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another year of uncertainty?

At the start of a new year it is always useful to take a moment to reflect. As has been the case for many organisations and individuals, for the Association 2021 proved to be a continuation of a challenging time. While we were better equipped in the second year of the pandemic from an operational point of view—for example we are now really experienced at running virtual events—Covid and a lack of clarity about the government's next steps on planning reform continued to pose a lot of uncertainty. But, despite that, we achieved a lot.

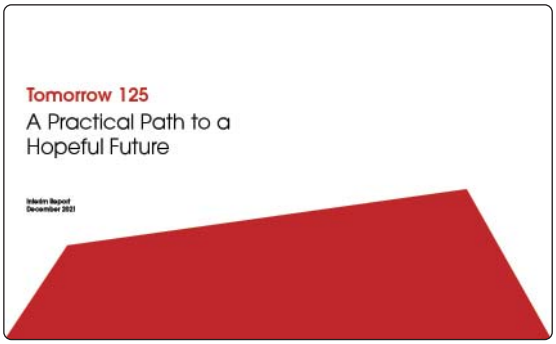
There isn't space here to cover everything, but one of the highlights was finally being able to host the 'Garden Cities Symposium: Celebrating Welwyn Garden City at 100', which had been delayed from 2020. The first day of the event was held virtually, and the second involved in-person field trips within Welwyn Garden City itself. This was the first face-to-face event that the Association had held since March 2019.[1] We are hoping to be able to return to more face-to-face events in 2022, including the Spring Conference, which is scheduled for March.

We were also pleased to publish some very important guidance, including, in early spring, the *20-Minute Neighbourhoods* guide for council planners in England.[2] And we issued an updated version of our guide on planning for climate change, once again published jointly with the RTPI.[3]

I am conscious that my contributions to *Town & Country Planning* often cover our campaigning and influencing work (and in this respect see the collection of articles in this issue relating to the TCPA's campaign for healthy homes) because, of course, seeking to influence planning reform and the government's agenda is a priority for us and will continue to be so. But, as set out in our current five-year strategy,[4] to achieve our desired impact of creating healthy sustainable and resilient places that are fair for everyone we also want to work more directly with community groups and individuals. We are doing this through a number of projects, including our work to support Planning Aid for London (PAL) and as a partner in a project focused on supporting discussions about community-led, affordable housing in Belfast.

We also took forward pilot work in Peterlee, which aims to facilitate discussions about the future of the town, and which will continue into 2022. TCPA staff have had meetings with Peterlee Town and Durham County Councils and representatives of local arts organisations and have held workshops, including events with college students. Work continues to support the community in commissioning a new art installation as part of initiatives to regenerate and renew the New Town, which I hope we can say more about in a future edition of *Town & Country Planning*.

2021 also saw us initiate a new project called 'Tomorrow 125'. Subject to funding, we hope that the project will conclude in 2023, the 125th anniversary of the publication of Ebenezer Howard's seminal work *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. While the work of the TCPA to champion Howard's ideas has resulted in the development of higher-quality places in some instances, his model has rarely been holistically applied. The project is therefore examining whether we can still learn from the Garden City idea in constructing a fairer, healthier and more sustainable future. There is a dedicated project website (at www.tomorrow125.org.uk), and in December we published an interim report, *Tomorrow 125: A Practical Path to a Hopeful Future*, reflecting both on the results of a survey that has been undertaken and on progress to date, and setting out proposed next steps.[5]



Looking ahead to what 2022 holds for the TCPA, it seems likely that the main theme will continue to be 'uncertainty'. This applies to a range of areas, including politics, the economy, and how we live with Covid. But we know that we continue to face health, housing, climate and nature crises—and inequalities relating to all of them. Inequalities have been, and are likely to continue to be, exacerbated by the impacts of Covid. While some people may have more flexibility about where they work, using remote and virtual working, for example, this is not the case for many, and we must keep this at the forefront of our minds.

While the Levelling Up White Paper has finally been published,[6] we know there will be further change on the horizon as we await a Nature White Paper, a White Paper on Health Disparities, and levelling-up and planning legislation—as well as another review of the National Planning Policy Framework. So, there is, as ever, much for the TCPA to do. At the time of writing we continue to digest the detail of the Levelling Up White Paper but, at the risk of sounding naïve, I believe that the inclusion of healthy life expectancy and wellbeing within the 12 missions gives us a glimmer of hope! Despite, therefore, the challenges we face in the year ahead, we will continue to work hard to make sure that those working at community, local, sub-national and national levels are aware that the built and natural environments have profound impacts on people's health, wellbeing, and life-chances. And to ensure that this knowledge informs policy and legislative development, as well as decision-making.

● ***Fiona Howie*** *is Chief Executive of the TCPA.*

Notes

1 A film commissioned for the event and a post-symposium report are available from the TCPA website, at www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-cities-symposium

2 *20-Minute Neighbourhoods — Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities. An Introduction for Council Planners in England*. TCPA, Mar. 2021. www.tcpa.org.uk/guide-the-20-minute-neighbourhood

3 The webinar held to launch the guide and the guide itself (*The Climate Crisis — A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change*. TCPA, Oct. 2021, Third Edition) are available at www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-for-climate-change

4 Information about the TCPA's vision, mission and values, and a PDF of the strategy, are available from the TCPA website, at www.tcpa.org.uk/what-we-stand-for

5 *Tomorrow 125: A Practical Path to a Hopeful Future*. Interim Report. TCPA, Dec. 2021. www.tcpa.org.uk/tomorrow-125

6 *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Feb. 2022. www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom

The TCPA's **vision** is for homes, places and communities in which everyone can thrive. Its **mission** is to challenge, inspire and support people to create healthy, sustainable and resilient places that are fair for everyone.

Informed by the Garden City Principles, the TCPA's strategic priorities are to:

- Work to secure a good home for everyone in inclusive, resilient and prosperous communities, which support people to live healthier lives.
- Empower people to have real influence over decisions about their environments and to secure social justice within and between communities.
- Support new and transform existing places to be adaptable to current and future challenges, including the climate crisis.

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- Affordable housing
- Community participation in planning
- Garden Cities and New Towns
- Healthy Homes Act campaign
- Healthy place-making
- New Communities Group
- Parks and green infrastructure
- Planning reform
- Planning for climate change

Hugh Ellis and **Jessie Fieth** look at two planning decisions that will go a long way to defining England's response to the climate crisis

climate change—no time for planning uncertainty

We are currently in the post-COP 26 hangover period. The great outpouring of public concern about the threats posed by climate change now has to be translated into urgent practical action through real decisions in real places. But decision-making is currently set in what is an increasingly toxic political environment, in which some politicians continue to argue against climate measures—ironically often because of high and increasing fossil-fuel energy prices. And the sources of the fossil fuels that we currently use, particularly gas, too often place us in the hands of regimes upon which no democracy should have to depend.

But the rapid development of renewable energy resources, along with decentralised delivery mechanisms, would, and still can, solve such problems—offering stability in supply and long-term energy costs. Such a transformation, and the drastic measures that we need to manage the impacts of climate change, have to be urgent priorities for planning reform in 2022.

The forthcoming review of the National Planning Policy Framework will be a major test of the government's commitment to addressing the climate crisis. It must go much further than just embedding aspects of the delivery of net-zero homes: it must set out a fundamental reframing of the planning system to provide a practical route-map for surviving the climate crisis. Much has been written about the importance of this policy objective, and countless submissions to government have been made to this end by broad coalitions of organisations—but there has not yet been any clear action. It is true that under the recently appointed Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary of State Michael Gove the mood music has been better, but time is not on our side.

Looking beyond a general sense of frustration, there are two recent planning decisions that have been called in by the Secretary of State and which act as a test of the commitment of the Westminster government to both cutting carbon and adapting to climate impacts. The first is the application for the development of a new coal mine in Cumbria, to provide coking coal for the steel industry. The public inquiry into the application ended in October 2021, and at the time of writing a decision is expected imminently.[1]

The UK's climate change commitments leave no credible case for the approval of this application. The Climate Change Committee has made clear that, to meet our carbon reduction commitments, the steel industry must stop using coal by 2035—just 13 years away.[2] Moreover, around 85% of the coal produced by the new mine would be exported, and it is a simple reality that every tonne of coal produced adds flame to the climate crisis fire at a time when meeting our existing reduction targets is proving difficult enough. Consenting new coal reserves is clearly a retrograde step into supporting outdated technology when there is simultaneously rapid investment in innovation in clean steel technology.

In short, the government has to refuse the application, both in response to the evidence and so as to maintain its wider reputation as a global leader on climate innovation.

The second decision follows a decision made in the East Lindsey local government district on the Lincolnshire coast. While it will never receive anything like the level of media coverage given to the Cumbrian coal mine, the outcome could have life or death consequences for many of the people in the area. The East Lindsey district includes a highly vulnerable stretch of coastline which is susceptible to storm surges—such as those that hit in 1953 and 2013. The surge in 2013 was higher than that in 1953, but, while extensive flooding occurred, changes in wind direction and tidal conditions avoided a worst-case scenario. Under different conditions there could easily have been a very different story.

Behind the concrete-capped sand dunes erected after the 1953 storm event are tens of thousands of static holiday caravans, sited in an area with one of the UK's highest flood risk designations. It is surprising to find that the current flood defences are not subdivided in land, meaning that a single breach of

Duncan Cutherbertson/iStock

Caravan camping resort park near Skegness in the East Lindsey district—caravan parks may seem unlikely testing grounds for the strength of commitment to climate change policy, but a recent decision is highly significant

the defences could lead to very extensive flooding. The risks to the people in these caravans have thus far been managed by restricting occupancy in the winter months (from November to March), when the risk of storms is far greater, and through evacuation plans based on these restrictions.

Parts of East Lindsey also suffer from serious issues of health inequality and deprivation, and the local economy is dependent on tourism. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, local politicians were seeking to relax occupancy conditions so that people could stay on the caravan sites for 11 months of the year, in order to help the local economy. It was also clear that considerable numbers of people were no longer keeping to the regulations as strictly as they might. In 2020, the council drafted a Local Development Order[3] to allow blanket relaxation of occupancy conditions, and was minded to respond favourably to individual applications. It was three of these applications that were called in by the Secretary of State.[4]

The heart of the case for relaxation was the suggestion that individual flood resilience measures on particular caravan sites are, along with evacuation procedures, enough to overcome both Local Plan policy requirements and national guidance which demand the application of the sequential and exception tests. In essence, it was proposed that large-scale holiday caravan parks would be translated into semi-permanent residential development with only a brief four weeks of the year during which the caravans had to stand empty.

The Environment Agency and the TCPA submitted strong objections to these proposals, and it was thus an enormous relief when the Secretary of State decided to refuse the applications (two outright, with one 'minded to refuse' decision, but inviting further representations before a final decision), because of the severe flood risk and in recognition that evacuation policies are not a proportionate response to the level of risk.

'The decision is vitally important in protecting, as a priority, people's health, wellbeing and safety, and it sets a significant precedent for similar applications'

One might conclude that the issues were so obvious that the Secretary of State had no other real choice. However, the decision is vitally important in protecting, as a priority, people's health, wellbeing and safety, and it sets a significant precedent for similar applications.

While from the outside both these proposals may seem incomprehensible, they serve to bring to light two important issues.

First, the local politicians who made these decisions were not presented with a clear and digestible

picture of the radically increasing risks to their communities posed by climate change, and so—in the East Lindsey case—lacked an understanding of why extending occupancy conditions could be highly dangerous. Local political cultures in which climate change is still underestimated, or de-prioritised and seen as a problem for future generations, must change, and they have to change now. Furthermore, professionals working in planning and climate change need to identify the causes of failure to communicate the risks in cases where the issues are so clear and the likely impacts so stark.

It is worth noting that the local arguments in East Lindsey on the prioritisation of economic development over flood risk were encouraged by the tone of a statement[5] made by the then Secretary of State Robert Jenrick, which encouraged local authorities to take a flexible approach to occupancy conditions. As always, the culture within which decisions are taken is established at the top, and the failure of successive Ministers to make clear the importance of climate change in decision-making has left a dangerous uncertainty in the minds of many local decision-makers.

'We cannot leave community decision-makers to grapple with some of the biggest global dilemmas on climate change. They need to be enabled by central government to offer their residents a positive future, and that requires much stronger policy and intervention'

The second issue is that both cases concerned communities who have largely been 'left behind', facing significant social and environmental problems but with very few positive options for development. The transition to a net-zero future provides enormous employment opportunities, but there is absolutely no plan to shape these opportunities to benefit ex-industrial communities. The situation in East Lindsey is particularly stark, because the *survival* of existing communities, let alone their future growth and development, depends on vitally important strategic decisions about the future of the east coast. Without a clear decision on long-term investment in the resilience of such places or, conversely, a decision to roll back or relocate them, it is impossible to see a feasible path ahead.

The lesson is that we simply cannot leave community decision-makers to grapple with some of the biggest global dilemmas on climate change. They need to be enabled by central government to offer their residents a positive future, and that requires much stronger policy and intervention.

● ***Dr Hugh Ellis*** *is Policy Director and* ***Jessie Fieth*** *is a Projects and Policy Manager at the TCPA. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/H0900/V/21/3271069. https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?CaseID=3271069&CoID=0

2 *The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's Path to Net Zero*. Climate Change Committee, Dec. 2020. www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/

3 See 'Coastal LDO (Local Development Order)'. Webpage. East Lindsey District Council. www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/CoastalLDO

4 *Town and Country Planning Act 1990 — Section 77 Applications Made by A. Mr K Palmer, B. Ms A Nash & C. Ellis Bros Contractors Limited*. Application Refs: A. N/084/00587/20, B. N/110/00906/20 & C. S/090/00770/20. Decision Letter. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Jan. 2022. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1047415/22-01-17_East_Lindsey_x_3_DL+IR.pdf

5 *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Planning Update on Cultural Venues and Holiday Parks*. Guidance. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Jul. 2020, revised Dec. 2020. www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-update-on-cultural-venues-and-holiday-parks--2

& country planning?

Whatever the rights or wrongs of Brexit, Britain has the opportunity to change the incentives and regulatory constraints to suit its rural characteristics and needs, says Richard Wakeford

in 'country planning' — new approaches to deliver the best use of farmland?

Invited to make a regular input to T*own & Country Planning*, I asked for my contributions to be headed '& Country Planning?'. After all, many of the statutes creating the framework for land use planning in Great Britain have those '& country' words in their title. But it's not only the planning system that shapes the character of our countryside. Following Brexit, everyone interested in 'country planning' should look at two recent announcements — Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary George Eustace's significant speech to this January's Oxford Farming Conference; and the establishment of a new House of Lords Committee on Land Use in England (see the box on page 9).

When it comes to *country* planning, there are some fair questions to ask. For example, how significant is planning legislation in influencing land use outside the urban areas when no built development is proposed? Reaching back over the last century, did legislators *ever* intend that land uses in town and country should be planned together in an integrated way? Should the UK have better embraced 'territorial cohesion', to use the European Commission term, with development planning properly reflecting the *interdependence* of town and country across regions?

The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 started to address the challenge of rebuilding after the Second World War. In shaping rural land use, Parliament delivered the Agriculture Act 1947, including provisions to encourage better use of the nation's farmland resource. And the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 created arrangements for protecting the most important land for wildlife and for designating National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Taken together, these Acts and subordinate legislation, suitably fine-tuned over the years, provided an approach delivering generally positive rural outcomes. By and large, farm and other rural businesses have delivered food and other services, while protecting nature and countryside character.

When building works are not involved, however, our town and country planning process has little positive influence on the landscape. Other incentives and constraints are more significant — especially those rewarding farmers and landowners for the delivery of public goods. Beyond providing for modest development in villages and smaller settlements, England's land use planning tends to focus on urban areas and proposals to extend them.

Elsewhere, the landscape has been significantly influenced by various European Union environmental rules and incentives — especially farm payments and rural development schemes applied in broadly uniform fashion across all EU Member States. Together, these regulations and financial incentives for rural development and infrastructure are said to address the need for 'territorial development'.

In the UK, our laws and policy on nature conservation, countryside character and land use might be seen as a broad approach to '*and country planning*'. They have been significantly influenced by Europe-wide strategies — implemented domestically. Those working in town and country planning nationally and locally have needed to take account of these Europe-wide regimes.

Did these plans, rules and incentives amount to coherent 'country planning' — with an agreed vision to work towards? Others may comment on that. For now, Brexit provides the UK governments with an opportunity to change the incentives and regulatory constraints to suit our nations' rural characteristics and needs.

So, at the Oxford Farming Conference at the start of 2022 it was particularly important to listen to the latest ideas from George Eustace, the Secretary of State with responsibility in England for the environment and rural development. He announced significant changes in government

financial support for agriculture—to reward farmers and landowners for 'sustainable farming', and to replace subsidies based on land area, ownership, and tenure.[1]

In previous speeches, he has stressed the importance of *domestic* food production—and the application of world-leading agricultural science. In terms of rural landscapes, he has observed with regret the negative impact on landscape, flora and fauna resulting from 'modern' farm practices encouraged in the 1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps that impact was excusable when achieving higher yields was the goal; more intensive production processes and hedgerow removal seemed to be necessary to meet the food needs of society. But the consequence for biodiversity and public access was unwelcome to many people wanting to enjoy the countryside, especially in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks (where town and country planning manages the built environment with sensitivity).

In short, the intensive food production goal seemed to trump all the other public benefits of sustainable land management. That was not the intention of those who had promoted the comprehensive post-war legislation—nor, I suspect, of those who created Europe's Common Agricultural Policy, which then further influenced Britain's landscapes.

So, in his speech to this year's Oxford Farming Conference, Environment Secretary George Eustace started with fundamental criticism of the Europe-wide area-based farm payment scheme. Over the years, he asserted, basic farm payments in the UK had rewarded land ownership and tenure rather than the production of public goods. His new approach would 'dispense with that old style, rigid, top down rulebook' and replace it with new payments to incentivise *sustainable* farming.

No longer based on 'income foregone', public payments would focus on outcomes—on the scale required to deliver government-set overall legally binding targets for the environment. He spoke about a more sustainable approach right across the farm landscape—embracing soil health, sensitive hedgerow management, and integrated pest management. And he mentioned proposals for new nature and landscape recovery measures.

From the perspective of town and country planning, one component of the government's proposals will be of particular interest. It will start by looking for 15 projects ranging in size from around 500 hectares to 5,000 hectares. The aim will be to deliver nature-led recovery of habitats, initially focusing on threatened species and priority habitats. If the government's overall expressed target can be achieved—

Urban or rural development? Dutch barn converted into a luxury home—new planning freedoms enable the conversion of farm buildings into dwellings in the open countryside, in locations where development plans would generally discourage new homes

300,000 hectares of habitat restored, and 10,000 hectares of new tree planting each year—the scheme will clearly have an impact. In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks there will be opportunities from that investment in the countryside—encouraging, for example, the right mix of trees for the landscape, and the opportunity for visitors and residents to benefit. But for many people's rural enjoyment, well managed rights of way—encouraging fitness through walking and cycling—might also be a primary aim.

In 1999, the newly created Countryside Agency published a strategy for England's rural areas in 2020. Looking back, I am reminded of the constraints that the Agency faced. It was set the goal of helping to 'build a better countryside' through spreading best practice and influencing all whose actions would potentially deliver that. As a government body, it could not say much *publicly* about priorities for public funding, or about the impact or potential creative use of taxation. And financial influence on the farmed landscape was shaped by rules determined in Brussels. The Agency's Chair, Ewen Cameron, acted as 'Rural Advocate' for the government and others, helping to inform policy delivery.

More than 20 years on, that 'Rural Advocate' role rests perhaps with Natural England—to maintain an overview of the 'and country' dimension of rural development and conservation. For example, it might monitor the impact of measures driven by the Environment Secretary's colleagues in the so-called 'Levelling Up' Whitehall department, responsible for town and country planning legislation.

Box 1

New House of Lords Committee on Land Use in England

Baroness Young of Old Scone, a former Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, with support from Lord Cameron of Dillington, former Chair of the erstwhile Countryside Agency, has secured agreement to establish a House of Lords special inquiry to consider 'pressures on land use and the decision-making framework for competing priorities for land'. The inquiry will be conducted by a Land Use in England Committee.[A] Addressing the House of Lords Liaison Committee Baroness Young highlighted that pressures on land in England are increasing — and pressed for better 'country planning' arrangements:

> *'... in all my experience I have never seen as much pressure on land use across the board as exists at the moment. We are seeing increased demands for land, for dealing with climate change — both climate change adaptation and carbon sequestration — for changes in agriculture and forestry, perhaps becoming more self-sufficient, for biodiversity recovery and, in response to our increasing population, for built development for housing, jobs and infrastructure.*
>
> *At the same time as these increasing demands, we are seeing that, by sheer chance, the polities, the subsidies and the investment decisions in all these areas are undergoing major change, and substantial land-use shift is already under way. ...*
>
> *If we are going to ensure that the finite land we have [...] is used as effectively as possible, we have to find some way of joining up these diverse policies and decision-making processes better to ensure that our scarce land is able to meet these multiple objectives. [...]*
>
> *This proposal covers a [...] wide range of issues — for example, carbon and biodiversity in agriculture — and focuses not just on the formal land-use planning system, which is primarily about the built environment, but on the policy and decision-making areas that extend beyond that.'*[B]

The committee will aim to report by the end of November 2022.

A See the House of Lords Land Use in England Committee website, at https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6479/land-use-in-england/

B See https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/3021/default/

Permitted development rights under that legislation now enable the conversion of many farm buildings into dwellings in the open countryside — in locations where development plans would generally discourage new homes, taking account of the impact on local public service delivery. Another simplified process, 'Permission in Principle', is a small-scale zoning instrument that makes it easier to redevelop agricultural barns into isolated housing. These incremental measures in the town and country planning system, alongside the 'new country houses' policy, do change the character of the countryside that so many people value.

In terms of population per unit of land area, England is one of Europe's most densely developed nations. Most land that is not built on is managed for agriculture, with crops and management significantly influenced by European Union payment schemes. Brexit now enables that financial support to be tailored to meet specific national and regional goals — thus incentivising land managers to change farming practices for a positive impact on rural landscapes.

So, can the government complement the new approach to farming support with a national 'and country' approach to development and land use? In this, planning regulation, economic instruments and measures to enhance nature would be better joined up to achieve the best use of the nation's finite rural land resource. As a nation, we invest huge resources in land use plans for development; but rather less in looking to achieve the best from undeveloped land. That needs to change. Perhaps the new House of Lords committee will help find the way.

● ***Richard Wakeford***, *formerly Chief Executive of the Countryside Agency, is an Honorary Life Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. The views expressed are personal.*

Note

1 Speech by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs delivered to the Oxford Farming Conference, 6 Jan. 2022. www.gov.uk/government/speeches/environment-secretary-shares-further-information-on-local-nature-recovery-and-landscape-recovery-schemes

integrated rail in the north and the midlands—good balance

It was depressing to witness the political cries of outrage that greeted the government's *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands* publication[1] in November. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said that the Prime Minister 'had 'ripped up' promises he made that HS2 would go all the way to Leeds and that there would be a new NPR (Northern Powerhouse Rail) line from Manchester to Leeds.'[2] 'This was the first test of 'levelling up' and the government has completely failed and let down everybody in the North. You can't believe a word the Prime Minister says,' he said.[2]

The objective of better rail linkage south to London has been part of the established political mindset for decades. In the political arena, and in some economic and cultural sectors, London may still be the lynchpin, as should be expected of our national capital. But that does not mean that the number of people physically needing or wanting to travel by train to and from the North and Midlands (let alone regularly, and frequently) is strategically significant. The pre-Covid rise in numbers, year on year, may come back but, as the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) had put it to government a year earlier, there should be a focus on 'the journeys that people are most likely to take—into cities from the surrounding area, rather than into London (for example, in 2018–19, 60 per cent of journeys in Yorkshire and Humber were between places in the region, while only 10 per cent were to London)'.[3]

HS2

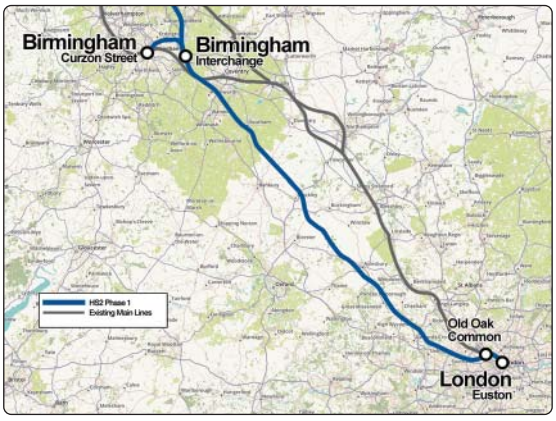
It is appreciated that the boasting rights of having an HS2 connection is one that would be proudly worn by many towns and cities, if only they could get one without upsetting the locals through its environmental impact. But the new dedicated fast rail line HS2 is a project grown from a different root stock: its primary purpose (never explained loudly enough) has been to relieve the West Coast Main Line. The other real benefits that could be gained in achieving that objective would improve its financial appraisal, and gain trophy-hunting political support, but were consequential.

The most recent root stock was the 2008 Department for Transport report, *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*,[4] which had identified 14 strategic national transport corridors in England. The intensely pressured London-to-Manchester corridor warranted a special mention. The following year the Department's modelling showed that the 'single most important and heavily used' rail corridor, and also the one which presented 'both the greatest challenges in terms of future capacity and the greatest opportunities to promote a shift of passenger and freight traffic from road to rail', was 'the West Coast main line, between London and the West Midlands [which was] likely to reach its absolute capacity limit by the mid-2020s—even after the £8.8 billion upgrade just completed and implementation of plans for longer trains and in-cab signalling'.[5]

Soon afterwards, and also in 2009, Gordon Brown's Labour government created a company called High Speed Two Limited (HS2 Ltd) to deliver a new relief line. After consultation during 2010, the 'Y'-shaped route from London to Birmingham, with branches to Leeds and Manchester, was confirmed by the Cameron/Clegg coalition government in 2012.

Exciting times for the train industry

The compressed logical sequence of events described above does not reveal enough about what the train engineering industry itself had been yearning for. The idea of a wholly new fast train line north of London had been brewing in and out of the public gaze for years: most developed countries had exciting rail projects of that sort, from Japan's Tōkaidō Shinkansen 'Bullet Train' network (started in 1964[6]) onwards.



The route of HS2 Phase 1

The UK had been embarrassed as a nation to have scrapped the wonderful tilting Advanced Passenger Train, designed and developed in the UK, but abandoned in 1985/86 due to cost overruns and forced premature trial running in a doomed attempt to stave off Margaret Thatcher's public spending axe.[7] So restoring the prestige of the UK's brilliant railway engineers and revitalising the industry, by having the chance to create a brand new fast line, scything across the landscape to carry whizzy new trainsets, was really exhilarating.

This dimension is mentioned because difficulties arose for HS2 from this proprietary focus of the train industry. Phase 1, now under construction and to be ready in 2033, has generated widespread opposition and resentment. The designers disregarded long lengths of the wide former Great Central Line through Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, the track bed of which still exists, with only relatively small lengths obstructed by housing or employment uses.

