way that seeks to establish a majority position that is supported within the community.

4.7 Collecting the evidence, negotiating and reaching a broad wide ranging agreement among all stakeholders is part of what neighbourhood planning is about. So, whilst neighbourhood planning shifts the balance of power to communities, the preparation of neighbourhood development plans should also mean that planning policy, and hence future land use, achieves a better balance, once that is generally supported by the community and the local authority.

4.8 The process of plan preparation should therefore mean that communities, local authorities and other statutory agencies are potentially relating to development from a common space. Moreover, because Neighbourhood Development Plans should look at all aspects of the local area, dialogue within communities on matters beyond housing, also has the potential to shift.

4.9 Given the above, it is surprising that there has been a limited discussion about the implementation of Neighbourhood Development Plans once made. Moreover, there is a clear argument for suggesting that the preparation of plans for implementation alongside the process of plan preparation is a logical evolutionary step for neighbourhood planning, and is one that would lead to development coming forward more rapidly.

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11   http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/user-experience-of-neighbourhood-planning-in-england-research/
12   http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-progress-on-housing-delivery/

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5. The Potential Role of Neighbourhood Planning

5.1   In broad terms the process followed in preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan is shown in the table below. There are several stages that are very similar to the process commonly followed by those bringing forward development within the community. Although the packages of work don't completely align, it seems sensible to consider what the opportunities might be to align development being brought forward by a community with the process its follows in preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Development Plan	The shared opportunity	Bringing forward development
Decide on the area	Initial work to engage locally and build support and agreement about the route forward	Scoping
Prepare the plan	Evidence gathering and testing stage	Feasibility
Consult on the plan		Viability and business model
Independent check	Independent Examination for NDP, possible development control committee for planning application	Planning consent
Referendum		
Made NDP	Implementation	Delivery

5.2   Experience gained through the preparation a Community Right to Build Order, through discussions with those undertaking some form of community led development and from discussions with those preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans, suggests three ways that the processes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan could provide routes by which a community can bring forward sustainable development in their communities.

5.21   Community-informed development

"A neighbourhood plan becomes part of the statutory 'development plan'. This is important as under section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in making a determination, regard must be had to the development plan and the determination be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As a result those communities choosing to produce a neighbourhood plan (these plans are not mandatory) produce a plan with real bite." [13]

i)   Neighbourhood Development Plans provide the local community with a seat at the table, indeed at the head of the table! Through Neighbourhood Development Plans, communities have greater control over planning policy. Through the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan it is also possible to set out design considerations and the type and mix of development that would be expected to come forward on particular sites.

ii)   During the preparation of a neighbourhood plan communities develop insights and systems for a more astute and collective understanding of what their community needs. As a consequence many communities are starting to consider and identify how services and infrastructure can be delivered alongside development (housing, employment space and community facilities). Through this communities are better placed to inform and lead other civic programmes around service provision, asset development, education, transportation, local energy production and local food production.

iii)   Applications for development are made by applying to the Local Planning Authority for planning permission. Therefore, if the Neighbourhood Development Plan allocates sites, as the plan has statutory weight and must be considered by the Local Planning Authority as part of the Local Plan, communities are directly informing where development goes.

5.22   Development co-ordinated by communities

"Early figures indicate that plans for housebuilding are more than 10% higher in areas that have a neighbourhood plan than in the council's local plan." [14]

i)   Through the processes established in preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans there is clearly the potential to dovetail these with mechanisms to deliver the development communities want to see, by bringing forward more detailed plans for development. So, rather than just setting a context for development, as in Community Informed Development, the community takes a lead in planning what the development will look like. The use of instruments such as Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders provides an opportunity for communities to lead masterplanning exercises, and detail the development they wish to see come forward on specific sites within the neighbourhood areas. Whilst underused at this time there is real potential in these mechanisms.

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13   Perspectives on planning in the UK, Ann Skippers, 2013 http://www.annskippers.co.uk/articles/
14   New Landmark with 200 communities now approving neighbourhood plans, 11 July 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-landmark-with-200-communities-now-approving-neighbourhood-plans

ii) Neighbourhood Development Plans are a route for a community to have real influence over the type of development that takes place over the period of the plan, and along with Neighbourhood Development Orders they have the potential to shift the power around development across England. Neighbourhood Development Orders have the potential to provide a greater degree of certainty about the scale and nature of development that can take place. This is clearly the prize for local communities, but it is equally (if not more) attractive to land owners and developers.

