SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
WRITTEN AND ORAL EVIDENCE

Contents
The Access Association – Written Evidence (BEN0198) ................................................................. 12
Anchor – Written Evidence (BEN0206) ............................................................................................. 24
Sir John Armitt – Written Evidence (BEN0226) .............................................................................. 27
Arun District Council and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council – Oral Evidence (QQ208-223) ................................................................................................. 29
Mr Nigel Spencer Atkins – Written Evidence (BEN0223) ............................................................ 59
Dame Kate Barker – Written Evidence (BEN0197) ........................................................................ 69
Dame Kate Barker and Shelter – Oral Evidence (QQ41-51) ......................................................... 71
Tom Bartlett – Written Evidence (BEN0181) .................................................................................. 102
Bat Conservation Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0172) .............................................................. 107
Bath and North East Somerset Council, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council and
London Borough of Barnet – Oral Evidence (QQ261-275) ......... 114
Beam, Farrells and The Place Alliance – Written Evidence (BEN0217) ............. 147
Giles Bergne Written Evidence (BEN0056) .................................................................................... 165
Lord Best and National Housing Federation – Oral Evidence (QQ52-63) ....... 167
Professor Peter Bishop – Written Evidence (BEN0011) ............................................................... 190
Professor Peter Bishop and Farrells – Oral Evidence (QQ29-40) ................................. 191
Boughton Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0097) .......................................................... 218
Boxley Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0073) ............................................................ 219
Professors Glen Bramley, Neil Dunse and Chris Leishman, Heriot-Watt
University – Written Evidence (BEN0104) ................................................................................... 221
Braunston Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0145) ......................................................... 227
Brington Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0105) ........................................................... 229
British Land, CBRE and Jones Lang LaSalle – Oral Evidence (QQ184-196)......234
British Property Federation – Written Evidence (BEN0135)........................................264
Bromley Civic Society — Written Evidence (BEN0151)................................................272
Dr Tim Brown, De Montfort University – Written Evidence (BEN0088)........275
Building & Engineering Services Association – Written Evidence (BEN0134) .282
Dr Kerry Burton and Dr Richard Newman – Written Evidence (BEN0118)......290
Byfield Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0036)...............................................295
Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research – Written Evidence
(BEN0109)......................................................................................................................296
Camden Town Unlimited – Written Evidence (BEN0127).................................299
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) – Written Evidence (BEN0084) ...302
Campaign to Protect Rural England and Town & Country Planning Association –
Oral Evidence (QQ109-120)..........................................................................................316
Campaign to Protect Rural England Kent – Written Evidence (BEN0038).........346
Campaign to Protect Rural England Lancashire – Written Evidence (BEN0070)
........................................................................................................................................350
Campaign to Protect Rural England – Maidstone – Written Evidence (BEN0079)
........................................................................................................................................356
Canterbury Society – Written Evidence (BEN0107).................................................360
Care & Repair England – Written Evidence (BEN0091)........................................369
Care & Repair England- Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0219)............375
Care & Repair England and Habinteg – Oral Evidence (QQ234-240)..............378
CBRE, British Land and Jones Lang LaSalle – Oral Evidence (QQ184-196)......397
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) - Written Evidence (BEN0063).398
The Chartered Institute of Building – Written Evidence (BEN0043).................404
Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) – Written Evidence
(BEN0102).....................................................................................................................416
Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management – Written
Evidence (BEN0078)....................................................................................................423
Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management - Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0221) ................................................................. 430
City of London Corporation – Written Evidence (BEN0199) ............................................. 462
Colchester Borough Council – Written Evidence (BEN0083) ........................................... 465
Collyweston Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0022) ............................................. 471
Committee on Climate Change – Written Evidence (BEN0124) ........................................ 477
Confederation of British Industry – Written Evidence (BEN0054) ....................................... 480
Construction Industry Council – Written Evidence (BEN0053) ......................................... 483
Construction Industry Council – Written Evidence (BEN0071) ......................................... 493
Construction Industry Training Board – Written Evidence (BEN0187) ............................. 502
Professor Rachel Cooper, Dr Richard Simmons, Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones – Oral Evidence (QQ1-12) ......................................................................................... 508
Create Streets – Written Evidence (BEN0195) ................................................................. 538
Croughton Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0025) ............................................... 555
The Crown Estate – Written Evidence (BEN0211) ........................................................... 558
The Crown Estate – Oral Evidence (QQ73-83) ................................................................. 561
Department for Communities and Local Government – Written Evidence (BEN0190) ........................................................................................................ 582
Department for Communities and Local Government – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0200) ........................................................................... 595
Department for Communities and Local Government – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0225) ........................................................................... 609
Department for Communities and Local Government – Oral Evidence (QQ330-343) ........................................................................................................ 620
Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Oral Evidence (QQ13-28) ....................................... 641
Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Communities and Local Government - Oral Evidence (QQ13-28) ............................................. 673
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design Council CABE – Written Evidence (BEN0177)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 674</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Council CABE and Made West Midlands – Oral Evidence (QQ84-93)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 686</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Danny Dorling – Written Evidence (BEN0204)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors Neil Dunse, Glen Bramley and Chris Leishman, Heriot-Watt University (BEN0104)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 720</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebbsfleet Development Corporation – Oral Evidence (QQ241-250)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 721</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EcoSystem Services – Written Evidence (BEN0006)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 738</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edf Energy – Written Evidence (BEN0117)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 741</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Edge – Written Evidence (BEN0122)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 746</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Edge – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0224)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 755</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Edge and Urban Design Group – Oral Evidence (QQ308-329)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 760</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh College of Art, University Of Edinburgh – Written Evidence (BEN0058)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 781</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Matt Egan, Public Health England and World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre – Oral Evidence (QQ224-233)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 788</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrosensitivity UK – Written Evidence (BEN0092)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 807</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy UK – Written Evidence (BEN0114)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 816</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Environment Agency and Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management – Oral Evidence (QQ283-307)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eythorne Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0068)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 822</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrells – Written Evidence (BEN0139)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 823</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrells, Beam and The Place Alliance – Written Evidence (BEN0217)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrells and Professor Peter Bishop – Oral Evidence (QQ29-40)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation of Master Builders – Written Evidence (BEN0220)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 829</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation of Master Builders and Home Builders Federation – Oral Evidence (QQ94-108)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committees Network – Written Evidence (BEN0072)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 863</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the Earth - Written Evidence (BEN0137)</td>
<td>........................................................................................................... 869</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Gardens Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0051) ................................................................. 877
Gas Safety Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0017) ................................................................. 883
Professor Jay Ginn and Professor Anthea Tinker – Written Evidence (BEN0046) .................................................................................................................. 890
Glass and Glazing Federation – Written Evidence (BEN0174) ........................................ 896
The Glass-house Community Led Design – Written Evidence (BEN0074) ........ 902
The Glass-House Community Led Design – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0214) .................................................................................................. 908
The Glass-House Community Led Design and Locality – Oral Evidence (QQ171-183) ................................................................................................................ 912
Professor Vincent Goodstadt and Dr Lucy Natarajan – Written Evidence (BEN0103) ................................................................................................................. 937
Greater London Authority – Written Evidence (BEN0191) .............................................. 940
Grove Park Group (Residents Association) – Written Evidence (BEN0067) ..... 945
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association – Written Evidence (BEN0096) ..................... 950
Habinteg – Written Evidence (BEN0116) ............................................................................ 955
Habinteg and Care & Repair England – Oral Evidence (QQ234-240) ......................... 962
Headcorn Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0161) ................................................ 963
The Heritage Alliance, Historic England and Prince’s Regeneration Trust – Oral Evidence (QQ159-170) ...................................................................................... 965
Historic England – Written Evidence (BEN0042) ............................................................ 990
Historic England – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0213) .............................. 999
Historic England, The Heritage Alliance and Prince’s Regeneration Trust – Oral Evidence (QQ159-170) .............................................................................. 1001
Hollingbourne Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0175) .................................. 1002
Home Builders Federation and Federation of Master Builders (QQ94-108). 1018
HTA Design LLP – Written Evidence (BEN0028) ............................................................... 1019
Roger Hutton – Written Evidence (BEN0202) .................................................................. 1028
Independent Transport Commission — Written Evidence (BEN0149) ..........1040
Independent Transport Commission – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0222) ......................................................................................................................1042
Innovate UK — Written evidence (BEN0147) ............................................................1067
Institute of Acoustics – Written Evidence (BEN0059) ...................................................1077
Institute of Historic Building Conservation — Written Evidence (BEN0160) 1094
The Institution of Structural Engineers – Written Evidence (BEN0033) ..........1106
Dr Isaac Jamieson, Dr Erica Mallery-Blythe – Written Evidence (BEN0216). 1111
Joint Parishes Group (JPG) –Written Evidence (BEN0189) ......................................1124
Jones Lang LaSalle, CBRE and British Land – Oral Evidence (QQ184-196) ....1129
Bulent Kazim – Written Evidence (BEN0003) ..............................................................1130
Kew Society – Written Evidence (BEN0180) ..............................................................1132
Kwes Kent Woodland Employment Scheme — Written Evidence (BEN0150) .................................................................................................................................1136
LABC – Written Evidence (BEN0064) ........................................................................1140
Landscape Institute – Written Evidence (BEN0136) ...............................................1142
Landscape Institute – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0208) ...............1153
Landscape Institute and the Land Trust – Oral Evidence (QQ121-131) ........1159
The Land Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0069) .......................................................1184
The Land Trust and Landscape Institute – Oral Evidence (QQ121-131) ....1190
Professors Chris Leishman, Neil Dunse and Glen Bramley Heriot-Watt University (BEN0104) .................................................................................................1191
Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association – Written Evidence (BEN0021) ....1192
Living Streets – Written Evidence (BEN0010) .........................................................1199
Locality — Written Evidence (BEN0153) .................................................................1207
Locality – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0212) ......................................1218
Locality and The Glass-House Community Led Design – Oral Evidence (QQ171-183) ................................................................. 1220
Local Government Association (LGA) – Written Evidence (BEN0207) ........ 1221
London Borough of Barnet, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council – Oral Evidence (QQ261-275) ................. 1226
London Borough of Islington – Written Evidence (BEN0183) .................. 1227
Janet Mackinnon – Written Evidence (BEN0099) ................................. 1246
Made West Midlands and Design Council CABE – Oral Evidence (QQ84-93) 1252
Ken Mafham – Written Evidence (BEN0178) ........................................ 1253
Judith Martin – Written Evidence (BEN0148) ...................................... 1270
McCarthy & Stone – Written Evidence (BEN0218) ................................. 1277
The Mersey Forest – Written Evidence (BEN0077) ............................... 1290
Tony Michael – Written Evidence (BEN0125) ....................................... 1296
Mineral Wool Insulation Manufacturers Association (Mima) – Written Evidence (BEN0176) .......................................................... 1306
Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland (BEN0039) ................................................. 1315
Moulton Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0120) ....................... 1329
MRC Epidemiology Unit & Centre for Diet and Activity Research – Written Evidence (BEN0085) .......................................................... 1331
Dr Lucy Natarajan, University College London & Professor Vincent Goodstadt, University of Manchester – Written Evidence (BEN0103) ......................... 1338
National Federation Of Roofing Contractors – Written Evidence (BEN0060)1339
National House Building Council (NHBC) – Written Evidence (BEN0111) ..... 1342
National Housing Federation — Written Evidence (BEN0152) ................. 1343
National Housing Federation and Lord Best – Oral Evidence (QQ52-63) ..... 1362
New Garden Cities Alliance (CIC) – Written Evidence (BEN0108) ........... 1363
Dr Richard Newman and Dr Kerry Burton – Written Evidence (BEN0118) ... 1367
William O’Brien – Written Evidence (BEN0192) ................................. 1368
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Witness/Group</th>
<th>Type of Evidence</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Fabiano Lemes de Oliveira</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overstone Parish Council</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Parks Alliance</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership for Active Travel Transport and Health (PATTH)</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulerspury Parish Council</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penoyre &amp; Prasad Architects and Quinlan and Francis Terry Architects</td>
<td>Oral Evidence</td>
<td>1397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Brett Associates</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Alliance</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Place Alliance, Farrells and Beam</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places For People</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Inspectorate</td>
<td>Oral Evidence</td>
<td>1437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Officers Society</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Officers Society and Royal Town Planning Institute</td>
<td>Oral Evidence</td>
<td>1463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontefract Civic Society</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth School of Architecture and Radian Group</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potterspury Parish Council</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Preston</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince’s Regeneration Trust, Historic England and The Heritage Alliance</td>
<td>Oral Evidence</td>
<td>1506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Prosser</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health England</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health England, Dr Matt Egan and World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre</td>
<td>Oral Evidence</td>
<td>1529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils 2 Parliament</td>
<td>Written Evidence</td>
<td>1530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinlan and Francis Terry Architects and Penoyre &amp; Prasad Architects</td>
<td>Oral Evidence</td>
<td>1546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reclaim London – Written Evidence (BEN0184) .......................................................... 1547
ResPublica – Written Evidence (BEN0044) ............................................................... 1556
Rescue, The British Archaeological Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0049) ..... 1562
Riverhead Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0156) .................................. 1568
Royal Academy of Engineering – Written Evidence (BEN0128) ..................... 1570
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) — Written Evidence (BEN0164) .......................................................... 1580
Royal Institute of British Architects — Written Evidence (BEN0157) ........... 1587
Royal Institute of British Architects and Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – Oral Evidence (QQ146-158) .......................................................... 1595
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – Written Evidence (BEN0185)..... 1617
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Royal Institute of British Architects– Oral Evidence (QQ146-158) .......................................................... 1624
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) – Written Evidence (BEN0188) .................................................................................................................. 1625
Royal Town Planning Institute – Written Evidence (BEN0126) ................. 1631
Royal Town Planning Institute – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0215) .................................................................................................................. 1638
Royal Town Planning Institute and Planning Officers Society – Oral Evidence (QQ132-145) ...................................................................................... 1643
Rushden Town Council — Written Evidence (BEN0155) ............................ 1644
Professor Yvonne Rydin, University College London – Written evidence (BEN0013) ...................................................................................................... 1646
Daniel Scharf – Written Evidence (BEN0005) ............................................... 1652
Professor Alister Scott – Written Evidence (BEN0227) ............................... 1660
Sellindge Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0194) ............................. 1672
Shelter and Dame Kate Barker – Oral Evidence (QQ41-51) ....................... 1677
Shine – Written Evidence (BEN0131) ............................................................... 1678
Henny Shotter – Written Evidence (BEN0076) ............................................. 1684
Dr Richard Simmons – Written Evidence (BEN0170) ................................... 1687

Page 9 of 1964
Dr Richard Simmons, Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones and Professor Rachel Cooper – Oral evidence (QQ1-12) .......................................................... 1696
Dr Felicity Simpson – Written Evidence (BEN0196) .......................................................... 1697
Social Life — Written Evidence (BEN0159) .......................................................... 1706
Stelling Minnis Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0093) .......................................................... 1715
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and Arun District Council – Oral Evidence (QQ208-223) .......................................................... 1718
Stop Smart Meters UK – Written Evidence (BEN0166) .......................................................... 1719
Teresa Strachan, Newcastle University, School of Architecture Planning and Landscape – Written Evidence (BEN0173) .......................................................... 1725
Suffolk Preservation Society – Written Evidence (BEN0080) .......................................................... 1729
Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA) – Written Evidence (BEN0115) .......................................................... 1737
Syresham Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0065) .......................................................... 1741
Tata steel – Written Evidence (BEN0179) .......................................................... 1742
Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, Professor Rachel Cooper, Dr Richard Simmons – Oral Evidence (QQ1-12) .......................................................... 1748
The Theatres Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0123) .......................................................... 1749
Sue Thompson – Written Evidence (BEN0031) .......................................................... 1761
Professor Anthea Tinker and Professor Jay Ginn – Written Evidence (BEN0046) .......................................................... 1763
Town & Country Planning Association – Written Evidence (BEN0171) .......................................................... 1764
Town & County Planning Association and Campaign to Protect Rural England – Oral Evidence (QQ109-120) .......................................................... 1775
Transport and Health Study Group – Written Evidence (BEN0094) .......................................................... 1776
Trees and Design Action Group – Written Evidence (BEN0182) .......................................................... 1797
Dr Shann Turnball – Written Evidence (BEN0110) .......................................................... 1809
UK Green Building Council – Written Evidence (BEN0081) .......................................................... 1816
UK Green Building Council – Oral Evidence (QQ251-260) .......................................................... 1822
UK Health Forum – Written Evidence (BEN0024) .......................................................... 1838
UK Indoor Environments Group – Written Evidence (BEN0112) ..... 1841
Ulcombe Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0098) ................. 1850
University of Manchester – Written Evidence (BEN0023) .............. 1853
University of Northampton, Collaborative Centre for the Built Environment – Written Evidence (BEN0027) ................................................... 1863
Urban Design Group – Written Evidence (BEN0141) .................... 1867
Urban Design Group and The Edge – Oral Evidence (QQ308-329) ........ 1870
Urban Vision Enterprise – Written Evidence (BEN0026) ............ 1872
URBED – Written Evidence (BEN0032) ........................................ 1881
Wappenham Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0048) ........ 1886
Dan Ward – Written Evidence (BEN0020) ........................................ 1887
Weedon Bec Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0168) ........ 1895
Welton Parish Council Written Evidence (BEN0050) .................. 1897
Westbere Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0055) ........... 1900
West of England Nature Partnership –Written Evidence (BEN0132) .... 1905
West Malling Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0119) ....... 1919
Wildfowl & Wetland Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0209) .......... 1923
The Wildlife Trusts – Written Evidence (BEN0113) ................. 1927
Woodland Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0130) ..................... 1951
Worcestershire County Council – Written Evidence (BEN0101) ......... 1955
Yelvertoft Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0047) ............ 1964
The Access Association – Written Evidence (BEN0198)

This response to the House of Lords Call for Evidence has been submitted on behalf of the Access Association.

The Access Association is a membership organisation for access professionals and experts from a variety of backgrounds, including the private sector and local authorities. The Association’s current membership breakdown stands at:

- Public Sector: 44.7%
- Private Sector: 44.1%
- Voluntary Sector: 8.7%
- Local Authority: 29.8%

We are a national network of individuals who are passionate about access and inclusive design. The Access Association’s aim is to improve access and facilities for disabled people, and consequently for all people who would benefit from an accessible and inclusive environment. The Association is about providing peer support, sharing knowledge and having an influential voice.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Guidance, policy, particularly inclusive design guidance, and creating an accessible environment for the diverse population of this country, including disabled people, have always been provided by a range of Government departments. It is felt that, at times, the co-ordination between departments and sectors could be improved, and, if a more integrated approach were achieved, the result could well be a more inclusive environment for everyone - including disabled people.

For example, access for disabled people and inclusive design are covered by:

**Planning:** the national planning policy framework and planning policy guidance. However, no design guidance is attached to this and British Standards documents are generally used as ‘the latest best design guidance’ under the planning process – however, the link to this guidance is not explicit.

**Building Control:** the Building Control process and the Building Regulations ‘cover’ access for disabled people at a fairly minimal level via Part M and Approved Document M of the Building Regulations. This standard cannot be described as providing ‘inclusive design’ solutions, and it is very possible to design an environment or development in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations which is not inclusive – one which segregates disabled people and non-disabled people at the entrance to a building, providing a
secondary entrance for disabled people, so allowing ‘design discrimination’ to occur on a daily basis.
It is felt that Part M and Approved Document M of the Building Regulations require updating to not only remove barriers to access which disabled people experience on a daily basis, but also reflect a more ‘inclusive design approach’ which creates successful, sustainable environments which are suitable for the population of this country, with no segregation on the grounds of any ‘protected characteristic’, including disability / impairment.

The Building Regulations are one of the few ‘statutory’ processes in terms of creating an accessible environment, and play an essential part in the creation of the built environment. For this reason, an update to the design guidance found in Approved Document M, and to Part M’s ‘approach’ to access and inclusion, is desperately needed, and fundamental in terms of creating a successful and future-proofed environment for everyone, including disabled people.

**Department for Transport**: guidance on the highways environment. This is essential and plays a crucial part in creating a single environment which is well connected and provides the necessary links, following and going beyond ‘Lifetime Neighbourhood’ principles. The DfT’s guidance document ‘Inclusive Mobility’ is well used, but desperately needs updating, again, to reflect inclusive design principles and provide further guidance given disabled peoples’ improved mobility and (rightly) increased expectations in terms of the environment they live in.

Contradictions do exist in the design guidance provided by the above three departments / sections. For example, there are a number of different designs cited for something as simple as a disabled person’s parking bay. Contradictions in guidance and standards which are in need of updating causes significant confusion, often resulting in environments which can exclude, are not suitable for or can segregate disabled people.

Standards need updating to reflect the increasingly diverse population the environment has to, and should, accommodate.

Consistency between standards will simplify the design process and remove confusion - (i.e. highways require one standard, planning another and building control another again) - and will also result in a higher quality, more suitable, and barrier free environment.

High level policy and political backing will add weight to the ‘case’ for the creation of a high quality, sustainable and inclusive environment which is suitable for the increasingly diverse and ageing population of this country.

Both nationally and locally, and within local authorities and on specific development schemes, it is felt that the use of access professionals - both Local Authority Access Officers and access consultants - is essential in co-ordinating the many sectors involved in creating a single, inclusive environment. The Government should be promoting the use of specialist knowledge and the employment of Access Officers and professionals, to guarantee that the
needs of the population, including disabled people, are taken into account at every stage of the development process and across every sector, to ensure that a future-proofed, barrier free, truly inclusive environment is created.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

It is felt, by many Access Association members, that there are significant national geographical inconsistencies in terms of the interpretation of the NPPF, and of how that guidance is translated into local plans.

The creation of a barrier free, inclusive environment is essential to protecting it and ensuring its continued suitability and effectiveness for the population in the future. Some plans lead the way in terms of the application of NPPF policies and guidance on Inclusive Design and providing suitable access for disabled people. Other core strategies / local plans do not appear to adequately address access or inclusion for disabled or older people.

It is felt that access and inclusion for disabled people, and the creation of an inclusive environment which is fit for purpose given our current population in terms of disabled and older people, and also our future population, should be prioritised. This prioritisation should also ensure a more consistent geographical approach, avoiding inconsistencies in terms of planning policy and Inclusive Design.

An inclusive environment is an environment which can be used by everyone. It should be seen as a baseline essential to all developments, and one which should be specifically addressed in all local plans, to a high standard and consistently throughout the country. Only this will allow people genuine choice in terms of where they choose to live, work or visit.

Disabled people and older people are often excluded from many activities due to an unsuitable built environment and barriers. These are often as basic as a step to a shop or no disabled persons’ toilet being provided. However, these will mean that many disabled people cannot use that service - or spend their money there. In terms of choice and the wider economy, planning should require that the highest standards in terms of inclusive design and access for disabled people are applied.

The provision of suitable access for disabled people cannot be left to a ‘civil’ approach such as the Equality Act 2010 - making it a disabled person’s responsibility to ‘enforce’ legislation - placing the ‘blame’ for the discrimination on them because they are disabled.

The planning process has a vital role to play in ensuring that all new developments are accessible and usable for the population as a whole, and that they do not segregate or discriminate against any group, including disabled people, due to their design.
Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The recent Housing Standards Review (in which the Access Association was involved) has created new optional Building Regulations in terms of accessible housing. This is felt to be a positive step forward, ensuring consistency in standards and in what consumers can expect from accessible housing. However, the application of the optional Building Regulations is dependent on local plans and the planning process ‘requiring’ (and conditioning) the provision of these optional standards. There will be a significant time lag in the implementation of these standards in terms of local authorities revising their local plans, and, even when plans are revised, they may not incorporate any accessible housing requirements.

The ‘basic’ Part M standard (M4(1)) is not suitable for most disabled people to visit or live in. It is therefore disappointing that higher standards are optional and that some of the higher accessibility requirements were not incorporated in the basic M4(1) standard, as many of these benefit the population as a whole - older people, families with young children, and disabled people with a variety of impairments.

To help address this, it is felt that the Government, centrally, could do more to ‘encourage’ or help local authorities to understand the importance of providing suitable accessible housing, and how they should go about this. The potential cost savings in terms of health costs and adaptation costs and wider societal benefits should be highlighted, and attention should be drawn to the NPPF guidance, emphasising the need to provide suitable housing for the population. This could also be strengthened in terms of accessible and wheelchair accessible housing, given the volume of the country’s housing stock which pre-dates any such standards, and the poor level of choice available for people who require accessible housing.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

For built environments to be sustainable and resilient, they need to be inclusive and accessible for the diverse population of the country, including disabled and older people. They need to be suitable and inclusive, and not segregate some people. This country has an ageing population to accommodate, and the incidence of disability does increase with age. Unless inclusive design and access for disabled people is adequately addressed now, the built environment will not be resilient, sustainable or suitable for the population. Planning and building control processes therefore have an essential part to play in the creation of suitable inclusive environments.
The Equality Act 2010 (EA) and its predecessors, the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA), have made a difference to the life of disabled people, and have acted to raise awareness of many of the barriers disabled people can face in society. However, there are still areas relating to both the built environment and transport systems which need to be tackled, and which need to work much better, if disabled people are to have the same access to employment opportunities and to goods, facilities and services, (including key areas such as transport and education), and the same opportunities to contribute to the economic success of the country as people who are not disabled.