The TCPA's former President, the late geographer Professor Sir Peter Hall, was particularly incensed about that, and so were many who were aghast at the swathes of land and property clearance and the environmental harm of a wholly new route being built through open countryside and woodland across a chain of Tory constituencies, yet with no stations except at either end. The approach compared badly with the Arup-initiated, and subsequently Arup-designed, careful threading of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL, now called HS1) up through Kent from Folkestone. Expensive long tunnels under the Chilterns have placated a few of the HS2 detractors, but too few to make much difference to the scale of outrage. Further, the cost of building this 'perfect' new fast train line predictably overran.

The Oakervee Review of HS2, February 2020

In August 2019 continuing controversy caused the new Johnson government to request a review of the project by HS2 Ltd's former Chairman, the eminent civil engineer Douglas Oakervee. The construction costs of HS2 had been estimated in 2010 to be between £30.9 billion and £36 billion; in 2015, this estimate was combined with the cost of rolling stock and adjusted for inflation to give a budget of £56.6 billion. Oakervee's review[8] estimated that the project would cost between £80.7 billion and £106 billion at 2019 prices. According to 2012 figures, energy running costs for operating HS2 trains on the high-speed line was estimated to be nearly double that of conventional rail trains.

Nevertheless, Sir Douglas (he was knighted a few weeks ago) recommended that the entire project should proceed as planned.

The National Infrastructure Commission assessment

In December 2020, just as various drug treatments for Covid-19 were being approved around the world and we were focused on the extent of constraints that would be placed on Christmas, the NIC published its *Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North,*[3] which noted (on page 21) that in response to Oakervee, the government had committed to prepare an 'Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands which will identify the most effective scoping, phasing and sequencing of relevant investments and how to integrate HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Midlands Rail Hub and other proposed rail investments. This plan will be informed by the Commission's independent assessment of the rail needs of the Midlands and the North.'

The NIC accepted that HS2 Phase 1 was committed and therefore outside its statutory scope for review.

The full scope of the Midlands Rail Hub[9] and Northern Powerhouse Rail[10] are topics beyond this month's column. Suffice to say that, at last, the objective of both is to improve the connectivity between and within towns and cities in those tranches of England. The appropriateness of both was now formally confirmed by the NIC: investment 'to create 'clusters' of cities'[11] is worthwhile from every point of view.

With regard to Phases 2a and 2b (the two branches of the 'Y' of the original concept), since enriched by the idea that HS2 trainsets should then feed into Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Rail Hub strategies, the NIC concluded that the inter- and intra-regional connections (east–west in this column's shorthand) were more valuable than all the original HS2 plans for very fast north–south services. The

NIC advice was stress-tested under three degrees of tight financial scenario, in typical NIC manner.

A particularly difficult NIC recommendation concerned the East Midlands Hub—a new HS2 station planned at Toton (between Nottingham and Derby, just west of Long Eaton), for which a special East Midlands Development Corporation has been established and grand housing and employment development plans prepared. The NIC took the view that the East Midlands Parkway station by the expiring Ratcliffe coal-fired power station, easily accessed from East Midlands Airport, was a more valuable point of connection. Toton would have a role less strategic than previously envisaged. For the time being. Perhaps.[12]

The government's *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*

A year after receiving the NIC advice, the *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*[1] of November 2021 outlines how major rail projects, including HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Rail Hub, will be delivered—according to HS2 Ltd:

'so that communities, towns and cities across the North and Midlands are better connected with more frequent, reliable and greener services and faster journey times. In respect of the HS2 project the Government's Integrated Rail Plan sets out the following proposals:

- *Complete HS2 from Crewe to Manchester, with new stations at Manchester Airport and Manchester Piccadilly. A hybrid Bill for the route from Crewe to Manchester will be deposited, which will seek the legal powers to construct and operate the new high-speed railway.*
- *A new high-speed line between Birmingham and East Midlands Parkway. Trains will continue to central Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield on an upgraded and electrified Midland Main Line.*
- *The Government will progress options to complete the Midlands Rail Hub and spend £100 million to look at how best to take HS2 trains to Leeds, including assessing capacity at Leeds station and starting work on the West Yorkshire mass transit system.'*[13]

The plan mostly reflects the advice of the NIC. There is not space here to report the numerous details, but the strategic decisions (it is so difficult to sail above details!) appear to be these:

- The new fast line built for HS2's western 'Y' will go no further north than Manchester Piccadilly, but HS2 trainsets will run onwards[14] to join the West Coast Main line and thus on to Glasgow.
- The new fast line built for HS2's eastern 'Y' will go no further than East Midlands Parkway station, where HS2 trainsets can run on upgraded Midland Main Line conventional rail lines to reach Derby, Chesterfield, Nottingham and Sheffield centres.
- The role to be played by an upgraded East Coast Main Line as part of the eastern 'Y' of HS2 is changed. It will not have HS2 trainsets.
- Newcastle and Leeds will still use the HS2 section from East Midland Parkway station for services to Birmingham, but will have longer journey times to London than the previous HS2 proposal.
- Sheffield's access by the Midland Main Line will equal the previously planned HS2 journey times from London.
- HS2 trains will now access Runcorn only temporarily until trains to Liverpool access the city via Warrington, which will now have high-speed Northern Powerhouse Rail track shared by HS2 direct to a new station in the town at the east–west aligned Warrington Bank Quay low-level station.

The current plan for HS2
Source: Cnbrb. CC BY-SA 3.0
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=70274282

UKNET—the fruit of the *Union Connectivity Review*

The Union Connectivity Review stream of multi-modal transport planning work by Sir Peter Hendy has been bundling along during the months of Covid distraction. There was an interim report in March 2021, and November's final report[15] was overshadowed by the government's *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*, even though it considers

connections between the nations of the UK and makes several recommendations with implications for HS2. It is ground-breaking. Hendy says:

> *'leaving the EU and its Trans-European Network has created the opportunity to establish UKNET — a strategic transport network for the whole United Kingdom, which, with funding and regular review, can much better serve the overall economic and social needs of the whole of the UK.'*[15]

It is meaty enough to be discussed in a future editions of this journal, but here we may note his recommendation to invest in 'the West Coast Main Line north of Crewe to properly use HS2 and […] serve connectivity between Scotland and England better'. The synchronised *Integrated Rail Plan* publication commits to that. Hendy also recommends 'conducting an assessment of the East Coast rail and road corridor to determine appropriate investments for better connectivity between Scotland and England'. He mentions the road link, too, because his span is multi-modal (as it should be).

In conclusion

This article expresses what may seem a heresy in the fevered political atmosphere surrounding Prime Minister Johnson at the time of writing, in late January 2022: that his government has made the right decisions in its *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*. It has a sound evidence base in the work of the National Infrastructure Commission, and chimes with threads in the multi-modal *Union Connectivity Review* (which must be dragged further into the sunlight of public gaze in the period ahead).

In a foreword to the *Integrated Rail Plan*, Mr Johnson says 'in my discussions on HS2 last year, I was struck by what one of my Parliamentary colleagues, Lee Anderson MP, told me: that his constituents in Ashfield would have to watch the high speed trains go through at 200 mph without stopping when what they really wanted was a decent bus service to the next town.'[1] Nicely put.

In the North it is connections east and west that are needed for everyone's benefit. The Midlands cluster — the Midlands Engine — similarly needs linkages within itself. Pruning state-of-the-art HS2 new-build a bit in those regions is more than compensated for by running HS2 trainsets on upgraded lines, forming part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail and Midlands Rail Hub lateral corridor visions. The balance is well judged.

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Notes

1 *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands*. CP 490. Department for Transport, Nov. 2021. www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-the-midlands

2 R Hotten: 'HS2 rail extension to Leeds scrapped amid promise to transform rail'. *BBC News*, 18 Nov. 2021. www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59334043

3 *Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North. Final Report*. National Infrastructure Commission, Dec. 2020, p.17. https://nic.org.uk/studies-reports/rail-needs-assessment-for-the-midlands-and-the-north/rna-final-report/

4 *Delivering Sustainable Transport*. Department for Transport, Nov. 2008, para. 4.10, and also Fig. 4.1 on p.31. The DfT website does not give access to this report — but Google will take you to Oldham LDF evidence base files (for which, thanks)

5 *Britain's Transport Infrastructure: High Speed Two*. Department for Transport, Jan. 2009, paras 31 & 34. Available at www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/49278/response/121285/attach/7/highspeedtwo.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1

6 Train buffs will know that the 10 fastest trains in the world are currently the L0 Series Maglev (Japan — 375 mph), TGV POS (France — 357 mph), Harmony CRH 380A (China — 302 mph), Shanghai Maglev (China — 268 mph), HEMU — 430X (South Korea — 267 mph), Fuxing Hao CR400AF/BF (260 mph), Frecciarossa 1000 (Italy — 250 mph) and Siemens Velaro (Spain — 250 mph), AVG Italo (Italy — 224 mph), and Talgo 350 (Spain — 217 mph) — see www.statista.com/statistics/557186/high-speed-trains-maxmimum-speed)

7 It was a fine train. The patents for the APT's tilt system were sold to Fiat Ferroviaria and appeared in the UK in the form of the narrow Pendolino — see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advanced_Passenger_Train

8 *Oakervee Review*. Department for Transport and High Speed Two (HS2) Limited, Feb. 2020. www.gov.uk/government/publications/oakervee-review-of-hs2

9 See *A Strategic Transport Manifesto for the Midlands: Our Comprehensive Spending Review Asks*. Midlands Connect, Sept. 2020. www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1722/a-strategic-transport-manifesto-for-the-midlands.pdf

10 See *Northern Powerhouse Rail. Connecting the People, Communities and Businesses of the North*. Transport for the North, Jun. 2021. https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Northern-Powerhouse-Rail-Connect.pdf

11 *Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North* (see note 3), Box 5.3, p.57

12 See the discussion on pp.61&62 of *Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and the North* (see note 3)

13 'HS2 and the Integrated Rail Plan'. HS2. www.hs2.org.uk/what-is-hs2/hs2-and-the-integrated-rail-plan/

14 Using the 'Golborne link', subject to an alternative linkage arising from the Union Connectivity Review (see note 15) — see *Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands* (see note 1), pp.60 & 70

15 *Union Connectivity Review: Final Report*. Department for Transport, Nov. 2021. www.gov.uk/government/collections/union-connectivity-review

developer contributions for affordable homes and infrastructure — anglo-scottish comparisons and lessons part one: scotland

In the first part of a two-part article on developer contributions for affordable housing and infrastructure in England and Scotland, **Fanny Blanc**, **John Boyle**, **Tony Crook**, **Kath Scanlon**, **Stefano Smith** and **Christine Whitehead** look at the workings of the current Scottish system

Both England and Scotland have plans to introduce infrastructure levies. However, while both are aiming to find a new source of funding, particularly for larger-scale investments, their starting points and their suggested mechanisms are different. In particular, Scotland is aiming to introduce a levy additional to its current developer contribution system (usually called planning obligations) which will fund sub-regional and regional physical infrastructure. England, on the other hand, is looking to move away from its current split Section 106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) system to one that combines funding from developer contributions and CIL charges into a single levy for funding non-local infrastructure.

In the last few years we have been involved in regular research into how the current system works in England, examining the process and the incidence, value and impact of Section 106/CIL.[1] In 2020/21 we undertook a similar study for Scotland[2] to help inform the Scottish Government's implementation plans for introducing the proposed levy.

In Scotland our research showed that, although developer contributions were less prevalent than in England, they worked reasonably well and, importantly, were generally accepted. This was particularly so for affordable housing, but securing infrastructure was more difficult, especially for off-site and sub-regional infrastructure. Most stakeholders saw developer contributions as strongly embedded in the planning system and becoming more certain and transparent over recent years. Contributions for affordable housing in particular are well understood—in part

photoggin/iStock

Housing and development site in Dundee

because national and local expectations are clear. As in England, the contractual nature of developer contributions also helps the system to work more effectively. But there were also significant differences across Scottish planning authorities in the way that the system was operated and in the range of activities affected.

The similarities and differences between the two countries raise important issues about what works and why. We have divided this present article into two parts. The first reviews the current Scottish system, which works in a rather different way from that in England and deserves to be understood and assessed in its own right. In the second (to be published in the next issue of *Town & Country Planning*) we compare these findings with those from England in order to draw more comparative conclusions and discuss the proposed structural reforms in both countries.

Developer contributions in Scotland—the legal framework

Developer contributions in Scotland evolved in piecemeal fashion but remain rather more restrictive than in England. The phrase 'planning obligations' is usually used to describe contributions. As in England, the developer contribution system was originally a mechanism to mitigate the immediate negative impacts of new developments. Over time it has evolved to secure funds for local and sub-regional infrastructure. In addition, again as in England, obligations have developed to secure contributions towards wider community needs, notably new affordable homes.

Planning obligations in Scotland are legal agreements made under Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. Although the Act itself does not tightly define their scope, their use is subject to five national policy tests designed to ensure that obligations are related to proposed developments. They can also be secured through Section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, which gives local authorities the power to enter into agreements for any of its functions. They may be sought through Section 48 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, allowing roads authorities to make an agreement with anyone willing to contribute to constructing or improving a road.

Section 75 obligations are enforceable, including against successors in title, if they are registered in the Land Register of Scotland or recorded in the General Register of Sasines. This is important as it gives confidence to the parties that obligations will be met. As in England, because planning obligations run with the land, they are appropriate where phased payments or in-kind provisions are sought and/or where sites involve multiple and/or changing developers.

In Scotland, unlike in England, much use is made of suspensive ('Grampian') planning conditions, especially when developers are required to secure infrastructure prior to development commencing. Conditions, while obliging infrastructure to be provided as a pre-commencement requirement, do not specify financial payments (and are thus consistent with the legal limitations imposed on planning conditions). However, they may introduce uncertainty about delivery, especially when a third party is responsible for the provision.

Developer contributions in Scotland—the policy framework

Policy about using planning obligations in Scotland is set out in detail in Circulars (most recently, that of November 2020). Obligations should be sought only where they are necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms. Planning authorities should set out their policies in development plans and in supplementary guidance. Polices should be supported by action programmes and action plans to ensure that they connect with the funding and delivery of infrastructure. Planning obligations should be used only where the relevant outcome cannot be achieved through either a planning condition or an alternative legal agreement (for example under Section 69 of the Local Government Act 1973).

Recent case law (for example Elsick[3]) and appeal decisions (for example Armadale[4]) have reinforced the need for a clear link between a proposed development and the infrastructure provided, and for contributions to be proportionate to the scale and nature of development impacts. Recent cases have also questioned the legitimacy of pooling

several contributions from small developments to cover the long-term mitigation arising from the cumulative impact of these developments.

Affordable housing is defined as of reasonable quality; affordable to those on modest incomes; and covering the full range of affordable housing, including social rent, subsidised owner occupation (including shared ownership and shared equity), and intermediate homes. Provision through obligations must be based on identified local needs. Affordable housing should normally comprise no more than 25% of dwellings on any new housing development and can be required on any sized site. Planning authorities seeking higher proportions must justify them through local needs assessments. Contributions are normally fulfilled as either serviced land or completed dwellings, both sold at discounted prices to affordable housing providers.

Unlike in England, there is no zero affordable housing grant policy on developments subject to Section 75 agreements. Significant grants (up to around £80,000 per dwelling, depending on size and location), the value of which takes no direct account of the extent of contributions, are available to registered providers buying land or new homes at discounted prices.

The incidence, value and impact of developer contributions in Scotland

Our recent research examined the experience of developer contributions over the three-year period of 2017/18 to 2019/20. It was commissioned by the Scottish Government, following recommendations by the Scottish Land Commission in its advice to Scottish Ministers on land value capture.[5] We collected a great deal of information on policy and data on agreements from all planning authorities. We were very grateful for their help, especially as during the Covid-19 pandemic many staff were working from home. This allowed us to secure a clear description of how the planning authorities operated and, together with other related data, enabled us to undertake a valuation of developer contributions. We also undertook case studies of four different types of development with planning obligations in each of four planning authority areas in contrasting locations. We conducted stakeholder focus groups and interviews with staff from a wide range of organisations, including planning authorities, government officials, infrastructure providers, developers, registered housing providers, consultants, and professional bodies.

All but two of Scotland's 34 planning authorities (i.e. including the two National Park authorities) used planning obligations. Three-quarters used them for affordable homes—and those who did not said there was no affordable need in their areas. Although contributions were agreed only on a small minority of planning applications (8% in 2019/20), they were mainly taken from large sites, so covered a much larger proportion of output.[6]

As Table 1 shows, as well as affordable housing, most planning authorities sought contributions for education, transport, open space and leisure provision, almost all of which went directly to the relevant planning authority to support their investment in these areas. Recently this list has expanded to include heath facilities, although this was seen as 'pushing the rules'. More generally, the fact that not all requirements have been set out in Local Development Plans has been creating some uncertainty for developers, many of whom talked about the way that there had been 'creep' in what planning authorities required in recent years. Unlike

Table 1
Number of authorities entering into agreements related to various infrastructure types, by year agreed

	Number of local authorities		
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Schools and other educational facilities	16	15	14
Roads and other transport facilities	17	13	14
Sporting and recreational facilities	12	11	12
Open/green spaces	9	8	10
Public realm improvements	6	7	4
Medical facilities/emergency services	5	5	4
Environmental projects	1	–	2
Energy projects	1	1	1
Employment projects	2	–	–
Other	5	4	5

Planning authorities that had entered into agreements with developers in the preceding the years; *n*=20. Multiple answers permitted

Table 2
Value of developer contributions agreed for new affordable homes in Scotland, 2019/2020

Type of contribution and dwellings (grossed-up survey totals)	Estimated grossed-up national total, £ million	Proportion of Scotland from top five local authorities,# %
Transfer of discounted land to registered provider for 2,700 dwellings*	82	45
Sale of completed units to registered providers for 1,150 social rented homes	161	44
Sale of completed units to registered providers for 505 mid-market rented homes	42	33
Sale of 180 market homes at discounted prices	15	44
Total	300	43
Commuted sum agreed with four local authorities in 2019/2020	1.8†	–
Commuted sum for all uses paid to five local authorities in 2019/2020	8.5†	–

The top five local authorities in a ranking of authorities by total value of estimated contributions
* All dwelling numbers rounded to nearest 10 as these are grossed-up numbers
† Not grossed up

Table 3
Value of financial contributions to infrastructure in Scotland, 2019/2020

Financial contributions to infrastructure	Total sum agreed or paid to planning authorities providing information, £ million	Sum per planning authority providing information, £ million	Grossed-up total for Scotland, £ million
Contributions agreed with 13 planning authorities in 2019/2020	80.8	6.2	179
Contributions received by nine planning authorities in 2019/2020	54.5	6.1	186

in England, much use is made of planning conditions, mostly to secure transport infrastructure—and indeed developer contributions should not be claimed if a condition can meet the same objectives.

Previous research had shown that the potential for contributions was less substantial than in England (because development values are generally lower) and that contributions would inherently be more heavily concentrated in a small number of high-value areas than is the case in England. One of the more recent studies undertaken before ours estimated, based on annualised land values (and not details of agreements made by planning authorities), that £230 million per annum would be available for affordable housing and infrastructure.[7]

Our calculations were based on valuing the obligations agreed by each planning authority and showed that, in 2019/20, £490 million worth of developer contributions were agreed, of which £300 million was for affordable housing (see Table 2) and £180 million was for financial payments towards infrastructure (see Table 3), amounting to £6 million agreed per planning authority.

The ratio between affordable housing and infrastructure contributions is thus about 2:1, comparable with the ratio in the most recent findings for England. Contributions for affordable housing had increased by more than a third over the three-year period of 2017/18 to 2019/20. We were not able to estimate the financial contributions to infrastructure for the two earlier years, nor to estimate the value of in-kind contributions to infrastructure for any of the three years, as relevant data were not available. However, the total raised in Scotland is not out of

line with the total for England (£7 billion in 2018/19), taking account of the relative population of each country (approximately 10 : 1 ratio between England and Scotland).

The vast majority of contributions in Scotland were delivered as long as developments went ahead and were not subject to revised planning consents. There was optimism among planning authorities that the value of contributions would increase over the next few years, covering a larger percentage of their estimated required infrastructure — although there was considerable concern that their estimates were over-optimistic.

Developer contributions are concentrated in a relatively small number of areas. The five largest contributing authorities, all in the Central Belt, accounted for 43% of the value of agreed affordable housing contributions in 2019/20. In these areas, the value of these contributions accounted for approximately 30% of the land value with planning consent. These planning authorities thus raised significant funds for new affordable homes and for infrastructure, including on large and complex sites. On these latter sites, this generally involved long negotiations with multiple agencies, including infrastructure providers whose plans were often not immediately consistent with one another. Renegotiations were often required to take account of changing market conditions that occurred during the long build-out of many of these schemes.

'Overall, it was agreed that developer contributions worked reasonably well in Scotland but were more concentrated on supporting the specific development in comparison with the situation in England'

In other planning authorities outside the Central Belt, but with the exception of North East Scotland, new development was typically on a smaller scale, where the main developer contributions were for affordable housing and small-scale development-related infrastructure needs.

It was generally accepted that landowners pay for these obligations because developers cover their obligations costs by offering lower prices than the full market value of sites with planning permission. The exceptions were where planning authority policy is unclear and/or where there are changes in what is required, creating uncertainty for developers when negotiating for land. This may mean that more of the costs of contributions are borne by developers.

There is also a risk that affordable housing grants enable higher land prices because the grant means that housing providers can pay more for land and for discounted new homes than if there was a zero-grant policy for Section 75 sites, as in England. On the other hand, developer contributions in Scotland secure social rented housing as a large proportion of the total agreed, made possible by the high level of grant adding considerably to the contributions coming from developers. New social rented homes accounted for some 70% of all new affordable homes secured via developer contributions in Scotland, whereas in England the proportion was only around 12% in 2018/19.

Overall, affordable homes secured in Scotland through contributions accounted for one in 10 of all new homes given planning consent. The proportion was also notably higher in high house (and land) price areas. In planning authority areas where house prices were in the highest quartile of all house prices, a quarter of all new homes were agreed as affordable homes to be delivered by developer contributions.

Overall, it was agreed that developer contributions worked reasonably well in Scotland but were more concentrated on supporting the specific development in comparison with the situation in England. Affordable housing was generally accepted and enabled a variety of housing types and tenures to meet particular needs, especially in rural areas. Even so, there were areas that saw no need for affordable housing, given local housing market conditions.

The challenges of developer contributions in Scotland

Developer contributions in Scotland are not without challenges. Two stand out from our research: complex negotiations, and the provision of larger-scale off-site infrastructure.

With respect to the first issue, the very essence of how obligations take account of specific site circumstances as well as overall policy means that there is often considerable negotiation. The increasing use of tariffs and fixed charges has helped to reduce some of the uncertainties, especially on smaller sites. But on large sites negotiations can be long and complex with uncertain outcomes, not least when market circumstances worsen — as our case studies confirmed. Where contributions were used for funding or for in-kind provision by local authorities or housing associations, the processes involved were relatively straightforward as compared with those which involved other service providers (for example transport or water authorities).

The second challenge is the provision of larger-scale infrastructure, especially associated with large sites or where the requirement accumulates from a number of smaller developments. In both cases recent reporter and court decisions on appeals have increased the doubts about how far Section 75 can be used to address these requirements. More

generally, the tendency for 'scope creep' in what is required on matters not in plans or supplementary guidance has created further uncertainty.

Stakeholders generally agreed that planning obligations should focus on site-specific mitigation, including generated local needs, and that using planning obligations to secure major off-site and sub-regional infrastructure stretched too far what Section 75 was originally designed to achieve. There was also a clear consensus that planning obligations are not an effective means of addressing the cumulative impacts of a number of developments.

Conclusions, and issues for part 2 of this article

Developer contributions together with planning conditions have worked well in Scotland for securing funding for affordable homes and immediate site mitigation. The principles are generally accepted, and the central role of local authorities is clearly identified. As a result, the system is proving relatively easy to operate across the majority of areas and sites. The system is also fuelled by grants towards affordable housing provision.

The big challenges are funding major infrastructure and addressing the impact of cumulative developments, to which the system is not well suited. Hence the provisions in the 2019 Planning Act to establish a new Infrastructure Levy and to introduce Masterplan Consent Areas for major new development, both intended to address this challenge more directly. If the provisions are implemented, a new two-tier system of developer contributions in Scotland will be introduced, but there are no details yet as to how this will work. A more fundamental question, given that large-scale infrastructure impacts on the values of existing as well as new development, is whether any levy can do more than make a small contribution to the costs of such infrastructure.

In contrast, the new structure proposed for England in the *Planning for the Future* White Paper of August 2020 would, if introduced as intended (a preliminary analysis is provided in the March–April 2021 issue of *Town & Country Planning*[8]), move in the opposite direction, using a new sales tax (or Infrastructure Levy) to replace the existing two-tier system — of Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy — and fund mitigation, affordable homes and larger-scale infrastructure from the one levy.

In part 2 of this article (in the next issue of *Town & Country Planning*) we will look in more detail at what is proposed in each nation and use our evidence from both countries to see if there are lessons for each to learn from the other's experience. More fundamentally, we will consider whether there is a simple one- or two-tiered approach that can work, or whether we might need a rather different (perhaps multi-tiered) approach to deal with the very wide range of requirements which probably cannot by achieved by traditional means.

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Notes

1 See T Crook, J Henneberry and C Whitehead: *Planning Gain: Providing Infrastructure and Affordable Housing*. Wiley Blackwell, 2016; A Lord, R Dunning, B Dockerill, G Burgess, A Carro, A Crook, C Watkins and C Whitehead: *The Incidence, Value and Delivery of Planning Obligations in England in 2016-17*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2018. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685301/Section_106_and_CIL_research_report.pdf; and A Lord, R Dunning, M Buck, S Cantillon, G Burgess, T Crook, C Watkins and C Whitehead: *The Incidence, Value and Delivery of Planning Obligations in England in 2018–19*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Aug. 2020. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907203/The_Value_and_Incidence_of_Developer_Contributions_in_England_201819.pdf

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successful town centres—a question of attachment

The much discussed and extensive changes in our high streets and town centres call for responses that treat them as evolving complex systems while focusing on the specific functions, relationships and opportunities that result in people's deep attachment to places, says Julian Dobson

Images: Julian Dobson

Love and loss in the department store—the window of Sheffield's John Lewis after its closure in spring 2021

Soon after Sheffield's John Lewis department store finally closed its doors after more than 170 years in business, its plate-glass windows were plastered with messages on heart-shaped cards from former customers and staff. Their sentiments ranged from predictable outrage ('so cross with you for going back on your promise to stay') to nostalgia ('I remember getting my first present for my girlfriend from John Lewis'). Changes in town and city centres, especially when they impact on people's sense of locality and identity, prompt emotional responses. But why does that matter in terms of planning?

The scale and extent of high street and town centre change in the UK has been well reported. The death of the department store is just one of the most high-profile effects: five years after BHS bit the dust, one-fifth of its former stores remain vacant. Since then, Debenhams and House of Fraser have folded, and despite its iconic status in the industry, John Lewis is in decline. Over one-quarter of retail sales are now online, ONS figures reveal.[1]

The structural changes affecting retail have longer-term consequences. Since the start of 2018, the Centre for Retail Research calculates, some 532,000 retail jobs have disappeared in the UK, alongside the closure of around 57,750 stores.[2] While some of those workers will have found other retail jobs, and some of those stores will have re-opened under new names or with new uses, the net effect is one of hollowing out. While the unforeseen impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic should not be underestimated, these job losses indicate a longer-term restructuring.