iii) Whilst engaging and negotiating with land owners and developers is not without its challenges, there are distinct advantages in doing so. This can enable a community to extend its own tools and insight to better ensure development meets its needs. There are also developers (particularly the smaller, medium and bespoke developers) who are beginning to recognise that this type of certainty means a great degree of success for them and less financial risk (no appeals etc. because of the community determining when and what development should take place). Development Co-ordinated by Community should therefore be beneficial to both communities and developers. With the opportunity to use mechanisms like Neighbourhood Development Orders the impact of Neighbourhood Development Plans is likely to be broader (i.e. beyond any Neighbourhood Development Order or community-led development) and would more likely result in the uptake of partnerships between communities and corporate bodies to deliver out development within the context of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and as such garner further local support for development. There are practitioners in the development industry who can deliver to a market of community developers locally and regionally and in so doing expand the pool of expertise that will benefit the development industries more broadly. There are also potential partnerships between developers that would enable the delivery of housing as well as the development of assets for communities and the capabilities of those communities to take on further development; as noted in the Housing White Paper '*the Government expects developers to build more homes, to engage with communities and promote the benefits of development, to focus on design and quality, and to build homes swiftly where permission is granted. Critically, we also expect them to take responsibility for investing in their research and skills base to create more sustainable career paths and genuinely bring forward thousands of new skilled roles.*'

5.23 Community-led development

i) Given that Neighbourhood Development Plans seek to allocate sites for development (including housing and employment space), and that often there is a need for affordable housing, it is surprising that as yet, there has not been a more significant connection between groups in communities seeking to undertake community led development and neighbourhood plan preparation.

ii) The number of communities seeking to undertake new development is growing, as is the diversity of development they want to bring forward. Community-led development now includes new housing, farms and space for growing, renewable energy projects, employment space, play areas, new community facilities, and new health facilities to name but a few. Providing affordable houses in the place communities want them alongside more development potential overall is a positive addition to meeting housing needs. Given both outcomes, the case for supporting community-led development within the context of neighbourhood planning seems clear. However, to support the case further the following are noted:

a) Some land on which communities are potentially interested in developing may not be viable or attractive to other developments. Therefore, supporting communities that have the ambition to build affordable housing, in a range of ways on such land, will be likely to liberate a pipeline of housing.

b) With development coming forward within communities, knowledge of development processes and practices locally may reduce antagonism around development more broadly, increasing the expectation and delivery of good development practice across the industry.

6. Enabling development within communities

6.1 By continuing to enable a rigour, within Neighbourhood Development Plan making processes, the Government is supporting the potential for development within and by community and community-led development.

6.2 Beyond continued support for neighbourhood planning processes there appears to be an argument to align support for community-led development processes within the context of neighbourhood planning.

6.3 Experience gained through preparing a Community Right to Build Order indicates that the following framework needs to be considered:

   i) An early awareness of the routes to development and potential opportunities for community-led development would ensure the group can grow its capacity, capability and resources early enough to ensure a timely inclusion of community-led development within neighbourhood development plans and other community plans and processes.

   ii) Providing a clear step-by-step process, early enough, that delivers actual buildings through community-led development, and that enables a community to deliver any number of outcomes. This is likely to support groups from very initial points right through to build and habitation.

   iii) Support in the early stages, regardless of initial intention, needs to address the longer-term development potential of a group, which translates into development of capacity and confidence in groups.

6.4 Support in the context of a step by step process will enable a community group to practically:

   • Undertake meaningful engagement to identify true need and capacity

   • Partner and liaise with groups outside the 'usual suspects'

   • Ensure effective governance of the process

   • Commission technical and specialist support that is needed in a timely and effective way

   • Negotiate land deals that manage risk within a wider structure

   • Develop and manage complex budgets and build programmes

   • Risk assess development plans at every stage.

7. The Benefits of Aligning Processes

7.1 For communities, a single process that can deliver a multitude of benefits locally provides a greater return for their efforts than potentially has been recognised by those 1900 already embarking on the journey of Neighbourhood Planning.

7.2 There is opportunity in development for a community to get involved from the root, and other organisations to shape their work around this growing empowerment. Places are about people, so development driven by those closest to it is an obvious win-win despite the challenges on the way.

7.3 Following a Neighbourhood Planning process can:

- demystify local and national structures,
- enable communities to see opportunities previously the domain of experts,
- enable a coming together of knowledge, experience and need locally, and
- provide a range of options that are tangible for the community wanting to inform, lead and deliver housing, infrastructure and/ or services.

For communities, neighbourhood planning processes achieve the above by developing trust in a process to deliver what they collectively need.

7.4 Working with communities in the driving seat is conceptually attractive to many agencies, but the reality can be challenging. In this respect the legislative process of neighbourhood planning provide comfort and allow genuine partnerships to deliver better on the ground. It also changes the power dynamics between communities and other organisations, taking people at all levels of civic, public and private organisations out of their comfort zones whilst working towards shared outcomes.

7.5 The invitation is simple (even if in practice very hard work): follow the process and find the development that meets your need. This is a new way of working for many people in communities, and has the potential to challenge traditional modes of Community Development (in its broadest term). It is less about outcome driven delivery and more about process.