It is essential to legislate in this area. A ‘market’ or ‘litigation’ based approach does not work in terms of ensuring an equitable and ‘fair’ society for all members, including disabled people. (This is demonstrated by the fact that disabled people are still facing barriers to access and inclusion). In terms of how that legislation works, it is essential to address certain areas, specifically in terms of the enforcement of the legislation and how service providers and employers provide and/or maintain facilities to enable disabled people to access and use services and places of employment.

The discrimination of disabled people (whether direct or indirect) should remain unlawful; however, it is felt that ‘responsible people’ should be identified to carry out the task of enforcement. These might be Local Authority Officers, possibly Trading Standards Officers, or Environmental Health Officers when checking food premises’ ratings locally. These officers should have the power to, and should be required to, follow up any suspected breaches of the EA in relation to specific and identified areas of the duty to provide or alter a physical feature to enable access for disabled people.

A local authority should be able to request the provision of facilities which enable disabled people equality of access, and should be able to enforce the maintenance and continued provision of these facilities. One particular example which is often cited by our members is the provision of a disabled person’s toilet in a restaurant, pub or café. Often, as space is at a premium, these facilities are used as storage areas for cleaning equipment or beverages, making them unavailable for people who need to use them. In such instances, the EA requires the individual disabled person who experiences this discrimination to raise the issue with the service provider, which could eventually result in the disabled person having to take legal action against the service provider. In reality, many disabled people will often not bother going through this process, as it seems lengthy, costly and difficult - and the question should be asked: “Why should they?”

The EA method of enforcement is reminiscent of the now very dated ‘medical model’ approach to disability. The medical model school of thought placed ‘blame’ on disabled people, considering that, if they could not access a building, or any of the facilities and services in society that are available to non-disabled people, then it was their ‘fault’. In contrast, the approach currently adopted and followed puts ‘blame’ on the wider society, or the people responsible for an inaccessible building or service for not designing and providing for the diversity of population we have today, including disabled people.
The EA method of enforcement could be said to actually build upon the medical model approach, by stating that, if a disabled person cannot access a facility or service, then they should do something about it and address the issue themselves - as the reason they cannot gain access is because they are disabled. A more ‘up to date’ and equitable approach would be to accept that providing a suitable environment and services for the entire population of this country, including disabled people, is everyone in society’s responsibility – which includes service providers and Local Authority Officers.

Disabled people should be able to live an independent life, without facing barriers to their inclusion and participation, and without the extra burden of having to enforce the removal of any barriers which society places in their way. They should be able to go to work, visit facilities, access services and enjoy leisure, should they wish to do so, and not have to spend their time writing letters to every establishment that denies them equality of access. The fact that the EA expects disabled people to do this could, in itself, be seen as discriminatory, as non-disabled people do not have this expectation placed on them.

If a service provider is identified by a disabled person as not providing, or maintaining, the facilities they require to access the service, then the disabled person should be able to notify the relevant Local Authority and request that they follow up the issue. Another possible solution could be through licensing processes that local authorities undertake. Entertainment and alcohol licensing regulations could be amended to require a local authority to assess premises applying for, or renewing, a licence in terms of access for disabled people, and to require an establishment or event to provide suitable access and facilities for disabled people before a licence is granted or renewed. Currently, there is no such requirement, and the fact that many entertainment and alcohol licences are granted to establishments or events which do not provide suitable access and facilities for disabled people is a missed opportunity, and this should be addressed.

Even though some local authorities ‘encourage’ some applicants to look into access and facilities for disabled people, they currently do not have powers to refuse the granting of a licence on these grounds. To ensure national consistency, suitable access and facilities for disabled people should be added to the minimum requirements for the granting of, or renewal of, a licence. Again, this would prevent disabled people from having to spend their time complaining to, and possibly taking legal action against, the said service providers.

Therefore, to allow disabled people the same opportunities as non-disabled people, to live an independent life, this country should not expect disabled people to spend their own time fighting for physical access to services. It should be provided by local authorities, via the licensing system, and enforced through existing legislation.

The Equality Act approach is therefore not adequate on its own to address access for disabled people, and it is felt that additional measures and powers should be put in place as soon as possible.
Another route / method to address issues of access for disabled people within the existing building stock would be to re-evaluate / investigate the ‘limits of application’ of the Building Regulations. There is a fairly common misconception among many people, including some disabled people, that ‘Part M’ covers all building works - it does not. Part M of the Building Regulations is limited in terms of the types of building works it can be applied to under the Statutory Instrument that is the Building Regulations. Aside from new-build schemes, the building works to which Part M applies could be seen as being quite limited. If the scope or type of works that Part M applies to were increased, (for example, in relation to existing buildings, i.e. change of use or material alteration applications), then there could be significant improvements to the existing building stock in terms of access for disabled people. It is felt that an opportunity exists via the building control system which could be investigated further.

This would also apply to the creation and provision of accessible housing. Currently, the new ‘optional’ building regulations M4(2) and M4(3) are also limited in their potential application by the Building Regulations. Part M of the Building Regulations in terms of residential developments would generally not apply to dwellings created via a Change of Use application or a Material Alteration, and this has been a disappointment to a number of Access Association members. If the limits of application of the Building Regulations were altered and did not exclude this type of application, then more accessible homes suitable for the diverse and ageing population of the country now, and in the future, could be created (pending local planning policies).

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

England has a rich and diverse range of designated and non-designated heritage assets which contribute to its world class status and popularity as a unique visitor destination. The importance of the historic environment and national assets is recognised, and it is felt that crucial to the preservation of England’s national assets is the careful protection and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and their settings.

“Easy Access to Historic Buildings” (English Heritage, June 2015) highlights the importance of ensuring that the diverse and changing population can access and use these assets now and in the future, as the following quotation illustrates:

“Historic Buildings, landscapes and places exist for the enjoyment and appreciation of everybody. Too many people think of the historic environment as being inaccessible. Historic England knows that this need not be the case. On the contrary, we know that good quality access can enhance our understanding of the historic environment and ensure its sustainability. What we have learnt is that with the right kind of thought and discussion a way can be found around almost any barrier. We also recognise that people’s expectations-and the technical opportunities to meet them- are constantly evolving.
While the needs of disabled people must be a priority, we also know that easier access will benefit almost all of us at some stage in our lives. Whether during pregnancy, as a parent pushing a buggy or an older person who is finding steps a bit harder to manage, we all value thoughtful and effective design for our access needs.

We want to see the broadest possible public access to the historic environment and to the interpretation that makes it come alive. For that reason we will continue to promote good quality solutions that make access easier while simultaneously encouraging responsible care of the historic places that matter to us all.”

Access Association members often report back on developers, service providers or building owners citing a building’s ‘listing’ as a reason why access for the diverse population, including disabled people, cannot be achieved. This is very, very rarely the case, although it is a regularly cited ‘excuse’ for providing and maintaining barriers for disabled people.

For heritage assets and listed buildings in this country to have a sustainable future, they need to be accessible to as many people as possible, including disabled people.

It is felt that stronger planning policy via the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and specific planning guidance via Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) should be provided which covers the issue of access and the historic environment, for example along the lines of: when considering re-use or refurbishment of heritage assets, historic or listed buildings, opportunities should be explored to identify potential modifications to improve levels of inclusion and access for disabled people. This can be successfully achieved, adding a new layer of history to our historic buildings and landscapes, and ensuring their use into the future.

Many access professionals, including Access Officers and access consultants, have specialist knowledge in this field and can advise in this area. The use of such specialist advice should be encouraged and will ensure that successful design solutions can be achieved.

It is felt that, for too long, the ‘excuse’ of a building having a listed status has been (wrongly) used as a reason to exclude disabled people, and additional guidance is required, at a high, national and strategic level, via the planning system. This will dispel this myth and encourage the removal of barriers in the historic environment, to ensure a future for these assets and allow a diverse population, including disabled people, to access and enjoy them.

Funding allocated to the removal of physical barriers (as per the Equality Act) to heritage assets would assist many building owners and organisations responsible for such assets in ensuring that high quality, successful and inclusive solutions are achieved.

**Skills and design**

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
It is felt that all professionals involved in the creation of the built environment should have some understanding of, and training in, Inclusive Environments and access for disabled people. A more inclusive approach to inclusion should be promoted!

For many years, access for disabled people and inclusion have been seen as an ‘add on’ or ‘added extra’, rather than a fundamental and basic requirement which should be addressed and incorporated at the start of the design process. It is felt that additional training is required in this area, and it is important that all professionals involved in creating the built environment undertake it and understand it.

The Design Council (CABE) is are currently putting together an Inclusive Environments CPD training programme which will be freely available. The Access Association has supported this project, both financially and ‘in kind’, from its inception, and is keen to promote the finished product. It is felt that the Government, via all relevant routes and departments, should endorse and assist in actively promoting this training to all relevant sectors, ensuring a baseline level of knowledge is achieved throughout the industry.

All local authorities should employ an Access Officer / Access Specialist to oversee all departments and processes involved in shaping and creating the built environment, to provide guidance and to check that inclusive design is addressed at every stage of the development process, and it is felt that the Government should be promoting such an approach.

Developers should be able to identify where specialist access advice, for example from Access Consultants, is required on large scale schemes, and this should be seen as an ‘essential component’ of the design process.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘placemaking’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The Building Regulations and the Building Control process play an essential part in creating an inclusive environment. Part M of the Building Regulations, both volume 1 (housing) and volume 2 (non-dwellings), do have the potential to promote and help provide good quality design and an inclusive environment, consistently, throughout the country. Part M volume 2 should be updated in terms of adopting a more suitable approach towards Inclusive Design, e.g. in avoiding the segregation that revolving doors can create. However, the Building Control process does potentially provide a nationally consistent tool which could be effectively used to shape the built environment.

Many Access Association members do have concerns in terms of how consistently the requirements of the Building Regulations, in particular Part M of the Building Regulations, are applied, and in terms of individual officers’ interpretation of ‘reasonable provision’ in accordance with the regulations. Experiential evidence has shown a lack of consistency in the application of certain clauses of the Approved Documents, one example being the
The provision of Lifts. Approved Document M is quite clear in terms of stating what type of lift should be provided, and where. The provision of level access via lifts is fundamental for the inclusion of many disabled people, including people who require level access.

Members often report back on Building Control Bodies - not necessarily from the private or public sectors - allowing developments to proceed and be completed without the provision of a lift (where it is felt one should be provided, in accordance with the approved document). One reason for this could be the ‘competitive environment’ in which Building Control bodies work. Building Control Bodies can be Local Authority based, or can operate in the private sector as Approved Inspectors. Due to this, bodies are competing for work, and this competitive environment may not always be the most effective environment in terms of ensuring that standards are met. Access for disabled people has been cited by some of our members as one of the areas that could be compromised as part of these negotiations.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

It is felt that there is a lack of connectivity, communication and links between the various sectors and departments which are either involved in creating and managing the built environment, or involved in providing health and social services for the population using the built environment. The built environment in which people live has, for many, a profound effect on their health, wellbeing and ability to live their day to day life without barriers.

A more accessible environment, including the availability of suitable accessible housing, has the potential to save health services significant amounts of money, through allowing people to stay in communities and their homes for longer. Local authorities can also make adaptations to people’s homes via the disabled facilities grants process.

There is both a moral and financial ‘case’ for creating a more accessible environment, both in the short term and the long term.

The Equality Act 2010 (EA) and its predecessors, the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA), have made a difference to the life of disabled people, and have raised awareness of many of the barriers disabled people can face in society. However, there are still areas relating to both the built environment and transport systems which need to be tackled, and which need to work much better, if disabled people are to have the same access to jobs, goods, facilities and services (including transport and education), and the same opportunities to contribute to the economic success of the country, as people who are not disabled.
It is essential to legislate in this area. A ‘market’ or ‘litigation’ based approach does not work in terms of ensuring an equitable and fair society for all members, including disabled people. (This is demonstrated by the fact that disabled people are still facing barriers to access and inclusion). In terms of how that legislation works, it is essential to address certain areas, specifically in terms of the enforcement of the legislation and how service providers and employers provide and/or maintain facilities to enable disabled people to access and use services and places of employment.

The discrimination of disabled people (whether direct or indirect) should remain unlawful; however, it is felt that ‘responsible people’ should be identified to carry out the task of enforcement. These might be Local Authority Officers, possibly Trading Standards Officers, or Environmental Health Officers when checking food premises’ ratings locally. These officers should have the power to, and should be required to, follow up any suspected breaches of the EA in relation to specific and identified areas of the duty to provide or alter a physical feature to enable access for disabled people.

A local authority should be able to request the provision of facilities which enable disabled people equality of access, and should be able to enforce the maintenance and continued provision of these facilities. One particular example which is often cited by our members is the provision of a disabled person’s toilet in a restaurant, pub or café. Often, as space is at a premium, these facilities are used as storage areas for cleaning equipment or beverages, making them unavailable for people who need to use them. In such an instance, the EA requires the individual disabled person who experiences this discrimination to raise the issue with the service provider, which could eventually result in the disabled person having to take legal action against the service provider. In reality, many disabled people will often not bother going through this process, as it seems lengthy, costly and difficult - and the question should be asked: “Why should they?”

The EA method of enforcement is reminiscent of the now very dated ‘medical model’ approach to disability. The medical model school of thought placed ‘blame’ on disabled people, considering that, if they could not access a building, or any of the facilities and services in society that are available to non-disabled people, then it was their ‘fault’. In contrast, the approach currently adopted and followed puts ‘blame’ on the wider society, or the people responsible for an inaccessible building or service for not designing and providing for the diversity of population we have today - including disabled people.

The EA method of enforcement could be said to actually build upon the medical model approach, by stating that, if a disabled person cannot access a facility or service, then they should do something about it and address the issue themselves - as the reason they cannot gain access is because they are disabled. A more ‘up to date’ and equitable approach would be to accept that providing a suitable environment and services for the entire population of this country, including disabled people, is everyone in society’s responsibility – which includes service providers and Local Authority Officers.
Disabled people should be able to live an independent life, without facing barriers to their inclusion and participation, and without the extra burden of having to enforce the removal of any barriers which society places in their way. They should be able to go to work, visit facilities, access services and enjoy leisure, should they wish to do so, and not have to spend their time writing letters to every establishment that denies them equality of access. The fact that the EA expects disabled people to do this could, in itself, be seen as discriminatory, as non-disabled people do not have this expectation placed on them.

If a service provider is identified by a disabled person as not providing, or maintaining, the facilities they require to access the service, then the disabled person should be able to notify the relevant Local Authority and request that they follow up the issue. Another possible solution could be through licensing processes that local authorities undertake. Entertainment and alcohol licensing regulations could be amended to require a local authority to assess premises applying for, or renewing, a licence in terms of access for disabled people, and to require an establishment or event to provide suitable access and facilities for disabled people before a licence is granted or renewed. Currently, there is no such requirement, and the fact that many entertainment and alcohol licences are granted to establishments or events which do not provide suitable access and facilities for disabled people is a missed opportunity, and this should be addressed.

Even though some local authorities ‘encourage’ some applicants to look into access and facilities for disabled people, they currently do not have powers to refuse the granting of a licence on these grounds. To ensure national consistency, suitable access and facilities for disabled people should be added to the minimum requirements for the granting of, or renewal of, a licence. Again, this would prevent disabled people from having to spend their time complaining to, and possibly taking legal action against, the said service providers.

To conclude, to allow disabled people the same opportunities as non-disabled people, to live an independent life, this country should not expect disabled people to spend their own time fighting for physical access to services. It should be provided by local authorities, via the licensing system, and enforced through existing legislation.

16 October 2015
Anchor – Written Evidence (BEN0206)

Background to Anchor:

- Anchor is a charity and England’s largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care to older people.
- It serves 40,000 older people across the country.
- Formed in 1968 as Help the Aged (Oxford) Housing Association, it adopted the name Anchor in 1975 and opened its first care home seven years later.
- Today, it provides retirement housing to rent and to buy, retirement villages and residential care homes, including specialist dementia care, from more than 1,000 locations across England.
- More information is available at www.anchor.org.uk

1. As a specialist provider of retirement housing and care to older people, we have some specific points to make in relation to the needs of older people and the provision of specialist accommodation.

2. We have therefore restricted our comments to those points and have not addressed all the questions raised in your call for evidence. The majority of our comments relate to your questions under the headings Policymaking, integration and coordination and Buildings and places: New and old.

3. As set out comprehensively in Ready for Ageing, the report from the House of Lords Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change, our society is woefully underprepared for ageing. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the built environment.

4. Increasing life expectancies are, of course, something to be celebrated. They also mean higher levels of dementia and multiple, complex needs which our ageing housing stock was not developed to accommodate.

5. However, the fact that demographic change creates multiple, interconnected challenges across departmental boundaries mean that it is not being sufficiently addressed.

6. The supply of appropriate housing for older people is seriously inadequate. The vast majority of older people live in mainstream housing. Demos reports 58% of over-60s say they are interested in moving but feel restricted by a lack of suitable alternatives.

7. Government projections suggest 60% of household growth through to 2033 will involve someone over 65. However, only 2% of the country’s housing stock is retirement housing.

8. A 2010 survey by the National Housing Federation found 65% of 60-65 year olds said they liked the idea of living in a self-contained home with support or care available in later life. Smaller homes would also be more energy efficient and manageable.
9. If additional retirement housing was built, it would create movement in the property market that will ultimately help first-time buyers onto the housing ladder. However, increasing supply has not been given the priority it deserves.

10. The National Housing Federation reported in 2010 that only 45% of local authorities surveyed had a housing strategy for older people. This, perhaps, goes some way to explain why a Reading University study found that two-thirds of planning applications for new retirement housing were refused first time round.

11. The amount of space needed for communal areas and to enable care provision mean retirement housing is more expensive to develop than mainstream housing.

12. Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy work to make it even harder for providers to develop affordable properties for older people.

13. Ready for Ageing states: “Central and local government, housing associations and house builders need urgently to plan how to ensure that the housing needs of the older population are better addressed and to give as much priority to promoting an adequate market and social housing for older people as is given to housing for younger people.” We have seen little evidence of policy change which has adequately addressed this point.

14. Any new housing also needs to be “future-proofed” enabling people to enjoy independent living throughout the different stages of their lives, a point stressed by the International Longevity Centre-UK, which also believes housing and society at large is not ready for Britain’s ageing population.

15. The Government needs to drastically overhaul parts of its housing strategy and provide strong leadership so that older people can live in safe, appropriately-sized accommodation which will enable other home buyers to move onto or up the housing ladder.

16. There is a dysfunctional relationship between housing, social care and health. Falls are the leading cause of ambulance call-outs to the homes of people over 65: around one in three people over 65 and one in two over 80 fall each year. Yet simple, cheap housing adaptations are increasingly hard to access.

17. Retirement housing with onsite support can also reduce the NHS bill yet planning obstacles are preventing such developments being built. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee recommended in 2009 that the Government establish “a more coherent strategy for the provision and funding of housing and support services for older people, making clear the role of sheltered housing” We’re still waiting.

18. Older people face a disproportionately high incidence of fatalities or injuries caused by road accidents, falls on pavements or while using public transport.

19. Many over 65s rely on their cars for independence, and this is likely to increase following the abolition of the mandatory retirement age. Just under half of those aged over 55 in Britain cannot walk to their nearest GP and 58 per cent cannot walk to their nearest bank.

20. The Department for Transport reports that older people are between two and five times more likely to be killed or suffer a serious injury as a result of a road accident.
than a younger person. The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) believes more must be done.

21. PACTS called for well-lit, large road signs with junctions being kept clear of hedges and other obstacles which obstruct a clear view of oncoming traffic. The International Longevity Centre also believes the Government should lead on improvements in road infrastructure, including clearer signage.

22. Pavements are an even more significant issue. Over 65s are 10 times more likely to be admitted to A&E following falls on footpaths than because of road accidents.

23. Anchor’s research in 2012 found 43% of those surveyed thought many pavements were not safe. We support PACTS’ recommendations for better-maintained and well-lit pavements.

24. Poor quality pavements and dimly-lit streets make many older people less likely to venture out. This increases social isolation – another major challenge.

25. Safety is also an issue on public transport. Despite older people experiencing a large number of trips and falls relative to other age groups, PACTS found “transport operators do not view meeting the needs of older people as a high priority.” Simple measures, such as grab rails in train stations, would make public transport more user-friendly.

26. There needs to be a joined-up approach to these issues: investing in well-maintained pavements, road junctions and public transport means fewer older people will end up in hospital.

27. We believe the government should:
   • Create a national task force of developers, ministers and local government to produce a national strategy for increasing supply of retirement housing.
   • Exempt older people who are downsizing from paying stamp duty.
   • Provide grant funding as well as interest-free loans to retirement housing developers to encourage them to build affordable housing.
   • Introduce a similar policy to that suggested in Scotland’s Planning Policy Consultation Draft 2013 where developers who build retirement housing are not required by law to also build affordable housing.
   • Create a level playing field for retirement housing developers by excluding retirement housing from the onerous requirements of the community infrastructure levy and Section 106.
   • Ensure all local authorities have a robust housing strategy for older people and act on it to increase supply, including through the sale of publicly-owned land.

28. On the urban environment as it relates to transport, government should:
   • Introduce fines if local authorities or the Highways Agency fail to maintain unobstructed views at junctions which are accident black spots; and
   • Provide adequate funding so that pavements are maintained to safe standards.

Compiled by: Mario Ambrosi, Head of Communications and Public Affairs, Anchor

06 November 2015
Dear Baroness O’Cathain,

National Policy for Built Environment Committee and the provision of infrastructure

Thank you for your letter regarding the work that your Committee is currently undertaking on the challenges that exist in UK infrastructure provision and for inviting me to put forward some of my views. I share the Committee’s desire to try to ensure that infrastructure serves its purpose, but that it is effectively integrated into the wider environment. I also agree that the relationship between infrastructure planning and its implementation at a local level is of importance, particularly for transport.

The outcomes sought from an infrastructure project or programme of interventions are not always explained to local communities. This creates a separation between the asset and the user. While not everyone will accept a development in their community, we can do much more to gain active support from communities. Early engagement in infrastructure projects enables competing demands and interests to surface sooner in the development process. Addressing these competing interests early makes them much easier to manage and allows for compromise. This should be done before significant resource has been committed to a project.

There are a range of incentives to achieve community buy-in to a project. For example, when building a wind farm there are a number of steps that can be taken. These include allowing local communities to share a proportion of the profits, reducing energy bills or providing residents with a stake in the farm itself. This is not just a challenge for those involved with energy infrastructure; it is also one that extends to the transport sector. It is ultimately an endeavour in balancing competing differences in opinion.

Beyond place-making, there are a number of other factors that should be considered in the integration of transport infrastructure with the wider built environment. These range from sustainable accessibility; compatibility with wider transport networks and social infrastructure; interchanges that help shrink the concept of time and space in the built environment; efficient interfaces with compact and high-density mixed-use urban environments; and receptivity to emerging digital and smarter transport technologies.
As you will be aware, I have recently been appointed as an interim Commissioner for the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) and as President of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). While the NIC is in the early stages of its undertakings, I hope these are issues that it will address in due course. My vision for the NIC is that it will set out the long-term strategic priorities for the UK, which will then be delivered by national, devolved and local governments, as well as the private sector.

You may wish to consider the recent report "Independent survey of attitudes to infrastructure in Great Britain 2015", published by Copper Consultancy, Icaro and Peter Brett Associates (PBA), which assesses the importance of involving the public and building a consensus around the need and benefits of infrastructure. While the report confirmed that almost 9 out of 10 people in Britain want to see investment in new infrastructure, it also showed that many also want more of a say in how it's planned and delivered.

Only six per cent of British people think there is a 'very well co-ordinated' national or local plan. Many people feel that infrastructure projects happen 'to them', not 'for them' and they do not see any local or national coordination. When asked what would increase confidence in the infrastructure sector, British people highlighted community engagement (41 per cent), consultation (30 per cent), leadership from politicians (25 per cent) and technical experts (24 per cent).

I can also confirm that the ICE is looking at these areas as part of its forthcoming (May 2016) State of the Nation report on devolution and infrastructure. In particular, the report will examine the affects, both current and future, that devolution is likely to have on infrastructure provision. If you would like more information on ICE's emerging findings, I am sure that the report authors would be more than happy to engage with you. Please do let me know and I will put them in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Sir John Armitt
ICE President

22 January 2016
Members present

Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Councillor Sue Derbyshire, leader of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and planning and housing lead for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and Councillor Gillian Brown, leader of Arun District Council and planning lead for the District Councils’ Network

Q41 The Chairman: Welcome, Councillor Brown and Councillor Derbyshire, to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. It is very kind of you to come. I am sure you have both had long distances to travel, so I hope it is okay. In front of you, you have a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. There are additional interests, incidentally. Baroness Young of Old Scone has just been appointed chairman of the Woodland Trust. That has relevance to what we are doing, and we congratulate her on it. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary.