This does not necessarily mean that the town centre as a focal point of urban life is dead or even dying. Reconfigurations are likely to continue, though, accentuated by alterations in working patterns that have been accelerated through the experience of Covid-19. A recent McKinsey analysis[3] suggested that 48% of the UK workforce could work remotely at least one day a week. Demands to 'go back to the office' are likely to meet with increasing resistance among those privileged enough to work from home comfortably.

Vision and identity

But those hearts on the windows of John Lewis matter. They matter because people become deeply attached to places, and these attachments are to the specifics of a place: the functions, relationships and opportunities that a place enables.

Psychologists Charis Anton and Carmen Lawrence distinguish between the *emotional* and *functional* dimensions of place attachment.[4] The functional bond—our need for particular facilities or attributes in a place, such as a bus stop or bakery—is described as place dependence, while the emotional dimension is described as place identity, 'the symbolic meanings given to a place as an individual becomes psychologically invested in it'. Or, as one John Lewis customer put it: 'I will miss everything about this place. I know it's a bit tatty in places but I love shopping here… I don't want you to go.'

Place identity does not keep shops in business. But it does influence footfall. Much of our movement is habitual and conditioned by the journeys we make by necessity (for work or medical appointments, for example) or by choice (to a favourite restaurant or theatre, a turn around the park, or a regular dog walk). Planners have been good at supporting place dependence, but have a mixed record on place identity. Policy-makers are beginning to recognise its importance through an increasing concern with 'pride of place': the word 'pride' appears on no fewer than 55 pages of the recent Levelling Up White Paper, while restoring 'a sense of community, local pride and belonging' will be central to the objectives of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

In summer 2021 the UK Government published a 'vision' for high streets in England, *Build Back Better High Streets*.[5] It sets out a goal of 'vibrant high streets where communities are at the heart of place-making; where a mix of commercial and residential uses complement each other; and where businesses large and small feel welcome'. Its five-point plan will be familiar to anyone who has followed debates about town centres in the last quarter-century:

- Re-use empty buildings.
- Support high street businesses.
- Improve the public realm.
- Create safe and clean spaces.
- Celebrate pride in local communities.

There are, as in the past, pots of money (mainly capital) to support this. There is the £1 billion Future High Streets Fund, the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund—and even a grant scheme for new litter bins. There is no money, though, to employ more people to empty the new bins. As MPs have noted,[6] too, the process of distributing money from the Towns Fund has lacked transparency, and it is unclear what impacts are expected.

'People become deeply attached to places, and these attachments are to the specifics of a place: the functions, relationships and opportunities that a place enables'

Like an old-style Woolworths pick'n'mix counter, it's a mixture of the good (investment in green infrastructure), the bad (disconnected, short-term competitive funding pots) and the ugly (a radical extension of permitted development rights). Unfortunately it is the removal of planning controls (once again dismissed by the Prime Minister in his foreword as 'pointless red tape') that sets the tone.

Build Back Better High Streets is strong on the rhetoric of place identity. But it lauds 'local pride' without a clear sense of how its fusillade of initiatives adds up to places that will also be functionally necessary. It addresses symptoms but skates over causes.

Contrast that with the statement from the review group behind the Scottish Government's 2021 report, *A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres*.[7] The group adopted a concise vision linking functionality and identity:

> *'Towns and town centres are for the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centre successful.'*

Logics of action

The difference between the Scottish and English articulations of a thriving town centre reaches well beyond semantics. The language may prompt apparently similar activities, but the Scottish document envisages a system while the English one describes what happens when certain bits of the system work well.

Each vision leads to a different set of questions, and those questions—if taken seriously—lead to a different set of priorities. Implicit in both visions is a theory of change. At its most simplistic level, a theory of change asks where we are now, where

Sheffield's Grey to Green scheme—improving biodiversity and flood resilience can help to create attractive city centre spaces

we want to go, how we plan to get there, and what milestones we expect to pass on the way.

For Scotland, 'The wellbeing of people, planet and the economy'[7] sets out a long-term destination. It envisages town centres as places of human interaction, ecological coexistence, and economic exchange—functions seen as complementary. Another way to frame this goal might be to say that a flourishing town centre is a human space that meets people's physical, social, economic and psychological needs, in an environment that supports the long-term wellbeing of place, planet, and people.

From such a statement it is possible to begin to build a logic model that will set out what kind of interventions are required, what effects they can be expected to have, and how we will know how well they are working and for whom. A set of short- to medium-term outcomes might include the creation of new and more biodiverse town centre green spaces to support human and more-than-human wellbeing; new opportunities for people to socialise and spend time together; clusters of services that meet people's social needs; and business activities that feed people's sense of play, celebration, and creativity.

Such logic models open up questions about what activities and decision-making structures are most likely to facilitate the desired outcomes. In the English context, a logic that focuses on deregulation and competitive bidding for time-limited pots of money assumes that human and planetary needs are best met either by removing restrictions from markets or through competitions devised and determined by central government. The impact of permitted development rights so far hardly inspires optimism, as Ben Clifford and colleagues spell out in a recent issue of *Town & Country Planning*.[8]

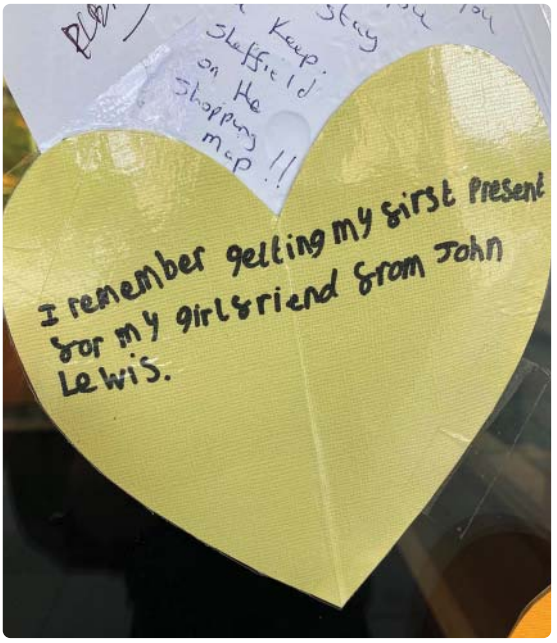
Indeed, given that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities claims to put 'communities at the heart', attention should be paid to the mechanisms through which this might be achieved.

At the heart of the planning system, flawed as it might often be in operation, is the process of managing competing interests and negotiating solutions via elected local representatives. So changes in the planning system are actually about changing power relationships. In the case of the reforms advocated by the Westminster government and its predecessors, that reconfiguration of relationships involves privileging one set of actors—property developers and landowners—over others.

The sum and the parts

Other proposals to put communities at the heart of high streets have been mooted. A working paper from Power to Change, a Lottery-funded organisation that supports community businesses (owned by and accountable to local people), argues that community-owned venues and businesses can help to create thriving high streets.[9] A bolder move would be to extend the Community Right to Buy from Scotland to England, and match its legislative clout with earmarked funding through the new Community Ownership Fund.

However, in a context in which funding is scarce, community rights to intervene in the development process are weak, and land ownership is frequently distant and opaque, community assets can only be



Place attachment—how can we plan to create good memories?

one element in the logic chain that connects where we are now with where we want to be.

Green infrastructure, as acknowledged in the *Build Back Better* paper and implemented in schemes such as Sheffield's Grey to Green project,[10] is another. Building the planning capacity of local authorities rather than incrementally removing people with local knowledge and expertise would help, too. But these are not solutions: they are mechanisms through which we might start to construct solutions.

In a sense, it does not matter which particular elements will characterise the town or city centre of the future. Digital retailing, driverless cars, pop-up events spaces, new cycle routes and collaborative makerspaces might all be part of the mix. Neighbourhood centres may become more important as the idea of the 20-minute city catches on; central business districts may matter less if remote working becomes normalised for more of the population.

Our concern should be the sum rather than the parts. Of more interest is how the elements that make up a town centre generate bonds between physical spaces, the activities that go on within them, and the people (and other species) who use them. 'Wellbeing' captures something of how those bonds might be optimised. 'Place identity' is another lens we can use.

It is the bonding of people and place that creates a successful town or city centre. Planning needs to reinforce the logics that link the built and natural environment, the activities that take place within it, and the place attachment experienced by people who live, visit or work in our urban centres. Those logics are not fixed, but they are identifiable and can be supported or undermined.

One of the staff at Sheffield's John Lewis wrote: 'I worked here for 33 years, it felt like a family and we welcomed our customers…' That comment describes a set of connecting bonds, built up over time and through repeated interactions.

Just as there are no specific activities that are guaranteed to generate place identity (new litter bins notwithstanding), so there are no quick fixes. As a generation of town centre initiatives has demonstrated, systemic change cannot be achieved by providing hanging baskets or giving heritage shopfronts a lick of paint, or by betting on new developments or visitor attractions. The least we can do is begin to see our urban centres as evolving complex systems in which people and their attachments play a pivotal role, and start to devise policy with the respect that such places deserve.

● ***Dr Julian Dobson*** *is Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

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lessons in delivering a low-carbon energy transition

Luke Jones, **Jon Selman**, **Stephen Essex** and **Olivia Wilson** report the findings of a study of the impact of a 'Merton rule' style, sustainable resource use planning policy in Plymouth

Bickleigh Down EcoVillage in Plymouth—a residential development of 87 zero-carbon dwellings by Zero C
Each home has two-thirds of its footprint facing south for optimum passive solar heating and an asymmetrical roof to accommodate monocrystalline photovoltaic panels (rather than clear glass), which doubles the electricity generation. The roof renewable energy supply runs an air-source heat pump for hot water and underfloor heating. Together with airtight construction and super-insulation, the homes are Code 6 energy standard under the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM 'Excellent' standard, which is the equivalent of a zero-carbon home

Given the urgency presented by climate change and global warming, local planning authorities have become active agents in the low-carbon energy transition. This transition has been defined as 'a radical, systemic and managed change towards 'more sustainable' or 'more effective' patterns of provision and use of energy'.[1] It is associated with a shift from centralised fossil fuel production and distribution of energy (such as from coal, gas and oil) to more decentralised renewable energy production

(such as from solar and wind) which is consumed on site or locally.

Alongside other government policy interventions, such as carbon emissions reduction targets, renewables obligations, feed-in tariffs, voluntary codes and capital grants, local authority planners can provide strategic direction through policies formulated in local development plans (Local Plans), as well as by influencing technological innovation in the built environment through development management decisions on planning applications.[2] The aim of this article is to evaluate the outcomes of Plymouth City Council's Policy CS20, 'Sustainable resource use' (based on the 'Merton rule'), which was implemented between 2007 and 2019 and had the objective of increasing the amount of renewable energy delivered as part of developments that came forward during this period (and so reducing carbon emissions).

The role of planning in the low-carbon energy transition

National government legislation has explicitly recognised the role of planning in the low-carbon energy transition. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004 placed a duty on local planning authorities (in Section 19, para. 1A) to contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change in development plan documents. The guidance in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of 2021 continues to require Local Plans to take a proactive approach to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change (in para. 153).[3] In addition, under amendments to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, many microgeneration schemes have been classified as permitted development (and so have not required planning permission).

The 2004 Act also supported the inclusion of the 'Merton rule' in Local Plan policies, pioneered in the London Borough of Merton in 2003, which required at least 10% of the energy requirements of new non-residential development above a threshold of 1,000 square metres be provided from on-site renewables. The policy was subsequently extended to include residential development of 10-plus homes by the London Borough of Croydon.[4] It has been estimated that about 170 local authorities have adopted a similar policy in their own Local Plans.[4]

The widespread adoption of 'Merton rule' local policies has had both advantages and disadvantages for the low-carbon transition. The recognised advantages include the relative simplicity of the policy, which made it easy to understand';[5] provided developers with greater certainty; encouraged the private sector to fund, build and operate low-carbon infrastructure; acted to shape the market in terms of demand, supply chains and skills; and generated public interest.[6]

However, the implementation of the rule did introduce extra costs and technical challenges for developers, which often stood in opposition to the more positive narrative of the planners. At the Examination in Public for the inclusion of the policy in the London Plan in 2007, the 'real-world' and pragmatic perspective of the development industry argued that the Merton rule was uneconomical and technically impossible. The cost of renewable energy, the viability of energy generation from combined heat and power (CHP) infrastructure and the practicalities of solar panels on tall buildings were arguments used by developers against adoption of the policy. The rebuttal of these arguments by the planning inspector in favour of the planners' narrative was a significant moment in the advancement of this policy.[5]

Decisions over planning applications involving renewable energy follow the priorities set out in the NPPF[3] and the so-called 'energy hierarchy'. The first priority is to reduce energy consumption (use less energy—be lean), which might be through improving the energy performance of buildings (insulation and materials) and/or behavioural interventions (to ensure that innovations are used and useable by users). Second, energy must be supplied efficiently (be clean), which focuses on infrastructure systems, including decentralised generation, technology, transport, and 'smart' cities. The third priority is to use renewable energy (be green), and represents the need to shift from centralised fossil fuel production to decentralised/local renewable energy. The capacity and preparedness of the UK's planning system to accommodate and promote new green energy technology, and the resulting new urban forms, through policies and development management is crucial to the achievement of a low-carbon future.[7]

Case study—Plymouth

Plymouth City Council was one of the local authorities that adopted a variation of the 'Merton rule'. In 2007, the rule was adopted in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy as Policy CS20, 'Sustainable resource use', which required all proposals for non-residential developments exceeding 1,000 square metres of gross floorspace and new residential developments of 10 or more units to incorporate on-site renewable energy equipment to offset at least 10% of predicted carbon emissions to 2010, rising to 15% for 2010–2017.[8] In the authority's Joint Local Plan produced with South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils, adopted in 2019, the policy requirement was further strengthened to offset at least 20% of predicted carbon emissions (in Policy DEV32, 'Delivering low carbon development').[9]

The research reported here focused on the outcomes of the original CS20 policy over a five-year period between 2012 and 2017. During this period, there were 123 planning applications that

complied with the CS20 policy. Using the authority's online planning application register, a database of the expected emission reductions delivered through the development associated with this policy was compiled from the documents submitted as part of the planning application (including the planning condition discharge report). The compilation of the database was a time-consuming exercise, as each application took around 20 minutes to process (over 40 hours in total), and some information was not found in all the planning applications. Some approved developments were not built out, so the valid sample was reduced to 87.

For some variables, the valid sample was even smaller because of missing information in the planning application documentation. For example, the expected emissions reductions were based on a sub-sample of 62, mainly because some approved planning applications did not include data on the carbon emissions reductions to be delivered. In total, 91 planning applications included an energy statement (73.9% of the total). The energy statement is a local mandatory element of the planning proposal and key to assessing the energy efficiency of the proposed development through the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP).

In total, 78 energy reports (63.4% of the total) featured information regarding regulated emissions, which refers to emissions that are part of the design of the building (for example the heating system, ventilation, hot water, and fixed lighting) and so can be predicted. Unregulated emissions, referring to emissions from electrical appliances within the building, are not predictable until the building is in use, and were much less commonly set out in the energy statements.[10] Only 30 of the planning applications (24.3% of the total) contained information about unregulated energy. The government changed the definition of carbon emissions in residential development in 2011 to exclude unregulated energy, although it can represent up to 40% of emissions.[11]

The original intention had been to check the reality of the expected delivery through site visits, but this part of the research proved to be impossible because of Covid-19 restrictions. The use of aerial photographs as part of 'Google Maps' and 'Google Street' to indicate any external renewable energy infrastructure also proved to be problematic, because of the variable spatial and temporal coverage of this source. Only 48 locations of planning applications could be located on Google Maps, and it was possible to identify the installation of renewable energy technology in only 25 of these cases. While the monitoring of such policies sounds relatively easy and straightforward, in reality it is much more complex than might be expected and is fraught with limitations, not least as result of changes in national policy.

Results

The results, nevertheless, provide some valuable and interesting insights into the effect of planning on delivering the low-carbon transition (see Fig. 1[12]). In Plymouth, photovoltaic panels were clearly the most practical form of renewable energy in the built-up area, by a good margin. A total of 76 of the developments (or 87% of planning applications)

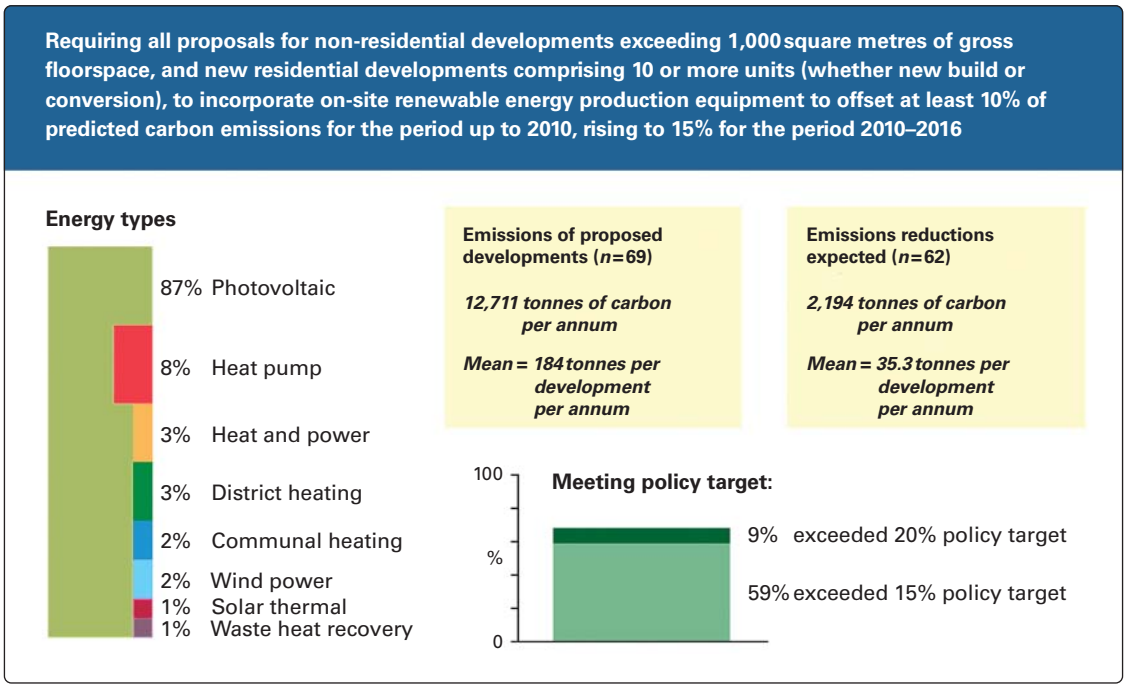

Fig. 1 Summary of the key outcomes of Plymouth City Council's CS20 policy, 2012–2017
Source: Delivering a Sustainable Energy Transition through Planning[12]

featured photovoltaic panels. The next most common technologies used were heat pumps (seven schemes, or 8%) and district heating networks and CHP (three schemes, or 3% each).

In an earlier study in London, CHP technology was the dominant renewable energy source, delivered by a similar policy in the London Plan.[13] This difference reflects the economic viability of CHP technology in a more densely populated urban environment, as well as the practicalities of solar panels on tall buildings. It demonstrates that the energy transition is likely to be based on technologies that are place-dependent, which will require place-specific planning policies—although that might change over time as the economics of renewable energy evolves.

From the 69 proposed developments with stated expected regulated carbon emissions, a total of 12,711 tonnes of carbon emissions per annum were predicted. On average, each development therefore accounted for about 184 tonnes of carbon per annum. In terms of the expected emission reductions from this development, based on the 10–15% policy target at this time, a total of 2,194 tonnes of carbon savings per annum was predicted (i.e. 17% of total emissions). In order to provide some equivalent measure of these figures, one source indicated that the average household in the UK emits 2.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum from heating.[14] On this basis, 2,194 tonnes of carbon savings would equate to the annual carbon emissions of 813 households—roughly the number of households on the Stonehouse peninsula in Plymouth.

Despite solar panels being the dominant form of renewable energy associated with these developments, higher average reductions of carbon were achieved by technologies involving wind turbines (one project—50% reductions); waste energy recovery (one project—27.6% reductions); CHP (one project—19.5% reductions); and heat pumps (two projects—15.6%)—see Fig. 2.[12] Photovoltaic panels achieved an average carbon emissions reduction of 15.8% from 64 developments.

In terms of meeting policy targets, over two-thirds of developments exceeded the policy target. A total of 59% of developments exceeded the 15% policy target, while 9% of developments exceeded 20%. These findings raise the question as to whether the expected carbon emission reductions reflect the limits of technology, compliance behaviour by the developers, and/or the effects of economic viability and deliverability (under neoliberal conditions). As technology evolves and costs are reduced, it is likely that the expected carbon reductions can be stretched further. Since the approval of the Joint Local Plan in 2019, the current policy target has been increased to 20% of predicted carbon emissions (through policy DEV32).

Discussion and conclusion

Despite concerns about whether planning policy would be successful in requiring developers to provide renewable energy technology as a standard part of new developments, Plymouth's CS20 (and later DEV32) policy appeared to be (and appears to be) delivering its objective. The progressive

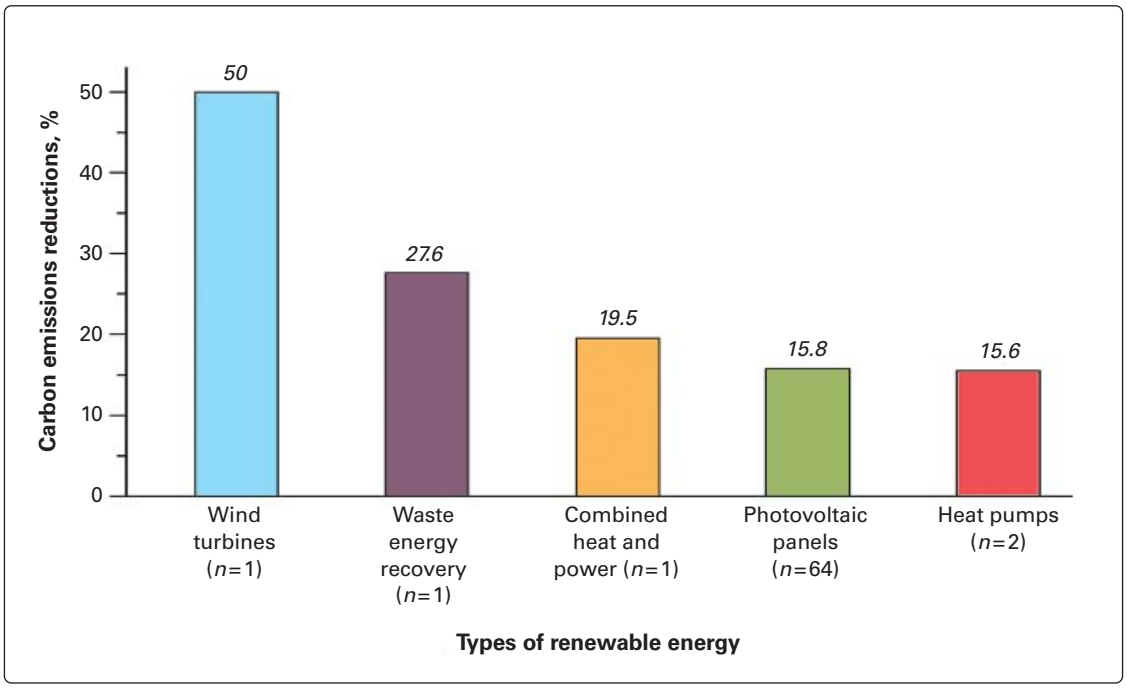

Fig. 2 Average carbon reductions per form of renewable energy, as a percentage of all emissions from new developments
Source: Delivering a Sustainable Energy Transition through Planning[12]

up-scaling of targets from 10% to 20% between 2007 and 2019 is an indication that the requirement has contributed to a market for new energy technologies and an opportunity to develop new planning practice, skills and expertise in this area. The technologies adopted in these new developments, especially photovoltaic panels, have been locally appropriate responses to the character of the city, as well as to local economic viability conditions for development schemes.

These achievements are important for future advances in carbon reductions, which will be increasingly dependent upon local action. The Climate Change Committee, as part of its Sixth Carbon Budget, has recognised that the exclusion of local authorities in the national strategy is a significant gap. They have been left to their own devices to deliver net-zero emissions despite limited funding, resources, expertise, and 'piecemeal policy and communications from Government'.[15] Local authorities should be given more powers and resources in order to move faster, within a clearer national strategy.

There are, nevertheless, barriers to the realisation of the potential of local authorities in this policy area. National planning policy is not changing fast enough to support this agenda. The direction of policies related to climate change in the revised National Planning Policy Framework in July 2021 remains unchanged.

The low-carbon energy transition is, nevertheless, subject to a rapidly changing policy environment, which means that static planning policy, enshrined within Local Plans at the point of approval, can quickly become out of date. The Core Strategy Policy CS20 led directly to the subsequent Joint Local Plan Policy DEV32. Notwithstanding the adoption of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan in March 2019, which set a plan-wide target of a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2034, the local 'climate emergency' declaration in March 2019 led to an informal review of the Local Plan policies to align them with the December 2019 update to the declaration,[16] to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. Politics can move faster than approved plans, soon leaving local policies and targets outdated. More responsive and flexible Local Plan policy processes are required.

The importance of having relevant Local Plan planning policies in place has been illustrated by a successful appeal made by developers against Swale Borough Council's climate change planning condition, put forward in April 2020, to reduce the operational carbon of new dwellings. As the new Local Plan had not been approved, the planning inspector and Minister decided that, although the proposed policies were important principles in addressing climate change, it was not possible or desirable for developers to have to predict what policies might apply in the future.[17]

There is also potential for a blurring between development management and building control in achieving greater carbon reductions. Under the pending legislation for the Future Homes Standard from 2025 a 75–80% reduction in carbon emissions from construction and energy use (compared with homes produced under current legislation) might be required. Under this legislation, 'Merton rule' styled

Sandpiper Road, part of the development of Seaton Neighbourhood in the north of Plymouth by Persimmon Homes
The Seaton Neighbourhood development will consist of up to 873 dwellings, together with commercial uses. The first phase comprised 105 new-build dwellings. Persimmon sought to meet Plymouth City Council's requirement to 'future proof' the homes by offsetting 15% of the development's total carbon emissions annually through the provision of rooftop photovoltaics, which were maximised on south-facing roofs

planning policies might become redundant, or could operate to secure the remaining 20–25% of emissions.

There are, nevertheless, challenges in monitoring the effects of planning policy mechanisms to achieve a low-carbon energy transition which appear to be rooted in the inconsistencies of documentation required when submitting a planning application. Submitted energy statements were inconsistent in their inclusion of calculations, and were even named differently, which can add to the difficulties and confusion in finding relevant information for monitoring purposes. The expected reductions in carbon emissions included in energy statements were not always recorded in consistent standardised units, and there remains the problem of how to record the emission reductions delivered in reality. A monitoring template, containing key information about each development, including whether it was approved and constructed, might be attached to each planning application record to facilitate monitoring.

While planning has contributed to the delivery of a 'public good' in the form of carbon savings in the Plymouth example, there remain uncertainties in quantifying the benefits. Furthermore, there are calls for measurement of the carbon performance of housing to include energy use from day-to-day living (which consideration of unregulated emissions would go some way to assess) as well as from building design — to include occupiers as well as architects and developers.[10] While a focus on carbon reductions from development is important, it should not be at the expense of other natural resources, such as water, that should be conserved to promote sustainability.[18]

While these factors appear to represent a missed opportunity for planning to demonstrate its clear contribution to sustainable development, the monitoring of planning policies to promote a low-carbon energy transition is much more complex and problematic than might initially be expected.