7.6 It is also a new area of community intervention. Many organisations working in housing development are already separating into distinct forms of development by community. Whilst there is a role for specialist experience, this paper deliberately seeks to broaden the potential for communities without advocating any one form of development by community.

7.7 Critically for the public and private sector, this is about finding new ways of enabling communities to take a process-led strategic approach to their local area. Some of this is knowing how effectively to deliver the funding and expertise that communities determine they need through the process, at different stages. For some sectors this is about providing technical support in a way that delivers the returns the community needs rather than the outcomes those sectors traditionally expect with their relationships.

7.8 The above indicates that the framework required in preparing a neighbourhood development plan offers the opportunity, and context, for communities to be more actively engaged in bringing forward development in a more coherent way than previously. Critically though, the framework of neighbourhood planning also allows for the spectrum of opportunity. At one end, setting the policy context and having influence over the determination of planning applications, and at the other end certainly owning and possibly building the final development.

7.9 It is also clear that the take-up of community-led development may be higher if there is a greater alignment with neighbourhood planning processes; land allocation, housing tenure and mix, and methods of delivery are all issues that have been dealt with as policies within Neighbourhood Development Plans. As these are issues which often need to be overcome by groups pursuing community-led development, it appears reasonably to argue that closer alignment between neighbourhood plan making processes and community led development may increase the number of houses developed by the sector annually.

8. The catalyst created by community led development

8.1 What the three routes outlined in Section 5 indicate, is that communities can be more actively engaged in bringing forward development within their communities. However, the resulting development is not the only outcome: critically, experience indicates that the process of preparing a community led development and then moving into delivery brings benefits and outcomes, that indicate that such processes can enable communities to move towards devolution and therefore lead to greater resilience within that community and well as de-stressing public services.

8.2 The potential within the process is, in part, the ability to see the connections across areas of civic development as well as a route to practical housing development. This includes:

i) Increased civic participation through engagement processes

ii) Partnership working with statutory agencies, development professionals and local authorities

iii) Increases practical opportunities for creation of input into infrastructure projects, including local services and transport planning

8.3   Dialogue between previously distanced agencies takes place through the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans, and community led development that is rooted within the neighbourhood planning process. This is clearly a consultative and partnership forming process across the community, with agencies, potential developers and contractors. One that has the potential not only to deliver the objectives around inputs into local planning and development, but also to enable a community to foster its own ability to shape need and locality beyond policy development. This has the potential to lead to greater community engagement and cohesion.

8.4   The Community Right to Build Order process followed at Atmos Totnes [15], which mirrors the process required to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Order facilitated:

- Three strands of expertise working hand-in-hand: the professional design team, statutory agencies and the local community.
- Regular consultation over the year (20 + sessions) which provided an iterative framework for review of design, which in turn has facilitated over 4500 meaningful contributions to the design of Atmos Totnes by the local community.
- Workshops on specific topics providing detail that crossed design themes around job provision and housing to meet need.

The made Community Right to Build Order for Atmos Totnes provides for the following; 62 affordable houses (held affordable in perpetuity); 37 houses for those aged over 55; 7,051 square metres of workspace; a 58-bed hotel; an energy centre; a community venue; youth provision; health facilities; an integrated sustainable transport plan. The process from initial engagement (October 2014) to made Order (March 2017) took 29 months.

8.5   However, the potential for a community following this process goes beyond the plan, order or consent itself. The opportunity in following such a process is magnified when we consider what the process itself allows, and that it enables a community to become increasingly versed, connected and able to act to support and in some cases, provide service and infrastructure programmes. The connections made across the community as a result of the process, the opportunities provided for people to engage and the opportunity for them to come together with professionals to develop solutions they collectively own to meet the community's needs are as important as the plan, order or consent.

8.6   The experience gained through Atmos Totnes is that this potential starts to be realised through the process itself. By way of example:

- through the opportunity to volunteer, professionals and committed community activists have got involved in activity they think will shape their communities or deliver projects that the community have sought to get off the ground for some time. These people are seeing the opportunity offered through the enabling context, they are not signing up to specific tasks or duties but rather offering their skills, time and abilities to something more nebulous (place shaping). The outcome of this is that they are engaging with others within the community previously not involved in any form of community engagement activities and creating a space for them to get involved. They are building capacity within the community.
- by bringing together those with a current and/or future need for business space, existing businesses (both private and community) have started to collaborate with each other and in so-doing are starting to create a market within the setting of the community and are supporting themselves to become more sustainable.
- the way in which the proposals for Atmos Totnes have come forward has started to facilitate a discussion within and across the community about the ownership and management of assets. This discussion recognises that there is value in establishing a multiple asset base, which provides an opportunity to generate a number of different revenue income streams (related to housing, business space, community space and energy), which in turn reduce the risk of managing any one specific asset, whilst at the same time generating greater surpluses which can be recirculated in to the community, so as to either support services and activities that are under threat or develop new activity that cannot be otherwise funded.