I shall begin, Councillor Brown, by mentioning that I am a resident of the Arun district. You probably did not know that. I will also highlight that you were invited via the District Councils’ Network and are very much here in your role as planning lead for the network. The
Committee’s questions will focus on national issues and issues that affect local authorities across the country, rather than focusing too much on any particular local area. This has happened throughout our evidence-taking, not that we have had the sort of clash that there is today. Could I please begin the session by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee for the purposes of the record? You will get a transcript at the end and we want to make sure we allocate the correct names to the people who spoke. You can look at that transcript and, if you think there has been a mistake, please let us know.

**Councillor Brown**: My name is Gillian Brown. I am the leader of Arun District Council in West Sussex. I am also a member of the District Councils’ Network.

**Councillor Derbyshire**: I am Sue Derbyshire. I am leader of Stockport Council and I am vice-chair of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. In that role, I hold the portfolio for planning, housing and low carbon.

**The Chairman**: That must be a massive job, and a very interesting one too, not that Councillor Brown is not interesting.

**Councillor Derbyshire**: It keeps me busy.

**The Chairman**: I have to watch my mouth. The first question is: what have the main impacts been on local authorities of recent government planning policy reforms? This is prior to yesterday—obviously things have appeared in the Statement. I have had a quick glance at them, but I really have not digested them. Have you seen them? That is only as an aside, but, if you have any observations, you can certainly make them here. How has the role of local authorities in the built environment changed in the light of recent government planning policy reforms?

**Councillor Brown**: Just having the NPPF was a huge change. Strategic planning coming to district councils through clusters and duty to co-operate made a huge difference, because we went from the regional system down to duty to co-operate. The rise of neighbourhood plans has made a huge difference in my own district. I think we have the largest number in the whole of the country; we have 14 made neighbourhood plans and three more in the pipeline. That is a very big difference. There is a huge tension between strategic planning and localism, particularly local residents’ perception of localism, in the neighbourhood plan preparation.
Then there is a big difference with the objectively assessed needs, setting our own housing targets, looking for that evidence, finding that the targets were much higher than the regional targets ever were. Many local authorities lost their five-year land supply when these new figures came out in March with these massive housing numbers. Local people find it very difficult to believe that we need that amount of housing, but they are the figures that we have to work to. In my own district, we had just finished our local plan, as we call it, and on the inspector’s desk when the new figures suddenly arrived within a couple of weeks. Now our plan has been suspended and we are looking at having to produce at least 200 houses more per year for the next 20 years. That has a massive impact on us.

The Chairman: What was the quantum? How many would you have produced per year for the next 20 years? You have to produce 200 more. Was it 400 you would have had to produce?

Councillor Brown: Unfortunately not. That is what the local population would have liked. We eventually agreed to 580, so we are now talking about 750 to 900. We have to look between those two figures. That is what we are doing now. The plan has been suspended for 12 to 18 months.

Q42 The Chairman: Can I ask about the process? Were you able to consult before these figures were imposed?

Councillor Brown: We consulted extensively on the 580. In fact, two separate consultants came to verify that we actually needed 580, because the local population were not happy with that, but we were not able to consult again. That will be part of the process that we are going through now.

The Chairman: Councillor Derbyshire, do you have the same problem?

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes, I would agree with that. A lot of the changes look fine, but on an objective needs assessment for housing, for instance, there is no right answer. It is about forecasting and projections. There can be quite a lot of difference in that. It can take a very long time and it is very expensive to get those projections. Current guidance says that we should start with the DCLG forecasts, but they are changed every two years, so you can be part of the way through the process and a very different set of figures comes up. It provides places where the plan can be challenged at various stages and creates tension between what local communities think and what should be done.
Currently, in Greater Manchester, we are consulting on a plan covering all 10 authorities. It is on the evidence base for the numbers, and the difference between the objective needs assessment, what the developers have put forward and the steady state is very, very significant. Calling it an “objective needs assessment” possibly gives a spurious idea that it is scientifically arrived at. It is forecasting; it is crystal ball gazing, in the end.

The Chairman: I see. Councillor Brown mentioned that she had to employ consultants to help you with this. Is this the same with you?

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes.

The Chairman: Who takes the burden of that expense?

Councillor Derbyshire: That is borne by the local authorities. In Greater Manchester, we are doing it collectively. I assume Councillor Brown has had to pay for that through her own council.

Councillor Brown: We spent more than £1 million—I should think around £1.2 million—in getting to the stage where we had our plan on the inspector’s desk, but immediately when those new figures came out we did not have a five-year land supply. We have now lost two appeals, with developers just coming in and putting in bids for houses, because we do not have that five-year land supply.

The Chairman: I should not and will not make an observation on that, but the fact remains that you go through all this work, you have it ready, and then suddenly it is scuppered, in effect. Is no allowance taken of what is done, or is there an easy way to build on your 580, or whatever it is, without too much more expense and without having to have another consultant?

Councillor Brown: Not really. We were grateful that our plan was not thrown out altogether and was only suspended.

Q43 Earl of Lytton: I am also Sussex-based, but not in your bailiwick. As you will probably know, I am a chartered surveyor. I am very interested in the numbers, because, not mentioning any names, I can think of one district in West Sussex in particular where, under the old regional spatial strategy, there was one figure, which was actually brokered between the counties and the districts. Then, when they got into the new phase of the local plan, they were going for housing numbers that were about a 35% to 38% discount on those figures. Of
course, the plan was then declared unsound because it did not meet the criteria, so they have to go back and have other things.

Councillor Derbyshire, you said that the figures were crystal-ball gazing. We seem to be on phase 3 of crystal-ball gazing, in fact. Could you explain the origin and sequence of these numbers and whether the numbers you are now talking about are the same as, more than or less than the ones that would have come out under a regional spatial strategy process?

**Councillor Derbyshire**: The numbers we started with under the regional spatial strategy, as you described, were probably brokered figures based on local authorities’ assumptions and what they thought they could deliver. We are going up from those. Clearly, there is a stated aim to create a lot more housing and we need to find ways to do that, but we have had several plans either suspended or rejected at the inspection stage within Greater Manchester, because the inspector has been unhappy that insufficient housing numbers have been presented.

When we went out with our first set of figures across the conurbation, which were based on an uplift from the regional spatial strategy to recognise our growth ambitions, that was severely challenged by developers and landowners. An organisation called Housing the Powerhouse has submitted its figures, which are significantly higher and based on us being successful on every single thing that we did, to the nth degree, and every new job creating the need for a new home. That is not what we believe will happen in Greater Manchester, but of course we have had to have consultants come in.

A lot of work has had to be done, in our area certainly, on the question of net immigration into the area, because if Greater Manchester’s plans for growth are successful, that will pull more people into the area than have lived there previously, and obviously we have a lot of travel to work across our boundaries anyway. There is an upward pressure on the figures, and because of the way the system is set up at the moment, if you are a landowner or a developer and you are in an area where land values are great, it gives you a lot of opportunity to challenge at the inspection stage. In my experience, the first thing inspectors look at is the housing numbers. If they are not happy that you are there with it, the plan does not usually get past day one.

**The Chairman**: At least you do not get involved in an awful lot of unnecessary expenditure.
Councillor Derbyshire: We have spent a lot of money to get to the inspection.

Earl of Lytton: Can I ask about Councillor Brown’s experience of these numbers?

Councillor Brown: It is very much the same. This is why we went back twice and spent money on other consultants: to really look at these figures and see if we could bring them down. There is this sort of policy-on, policy-off process, whereby you look at these figures without any constraints, and this is where you get to the final figure. I live in a very constrained district: I have the sea on one side and the national park on the other, and 50% is AONB, so we are very constrained. When you look at this policy-on and policy-off, they do not take any notice of the constraints that you have; that is the number of houses that you need. We need some, because we need jobs. We need housing, but I do not believe we need that amount. That is the problem.

Q44 Baroness Whitaker: I would like to go more widely than housing. As you know, this inquiry is about the whole of the built environment and how the elements interact. Councillor Brown mentioned tension between strategic planning and localism. I would like, if I may, to ask about one particular area of tension. I know that the only way some local authorities can get to their housing targets is to destroy worksites, particularly small firms. How do both of you view that tension? How do you balance the local economy’s need and the sense of local identity’s need for particular workplaces and housing?

Councillor Brown: In my particular area, the Government said, “If you do not develop commercial and business premises within a certain time, they can revert to residential”. In fact, we hung on to our commercial land from our last local plan. In fact, it has taken 12 years: we have a very large commercial area and it has just come to fruition now. The second Rolls-Royce motor car manufacturer has come to Bognor Regis, believe it or not. The first one was in Goodwood at Chichester. That will probably produce 2,000-plus jobs, plus a lot of apprenticeships.

It was the right thing to do, to hang on to that land, and I am very much opposed to changing commercial and business land to residential. It is one thing building houses, but people need jobs. We already have more than 16,000 people out commuting every day in my district, because we did not have the jobs. Although it took 12 years, which is a long time, we managed
it in the end and it is absolutely brilliant. That is a catalyst for a lot more companies that want to come into the area.

**Councillor Derbyshire**: I have a slightly different experience, coming from a northern area, where the employment land is not necessarily all the right land. We are looking very closely at what the employment needs are, which tend to be not quite such large units as historically the factories would have taken up. But there is a real need to preserve the employment land, and the pressure to release for housing can disrupt a strategic overview of what is needed, because once it has gone for housing it is lost and has all the impacts on the infrastructure of the roads if it creates commuting. We feel it is very important that they are looked at together and that we do not lose sight of the fact that we need employment sites. They may be of a slightly different nature than historically in some areas, but we still need them.

**Q45 Baroness Andrews**: I am going to go back to housing. There are quite different housing situations in Sussex and Manchester. Both of you have said, essentially, that you have had to lift the figures from where the regional spatial strategies were. It sounds as if you were quite comfortable with the regional spatial strategy, because those were negotiated numbers. This is my first question: there are no national housing targets any more, so where are you getting your instructions about numbers from?

Secondly, in West Sussex, as you say Councillor Brown, you are constrained geographically. To what extent can you build your expectations of housing numbers into, for example, the regeneration work that you are doing around the coast, which is clearly an important strategy, because it is quite depressed? In relation to Manchester, Councillor Derbyshire, given the housing market renewal programmes that were started and faltered after about 2010, to what extent are you reviving those sorts of plans in relation to your housing need? Is it a completely different strategy now?

**Councillor Brown**: The housing figures come from this wonderful thing called the SHMA, the strategic housing market assessment, which everybody has to have. I am not quite sure how they devise these figures, but this is what we all work from. They evaluate how many houses they believe we need and that is our starting point. I do not believe they are realistic figures, but when you get a whole sheet of figures, it is extremely difficult to dispute them.

**Baroness Andrews**: Do they come from CLG?
Councillor Derbyshire: No. We are required to employ people to do this assessment, to say, “Based on economics, trends and projections, this is what you will need”, and then we cannot really argue with it. Previously, the plans were based on local authorities setting what they thought was realistic within their plans and then meeting objections so that the plans were defensible and to some extent agreed with communities.

Now we have to pay for these assessments, which our communities may not agree with and we can be quite unhappy with, potentially, because, as Councillor Brown says, they do not necessarily take into account the ability of the area to deliver those plans. I have three river valleys running through my authority, for instance, which limits you considerably. It is meant to be objective. While the legislation sounds very good—it has to be based on sound evidence and be objective—it is not looking at local criteria and is creating a lot of legalistic points at which landowners, developers or sometimes objectors can challenge to the inspector or to the High Court. The planning system generates an enormous amount of judicial reviews for the courts.

Baroness Andrews: What about the other questions, which are about place, really? The regional spatial plans identified the growth points, so you had a steer about whether you were going to do an urban extension or whatever it was. Are those the same sort of criteria?

Councillor Brown: I think they are, yes. In my area, economic regeneration is our main objective, because we do not have the right jobs or skills. We have a very low skill base, so we are trying to upskill our workforce and have better jobs. So, yes, we are trying to do that. Rolls-Royce in particular has helped with that. But, through the local plan, we are ing much the same as we would have done through the regional strategy, so that is a whole-place plan.

Councillor Derbyshire: In terms of Greater Manchester, we are doing at least the overall plan on a Greater Manchester footprint, although there will still need to be local plans, because that is a coherent economic structure. We need to look at place. Planning is very important, but it is only an aspect of regeneration and of place-building. The Greater Manchester spatial strategy will have to fit in with our transport strategy. No planning document has ever built a house or a factory. You need your residential growth strategy; you need a whole raft of strategies that fit together. It is an element in a jigsaw or a patchwork rather than being the answer in itself, however you do it.
Q46 Baroness Young of Old Scone: In normal walks of life, where there is that degree of uncertainty about numbers, planners would be encouraged to think on a much longer timescale and then speed up or slow down depending on how things were panning out. Is there a case for having a much longer horizon for plans and housing targets, so that plans can emerge on a rolling basis rather than constantly being knocked back in the way that you have described?

Councillor Brown: That was our plan at the beginning. We decided when we had to have 580 houses that we would have 400 built in the first 10 years and then we would have 600—whatever the figures were—later on, but we were not allowed to do that, because you have to have this five-year land supply, and that meant we would not have one. There is this pressure all the time to build. Now our housing numbers have gone up. We had a land supply of 5.3 years and we were thrilled, because then you can hold back on planning on appeal. If you do not have a five-year land supply, it just goes on appeal and you are left with piecemeal developments all over the place instead of your local plan. This is what happens. We now have to get a five-year land supply, and we can only do that by building.

In my district alone, we have 3,000 planning permissions already granted, but not one of them has started. When you are trying to get a five-year land supply, this is the problem. We need developers to build out on the sites that they have.

The Chairman: It is similar in your area.

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes. We do not have quite the demand to build. For instance, the five-year supply is difficult to demonstrate, but the housebuilders are not building anything like that number, so we are being caught in both directions. Across Greater Manchester, I am not sure how many applications there are, but 47,000 units have planning permission but are not being developed because of viability issues. They affect the five-year land supply. It is a straitjacket that is not helping to create houses. It has been a little counterproductive.

Baroness Andrews: By “viability issues”, do you mean it is not profitable for developers to build them?

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes.

Baroness Andrews: That is the bottom line, essentially.
Councillor Derbyshire: Yes. There are different viabilities across Greater Manchester, but in an area like Greater Manchester land values are significantly lower than in London and the south-east. There is quite a lot of contamination, potentially, and infrastructure issues—the costs that you might load on—to deal with, and developers are not that keen on a lot of the sites that we would want to see developed, because the profit is not in it for them. For many years, until recently, the only real houses that were being built in Greater Manchester were being built by the social landlord sector. The volume housebuilders—I sometimes think that is an oxymoron—were not particularly interested. Parts of the conurbation they are now getting interested in, but it is very limited. Issues of viability and infrastructure costs, which I think is one of your questions, are big ones for us.

The Chairman: We need to crack on a bit. Baroness Rawlings, then Lord Inglewood.

Baroness Rawlings: You said that 47,000 units have planning permission. Do the permissions not elapse after a certain amount of years? They are not ongoing, so those would not be there for ever.

Councillor Derbyshire: They can come back for renewal at the end of each period.

Baroness Rawlings: Every three years?

Councillor Derbyshire: Every three years, yes, but I know of one that came back for 12 years until they forgot to come back at the end of the 15th year, as it were.

Baroness Rawlings: But they had lost the permissions then.

Councillor Derbyshire: They lost it because they did not put their paperwork in on time. It was never going to be developed. Even I could tell that it was never going to be viable.

Q47 Lord Inglewood: The responses you have given have taken you in the direction that I wanted to inquire about. Until the end of the discussion that we have been having, you talked a lot about allocations and plans and not all that much about demand. I do not know much about the south of England, but my understanding is that in places like the Arun district you could more or less build from the north end of the district to the sea if you just let it rip. What is the relationship between the real demand for housing and the allocations that you are being given?

Following on from that, to take up Councillor Derbyshire’s point, you illustrated something that people have said to me privately, which is that on occasions affordable local housing, for
example, means that on certain sites the combination of the price of the product and the margins is such that it is not worth doing. Is one of the answers as far as housing is concerned, therefore, contrary to what appears to have happened yesterday, to ease the burden of tax on housing rather than to increase it?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** I would not like to go into tax policy at this point.

**Lord Inglewood:** It is quite important, is it not?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** The viability is important. Houses are not just blocks that people live in; they are homes and they are parts of communities. We like to talk about community and place-building. The infrastructure implications of housebuilding are enormous—for example, the road networks and schools. Even if you take out the requirement for affordable housing, very often the costs of developing a site, if the developer cannot meet them either through CIL or Section 106 and you do not produce an enormous amount in a lot of the country, make it unviable.

**Lord Inglewood:** Can I just stop you there? Forget about precisely why. If you are the developer, if there is no margin, no profit, in it, you are not going to do it, yet the allocations you are given are such that this should be done. Is there not somehow a misfit?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** Potentially, yes, but I am not sure what the answer to that is, because the investment to make those houses viable within the communities in which they are built has to be made by somebody.

**Lord Inglewood:** Somebody has to pay for it.

**Councillor Derbyshire:** If the road network is already at 100%—and certainly there are parts of my borough and I am sure Councillor Brown’s borough that are at that—and if the schools are already well oversubscribed, even without taking into account other things such as play and social housing, there are costs to housing being produced over and above the cost of the bricks and mortar and the land. One thing we would like to capture in Greater Manchester is the uplift in land value of some of the land that is released for housing and is immediately worth a great deal more, which tends to reduce the developer’s margin, because they put that cost into their balance sheet.

**Lord Inglewood:** Yes, but it does not matter to the developer whether his disbursement is tax or infrastructure contribution, does it? The problem is—question mark—that in a number of
cases the costs of doing it exceed what the project will bear. Then there is a really big public question: if you need the housing and you have a land-use planning system, how do you deal with that?

_Councillor Derbyshire_: That is not in itself a planning policy issue, in that no plan can overcome that, which is why the residential growth and the other economic plans in areas are part of how we try to deal with it.

_Lord Inglewood_: I appreciate that. That must be right, but if stuff is not happening, the whole thing is a complete waste of time.

_Councillor Derbyshire_: Yes, and it is expensive to produce the plan. As I say, no plan in itself produced any houses.

_Lord Inglewood_: Councillor Brown, do you have any comments on that?

_Councillor Brown_: We have much the same problem. Yes, we need family housing. We have quite an elderly population too, but we need low-cost housing; we have a lot of young families. What happens on some of the building that takes place is that developers come back and say, “It is not viable any more”, so the bit you need, the affordable bit, is reduced. Instead of 30% affordable, you are lucky if you get 15%. On some, it is taken away altogether, or some of the infrastructure that was going to be part of that development is taken away. This is where the problems start.

_Lord Inglewood_: It is the conundrum that it may be affordable for the potential purchaser but it may not be affordable for the developer.

_Councillor Brown_: That is right. It is a huge problem.

Q48 _Lord Clement-Jones_: I would like to come on to some of the cross-boundary issues that we have touched on, and in particular issues such as the duty to co-operate, devolution, and so on and so forth. We have heard criticism of the duty to co-operate. I wondered where you both stood on whether that is working well in practice. Does it need change? It is fairly recent in terms of the 2011 Act. Coming on to devolution, virtually every major northern conurbation apart from Leeds now seems to have a combined authority or a city region—whatever you call it. Do you think that is going to be an effective way? Is it really effectively a substitute for the regional spatial planning framework that was there in the past in those particular areas? That of course begs the question about what you do where there is nothing.
**Councillor Brown**: Yes, absolutely. The duty to co-operate has been extremely difficult in some areas. You are bringing together local authorities that were in different places producing their plans, and with different political make-ups. The whole thing was quite new. In my particular area, we have done extremely well. I have to boast that we got an award for best practice. We have quite a large area in our duty to co-operate. It includes Brighton and Hove. There is one county council, we have the South Downs National Park, and there are seven districts and boroughs. We cross into East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: Why did you get the award? What was good about what you did?

**Councillor Brown**: We actually collaborated and worked together on a plan.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: I see—just by collaborating, in a sense, as you are meant to do.

**Councillor Brown**: Yes. That is right. We spoke to each other—members and officers. We had a good working relationship. We came together as a strategic planning board and we achieved something. We put forward our proposals and, yes, it worked very well. But we were taking into account a functional economic area rather than county boundaries. This is the way it works. You get a cluster of districts in an area that works, where people want to live somewhere, they shop somewhere else and they work somewhere else. That is the economic boundary, and it does not necessarily—I know the county councils do not like this—end at the county boundary, nor at the LEP boundary. That is why ours was successful: because we were an actual economic area.

**The Chairman**: And you spoke to each other.

**Councillor Brown**: And we spoke to each other, and we are still quite friendly. Even though there are quite large political differences between some of the authorities, we worked together for that.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: Going forward, that is going to be an effective framework.

**Councillor Brown**: Yes.

**Councillor Derbyshire**: Similarly in Greater Manchester, we are an economic area. We are working together as the 10, but the duty to co-operate involves the boundaries. It sounds blindingly obvious that you should co-operate. In practice, it has produced real difficulties as to what is meant by “duty to co-operate”. In some cases, you get a letter saying, “This is our plan. This is what we are planning to do”, and informing is seen as co-operation. A
neighbouring authority to my own nearly foundered on its first day of the inquiry, because we were asked, “Did they co-operate with you?” We said, “Yes, they did. We do not agree with some of their conclusions”, and the inspector started a long debate as to whether duty to co-operate was the same as duty to agree. We said that we were happy that they had co-operated and that we had the information and we were clear between the two authorities where we disagreed on analysis. It was suspended for other reasons, and it has come back. It is one of those phrases that, again, can be used as a way of trying to stop or derail plans, because even objectors or developers, if they can see a way in, will go, “We do not think there was sufficient co-operation between the authorities”.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: Is that superseded, though, by the combined-authority structure? Is that structure going to be more effective?

**Councillor Derbyshire**: Our combined authority involves the 10 working together, but we have neighbours all around our boundaries, so we will be co-operating on the GM strategic framework with all of them. That will be Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, Derbyshire and probably a couple of others I have forgotten.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: That takes you wider. My supplementary was going to be: in terms of major infrastructure, you need to have co-operation of a higher order, in a sense, between city regions and combined authorities as well.

**Councillor Derbyshire**: Potentially, but, as I say, there is no real definition of what it means to co-operate. In the end, with Cheshire East, they accepted that we were aware of their plans, we understood their plans and we had made comments, but then our reservations stood. It does not necessarily mean that the issues have been dealt with; it is more about awareness, which obviously should happen. It has caused difficulties in areas where it was not meant to do so.

**The Chairman**: Would it be an idea if, instead of calling it a duty co-operate, they called it “duty to show common sense”? It seems to be just crazy.

**Councillor Derbyshire**: I am not sure that that would overcome some of the difficulties that we have had, which require investment in further highway engineers to look at the traffic impacts of the proposals. The soundness requirement—again, it sounds blindingly obvious
that the plans should be sound—can require years of evidence and consultation. Did you say that it cost about £1 million to get yours ready?

_Councillor Brown:_ Yes.

_Councillor Derbyshire:_ It leaves it open to being questioned. In any planning where you are looking ahead, whether you are projecting five years or 20 years into the future, there is an element of uncertainty that people can challenge on.

_Councillor Brown:_ The duty to co-operate, I believe, needs some review. The District Councils’ Network has put forward some suggestions. You can get to the end of the local plan process with your thing on the inspector’s desk and he can then rule that out by saying that he does not believe you co-operated. This happened to Mid Sussex. One of our suggestions would be that we have a staged local plan. Ours has taken nearly five years. After two or three years, you have done the main bulk of the work you need to do. At that point, you could go before the inspector and he could tell you whether or not you were on the right road to co-operating and put you right there, rather than waiting until you get right to the end of the process and him then saying, “Sorry, I do not believe you have met that requirement”.

_The Chairman:_ You have done this; you have a template for co-operating. Is there any chance that we could have a copy of that?

_Councillor Brown:_ I can send that to you, yes.

_The Chairman:_ If you could. Somebody used a jigsaw analogy recently, and that is what it seems to be.

Q49 Baroness Andrews: I should declare an interest because I live in East Sussex. I know the ecology of West Sussex and East Sussex is rather different. If you have a strategic planning board that covers the entire plan, what you effectively have is a sub-regional plan, which is to put a new narrative on it, frankly. You also have this Coast to Capital initiative. I would just like to ask a bit about that. Councillor Derbyshire, one thing that has worried me about the creation of sub-regions that are city regions is how you ensure that those smaller towns, not least like Stockport, really get a fair share of airtime, resources and influence. They sometimes get lost, do they not, in the great magnetic pull of the city itself?