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the campaign for healthy homes—making it happen

Fiona Howie introduces the Special Section on the campaign to secure the delivery of all homes against a rigorous set of Healthy Homes Principles

This time last year, those of us based in the UK were in lockdown, with the majority of schoolchildren back trying to cope with virtual learning. The 'stay at home' orders meant that many people were spending more time than ever in their homes and, as has been written about many times, the quality of their homes and the importance of access to green spaces were at the forefront of people's minds once again. Despite frequent Ministerial shuffles, we must not let decision-makers forget the many times that they and their colleagues recognised the importance of housing and community. Back in September 2020, for example, the then Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick MP, said:

> *'Through the storms we have weathered, I think we have learned a lot—not least reminding ourselves of the absolutely central role that our homes and communities play in our health and general wellbeing.'*[1]

More recently, in his Select Committee evidence in November 2021, Michael Gove also put an emphasis on the quality of development, going as far as stating 'we are looking at what all the levers are to make sure that people can aspire to be in a decent home, can be in a decent home and can then aspire to ownership'.[2]

The reference to people being in 'decent homes' is welcome—but is also why the TCPA will be keeping the pressure on the current Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing through its Healthy Homes campaign.

I first wrote about this campaign in my regular 'On the Agenda' column in *Town & Country Planning*, published in the May 2019 issue. As I said back then, too many of the homes being built are not of a high enough quality and risk undermining people's health, safety, wellbeing, and life-chances. Many of these poor-quality homes were being delivered through permitted development rights (PDR)—but not all.

Since the campaign was launched, research has continued to be published that reinforces our concerns—most notably research conducted by University College London and the University of Liverpool, commissioned by the government to undertake a more thorough assessment of the quality of homes delivered through PDR. The report was published in July 2020[3] and drew on site visits to 639 buildings and detailed desk analysis of 240 of those schemes. Its analysis found a 'slightly more nuanced picture' about the quality of new homes created through PDR than is suggested by some research and media reports—but it still concluded that homes converted via change of use do:

> *'seem to create worse quality residential environments than planning permission conversions in relation to a number of factors widely linked to the health, wellbeing and quality of life of future occupiers'.*

But, since then, permitted development rights relating to change of use, and in particular to enable the creation of residential units, have continued to expand.

Quality is not only an issue for homes delivered through permitted development. In 2020, work

carried out by the Place Alliance, and supported by CPRE, based on an evaluation of the design of 142 large-scale housing-led development projects, highlighted that the design of new housing environments were 'mediocre' and 'poor'.[4]

To help deliver *more and better* homes, and to prevent the development of unacceptably poor-quality homes, the TCPA has been campaigning for a Healthy Homes Act. It would raise the bar in terms of the minimum quality of homes that are being built or delivered through conversion or change of use. The proposed legislation would articulate what constitutes a 'decent' home through a suite of purposefully high-level principles (see Daniel Slade's article on pages 32–34). These Healthy Homes Principles cover a range of issues around fire safety, adequate liveable space, access to natural light, the need for resilience to climate change, and freedom from noise pollution. But they also aim to tackle the neighbourhood within which the home is situated—so they include issues around walkability, access to the public realm, and the availability of green and play space. While some of these themes are complex, the quality of a home cannot be considered without reference to the community within which it sits.

As outlined in Daniel Slade's article, the TCPA, with Lord Crisp and signatures from Lord Young of Cookham, Lord Blunkett (a Vice-President of the TCPA), and Lord Stunell, have put forward an amendment to the Building Safety Bill which would be a first step towards the introduction of the Healthy Homes Principles into law. At the time of writing, the debate on the amendment at Committee Stage is awaited (in late February).

While the TCPA's campaign is still working towards the primary legislation that is necessary, the government has made some concessions on policy, amending regulations to require all new homes delivered through PDR to have access to natural light and adhere to minimum space standards. There is clearly much more to do, but these changes to regulations will prevent the replication of some of the worst examples of PDR homes, and might already have improved the living conditions of thousands of people across England.

To build on that progress the TCPA has been thinking hard about how to make change happen. Since the campaign started, the planning system has evolved. Perhaps of most relevance is the emphasis now being placed on local design codes. While there is still a need for national intervention, during 2022 the TCPA will be examining how local authorities and local communities might be able to maximise the use of this new policy lever.

This focus on the tangible differences that can be made at the local level, even without changes to national policy and legislation, is a key subject of one of the centrepieces of this issue—a dialogue between Lord Crisp, who is leading the Healthy Homes campaign in Parliament, and Nick Raynsford, the TCPA's President (pages 40–48). Their discussion ranges across a variety of themes and across their long careers in the heart of Whitehall, but the government's limited appreciation of the value of properly linking health, planning, housing and other areas of policy is a key theme.

This is also an important theme in both Julia Thrift's article (on pages 35–39), which looks at how the levelling-up agenda could be undermined by the government's stance on public health, and Christine Murray's article (on pages 49–50), which considers the lack of government action in integrating urban planning and public health. A fundamentally important factor here is the public's—rather than the government's— understanding of housing quality and inequality. The Nationwide Foundation's Natalie Tate discusses (on pages 51–53) research that the Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have commissioned to investigate exactly this issue. She outlines their emerging findings, and considers how those campaigning for better-quality housing can more effectively communicate the issues at hand.

The scale of the change that we need is certainly vast. But there is plenty to draw hope from in the final two articles in this Special Section, written by the Church of England's Bishop for Housing, Guli Francis-Deqhani (on pages 54–57) and by Marissa McMahon (on pages 58–59) from the community campaign group Participation and the Practice of Rights. They lay out their organisations' visions for transforming the lives of communities by ensuring access to safe, healthy homes, and, crucially, by putting them in the driving seat on how this is done.

● ***Fiona Howie*** *is Chief Executive of the TCPA.*

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and the point is...

The narrow focus of the Building Safety Bill could and should be extended to secure the delivery of healthy homes, says **Daniel Slade**

The TCPA has been running its Healthy Homes campaign for more than two years—a long period by any measure, but aeons in Westminster time. When working on such long-running projects, it can pay to step back and take stock, especially in turbulent times such as these. Over the last two years I have spoken on the subject of the campaign many times, and received countless questions from audiences, both pixelated and corporeal. Two questions in particular have popped up time and time again, often prompting those important moments of reflection and stock-taking.

The first question is a simple one: '*Do you think you've actually got a chance of making this happen?*' No question from the audience has been harder to answer, or more satisfying. It's satisfying because I have taken it as a sign that the audience is engaged, and keenly aware of how big the challenge is. It's hard to answer, in part, because the political situation keeps changing, and with it the odds of success.

In last year's special edition of *Town & Country Planning* on the Healthy Homes campaign,[1] I made the case that, as another wave of deregulatory planning reform seemed to be about to wash over us, there were portents in the campaign's favour. I highlighted widespread grassroots outrage about the impacts of extended permitted development rights and the introduction of the Building Safety Bill as crucial opportunities—which they remain.

However, a lot of has changed since then, inside and outside of the campaign, and taking stock of everything that has happened can be quite a mind-boggling exercise. The planning reform wave crashed against the rocks of the Chesham and Amersham byelection (and staunch opposition from the TCPA and others) and retreated.

Following a series of scandals the government seems significantly less bullish than it was, and lobbyists in favour of planning reform now strike a much more reconciliatory tone; but the threat of deregulatory planning reform has not passed—the smart money is on the planning reform proposals that will eventually emerge from Michael Gove's rebooted Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities being less of a U-turn than had previously been briefed, and the YIMBYs have a new stalking horse in the form of 'street votes'. But parliamentary debates now feature much greater discussion of the need for high-quality new homes, not just homes in high quantity.

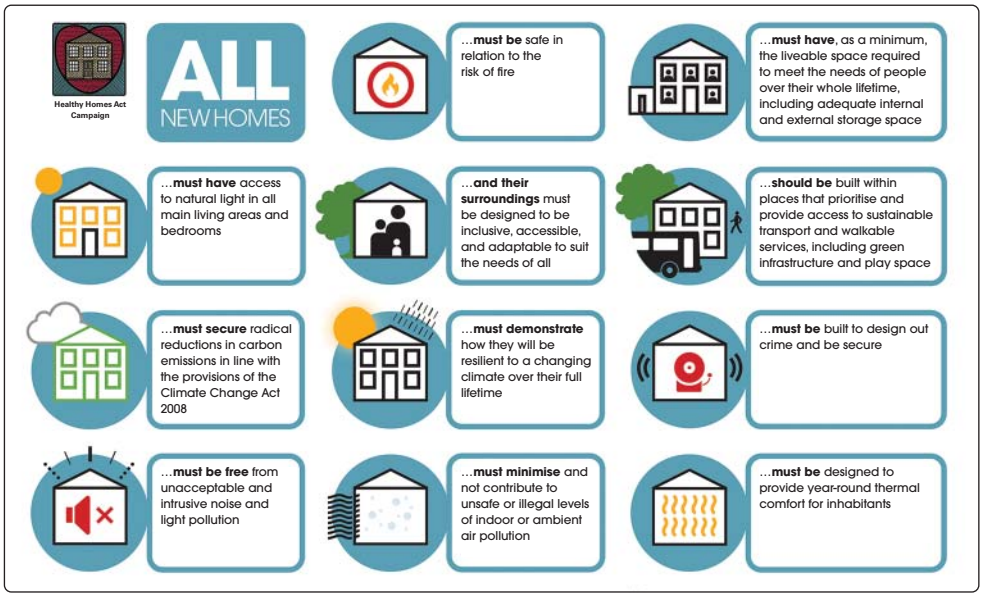
Amending the Building Safety Bill

The Healthy Homes campaign itself is also in a very different place. At the time of writing we are waiting for the Building Safety Bill's examination in Grand Committee in the House of Lords. Amending the Bill at this stage is the best chance that we will have any time soon to make key elements of the campaign's Healthy Homes Bill[2] law—and there is a strong base of support in the Lords, with several peers speaking powerfully in support of the changes that Lord Crisp (who has been promoting the principles of the Healthy Homes Bill in the House of Lords) has been arguing for.

The Building Safety Bill is the government's flagship legislative response to the Grenfell tragedy. But rather than aiming to bring about fundamental systemic change to the way that England regulates its built environment, it focuses narrowly on 'adding' measures to the existing system in relation to catastrophic fires in tall buildings, cladding and remediation, plus some limited improvements to building regulations. These are obviously important issues, but in failing to shift the whole system into a mode that actively promotes people's wellbeing, the Bill does little to address chronic threats to many thousands of residents' health (such as air pollution, unwalkable neighbourhoods, and lack of access to green space), or acute threats other than fires in tall buildings. With hundreds of converted office blocks providing homes across the country, it is fair to ask what the next Grenfell is going to look like.

The Building Safety Bill clearly needs to be more ambitious, and there is scope for it to be so. Its 'long title' (which lays out its formal objectives) is expansive:

> '*A Bill to make provision about the safety of people in or about buildings and the standard of buildings, to amend the Architects Act 1997, and to amend provision about complaints made to a housing ombudsman*'



Summary of the TCPA's Healthy Homes Principles

The first 14 words, 'A Bill to make provision about the safety of people in or about buildings', give parliamentarians an opportunity to propose amendments that go well beyond building regulations, and which may concern planning and the wider environment and take a very broad interpretation of the word 'safety'. This is what the TCPA's strategy takes advantage of. It has two steps. First, following his intervention at Second Reading, Lord Crisp is proposing the following amendment at Committee Stage, with signatures from Lord Blunkett (Labour), Lord Young of Cookham (Conservative) and Lord Stunell (Liberal Democrat):

Clause 3, page 2, line 33, at end insert—
'(6) In this Part, 'safety' means risk of harm arising from the location, construction or operation of buildings which may injure the health and wellbeing of the individual.'

This will 'crack open' the Bill by making health and wellbeing explicit responsibilities of the office of Building Safety Regulator that it creates. While it is a common-sense and clarificatory amendment, it has several important effects:

- It gives the terms 'health' and 'wellbeing' standing as explicit objectives and concerns within regulation of the built environment in England.
- It draws those crucial chronic and acute threats to health alluded to above into play.
- Crucially, and whether or not the amendment is successful, it provides room for debate, on the record and on the national stage, about housing and health.

If the amendment passes (or, more likely, if the government adopts the amendment on the condition that is withdrawn) it also provides the platform for a second step. This is to put forward further amendments to legislation that sharpen up the system by defining healthy homes as those which conform with the TCPA's Healthy Home Principles (summarised above).

Seeing the need for system change

To return to the question of whether there is '*actually a chance of making this happen*', what all this suggests that there is now 'a chance', in a literal sense. However unlikely it remains, the possibility of the Healthy Homes Bill's key elements becoming law has moved from the realm of theory to that of practical possibility. Perhaps the greatest threat to this practical possibility is posed by questions of ambition and perspective, not from the government, but from parliamentarians and lobbying groups of all stripes.

Quite simply, while the campaign is making the case that *a)* the terrible quality of many new homes and the Grenfell disaster are products of a deep sickness in how we regulate the built environment, and *b)* genuine change will therefore require system change, many other organisations and politicians have taken the Building Safety Bill on its own terms, and are seeking to graft interventions on top of its limited measures, or are focusing on making the Bill 'workable' in its current form, instead of challenging its scope.

The clearest examples of this came during the Bill's Second Reading in the House of Lords, when many peers made the case for adding particular safety features or standards to the Bill. Safer stairs, sprinkler systems and additional safety exists could, of course, be valuable, but instead of making piecemeal additions to a system that, overall, is clearly failing, we should all be striving to build a

newly refocused system that would deliver such changes as a matter of course.

Similarly, many prominent built environment professional bodies and NGOs have taken the default stance of 'welcoming the Bill and looking forward to working with the Government to…', apparently without surveying the bigger picture and seeking an opportunity to address the core issue of housing and planning systems that do not align with the pursuit of health and wellbeing. What if the next Grenfell-style disaster occurs in a long, low, commercial-to-residential conversation in the middle of an industrial estate that fire engines might struggle to access or even locate?

'We should be delivering healthy homes as an absolute minimum, working out from that fundamental proposition to design a system that acts upon it and delivers'

Most frustratingly, many parliamentarians, of all political colours, have used language that frames the Bill's objectives in terms of *consumer rights*. Obviously, property-buyers should not be at risk of spending life-changing sums of money on bad investments.[3] But again, the fundamental point of the Bill, policy, and regulation in general should be to ensure people's wellbeing. Safe investments would be a nice by-product of satisfying this much deeper human need.

All of the concerns listed above are legitimate issues in themselves; but they would all be better addressed if we collectively stood back and took stock of the system as a whole.

The economic viability question

Standing back and looking at the bigger picture also has bearing on the second of those particularly resonant audience questions— namely, *'But how can we make healthy homes economically viable?'* This question comes up again and again, and is one that progressive practitioners grapple with on a day-to-day basis. It serves as a powerful reminder that healthy homes—meaning homes that provide the *most basic things* that people need to live fulfilling lives—are often not economically viable within our current planning and housing systems. Surely, this is a perverse state affairs: we should be delivering healthy homes as an absolute minimum, working out from that fundamental proposition to design a system that acts upon it and delivers. Can an economic system that is unable to deliver homes satisfying the Healthy Homes Principles really be considered to be worthy of preservation?

The housing market and urban economics are not immutable or laws of nature—they are social constructs and products of the state and regulation. Enshrining the Healthy Homes Principles in policy and statue would reshape urban economics. Universally applying minimum standards at national level would lead to any 'increase' in the cost of development being priced into all development land. And the value of land with permission for residential development would not increase dramatically because the new baseline for residential development would increase universally. Residential development would produce only healthy homes as homes that were anything other than healthy would be outlawed. In any case, the value of land *should* reflect the cost of building homes that are fit to live in. Why would we want to build anything else?

To put it another way… If it is argued that universal decent housing is a flawed ambition because it cannot be achieved within our current system of development economics, the answer is that, if that is indeed so, we need to change that system. Decent housing should be non-negotiable, and developers should not be building anything other than decent homes. If their business models depend on building homes that are substandard, it is those business models that should be considered unviable.

What's the point?

Beneath the surface of *'But how can we make healthy homes economically viable?'* is a much more simple question: *'What's the point?'* What *is* the point of a regulatory or economic system that regularly produces homes or neighbourhoods that undermine their residents' health and wellbeing? And since that is what the system does, just what is the point of merely making incremental amendments through a Bill which—if the bigger picture is grasped—*could* be used to fix the much deeper structural issues that cause the issues that are addressed by those incremental amendments?

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Notes

1 D Slade: 'Seizing the political moment—regulating the built environment through a healthy homes act'. *Town & Country Planning*, 2021, Vol. 80, May/Jun., 180–83

2 Information on the TCPA's Healthy Homes campaign is available from the TCPA website, at www.tcpa.org.uk/healthy-homes-act

3 It is fascinating how this reflects the results of FrameWorks' research into how the public perceive housing inequality, which Natalie Tate considers in this issue—see N Tate: Talking about housing'. *Town & Country Planning*, 2022, Vol. 81, Jan.–Feb., 51–53

good health, ill-health—*who knows?*

Julia Thrift looks at how the government's apparent antipathy to public health could easily undermine delivery under its levelling-up agenda

Caroline Brown/David Lock Associates.

'The link between social conditions and health is not a footnote to the 'real' concerns with health'

On 15 July 2021 the Prime Minister made his first major speech about 'levelling up', in which he started to explain the government's most powerful policy idea for the post-pandemic era.[1] The gist of it was this: 'for too many people, geography turns out to be destiny'. Among the many things that he said must be 'levelled up' is health:

> *'Take simple life expectancy—even before covid hit, it is an outrage that a man in Glasgow or Blackpool has an average of ten years less on this planet than someone growing up in Hart in Hampshire or in Rutland. Why do the people of Rutland live to such prodigious ages? Who knows—but they do.'*

Who knows…? Well, actually, anyone working in public health has a very good idea why, on average, people living in some parts of the country live a decade less than people in other places. For a Prime Minister who has spent more time with public health experts than most, this statement seems in bad faith.

Put crudely, what causes some communities to live much shorter, ill-er lives is poverty and deprivation. It is no co-incidence that Blackpool has the misfortune to be ranked number one in the Index of Multiple Deprivation for local authorities in England (by rank of average rank).[2] And it is no coincidence that Rutland (ranked 303) and Hart (317) are among the least deprived.

The person who has done most to understand health inequalities and how and why they play out differently across the country is Professor Sir Michael Marmot. His *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* report[3] was commissioned by the then Health Secretary Andy Burnham at the end of the last Labour government and published weeks before the coalition government came to power in 2010. It set out the multiple and complex factors that determine whether or not people are healthy; made evidence-based recommendations for reducing health inequalities; and provided serious economic analysis of the costs of addressing poor health—and the far greater cost to the economy of doing nothing.

The report could not have been clearer. This is how it begins:

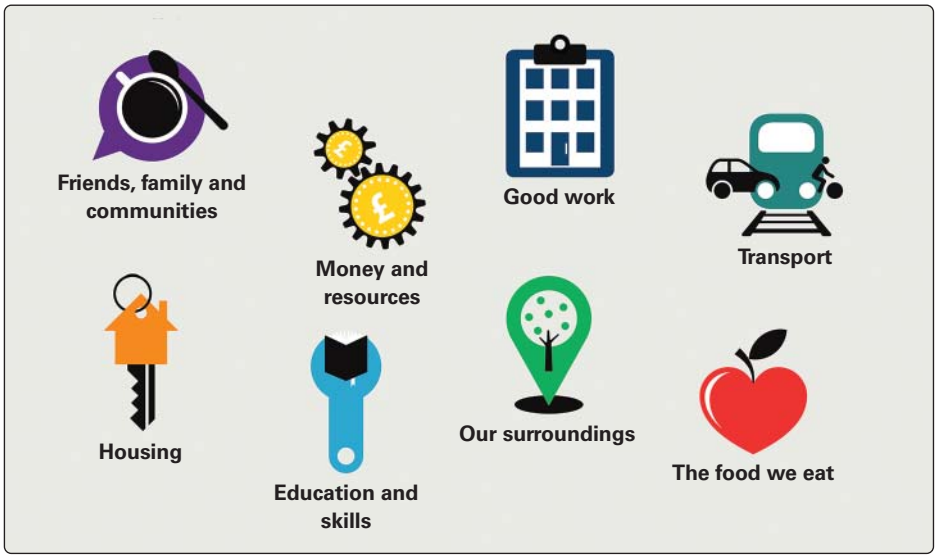
> *'People with a higher socioeconomic position in society have a greater array of life chances and more opportunities to lead a flourishing life. They also have better health. The two are linked: the more favoured people are, socially and economically, the better their health. This link between social conditions and health is not a footnote to the 'real' concerns with health—health care and unhealthy behaviours—it should become the main focus.'*

The recommendations included a recognition that the communities in which people live have a profound influence on their health and a clear message that funding and effort should be deliberately weighted towards the people and places that need it most.

The brief given to Marmot and his team by Andy Burnham had been to provide evidence and recommendations to inform the development of a health inequalities strategy for England. A decade later, after two years in which a pandemic disproportionately killed people living in poverty,[4] the need for Marmot's evidence-based approach is even more urgent, and his updated recommendations, set out in *Build Back Fairer: The Covid-19 Marmot* Review,[5] ought to be an essential ingredient in plans to 'level up', particularly in the forthcoming health disparities[6] White Paper.

From a political perspective it is unsurprising that the recommendations set out in *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* were ignored by national policy-makers: 2010 saw a decisive change of government and a new regime of state 'austerity', with an overwhelming focus on reducing public spending. Investment in people and places was cut. Directly contrary to Marmot's recommendations, the cuts were deepest in the most deprived areas.[7]

The places in which people live shape the choices they are able to make, and this shapes their health



What makes us healthy?
Source: What Makes Us Healthy? An Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health. Health Foundation, Mar. 2018. https://reader.health.org.uk/what-makes-us-healthy

Nevertheless, the report had lasting influence in the way that it brought to the fore the important contribution that places and communities play in supporting good health. Living in a good-quality and suitable home in a green and unpolluted neighbourhood, with supportive family and friends, a sense of purpose and an adequate income, are the key ingredients of a healthy life. While the health care provided by the NHS is important, it is estimated that it contributes only around 15–40% of the factors that keep people healthy: homes, neighbourhoods, communities and a sufficient income account for the majority of the 'determinants of health'.[8] Although national policy-makers ignored the report, cities such as Manchester and Coventry are adopting its recommendations.

Since the Marmot Report was published, a wealth of academic research has added to the evidence that places have a significant impact on health. Furthermore, reports such as Public Health England's *Spatial Planning for Health*[9] and NHS England's *Putting Health into Place*[10] set out what the evidence says about how places should be planned and built to best support the health of the people who live in them. Nowadays, there is no lack of evidence about how to create healthy places.

Perhaps 2022 is the year in which a decisive government effort will be made to create healthy places to prevent ill-health? Promisingly, the government has set up a ministerial-level Health Promotion Taskforce, whose remit is 'To drive a cross- government effort to improve the nation's health, supporting economic recovery and levelling up'.[11] Indeed, the Levelling Up White Paper[12] includes both 'increasing healthy life expectancy by five years' and improving 'well-being in every area of the UK' as two of the long-term 'levelling up missions' that the government has promised to measure and review.

Despite this, there appear to be deep-rooted ideological reasons why this government seems unlikely to 'level up' health. At the heart of the problem is the distinction between 'public health' and 'health care':

- ***Public health*** concerns the health of whole populations. It is a collective effort to prevent illness and help communities to stay healthy. It can be delivered by governments (often local councils) or communities themselves. The World Health Organization defines it as 'the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society'.[13] Public health is often relatively low cost and unglamorous: clean water, sewage systems, contraception, washing hands with soap and water and vaccination are all vital components.
- ***Health care*** is the medical treatment provided by professionals to individual people. It can be high-tech, expensive, glamorous, and dramatic—think of skilled surgeons carrying out life-saving operations. Politicians like to be photographed visiting hospitals: health care gets the limelight, investment, and policy focus.

In essence, public health is about preventing illness; health care is about curing people after they have become ill. As is so often the case, prevention is far less expensive than cure: a systematic review of the return on investment in public health concluded that it is 'highly cost saving', with a median return on investment of 14.3 : 1.[14]

However, the government's ideological preference for individual agency rather than collective action has repeatedly led to it making strong statements about the importance of public health while in the same breath announcing initiatives and funding that are nothing to do with public health and entirely

about health care. The most egregious example is that at the height of the pandemic the Prime Minister announced funding for 40 new hospitals: instead of investing money in public health measures to prevent people becoming ill, the government committed funding for the much more expensive solution of trying to cure their illness.

So what should policies for 'levelling up' health look like? The Levelling Up White Paper makes the link between place and health, says very little about how it proposes to reduce health inequalities, but promises a Health Disparities White Paper in due course.

'The signs are that the government continues to ignore the evidence that population-level structural change is necessary and, instead, creates policies focused on individual behaviour change'

The Health Foundation, a leading health think-tank, makes it clear that improving population health and reducing health inequalities can be achieved only by an integrated approach that spans multiple government departments, not just the Department for Health and Social Care. In its briefing, *A Whole-Government Approach to Improving Health*,[15] it lists five policy areas that, if co-ordinated and focused on health outcomes, would have the most effect. Planning and the quality of the built and natural environment are central to three of them:

- ***'Great places to live and work'***, including improving access to safe, good-quality housing and introducing a Healthy Homes Bill, as suggested by the TCPA,[16] and a one-off £20 billion investment in social housing.
- ***'Connecting the country, creating opportunities'***, including ring-fencing 10% of the national transport budget to be spent on active travel (particularly in deprived areas), and focusing planning on creating low-carbon places and 20-minute neighbourhoods.[17]
- ***'Health and the environment'***, including improving local green spaces, reducing air pollution, and meeting the net-zero target by 2050.[18]

Policies such as these would help to create places in which everyone, whatever their socio-economic situation, would find living a healthier life both easy and affordable. These policies deliberately focus on structural change—rather than putting the onus on individuals to take action to improve their health—because evidence shows that this is the most effective approach. According to the Health Foundation:

> *'any strategy to improve health equity must go beyond an emphasis on identifying personal risks to ill health or influencing individual behaviours. Evidence shows that population-level interventions will have more impact on increasing healthy life expectancy than relying on individual agency to bring about change.'*[15]

The Levelling Up White Paper makes it clear that a cross-government approach is necessary to achieve its aims, including reduction in health disparities. Worryingly, however, the signs are that the government continues to ignore the evidence that population-level structural change is necessary and, instead, creates policies focused on individual behaviour change.

Although the government's policy statement *Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care*[19] includes encouraging statements such as 'Prevention [of ill health] must be a central principle in delivering a sustainable NHS and levelling up', it goes on to say that one way of achieving this will be to explore 'turning the NHS Health Check programme into a National Prevention Service so that people can access health checks, supporting individuals to be healthier and access the right treatments'. So someone living in a cold, damp flat alongside a road with high levels of air pollution will be able to get their bronchitis and asthma diagnosed and treated—but not prevented by the provision of a good home in a neighbourhood free of air pollution. To describe this as a policy initiative to prevent ill-health ignores decades of evidence of what action is required to effectively improve the nation's health.