8.7   In summary, experience suggests that the process of facilitating a community-led development, within the neighbourhood planning framework, not only leads to the outcome (a planning consent or made Order), but is of significant value in its own right. It appears to provide an opportunity to support a community to consider the ways it can become more resilient and sustainable by providing a space for connections to develop and grow. Within this the opportunity to manage assets more effectively, through the common and collective ownership across a community, provides an enhanced opportunity to meet local need. If the dialogue across a community and with statutory agencies is continued as the development is delivered it is felt that it is possible that this will support communities to establish a dialogue about the most appropriate ways in which devolution might take place at a community level. In short this could lead to greater resilience within the community as well as de-stressing public services.

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15   Atmos Totnes is a proposed development on an 8 acre brownfield site in Totnes see www.atmostotnes.org

9. Addendum: Practical Support for Communities

Having used the processes and opportunity outlined above (to reach the point of a made Order) there is support relating to the three-stages of the process that would have helped Atmos Totnes move on at a more rapid pace. For those interested in supporting communities to undertake development the areas of support that would have helped are listed below. There is no call for action here, but rather a call for those who support community-led development to consider the following and to truly co-ordinate their support.

It is important to note that early offers of support will be likely to strengthen the process overall; i.e. support in the initial stages will not only service those initial stages but will result in and provide ongoing skills, capacity and resilience.

Stage 1: enabling communities and scoping

For community led development to move past the point of pure potential within the process of neighbourhood planning, there is a need to effectively build the awareness, confidence and capacity of organisations, whilst they are engaging the community in the early stage development of their proposals. The focus here is initial steps that show the possible pathways. Seeing the journey ahead and understanding where you are on the journey, as well as engendering the confidence to create a bespoke approach. It is critical that this does not predetermine the needs of the community or the outcomes of the process, but simply shows the strategic path and the possible routes.

Practically, there is a need for clear and simple input from experts which is underpinned by understanding of the process and the strategy, and which provides signposting to other resources.

Stage 2: feasibility and viability

Once communities get to the critical point of identifying land, several other practical and technical packages could be triggered alongside the Stage 1 support to address the complexity of understanding, including whether the land can and should be brought forward through community-led development.

Practically the following areas of support would help:

i) A managed option fund: for many communities seeking to undertake community led development this would enable them to access land and would be extremely helpful. Despite the opportunity afforded by the process and framework of neighbourhood planning its not easy for communities to become 'players' in development. Access to funding which would enable land to be optioned and pre-development costs to be met would increase the number of completed developments. These funds could be delivered through revolving loan funds, where the costs of the option and pre-development costs are repaid once the development is completed. Such a fund would provide some security for communities undertaking exploratory work at risk, and is likely to increase development in those areas with a portfolio of land unattractive to the mainstream developers.

ii) The development of a pool of community-led practitioner built environment specialists who can offer bespoke but sensibly costed (from pro-bono support onwards) support to groups needing help with their masterplanning activities. Fee structures could be developed to increase as the risk decreases. So, small amounts of initial input for free to start 'to prove' the project, moving on to feasibility fees at reduced costs, to fully funded feasibility work. The aim here would be to build the capacity within a community to develop its own capacity and resilience, so working locally with professionals is the key and asking them to 'give a little' to their community is a way of supporting the creation of resilience within the community.

In addition to the above, it is also argued that there needs to be a review of initiatives like the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Currently, CIL generates money for areas where there is high growth but does nothing to stimulate growth in under-performing areas where development land is available, but not viable. Why not collect a percentage of these monies collected in high growth areas and spread it across those areas where there is no growth but available land, and communities who wish to use such land for development but cannot get a foothold?

Stage 3: planning, detailed design and delivery

Taking concept plans and a community through planning (including through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders) and onwards to development would be helped by:

i) Staged financial input which de-risks development.

- This involves de-mystifying the process for a portfolio of local lenders and national bodies. This would allow relationships to develop between communities and funders in an appropriate way and time within a staged, understandable process.

- Following initial input in the feasibility stages, finances could be offered in a staged approach with money earmarked for communities and released in phases as the strategy develops. Staging finance therefore decreases the risk of the developments not occurring, and minimises the risk of other investors in the scheme.

ii) A network or co-operative of professional providers of technical input, who understand the opportunities and challenges of community-led development, and who are willing to work a percentage of time at risk, pro-bono or at cost would enable the flow of design to respond to the community need presented in Stage 1, and be match-fit for planning and build. This also provides the framework for local skills development, builds the capacity for employment and enterprise networks, and avoids the idea that communities need to rely on experts or professionals being parachuted in.

Notes

Helping Communities Build Themselves
(from the inside out)

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