_Councillor Derbyshire:_ Greater Manchester’s geography suits us in that the city of Manchester is not enormously larger than the other nine authorities, and it literally sits in the middle; it is
our regional centre. Our geography works very well for us. We have had this long history of working together after the metropolitan county councils were abolished in the mid-1980s. We have a mayor model, and will have a mayor model, where the 10 leaders of the local authorities are the cabinet. I have responsibility; each of the 10 leaders has responsibility. That is a model—it is more of a joint committee, in all honesty, but “combined authority” and “mayor” are the chosen phases that we have to use—that works for us. I appreciate that it would work differently in other areas—in areas such as Birmingham, where the city council is so large compared to the others, or rural areas where you do not have that large conurbation. The thing is functional economic areas where there is a common advantage. We have a joint growth and reform strategy that we can all sign up to. That is probably the basis that you need for any kind of combined authority or devolution agreement.

The Chairman: I am being pressured from my left about time.

Councillor Brown: I will be very brief. Building on our good working relationship on our duty to co-operate, we are putting in a devolution bid from East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey. Next week, I think, we are going to see Government. We have put in our initial bid. We are quite excited about that.

Baroness Andrews: Where does the national park sit on that? The national park is a very complicated element in all this.

Councillor Brown: They will be part of it.

Baroness Andrews: They are part of it. They complain because they have 17, or whatever, local authorities represented, all fighting for their space.

Councillor Brown: I know they do, yes. I have heard them.

Baroness Andrews: It is a very complicated national park.

Councillor Brown: There are 26 local authorities involved from East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey, but we are very confident that we may be one of the first areas to get it.

The Chairman: Well done. Best of luck. That is terrific.

Q50 Baroness Rawlings: From all that you have explained very clearly, I wonder what powers and resources local authorities need to ensure planning departments can carry out their functions effectively. In the case of reforming planning fees, have you had time to evaluate a little the effect of the Autumn Statement?
Councillor Derbyshire: It is very clear that planning authorities have been running at a significant loss, given some of the expertise that you need. A lot of planning officers have been lost and a lot of authorities do not have some of the more specialist staff available to them, at least directly, because of costs. The ability to put fees up will probably help with that, but there is a question about whether it will allow us to fund to the level that we are at. Some of the changes—for instance, being able to change from office or shop to residential without planning permission—create work for planning authorities but without any fees. The potential in the Bill for the brownfield designation will also do that and take away some of the strategic view that we can have. There is a tension there. To run a proper planning authority, you need some specialist staff, and the planning fees do not cover that. I think developers would prefer to pay a decent amount and get a good service, in all honesty. A lot of us do pre-planning for free, which saves quite a lot of money. Sometimes you can put a lot of time into pre-planning discussions and a planning application does not come forward at all—possibly for very good reasons, such as that you have advised that it would not meet policy or it would be too difficult—but the cost is falling on the local authorities at a time when the ability of local authorities to meet it is limited. That, again, is one of the reasons for working together, as we are doing and as it sounds is happening in the Sussex area.

Councillor Brown: Through the District Councils’ Network, we have put forward a very robust case for at least two years to have full cost recovery on planning fees—to set our own local planning fees. The announcement yesterday is just another uplift. We want to be cost-neutral, but I do not think the Treasury trusts us to do that. It is very counterproductive not to be able to recruit and retain good planning officers. This is the problem. We are eight short at the moment. We have to pay consultants. It is a huge cost.

The Chairman: I was going to ask that question. Other witnesses we have had have said that there has been a reduction in the number of those who are training to be planners, that planners are moving on and that there is a real serious situation. In both your areas—particularly Councillor Brown, with your national hat on—is that valid? If it is valid, how important is it to get working on it now? Should it be a major recommendation of ours, or, indeed, is it just being bigged up?
Councillor Brown: I believe it is a major problem that we need to sort out. No, we do not have enough planners, but the ones we have are all going to the private sector. You cannot really blame them. In my own case, I am looking at having one set of planning officers between maybe two, if not three, authorities, but still keeping the local planning determination, because it is very important that you have the local input. But in order to get specialist and well-trained officers, we cannot afford now, with our loss of income, to have a separate planning department.

The Chairman: I take it that it is the same in your area.

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes, I would agree with that.

Q51 Lord Inglewood: I would just like to pursue this a bit further. A generation and a half ago, the planning service was a municipal phenomenon; it was all paid for by the rate-payers. We have now moved to a world where you say you cannot afford it, which I am sure that is right, but at the same time we are therefore privatising, in one sense, the planning system. If you end up getting full cost recovery, first, is it desirable in constitutional or institutional terms that this public service is all being paid for by individual people in the private sector? Forget about where you raise the money from for a moment; it is a comment in principle. Secondly, if those who are applying for planning permission are paying for the whole thing, what, if any, redress do they get when the planning system is incompetent?

Councillor Derbyshire: If they do not get their decision within a certain amount of time, they can go directly to the inspectorate.

Lord Inglewood: Yes, but it is not very satisfactory.

Councillor Derbyshire: That is not very satisfactory, no.

Lord Inglewood: I am just questioning you.

Councillor Derbyshire: We are running a planning department, as all the authorities are, but we are all looking at ways in which we can maximise. It is probably true that a lot of developers would tell you that things have got slower because there are fewer planners, or there are fewer specialists, when certain things need to be done, so it takes longer to do it. There has been an enormous growth in the number of people working in planning agencies for the private sector, who are then trying to persuade the planning department that something is
acceptable despite local policies, or whatever. In a way, it is becoming almost more confrontational.

It would be desirable if planning were seen as completely independent of the developers, but given the pressures on local authorities—a cut of, I think, 41% was announced yesterday, on top of what we have already had—planning is part of the reductions that we have faced. As I say, the calculation is that, without change, the bins and social care will take up all the available resources. That does not include planning. Somebody has to pay for it somewhere. Whether or not it is being paid for by the planning fees, applicants should have redress if they are not getting good service. That does not always mean getting the answer that they want, but getting the appropriate service is something that all applicants should expect.

Lord Inglewood: I am not saying that I subscribe to any question I put, or that I subscribe to this one, but you have made the case that we cannot afford proper planning any more.

Councillor Derbyshire: We have a system where planning is often seen as the answer to all sorts of problems. It is an aspect of the answer, but it has not been given the resources to do that, which is a very difficult position for planning authorities to be in.

Lord Inglewood: You have told us they are not there, as it were.

Councillor Derbyshire: A lot of local authorities are running like mad to try to keep the show on the road. It could be a lot better if it was better resourced. I would say that is true of many public services, of course, and it is a question of priorities, but if we want to see the growth in housing and employment, we need a properly funded planning system to do that, however that funding is produced.

The Chairman: What is the situation in other countries? Do they have this awful block on progress that is created by a lack of planners or planners who are not properly skilled? Is there any information about that?

Councillor Derbyshire: I would not really know. Strategic planning is very different in France, for instance, and in some countries there is a different culture towards local planning.

Q52 Baroness Andrews: I want to ask you about CIL and Section 106. CIL is designed to streamline the accumulation of benefit, as it were, but Section 106 lingers on, because there is a transitional arrangement. What is it doing to your ability either to deliver affordable homes or to deliver proper strategic planning for infrastructure? Is it helping or is it not?
**Councillor Derbyshire:** We do not have a lot of experience of CIL. We only have one authority in Greater Manchester that has gone for CIL. There are six that are not even looking at it, and three, including my own, that are looking at it. One of the things about CIL is that it looks simpler, but simpler does not always meet the complexity of life. You have a flat rate. That does not allow for negotiation on perhaps the more difficult sites, where, for strategic reasons, you might want to show flexibility. There is more flexibility in the 106 system, but there is a limit now, under the transitional arrangements, to the number of 106 agreements. As I say, the problem generally in a lot of the north-west, certainly, is viability. Regardless of your policies with regard to CIL or to 106, if a developer is coming forward and saying that a site is not viable, you start to compromise if you really want to see the development. Very often, affordable housing is almost the first one to come under pressure; if you need the highway improvements, they tend to take priority, because they have to be in, so affordable housing gets squeezed. Many authorities have aspirations for affordable housing out of development that are very often not met, or are met only in small proportions.

**Councillor Brown:** We are exactly the same. We have not really entered into the world of CIL yet; we are still in Section 106.

**Baroness Andrews:** Are you recommending that we revisit CIL? Could something be done to make it more effective or more accessible and useful to you?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** The evidence from my area is that it is inflexible, because you need to look site by site. You might want to bring a site forward for strategic reasons—either as employment or perhaps major housebuilding—but it is not going to be terrifically viable if you apply CIL. There are very limited exemptions from it. It does not have that degree of flexibility for an authority to say, “We would forgo this because of the other benefits”, or, “You particularly want to go here. Can you put some more in?” It does not have the flexibility. Equally, 106 agreements can take a long time to negotiate and can be quite piecemeal.

**Baroness Andrews:** Also, sometimes, you simply do not get what you expect out of them at the end.

**Councillor Derbyshire:** Yes.
**Councillor Brown:** The Government are looking into an investigation into CIL. I know the District Councils’ Network has been asked to input into that review. They announced it last week, if I remember.

**The Chairman:** Too many things are happening, but there you are.

**Q53 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Can we just stick with infrastructure? The planning system needs to look at a whole range of infrastructure issues. You have talked about transport, but they also include healthcare provision, schools, water, sewage, flood defence, energy—you name it. How effective is the system currently at being able to bring into play these issues? If it is not, what would you like to see changed in the system that would allow that to happen?

**Councillor Brown:** In my area, we have a huge deficit in infrastructure before we even start talking about building one more house. We have a big problem, and that affects the economy of the area and everything like that. We need a national approach to infrastructure that supports housing and economic growth. We need a little more flexibility within CIL and Section 106 to advance-funding the infrastructure maybe from your CIL, but we need to front-load it. One of the problems that we have with, say, infrastructure is the fact that we have this deficit but local communities are against any further development because they cannot see the benefits of it. I talked about my last big strategic allocation with the commercial land. It took 12 years to build 1,800 houses and we are waiting for the relief road to be opened next March. We need to have some up-front funding for infrastructure. That would make it a whole lot easier to sell the fact we need more housing and to actually move around the area.

**Councillor Derbyshire:** There are a lot of problems with infrastructure: strategic, financial, and sometimes the politics of local areas about what you do—communities have different views. Planning is part of it, but I do not think that planning can be the sole answer to creating the infrastructure, because the value is not there in a lot of the areas.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I have to declare an interest from the past: I was chief executive of the Environment Agency. There are whole swathes of the south-east where, quite frankly, there is simply not enough water around to sustain development aspirations for the future. Are you able to take a broad enough view across a range of authorities? Does the duty to
co-operate mean that you can take a strategic view about things like the housing and sewage need or the transport need, or is that a really difficult proposition?

Councillor Brown: Yes, you can. In my local area in Chichester, they had to stop building for that very reason. That is definitely part of what we look at in the duty to co-operate and the strategic planning.

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes, it is something that we take into account. Within GM, we have an open-source infrastructure map, which has a lot of the information on it that allows people to see what is there and what is not there, which hopefully will help with forward planning.

Earl of Lytton: In the old days, a lot of this infrastructure was provided centrally; one thinks particularly of trunk roads, which were provided through the old Department of Transport, as it was in those days, which presumably then provided funding to the county to deal with roads that were not Department of Transport roads. First, am I right in thinking this has just been shunted down wholesale somehow for you lot to sort out?

Secondly, when you are dealing with these infrastructure things—just picking up a point that Baroness Young made, and thinking about the privatised water companies and the people who provide telephone, IT, drainage facilities and stuff like that—how do you corral all these things? I have some experience in my professional work of this. On one particular site I can think of in the past, the sewerage authority said that it would not put anything in its forward plan unless it was in the local plan. The local plan said, “We are not putting it in our local plan unless we know there is capacity in the sewage treatment works”. Do you come across all this sort of stuff as well?

Councillor Brown: We have the same problem, because we are working on a 20-year plan and most of the other utilities seem to be working on a five-year plan. This is where the difficulty came in forward planning. On the road network, I am not quite sure where we are with it. We still have what is not the Highways Agency any more; it is called something else. Part of the devolution bid that we are making is that we take over transport—road and rail—because it is really important. It is a very big ask, and I am not quite sure whether we have not bitten off more than we can chew, but that is what we are trying to do with our bid. I think that is the only way forward.
Lord Inglewood: Might I first ask a question of Councillor Derbyshire? We are talking about infrastructure and costs and so on. I put it to you specifically because you come from Stockport. I live in Cumbria. The water you drink comes from where we are, and we do not get a penny piece from you all for it. Do you think that is right?

Councillor Derbyshire: That sounds right, although the Greater Manchester area has quite a lot of rainfall of its own and a number of reservoirs. Yes, there are all sorts of anomalies in the system. As I say, all our boundaries are very permeable in terms of travel, natural resources such as water, and the infrastructure that has been set up. That is why it is important to have these overviews, and the networks, the partnership and the communication between the organisations. It is quite difficult to legislate for that, because then it becomes a tick-box system, but you have to require that areas work together.

Q54 Lord Inglewood: If the volume of water you all drink was a volume of oil that had been extracted from Cumbria, we would be the richest part of the United Kingdom. My real concern is the inhibitions that we have talked about, particularly on housing and bringing land forward. The general question is: are there any particular new powers that might enable this to happen more smoothly? In particular, do you think that the CPO powers that you have are adequate to bring some of these things forward in the wider interests of the communities you are serving? If you have a site that has been sitting with consent and planning permission for housing for, say, 10 or 15 years and you need that, there seems to be a case for thinking that perhaps it should be progressed.

Councillor Derbyshire: It is difficult to use CPO powers locally for purely regeneration purposes directly.

Lord Inglewood: Is that because the legal inhibitions on the criteria are too tightly drawn?

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes. It is a very cumbersome process as well. You have to take a very deep breath before you get into it, so that is an inhibition. Part of the budget in the spring was a land commission for Greater Manchester. We are hoping to start meeting in January. We hope that will help us to bring together the public sector. That is part of the work that we are doing, because we believe there may well be public sector land that can be released. That is obviously a lot easier for us to get hold of than the rest. In many cases, though, it is the resources that are needed to develop the sites. A lot of our private sector sites, if we could
put something into the remediation, would probably come forward. It is a whole range of things, but I am not convinced that our CPO powers are as strong as they should be, given the demand and the aspirations that we have for housing and for employment land.

**Lord Inglewood:** Are you saying that what you need is a CIL in reverse? There are some sites where, as a matter of course, some public money—do not let us get into where that comes from, for a moment—should go into the site to take it through the threshold of viability.

**Councillor Derbyshire:** Yes. I am not sure about Councillor Brown’s area, but Greater Manchester has an industrial legacy, some of which is very beautiful but much of which leads to pollution and to site contamination that needs work. If they could be productively brought back in, they could make a massive difference to local communities, but they are not viable for the private sector as they stand.

**Baroness Andrews:** Where does that leave the brownfield provision that is in the new planning Bill? Are you saying that is not going to work for you?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** A lot of the brownfield within Greater Manchester would fall within that. The deemed permission, which takes away the strategic view of how sites might play into an area—I have some concern over that—would still have the viability issues. There is also the issue that what is brown to a developer or to a planner is sometimes very valued green-looking space to communities. They are not always lacking in controversy. Just making it easier to get permission would not in itself bring those sites forward, because of the viability issues that are tied up with them.

**Baroness Andrews:** Presumably in greater Sussex, or whatever it is going to be, there is a lot less brownfield.

**Councillor Brown:** Absolutely.

**Baroness Andrews:** So it is not going to help you with your land supply issues.

**Councillor Brown:** No, it will not help.

**Baroness Andrews:** Yet that is where the pressure is for housing.

**Councillor Brown:** Yes, it is. We would like to see the CPO process made much easier for councils to exercise when it is necessary.

**Baroness Andrews:** Would that be the one single thing that would make the biggest difference to you—if you freed up CPO a bit?
Councillor Brown: It would not make the biggest difference, but it would be a good thing to do where it is necessary.

The Chairman: Would you put it at the top of your list of priorities?

Councillor Brown: It would not be at the top of my list, but it would certainly be on it.

Lord Inglewood: What would be at the top of your list?

Councillor Brown: Getting developers to build out the sites they already have permission for, where they are viable. That would be right at the top of my list.

Lord Inglewood: Are you then saying you would like to have access to central government money, or money from somewhere, so you could say to these people, “We will put some cash on the table here. You do the rest”? Is that how you think it should happen?

Councillor Derbyshire: Yes, that would unplug a lot of sites.

Councillor Brown: Yes, it would.

Lord Inglewood: But it is less easy to do.

Q55 Baroness Parminter: I declare an interest as a former district councillor in West Sussex and a resident of Surrey. My question follows on from Baroness Young’s and is about how you build communities that have the necessary infrastructure along with the housing. I wanted to ask particularly about low-carbon futures and the failure—or not—of the present system to ensure that those communities in the future have the resilience to deal with the impacts of climate change and the statutory requirements that you have on low carbon.

Councillor Derbyshire: That is a good question. We have a carbon implementation plan. At the moment, we try to, but there is variability in the environmental standards that local authorities ask for, and then there is that viability discussion with developers. Some developers are planning for the long term, but if you build and sell you do not necessarily worry about the running costs. We are working with some of those who are building to hold in the private rented sector and who perhaps have a different attitude. Putting in some of the low-carbon things is still seen as a bit of a luxury, an add-on, an extra cost, rather than as something that would benefit. As I say, given sites’ difficulty with viability, that is difficult. On some of the sites where they really want to go, developers will offer you higher standards. It would be good if the building standards that people had to work to clearly required them to build for the future. We have the sustainable urban drainage system coming in. It would
be better if that was built into the system, but it is very difficult for an individual authority to do it and it usually loads costs on to the initial building process.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I was talking recently to people who were active at the time of the green building code and the standards that were in place then, and I was given assurances that the majority of the code standards were now in building regs. Is that not the case?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** The higher ones have not come in. It is a lot easier to put in a gas central heating system, and everybody understands gas central heating, but for long-term sustainability, particularly if it is a large unit, you might want to look at district heating, at heat source pumps, for which we have pilots going, or at routinely putting in solar where it is appropriate, and those things are not built in. A lot of the carbon that is produced is produced domestically and it is through the grid—either gas or electricity. Even if we go to electricity, whether or not it is a low-carbon usage depends on how the electricity is being produced. There is a presumption that every house has its own gas boiler and suchlike when things are being built.

On the whole, people are probably building houses with good insulation, because that is important if you are going to try to sell it, but they are not necessarily doing some of the things that would reduce carbon costs over a longer period of time, because it is not an immediately saleable thing. If you are a developer, you are going to sell and you are going to move on. As I say, we have seen landlords who plan to stay taking perhaps different views of biomass boilers and making the running costs of the building cheaper, which tends to make the carbon output lower as well. Low-carbon tends to be a win-win from the point of view of costs of running buildings.

**The Chairman:** Do you find the same thing, Councillor Brown?

**Councillor Brown:** Yes, I do. We were working towards every home being level 6 of the code by almost this time, but the financial viability just would not allow that to happen. We still have our own housing stock. We have made it as good as we can, and everybody has new windows and it is very high-quality stock. We were just starting on a programme of building our own council houses again, after 25 years, and they were going to be built to a very high specification. Unfortunately, the Government’s announcement that 1% has to come off all
the council house rents for the next four years has cost us £4 million and we have had to stop our building programme, which is very sad.

**Baroness Andrews:** You have completely stopped it.

**Councillor Brown:** We just cannot afford to do it. It is a very long story with the HRA, but there is a cap on that, so we are not allowed to borrow. We have got to the position where unless the Government take away the cap, we cannot borrow to build—and it is a very cheap rate to borrow at the moment.

**Baroness Andrews:** Just to be accurate, are you saying that because of the combination of the cap and the second factor, which I have forgotten—the regulation, or whatever—you will not be building the local authority housing that you thought you would be able to build? How many houses would that have been a year?

**Councillor Brown:** We knew that we could build 30 a year; we were hoping to build 50. When you build your own council stock, you can keep the rent low. You do not have to do it at the housing association rates, which are—I cannot remember exactly—around £150 a week. Our council housing we can set at a social rent of about £90 a week, which makes a big difference to people who can never afford to buy.

**Baroness Andrews:** If you gross that up across the whole of your region, you would be talking about hundreds of houses.

**Councillor Brown:** I cannot remember the amount of housing that will not be built across the whole country, but it is a lot of housing.

**The Chairman:** This is really quite incredible. This is silos gone mad. We are not going to be able to recommend anything if we have this rubbish going on.

**Councillor Derbyshire:** We have not done a calculation for houses, but we know that across Greater Manchester the loss to the social housing sector over four years is over £300 million. That would have represented housebuilding as well as improvements to existing stock. It is over £300 million.

**Baroness Andrews:** It is a difficult equation. Do you think that the £400 million that is being made available nationally, as of yesterday, to build new homes is going to be completely discounted by the impact of the loss of homes?

**Councillor Derbyshire:** Yes.
Councillor Derbyshire: More than.

Baroness Andrews: In fact, more homes will now be lost than will be built.

The Chairman: I cannot believe it. Something has to be done. The two of you have certainly made an impact. This is quite remarkable.

Councillor Derbyshire: It is a situation where there are aspirations but policies are not lining up on the ground.

The Chairman: I am being reminded of the time by my clerk. You have the last question, Baroness Whitaker, but please make it very quick.

Q56 Baroness Whitaker: We need a quick word about the people who are going to live in all these places. Councillor Brown mentioned local resistance to more housing and people being against infrastructure development. What is the best way to draw in local communities to these decisions, which affect the whole of the way they live their lives? How ought people to be better informed about all their built environments so that this can play a bigger part in the decisions? What are your ideas on this?

Councillor Brown: In my area, the residents are very much involved. As I was saying, we have 14 neighbourhood plans. That is the opportunity for the communities—

Baroness Whitaker: At what stage are they asked what they want their place to be like?

Councillor Brown: They compile their neighbourhood plan. They start from scratch as a group. It is not done by the council; it is done by local residents. They say what they want in it. They have to align with our local plan, though. This is where there is the tension. In some of the village areas, because we do not have any brownfield sites we have to allocate greenfield land for housing.

Baroness Whitaker: How do you ensure that they are fully aware of all the factors that you think they need to be aware of?

Councillor Brown: They are fully aware. At our local plan meetings, we can have upwards of 200 people turning up. We can only get 100 into the council chamber because of the fire regulations, so the rest are downstairs on a monitor. They are very much aware. We have had even more than that.

Baroness Whitaker: If they are on the monitor, can they ask questions?
Councillor Brown: They can ask questions at the beginning of the meeting, yes. We have a lot of two-way communication with our residents.

Baroness Whitaker: Is it their opinion that they have enough communication?

Councillor Brown: I think they do. They do not like the decision because, at the end of the day, this is where localism clashes with strategic planning. We are bound by certain things that we have to do, and they think, with localism, that they can say they do not want that number of houses. I wish that was so, but unfortunately it is not. That is where the tension is—that localism does not actually exist in reality.

Councillor Derbyshire: I would have to agree with that. We had one area that was looking at a local plan until they realised it could not be used to stop the planning application they were concerned about. I think all local authorities try really hard to communicate when they are in the planning process. It is something that you are required to do anyway, because if you get to inspection and there are a lot of objections because you have not followed the process, that will derail you. We have local planning committees.

Baroness Whitaker: There is consultation and there is involvement right at the beginning. These are not quite the same thing.

Councillor Derbyshire: No. As Councillor Brown said, there is perhaps a belief out there that planning is locally determined, whether it is an application or whether it is the planning, and very often there is a frustration from communities that then we are saying, “We cannot do that”, or, “We cannot change that, because it is centrally set”. That can cause residents to feel discouraged and maybe excluded. Although they have had their say, having their say does not always mean that they get their answer.

I personally feel that because we need to look at releasing land, there have to be conversations with communities about communities and growth. Most people recognise there needs to be more housing; they hope there is somewhere else it can be built, but if it is going to be built in their community, what is it that their community needs? What are the benefits? This comes back to the fact that it is very often difficult to put those benefits in place in advance, or to guarantee them. It is a bit like jam tomorrow but you have the building works today. There is a lot of frustration, I would say, in local communities with regard to planning.

Baroness Whitaker: We could develop this, but I do not think there is enough time.
The Chairman: I am afraid again we have run out of time. I just want to say that I am sure everybody agrees with me that this has been a brilliant session. You have been very co-operative and you have put up with some nonsense questions from me and some very erudite ones from the members of the Committee. If there is anything that you think we have really glaringly forgotten, could you just drop us a line and let us know? If you have any other thoughts in the middle of the night or, indeed, even the middle of the day, we would be very grateful to have them. We just want to make sure that our report works well and makes a decent impact. You will be getting the transcript anyway, and eventually a copy of the report. Thank you very much.