There is no doubt that many in government genuinely do want to 'level up' the country. However, it is far from clear that Ministers are convinced that collective public health solutions provide the answer. They make the age-old error of thinking that if one person can escape poverty and its associated ill-health through strength of character or pure good luck, then so can everyone. This is tantamount to blaming the people who get left behind for being poor and ill.

Tellingly, someone who has successfully escaped an impoverished start in life is the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid. On 16 September 2021 he chose to make his first major speech in Blackpool, the most deprived town in England. Reading Javid's speech, its sincerity shines through.[20] This was a heartfelt statement of intent by someone who grew up in difficult circumstances and now, with the power and influence of a government Minister, wants to improve the lives of those still struggling.

He pointed out that the Covid mortality rate for people living in the most-deprived areas was 2.4 times

that of people living in the least-deprived areas. He spoke about the importance of public services such as libraries to people's wellbeing and life-chances. He said that just as 'we can't level up economically without levelling up in health, it's equally true that we can't tackle health disparities without tackling wider disparities too'.

Judging by his words you might think that the strong but complex links between poverty and ill-health, and the importance of tackling both at once in order to 'level up', was understood. And yet, a few weeks earlier, the government had announced that it would cut Universal Credit by £20 a week…

● ***Julia Thrift*** *is Director, Healthier Place-Making, at the TCPA. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 B Johnson: 'The Prime Minister's Levelling Up Speech: 15 July 2021'. Prime Minister's Office, 15 Jul. 2021. www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-prime-ministers-levelling-up-speech-15-july-2021

2 See File 10: Local authority district summaries (lower-tier), in *English Indices of Deprivation 2019*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sept. 2019. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019

3 M Marmot *et al.*: *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*. Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post-2010 (The Marmot Review), Feb. 2010. www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review

4 *Disparities in the Risk and Outcomes of COVID-19*. Public Health England, Aug. 2020. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf

5 M Marmot, J Allen, P Goldblatt, E Herd and J Morrison: *Build Back Fairer: The Covid-19 Marmot Review*. Institute of Health Equity, for the Health Foundation, Dec. 2020. www.health.org.uk/publications/build-back-fairer-the-covid-19-marmot-review

6 It is notable that the government now refers to 'health disparities' rather than using the well established term 'health inequalities'. Health inequalities have a widely accepted definition: they are 'unfair' and 'avoidable'. In other words, they exist as the result of political choices. In contrast, 'health disparities' are simply differences in the health of one group compared with another. Arguably, switching from 'health inequalities' to 'health disparities' lets the government off the hook

7 P Butler: 'Deprived northern regions worst hit by UK austerity, study finds'. *The Guardian*, 28 Jan. 2019. www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jan/28/deprived-northern-regions-worst-hit-by-uk-austerity-study-finds

8 See 'Broader determinants of health: future trends'. Webpage. The King's Fund. www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/time-think-differently/trends-broader-determinants-health

9 *Spatial Planning for Health: An Evidence Resource for Planning and Designing Healthier Places*. Public Health England. Jun. 2017. www.gov.uk/government/publications/spatial-planning-for-health-evidence-review

10 The *Putting Health into Place* suite of publications (TCPA, The King's Fund, The Young Foundation, and Public Health England, for NHS England, Sept. 2019) summarising the Healthy New Towns Programme work are available from www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/

11 Cabinet Committees, their memberships and their terms of reference are listed at www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-cabinet-committees-system-and-list-of-cabinet-committees/list-of-cabinet-committees-and-their-membership

12 *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Feb. 2022. www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom

13 Based on the definition set out in D Acheson: *Public Health in England. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Future Development of the Public Health Function*. HMSO, 1988

14 R Masters, E Anwar, B Collins, R Cookson and S Capewell:'Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review'. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 2017, Vol. 71 (8), 827-34. https://jech.bmj.com/content/71/8/827

15 K Merrifield and G Nightingale: *A Whole-Government Approach to Improving Health*. Briefing. Health Foundation, Oct. 2021. www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/a-whole-government-approach-to-improving-health

16 Information on the TCPA's Healthy Homes campaign is available from the TCPA website, at www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/category/healthy-homes-act

17 The TCPA has published free resources about 20-minute neighbourhoods and how they could be introduced in England — available at www.tcpa.org.uk/the-20-minute-neighbourhood

18 The Levelling Up White Paper announced £30 million to improve parks, with around £1 million allocated to each of 30 parks. The Landscape Institute describes this as 'profoundly insufficient' and is calling for £1 billion to be invested annually over five years (see 'Levelling Up White Paper: Our initial reaction'. News Story, Landscape Institute, 2 Feb. 2022. www.landscapeinstitute.org/news/levelling-up-white-paper-initial-reaction/). The Communities and Local Government Committee's *Public Parks* report (HC 45. House of Commons, Feb. 2017. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/45.pdf) estimated that there are 27,000 parks and green spaces in the UK — improving 30 of them, although welcome, is unlikely to achieve much levelling up

19 See *Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care*. Policy Paper. Cabinet Office/Department of Health and Social Care/Prime Minister's Office, updated Jan. 2022. www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-health-and-social-care/build-back-better-our-plan-for-health-and-social-care

20 S Javid: 'The hidden costs of COVID-19: the social backlog'. Speech by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care at the Grange Community Centre, Blackpool, 16 Sept. 2021. www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-hidden-costs-of-covid-19-the-social-backlog

talking health; talking homes

TCPA President and former Housing and Planning Minister **Nick Raynsford** and former Chief Executive of NHS England and Permanent Secretary at the UK Department of Health **Nigel Crisp**, who has been promoting the Healthy Homes Principles in the House of Lords, discuss the 'why' and 'how' of bringing housing and planning together to ensure that all our homes are health-supporting

Nick Raynsford (NR): Just to start things off, and by way of introduction, I have quite a long history of involvement in housing and planning issues, going right back to the 1960s. When I came to London after leaving university I found myself living in an area in which many people were living in awful housing conditions. This triggered my involvement in politics and housing, which has been a major interest ever since.

Nigel Crisp (NC): As a health service manager, for a period I was Chief Executive of the NHS in England and also Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health—but, as I normally say at this point, I'm now in recovery. My background is that before I joined the health service I worked for about 10 years in community development. And I'm back in that area through some of the things that I'm doing now. When I left university, I lived and worked for four years on an overspill housing estate in Halewood, outside Liverpool, and there I learnt something about bad planning and the problems it created, sometimes with the best of intentions. But it is only relatively

recently that I have really come to understand some of the impact that housing has on health.

Let's start off by exploring a bit more of your background, Nick. Obviously you're quite a political animal, and I note from your CV that you were protesting against the Vietnam War while up at Cambridge University. Your politics and your approach to housing and planning presumably go hand in hand.

NR: Very much so. That exposure to some pretty awful housing conditions in London in the mid- to late-1960s really was an eye-opener to me. As you noted, I had already been quite politically active, but it was the experience of living in a rather run-down area of Fulham in the late 1960s that propelled me into local politics. I stood for what was then Hammersmith (now Hammersmith and Fulham) Council and was elected in 1971 and spent a few years on the council's housing committee. But at the same time I was getting myself into employment in housing, first with a co-operative housing association, and then at the Shelter Housing Aid Centre (SHAC). That was a wonderful and innovative project, made possible by Shelter's very successful campaigning and fundraising, which tried to find appropriate solutions to people's problems, rather than make them fit into a predetermined pattern. We forget just how rigidly divided housing was in the immediate post-war era. If you were looking for a new home, you either had to go to the council, who would offer rented housing providing you met their criteria, or you had to get a mortgage and buy a house. Those were the two main options, as the private rented sector was declining and conditions were generally poor and getting worse. There was very little interest in intermediate housing, so options were very restricted.

At SHAC we tried to find solutions—and they were often quite imaginative. We had a team that worked with people to get them opportunities to move out of London to the New Towns; but to do that we had to set up an employment agency, because the route to New Town housing was through employment: if you had a job, you qualified for a house. It was slightly odd finding myself in a housing agency but being part of an organisation that in effect ran a labour exchange—today's Job Centre—to help people obtain jobs and thus housing.

There was one other important dimension to my experience back then, which was the way in which places like the area of Fulham that I was living in, which had been very run down and designated for slum clearance, changed rapidly in the late 1960s. After being designated an area for regeneration it began to attract an entirely new group of people, who sought to buy the run-down houses there very cheaply, get rid of the tenants who lived in them with security of tenure and fixed rents, and then make large capital gains on the disposal of the properties in a rising market. That particular form of exploitation angered me hugely, and I campaigned strongly for the poorer tenants living in these run-down houses to get the benefit of the improvements, rather than being turfed out to make way for what were becoming fashionable 'yuppie' homes in a newly rising market.

NC: That's fascinating, especially the point that the flow of people to the New Towns was about housing *and* employment, which touches on a recurring issue today—namely that we tend to put things in their own unconnected boxes, such that we treat housing separately from other matters with which there really is a strong link—such as health.

'We tend to put things in their own unconnected boxes, such that we treat housing separately from other matters with which there really is a strong link—such as health'

NR: I absolutely agree. Generally, good policy-making depends on making linkages between disciplines to ensure that solutions are appropriate. As an illustration, I was really heartened when I heard—while still an MP but after I'd ceased to be a Minister—about an experiment in which GP practices were enabled to prescribe home improvements in order to deal with very poor conditions, particularly damp and insanitary conditions, that might adversely affect people's health. That seemed a very intelligent, creative way to approach the problem—trying to initiate not just responses to people's respiratory problems, but solutions that would transform their home so that it would no longer aggravate their existing condition, and would probably help to cure it. It demonstrated the sort of joined-up thinking that we need much more of. Among many other examples I could give is the place in which I now live (and which I had something to do with getting going in the late 1990s), Greenwich Millennium Village, which was designed to be an exemplary development. Part of its planning involved establishing a health centre right at the outset and moving an existing school onto the site so that these facilities would be there when the first people moved in. That is the kind of intelligent planning that generates better communities and better outcomes for people.

NC: Yes, and it's absolutely where we need to get to—but in recent years that focus on better outcomes and better communities has too often been lost.

Perhaps I should add a bit more about my background. In Halewood after leaving university, I worked for Halewood Community Council, a local charity that was part-funded by the Urban Aid programme, which, back then, was, in a sense, trying to 'level up', and which offers some important lessons for today. Once a small village, Halewood was further developed as an overspill estate of some 20,000 people. From there we looked with envy at Runcorn and Skelmersdale, which benefited from New Town facilities, whereas Halewood was basically just housing, an awful lot of which was of fairly poor quality. It had two 'shopping centres', each consisting of a row of about four shops, it had a pub, it had a secondary school and a primary school; and that was about it for facilities. With good intentions, the planners of Merseyside were clearing slums in Central Liverpool, but at Halewood, in many ways, they created a new one—simply finding housing for people outside town, bunging them there, and leaving them to it; and there were lots of problems. But as well as some of the outcomes of bad provision, I also experienced another side of what you were talking about, as the community council worked to try to create a community. Its work was all at a very local level—some local visionary people doing things—and apart from Urban Aid there wasn't much connection into the system. I never met anyone senior in the system—people like me or you in our latter careers.

The next time that I really encountered housing as an issue was only fairly recently. I worked in the NHS in England for precisely 20 years, the last six in running it. And housing was not something I really dealt with. Of course, I knew at the back of my mind that housing and planning were important health issues, but we were focused on our priorities, within our silo, if you like. The NHS was given clear priorities and when I was running the NHS they were about waiting lists, about heart disease, and so on. Tony Blair had a line about being tough on crime and the causes of crime. And we were just being tough on waiting lists and heart disease; we weren't being tough on the causes of waiting lists and heart disease.

I became involved in housing about eight years ago when I undertook a review for the Royal College of Psychiatrists, looking at why so many people were being admitted to mental health hospitals and why they stayed so long. And the answer was not that we needed more beds; we needed more community provision of care. And the biggest single blockage was a lack of suitable housing. Too many people were admitted to hospital because there was no other suitable accommodation for them, and too many had their discharge delayed for the same reason. The psychiatrists, of course, understood that, but the priority for the mental health system was medical treatment.

And then the final point at which I've really got involved in housing has been during the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid has seen we middle classes sitting in a nice comfortable home and having things delivered to our door, but there are plenty of people in bad housing conditions who, during lockdowns, have been trapped with abusive partners, or children with no space, and so on. And the more I got involved with, for example, the TCPA's Healthy Homes Act campaign, the more I realised how fundamental the home is to health—a stable home and a stable community are the best foundations for people to create something of themselves and their lives.

NR: I'm fascinated by your observations on Halewood, which seem to chime in with my understanding of what went wrong in that period. One of the most influential books I read early on in my working career in housing was the famous Willmott and Young study, *Family and Kinship in East London*, which blew open the issue of lack of community in a lot of the post-war overspill estate housing that people were moved out to from the big cities such as London, Liverpool, and elsewhere. It took a very long time before it was properly understood that community needs should be considered as part of the planning process. I wonder why it took so long for this obvious truth to percolate through into the political system.

NC: And we've been similarly careless about community since then, in other circumstances. I have just had an article published in *Prospect* which looks at how, on many occasions over the last 50 years and more, we have seen the destruction of communities. The loss of community in the wake of the slum clearance programme—Willmott and Young again—was echoed in the winding down of some of our great industries in the 1970s and 1980s and its effects on community in towns or villages that depended on a coalmine, a steelwork, or a dock. And there has been a continuation of that destruction of community through post-2007/08 financial crisis austerity, which has seen the loss of so many of the things that make 'community' happen. There has been a constant pursuit of an essentially economic view of the world, as opposed to a community view. *The Third Pillar*, written by Raghuram Raja, a former IMF chief economist and former head of India's central bank, talks about the interaction of the state, the market and the community and suggests rethinking the relationship between the state, the market and wider society, and strengthening the 'third pillar' of the community. Our view of progress has been dominated by market and state.

NR: It's fair to say of the state's role that post-war reconstruction saw the building of extraordinary

numbers of new homes—Harold McMillan boasted that his government would deliver 300,000, Harold Wilson's 400,000, and they achieved that. But the real tragedy is that council housing was built in one part of the city and owner-occupied housing elsewhere. The two just didn't meet, so you didn't get mixed and balanced communities. And as the problems you identified worsened—the decline of industry and growing problems of dislocation of existing communities—the poorer areas became very, very much poorer. The problem was aggravated by inadequate investment in maintenance and management, partly because councils were reluctant to put rents up for fear of political backlash.

When I came into government in 1997, then as Minister for Housing and Planning in 1999, the biggest single challenge we faced was really poor-standard council housing that desperately needed renovation. We introduced the Decent Homes programme, a 10-year programme to try to ensure an improvement in standards—but it was also about trying to create more diverse communities through tenure diversity. There would be some owner-occupation, some intermediate housing, some social rented housing and some private rented housing, rather than just mono-tenure.

NC: As Minister for Housing and Planning you were able to think in those wider terms within your department, but you would also have needed the help of other departments, presumably education or health, for example?

NR: Yes, and above all, I needed time. After two years as Housing and Planning Minister I was moved on in 2001 to the local government brief. I was disappointed because I knew that the housing and planning agendas required a lot more time. Unfortunately, this is one of the problems of British politics: the churn of Ministers is just ridiculous. The average tenure of Housing Ministers over the last 10 years is only one year. This is crazy, because these kinds of big issues require a lot of time and a lot of consistent, sustained attention. If Ministers think they are going to be moved in a year or two's time, they inevitably focus on the short term, rather than on the long term, which is really damaging to the chance of making transformational changes that will last.

NC: So was the 10-year programme continued by the next Minister?

NR: Yes, the Decent Homes programme did stick and it achieved quite a lot, but lots of other policies just fell by the wayside, which was a cause of sadness to me as the White Paper of the year 2000 was the most comprehensive statement of housing policy since the 1970s. There was a lot in that which I would have loved to have seen implemented, but didn't actually last.

NC: I saw things from the other side as Permanent Secretary in the Department of Health. There were three Secretaries of State during my six years. Totally different characters, each with a different approach—one very strategic, one very political (who essentially acted as a non-executive chair of the NHS and left management to me), and one very policy-focused. That changed a lot of the dynamic of what could happen. Ministerial personality and the 'churn' are really important and have a really big impact. When you were Minister did you have regular contact with health in any way?

NR: Not really. Obviously I knew the Health Ministers well and talked to them informally in the lobby, and so on. But there wasn't the level of meetings that one would have hoped for in a properly integrated government trying to break down the silos and ensure consistency between different policies in different departments.

NC: And I guess we didn't reach out much from health either—perhaps almost deliberately because we were so focused on the agenda of improving the *service* of the NHS; getting waiting lists down, improving heart and cancer services, all of which we did. These were valuable achievements, but things that weren't among those priorities got neglected, and we just didn't think outside the territory of the defined agenda. Even our Chief Medical Officer (a great man) was drawn into this agenda, whereas the Chief Medical Officer should be (and indeed is) an advisor to the Prime Minister and therefore ought to be able to make some impact more widely across government.

NR: An area in which there was quite a lot of cross-departmental working was that of homelessness. It's shocking now to remember that in the 1970s homeless policies were essentially hangovers from the Poor Law—a homeless woman and her children would be admitted to temporary accommodation, but in many areas the rules excluded the husband or partner; or women who were pregnant didn't qualify for accommodation until the pregnancy had reached the seventh month. I got involved in voluntary sector campaigning for what became the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, which gave significant accommodation rights to homeless people; it wasn't the full story as most single homeless people did not qualify for rehousing, but it did make a difference.

But by the late 1980s and 1990s it was clear that the issue that had come back in a big way, and there was a real problem of rough sleeping. The Social Exclusion Unit was very involved in the work to try to counter this, so policy wasn't just about housing

provision. There was a recognition of the importance of involving a network of different organisations in providing a comprehensive service—voluntary organisations running shelters or street work to identify people sleeping rough and to get them into accommodation, as well as support teams to ensure that they got the help they needed: mental health was and is often a very big factor in homelessness. There was good co-ordination between the voluntary sector and local authorities, and the NHS was brought into that; but it didn't really extend to the wider housing and community field, other than in the fairly narrow field of homelessness.

NC: Poor homes have such an impact on health—dampness, overcrowding, right through to access to green space, the importance of which has been highlighted by Covid. If you were a Minister now, would you be looking to bring housing and health more closely together?

NR: After the Second World War Nye Bevan was Minister for Health and Housing. But by the 1970s the case for the environment being brought together with housing and planning was dominant—it was the Heath government that created the Department of the Environment, merging the old Ministry of Housing and Local Government with transport and whatever there had been on the environment (which at the time was, I think, not very much). That was in some ways helpful. But you then always had conflicts: transport was brought within the department and then taken out of it, and that happened again when I was a Minister in what was the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (and then the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions) from 1997, with transport becoming a separate department again in 2002. There is a tension between trying to create linkages between relevant departments to ensure more joined-up government, but then creating over-large and unwieldy departments that don't focus as they should on a few achievable objectives—that may slightly overstate the case, but no-one has really found the right solutions to such tensions. I have come to the conclusion that most of this machinery of government change tends to be totally unproductive.

NC: There will always be boundaries. And from my experience of running the NHS in England, which is obviously a massive organisation, I would say that whatever system you have, it's the people within in that make it work. It's not just that culture tends to trump strategy: the core thing is relationships. I had oversight of around 150 different bodies, and every Friday I was out visiting one of them somewhere in England. You could walk into a general hospital or a mental health hospital or a GP surgery and sense the atmosphere; and in large part the ones that worked well were those that had got the relationships right—the places where the people on the front desk could catch the eye of the chief executive, or knew who the senior surgeons were. We deal too much in structures and systems and not enough in relationships and people, whereas in the voluntary sector it's the other way around. From our time in the voluntary sector we can see that it's about passionate people doing the work and finding a way to do stuff.

NR: Yes, and about finding ways round problems, rather than reinforcing silos, which is what institutional changes tend to do.

NC: I totally agree. And you're always going to have to find ways of working across boundaries because you can't bring everything all into one place, because if you do that you then just have to create internal boundaries.

NR: Turning to the Healthy Homes Act campaign, how do we achieve the necessary cross-division agreement to make it possible to bring the Act into being? There are aims here which will only be achieved if they are accepted much more widely than by the advocates at the TCPA or those of us involved in various ways with the campaign. We've got to get the case accepted by a very wide range for people, obviously including people in the NHS and in the housing field. There's a challenge in trying to build alliances and support for something which we both believe is an important objective.

NC: I think that, with the way that the health system is changing today, it is much more receptive than it would have been. While you could always have found psychiatrists, mental health nurses and public health people who would have been behind the Healthy Homes Act campaign, the power in the health system has resided in the acute sector. But people are starting to understand the sort of objectives that the campaign is pursuing; and I think that again is about relationships. It may be about convincing one place at a time. When I've talked about this with chief executives across the country they are naturally interested in how they can ensure that their hospital can do the stuff that it really has to do and not so much about the stuff that it doesn't really have to do. But people are understanding that much of what hospitals end up doing is essentially picking up the pieces from the fall-out from other sectors and sticking them back together again, sending people out knowing that they'll just come back in again because the underlying cause is an issue of housing, of homelessness, of poverty, or of addiction.

The new structures involved in integrated care networks may bring more thinking and initiatives on

Clifford Harper

that together; but there are two things here. One is devolution, because this sort of thing cannot be mandated from above—we really need to make devolution work in the NHS. But there is also a huge potential impact from primary care. At the moment, in the face of Covid GPs are under extraordinary pressure, and on the end of much very unfair criticism, but the GP's role is something that needs attention. The old model that you and I were brought up with—the GP who knew many of their local community personally, who would help with your birth as well as your grandpa's death, and was always on call—is never going to work today. But I do see many new, younger GPs going out and working with the community, not just on illness prevention, but on 'creating health'. Prevention can be colonised by the professionals, and as they're trying to prevent heart disease or obesity or whatever is their area of special interest, the work tends to become narrowly focused. What we should be thinking about is creating the circumstances that allow people to be healthy, competent, and resilient.

For example, there is a very good GP working near Gatwick who runs Growing Health Together in Horley. She's got together with something like 30 or 40 local community organisations—some of them are gardening, some of them are looking after disabled people, some are singing groups, and so on. She has been working very humbly with them to help create an environment in which people can be healthy. I've recently written a book called *Health Is Made at Home, Hospitals Are for Repairs*—a great African saying which sums up the truth that it is what happens to us at home, at work, at school, in our relationships, and so on that are the crucial determinants of health. Of course, you can get run over by a car or be struck by cancer, but that's not what the majority of the burden of ill-health is. There is real hope in what people like that young GP and others are doing. There are a lot of allies for the campaign there, but there must also be allies to be found in local government, and I've always been convinced by devolution, having been a community worker. Could you say a bit about how you see that?

NR: Like you I wrote a book, in my case five years ago. Among other things it made the case for further devolution. I called it *Substance Not Spin*, which may give a bit of a clue about my bias, and subtitled it *An Insider's View of Success and Failure in Government*. It looked at a series of things that I'd been involved in, either as a campaigner from outside or as a Minister in government, and what had worked and what didn't, and tried to draw some conclusions.

One conclusion was that government tries to do too much. It should concentrate on doing less and doing it better. It should devolve far more power to

people both in the field and within departments—and particularly in health, where there is an overwhelmingly strong case for giving more opportunity for local initiatives. And there is certainly a case for making it possible for local government to take decisions in the interests of the area without being constantly double-guessed by the micro-management attitude of central government, stemming from a belief that without a tight watch on local government things will go wrong. I don't believe that at all. In fact the result of micro-management has been to undermine confidence in local government, such that local authorities don't feel able to do as much as they would like to do and are constantly in thrall, asking whether central government will approve or not—which is totally counterproductive and undesirable.

'Government should concentrate on doing less and doing it better. It should devolve far more power to people both in the field and within departments—and particularly in health, where there is an overwhelmingly strong case for giving more opportunity for local initiatives'

During my time as a Minister a constant mass of material came across my desk, and half of it was not strategic at all—including individual planning decisions that really shouldn't have ended up on a Minister's desk, and should have been decided locally if at all possible. So I'm very strongly convinced of the importance of greater and more effective devolution. How we get there, of course, is another matter. I was involved in the creation of regional government, first with the creation of the Greater London Authority, which I consider one of my successes—because it's still there. (Early in 1999 as we were introducing the legislation to set up that the GLA, my officials said to me: 'We think you ought to know, Minister, this is going to be the longest piece of legislation since the Government of India Act 1936.' To which I replied: 'I hope it lasts a bit longer.') We followed that up with the concept of regional devolution in other parts of England (one of John Prescott's great enthusiasms), offering scope for elected Regional Assemblies. As a first step we were committed to a referendum in the North East region, but the vote was lost massively, which effectively ended the initiative.

The consequences are still seen today in the very odd tapestry of different devolution models in different parts of the country, among which Manchester has probably the most developed and coherent framework. Some of the Combined Authorities or Metro Mayors work quite well, others less so; but there is no coherence, and large areas of the country are without any effective devolved body.

I thought quite a lot about why we lost the North East referendum, and the answer was very simple: there weren't enough powers on offer. The Regional Assemblies would have been given notionally similar strategic powers to London, but they would have had no effective powers over, for example, transport and policing, whereas in London the Mayor of London/GLA has a significant role in relation to policing and controls London Transport. The powers that we *were* able to offer were entirely those within John Prescott's gift because they were among the responsibilities of his department (the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which became the Department for Communities and Local Government and is now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). So a certain amount of planning and housing powers were offered, but we couldn't do much more—there was no way that the Transport Secretary was going to concede any powers to a regional authority in the North East. The criticism that it was going to be a toothless talking shop without adequate powers was unfortunately true, and killed popular support for the Regional Assembly in the North East. There was a reluctance among central government to concede some powers to other bodies that might actually be in a better position to do the job than they were.

NC: Yes, asking someone in power to give up some power is often a difficult conversation. I remember some time around the mid-2000s one or two big local authorities asking if they could act as agents of the NHS locally (Kent in particular). They had done the sums on all sorts of public money and were seeking to act as departmental agents, instead of having all those central government departments peering down on them from Whitehall. That was in line with my thinking, but it never really got anywhere. But perhaps instead of creating something new, giving more responsibility and funding to existing decent-sized authorities might have been a way forward.

NR: The main obstacle was the proliferation of lots of small authorities. The John Major government had tried to address this by asking John Banham to undertake a review of local government. His recommended merger of various local authorities went down like a lead balloon, as most authorities didn't want to be merged with their neighbours. When we came into government, we put off addressing

this given the tension and difficulty that would be created. But we had to come back and face the issue when it became clear that the policies that we were promoting for local government would work only if there was a smaller number of larger, more powerful local authorities with the capacity to do what really needed to be done locally. So we again began the process, and it's carried on under the subsequent coalition government, and the present government. But progress has been patchy and there's still an awful lot of inappropriately sized authorities.

NC: Turning more directly to the Healthy Homes Act campaign again, what do you make of the prospects of making the change happen through Westminster?

NR: I could say more, but having been in contact with various people there for getting on for 50 years, there's no time during that period in which I felt more depressed about the state of affairs in Westminster than I do now.

NC: I agree. In my *Prospect* article, in which I generally take a global view, I noted that in the UK we drift from crisis to crisis apparently without strategy or vision. On the campaign, we need to see what emerges from the Levelling Up White Paper and be pragmatic about what if any opportunities are offered for progressing the Healthy Homes Act within Parliament. One of its underpinning principles concerns space standards for new developments, and there has been movement on that in relation to permitted development conversions, introduced in response to back-bench rebellion. We need to be alert to further opportunities. But I suspect that one of the things that we need to do is to try to start to make things happen out in the country, encouraging local authorities to adopt the Healthy Homes Principles and make things happen on the ground. Sometimes change is provoked from action coming up from below.