26 November 2015
Mr Nigel Spencer Atkins – Written Evidence (BEN0223)

Dual National British / French (naturalised 1982)

Czech Resident

1982 – 1992 Chief Executive of Wimpey France
Subsidiary of George Wimpey now Taylor Wimpey
3,000 homes built in the Paris Region
1992 Founder and Chief Executive of 2 development companies
Federal SA in the Paris Region
Atkins & Langford in Prague
4,000 homes built
2006 – 2013 Associate Professor Sorbonne University Paris and Abu Dhabi
Master in Urban and Regional Planning
Lecturer at the Paris Business School (ESSEC) in Globalisation Comparatives Studies of World Metropolises 2013
Deputy Mayor of Chatou in the Paris Region (population 30,000)
Delegation Urban Planning
Member of the Western Paris Agglomeration Council (population 334,000)
Member of the Urban Planning Commission
General Secretary of the Association of Mayors of the Paris Region – Economic Council
Member of the European Urban Regeneration Council of the ULI (Urban Land Institute)

Although I have spent nearly forty years of my career in France I have kept close ties with the UK building industry through my connections with Taylor Wimpey and the Urban Land Institute.

I am a liveryman of the Workshipful Company of Paviors.

I have as well an extensive experience of Central Europe and the Emirates.
I feel however that France has many relevant comparisons with the United Kingdom in its population size, mature economy, and a strong sense of home ownership. Both economies are driven by vibrant Metropolises.

I will conclude with a comparison between the British and French built environment concentrating on planning aspects

1. In order to explain the French building environment it is necessary to briefly describe the French political and local government systems. France is a centralised country. Under the Bourbon dynasty notably Louis XIV (1638-1715) all executive power was concentrated in the monarchy. The French Revolution confirmed Paris’s domination. Modern France is the achievement of Napoleon. Laws were codified. The Central Bank created and the military universities (Les Grandes Ecoles) were founded which exist to this day – Ecole Polytechnique, Central Supelec, Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées.

After 1945 the business schools HEC and ESSEC were founded and moreover the Ecole Nationale d’Administration (ENA). General De Gaulle created ENA to form top level civil servants and politicians. 80 students are enrolled every year. Each year is named after a French writer or philosopher. In the year “Voltaire”, was François Hollande, Segolène Royale (the current Minister of Environment), Michel Sapin (the actual Minister of the Economy), Dominique de Villepin (Jacques Chirac’s last Prime Minister), Henri de Castres (Chief Executive of Axa France’s main insurance company).

The meritocratic education system leads to an elitist ruling class.

2. France’s territorial administration is organised in several layers the Regions, the Departments, Agglomeration of Communes and the Communes.

There are 18 regions, the largest being the Paris Region (Ile de France) with a population of twelve million inhabitants. The Regions are responsible for transport, hospitals, secondary schools and strategic urban planning.

There are 92 Departments (equivalent to a British county) with responsibilities for social welfare roads and primary schools. There are 36,000 communes in France, each with their own Mayor/Council. Paris is considered a commune!

In all there are 616,000 elected officials in France!

Until 1983 all planning and building consents were administrated by the State.

The then President, François Mitterrand, passed a major devolution law giving communes the authority to grant building permits and the right to modify their structure plans.
The underlying philosophy in the French built environment is coherence and logic... a Cartesian logic as developed by Descartes.

A key person in the French territorial system is the Prefet. He or she is appointed by the Government through a state decree. They report to the Minister of the Interior (Home Office) in each Region and Department. Their role is to represent central government and to ensure all laws are applied by the communes. The Prefet’s Office (La Prefecture) has to control all council decisions by the communes and to verify that building permits are in conformity with the law. Prefets are generally past graduates of the elitist university ENA.

One important change is that in 1999 the Central Government has encouraged the grouping of communes into agglomerations (EPCI – Etablissement Public de Cooperation Intercommunale) to ensure a better co-ordination of transport, economic policy, and housing. Initially this was voluntary.

As and from 1st January 2016 my town Chatou will be part of a new agglomeration with 20 communes covering a population of 334,000.

Planning and building permits remain the prerogative of the communes.

As and from 1st January 2016 Paris will be creating a new Metropolise structure to cover 131 communes with 7 million inhabitants. A transition period of two years has been granted to establish its full powers.

3. The French planning process is as follows:

Each of the eighteen Regions elaborates a strategic master plan SDR (Schema Directeur de la Region) which covers transportation, housing directives, open spaces, and economic development. This plan is generally reviewed every twenty years. It is the backbone for all urban planning documents. It was first implemented in 1965 by General de Gaulle to give an impetus to the Paris Region. The first plan created five new towns, the regional express metro (RER) and launched Europe’s largest business district La Defense. In coherence with the Schema Regional, the Agglomeration of Communes (EPCI) develops a more detailed structure plan called the SCOT (Schema de Coherence Territoriale) which at a local level sets objectives of transportation, economic development and housing. This plan is usually reviewed every ten years. It was first implemented in 2000 as it was felt that there was a need for an intermediary planning document between the Region and the communes. The communes in coherence with the SDR and the SCOT develop their own neighbourhood plan PLU (Plan Local d’Urbanisme). This plan gives detailed planning directives to be applied to all properties in a commune and is subject to a public inquiry. The PLU is reviewed generally every ten years but can be modified to suit specific needs. We have a national planning law since 2000 (SRU – La Loi Solidarité et Renouvellement Urbain) which obliges all communes
to have a minimum of 25% of their housing stock classified as social. If the commune does not meet its objectives it has to pay a heavy fine to central government. If a commune refuses to comply its planning rights are withdrawn by the State. My town Chatou has 14% social housing, so in my town’s neighbourhood plan PLU I am identifying zones which can be for mixed use. The Paris Regional Plan (SDRIF) of 2013 has laid down that 70,000 homes are to be built every year. A town such as mine in its District Plan (SCOT) has to justify in a housing programme (PLH/Plan Local Habitat) that its quota of 70,000 homes can be achieved.

Paris Regional Plan (SDRIF) 2013 – Grand Paris Project:

In 2007 when the Paris Regional Council voted the new Regional Plan SDRIF the Regional Prefet on the orders of the President Nicolas Sarkozy refused to sign it. Nicolas Sarkozy felt that the plan had no vision towards making Paris a world metropolis. He decided on major rethinking of the Region calling upon ten leading architect urbanists including Richard Rogers Partners. After two years of debate, a new transport network was agreed. The objective was to link living areas with workplaces, as well interconnections between airports and the TGV hubs. For instance, Saclay one of Europe’s main research hubs is only 10 kilometres from Orly airport. By public transport one has to go to the centre of Paris and then take a non-express train out to Saclay. This can take up to one and a half hours.

4. When the French Government decides that a project is in the national interest, there is very little local public debate. The best example is the TGV fast rail network. The Grand Paris project was created by an act of Parliament in 2010. It was integrated into a new Regional Plan in 2013. It comprises a new automated system and the creation of 72 metro stations. The estimated cost is 32 billion euros which is financed from local rates and company taxes and land enhancement values. All land in a radius of 200 metres will be compulsory purchased by the State and then sold at a profit to developers and social housing associations. A high density spatial plan for each station is being prepared by private planners. A State company, Societe du Grand Paris, has been set up to ensure delivery of the project. Guidelines have been set down for each station dependent upon its location and density. The English web site: [www.societedugrandparis.fr/english](http://www.societedugrandparis.fr/english) makes for interesting reading. It describes the future built environment. The President of the Societe du Grand Paris is of course a Prefet!

5. Urban Renewal: France and in particular Paris has an important stock of high rise social housing. These flats were built in 1960’s and 1970’s to accommodate an influx of over one million people from France’s past colonies from Algeria, Marocco and Tunisia. There was a heavy influence from the Swiss architect urbanist Le Corbusier. The sites chosen were often on the outskirts of towns with poor transport facilities. In autumn of 2005 riots took place
essentially in the northern Parisian suburbs notably in the towns of Clichy sous Bois and Montfermeil. Under the impulsion of an energetic Housing and Environment Minister Jean-Louis Borloo, a state agency ANRU (Agence Nationale pour la Renovation Urbaine) was established in 2003 to coordinate the renovation of areas suffering from poverty and degeneration. The onus was on the communes concerned to propose to the Prefet an urban project with demolition of the high rise buildings, a proposal of mixity of population and new retail and public realm. The finance coming from a levy on employers Action Logement (which I explain later) and social housing associations.

Private developers were encouraged to participate in the projects. In France new housing is subject to a 20% VAT and in the ANRU areas it was reduced to 5.5%. In ten years 490 projects have been completed. 4 million people have been rehoused. 45 billion euros of construction work has been carried out. I have personally been involved in several ANRU projects and it is true that towns such as Clichy sous Bois, and Montermeil where the 2005 riots started, have been radically transformed. Social problems, unemployment and illiteracy remain.

The phase 2 ANRU is about to start concentrating on the social aspects. The site www.anru.fr is instructive…. Although written in French there is an international section and one can read in English that the ANRU framework has attracted considerable international interest. Joint pilot studies have been started in Johannesburg.

Action Logement: for over sixty years French employers have paid a payroll tax to finance housing especially social housing. Originally it was a 1% levy on gross salaries. This was reduced to 0.45% in 1992. In 2014, 1.8 billion euros were collected. Action Logement also enables staff of companies contributing to receive top up mortgages at privileged rates.

6. Land Policy: any mature economy with a need to create housing (France nationally 500,000 homes per year and 70,000 in the Paris Region) is confronted with the essential issue of land availability and then the planning issues. Under French law all communes on the declared sale of any land and built property have the prior right to purchase. This is a delicate matter as communes do not have the financial resources and planning changes can take up to 2 to 3 years. The Paris Region in 2008 created a land agency (EFIF-Etablissement Foncier Ile de France) with powers to purchase land on the account of communes. This is now applied to 13 regions nationally. Finance is raised through a regional tax and long term loans. The communes have to sign a convention with the Land Agency on designated land with an obligation to purchase the land within five years from the Agency or substitute with a private developer or housing association. Twenty five per cent of the housing must be social. Although priority is given to housing land can be developed for retail or commercial use if there is a proven need for the commune. In my town I have signed a Convention with the Land Agency to build 170 homes. There are 15 landowners and they can only sell to the Land Agency on a valuation from the State assessor. This helps to avoid speculation. As a
developer I am purchasing land from the Land Agency of the Department of Oise to build 130 social houses. The Paris Land Agency in seven years has signed 320 conventions with different communes and now has a land bank of 300 hectares (741 acres) for a total investment of 680 million euros. In 2016 land will be released to build 10,000 homes in the Paris Region with an annual objective of 12,000 homes annually. Priority will be given to the Grand Paris project.

7. Private Housing for Rent / Fiscal Advantages: there is a world phenomenon of urbanisation of main metropolises. In 2015 50% of the world’s population lives in urban areas. This will increase to 60% by 2030. This puts pressure on Governments to satisfy housing needs. France is no exception. This urbanisation encourages speculation and forces young couples to abandon the idea of owning property and to rent in the private sector. Despite a sophisticated social housing system France still needs to build 500,000 homes every year. Private home ownership is dependent upon mortgage rates and speculation. Since 1986 France has introduced a series of laws encouraging private investment in housing for rent. It is used for stimulating the market when house sales slow down. Over the past thirty years the private rental market accounts for 40% of all homes built in France. In recent years in the Paris Region on an annual average of 20,000 homes in the private sector 50% are built for rent. During the financial crisis of the autumn 2008 the French housing market grounded to a halt. In February 2009 Parliament passed a law which allowed the deduction on income tax at a favourable ceiling for nine years on new housing for private rent. Overnight the market took off. It is true to say that as house prices in France include 20% VAT a depressed market means less revenue for the State so it is justifiable to plead for tax incentives for new build to rekindle sales. There are restrictions. The homes must be let for a minimum of nine years and if the properties are empty for longer than six months the tax concessions will be cancelled. Many developers offer a rental guarantee service. Fine on paper but there have been several cases of developers filing for bankruptcy and leaving the owners stranded. France did not suffer from a depressed housing market 2006-2011 as did the UK and Ireland.

8. Planning Education in France: France has in modern times a rich architectural and planning heritage. It was the Baron Haussmann (yet another Prefet) under Louis Napoleon who transformed Paris (1853-1870) in creating broad avenues, elegant buildings with coherent designs and open spaces such as the Bois de Boulogne. In the 1930’s under the impulsion of Le Corbusier Modernism was born with the «Functional City» leading to the regrettable high rise policy after the war as previously discussed. Since the 1960’s urban planning in most French universities is under the geography faculty and separated from architecture. This was the case at Paris Sorbonne where I was Associate Professor. Priority is given to understanding the layouts of cities, transportation, and planning laws. Extensive field trips are organised to other continental countries and the Erasmus exchanges encouraged.
architectural schools include spatial planning in their syllabus but few State planners are qualified architects. In my town of Chatou I have four planners very well qualified who have the task of approving building permits and assisting me with revising the towns neighbourhood plan (PLU). Building design assessment is left essentially to the Council. Qualification wise France is well prepared to handle both regional and town planning. The development of the Grand Paris has a pool of trained planners.

CONCLUSIONS:

France and Britain have similar populations. France’s is estimated at 66 million and Britain’s at 64.5 million. One could assume that their global housing needs are similar.

The UK Housing and Planning Minister in his oral evidence on 17th December 2015 refers to 240,000 homes completing planning in 2014. According to an editorial in the Times dated January 5th 2016 only 140,000 homes were built in 2014. Comparable figures in France are 360,000 in planning and a similar number built. In 2007 France attained a peak of 500,000 homes which remains the annual objective.

To compare the French and the British built environment is a complex matter. How can one explain that France is capable of building consistently more homes?

The difference in my opinion comes essentially from the market driven private housing in the UK and the planned economy in France. The French are able through regional spatial plans with powers over transports, schools and housing to coordinate public expenditure and to allow the communes to administrate local neighbourhood plans. One has the impression listening to the evidence of Sue Derbyshire, leader of Stockport Metropolitan Borough and member of the Greater Manchester Authority, that local community coordination in the UK is ad hoc. In France if you go from Calais to Strasbourg to Nice the framework is the same. This allows planners to have more mobile careers with more job satisfaction. There is no outsourcing of planning in France. I am currently preparing a new neighbourhood plan for my town based on national directives but I still have considerable freedom and I encourage public participation. In France we have excellent relations between private and public housing sectors. We have a well-oiled social housing sector essentially financed by deposits from the National Savings Bank. A system which goes back over 100 years. We build 80,000 social units a year. The private sector can build for social housing associations on stage payments.
A fundamental difference listening to the evidence from the two Builders Federations is that in France new homes are built off plan. The conveyance system and the mortgage finance is so structured to facilitate stage payments. In France bank finance for construction is only released when 40% to 50% of the project is presold off plan. The developer receives payments at stages of land purchase, foundations, wind and watertight, and completion. In the UK the homes are only conveyed upon completion. This reduces substantially the equity involved in France.

I will give a recent example of one of my projects.

I sold in 2015, 100 flats to a social housing association in the town of Bondy, one of the deprived northern suburbs of the Paris Region. The time schedule was as follows:

- February 2014: Signing of a land option with three owners - purchase subject to full planning
- September 2014: Filing for detailed planning with the town of Bondy on a neighbourhood plan
  PLU
- May 2015: Obtention of full planning despite an objection from the Historical Department
- 14th June 2015 morning: Purchase of the land
- 14th June 2015 afternoon: Sale of project at the land stage to the social housing association
  OSICA with a 25% advanced payment.
- 15th June 2015: Construction starts.

My company is contracted to build with a bank completion bond.

No equity was required except for initial architectural and engineering fees.

On the average in France we only need 7% to 10% equity.

When Brandan Lewis confirms that a UK 500 unit’s site would take ten years to build. Seen through French eyes this is a not efficient. I have recently completed two projects of 400 units each in less than three years. I act as coordinating developer encouraging a mix of
products with social housing, houses for private rent, and two projects for sale catering for different market sectors.

In France developers pay no fees for planning to local authorities. For me this is logical. The town conceives the plan with public participation and through in-house planners controls all the planning process. To pay £24,000 for planning is non-productive. It makes developers hesitant and slows the process.

As well I believe that the 106 sections for the developer’s contributions appears to be too complex with little coherence. In France we have a developer’s tax on planning fixed annually by the Department based on construction values to cover infrastructure and primary schools. If there is a specific need this is discussed and contracted before the planning process starts but due one year after planning is granted.

Brandan Lewis is adamant that regional planning is out. It is needed. But the territorial administration in the UK is not designed for it. I was impressed by the initial stages of Thames Gateway but it fell apart due to differing local authorities’ objectives. It is now centred on Ebbsfleet which is tied into the high-speed train network.

What has happened to the spatial planning between there and Lea Valley?

Again I was impressed by the initial impact of the Olympic Games Delivery Authority but there seems no legacy plan. This past summer I visited the Stratford area. The private rented flats which were originally the athlete’s village have no community feel... There is not one ground floor retail space let. The Westfield shopping centre which I have followed since the outset is clearly a commercial success but from a spatial planning point of view it is a walled city, not at all opening out to the community.

Density is an important ingredient and Brandan Lewis recognises that the densities around the Crossrail stations are too low. Density is a means of improving building capacities and making land prices more affordable.

I recommend that the British Government, if it has not already, takes a look at the Grand Paris project. We can lend them one or more of our Prefets!

In the mid 1980’s I was seconded by George Wimpey to represent the Channel Tunnel Consortium in France during the bidding phase.

I worked directly under the project director now Baron Tony Berkely and the Chairman Sir Nicholas Henderson.

One day Sir Nicholas Henderson said to me Nigel how can you work with the French. I replied my wife is French.
He said I mean that the French start with the conception and stumble on the details and the British start with the details and stumble on the conception!
Post Committee Hearing Evidence

At the oral hearing on September 10, 2015 I was asked to respond on three issues: data about vacant public and brownfield land; why the ecotowns initiative failed and any extra thought on key issues around housing policy which the Committee might wish to consider. There is not a great deal I have to add on the first two of these, and by and large the third was covered in the Committee hearing. However a brief response is given below.

Data on publicly owned vacant land and vacant brownfield land

There are various sources of data for land. The vagaries of the Gov.UK website does not always make it easy to uncover them. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) own a considerable amount of land on behalf of the Government, including sites inherited from the Regional Development Agencies. I tried briefly without success to find up-to-date information on their website.

In the private sector, Savills have spent some time of this. I have attached a recent note of theirs to the email though it is not on public land as such, but drawn from the DLCG database. They published an article in autumn 2014 on the potential of public land for housing which I also attach. The Mayor is reported to be creating a public land database for London.

DCLG are improving their land data – there is a database there of MOD land for example. I would recommend that the Committee asks the Department for vacant public land data.

The eco-towns initiative

Here I would not claim any special knowledge. Certainly some of the sites attracted local opposition which is a cautionary tale for those of us who propose there should be new towns. In one or two case, the sites were suggested by private landowners and were places which had failed to be included in regional plans. These were likely to be opposed by the planning authorities. In other cases, the realisation that the housing provision might have to be additional to existing plans deterred local authorities from pushing sites forward.

The project was not a complete failure as at Bicester at least a development is taking place using those principles. One problem perhaps was that the proposal had two aims – building to higher environmental standards and pushing up supply. There may have been a thought that the environmental standards would lessen opposition to the sites – but of course building better does not make a site work necessarily in terms of wider spatial planning considerations.

Any additional key points

At the end of the hearing I argued for three important improvements:
1) Better public consultation on plans, bringing out why more residential development would be positive as well as honesty about people for whom it would be detrimental (loss of views, etc). These are hard choices for local authorities to make.

2) An independent assessment of the environmental costs of better housing provision (ie more space per person) – clearly not easy to relate this to sites, but there are general questions about energy, water, waste and bio-diversity which could be discussed. This would enable a clearer view of costs and benefits of better housing to answer the question: ‘why do we limit development?’ and also perhaps provoke work on how to reduce these costs.

3) An overall government and Bank of England policy view about housing. At present the Government wishes to promote home-ownership, but the Bank wishes to ensure mortgages are sustainable for households. These are both important goals – but may lead to inconsistency.

Other points which I would like to stress are:

4) A review of the whole system of housing taxation would be useful, with the aim of creating less of an incentive for households to consider housing as an investment. Reforms to council tax and to capital gains tax are the most plausible candidates.

5) A recent report (also attached) recommends that large-scale housing is considered as a candidate for becoming part of the nationally significant infrastructure. This would be quite contentious, as it would run counter to localism. The eco-towns experience suggested it is not always easy to marry up local and national interests. Taking this as a lesson and starting from a wider spatial view than the local, it would be good to start a discussion with local communities about the benefits they might receive if large-scale housing were accepted. This recognition of costs and benefits between local and national would obviously be a negotiation.

6) This leads on to the question of compensation where costs of a new development are very direct. This is anathema to the planning profession – but perhaps this should not be the defining answer.

7) Finally, I attach a paper recently given at a Planning Law conference. It suggests that just using the household projections is not enough – as well as commenting in a reasonably careful way on the present state of planning for housing in Hertfordshire.

09 October 2015
Members present

Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

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Examination of Witnesses

Dame Kate Barker, economist, author of the Barker Review of UK Housing Supply, former member of the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, and Toby Lloyd, Policy Director, Shelter

Q57 The Chairman: Good morning everybody, and welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you, Dame Kate and Mr Lloyd, a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please, starting with Dame Kate?

Dame Kate Barker: Thank you. I am Dame Kate Barker. I have a history of advisory work for the Government on housing policy, but it is now a very long time ago; the report was published in 2004. To declare my interests as well, I am presently a non-executive director of Taylor Wimpey and a non-executive director of the Yorkshire Building Society, so I retain a very active interest in housing policy from various sources. I want to be clear that I am not here representing either organisation; I am simply representing my own views.

The Chairman: Your own expertise. Thank you. Mr Lloyd.
Toby Lloyd: I am Toby Lloyd. I am head of policy at the housing and homelessness charity Shelter. I have been a housing policy professional for the last 12 years, working for local government, national government, private consulting and the charity sector, in a range of different roles. I am here very much representing the views of Shelter, which as you know is the leading charity in the housing space and we have done an awful lot of work on all aspects of the housing problem in this country.

Q58 The Chairman: Thank you. I am sure your evidence will be most welcome. There is a degree of political consensus on the need for more housing, but in practice housing completions rarely meet the targets that have been set. In your view, what are the reasons for this, Dame Kate?

Dame Kate Barker: It is interesting to say that there is political consensus. I spent a bit of time ahead of the last election reading all the different manifestos to see what they said about housing supply in particular. It is certainly true that both Labour and the Liberal Democrats had targets for housebuilding in England—well, I assume it was England. In the case of Labour it was 200,000 a year, and in the case of the Lib Dems a rather ambitious 300,000 a year. The Conservatives did not in fact produce a supply target, although they have been very clear that they would like to see supply increase; they did of course have targets for things like starter homes, over the course of the Parliament.

The difficulty is that the national targets very obviously do not necessarily translate into local targets, and of course these come from local plans. I am sure we will get on to this later—the change under the coalition towards locally driven targets. When you think about the costs and benefits of housing supply, it is usual to argue, and I would argue, that the benefits are seen in some sense more at national level. If you think that building more houses helps house prices generally or the housing benefit bill, you get those benefits coming through at national level, whereas it is the people who live locally who will bear the costs of having houses built near them. Either they are concerned that it will reduce their own house prices because it is right in their view, or, if it is not right in their view, they think the roads or the schools will become more crowded or they will never get an appointment at the doctor’s surgery, all of which is true to some extent. It will often bring pressure on infrastructure, and even if your
infrastructure has the space to cope with it, it is nice to live with an ample infrastructure; people do not necessarily want other people moving in. Often people will say, “We really would be prepared to see homes, but only for local people”, which is a little bizarre, since most of us are aware that many people nowadays do not live anywhere near where they were brought up. I certainly do not, and I am sure many people here do not. At the local level, the argument has often proved very difficult to make.

I recently did a very rough piece of work looking across the councils in Hertfordshire, which I just decided to take as an example; it is a county relatively near to where I live. I was trying to find out where they were on their local plans and where they seemed to be going. When you added them all up, they only added up to 75% of the most recent household projections for that area. Housing projections can be quite variable, but actually household projections are probably not enough. Because of rising incomes, you probably need to build even more than the household projections. That just shows that there is still this gap between what is happening nationally and what is happening locally.

**The Chairman**: How would you suggest it should be addressed?

**Dame Kate Barker**: I thought we might get on to that when we talk about the NPPF. How would I address it? As a whole, I like the National Planning Policy Framework—this is one of your other questions—but one of the problems with the coalition’s and now the new Government’s approach to policy is the fact that they have made it very locally based. Councils of course have something called the duty to co-operate, and it is clear, again from the experience of reading through some of the planning documents for Hertfordshire, that inspectors look to see if they have made an attempt to co-operate with other local authorities, but of course they are all bringing their plans along at a different pace and they have them inspected by different people. Actually getting something coherent across a wider area is quite difficult, and a local authority that does not really want to play the game or whose people do not really want to play the game—because of course councillors do respond to what their constituents think—or a council that does not want to persuade its people to take their share of the responsibility will find it easy not to co-operate with the wider picture.