NR: In a sense what this is all leading to is the importance of ammunition to reinforce the case; and, here, examples of the disastrous health consequences of substandard housing or the lack of housing can be very powerful. And there have been small gains, such as the positive initiative at the beginning of the Covid pandemic to try to ensure that homeless people were helped off the streets and into temporary accommodation. Although there has been retreat from that, it was a recognition that leaving people on the streets was a disaster and would help to spread Covid, and that it was important to get homeless people into a place where they could be properly looked after and treated, if they had medical conditions, and given the support necessary to establish a future life—the same kind of principles that we were trying to put into practice in the late 1990s with the rough sleepers initiative and the work of the Social Exclusion Unit on homelessness referred to earlier. There have been moments of optimism and we've clearly just got to make the most of them when they come.

'Historically, we've been very bad, particularly in national government, about tackling problems by addressing failure—in effect bailing out losers, rather than backing emerging winners. We need a shift towards the latter'

NC: Yes, I agree that highlighting negative consequences can help bring about change—yet in health you can do that for any topic under the sun and Ministers, and others, become expert in avoiding the issue. But there is also potential in highlighting the positive, especially if it could be done with the sign-up of local politicians from the party in power in Westminster. If a spectrum of people bought into positive examples you might start to see something creative happening. Historically, we've been very bad, particularly in national government, about tackling problems by addressing failure—in effect bailing out losers, rather than backing emerging winners. We need a shift towards the latter.

NR: And towards locally worked-up initiatives that bring health and housing together, whether that's to help the process of discharges from hospitals, where inadequate housing has been an issue for such a long time, or ensuring that in mental health cases people have access to the relevant support that is necessary, rather than being left in the lurch. There must be scope for more of that.

NC: I think so. And examples would help to move the debate a bit. If you were the Minister with responsibility for local government or housing and planning now, what would be the key things that you would try to do for the future?

NR: A very good question. I think the first thing would be to try to get back in place an effective planning system that is about forward planning, rather than development control. The current system is entirely focused on dealing with planning applications rather than strategically planning for

the needs of areas and ensuring good-quality and sustainable development.

Secondly, try to ensure that connections are made between different parts of the policy world—local government, the health service, the criminal justice system, and so on—rather than allowing a silo mentality to obstruct joint working where it would be useful. That is much more difficult to achieve than it is to talk about it. But you're right to say that the initiative has to come locally, and therefore this is probably a question of trying to provide incentives and encouragements, maybe backed with some modest funding, to support new initiatives that are innovative and have the effect of bringing together different parts of the policy framework.

The third thing would be to give a clear, strong message about devolution; about government not interfering when it shouldn't, and instead focusing only on strategic matters, where there is a logic for ensuring that national needs are met. There is always going to be a need for government to determine national priorities, but it has got to move away from this micro-management; it's got to give confidence and encourage local elected leaders to take more initiatives. What would you do?

NC: I'm thinking about how to move the health system towards properly engaging with the issue of healthy homes. It seems to me that the area that is failing at the moment (and where the biggest pressure is) is primary care. Here (and it may be that the current Health and Care Bill might help) we have to find local solutions that pay attention to what is known as the social, economic and environmental determinants of health—all the things that shape our health, including mental health, on which we again need a really big push. Because the health care system shapes only about 20% of our health; everything else comes from external factors, of which housing is one.

'This is about giving confidence to people to really want to change things rather than just be instruments of a process that is dealing with existing problems'

Another thing that is also fundamental for health, and this may be true for other disciplines too, is to re-imagine and change the way that professionals are educated, which is currently very tightly focused on the science. There was a great study on healthcare which proposed three levels of education for a health professional. First, the informative level—the level that makes you a specialist, in which you come to understand the anatomy, physiology, and body systems. The second level is the formative, which is where you take that specialist knowledge and add to it values—confidentiality, behaviour, understanding and relating to the patient, and so on. And then there is a transformative level, in which you become an agent of change. That's rather a good description of a professional, because GPs have a responsibility not just to be a clinician but to try to change what's happening around them. I suspect that's the way we need to be thinking about our professional education in the future, and certainly for health. We need our professionals to be thinking about the wider picture—in health, not just focusing on the various systems of the human body, but on changing the future as well. I hope that makes sense.

NR: It makes a tremendous amount of sense, and it goes very well with what we were saying earlier about more devolution, because this is about giving confidence to people to really want to change things rather than just be instruments of a process that is dealing with existing problems. That's a challenge I've wrestled with all my life: how do you incentivise people to be innovative and creative and to develop new ways of tackling old problems that probably could be dealt with better if people thought carefully and rigorously about how to respond? So there is a common thread there.

NC: The more I think about this, the more the more important it feels, because change so often begins in the head of the professional, and that will be true of the planner, or the housing officer, and so on. I think of professionals that I've met in Africa and India, who, often working alone and covering huge populations, have to go out and finds allies in the community to get things done in a way that we in the UK don't have to—we're so well resourced, we can spend all our time talking only to other people within the system. Such change is, of course, long term and, to return to a point you made earlier, all takes time. We can't just click our fingers and make any of this happen.

● ***The Rt Hon. Nick Raynsford****, formerly Minister for Housing and Planning and Minister for Local and Regional Government, is President of the TCPA and led the Raynsford Review of Planning in England.* ***Nigel Crisp, The Rt Hon. The Lord Crisp KCB****, formerly Chief Executive of NHS England and Permanent Secretary at the UK Department of Health, is an independent crossbench member of the House of Lords. His latest book, Health Is Made at Home, Hospitals Are for Repairs, is published by Salus. The conversation on which this exchange is based took place in early January 2022. The views expressed are personal.*

towards a unifying vision for planning healthier places

Christine Murray asks why, given the abundance of reasons in its favour, we are not yet seeing a return of urban planning for public health

Disease is the mother of planning—plagues and pandemics spurred investment in sewers, green spaces, higher-quality housing, and Garden Cities. From the Broad Street Pump cholera outbreak to the Great Smog of London, health emergencies have led to significant action on the part of government, from infrastructure-building to increased regulation.

Yet planning has been cast as the 'problem child', not the keystone agent of making healthier places, fundamental to 'building back better' and 'levelling up'. Planning reforms—now on hold—emphasised zoning, clarity, expediency, and aesthetics; they did not seek to bring together planning and the NHS, for example, despite successful pilots such as the Healthy New Towns programme, which was funded for just three years.

We have a full checklist of reasons to invest in healthier places…

Pandemic—tick. Scientists quickly identified Covid's disproportionate impact on deprived communities and those in overcrowded homes. A report researched by the Northern Health Science Alliance and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'Left Behind' Neighbourhoods[1] showed that citizens were 46% more likely to die of Covid-19 in deprived places.

The economy—tick. The same report revealed a £36 billion loss in economic productivity due to poor health in deprived neighbourhoods, even though residents worked more hours than the national average. Local authority areas containing these places suffer a further £2.5 billion gap in lost productivity when compared with areas with a similar level of deprivation but better connectivity and civic assets (that is to say, things that we could invest in).

Pollution—tick. The crumbling state of England's water infrastructure continues to spark outrage across the country. The nitrate neutrality crisis in rivers caused by sewage dumping and agricultural pollution has led to a planning moratorium and stopped housebuilding in several large areas. As for clean air, the coroner called for a reduction in national pollution limits following the death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, but MPs voted down an Environment Bill amendment that would have introduced stricter guidance to meet WHO targets. Emissions choked London on 12 January 2022, and citizens were advised not exercise because of the increased risk of stroke and heart damage.

And then there's the climate emergency, as declared by around 350 councils. The UK is threatened with an increase in unpredictable weather shocks, including floods, heatwaves, and drought. Flood defences need upgrading, many of which are owned privately. The insulation of homes is below standard when compared with Europe—and the need to 'Insulate Britain' has been made more acute by the spike in the cost of energy.

We have had plenty of rhetoric from politicians, but a lack of action characterised by a fundamentalist belief that the market will provide. Meanwhile, local councils continue to fall victim to double-digit million-pound budget cuts, while policies including levelling up and planning reform have been languishing in the doldrums. Will the market provide? Will it tackle public health through property development?

We are not entirely without hope. The growth in ESG (environmental, social and governance) investment is fuelling net-zero targets and social value commitments among many private developers working in urban regeneration, as pension funds and private wealth, nudged by consumer demand, take a long view of real estate. The climate emergency is, after all, a financial risk, from the potential obsolescence of building stock to coastal erosion, flooding, or overheating. Investors are making demands.

But there are gaps that the market will never fill. Chronic under-investment in water infrastructure provides the most basic example of where the market will fail us. Despite paying out £72 billion in shareholder dividends, the system is on its knees. In districts across England, planning applications are on hold, with tens of thousands of homes in limbo and Local Plans at risk, following notices from Natural England relating to nitrate or water neutrality leading to embargoes on planning and housebuilding.

'The absence of a unifying vision from the top in an age of divisive politics has left us wondering what the UK stands for… What kind of places are we building? Who is leading?'

The water crisis elucidates the role of national leadership and enabling funds. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan cannot go ahead without tackling a shortage in water supply, but this huge undertaking will not come from private companies because it does not fall under one company's remit. As Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Cambridge City Council's Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport, told me last year: 'Development levels may have to be capped.'

In the absence of national leadership, local government needs empowering and effective devolution, but councils are struggling to realise their ambitions due to the unstable mechanisms through which they borrow and budget.

In any case, as *The Guardian* has reported,[2] hundreds of councils are facing a budgetary shortfall—Nottingham needs to save £28 million to avoid closing six children's centres; Thurrock is looking to cut one in four jobs and sell property to save £34 million by 2024; and the funding gap in Bristol requires a cut of £23 million from next year's budget (following almost £100 million of cuts three years ago) to balance the books. All this is happening against a history of pain: between 2010 and 2015, council services for planning and development were cut by a larger proportion than any other council service.

These challenges are compounded by national leadership that has so far not put its money where its mouth is. The absence of a unifying vision from the top in an age of divisive politics has left us wondering what the UK stands for and just what it means to be 'British'.

What kind of places are we building? Who is leading? Urban planning, design and development involves a complex mix of relationships, from private and public developers to local government departments, plus swathes of consultants, non-government organisations—each with their own budget, responsibilities, agenda, and priorities.

Indeed, it was this complex ecosystem that inspired me to create *The Developer* magazine and its events series, the 'Festival of Place'—to break down silos and bring together a community committed to making places that thrive. We draw professionals in who believe in making a positive social and environmental impact through their work, through the articles we publish, and through our events. We get them talking in a relaxed environment where it is safe to ask questions.

To reimagine how and what we build, we need to come together and forge that unifying vision—with fresh and diverse voices that are traditionally locked out of property events.

Given the major challenges that we face, we need to break down silos between departments, budgets, communities and disciplines and write that new story—create that vision—together. The absence of leadership and funding makes it harder but not impossible to create healthier places, but collaboration is mission-critical.

● ***Christine Murray*** *is Editor-in-Chief and Founding Director of The Developer. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 *Overcoming Health Inequalities in 'Left Behind' Neighbourhoods*. Northern Health Science Alliance and Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI), for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'Left Behind' Neighbourhoods, Jan. 2022. www.thenhsa.co.uk/app/uploads/2022/01/Overcoming-Health-Inequalities-Final.pdf

2 P Inman: ''Councils have been short-changed. We need more government money''. *The Guardian*, 4 Dec. 2021. www.theguardian.com/society/2021/dec/04/councils-have-been-short-changed-we-need-more-government-money

talking about housing

Natalie Tate explains why the Nationwide Foundation is teaming up with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to try to change the way that housing is talked about by the sector and in turn understood by the public—and runs through some of the findings that have emerged from their joint work to date

Nationwide Foundation

We need to find ways to talk about housing inequalities that will help to change hearts and minds

News stories about housing are all around us. Whether directly or indirectly, we read and hear stories about housing all the time. Yet the messages are often mixed, so it can be difficult for members of the public who do not work in the housing sector to tune into the important points. Is the message that housing is about the state of the economy? Is it about health? About kids doing well at school? About the taxes that we pay or the benefits that we can claim?

The truth is that housing is an issue that cuts across numerous government departments and many spheres of life—and this makes the issue complex and, as a result, widely misunderstood. Despite their best efforts, what might appear obvious to housing professionals often seems to get diluted or mutated, and the importance of a story can be lost. Yet, fundamentally, the benefit of good housing is also the simplest of things to understand and appreciate. A home should be a refuge from life's constant pressures; the perfect soothing environment to wash away the stress at the end of a hectic day. But for many people in the UK today, this is simply not their reality.

Box 1
Communicating about housing

As set out in the *Communicating about Housing in the UK: Obstacles, Openings and Emerging Recommendations* report,[A] research completed to date under the Talking about Housing project has revealed three main obstacles that stand in the way of building public support for systemic housing solutions. It is suggested that communications strategists should keep these in mind as they present messages to the public. The final stage of the Talking about Housing project, whose outcomes will be published in late 2022, will set out effective frames to shift hearts and minds.

- ***Obstacle 1—The public mainly think of housing through a consumerist lens:*** First, many people see housing as a commodity: a product to own and to generate wealth. This is grounded in long-standing ideals and past policies encouraging people to pursue home-ownership. This focus on investment means that people assume that everyone aspires to own their own home, not only so that they have stable accommodation to live in, but also (and in some cases mainly) so that they can make a profit and move up the housing ladder.

  Despite having this view, people do recognise that housing should meet a basic need, and they think that the government should be doing more to meet this need. However, people think of government action here as temporary stop-gap — and that it is fine for government-provided accommodation to be basic, taking the view that any shelter is better than no shelter at all.

  As researchers and advocates, we should be trying to expand and deepen recognition that we all need decent and affordable homes, rather than just basic shelter, as this is inhibiting public acceptance of policies that go further than providing rudimentary accommodation.

- ***Obstacle 2—People believe that housing inequities are 'just the way things are' in the UK:*** Despite recognising that housing inequality is a serious issue, people also believe that this is 'naturally' the way things are, which makes it hard for them to see how the use of alternative policies could work to make housing fairer.

  However, because public do see the inequality and discrimination that exists, and that this has grown worse over time, the housing sector has an opportunity to shift perceptions away from such fatalistic thinking. This can be done by explaining how historical policies have failed people and contributed to inequality, showing that inequality has been constructed, and is not simply a natural occurrence. The public also need clearer explanations of how systemic discrimination shapes communities' access to housing.

- ***Obstacle 3—While people see that poor-quality housing is harmful to health, they do not see how high-quality affordable housing can be made accessible to all:*** The public see the negative effects on mental and physical health and social isolation that come from poor-quality housing. However, they reason that, since quality costs money, high-quality housing that is also affordable simply cannot exist. Helping people to understand that there are in fact workable solutions is important in overcoming this obstacle.

  Of particular interest to the TCPA and its work in promoting its 'Healthy Homes Principles' is that the public have a narrow view on what 'health' means. 'Safe housing' tends to be understood as a place that does not pose an imminent threat of danger. People also think that 'housing stability' refers to the structural quality of the homes that people are living in, so as a sector we need to be careful not to make assumptions in our conversations and in the vocabulary that we use.

  The public think that the question of safe homes is primarily a matter in which individual property-owners should take responsibility, and they find it hard to know what role the government can play beyond enforcing basic safety requirements on the industry.

  All of this means that we need to be careful in talking about housing 'safety', and instead refer to the quality of housing and its ability to support health and wellbeing.

A TL Miller, E L'Hôte, A Rochman, P O'Shea and M Smirnova: *Communicating about Housing in the UK: Obstacles, Openings and Emerging Recommendations*. FrameWorks Institute, for Nationwide Foundation/Joseph Rowntree Foundation, May 2021. www.jrf.org.uk/report/communicating-about-housing-uk-obstacles-openings-and-emerging-recommendations

This is where the need for effective framing comes in. Framing is about finding successful ways to talk about an issue that will make the public really care, and which will help to change hearts and minds. Good framing of an issue leads to change, because once the public understand an issue and are concerned, they will be more likely to hold their leaders to account—and this puts pressure on governments to take action. In particular, framing works by activating people's underlying concerns about an issue, and it moulds these often dormant thoughts into a 'can-do' attitude that in turn rouses them to believe that change is possible and worth calling for.

We know that there is a community that wants to play a part in the collective responsibility for making meaningful change happen to transform the housing system. It is a community made up of funders, charities, housing associations, researchers, and many others. While each of these organisations has its own communication operations, to us at the Nationwide Foundation it is clear that what is needed is for everyone to speak with powerful, galvanising language. Collectively, the sector lacks a common understanding of how the public think and feel about housing, and we identified a need for scientific insight that would inform a more productive narrative—one that more people would understand.

The Nationwide Foundation has joined together with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to facilitate work to develop scientifically tested phrases, so that we and like-minded organisations can align and amplify our messages about housing. With sharper, tested and resonant messages, our voices will rise above the noise and be listened to. We have therefore jointly funded FrameWorks Institute to research the best ways to frame messages about housing, in a project we are calling 'Talking about Housing'. Its final recommendations will be published in summer 2022.

Although the work is still in process, the project is already yielding some fascinating insights into what the public think about housing, and on the main problems and obstacles that need to be overcome (see Box 1). They provide a valuable benchmark to help find ways to better talk about housing and show the housing sector what it is up against.

The research shows that people already recognise that housing inequality exists and that the lack of access to safe, stable and decent housing is a serious issue in the UK. The public also understand that poor-quality housing has negative effects on people's health. The sector can usefully tap into such awareness and use it as leverage for expanding people's understanding. But the human brain is complex, and so, as well as understanding the problems, people can at the same time hold contrary beliefs and attitudes that stand in the way of receptiveness to solutions. Consequently, without the right explanations, they will often struggle to see how changes to policy and practice can transform the current system. The work being carried out now by FrameWorks Institute aims to reveal ways that we can effectively frame housing to overcome these obstructive ways of thinking.

'Only with proven ways to explain key housing issues will the messages resonate with the audience... More clarity on the issues in housing will eradicate pessimism and instead will lead people to demand that the solutions they believe in are acted on'

Only with proven ways to explain key housing issues will the messages resonate with the audience. The narrative—or core story—can then be told again and again, and it is our hope that the public will then more easily be able to join the dots, developing a richer understanding of why changing our housing system really matters. More clarity on the issues in housing will eradicate pessimism and instead will lead people to demand that the solutions they believe in are acted on.

This new community of 'housing framers' is open to all—further information about the research, including the strategic brief and what has been learnt so far, is available from the Talking about Housing website.[1]

● ***Natalie Tate*** *is Communications, Policy and Public Affairs Manager at the Nationwide Foundation. The views expressed are personal. The Nationwide Foundation works to influence changes that will improve circumstances for those people in the UK who most need help. Its vision is for everyone in the UK to have access to a decent home that they can afford, and its strategy seeks to improve the lives of people who are disadvantaged because of their housing circumstances. To do this, it aims to increase the availability of decent, affordable homes.*

Note

1 The Nationwide Foundation/Joseph Rowntree Foundation Talking about Housing website is at www.jrf.org.uk/housing/talking-about-housing

the housing crisis—the church responds

Guli Francis-Deqhani, the Church of England's Bishop for Housing, outlines the Church's involvement with affordable housing and community-building

Reimagining Britain, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, first published in February 2018 and revised and updated in 2021, includes a specific chapter on housing: 'Housing—the architecture of community'. 'To reimagine Britain,' he writes:

> *'we must […] reimagine housing. The first form of reimagining is to reclaim the purpose of housing. Housing exists as a basis for community and community exists for human flourishing. Building new houses without clear community values and aims will lead to the same problems being repeated again in the future [...] Reimagined core values and practices in any housing development will be linked to health in many forms. Good communities build financial, physical, mental, spiritual and relational health.'*[1]

In April 2019, the Archbishop launched a Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community, chaired by Charlie Arbuthnot, an expert in housing association finance. The Commission brought together a group of people from a wide range of backgrounds, including the Civil Service, local government, housing, academia, and local parishes. The Commission's work concentrated on four themes, each with a working group:

- local church and community;
- national church institutions and dioceses;
- macro policies and issues; and
- theology (permeating the work of each of the groups).

Its aim was to re-imagine housing policy and practice, with a focus on building better communities and homes, not just houses. As well as making recommendations to government and others, it looked at what actions the Church of England should take, in partnership with others, to help tackle the housing crisis at local, regional and national levels.

Members of the Commission made several visits during 2019, to Newham, Bristol and Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, meeting local people and listening to their experiences. But the Covid-19 pandemic unfortunately prevented further visits during 2020, including planned visits to Stoke and County Durham. It also caused a delay in the publication of the Commission's final report. The cladding crisis, highlighted by the Grenfell disaster, has remained a key priority for the Church, with the Building Safety Bill going through Parliament being seen as a matter of vital importance. Dialogue with government, developers and the London Fire Brigade continues, and the Church supports the principle of the 'polluter pays' being included in the Bill.

The Commission's report, *Coming Home: Tackling the Housing Crisis Together*,[2] was launched in February 2021 and received a wide and enthusiastic range of responses from the housing world. The report highlighted the national housing crisis—with not enough decent homes for everyone—and set out a positive vision for truly affordable housing and stronger communities, concluding that 'the housing crisis is neither accidental nor inevitable'.

The report set out a clear vision for what good housing should look like—rooted in five core values—the 'five Ss':

- ***Sustainable:*** As stewards of God's good creation, making sustainable homes which work with, not against, nature is an essential part of our human calling as co-creators with God.
- ***Safe:*** The Grenfell disaster highlights the urgent priority that we should be giving to safety. Homes should be places where people feel safe and secure.
- ***Stable:*** Good housing policy creates stable communities in which people can, if they wish, put down roots and build lives, families, and communities.

Pexels/Mike

The Church has long had a role in providing homes, particularly for those in greatest need

- ***Sociable:*** Homes should be places where hospitality and sharing can be possible, and developments need community spaces to enable interaction and fellowship.
- ***Satisfying:*** Homes and communities should be places we delight in—not just bricks and mortar.

Regarding the term 'affordable', the Commission was quite clear: a definition of 'affordable housing' should be based on income rather than average market rent.

Coming Home made several key recommendations to government and the nation, calling for:

- a better-regulated private rented sector;
- real changes to the way in which temporary accommodation is provided and managed; and
- a long-term, cross-party housing strategy (the main recommendation).

To enable this work to go forward, the Archbishops appointed a Bishop for Housing, an Advisory Group, and a small, part-time Executive Team.

Historical involvement

Of course, the Church's role in providing homes for those in greatest need has a long history—think of almshouses, dating back to mediaeval times, when parishes and religious orders cared for the poor, the elderly and the infirm and provided hospitality to travellers. Despite the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, almshouse provision continued, and today there are over 36,000 people living in almshouses.

The Church also played its part in looking after those deemed to be 'the undeserving poor'—people in great need who, in the harsh and judgemental attitudes of Victorian times, were housed as part of the civic responsibility of the ecclesiastical parish. We know from *Oliver Twist* that the workhouse was a last resort, and a pretty unpleasant one, too.

Victorian workhouses would have struggled to ascribe to the five core values referred to above. Those values—sustainable, stable, safe, sociable, and satisfying—are rooted in social, economic and environmental justice. They shout loudly (although maybe not loudly enough for our Victorian forebears) from the pages of the Bible and the teachings of the Church down the ages.

Of course, we cannot judge previous generations without acknowledging that future generations will look askance at some of the glaring errors and omissions in our own lives, practices, policies, and programmes. But we can draw attention to the role played by some outstanding people who, drawing on their faith and vision for humanity and the world, stood out against the prevailing culture and attitudes of their day and addressed with energy (and a good deal of righteous anger) the grim and inhumane housing conditions of so many of their fellow citizens—whether deserving or undeserving.

From the historical record there can be little doubt that the Church and its members (meaning churches of all denominations) have played an important role in energising, funding and shaping the voluntary housing sector. In past centuries the Church was almost the only institution capable of providing a welfare service. Since the 19th century it has increasingly shared that role with others, particularly with the growth of state provision in the 20th century, but it has continued to play an important role.[3]

The role of the Church in forming many of the voluntary housing societies, through the 19th and 20th centuries, has been significant. Some of today's largest housing associations were originally started and supported by people motivated by their faith to address the visible poverty and need around them. An outstanding example is Octavia Hill (1828–1912), co-founder of the National Trust and a lifelong and incredibly practical social reformer, who initiated the provision of good, well maintained and well designed social housing and, by 1874, held over 3,000 tenancies around London.

Through her mother's connections, Octavia came to know the pioneering Christian socialist minister Frederick Denison Maurice, radical thinker John Ruskin, and the anti-capitalist critic and author Charles Kingsley. Inspired by their ideas, Octavia set out to improve working-class living conditions. She began with a series of properties in London's Paradise Place, which Ruskin purchased for her. Instead of the overcrowding and 12% return on the

investment that many landlords expected, Octavia settled for a more modest 5% return, ensuring that some of the money was used to keep the buildings in good repair and to improve the community.[4]

Influential providers of good-quality affordable housing included, among others, the Quaker industrialists, Joseph Rowntree in York and his friend George Cadbury in Bournville, Birmingham, and the Congregationalist Titus Salt, who built the 'model village' of around 800 homes around his grand mill in Saltaire, Bradford. William and Catherine Booth launched in London's East End, in 1865, what became the Salvation Army, and their work soon included setting up shelters for people who were homeless, instigating a family tracing service, running soup kitchens, helping people living in the slums, and setting up rescue homes for women fleeing domestic abuse and prostitution.[5]

When compared with the provision of education across the UK by Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Quaker and other Christian denominations and groups (the Church of England today has a quarter of all schools in England, most of them primary and most of which are open to pupils of all faiths and none), the scale of the Church's direct involvement in housing provision has never been large. Its significance lies more in its ability to highlight new problems and shape the agendas of government. The Church was able to play this role because it was part of those deprived communities—present and engaged—and therefore more fully aware of the reality of poverty than many others at the time.[6]

At the end of the First World War, Lloyd George's glorious vision of a land with 'homes fit for heroes' was never fully realised, although one remarkable development was the Becontree Estate in Dagenham (part of the Diocese of Chelmsford, which I serve), started in 1921 to rehouse people displaced from the East End by slum clearance. It was completed in 1935, housing 120,000 people, the majority of whom lived in two-storey cottages with gardens, built primarily in short terraces. Privet hedges were planted in front of every garden, and residents were strictly required to maintain their gardens well.[7]

In 1923, a young priest, Father Basil Jellicoe, arrived in Somerstown, near Euston station in London. He quickly discovered the dire state of his parishoners' housing. This he denounced as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual disgrace', for it revealed the callous indifference of those with power and influence. He went on to found the St Pancras House Improvement Society. His obituary (he was only 36 when he died) in *The Times* gives some flavour of his extraordinary energy and enterprise:

> *'[He] resolved that he would not rest till his people had homes fit to live in, and the re-housing schemes started by his society have already provided many excellent flats, with gardens, trees, ponds, swings for the children, and other amenities. Although the rents charged are not more than what the tenants paid for the old slums, the loan stock receives two per cent and the ordinary shares three per cent.'*[8]

In 1924, Church Army Housing was founded to provide accommodation and support for homeless people, and in the same year English Churches Housing Group was formed in Liverpool, merging eventually (in 2006) with another Liverpool-based housing association, Riverside (founded in 1928).