One of the things I would like to see is some focus back on a sub-regional housing market level, looking across the area, not just because I think it would help supply but because it
would help with the infrastructure and even the environmental questions. A local authority is not necessarily the right spatial level at which to think about questions such as biodiversity or water supply; they will very often run a little wider. This is pretty difficult, because we have local authorities being very much encouraged by central government to produce their plans quickly now. If you are going to specify something slightly different and sub-regional, it would be quite awkward to add it on but it would not be impossible to add it on as an adjunct and, specifically when inspectors look at soundness, to try to give more force to that, so that you could be sure that you were getting something across a housing market area that made more sense. It does go on to some extent. I am not suggesting that it does not go on at all, but not sufficiently.

**The Chairman:** I will just ask the final piece of this. Do you really think that at a sub-regional level you would get enough support for new housing that would meet up with the overall national plan for housing? The BANANA factor, as we have been told, is to not build anything anywhere at any time.

**Dame Kate Barker:** Getting local support remains terribly difficult. I am saying that I understand why it was felt that the downward pressure, which the Labour Party had introduced with the regional structures, should be stripped away. What we have now is still pressure from the centre, but it is coming through the planning system and the Planning Inspectorate in a way that in some sense I find less democratic and less efficient, because of the divergence of views between different inspectors. It’s not clear that my proposal would solve the problem, but it would help to get housing built in the right place, because local by local does not do it.

Alongside that, you might have to consider financial questions. Everybody says that the new homes bonus has not been effective, but at the margin it has made councils more prepared to think about housing. Personally, I would be prepared to go further. Planners do not like you saying that you should compensate people for losing their views, because they say, “You do not buy the view, you just buy the house and you understand that the view may or may not stay”. I would be sympathetic about saying to people, “You have lost this view. Maybe you should have some compensation”.

Page 74 of 1964
The Chairman: Surely that comes in the pricing mechanism. If you put up an estate of 800 houses or something and some had really lovely views, the same houses in a different part of the estate would sell for less anyway, I would have thought.

Dame Kate Barker: The point is that if you are on the edge of that estate and have the lovely view, and then another estate is built just beyond you and your lovely view goes, that does have an effect on your price.

Q59 The Chairman: The evidence we have had so far is that we have to consult locally, because too much goes on without proper consultation. Mr Lloyd, what do you think on this particular one?

Toby Lloyd: While I would not disagree with anything Kate has said, I do think there is more to it than just the planning system. The failure to build enough homes in this country, I would contend, is not fundamentally a failure of planning, although planning is clearly an important part of that process. It is a fundamental failure of the entire housing supply system, which includes private sector actors, landowners, developers and, as we have touched on, individual homeowners, just as much as it does public policy and public bodies.

Even the obvious point that has been raised about planning permissions is not really the be all and end all. In fact, there is plenty of evidence that planning permissions have been going up very fast and housebuilding has not. There is actually very little direct evidence and connection between the number of homes that get built and the number of planning permissions that are secured. It is always very easy to beat up the planners and say that it is their fault: if there is a failure—there is clearly a market failure; as you said, there is a consensus that we are not building enough homes—it must be the dead hand of the state getting in the way, surely. If not, the market would work perfectly and everything would flow. We would build more homes and prices would come down.

Clearly there is more to it than the planning system obstructing supply. In fact, the market has a very clear vested interest in not oversupplying homes, because developers quite rationally have no interest in building so many homes that prices are lowered. Therefore, it makes absolute market-logic sense to constrain housing supply to maintain maximum sales prices. That is how you maximise the value of your land assets. What this comes down to, therefore, is why it is that this market allows that sort of perfectly rational market behaviour
to occur. You cannot do that in other markets. You do not increase your profits as a mobile phone manufacturer by producing fewer phones so the price goes up, because someone else will come in and sell into that market. The key point is that of course housing relies on land and land is in fixed supply.

It is often said that land is only scarce because of the planning system. That is the wrong way round. In fact, we have a planning system because land is inherently scarce. That is why even the most liberal free market economies in the world all have some sort of land use planning system, because it is a fundamental fact of life that land does not operate as other factors of production, because it is in fixed supply. Therefore, the relationship between the market and the planning system is merely one factor in the way in which developers behave in the market so, if we are looking for why we do not build enough homes, we also have to look at developer behaviour. That is my first point.

The Chairman: There is another question in this session that will look at yet another issue.

Toby Lloyd: There is a real risk, though, of going round and round in circles over planning systems and planning targets. We can all argue about angels on the head of the pin and whether the targets should be X or X+10. We are not building half the homes we need. Targets are almost irrelevant in this context.

Q60 Earl of Lytton: This is probably for both of you. As you probably know, I am a chartered surveyor, so I know something about the issues, but when we are dealing with planning and new homes, even on the best shots the numbers that we are producing are a tiny percentage of the housing stock and it is the generality of the housing stock that makes up the market. Am I right in thinking that it is not realistic to look at just the annual input into that as a means for the 1% to control the other 99% of the market?

I ask that question because, it seems to me, there are not very many constituent bodies or groups out there that have any interest in lower prices other than the first-time buyer trying to get their foot on the ladder. How do we try to square that, given what this Committee is looking at, which is the built environment as a wider construct, in this context of planning and affordable new house or whatever type of new house development?

Dame Kate Barker: I just want to respond to something that the Chairman said. When I talk about going to a sub-regional level, it does not mean that I do not think you should consult
local communities. You have to consult local communities. The difficulty is working out ways
to deal with the in-built bias of local communities, particularly in the south-east, not to want
very many homes.
My other point about sub-regional is in some cases that I am sympathetic to local
communities, because their local communities may not be the best place to build and it may
be a neighbouring council. We need to have a mechanism to overcome that. I absolutely
think both that you need to consult local communities about the numbers and, indeed, that
developers need to work with communities in the way that is described. I do not have any
problem with that.
To answer your question, it is absolutely true that focusing on the rate of new supply will only
resolve very slowly the problems that we have in the housing market. This is a general
problem with the housing market: that policy changes produce their benefits after several
years. It is very difficult for politicians, because when they make the policy change there is a
great fuss and the benefits accrue down the line to subsequent politicians who have not had
to put up with the fuss. That of course is a problem in many areas of policy.
You say that it is just first-time buyers who have a problem, but—and I am sure Toby is going
to say this as well—it is not just first-time buyers. The people who really have a problem
today are the people in private renting, who are now 20% of housing. Sorry, it is not 20%
now, but it has gone up an awful lot. It is probably on its way to 20%. That is a lot of people.
Eurostat publishes some figures on housing stress: people who pay more than a certain
proportion of their income in housing. The proportion of people in private renting are the
ones who are struggling.
In some sense you are quite right: once, as a first-time buyer, you have your foot on the
ladder, unless you lose your job or have some financial crisis, particularly given the
affordability criteria that are used nowadays, your house is pretty affordable. If you are in
private renting and the rents go up and up, you may never be in a position where you are able
to deal easily with your cost of housing. I think it is really important not to have the debate
just about first-time buyers, but to have it about everybody in housing.

**Toby Lloyd:** On the point about the constituencies for increased supply, there is a very strong
perception in this country that a large majority, or at least a very powerful bloc, are absolutely
wedded to ever-rising house prices and will oppose any housebuilding. Actually, the evidence does not bear that up so much. It is the experience of people at planning committees: we get 20 people who all object, but that is a tiny minority. Actually, if you look at the British Social Attitudes survey, which has been asking the same question about nimbyism and attitudes to building in your local area, nimbyism and BANANA-ism—build absolutely nothing anywhere near anybody—have been declining dramatically in recent years. In fact, in the last five years alone, the percentage has completely flipped round from people saying, “I would support more housebuilding in my area”, to those saying, “I would not”, so it has changed dramatically.

In terms of who can actually speak up for it, the problem is that it is very vocal minorities who oppose. The people whom we represent—those in private renting who are stuck spending more than 50% of their income to secure a grotty and insecure home to raise their children in, or, even worse, those who are actively homeless and have literally nowhere to call their own—are the people who have a vested interest in more homes being provided, but their voices are never heard in planning debates or policy discussions.

The Chairman: If you have that information, a statistic or an article about how it has changed, that would be very useful. Certainly I have it in my mind that it is all a problem of nimbyism.

Dame Kate Barker: I may be unduly influenced by the fact that I live in a village where virtually every house has a notice in the window opposing greenfield development.

Toby Lloyd: To give you one story to counteract that, at Shelter we developed a toolkit called Shelter Housing Insights for Communities, which enables people, anybody—developers, planners—to look at different areas by postcode and identify which places and groups of people are likely to support development. The first time we tried this, just to help identify who might support a development, was for a greenbelt, greenfield affordable housing development. The planning committee, as a result of our action, got 60 spontaneous letters of support for the development. They said they had never seen anything like it, because they are only ever used to getting angry, screaming objections. It is because no one ever asks the people who do want more homes to be built and they do not go out of their way to tell planners that.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: I just wanted to follow up the point that was made about land being a finite resource. There are some who say that the land issue is the primary problem. I think you are right that it is a multi-faceted multi-organisation issue that we are talking about. From both of you, I would be interested in your perspective on how much land is currently being sat on by developers or local authorities and, indeed, how much of the current brownfield land is still undeveloped.

The Chairman: If you could give us those figures if you have them, they would be very useful. I am not trying to hassle you, but we do have a lot of questions to ask and it is always a problem: we get stuck on one.

Toby Lloyd: I can answer that very quickly. Yes, land is the central question, but it is not a simple matter of just an absolute shortage of land. There is plenty of land in England. It is sitting in developers’ land banks, quite sensibly. It is sitting in local authorities. Most of it is sitting just in agricultural use, to be honest. The issue is about how we organise its supply and the prices at which it is supplied for development. It is not about the ultimate quantum. We use more land for golf courses than homes in this country.

Dame Kate Barker: This question about the figures is very difficult, but in some sense I am not sure how helpful it is to know. There is a lot of brownfield land around, and much more work is being done by the Homes and Communities Agency, which I hope you will see, and by government in building up a central land bank. I happen to come from Stoke-on-Trent, which is full of brownfield land, but frankly the world is not full of people who are burning to go and live there. That is another difficulty: do we want to try to persuade people to live somewhere else? This is something else that we do not explore properly.

I have been encouraged very recently by one thing, however. Toby has talked about local authorities. This is not just local authorities. When we talk about landowners, we often think about fat cat farmers or whatever. Actually, the public sector, as we all know, is a massive landowner in many local authorities. I am encouraged that the Government are really starting to put pressure on to get public land developed and to develop it in a more imaginative way, so that the public realm will get more back for it. That is a very positive strand to what is going on at the moment.

The Chairman: Thank you for giving us that steer.
Q61 Baroness Andrews: Kate, if I may, I have to declare an interest, having been in the department when you produced your report. I wanted to take you back a little. In order to make a proper diagnosis of what we can address, what things we can change as opposed to things that are really difficult to change, I want to ask you about your report in 2006 and whether, if you had to revisit it now, if the Government had commissioned that sort of report today, your analysis would be very different. We have heard a lot already about the obstacles to development and the problems with consensus, and so on. We had a chance, in that particular Government, to take a big strategic look at housing for the first time. It was the first analysis of its kind, with big targets. I just wonder, if we revisited it, whether it would be different. Apart from what you have said already, what do you think were the crucial problems that we had as a Government in implementing it, and would that be the same for any Government?

Dame Kate Barker: Since the Chairman has encouraged me to be brief, I will attempt to be so. I produced the housing report in 2004. The 2006 report was about planning more generally. That was just for clarification.

The first thing is that when I wrote the report, and in some sense other people kindly said this on my behalf, I was slightly frustrated by the fact that I was only able to write about things that really affect supply. Mostly it was about planning and I did not have much ability to talk about the tax system, which is also relevant, or indeed about the mortgage market, partly because there was a simultaneous report on long-term mortgages being conducted by David Miles. If I were to write the report again today, and if I were to leave you with any thought at all today, it would be the one I really think about a lot: the failure of government to be coherent across itself in its approach to housing. You see this in many places, and because of looking at only part of it, I was guilty of partialness. I was appalled on realising how complex the housing supply problem was. I would never have agreed to write that report if I had known the issues.

Actually, some of the things raised in the 2004 report are better now. At the time, PPG3 had recently been introduced, which I thought was unnecessarily prescriptive for local authorities and was very focused on high density, not much parking and no building in villages. I thought that was very constraining. The move to the NPPF is a big improvement. One of the reasons
why supply is so low today is not because of failings in the report or, indeed, the Government’s response to it. It is actually because of the long tail of the financial crisis, which we struggle with everywhere, the loss of all the small builders and the changes in the mortgage market. As the housing market is rather slow moving, we have not yet fully adjusted to these, and indeed there is the slow response from government in getting public land out.

If I were to do it again today, I would say many of the same things. Some of the things are better. The ability to deal with planning conditions has improved post my review, as a result of the work of Adrian Penfold on administrative problems in the system. All that has got better. The NPPF’s focus on growth and encouragement of developers to do better local consultation, not this endless “We hate you”, is all very good. The planning side has got quite a lot better since I wrote the report.

I have talked about the fact that there are still some problems on the planning side, but I would be much more concerned today about something that I was bothered about at the time, which is already coming out in this session, and that is really good communication. I like Toby’s example that you can find places that are prepared to accept development, but actually local authorities are not prepared very often to try to put the arguments to people about what they are trying to do and why. They very readily say, “Well, central government wants to do this”. The Government then feel, “We will localise everything and it will all go away”, but the problems have not gone away. We have to try to get local government motivated to work with central government in putting this problem forward, which I do not think has really changed since I wrote the report.

**The Chairman**: Is it a case of passing the buck?

**Dame Kate Barker**: Yes.

**Q62 Baroness Parminter**: You have both touched on the issue of the NPPF in your responses to the first question. Could I invite you to say in a bit more detail, particularly you, Toby, about what you think works well and what does not work well? Dame Kate, could you say a little more about this idea that you have expressed about being able to add sub-regional planning to the end of the process, which is an interesting idea but I am struggling to understand how it could actually work?
**Toby Lloyd:** With an eye on time, I will try to be brief. The best thing that can be said about the NPPF is that it is there and that upheaval and more fundamental reform are probably very unhelpful, because it takes the industry an awfully long time to adapt and these are slow-moving systems. We are absolutely not calling for massive upheaval in the planning system. Where it fails is to really follow through on the logic of a plan-led system. The point of a plan-led system is to exert democratic control in determining what development will happen.

Unfortunately, the NPPF repeats the mistake of the entire post-war planning settlement, which is that it is reactive. Ultimately, it sets vague policies and then waits for proactive developers to come forward with proposals, to which the democratic response is “maybe” or often “no”. It is entirely reactive and passive, whereas a planning system ought to be determining what development needs to happen and will happen. Therefore, it can write the land values. Therefore, it can capture the value that is needed to support infrastructure, provide affordable housing and to allow for quality development that people actually want. Unfortunately in this country, we get the democratic involvement in planning at the wrong point in the process. It comes right at the end, when all the values have been baked into trading, the land market and so forth, so that there is very little real room for manoeuvre. At that point, we offer people the illusion of choice, but they do not really have it. What you end up with is a simple yes/no, and the answer is often no. Really, the place for democratic involvement is at the plan-making stage, which should then determine what is actually economically viable, not the other way around.

**The Chairman:** That is very interesting. That is actually looking for the real way that it would work, but how would you set about it? If you were in charge of all this, how would you set about doing that—i.e. consulting first and then getting the views of people—instead of imposing on them and then sweeping up afterwards?

**Toby Lloyd:** The late great Sir Peter Hall used to say that everyone extols the Dutch planning system, and I am one of these people who extol the Dutch planning system, but it is exactly the same as the British one. The difference is that they take it seriously; they do it properly. It is not about the system; it is the way we use it. If you look at most local plans, they do not exist, are massively out of date or are just woefully vague. They do not actually say anything
about most of the area. Most of the time, it just relies on developers to come forward with proposals, which the local authority then judges against fairly poorly defined criteria. A local plan or a neighbourhood plan, if that is the way it is going—and either is fine by me—needs to have a strong proactive vision for the whole area that it covers, and that can involve huge amounts of not just consultation but active participation of local people.

**Baroness Andrews:** I entirely agree with you, Toby. Is not part of the problem actually that most local plans deal with things as they are? At the very most, you are looking at a bit of urban extension or a bit of translation of local infill. There is not the massive opportunity for the big design, the big greenfield site or whatever it is, so somehow we have to feed possibilities into the culture of training and education.

Would you agree that in infrastructure planning we did try in the 2008 Act to introduce the notion of local democratic accountability earlier in the process, so that people were part of the argument and part of the formation, rather than just reaction at the end? That was not very successful at all, because there are all sorts of democratic tensions between the people who get a benefit and the people who cannot see a benefit. Although we do not want to reform the planning system again, we are looking at what effective change would be, which is likely to have the greatest impact.

**Toby Lloyd:** At this point, I would say that it is insisting that local authorities come up with proper, comprehensive plans as soon as possible and that those are given sufficient teeth, so that, rather than being seen as something that is there to be fought and argued over, they are the strong planning documents that write the land value. If your local policy says, “Fifty per cent affordable housing”, that is what it means, because then the market adjusts, the prices adjust accordingly, and development is viable. As soon as you accept that, “We will flex on that”, you have dug yourself a hole, a viability, which you will never get out of.

**Baroness Andrews:** Is that not a case for national planning?

**Toby Lloyd:** No, it can be done at a local level, too. It does not really matter which level it is done at as long as it is strong and clear. Where it does matter is when you are talking about very large developments, where you need a national steer, but the principles are exactly the same, whether it is at neighbourhood or national level.
**Dame Kate Barker:** I will try to be brief. You have embarked on something where I do not quite agree with Toby. I do not disagree, by the way, that the planning system simply does not work now because local plans are not very good. The habit of waiting for people to bring land to you, rather than saying, “Actually, we would quite like this land to be developed”, is a difficult one. Of course, you cannot force a landowner today to sell a piece of land if they do not want to. You can say, “We think this is a great place for development and we want 50% affordable housing. Therefore, the price is lower than it was 10 years ago”, and the landowner says, “I think I will just wait for this council to go away”.

That is a big problem. I do not say this happily, but trying to think about how you persuade landowners that you have changed the land market so they are not going to be able to make huge sums of money from selling for housing is fundamentally one of the problems, and I do want to distinguish here between landowners and developers, because it is often landowners, including the public sector, who are very keen to get these large sums of money.

On the sub-regional, I am completely with Baroness Andrews about not wanting to tear up the system. You are quite right. You and Toby are both saying the same thing: you want to identify quite big places where you might do a new town or a big urban extension. That will be easier if it is seen at a larger area than a local authority. It is about trying to work with a group of authorities, making the duty to co-operate have more teeth, so that in the plans the consultation between local authorities is much more real. It is getting the Planning Inspectorate to approach it with a more consistent view, so that if you have two planning inspectors looking in the same area, they do not take different views of where would be a good place to build in that area, because that is not going to give you a sensible and comprehensive plan. In that sense, I want to reintroduce it. From the environmental point of view, environmental issues do not sit in local authorities; they sit much more widely, and it is genuinely harder to address that.

**Q63 Lord Inglewood:** I had better declare an interest as a landowner. To some extent, Kate Barker replied to some of the points I was going to put to Toby Lloyd. It seems to me that you are not right in describing the planning system quite in the way you did, because there is a residual CPO power in local authorities to promote schemes. It is not merely its use, but actually its existence that acts as a kind of catalyst towards bringing things forward. I do not
disagree with you that there are many instances where, either for reasons of greed or perhaps sometimes reasons of sentiment—for example, wind farms—landowners decide not to do something. I do not think that the analysis you have given is necessarily completely balanced.

**Toby Lloyd:** I make no apologies for the fact that, as a representative of Shelter, our interest is in ensuring that the nation is adequately housed primarily, rather than that the sentiments of landowners are satisfied. I appreciate that there is often a tension there, and I declare my interests as to which side of that tension I sit on.

**Lord Inglewood:** I entirely accept that you are an advocate for Shelter, but if you are describing the planning system, which is what we are interested in here—I am not trying to argue the interests of landowners—we have to see a picture that is as closely in agreement with the reality of the arrangements that are in place as we can. Then we can politically, quite properly, argue on the barricades, either the same one or different ones.

**Toby Lloyd:** Where I would agree with both you and Kate is that the planning system alone is only one part of it. The zoning approach that I have outlined is only one element. You also then need the mechanisms for making sure that it happens, including compulsory purchase, which is a vital tool within the operation of the land market, the planning system and the development industry as a whole, which has fallen into terrible disuse, effectively because of a series of case law, which has meant that it only really works now to overcome very egregious blockages. It does not work to give that zoning approach to planning teeth.

In other words, it does not serve to communicate to landowners that the price you will get is that which reflects the local plan, including all the infrastructure, affordable housing and environmental requirements that that plan specifies. You need compulsory purchase to act exactly as you say—as that last-resort incentive to encourage landowners to participate positively. If it is there, you never have to use it, because then you can strike reasonable deals, based on reasonable land values that reflect the requirements of the local community.

**Lord Inglewood:** I entirely agree with your general approach, but is there not a problem with things like the European Convention on Human Rights if you approach compulsory purchase on the basis that you will not compensate people fully for the market value of the asset?

**Toby Lloyd:** No, there is not. The European Convention on Human Rights is very clear on this point. After all, it is European and its methods are used all over Europe far more effectively.
than they are here. As long as there is a clear planning policy that says, “This is what the community requires”, it is perfectly acceptable to human rights.

**Lord Inglewood:** You still have to pay full market value.

**Toby Lloyd:** The market value will be determined by what the planning policy says.

**Lord Inglewood:** That is right, but there is an argument that we have seen canvassed, and again I am not trying to argue one way or the other—I am trying to stand back—that says that in certain circumstances the public sector should be entitled to acquire the underlying asset, i.e. the land, at less than its market value. This is what Kate Barker has been suggesting. I am saying that I think there is a problem with that, forgetting about any other consideration, from the perspective of the human rights legislation.

**Toby Lloyd:** We have had councils’ advice on this matter and it is less significant a concern.

**Dame Kate Barker:** There are examples where land is compulsorily purchased. I have to say that I am kind of with Toby on this, because if we are talking about urban extensions and new towns, you would have to make this kind of land deal there. The question about the market value is a tricky one. I accept this and I hope that perhaps this Committee can produce some legal argumentation on it. In some senses, particularly if you are identifying a site for a new town, the truth is that if the new town is not built, your land is probably of agricultural value. Of course, if it is built, it goes up to several millions a hectare. The cost difference is enormous. The question is where in that you might think would be a reasonable place to put the price. I would not, for example, support trying to give people agricultural value. That would seem to me to be quite wrong, because you are forcing them to change their land into a new use willy-nilly, when they might not like it. Equally, if I was building a new town I would not want to give them the full price that you would get for a development on a more normal site. There is a serious question as to how you set up a national policy that would enable you to do that. I also agree with Toby that, although we are talking about the land market, this is such a regulated market that the public sector sets the price to some extent. It is the outcome of the planning system and the incentives around it that enables land price to be very high or result in land prices that are very high. A different planning system could quite well result in a different land market. The problem is persuading landowners that what you have changed is going to be changed permanently. That is very hard and we have plenty of history of people
who think that they will wait it out. Unless you are prepared to use compulsory purchase, that is where it falls foul.

**Lord Inglewood**: I entirely accept the generality of the problems as you have analysed them, but it is not straightforward, as we know. My only stone to throw in this particular pond is that of course the characteristics of the land market as you have described them—and I do not disagree with quite a lot of what you have said—are probably the same as the characteristics of the art market. Two pictures of the same size, one by Rembrandt and one by me, are worth very different amounts of money.

**Dame Kate Barker**: Yes, absolutely. It is entirely site-specific. It is one of the reasons why policy is so difficult.

**The Earl of Lytton**: I was only going to make a very brief comment. I am with Lord Inglewood on this, because the Land Compensation Acts, as we have them at the moment in this country, provide a very clear framework. If you are going to have wholesale compulsory purchase, I would suggest that in order to achieve your aims we would have to rewrite those particular bits of primary legislation.

**Toby Lloyd**: You absolutely would, and I am very pleased that the Treasury is looking at this question.

**The Chairman**: Lord Inglewood, you have a question. Have you been sufficiently informed?

**Lord Inglewood**: I am quite interested in a sort of rider to it about zoning. The system of planning is not based on zoning, and each of you has indicated to some extent that it would be a shift in the right direction to go that way. If you were to do that, do you think it is realistically possible, then, to make sure that the quality of what is subsequently built is going to be of as good a standard as we would like? Clearly, living in well-designed, well-built housing is a better experience than the opposite.

**Toby Lloyd**: Yes, I absolutely do. In fact, all the evidence is that zoning tends to deliver far higher quality than the speculative model that we currently use.

**Lord Inglewood**: That is by its inherent nature.

**Toby Lloyd**: Yes.

**Lord Inglewood**: You do not need to do any more.
**Dame Kate Barker**: I would quite like to ask Toby why, but anyway. Zoning gets used in lots of different ways. I am sorry to ask you this, but what exactly do you mean by “zoning”?