The 1945 Attlee government made housing a national priority, and council house provision grew at a huge rate as a result. By 1953, over 1 million council homes had been built in England and Wales. Voluntary housing societies or associations continued their work, although their role was marginal until, in 1961, the Housing Act signalled a change of approach, with public money becoming available for housing provision for those unable to get a council house or buy their own home.

Over the next decade, new Church-led associations emerged, including the Notting Hill Housing Trust, started in 1963 by Reverend Bruce Kenrick, and Paddington Churches Housing Association, set up in 1965 by Reverend Ken Bartlett (who was to become Assistant Chief Executive of the Housing Corporation). In October 1963, Gospatrick Home, along with a small group of like-minded individuals, took out an initial investment of £64 to start a housing association with the aim of improving housing conditions and reducing homelessness in London. The work began alongside the rector for Woolwich, Reverend Nicolas Stacey, to start the association, London & Quadrant Housing Association, after buying a single property in Woolwich. This was then followed by the conversion of several South East London houses into flats.[9]

Church involvement in housing grew in the following decades, but the government significantly shifted its approach to social housing provision in the 1980s, making housing associations rather than local authorities the mainstream providers of social housing and introducing, for council housing tenants, the 'Right to Buy' programme.

Over the next three decades, many of the smaller housing associations were absorbed into larger ones. A number of smaller, church-linked housing associations were taken over or closed. However, some have survived and prospered, including the West Midlands-based Nehemiah Housing Association. In the 1980s growing housing needs, urban deprivation and an ageing African-Caribbean population posed problems, exacerbated by riots in Handsworth in 1981 and 1985. The African-Caribbean community responded, through a variety of churches, with the creation of the Nehemiah and United Churches Housing Association (UCHA) in 1989. Nehemiah took its name from the biblical rebuilder of Jerusalem.[10]

Jonathan Tame

Output from the Good Stewardship Mapping Tool developed with Knight Frank

Church land and affordable housing

So what is happening now? Work to take forward *Coming Home* is continuing, and its initial focus is on the provision of homes and the strengthening of communities. The Church of England (the Church Commissioners, dioceses, parishes and others) collectively owns a lot of land—200,000 acres—much of it rural, with some larger and many smaller plots. To help clarify a complex picture, an interactive geospatial map (rather like Google Maps) of all Church of England land and buildings across England has been created by Knight Frank, with Eido Research drilling down into greater detail in two pilot areas—Gloucester Diocese, and Newham Deanery in the Chelmsford Diocese. This strategic tool enables us to identify suitable opportunities for developing affordable homes on Church land.

In every village, town and city there are local churches with land and buildings, such as a vicarage and church hall, where small-scale developments of, say, 4–10 homes are possible, for young families forced to move because they cannot afford a local home, or for older people with nowhere local to downsize to, or for people needing supported living accommodation, or for homeless people or ex-prisoners with nowhere to go.

This is not about selling off Church land, but about stewarding it for real benefit to the community. By retaining ownership where possible, the Church can more actively help to ensure high-quality, eco-friendly homes for those who need them most. To move forward with these aims, we are working on forming an overarching national charitable body with access to a housing investment fund, especially to build homes for people who most need them. Gloucester Diocese has its own property development company called the Good & Faithful Servant Ltd—which builds high-quality homes and recycles profits (and this is going national). We are also now moving forward in setting up a national Church Housing Association with a strong local presence and an emphasis on community-building. And we are strengthening our awareness-raising and promotional work, not least to encourage the involvement of parishes and people actively wanting to make a difference.

In addition to the 'five Ss' outlined above (our core principles), there is a sixth 'S'—sacrifice. At the heart of the Christian story is the sacrificial self-giving of Jesus Christ. We are working to mobilise the Church's resources to play a far more substantial—and sacrificial—role in tackling the scandal of the rotten, unaffordable, unsafe housing which too many of our fellow citizens have to endure. And we hope others will catch this vision and be willing to make sacrifices too.

Together with others, the Church can hugely improve the provision of affordable housing. Too many people feel stuck, isolated and forgotten, especially young people unable to get onto the housing ladder. *We* can make a difference. But what we need in the Church—and in society—is a bit more impatience, a bit more noise, a bit more anger at the way things are; and a determination to steward what God has entrusted to us in ways which both help others and build God's Kingdom here on Earth.

● ***Dr Guli Francis-Deqhani**, Bishop of Chelmsford, is the Church of England's Bishop for Housing. The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 J Welby: *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope*. Bloomsbury, 2018. Revised and updated edition: Bloomsbury Continuum, Jun. 2021, p.128
2 *Coming Home: Tackling the Housing Crisis Together*. Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community, Feb. 2021. www.churchofengland.org/about/archbishops-commissions/housing-church-and-community/
3 T Thorlby and A Gelder: *Our Common Heritage: Housing Associations and Churches Working Together*. Centre for Theology and Community, and Housing Justice, 2015. www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/OCH-Final-Final.pdf
4 See 'Octavia Hill: her life and legacy'. Webpage. National Trust. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/octavia-hill-her-life-and-legacy
5 See 'Our history'. Webpage. Salvation Army. www.salvationarmy.org.uk/about-us/our-history
6 *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (see note 1), p.2
7 See 'A brief history of Becontree estate'. Webpage. RIBA. www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/a-brief-history-of-the-becontree-estate
8 D MacCulloch: 'Catholic not churchy'. *Church Times*, 6 Apr. 2010. www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2010/9-april/features/catholic-not-churchy
9 J Simpson: 'L&Q co-founder passes away aged 87'. *Inside Housing*, 17 Apr. 2020. www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/lq-co-founder-passes-away-aged-87-66108
10 See the Nehemiah United Churches Housing Association website, at www.nehemiah-ucha.co.uk/page.php?id=2

campaigning for a new age of housing

Marissa McMahon explains how campaigners in Belfast are working to bring about housing with the rights, health and wellbeing of people at its core

In 2006, the human rights NGO Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR)[1] began working with residents in the Seven Towers, a high-rise complex of seven buildings containing 380 dwellings in North Belfast. The towers were built in the 1960s, and after decades of neglect and poor maintenance were severely run down, yet the State continued to house families in them. Using PPR's innovative human-rights-based approach, a group of women and children directly impacted by these conditions began a campaign for meaningful change. They wanted to ensure that they, and others like them, could live and raise their families in safe, healthy and habitable dwellings. I was one of these women, and my then new-born daughter was one of these children.

The families involved often complained to our public housing authority about the appalling conditions that we were told continually were fine to live in. Fed up with their inaction, we began to conduct research: surveying, photographing and collecting evidence on dampness, mould, pigeon waste and the raw sewage that came up into our sinks and baths daily. We knew the difference that a warm, dry, affordable, comfortable and sizeable home could make to a family's physical and mental health. We found that our instincts were confirmed by internationally agreed standards on housing, set out in human rights law.[2]

We developed a set of indicators and benchmarks based on these human rights standards and used them to measure progress. With the support of international and domestic human rights experts, we set specific timeframes during which our housing authority would be monitored by us—the newly established 'Seven Towers Monitoring Group'.

In this way we changed the rules of engagement with the State, moving out of the officially available accountability structures to a process in which we genuinely held government accountable in order to achieve meaningful change. We leveraged significant improvements and investments from government, including the removal of pigeon waste from communal landings, a £1 million replacement of the sewerage system, balcony repair programmes, new roofs to stop leaks, increased and better maintenance responses for residents, compensation for damage to people and property, fire and toxin safety tests, and the re-housing of the majority of families with children into more suitable accommodation.

As the campaign evolved, we quickly discovered that the issues we experienced while living in the Seven Towers were not unique to us. Two of the most significant issues in Belfast remain child homelessness and systemic religious inequality in access to housing. There are around 2,000 children on the waiting list in West Belfast, with around 92% of them in the predominately Catholic areas. In North Belfast, there were four times as many children from predominately Catholic areas in households on the waiting list than in predominately Protestant areas.[3]

Back in 2010, we launched the 'Equality Can't Wait' campaign; it has since grown to involve families from across Belfast impacted by the issue of homelessness and poor housing provision. They have been calling on the government and those in power to develop a time-bound, resourced strategy to tackle the growing issue of homelessness and housing stress in the city.

For over a decade the campaign has worked tirelessly. After those in power told us that there was neither money nor land available for new homes, activists launched a number of initiatives, including mapping the available land, sourcing funding, and lobbying political parties throughout the city to build housing where it was most needed. While conducting their research, the campaigners soon discovered more about the robust equality legislation at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement;

PPR

Young people at a Take Back the City planning weekend

despite the fact that this placed legal requirements on Ministers and public bodies to address the legacy of housing inequality in Northern Ireland, the problem remained unaddressed.

Like the TCPA, our campaign believes that the people of Belfast have the right to housing of good standard, that provides a safe, healthy environment and meets the needs of their particular household. They have the right to security of tenure, and to homes that are affordable and located in places with easy access to their jobs, schools, families, and support networks.

'We are campaigning for a new age of housing that will stand the test of time'

After years of being told to wait by those responsible for providing such things, the Equality Can't Wait campaign decided that waiting was no longer an option. It has worked with a coalition of experts, known as 'Take Back the City', to create an evolving, interactive map to provide communities, activists, professionals, public servants and politicians with a tool to address the challenges facing the city. Using a range of data from various sources, the map shows a city divided by sectarianism and inequality. However, it also demonstrates potential—how assets, resources and communities can be mobilised to respond effectively to the critical socio-economic and environmental tests that we currently face.

As a coalition, Take Back the City is dedicated to building a new Belfast, starting with a prototype at a 25 acre, publicly owned site in West Belfast known as Mackie's—one of the original sites that the campaign mapped in 2015. Situated in a part of the city that experienced some of the worst conflict, it is now an area currently experiencing the highest level of homelessness in Northern Ireland, as well as some of the most severe forms of inequality. We have a different vision for Mackie's. We want to transform it into one of Europe's most sustainable and inclusive community housing projects.

The campaign has worked with the coalition to produce plans for a community that provides a holistic approach to housing, one that includes green space, ecologically sustainable homes, and spaces to grow food. At every step of the way, the campaign and the coalition have invited those in power and with responsibility to work with them in order to envisage this ground-breaking community at Mackie's. To date, we have been met with silence or avoidance.

Everything that the campaign and the coalition stand for and want to provide for the people of Belfast and the future generations of the city is captured within the TCPA's Healthy Homes campaign. The proposed Healthy Homes Act:

> *'would require all new homes and neighbourhoods to be of decent quality and outlaw those which undermine residents' health and wellbeing; recognises that too many people suffer in poor quality, even dangerous, homes; resolves to stop building the slums of the future [...]'.*[4]

At Mackie's we are campaigning for a new age of housing that will stand the test of time; for a place which has the rights, health and wellbeing of people at its core—not as an afterthought. We all know the impact that housing has on our mental health and wellbeing; children living in crowded homes or in homeless hostels are more likely be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health, and attain less well at school. Like the TCPA, the Take Back the City coalition wants to change that reality. The future of housing can begin at the Mackie's site.

● ***Marissa McMahon*** *is with Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR). The views expressed are personal.*

Notes

1 See the Participation and the Practice of Rights website, at ww.nlb.ie/

2 Article 11 of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights includes the right to adequate housing. The content of this right is articulated further by the human rights experts who monitor the Covenant in their General Comment on the right to adequate housing. The UK has signed up to this Covenant. Its standards should underpin all housing provision

3 See 'Child homelessness and housing need in West Belfast: a look at the Housing Executive data'. Webpage. PPR, Aug. 2021. https://bit.ly/35ESFI1

4 *Healthy Homes Act.* Early Day Motion EDM 1417, tabled before Parliament on 27 Jan. 2021. https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58026/healthy-homes-act

when I disagreed with richard rogers

When I was Editor of this august journal the late Richard Rogers was becoming a key figure in the debate about the future of our cities. In 1986, the Royal Academy of Arts held an exhibition in London called 'New Architecture'. It was at the soirée before this event that the Chair of the National Trust, Lord Gibson, famously mistook a long flat piece of water for a table and sat on it. But for me the key moment came during the press conference at which James Stirling faced the London media. Along with Norman Foster and Richard Rogers, he made up a trio of big-name British architects. Each had two buildings featured in the show, one in London and one abroad.

Sitting just behind me, the property correspondent of the *Evening Standard,* Mira Bar-Hillel (a former folk singer in the Israel Defence Forces), picked up this peculiarity and asked why the obsession with London, when he had a new art gallery in Stuttgart. 'Surely the equivalent of Stuttgart isn't London—it's Rotherham,' she said. 'Why aren't you building an art gallery in Rotherham?' 'Well,' said Stirling. 'I hardly think anyone's going to want to build an art gallery in Rotherham…' There were polite titters from the metropolitan audience at this ridiculous thought.

When I got back to the office, there was a press release from the RSC, which was making its first visit to Middlesbrough—and all the tickets had sold out without 24 hours. There was and is a huge appetite for culture outside London, it hardly needs saying.

Of the three of them, Rogers—who died just before Christmas—came closest to capturing the public's imagination. But I did cross swords with him once—the only time we ever encountered each other: at the press conference to launch his Urban Task Force report in 1999. He had been commissioned partly to further the agenda of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, to increase the density of new housing in the UK—something he partly succeeded in doing. At the time, I had been running what was virtually a personal crusade against the idea. I don't think I succeeded in discomforting the great man in the least—although I did put a few noses out of joint at Friends of the Earth, where the campaign had begun. As far as I could see, this was a repeat of a similar alliance between urban sophisticated types and green campaigners that, in the 1950s, had made common cause along the same lines between shire Tories and inner-city Labour councils, both of whom had electoral reasons not to let the poor leave the cities.

The result had not seen any change at all in the way that the middle classes lived, but it saw poor communities broken up and decanted into high-rise flats. The lifts were soon vandalised, and many of the flats were blown up, even before the debts that had funded their building had been paid off. It seemed to me then, as now, that high-density living is a kind of con to keep the urban poor staying put in cities – and to make urban mass transit more affordable, which is an example of the tail wagging the dog.

But it was a different issue on which I asked what I believed was my killer question to Lord Rogers. It seemed to me that the future of cities was not going to be the kind of zoned specialisation that we might have imagined in the 1960s—primarily because of the demands of the circular economy. If we were going to use our waste as raw materials, we would need a good deal more space in our cities near where people live, in which to do the processing; we would need more space to grow the food, rather than trucking it all in every night; and we would need more space for generating renewable energy.

I am less sure about the last of these now. What I am sure about is that making our cities a bit greener, bringing in some aspects of life in the countryside, won't just be good for people's mental health, it will also be good for local, sustainable economies. Unfortunately, there is an irritatingly backward strand of thinking on the UK political left which wants more and more people dragged into our cities. Just have a look at the horrible towers already beginning to create such winds near East Croydon station. And not a blade of grass to be seen. These are our future slums.

It hardly needs saying that Rogers didn't agree.

● ***David Boyle*** *is co-founder of the New Weather think-tank and Radix Big Tent, and is the author of Tickbox: How It Is Taking Control of Our Money, Our Health, Our Lives—and How To Fight Back! (Little, Brown). The views expressed are personal.*

is it legal?

The planning code includes a mechanism to determine whether development that has already taken place or which is contemplated is lawful. In deciding whether or not to grant a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC), the decision-maker's remit is limited to reviewing factual evidence concerning the planning status of the building or land—the planning merits are irrelevant to the outcome. However, while an LDC does not equate to a planning permission, it does set an important benchmark for future development. This means that a decision to grant an LDC can have a lasting impact on those living in an area, so a degree of circumspection is required.

This is illustrated by the events surrounding a High Court challenge to a decision taken by the London Borough of Islington to revoke an LDC that it had previously issued.[1] The LDC in question certified the lawful use of four commercial units at Bush Industrial Estate Archway, North London, for storage and distribution purposes. The site is adjacent to residential flats and Yerbury Primary School, which is attended by about 450 children. In line with the approach taken to the vast majority of LDC applications, it had been decided without any public consultation and under delegated powers.

On the back of this, Ocado, which had been looking for a distribution centre site in the area, took a lease of the units. It was only when Ocado then made a planning application for the distribution centre that local residents discovered that the LDC been issued. This prompted them to provide additional information to the local planning authority concerning the planning history of the site, which was at odds with the evidence provided by the applicant and resulted in the local planning authority making the revocation order.

In the High Court, Holgate J declined to overturn the revocation of the LDC. His judgment is replete with helpful observations concerning the LDC process. When it comes to maintaining public confidence in the LDC system he highlighted the importance of local planning authorities being furnished with adequate information. With this in mind, he saw the power to revoke a certificate as an important safeguard for dealing with false information or non-disclosure.

Commenting on publicity for LDC applications in the context of guidance set out in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Holgate J suggested that it could be seen as 'unsatisfactory' that whether consultation takes place should depend upon the exercise of discretion by individual planning officers, rather than there being a uniform national procedure. Crucially, an authority is unlikely to be able to identify all situations in which members of the public have something material to contribute, either on the decision whether to grant a certificate or on its precise scope.

An LDC was also the subject of another significant High Court decision in 2021.[2] This dealt with the highly topical issue of the planning status of homeworking. The claimant, Mr Sage, had made a couple of failed attempts to secure an LDC for an outbuilding at the rear of his garden, which he used as a garden shed and a gym, both for his personal use and in connection with his business as a personal trainer. His first LDC application was refused on appeal because of the amenity effects associated with people accessing the gym. This led the inspector to conclude that there had been a material change of use to a mixed use as a dwelling and a personal training studio.

This prompted Mr Sage to make a second LDC application based on a reduction in hours of use by his clients to around 30 per week over six days. This application was also refused on the grounds that the use was not incidental to the residential use of the property and resulted in an overall change in its character. In his case before the High Court, Mr Sage suggested that the inspector should not have taken visual disturbance into account as it was not referred to in PPG as a material consideration.

Sir Duncan Ousley rejected the challenge. He was satisfied that the inspector had properly applied her planning judgement in assessing the impact of the business use. He expressed reservations about PPG guidance on homeworking, which he saw as out of kilter with the law, as it

appeared to treat environmental impact as the crucial issue when assessing whether a material change of use has occurred. He identified the correct legal test as whether there has been a change in the character of the use. This can be established in the absence of any impacts on the environment. Interestingly, and while it was not relevant to the outcome of the case, Sir Duncan did acknowledge that what can be regarded as normal when it comes to the use of a dwelling house may now have shifted as a result of changing work habits associated with Covid.

'The decision has shown that public consultation has a role to play, even when it comes to more technocratic planning decisions'

While these two cases were fact-sensitive, they do highlight some important issues. First of all, while PPG has proved to be an invaluable tool in navigating a path through the planning system, it is not infallible, cannot be treated as a definitive statement of the law, and requires regular maintenance—following the outcome of the Sage case, paragraph 14, 'Do I need planning permission to home work or run a business from home?', has been deleted from the 'When is permission required?' section of PPG. Secondly, the Ocado decision has shown that public consultation has a role to play, even when it comes to more technocratic planning decisions—a consideration which should not be lost on those who are currently contemplating future planning reforms.

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Notes

1 *Ocado Retail Ltd, R (On the Application Of) v London Borough of Islington* [2021] EWHC 1509 (Admin)
2 *Sage v Secretary of State for Housing, Local Government* [2021] EWHC 2885 (Admin)

Mark Bramah surveys the post-COP26 landscape as local authorities attempt to meet ambitious emissions reduction targets

the road from COP26—a journey into the unknown

Putting aside, as I write, the endless distractions of 'partygate' for a moment, it is worth taking stock, three months on from the COP26 climate change summit held in Glasgow, of the progress that the UK has made in meeting its net-zero commitments.

The government published its Net Zero Strategy *Build Back Greener* ahead of COP26 on 19 October 2021.[1] It sets out ambitious targets to decarbonise the UK, including an undertaking that 'by 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity', with the major caveat that this is 'subject to security of supply'. Given the recent volatility in energy markets and the huge rise in energy prices, one would have thought that the more rapidly we transition to renewable forms of energy, the more secure our energy supplies will be. This is not a binary question.

Client Earth, an organisation that uses 'the power of law to bring about systemic change that protects the earth',[2] is now undertaking a legal challenge against the UK government over its net-zero strategy, claiming that it is not taking action at the pace needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Client Earth calls the government's approach 'pie in the sky',[3] without the policies needed to reduce emissions to levels that meet its legally binding carbon budgets—targets which limit the total amount of greenhouse gases that the UK can emit over five-year periods on the road to net zero.

Client Earth successfully challenged the UK government on its failure to act on clean air in 2015, when the Supreme Court found that the Environment Secretary had failed to take measures that would bring the UK into compliance with the law 'as soon as possible', and said that Ministers knew that over-optimistic pollution modelling was being used. Another successful challenge to the government's net-zero strategy really will put the cat among the pigeons.

Climate change—the gathering storm

But where does this leave local planning authorities in trying to meet ambitious climate change targets with limited resources?

Local authorities are umbilically tied into the government's policies and legislative commitments on reducing emissions through binding international obligations set out in the Paris Climate Agreement on limiting global emissions to below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and through UK legislation in the form of the Climate Change Act 2008. Many councils are already feeling the heat of possible legal challenge by Client Earth in cases where they fail to act on cleaning up pollution from vehicles where there is local opposition to the introduction of clean air zones (CAZs). That there is limited financial support from government to manage the change is currently being highlighted in Greater Manchester, where the Mayor Andy Burnham has told the government that the proposed CAZ for Greater Manchester needs 'major changes' in order to 'protect businesses and jobs'.[4]

But this is merely a 'hors d'oeuvres' ahead of the main event—which is the gathering storm over local authority climate change plans. On 27 January 2022 Climate Emergency UK published its league table of local authority climate action plans, highlighting that, of the 409 local authorities across the UK, 84 still did not have climate action plans, while 139 had not committed to reach net-zero emissions by a specific date.[5]

In many cases ambitious targets to tackle climate change at a local level are not backed up with the means to achieve them.

Climate change costs—not small change!

The government's response (in January 2022) to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee's October 2021 report into local government and the path to net zero states that 'the National Audit Office Report into Local Government and Net Zero identified £1.2 billion in specific grant funding available in 2020–2021 for local authorities to act on climate change, and notes this is a sixteen-fold increase on the previous year'.[6] The government also states that it has increased the core spending power for English local authorities from £49 billion in 2020–2021 to up to £51.3 billion,

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Much greater levels of spending are needed to deliver net zero at a local level

a 4.6% increase. But this is a drop in the ocean compared with the resources needed to deliver net zero at a local level.

Estimates of costs for decarbonising the local energy system alone (heat, power, and transport) undertaken by the Energy Systems Catapult as part of work on Local Area Energy Plans amount to billions over the next two decades. While these are clearly not all costs that fall on local government and will be borne by the whole of the energy system, the scale of costs replicated across the UK are enormous and all local authorities will face the same challenges of trying to achieve net zero without the means or the money to do so.

Without the funding, what other tools are available to help us meet this massive challenge?

Planning for climate change

The local planning system is at the very heart of councils' efforts to tackle climate change. In October 2021 the TCPA and the Royal Town Planning Institute published an excellent guide on the role of local authorities in planning for climate change.[7] Planning policy across the UK is front and centre to the issues associated with climate change. The TCPA/RTPI guide says that:

'inconsistent delivery of action has been delayed and de-prioritised for too long. Structural weaknesses have significantly undermined the effectiveness of the planning system, including a lack of political drive in England and Northern Ireland and, across the UK, the loss of in-house skills resulting from local government austerity.'

The guide argues that solutions to these problems need to be developed locally. Planning can do this directly through, for example:

- consenting renewable-energy developments and preventing fossil-fuel extraction;
- determining the location, scale, mix and character of development to ensure that its density, layout, building orientation and landscaping make it resilient to climate impacts; and
- encouraging a wide range of behavioural change, such as enabling people to make personal choices through, for example, the creation of green and walkable streets.

Without an effective and proactive planning system we are unlikely to be able to mandate or encourage the changes that are needed to reduce carbon emissions and meet our climate change targets. While effective planning systems would not necessarily reddress the shortfall in financial resources, it could set a framework for local action. The economic and environmental costs of failing to act are incalculable.

The costs of inaction on climate change

The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA)[8] has responded to the UK's Third Climate Change Risk Assessment forecast that 2°C of global warming would reduce GDP by

1% a year by 2045 by calling for an acceleration in the deployment of renewable energy and clean technologies to reduce emissions.

The government's risk assessment published in January 2022[9] assesses dozens of impacts that the UK might face due to global temperature increases through to 2050 and 2080, outlining the likely risks in two warming scenarios of 2°C and 4°C. Risks include water scarcity; loss of agricultural productivity; risk to health and wellbeing; coastal erosion and flooding; and risks to finance, investment and insurance. The report also assesses the impact of the UK being exposed to international risks caused by the climate crisis, affecting trade and investment. For eight of the risks assessed, economic damages will exceed £1 billion each year by 2050, even if warming is limited to 2°C. The report states that when all the risks are assessed the total hit is likely to be at least 1% of GDP in a 2°C scenario.

'Without a massive step-change in renewable generation, the government's net-zero target of clean electricity by 2035 will be even harder to reach'

In 2020 record levels of renewable generation saw the proportion of energy generated from renewables outstripping the proportion generated from fossil fuels for the first time, with renewable electricity accounting for 43.1% of total generation, up from 36.9% in 2019. But the growth in new renewable capacity continued to slow, with just 1.0 gigawatts added in 2020, the lowest since 2007. Covid-19 restrictions are likely to have contributed to the slowdown in growth in 2020, but, at just 2.1%, this is the slowest growth rate since 2002.[10]

Without a massive step-change in renewable generation, the government's net-zero target of clean electricity by 2035 will be even harder to reach. Local authorities can be a catalyst for this transition by using their own land and buildings to develop smart energy systems; attracting investment into their areas to increase renewables; and using the local planning system to encourage the deployment of more renewable energy.

Time is passing, and the consequences of failing to act will be a blight on future generations. We need to use all the means at our disposal to speed up the energy transition and avert the worst impacts of climate change.

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Notes

1 *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*. HM Government, Oct. 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033990/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf

2 See the Client Earth website, at www.clientearth.org/

3 H Bancroft: 'UK government sued over 'pie in the sky' net-zero strategy'. *The Independent*, 12 Jan. 2022. www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/net-zero-carbon-emissions-client-earth-b1991326.html

4 'Greater Manchester Mayor calls for 'major changes' to controversial Clean Air Zone scheme'. *ITV News*, 27 Jan. 2022. www.itv.com/news/granada/2022-01-26/andy-burnham-calls-for-major-changes-to-clean-air-zone-scheme

5 A Bawden: 'One in five UK councils have no climate action plan, campaigners say'. *The Guardian*, 27 Jan. 2022. www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jan/27/one-in-five-uk-councils-have-no-climate-action-plan-campaigners-say

6 *Local Government and the Path to Net Zero: Government Response to the Select Committee Report*. Policy Paper. Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government, Jan. 2022. www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-and-the-path-to-net-zero-government-response-to-the-select-committee-report/local-government-and-the-path-to-net-zero-government-response-to-the-select-committee-report

7 *The Climate Crisis—A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change*. TCPA & RTPI. TCPA, Oct. 2021, Third Edition. www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-for-climate-change

8 'REA call for more renewables as climate crises' economic hit revealed'. New Story. Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA), 18 Jan. 2022. www.r-e-a.net/rea-call-for-more-renewables-as-climate-crisis-economic-hit-revealed/

9 *UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022*. HM Government, Jan. 2022. www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2022

10 *Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES)*. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Jul. 2021. Chapter 6: 'Renewable sources of energy'. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006819/DUKES_2021_Chapter_6_Renewable_sources_of_energy.pdfccccc

Olivier Sykes looks at the frequency with which articles and discussion pieces addressing EU and European issues have appeared since 2003, and at the main themes covered

planning and europe: *adieu ou au revoir*?—part 1

The relationship between planning and first EEC (European Economic Community), then EU (European Union) legislation, policies and programmes has been examined by various academic, government, and professional studies.[1] This reflects the fact that, while land use/spatial planning as such is not an area of policy in which EU Member States have chosen to pool their sovereignty (the overlapping multi-level nature of planning, its relation to territorial control, and legal concepts such as subsidiarity and proportionality[2] making this unlikely), EU policies in related fields (environment, regional development, transport, etc.) can have consequential spatial and legal impacts on planning.[3] This article draws on a review of the *Planning Resource* archive to establish the frequency with which articles and discussion pieces addressing EU and international issues have appeared since 2003 in *Planning* magazine and the former publication *Regeneration & Renewal*.

The review was initially undertaken for a project commissioned by the RTPI (with outcomes published in 2019) which investigated the implications of the UK's exit from the EU ('Brexit') for the relationship between planning and environmental protection.[4] It should be noted that this was a fairly basic form of content analysis and that care is needed to not over- interpret the findings. Equally, the number of articles containing references to the EU is not expressed in Fig. 1 on page 68 as a proportion of the total number of articles. Rather, the emphasis is on overall trends in the numbers of articles being published.

Reflecting the focus of the original project, there is an emphasis on environmental issues. However, the findings provide a general sense of the evolving level of attention directed towards EU issues over the period covered.

The analysis has since been extended to the end of 2021, and to explore the frequency of references in the title or text of articles, not just to the 'EU', but to other terms related to the European and international spheres—'European', 'Brexit', 'international', 'UN', and 'global'. The frequency of references to 'European' is reported below and compared with that for the term 'EU'. The prevalence of the other terms will be considered in the next instalment of this column.

References to the EU

The overall number of articles which mention EU in their titles, or text, for the years 2003–2021 is shown in Fig. 1. These articles typically addressed matters relating to EU legislation, policies and programmes and planning on key themes such as EU environmental policy and associated instruments; cohesion policies and their links to governance structures for economic development and regeneration in the UK (Regional Development Agencies, Local Enterprise Partnerships, city regions, etc.); and agricultural and rural development issues.

The number of references to EU issues varied over time, with a rising number of articles from 2003 through to 2007–2008 and then again from 2012 onwards. These trends may have reflected the general policy and budgetary cycles of the EU, as reforms and funding packages were discussed in the lead-up to the adoption of new six-yearly EU financial frameworks, which had implications for areas such as agricultural, regional, or transport funding. This is suggested, for example, by the rising number of articles leading up to the funding cycle that started in 2007.

The other noticeable spike was in the year of the UK's EU referendum in 2016, followed by a steep drop-off in articles addressing EU themes in the following year, 2017, with significantly fewer articles than in the earlier years 2005–2008 inclusive. This fall continued into 2018, but as the tortuous process of negotiating the UK's exit from the EU dragged on there was a rise in 2019 to 58 articles, almost equalling the 60 published in 2015. The discussion below considers some of the main themes covered in articles published over the period reviewed.

Themes discussed within the articles

In 2003, a number of articles addressed air quality, notably in the context of aviation. Regional policy reform was another big theme at that time, looking ahead to post-2006 EU funding allocations to UK regions. There was also discussion of the

iconphotomedia/iStock

Brexit aftermath—HGVs queueing on the A20 into Dover

possible adoption of new EU Directives seeking to ensure compliance with the consultation requirements on environmental matters contained in the Aarhus Convention.[5] Another theme was the need to prepare for new EU energy standards coming into force by 2010. The transposition of the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Directive (2001/42/EC) also featured as a key issue.

In 2004 a number of articles addressed the adjustments to policy and practice needed to comply with the requirements of the Urban Waste, Urban Waste Water and Landfill Directives, with it being reported that companies were throwing away a lot less following the introduction of EU rules.

Interestingly in light of what was to come in the 2010s, a number of articles also point to the UK's leadership role in environmental issues in the lead-up to its Presidency of the EU in 2005. This perhaps reflected the scope for 'upload' Europeanisation—the process by which the policy approaches and objectives of certain EU Member States can contribute to shaping subsequent EU objectives, legislation, policy, and programmes. The UK Presidency of the EU in 2005, for example, saw the UK promoting its approach to sustainable communities through an Informal Council on Sustainable Communities held in Bristol in December, at which Ministers endorsed the Bristol Accord, setting out eight characteristics of a sustainable community and a commitment to share good-practice case studies.[6]

A topic often discussed in articles from 2005 was emission cuts under EU requirements, and it was also reported that the then Environment Secretary, Margaret Beckett, was leading the EU delegation negotiating new international climate change targets—providing another example of UK leadership and influence being articulated and magnified through the medium of EU structures and co-operation. Other topics covered at this time were waste management fines for London, for failing to meet EU standards, and the Habitats and SEA Directives and their implications for aspects of plan- and decision-making.

The following year, 2006, saw articles discussing the planning requirements of transposing the Water Framework Directive and continuing reports of fines associated with failures to comply with landfill requirements. A big news story linking planning to EU environmental requirements at this time was the ruling of the European Court of Justice that the UK government had failed to properly transpose the EU Habitats Directive into domestic law and policy regimes. This led to changes in the regulations to address the issue, with the changes being seen as a major challenge by some commentators, but by others as an opportunity to address issues at a strategic level and reach better decisions on individual sites.

In 2007—a year marked by significant flood events—the EU provided aid to the UK totalling €162.4 million from the European Union Solidarity Fund.[7] There were also some stories about the potential effects of EU requirements in hindering the delivery of new housing. Around this time EU energy targets were beginning to be discussed after the agreement on the EU climate and energy package goals for 2020,[8] with related debate about the development of renewables. The EU Habitats Directive continued to be debated, sometimes in terms of how wider global environmental objectives such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions could at times be in conflict with more conservation-focused

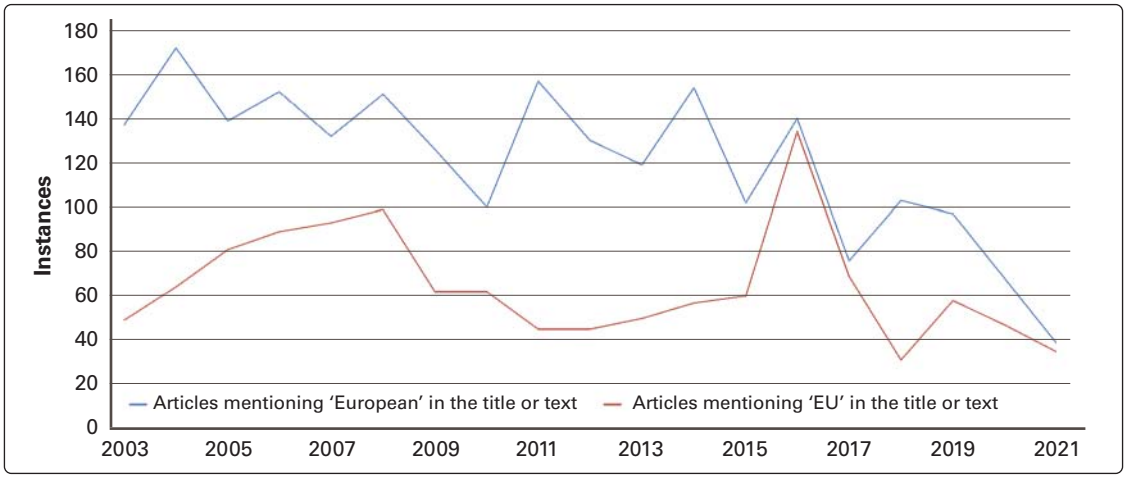

Fig. 1 Articles mentioning 'European' or 'EU' in the title or text

forms of environmental legislation (for example, on the development of renewable energy sources such as windfarms).

Marine planning also started to become a more prominent issue in articles published around this time. Another significant story related to the relationships between EU-derived environmental policy regimes and planning concerned delays to the East of England Plan, to allow further assessment of its impact on protected habitats. Air quality was also on the agenda, with the Mayor of London's Low Emission Zone being criticised by some transport operators.

In 2008 a number of articles addressed Heathrow Airport and air pollution, with noise maps being released to meet the requirements of the EU Environmental Noise Directive. In 2009 a topic of discussion throughout the year was EU rules on public procurement, which were seen by some as 'red tape', hindering, for example, the delivery of renewal projects. In April, an article by Cliff Hague discussed the ambition to see greater territorial coherence in how certain items of EU legislation interacted, to avoid contradictory effects in given places. There were also articles discussing how the EU was seeking to address carbon emissions from transport, and reports that the UK needed more than 10,000 wind turbines to hit EU green power goals. EU funding for transport projects, the role of SEA in promoting health and wellbeing and the contribution of EU Objective 1 funding to regeneration in Wales also featured.

In 2010, it was reported that the UK faced a race against time to meet the requirements of the revised EU Waste Framework Directive and bring in domestic legislation transposing the Directive. It was also reported that the UK planning system was one of the most efficient in Europe in approving wind farm applications in terms of the time taken. The Mayor of London was criticised for delaying plans for Low Emission Zones despite the widespread failure to tackle air pollution.

In 2011 came a clear example of the deregulatory discourses surrounding planning and EU environmental legislation, with the then Chancellor George Osborne promising that the government would review the implementation of the EU's 1994 Habitats and Birds Directives in England to 'make sure that gold-plating of EU rules on things like habitats isn't placing ridiculous costs on British businesses'.[9]

In 2012, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles launched a consultation on EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) regulations to avoid councils requiring assessments beyond those required by EU Directives, and also warned of EU 'regulatory creep' over proposed changes to the then 25-year old EIA Directive, which it was claimed could lead to more costs and delays in the planning system. Meanwhile, a government review concluded that George Osborne's claims about the costs to British business of EU wildlife protection measures were inaccurate in more than 99.5% of cases.[10]

In 2013, the designation of Marine Conservation Zones was a topic, and the potential 'legal pitfalls' for neighbourhood planning of failing to comply with the requirements of SEA, where required, were also reported in a number of articles. The arguments about the European Commission's proposed revision of the EIA Directive and potentially increased burdens on developers carried on, and articles on local air quality management also continued to feature.

In 2014 it was reported that the Scottish government was consulting on proposed amendments to planning

legislation to implement the land use planning elements of the Seveso III Directive (Directive 2012/18/EU) on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances. This could, it was reported, include new public participation requirements to make the Directive compliant with the Aarhus Convention. Air quality continued to be an issue owing to a lack of actions to address breaches in statutory limits of certain pollutants. The debate on the potential 'burdens' of new EIA requirements also rumbled on, and there was an article discussing the mitigation of housebuilding's effects on Special Protection Areas. Tensions between energy targets and renewables developments such as windfarms and habitats legislation were again highlighted.

The year 2015 saw a 'Cutting Red Tape' review, which looked at EU legislation on habitats. Meanwhile, the Thames Tideway Tunnel 'super-sewer' being planned to meet the requirements of the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive was discussed. Air pollution continued to be an issue, notably in relation to London, and an EU Fitness Check on Birds and Habitats Directives was accused by environmental groups of potentially watering down protection.

In 2016 there were a large number of articles on EU matters, and after the referendum they had an overwhelmingly economic focus. Articles on environmental issues stressed the potential for deregulation of environmental standards in the event of the UK leaving the EU, or argued that, in practice, access to the single market, international obligations, and public opinion would militate against a more radical 'tearing up' of environmental standards.

Overall, up to 2016 the number of articles discussing the EU fluctuated. Discussion of how to adapt policy regimes and planning practices to EU environmental requirements was a much-explored theme, and there were debates, also familiar domestically, about the level of 'burden' and 'red tape' that changes might place on the planning system and developers (concerns often stemming from government, particularly after 2010, or industry lobby groups). There were some debates about contradictory policy objectives, such as renewables development versus nature conservation, as well as articles citing the benefits of EU legislation in providing more robust treatment of environmental issues and in driving up standards and holding authorities to account.

Although there were differing views on appropriate procedures and necessary standards, there seemed to be fewer concerns about 'duplication' between policy regimes caused by EU membership. The role of the EU in supporting regional development and regeneration was also a common theme—and one with contemporary resonance. The latest report from the House of Commons Treasury Committee, for example, notes that with regard to the supposed 'successor to the EU Structural Investment Funds', the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, 'the Government is only providing to this new fund 60 per cent of the money provided by the EU'.[11]

Europe or EUrope?

A comparison was also made between the frequency of articles mentioning the terms 'EU' and 'European' in their title or text. As Kai Böhme points out, there is both a 'planning *in*' and 'planning *for*' dimension to Europe and planning.[12] The former refers to the variety of planning approaches and traditions which exist in European countries, and the latter considers policies developed by European countries under the auspices of institutions of the EU in response to the effects of European integration on the spatial development of Europe's diverse spaces and places.

In other words, not all references to Europe and 'the European' necessarily pertain to the EU and its relationship with planning—for example, discussions on different planning systems, or specific topics such as urban design, transport, sustainable urbanism, etc., often refer to 'European' approaches or models, without implying any particular relation to the EU (although its programmes, such as Interreg, have often supported knowledge exchanges around urban, regional, environmental, and social development).

In Fig. 1 it can be seen that the broader term 'European' occurred more frequently in the titles and text of articles than 'EU'. It is noteworthy, too, that in the year of the EU referendum the incidence of both terms rose. In the case of 'EU' the frequency rose to its highest level since the start of the archive, but this was not the case for the term 'European', which had occurred more frequently in five other years since 2003.

It is noticeable that Fig. 1 shows that, while the overall number of references to 'European' fluctuated fairly consistently over the survey period, the number of articles mentioning the 'EU' was generally lower in the first half of the 2010s than it had been in the previous decade. Perhaps in the aftermath of the global financial economic crisis of the late 2000s, and in the face of austerity and domestic reforms to planning in parts of the UK such as the abolition of regional planning, the promotion of localism, and changes to specific planning procedures, other pressing issues occupied column space.

And polling at the time suggested that, for the general population, Europe and the EU were not issues of overriding concern—for example, a survey of opinion in the UK conducted by Ipsos MORI showed

that, as late as December 2015, only 1% of those who responded felt that Europe was the most important issue facing the UK.[13] In planning there were also many other matters—experiences from practice, evolving planning policy and case law, and cycles of reform—to occupy the attention.

It is arguable, too, that the main adaptations of planning to EU legislation, policies and programmes (so-called 'download' Europeanisation) had to a large extent taken place in earlier decades, and the EU context had become 'part of the furniture' for planners and planning by the 2010s. This is not to say that this evolving context was not relevant to planning—for example in relation to environmental protection.

What is noticeable, too, is that critiques of EU legislation, policies and programmes and their impacts often seemed to derive from similar deregulatory impulses, sectors, and sources that, from the 1970s until the present day, have frequently criticised planning as a regulatory burden.[14]

The prevalence of other terms in the archive ('Brexit', 'International', 'UN', and 'global') will be considered in the next instalment of 'Europe Inside Out'. It will also reflect on whether the EU and/or European context will inexorably fade into the background for planning and planners in the UK—the '*adieu*' scenario—or whether an '*au revoir*' scenario might be envisaged, in which the environmental, social and economic realities of physical proximity, and shared interests in global sustainability and other agendas, foster continued interest in the potential to share experiences and best/promising practices with others in the UK's European neighbourhood.

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Notes

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8 See the European Commission's '2020 climate & energy package' webpage, at https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2020-climate-energy-package_en

9 *Autumn Statement 2012: Environmental Issues*. Fourth Report of Session 2012–13. Environmental Audit Committee. House of Commons, Nov. 2012. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmenvaud/328/328.pdf

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12 K Böhme: *Nordic Echoes of European Spatial Planning: Discursive Integration in Practice*. Nordregio, 2002. Available at https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/19205/19205_nordecofe.pdf

13 See M Diffley: 'Public opinion and the EU'. Blog Entry. Ipsos, 25 Mar. 2015. www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/blog-public-opinion-and-eu. Meanwhile 'data aggregated over the whole of 2014' showed that only 2% of voters overall (and only 7% of even UKIP voters) ranked the EU 'as the most important issue' — see A Rasmi: 'Only 1% of Brits cared much about the EU before the 2016 Brexit vote'. *Quartz*, 10 Oct. 2019. https://qz.com/1725402/only-5-percent-of-brits-cared-about-the-eu-before-brexit/

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street fighting

Among the many legacies of Covid-19 in American cities, the question of who controls the street has become a source of conflict. In a previous column,[1] I referred to enclosures of street parking by restaurants seeking outdoor seating. Another issue has arisen with closures of residential streets as long as two miles, intended to provide safe spaces for people to exercise in the open air. Cities from New York to San Francisco at first welcomed and generally supported the idea, although some closures as short as one block appeared to be arbitrary or reflecting political influence.

San Francisco had previously run a successful programme closing commercial streets on a selective basis on Sundays — the Sunday Streets Program — and, of course, European cities had done so much sooner. However, with the support of locally powerful bicycle lobbies, there has been a push to make the Covid closures permanent and extend them. Both planners and local officials have worked to this end, sometimes energetically.

Now, with the end of the most recent surge of the Omicron variant seemingly in sight, the gloves have come off. In San Francisco, the issue has been most visible in Golden Gate Park, the city's jewel of calm and recreation. The dispute has pitted the art establishment, long a powerful factor in city politics, together with elderly and disabled groups, against younger users who jog and bicycle on the main drive (as it is usually called) through the centre of the park.

For years, the street has been closed on Sundays, but open during the rest of the week. It was fully closed during the pandemic, and it remains so. The problem is that the de Young Museum, the city's most prestigious museum, is located in the centre of the park. It has an underground garage, but it is expensive and too small. Patrons would park on the drive and have an easy walk to the building, accessible to those who are handicapped.

As with most issues in San Francisco, the problem is complicated by the politics of class and race. Defenders of the closure suggest that the users have higher incomes, and can afford Uber or other means of transport, but that is not at all clear. The museum has long attracted a wide range of people. And the younger people who use the drive are not necessarily poor. San Francisco has been a magnet for well paid high-tech workers, who like to live in the city. Bicycles that cost thousands of dollars are everywhere. So, the debate has raged, with the museum taking a public position, which is rare. Given the social standing of its board and major donors, informal channels would be normal. But in these times, not much is normal.

Where this issue will end is still not evident. The Mayor backs the closure, but political realities may exert themselves. Meanwhile, the question of the four major closed remaining streets is quiescent. So long as the Omicron variant remains a scourge, there is little likelihood of any change, which is just as well. However, as the pandemic recedes, we may see some new political fractures and alliances.

It is clear that well selected residential streets with parallel major streets are very well suited to pedestrianisation. Yet, issues remain. Pedestrians and bicyclists often tend to view them as continuous, ignoring the cross-street traffic. As yet, I have found no data on injuries, other than personal observation of poor behaviour. Single block closures often seriously disrupt local residents, and issues of political influence cloud them. Frustrated drivers often ignore them, which makes for more trouble. The increasingly bad behaviour of drivers on freeways and local streets, widely noted in the media, certainly needs no more encouragement.

Meanwhile, other major problems remain, with Covid receding. Downtown's stores and restaurants are closed or barely hanging on. Office workers may or may not return — if they do, it is unlikely that it will be for a five-day week. Local shopping districts are decimated. An atmosphere of uncertainty is pervasive. Yet, there is some room for hope. Northern California has had some serious rain, although we are still in drought. So some people are happy.

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Note

1 M Teitz: 'The parklet perplex'. *Town & Country Planning*, 2021, Vol. 90, Sept./Oct., 356

Climate catastrophe

A draft of a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that is due to be published early in 2022 is unequivocal: even if humans can tame planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, climate change will fundamentally reshape life on Earth in the coming decades, owing to the emissions already in the atmosphere. According to the report, species extinction will become more common, many diseases will be more widespread, some parts of the world will suffer unliveable heat, ecosystems will collapse, and many cities will be menaced by rising seas. 'These and other devastating climate impacts are accelerating and will become painfully obvious before a child born today turns 30. The worst is yet to come, affecting our children's and grandchildren's lives much more than our own,' says the report.

In response to similar warnings of climate catastrophe, the recent summit of G20 world leaders in Rome failed to agree on the steps that nations would take to try to hold global warming to 1.5°C; the summit did not even commit to the basic step of committing to phasing out coal power, continuing with an annual $20 billion in subsidies for fossil fuel production and consumption. In particular, China, Russia, Brazil and Australia are pursuing policies that could lead to a cataclysmic 5°C of warming. China and India maintained their sabotage of progress on coal at the subsequent COP26 summit in Glasgow when they amended a key proposal to 'phase out' coal power generation to simply 'phasing it down', a move that reduced summit President Alok Sharma to tears.

Unsurprisingly, it was teenager Greta Thunberg who best summed up the response of many by excoriating global leaders over their promises to address the climate emergency. Quoting Boris Johnson's call to 'Build back better', she commented that 'The words sound great but so far have not led to action. Our hopes and ambitions drown in their empty promises.'

A stark reminder

Simon Lewis, a climate change scientist at University College London, had a stark reminder of what is to come on his way to the COP26 meeting when he was stuck on a train for more than three hours as a result of the disruption caused by a severe storm, commenting that 'while inconvenient, this is a reminder that climate change drives extreme weather events and every country needs to adapt'.

A measure for obfuscation

Greta Thunberg has also come up with a measure for obfuscation—the 'blah', rating G20 promises of a green economy and net zero by 2050 as worthy of three 'blahs'. However, Thunberg's hope that 'meaningful action to stop the climate crisis will only come from massive pressure from the outside' seems likely to fall on deaf ears if a recent survey carried out by Opinion Research is correct. It found that the most important action—saving energy—was some way down the list of priorities, with the public believing that avoiding throwing away food was the most important action that they could take, followed by various moves to reduce plastic waste. It seems that we have gone backwards: a survey 20 years ago found that the great majority of people cited the need to save energy as the top priority.

But the public are better informed than some MPs: a survey of some 100 MPs carried out by ComRes for *The Independent* found that one in 15 Conservative MPs do not believe that climate change is real, describing it as a 'myth'. And we should remember that climate concerns are nothing new. The World Conservation Strategy produced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1980 on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme noted:

> *'There is also a general need for better climatic data, for clarification of the relative roles of human and natural influences on climate, and for improved understanding of the impact of climate change on human activities.'*

Cleaner cows

Of course, it is not just humans that contribute to climate change. Ruminating cows belch significant amounts of methane, a potent global warming gas. So it is good news that Tesco and WWF are co-funding research at Nottingham University to determine if a natural supplement added to a cow's diet can crucially alter the gases in its daily belches. This has necessitated the development of a digital tag which communicates and records the methane output of each cow. Methane from livestock accounts for around half of the greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector.

One of the grand Passivhaus Plus homes in Norfolk

Close neighbours but no friends

Most people would rate having close friends as being essential to a good quality of life, and most people would assume that living close to lots of people would mean having many friends. However, a study by a team at the University of Hong Kong of more than 400,000 people in 22 British cities has shown that the opposite is often the case.

The study found that self-reported loneliness rose by almost 3% for every additional 1,000 housing units within a kilometre of a person's home, with social isolation rising around four times as fast. The researchers suggested that feeling a lack of control over their own space and privacy was the primary cause of social stress, with men and older people being the most affected.

Why people drive short distances

Planners have a key role in the travel mode that people choose for short-distance journeys. Researchers at the University of California and McGill University in Canada examined the numbers of intersections, streets radiating off each intersection, dead ends and loops for all 46 million kilometres of the world's mapped routes and found that cities with many cul-de-sacs and crescents are the least well connected. Their curvy, dead-end streets created disjointed suburban islands that discouraged walking.

In the study, Manchester fared badly in terms of its street design, with Paris and Vienna providing better connectivity. People in Manchester were more likely to use a car for a short journey than people in the European cities. The researchers also found that the belief that cul-de-sacs were safer for pedestrians is unfounded: people were more likely to be run over in a cul-de-sac than on grid-like streets, possibly because they are less cautious.

Grand Passivhaus

Grand mansions built in the countryside cannot often be described as sustainable, but six 650 square metre homes being built in Norfolk have been designed to meet the Passivhaus Plus standard. The houses feature triple- and quadruple-glazing insulation and have 53 solar panels to maximise the potential for energy self-sufficiency.

Unusually in Britain, great care has been taken to avoid summer overheating. Both the glazing and the white render are heat reflective, and a high portico shields part of the house from direct high-level sunshine. The render sits as a separated 'skin' over the building, allowing heat to escape through the void between the render panels and the inner structure of the walls. All the windows and doors are recessed, again reducing direct sunlight heating by providing further shading. In winter, the design allows the maximum natural light to enter the building.

Situated in 20 acres of parkland, the homes have been priced at almost £3 million each, more than 10 times the average price for a Norfolk home.

Youthful ambition

Can any reader identify a young planner who comes anywhere near the achievement of the American John Randel? In 1811, at the age of 20, he surveyed and marked out the entire street grid for Manhattan.

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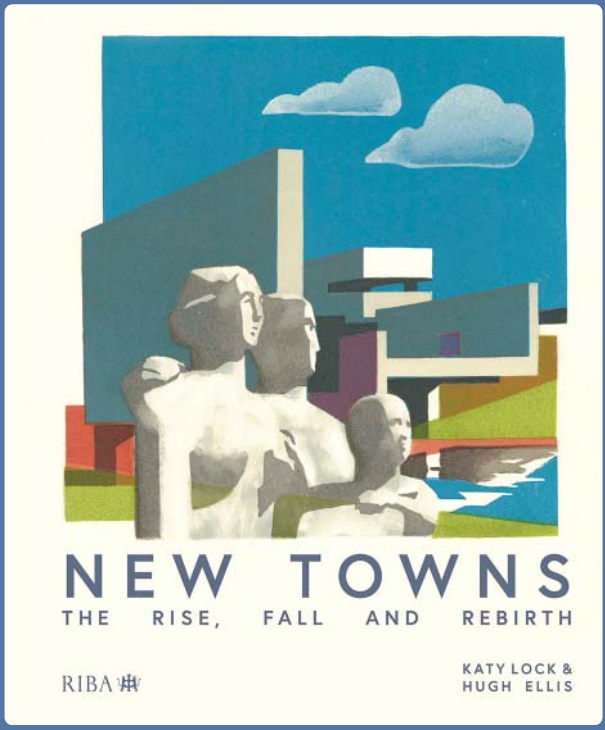
designing new communities for the 21st century

new towns: the rise, fall and rebirth



New Towns: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth
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Often misunderstood, the New Towns story is a fascinating one of anarchists, artists, visionaries, and the promise of a new beginning for millions of people. *New Towns: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth* offers a new perspective on the New Towns record and uses case studies to address the myths and realities of the programme. It provides valuable lessons for the growth and renewal of the existing New Towns and post-war housing estates and town centres, including recommendations for practitioners, politicians and communities interested in the renewal of existing New Towns and the creation of new communities for the 21st century.

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