**Lord Inglewood**: Basically, the way I see it is that once you have an allocation on a map, you can more or less go ahead and build.

**Dame Kate Barker**: That is fine, but in order to get the quality that you then want—I talked about this back in the 2004 review—you have to specify building to a certain standard and quality, and then that is fine. You cannot just say that it is fine to build housing, and I am sure that is not what Toby is saying either.

**Lord Inglewood**: We have building regs and all the rest of it.

**Dame Kate Barker**: Yes, but you probably need to go beyond building regs. Everything that is built coincides with today’s building regs. You might want to say something specific about that area and that you wanted a particular type of housing. You will more readily get that—and in a sense Toby is right—because you have the certainty that you will get the permission. That will then be a bit more like the Dutch system. I agree with Toby that the thing with the Dutch system is that they have much more weight on democracy in the plans, and people take the plans more seriously. Once those plans are in, objections to stuff being built under them are pretty much dismissed, but it would be psychologically tricky here to make that shift, because people are used to ignoring the planning system.

Again, to go back to my experience trawling through these local plans, I was interested to see that the planning consultation for Stevenage, which is not a small area, received 188 letters. I bet you that every single development in Stevenage gets close to 188 letters about it, and it is because we have somehow not persuaded people that they should take more of an interest in the plans and be exercised at that level, and then that things have more chance of going ahead.

**Lord Inglewood**: As an ex-chairman of a planning committee, I agree with you about that.

**Toby Lloyd**: That is why zoning is the answer. A masterplan zone gets people very exercised. It is a really good opportunity for people to engage positively. The reason why it drives up quality, assuming you have set proper minimum standards, is because within a zoned environment, where planning permission is guaranteed and the land value has been written in advance, the competitive pressures on different developers are not who can get the most
planning permissions for the smallest units and build them cheapest; the competitive pressures are who can make the best quality product, because that will deliver them the best return. The land price is already fixed. What you build is already fixed. Therefore, you only make more money than your rivals by making better, whereas at the moment the competitive pressure is all the other way round and drives quality down, rather than up.

**Lord Inglewood:** I admire your optimism.

**Baroness Whitaker:** It is very reassuring to hear that zoning can improve quality, but it would be very helpful to us if there was hard evidence of this. Maybe you can send us something.

**Toby Lloyd:** We have huge amounts of evidence, mainly from Holland and Germany in particular.

**Q64 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** The greenbelt has done not a bad job of stopping ribbon development and maintaining the character of the countryside, but do you think that it is now getting in the way of delivering sufficient new housing? If change to greenbelt policy is required, how would you stop the public from doing what they did when we wanted to do something to the forest estate?

**Dame Kate Barker:** I was really reluctant to say anything negative about the greenbelt, because my experience is that it can result in a lot of unpleasant post. I am saying that because it is important background. When you look at the greenbelt, of course, you discover that it occupies more of England than built-up areas, which is the first surprising fact that people should think about and hang on to more. The second thing, of course, is that it is not an environmental designation; it is a planning designation. I completely agree with you: in a lot of places, the greenbelt has done a very good job at keeping developments apart and looking after the setting of historic towns. All those things are really important, but it does not mean that it is right to have it in exactly the same place for all time. It is right for local authorities to be encouraged to do greenbelt reviews.

I am increasingly of the opinion that that is the right way to go: to give authorities guidance about greenbelt reviews and encouragement to think about whether the bits of greenbelt that they have are still in the public interest or not and are still or not performing their planning designation. I am not one of these people who say, “We just get rid of the greenbelt
and all our problems are over”. That is to misunderstand the importance of the greenbelt and to overstate the value of just removing that designation, because actually people do not like greenfield developments either.

This is one area in which the new planning guidance, which on the whole I welcome, was unhelpful, because it says that unmet housing need is probably not a good reason for going into the greenbelt. As a matter of fact, I do not think that is right. You just have to look at it in a more constructive way. Actually, lots of local authorities do greenbelt reviews. As I say, they should be encouraged to carry on with them. I am not sure, as you rightly imply, that drawing huge amounts of attention to it, as opposed to making it a locally thoughtful matter, would be very helpful. You would just get a big negative response.

Toby Lloyd: I entirely agree with everything Kate has said and would just go one step further. If you were to remove greenbelt restrictions at a national level, all you will do is spark a massive speculative land trading frenzy, which will quite probably end up with no more homes being built and certainly not in the right places. The greenbelt is a huge opportunity, precisely because it has suppressed land values in the very places where the market wants to develop most. It is a great opportunity to release land at low cost, enabling the uplift to fund infrastructure, affordable housing and all the things that people want to see.

We need to treat it as an opportunity to release bits intelligently, rather than as an environmental designation, as Kate says, but also not to treat it as some kind of sclerotic dead hand of the state getting in the way of the market. It is actually a great opportunity to get development in the right places, at the right price.

The Chairman: You have got my brain stirred. If there was a certain amount of greenbelt—a hypothetical situation—and the decision was made that in order to fulfil the obligation of getting more and more houses, you really had to create something that was a sense of place, which we have heard from Professor Carmona about, there would be a very strong argument to release greenbelt, which would make the subsequent housing estate or housing quarter much more acceptable and add to the overall whole.

Stevenage is a fortunate one to think about. You probably saw on the television last night about it being the first new town of Queen Elizabeth’s reign. As a result, they are always celebrating it and they have a great sense of pride there apparently, but there are other areas
where developments have looked really ghastly and could be hugely improved overall by adding on new satellites around them, which use the greenbelt.

**Toby Lloyd**: Absolutely, and that requires exactly that proactive approach to it, rather than incremental nibbling away at the edges, which leads to crummy developments, which are what really riles people: crummy developments on the outskirts of existing settlements. Strong confident bites out of the greenbelt are a far better way to go, whether it is doubling the size of Stevenage, urban extensions to other places or even smaller things. The M25 is entirely on greenbelt land. No one is really suggesting that every inch of that motorway verge is the most precious environmental designation in the country. There are huge amounts of industrial land in London that do not really need to be there. It would much rather be next to motorway junctions in the greenbelt, freeing up industrial land for high-density housing in London, for example.

**The Chairman**: Is that hypothetical thing I talked about likely to gain traction?

**Toby Lloyd**: It is not, under the current system. This is the failing of the planning system at the moment, which does not have that national level to drive significant growth like that. Stevenage is the perfect example. Stevenage wants to grow, but it cannot get co-operation from its surrounding authorities.

**Dame Kate Barker**: That is indeed another good reason for mentioning it. It is a good example where the duty to co-operate has not worked, and there are plenty of other examples. Nottingham is an example.

I do not know if you remember the Wolfson prize, where people were asked to design garden cities. The winner of the prize in fact produced an urban extension, which they gave an odd name to. It sounded to me a bit like Uttoxeter, but was not; it was actually based partly around Oxford. Cambridge has been good on releasing its greenbelt. Some of the development around Cambridge is good and some of it is less good, but on the whole they have been doing some quite interesting stuff.

**The Chairman**: Actually, we are coming on to that in the next question.

**Dame Kate Barker**: Oxford has not released its land. What happened the day after the Wolfson prize was announced? The then Minister said, “We would never do anything like that”.
Q65 Baroness Whitaker: That leads us really nicely on to garden cities. There have been warm words about garden cities ever since Ebenezer Howard came up with the idea, but not an awful lot of them have actually happened. I would like to ask both of you if you would agree that one of their chief advantages is that the increase in the land value accrues to the local community. Can you say what you think the prospects are for new garden cities and the factors that will determine whether they come about and really work? Can you focus a little on how one would ensure a proper social mix, neither a dump for just affordable housing nor elite tax-advantaged people? How can you continue keeping it thriving? Can you help?

Toby Lloyd: I came second in the Wolfson prize with our proposal for a new garden city. To answer your many questions, the first answer is yes; garden cities are a good way of doing precisely this. In fact, whether we are talking about zoning or urban extensions, these are all the same thing; these are just ways of doing large-scale developments that get land in at reasonable prices and capture that value to ensure that there is adequate provision for affordable housing, infrastructure and quality. They are all the same thing. It does not matter whether it is the public, private or voluntary sector. The great estates of west London are kind of an aristocratic version. Letchworth Garden City was a philanthropic, charitable version. Stevenage New Town was a state-led version of exactly the same model. The Olympic development in East London is exactly the same model. It really is not rocket science. The great thing about garden cities is that they have the name “garden” in the title, which makes them more acceptable to a lot of people. That really is the only difference. It makes perfect sense. Let us talk about garden cities, rather than new cities, which sound scary.

Baroness Whitaker: Do you think a garden city is the same as a new town?

Toby Lloyd: In its key economic aspects, yes, it is. The design aspects are different, but to be honest those have changed anyway. No one would design a new garden city in the same way that Ebenezer Howard designed Letchworth, for example. It would be considerably higher density. The housing composition would be different. The design aspects have changed in any case. What matters is the economic model and the social model that the garden city envisaged.

The Chairman: Can I ask a question? I just have to ask it. Have any of you been on the High Line in New York?
Dame Kate Barker and Shelter – Oral Evidence (QQ41-51)

_Toby Lloyd_: I have not, no.

_Dame Kate Barker_: Yes, I have.

_The Chairman_: The change that has happened there over the last five years is incredible. It was done in this awful sort of warehouse part off the river. When I was there last time, just about a year ago, all those warehouses had been converted into condominiums and social housing. Right through the middle of it is this ex-railway, with a wonderful garden, for a mile and a half. I know we cannot do that, we cannot actually replicate something in New York, but the very idea is bringing greenery into the centre of a ghastly area and then building all these brownfield sites into huge homes.

_Toby Lloyd_: That is exactly what we are doing in Stratford. There is a fantastic new park there. There are fantastic revived urban waterways, and tens of thousands of homes being built. It is exactly what is called “regeneration”.

_The Chairman_: I must go there.

_Baroness Whitaker_: If I may clarify your argument, is it your contention that we just need to apply the sort of good planning ideas that we would to any urban redevelopment to get what other people might call a “garden city”?

_Toby Lloyd_: What makes a garden city unique is, first, that it is a single large planned development. Secondly, it captures land value, but, again, you could do that without calling it a “garden city”. Thirdly, it gives a strong element of community ownership and control to preserve that ethos. Those are the three key elements that make a garden city, in my view.

_Baroness Whitaker_: What about its economy and jobs?

_Toby Lloyd_: In any decent place, whether it is a garden city or not, you would want to have a decent economy and jobs. Those are universals of development.

_Dame Kate Barker_: I sort of agree with Toby that the key thing that both of us want is to see some ideas for big new places developed, where the public sector puts itself forward, in the way it did with the new towns, and gets the land value in. I completely agree with that. Garden cities are slightly different, because they place a bit more weight on the greenery and environment, but you would hope that anywhere would do that. I rather dislike the habit of calling things like Ebbsfleet garden cities, in a slightly random way, where something was already going on, and designating it as a garden city. I am not sure what that would do.
I also agree that one thing that is interesting about the garden city movement, and is interesting about Letchworth today, is the continuing way in which it is managed and run so that it has more community involvement. That is incredibly interesting. If you ask whether garden cities will solve the planning problem, Milton Keynes built at an average rate of 2,500 a year. You just have to bear that in mind.

The key thing for me is not: should we have garden cities? Yes, but they will not do the job on their own. Plenty of work has been done, partly in the Wolfson prize, about how you might design them and make them really interesting and exciting places where people will want to live. Milton Keynes and Stevenage are not places that trip off the tongue as great places to live, but we know that both of them are places where people enjoy living and get a lot of value from that.

The Chairman: Perhaps we should ask Ebbsfleet, if they extend all around Ebbsfleet, what name they would like to give to it, other than “garden city”.

Lord Inglewood: A quick point arising out of this is if you can say what differentiates the ones that work from the ones that do not, really.

The Chairman: That is a good point. If you cannot give us that answer straight away now, could you write to us about it? I am very conscious that we have been carried along.

Dame Kate Barker: To some extent, that is the point that was made. It is about economic connections. New towns that were built with not particularly great building standards and in places that were not especially economically vital do not really work. Towns rise and fall. I referred earlier to the fact that I come from Stoke-on-Trent. It has probably never been a pretty town, but when I grew up there it was an economically vibrant town. It is not the fault of the planning system that today it is not a very pleasant place, although I would like to say that I am enormously loyal to it and one day hope to go back and have a house there.

The Chairman: It is all the fault of table-top industry not keeping up to date.

Dame Kate Barker: Should we get distracted on to the pottery industry?

The Chairman: Seriously, that is what happened, with Johnson and Wedgwood.

Dame Kate Barker: Sorry, I could dribble on about this—and the closure of the mines and steel, of course. It is not the fault of the planning system and it is not wrongly located. It sits on the M6 and the main line.
Baroness Andrews: Perhaps our two witnesses could give us a note on what they think are the lessons we can learn from the eco-towns, because that has been our only attempt in recent years to plan, from scratch, for coherent locations and towns. They were very problematic.

The Chairman: I will make a submission, because I was deeply involved locally on that one.

Q66 Baroness Rawlings: Dame Kate, you mentioned earlier on that you regretted that your 2004 report did not include taxation problems. We would all agree that the taxation of land and property is a complex topic. Could you expand on three points? Then I have one question. The three points were about the stamp duty reformed to end its slab structure and the lost revenue, partly replaced with the site value tax on vacant land that is both urban and brownfield. Your other point is that higher bands should be added to council tax and that the single adult discount should be abolished. Could you say why, and expand a little on why VAT should be removed from major household renovations and extensions?

Finally, what tax incentives might be used to encourage developers to build faster on land already allocated for housing that has planning permission? Sorry, that was quite a lot.

Dame Kate Barker: Yes, there is a lot there. I would make two general points about tax first. One is that if you are going to use tax very actively to improve the housing market, you have to be aware—and I am slightly concerned that some of the things Toby was saying would fall foul of this—of doing too much to values today. Values today sit on lots of people’s balance sheets. If you disturb land values incredibly rapidly, because you disturb house prices incredibly rapidly you have to be aware that there will be a lot of collateral damage. Changes to the system often have to be introduced gradually and thoughtfully. In fact, the Chancellor’s proposals to change mortgage tax relief on buy-to-let landlords, which on the whole I support, were announced two years before anything happens, and a four-year period is very helpful because it enables a good adjustment process. That is a general point.

My second general point is that when I wrote about the tax system I tried to think about it coherently rather than address it point by point, otherwise you get unintended consequences in different places. People often put forward a tax proposal that they think addresses one thing, but it has spillovers. I was trying to think about changes that went in two directions: partly changes that helped the market to work a little better and encouraged some land into
the system, but partly changes that changed the incentives for homeowners, which is much more contentious.

To answer your question specifically, on stamp duty the Chancellor has now got rid of the slab structure since I wrote about it, so that is great, but he did not pay for it by introducing a site value tax; he paid for it by having much higher rates of stamp duty at higher levels, which I would do. I wanted a site value tax on vacant brownfield land because it is important to try to get brownfield land into better use. It was one of the things I very much wanted to introduce in one of the reports. I now cannot remember which one, but anyway it proved quite difficult.

Why do I want to increase council tax higher up and reduce the single person’s discount? This all comes back to a view about the housing market overall. Like Toby, I want to see everybody adequately housed. I do think that there are some environmental costs to building more housing, actually, because it uses up land. I also do not think that land is finite, but there is some evidence that if people live in bigger houses relative to smaller houses, they use more water. You might think that you do not necessarily want to encourage everybody to live in the big house that they might otherwise want, because the more money you have the more space you want. Housing is an income-elastic good, so if you are richer you tend to want more of it. That is why the household projections would not be enough to stabilise prices. You have to build more than household projections to stabilise prices if incomes are rising. Of course, with the financial crisis, incomes did not rise. Sorry, this is proving to be a terribly long answer.

If you therefore think that from an environmental point of view you want to constrain how much is built but you do not do anything about demand, you will end up with what we end up with today, which is that some people have a lot of money and live in very big houses. We know that there is more housing stock per head than there used to be; it is just that we share it very badly. I live in a reasonably sized house and I dare say a lot of you do. Something like 8.1 million people live in underoccupied homes, but at the other end you have these people often in private renting who live in overcrowding.

Part of the reason why this occurs is that we all have an incentive to invest in housing. It is absurd to say that there should not be an investment motive for housing, because it is clearly
part of your financial planning to put money into a house. That is perfectly reasonable, but the fact that government constrains housing development for environmental reasons and then you have an incentive to invest in it does not seem right. The reasons for wanting to increase council tax on higher-value properties and to reduce the tax relief for single persons is really to try to have some way of discouraging investment in housing and discouraging underoccupation, in order to ensure that our housing stock is shared more fairly. I have to say that this is politically pretty tricky, as indeed is my proposal on CGT, which you did not mention.

VAT is a bit simpler. If you have a house and you want to make a big extension to it, it may be cheaper to knock it down and start again. This seems to me absurd. A good way of increasing supply and densification would be to make that a little cheaper, so actually I think I would just clean the VAT system up. It is a much more trivial argument. It would also help revive the small building community, which would be a good idea, because then they might go on and build houses. That is a relatively simple one. I am sorry that was such a long answer.

The Chairman: The other thing you have not mentioned of course is the fact that families are much smaller now and that there is huge demand, particularly away from London, from people who live in big houses trying to reduce to downsize to get more equity back. Also, 40% of households are now one or two people apparently. Can you check out those figures and let us know?

Dame Kate Barker: The average household size in the UK is still around 2.3. Unlike other countries, our household size has not been declining, partly because of the constraint. For homeowners, household sizes are quite small and they have quite a lot of rooms. Private renters and other people are quite crowded. To sum up the point I am trying to make, it is that because we live in a small place we feel we should huddle up. At the moment, only poor people huddle up. Rich people do not have to bother.

Q67 Baroness Rawlings: Can I just ask you about encouragement to developers? What tax incentives?

Dame Kate Barker: I apologise for not answering that question. I declared my interest at the beginning of this meeting, so perhaps you would not want me to answer that question. If I were to answer, I would say that I am not in favour of necessarily placing a tax on
permissioned land. First, the issue about permissioned land is misunderstood. Toby was right about the fact that permissions do not quickly lead to building. They do not, partly because if you have a very big site you do not build it out all at once. Actually, probably nobody would want you to build it out all at once.

If you go back to all these figures about these unbuilt permissions, you find that not so many of them are on projects that have not been started. When they say that there are 400,000 unbuilt houses, that is because if you get permission for 1,000 houses and you have only built 100, which is very often the case, the whole site goes down as being unbuilt. Do you see what I mean? It is an exaggeration of what is unbuilt.

The other thing is that if you start from the date of the permission, you will almost certainly get a delay, because you then have to clear your planning conditions, which can often take quite a long time. To put my developer hat on very briefly, at the moment it often takes a disproportionately long time, because local authorities have had to reduce their staff and we just cannot get people to clear our planning permissions. It is not surprising that there is a delay.

Then the question is whether we can do something at the margin to force developers to build out a bit more quickly, so that they do not necessarily get quite as high a price as they would have got. Of course, the tax system will do that, but you have to remember that that will then increase developers’ risk and the cost of that will get borne somewhere else. If you did it today of course, people would build out more quickly, but they would be a lot more cautious about the next set of planning permissions they applied for, so actually it might make the future market less elastic. Today, if there are permissions about and demand rises, the industry can respond. If you make it expensive for them to hold permissioned land, they will not have as much permissioned land and that may make the market less elastic. You have to be very careful in thinking about that.

It is perfectly possible on public land, and I am quite supportive of this, for the public sector to say, “We are going to give you a contract and you have to build this out”, but then the public sector has to recognise and bear the risk of that build-out rate, and that is a slightly different proposition.

The Chairman: There is just one point.
**Dame Kate Barker**: I think Toby ought to be allowed to reply to that, because I am sure he has a different view.

**The Chairman**: Is there a case for looking at some fiscal penalty on developers or people who hold large land banks and do not even pretend to want to build on them, on the basis that land has gone absolutely through the roof?

**Dame Kate Barker**: This is terribly difficult, is it not? Taylor Wimpey holds several years of land—let us be straightforward about it—but you would not want us to build on it all tomorrow. When a local authority produces a plan, it produces a plan for 15 years. If we, the developers, all said that we wanted to build on it today, they would not give permission for the whole 15 years at once, because they have views about sequencing. I am not suggesting for an instant that the land market works terribly well.

The other reason why you have a large land bank, though, is that you do not necessarily know where your permissions will come from. You want to have a lot of land, because you are uncertain about where the permissions will go. If you go right back and read the report that the OFT wrote about housebuilders and the land bank, it explains why it is an important part of the business model.

You could change it by deciding to have a tax on all land, but that would not necessarily just be aimed at developers. It would be much more differently motivated. It would actually be motivated on the fact that land is, in some sense, an undertaxed thing, but it would not necessarily help the permissions. That would be about equality, which gets you into Piketty territory, which I do not want to get into.

**The Chairman**: Can I just ask for about three sentences from Mr Lloyd on that one? I suspect his attitude will be quite different from yours.

**Toby Lloyd**: It may not be as different as you think. Kate’s answers are extremely thoughtful and well considered. I absolutely agree about the complexity and the delicacy of this area, but she is also absolutely right that tax changes are a potentially very important tool, which we have underutilised, in order to change incentives, both in the homeownership market and in the development market. We do need to be looking at both ends: the demand and the supply side.
There is no simple answer on the developer side, and, again, I agree that it is too easy just to point at current land banks. Actually, the real issue there is probably more about strategic land banks, which no one really has any handle on, because developers are slightly tricky about admitting what they are. Most of these are optioned sites, so they are typically still owned by a farmer and under agricultural use, but are optioned for development at some point in the future. It is complicated; I do accept that.

The one element I would just like to chip in on, in addition to everything Kate has said, is to consider levelling the playing field more between buy-to-let investors and homeowners. At the moment, buy-to-let investors have a colossal tax advantage, and then we wonder why a whole generation is being priced out of ever owning a home of their own. There will be collateral damage in any change; there always is, and the losers will always scream.

I would just like to make one final plea; 90,000 children will wake up on Christmas morning homeless in this country. Are they just collateral damage or are we not prepared to be a little brave about trying to change some of these systems so that they work better for the people who are already losing out from the current system?

**The Chairman:** That is a wonderful note on which to end your session. I am sure that we could go on for ever, but we have another set of witnesses. Are there any other issues that you would like to raise with the Committee? Would you like to tell us about them? Perhaps you could write just a few points. Also, if you were in my position, what do you think would be front of mind in the things you would like to see in the report coming out, say three recommendations? You have one minute. In fact, think and write.

**Dame Kate Barker:** I would like some stern stuff on public understanding, ensuring that public consultation is done in a more interesting and imaginative way when you are doing plans, although it is pretty hard to interest people. I would like the Government to do more solid work on the costs and benefits, in environmental terms, of extra housing. I would like government to be really joined-up, so that the Bank of England, DWP, the Treasury and CLG actually think about each other.

**Toby Lloyd:** I would agree with all that. We need a serious coherent plan from government. From this Committee, what would be really useful is to bottom out what “zoning” actually means. There is a lot of talk about it at the moment, and as with garden cities—a whole series
of crack developments labelled “garden cities”, which do not live up to the name—we are in danger of doing the same with the zoning approach, where it will be a label slapped on things that does not do what it needs to, which is to get to the land value question at the heart of development.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed, both of you. It has been very stimulating. You can see by the questions asked that we are engaged and very excited about this. I want us to report with a report that is going to be of use in the future, as your two were. Thank you very much.

10 September 2015
Introduction

I would like to relate experiences I and others in the local community had with certain aspects of the Northern Line Extension (NLE) project which is currently taking place in London. This is relevant to your questions 11 and 12 below:

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Although this is a single case, it reveals some problems with the system, in particular the legal framework, currently in place.

Background

I am a Chartered Surveyor working and living in London. The Northern Line Extension (NLE) project is happening on my doorstep and will continue to have a major impact on my life, and the lives of hundreds of other local residents living adjacent and thousands of people who pass through the area on a daily basis, for years to come.

During the planning stages of the project, which formed a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) and deemed Planning Permission application, I tried to meaningfully engage with the promoter of the scheme (at first Treasury Holdings, and latterly Transport for London), as I had ideas and opinions regarding their plans.

Overview of this particular case

During the consultation, in relation to a particular aspect of the project, I identified and suggested a better alternative. Briefly, the NLE promoter’s plan is to locate ventilation shaft underneath Kennington Green, connected by a shallow connecting tunnel to a 3-storey ‘head house’ building at the side of the Green.

Kennington Green was a small public open space with a number of mature trees. The Green was a valuable amenity used by local residents and by local workers. On two sides of the Green are Grade II or Grade II* listed Georgian houses and the whole area is within the Kennington Conservation Area which is notable for its smart terraced housing. The Green therefore has high heritage and townscape significance. The Green is surrounded by numerous buried utilities including a 36-inch gas main from the nearby Oval Gasholders.
Utilities diversions started in February this year and are expected to continue until the end of November. To build the head house requires the taking of land from the Beefeater Gin distillery; it also required the demolition and rebuilding elsewhere of the distillery’s tanker filling station. To achieve this the promoter had to purchase additional land on the opposite side of the distillery to the Green and add it to the distillery’s site. Montford Place (which leads off Kennington Green) is a popular route for pedestrians as it provides access to Tesco and towards Vauxhall Station and local schools. The promoter’s pedestrian survey recorded over 2,000 people passing during one 12-hour period. Currently, residents and those passing through the area are subject to road and pavement closures and diversions and this will continue for another 3+ years. Once the works are completed, the Green will be reinstated, but due to the connecting tunnel under the Green, the areas where trees can be put back are significantly limited.

The Secretary of State’s official recorded view is that the scheme has “a seriously negative effect on the character and appearance of the [Kennington] conservation area and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings”¹.

I proposed an alternative location for the ventilation shaft, at 373 Kennington Road. This is on the other side of the road to the Green and is directly above the Northern Line running tunnel, so no connecting tunnel would be required. The site is currently occupied by a number of post-war light industrial buildings which are not positive contributors to the Conservation Area (i.e. ‘neutral’ as stated in the Conservation Area statement) and which are likely candidates for redevelopment in the short to medium term. The current buildings form a hostile high blank wall along the frontage with Aulton Place. There are no trees on site. The site is self-contained, so the effect on Pedestrians and traffic would be significantly less. There are likely to be far fewer utilities to divert as no roads are within the site. It is closer to Kennington Station, so has engineering and safety advantages. The site could be redeveloped after the NLE works to provide a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and a significantly improved public realm, particularly for Aulton Place. The main drawback is that some of the buildings on site were in use as an art gallery and some as offices (some were vacant); these companies would have to be moved and the owner of the site compensated. The promoter made a lot of that issue, although elsewhere on the scheme they are demolishing significantly larger buildings that are in active use (for example, Banham Security’s building). The art gallery and offices could have moved to the land on the opposite side of the distillery.

The 373 option was brought to the attention of the promoters in June 2011, approximately two years before the application for the Order was made, and the promoters advised at that time that it would be assessed. Unfortunately, they did not until too late (in their own chosen timetable). The promoters pressed ahead with the scheme on the basis of the inferior option.

It should also be noted that in general the consultation and engagement with the local community was poor; many local residents did not hear about the proposals until very late in the process. For example, the promoters held some meetings to talk about the reinstatement of the Green once the project had finished; these were poorly advertised and attendance was 9-13 people per meeting. The design of the head house was revealed as a fait accompli at the last meeting, so there was no consultation allowed to local residents on that very important aspect. The design for the head house is considered by many in the community to be poor; an ‘alien object’ in the townscape, juxtaposed with the listed Georgian heritage in an area of high significance.

Further details of the scheme and associated references are contained in the Appendix.

**The Decision made by the Secretary of State**

1. The Secretary of State decided that “in spite of any deficiencies in the evolution of the NLE proposals and the criticism by objectors of the approach to consultation by TfL and Treasury Holdings, the uncertainties, delay and cost implications of pursuing the 373 option tip the balance in favour [of] the Kennington Green site”. ²

2. The Secretary of State’s decision, based on the Inspector’s opinion, is that deficiencies in the consultation process were cured by the fact that the Public Inquiry allowed a full review of events leading up to the Order application.³

**Discussion**

The Department for Transport’s Guide to TWA Procedures (2006)⁴ states that the “carrying out of wide and thorough consultations in advance of an application is a crucial part of the whole authorisation process.” This is not only because it is good practice in a democratic society. It is also for the very pragmatic reason that consulting persons who may be affected “can provide helpful feedback into the design development process” (paragraph 2.2).

The onus should be on promoters/developers to design their schemes intelligently, and to respond diligently and intelligently to consultation. Developers are being paid for working up their proposals; the local community are acting as volunteers (and are forced into it, in the sense that they happen to be living in a particular location). In this particular case I would argue that the benefits of the alternative option were easy to see and to comprehend. Even with the promoter’s numerous paid advisors fighting a rear-guard action trying to justify why the use of the Green was better, they failed to convince the Inspector and the Secretary of

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State. And yet, the proposals gained approval ‘as is’ with the justification of “uncertainties, delay and cost implications.”

The main driving factor behind making the inferior proposal seemed to be an unwillingness to properly engage in consultation (i.e. being willing to seriously examine alternatives), and a compressed timetable, which the promoters were not willing to vary. I do not know what was driving this urgency.

There obviously needs to be a balance between the powers of developers / promoters to achieve the delivery of building projects without being ensnared by vexatious or ‘NIMBY’ objections; and communities / individuals to engage in the process of delivering major projects and if necessary to object to proposals that are unnecessarily damaging. When it comes to challenging a decision such as a TWAO, resources of the parties are fundamentally mismatched. My understanding is that for challenging a planning application via Judicial Review there is a cost cap of £5,000 under the Aarhus Convention. However, for a statutory challenge, my understanding is that there is no cost cap and therefore the potential liabilities (legal fees of the promoters who will be large corporate bodies with expensive legal representation) of making such a challenge will effectively preclude individuals and community organisations from doing so.

This situation is against the public interest because it effectively gives carte blanche to promoters of schemes (particularly larger schemes with significant expected benefits) to fall significantly short in their proposals and yet proceed nonetheless with a needlessly more damaging scheme by using uncertainties, delay and cost implications as the justification.

This situation is unfair to the public; it defeats the object of the consultation and inquiry process, and ratifies a deficient process of the promoter (especially in this case given the promoter’s knowledge of a potential better alternative at an early date).

It should be noted that the alternatives were only investigated when a party with financial firepower i.e. the distillery objected to the scheme, much later in the process. My earlier ideas were effectively ignored.

Further, the Public Inquiry is too late a stage for proper changes to be made to such schemes. The fact that there is a Public Inquiry does not substitute for proper consultation and engagement.

**Conclusion - Community involvement and community impact**

Therefore, in answer to your questions above, my experience is that the decision-makers did not take sufficient account of the way the built environment affects those who live and work within it; they did not engage properly with the local community; and the local community’s ideas were largely ignored by developers and decision-makers.

The whole process has had caused a considerable amount of worry and stress, and most importantly frustration, for many in the community and this will continue for years to come.
As long as there is the inequality in resources (and potential liability for crippling costs for individuals and community organisations) there is little incentive for developers and promoters of major schemes to consult, engage, plan and develop the highest quality schemes.

As long as developers and promoters develop good quality schemes they can be confident that they will not be subject to legal challenge. If they develop poor or mediocre proposals, there should be an effective ability for communities / individuals to challenge them in a court of law.

I am not a legal expert but from my experience both (1) a more stringent requirement to consult and engage properly; and (2) legislation to cap an individual or community group’s potential liability for costs in respect of statutory or other legal challenges that could relate to such schemes, seems necessary.

12 October 2015
Bat Conservation Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0172)

About the Bat Conservation Trust

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) is the UK’s leading NGO dedicated to the conservation of bats. Working with a network of members, volunteers, academics, professionals and partner organisations we help to tackle threats to bats such as land use change and the loss of roosts.

Bats are important indicators of biodiversity that make an essential contribution to ecosystems and their associated economic benefits. BCT has significant expertise in the built environment and plays a critical role in ensuring the planning system contributes to halting the decline in biodiversity.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Decision making should be encouraged at the administrative level best equipped to respond to local needs. Whereas national policy-makers have a duty to uphold the principles of sustainable development across the planning system they should not dictate to local planning authorities how this is achieved.

At the local level decision making should be based on effective local plans that reflect the identified, evidence-based needs of communities and the natural environment. These local plans must be developed within a national policy framework that is unambiguous in giving equal weight to the natural environment as economic matters in planning decisions.

A National Policy for the Built Environment should establish standards to improve the quality and consistency of advice and implementation of existing safeguarding mechanisms across the sector.

Consistent and informed advice is needed by developers and applicants from all those involved in the built environment. This means standards and knowledge need to be raised, reviewed and enforced within the private sector, local authorities and Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations.

BCT is currently leading a Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning to improve the consideration of biodiversity in the planning process. Further information is provided
2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

It is worth pointing out that the natural environment is not mentioned in the question above, which would suggest already that it is not prioritised in the way that it should be.

Nevertheless, policy for the built environment has continuously been divided between government departments. A National Policy for the Built Environment should include policies on the natural environment that are implemented consistently across all departments that have the built environment in their portfolio.

At a national level, coordinating the consistent implementation of policy should take place at an official and Ministerial level. One such step would be tasking the Cabinet Committee on housing to ensure that changes to the built environment make a positive contribution to the natural environment.

In addition to coordinating policy across national government there is a need for improved connectedness between local planning authorities to encourage consistency across boundaries, the sharing of skills and expertise.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? What should be prioritised and why?

The Committee should be reminded that the NPPF requires that economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development are given equal weight. Of core concern to the Committee here should be how this requirement is being applied in practice. The BCT’s concern is that the environment is not being given equal weight to economic and social matters.

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee released their report on the Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework at the end of 2014. The report concluded that “Communities need greater protection against unsustainable development”. They recommend a number of steps to make sure that the planning system delivers the what was promised in the NPPF, ensuring that the same weight is given to the environmental and social as to the economic dimension; that permission is only given to development if accompanied by the infrastructure necessary to
support it; and that the planning system places due emphasis on the natural environment.

The report laid out the recommendation that the *NPPF provisions on the natural environment have an important role to play in ensuring sustainable development is delivered. Local authorities are missing an opportunity if they do not set out a clear vision for the biodiversity of their area. Moreover, if they do not set out clear policies in respect of the environmental aspects of sustainable development, it may be harder to resist the economic aspects taking a more dominant role. We strongly encourage all local authorities to make the natural environment an important theme in their local plans. To do so, smaller authorities may need to tap into ecological skills available elsewhere, be it in other local authorities or the Planning Advisory Service.*

There is also a need to consider what should be prioritised within the NPPF against what is being prioritised in practice. Local planning authorities do not often have the level of ecological expertise necessary to give equal weight to the natural environment in planning matters. A recent report from the Association of Local Government Ecologists for example found that only 35% of local authorities in England currently employ an ecologist. A third of all planners have no in-house ecological expertise. In practice this may make it harder to resist economic aspects taking a more dominant role. A first step to address this would be to support authorities to utilise ecological skills available elsewhere, be it in other local authorities or other experts.

BCT recommends that the Committee call for much improved support to local decision making bodies as part of a National Policy for the Built Environment. Local planning authorities must have access to expert ecologists to help them make informed decisions, either in-house or via service level agreements with neighbouring authorities.

**4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

Integration of spatial perspectives is fundamental to the concept of Landscape Scale Conservation (LSC). This can mean integrating biological and cultural approaches to landscape, heritage and biodiversity conservation. However, the successful implementation of a spatial element to national policy is reliant on high quality data interpreted robustly. In the context of the natural environment these would be biological records and evidence of how species use the landscape, which can then be used to protect and maintain connectivity. Without sufficient base-line information there is a risk of creating a network of habitats that although well maintained are absent of the unique species reliant on these areas.

A National Policy for the Built Environment should adopt a landscape scale approach based on the concept of creating the right habitat in the right place.
A spatial approach to planning, if based on robust scientific data and expertise, has the potential to deliver significant benefits to biodiversity. However, a key challenge is to ensure that heterogeneity is maintained. England’s landscapes have become increasingly monotonous with certain land use change resulting in a landscape with fewer ecotones. It is essential that a National Policy for the Built Environment incorporates principles that ensure heterogeneity is maintained.

The Biodiversity and Planning Project (http://www.biodiversityinplanning.org/) is a cross-industry partnership of 17 organisations, led by BCT, representing the planning and conservation sectors, who are working together to simplify, streamline and improve the consideration of biodiversity in the planning process. Part of this work will be to provide a spatial tool to help with the development and assessment of local and strategic plans.

5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning out future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

The tendency to give greater weight to economic matters, over environmental or social considerations (due in part to the reasons outlined above), encourages short-termism in the implementation of policy for the built environment.

Protection of the natural environment for the long-term should be a cornerstone of any new National Policy for the Built Environment. This must include recommendations for ecological enhancements in developments as an important way of helping with the recovery of bat species. Securing a long-term view would help ensure that the natural environment is not vulnerable to the pursuit of short-term political priorities.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

6. **What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions properly coordinated at central Government level required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?**

The government is committed to encouraging more house building within the planning system. Local planning authorities are encouraged to calculate their own housing figures and set aside enough land to satisfy housing demand. Decisions about the allocation of land and the subsequent development of new homes need to be made with a full and complete understanding the potential impact on habitats and species. Bats, for example, should be considered at the earliest stages of planning. However, as made clear above, key participants and decision makers in the planning process do not often have the level of ecological expertise necessary to do this. Government proposals to introduce a zonal system for brownfield land also risk
undermining the ability of local planning authorities to negotiate appropriate and sustainable development in their areas.

The government is also committed to legislating for statutory registers of brownfield land suitable for housing in England. The Committee must note that brownfield land can support a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The NPPF is explicit that ‘previously developed’ land, treated as synonymous with ‘brownfield’, should be prioritised for development as long as it is not of ‘high environmental value’. Statutory registers must be required to comply with this requirement and include information about any protected species on brownfield sites. Greater guidance is also needed on what ‘high environmental value’ means, how to identify it and how to prevent biodiversity losses on these sites.

Proposals to extend permitted development rights could have serious implications for bat species. Prior approval requirements must be introduced to ensure that protected species legislation is taken into account. To fail to do so would risk misleading a property owner or developer into potential breaches of the law.

Extending permitted development rights in the name of boosting house building will unfortunately increase the vulnerability of property owners to prosecution should they negatively impact protected species as a result of their actions. The simplest way to prevent this in the context of the proposed policy would be to exclude from the changes properties that host protected species.

7. **How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**

It is estimated that 80 per cent of wildlife and habitat loss is as a result of development. Integrating biodiversity into the built environment is of critical important to sustainable design. However, current biodiversity approaches taken by industry, planners and designers are often tokenistic, contributing little to overall ecological value and resilience.

To address this issue, a four-year partnership study between BCT and University College London was launched in September 2012. The research aims to overcome barriers to integrating biodiversity into the built environment by developing simple tools that measure the ecological value of urban green infrastructure.

BCT are also on the Project Steering Group for the Construction Industry Research Information Associations Biodiversity Interest Group, that ‘work collaboratively across
the construction industry to identify best practice, develop new approaches and to identify and enable innovation’ in relation to the built environment.

BCT urge the Committee to recommend that any National Policy for the Built Environment set a clear vision for how buildings can be designed to protect and enhance biodiversity.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g.) planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills to adequately consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

A recent report from the Association of Local Government Ecologists found that only 35% of local authorities in England currently employ an ecologist. A third of all planners have no in-house ecological expertise. Without capacity or competence to undertake effective assessment of planning applications where biodiversity is a material consideration, local planning authorities are at risk of failing to fulfil statutory duties.

Furthermore, the lack of ecological skills in local planning authorities is reducing efficiency and slowing down the planning process. In particular, a lack of capacity to offer pre-application advice significantly increases the risk that a planning application will be held up further down the line.

The Committee should make recommendations to address the lack of ecological skills in local planning authorities so that policies to design buildings for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity can be implemented. The Planning Inspectorate must also be given the necessary resources to ensure that local planning authorities understand and adhere to national and local biodiversity policies and statutory obligations.

As mentioned above, these recommendations must include ensuring local planning authorities have access to expert ecologists to help them make informed decisions, either in-house or via service level agreements with neighbouring authorities.

Community involvement and community impact

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other
mechanisms that would encourage better design and place making by private sector developers?

It is worth highlighting some of the benefits and challenges associated with valuing the natural environment, and in applying these values to planning and the built environment.

Valuing biodiversity, ecosystem function, and the services they provide is incredibly difficult, as not all of the benefits and values of the natural environment can be quantified. However, this does not mean that these benefits are less essential and valuable than other more measurable assets. In placing an economic focus on the natural environment we run the risk of ignoring some of the essential and irreplaceable benefits the natural environment brings. BCT believe that with appropriate input from those knowledgeable within the field, valuing natural resources could result in more responsible approaches to help safeguard the natural environment and ensure that short term economic gains don’t result in long-term damage to species and the habitats they rely on.

Biodiversity Offsets are an emerging valuation system relevant to the built environment and they have become increasingly accepted as a potential system for counteracting the negative impacts of development.

Biodiversity offsets are conservation actions designed to compensate for the residual impact on biodiversity caused by development and other land use change activities, to ensure no net loss of biodiversity. Establishing an offsets market has the potential to help stem this loss in an efficient manner. It also streamlines the development process by indicating to developers which land is ecologically preferable to build upon. This may help direct local planning decisions and create more transparency throughout the planning process. However, it is essential that these systems and the principles they founded on are fully understood and supported by local government and the staff charged with determining applications against them to ensure that it is applied appropriately.

Current valuation systems are open to interpretation resulting in inconsistencies in their application, particularly with the aforementioned lack of skills in local planning authorities. To ensure compliance with European Directives it is essential that any processes allocate sufficient training, resources and high-level support to ensure efficient and consistent implementation across local planning.

07 October 2015
Examination of Witnesses

Mr Simon de Beer, Planning Policy and Environment Manager, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mr Joe Henry, Service Director, Development Management and Building Control, London Borough of Barnet, and Ms Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Development and Public Protection, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

Q68 The Chairman: Good morning. First, thank you very much for giving up your time, submitting your ideas and being willing to be grilled by us, although I can tell you that it is quite painless. Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each one of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please? This is for the purpose of the record and so the transcribers can put the name to the voice.
Simon de Beer: My name is Simon de Beer. I am the Planning Policy Manager at Bath and North East Somerset Council, which is a smallish district council adjoining the city of Bristol, with a population of around 180,000, half of which lives in the city of Bath.

The Chairman: So you actually call it Bath and Bristol?

Simon de Beer: No, it is Bath and North East Somerset Council. We are part of the West of England group of authorities, which is the former Avon County Council, which after reorganisation became a unitary authority.

Joe Henry: My name is Joe Henry. I am service director of planning and building control for Barnet Council. Barnet is a large local authority in London. We are projected to be one of the most populous boroughs in London next year.

Anneliese Hutchinson: Anneliese Hutchinson. I am the service director for development and public protection at Gateshead Council. For those of you who do not know, that is on the south banks of the Tyne, so we share our urban core with Newcastle. We have both green belt and urban areas and a population of around 200,000 people.

The Chairman: You have a wonderful concert hall there.

Anneliese Hutchinson: We have, yes.

The Chairman: You did not come down this morning, did you?

Anneliese Hutchinson: No, I came last night.

Q69 The Chairman: Thank you all. The first question is: what are the principal challenges faced by local authority planning departments in the current climate and how are they responding to these challenges? Who would like to start? I take it all three of you would like to answer this.

Anneliese Hutchinson: I am happy to start. There are a number of challenges, the first of which is staffing. We are probably staffed to deal with the economic downturn, so the issues are to do with recruitment and retention of staff. Obviously, the economic climate has improved greatly and the universities et cetera have not necessarily caught up with that, and certainly in the north-east we struggle to recruit new planners and to find students to come in, help us out and be trained. We have also lost a lot of expertise with austerity cuts in the local authority—I do not have anybody in my service over the age of 55—and we have a
considerably reduced workforce, so we are having to work more closely with other authorities to share that expertise. For example, we will have the expertise perhaps for flooding in the area, where another authority will have expertise in, say, retail planning.

One of the key things is uncertainty, in that the legislation has changed considerably over time, and often at short notice, which creates its own problems when trying to understand where you need to put your limited resources. On the horizon at the minute is the idea of us having to produce a brownfield land register and local development orders by 2020. Really, I should be putting my service in place to do that now to get to that position by 2020, but there is a lack of detail.

Despite some of the changes, the system is more complicated now. When submitting an application, for example, a lot more information and a considerable amount of upfront investment in terms of the information required, and often some of the things that we have to look at as planners are far more complicated than they were a number of years ago. We need to be experts in sustainable urban drainage systems or the viability of sites, and that has issues as well.

In response, we are obviously much more flexible, we have looked at where we can obtain temporary funding, we are looking at how we can use capital rather than revenue to fund posts, we are looking at how we can work more closely with other authorities, both on a formal and an informal basis, and we look at how to be more commercial in terms of what we can charge for. Also, looking ultimately at why planning is there, we are there to improve economic and housing growth, so we are looking at how, as a council, we can play a role in that vision.

The Chairman: Dealing with that last point, do you think it is also part of your role to try to make the system work quicker and be more customer-friendly?

Anneliese Hutchinson: Definitely, yes. If you get that right, life becomes so much easier. Obviously, the planning system is about making sure that you get the balance between the requirements of local communities, what the developer wants, and the vision for the area. That is my key role as a planner. Sometimes, in some respects, some of the changes have made that more difficult.
The Chairman: I understand absolutely staffing to the downturn. It is nice to know that there is an economic uplift, but it is not great for you. You are a university city. Do you have any link with the university to do sandwich courses for training or apprenticeships?

Anneliese Hutchinson: Yes. Newcastle University runs a planning course and we work very closely with it, both in the work that we do and the help that it gives us on some of our longer-term strategic thinking, but it has reduced its numbers on the courses and the private sector has greatly increased, so obviously if there is a choice it would normally prefer to go to the private sector, I think.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Mr Henry.

Joe Henry: I agree with a lot of what Anneliese said about bringing in the right people. It is a very competitive market now for the right skills. On the question of how we have addressed that, Barnet’s solution is to outsource. We are now a joint venture company between Barnet Council and Capita. Capita has a 51% share in the company and Barnet Council has a 49% share. The whole of operational management has been outsourced to Capita. The idea was that Barnet wanted to ensure that it could maintain a very high level of service, but obviously with the cuts and the austerity pressures that we were under, it was looking for a company to guarantee a certain price, looking to commit to putting additional revenue into the services, and hopefully being able to share in any profit the company may generate.

The contract ensures a very high level of performance at a set cost. The customer focus, which you mentioned, is the key going forward. The key to our model is also growth, by which I mean that we are looking to generate income to bring in additional resources. We have a number of ideas about additional planning services. For example, you can now fast-track a planning application at a premium price. We are the only council in the country doing that at the moment. We offer premium services on pre-application advice; we now have specialist teams on pre-application advice. We give developers the opportunity to pick their own planner if they have a relationship with one, because relationship management is all part of good customer service. There has been a tendency to go away from that because a conflict of interests may be seen as an issue, but we think that the relationship between planners and developers should be a strong partnership to deliver outcome.
There is one challenge: obviously, when you have contracts, you have clauses to ensure a certain level of performance. Targets can drive bad behaviour. You probably hear that in a lot of senses. That is true for planning as well, and we wanted to make sure that, while we had very strong key performance indicators and performance indicators within the actual contract, we still focused on outcome, the key being the customer experience throughout the whole process and coming to the right outcome, which is in the public interest. The key for our growth model is that we want developers to come into Barnet and deliver good, sustainable development. If we are not attractive to them, the company fails and the community loses out, so the contract in a sense is incentivising the right way to deliver the right outcomes.

As for recruiting the right people, we are still competing in the market. We cannot pay over the odds and there is a lot of competition. One of our long-term strategies in Barnet has been to “grow your own”, and we employ people who are non-planners but might have, say, a geography background. We say to them, “We will invest in you to go to university”—and there are plenty of universities in London—“on day release”. Retention of staff is important, so we have golden handcuffs in a sense: we invest in you, we will pay for your courses. Of course, if you want to leave, you can, but you will have to pay back your course fees. That is an incentive to stay with us.

The model has also helped us to attract people, because they see it as something different. We also offer private consultancy work. As Anneliese said, you are competing against the private sector for planners. There is, I suppose, this idea that the local planning authority has one type of planning officers, and private sector planners are different. That gulf in perspective is quite large. We offer both; we offer people the opportunity to work in the private sector as well, because we have our own private consultancy.

**The Chairman**: That is very interesting. Can I ask a supplementary question? I will be quick, because we have to watch the time. First, did you invent this model? Has it been taken up by other local authorities?

**Joe Henry**: This model is unique to Barnet.

**The Chairman**: You should flog it on a consultancy basis.
Joe Henry: We are trying to.

Baroness Rawlings: How long has it been in existence?

Joe Henry: We have been operating it for two years up to last October.

Lord Inglewood: Chairman, presumably they cannot offer consultancy for money in their own area?

Joe Henry: Yes, we do, and I will explain why and how. We form relationships through the planning process when dealing with planning applications. We have a monopoly there, but in terms of the private consultancy we are competing with the outside world. We prefer to work with people, and rather than have these sometimes difficult relations with private consultants acting for people, we say, “We can act for you”, but the people who do that are separated from the decision-makers, so we have a very strong and clear conflict of interest protocol. The industry likes that, so we are developing a strong partnership with developers, and they are not just using us because they think they have an angle in the authority—because they are using us for outside Barnet. We recently acquired a £50,000 job in Dover, because the client was really happy with the service that we were offering in Barnet and saw the skillset that we could transfer into other authorities. They also see it as an advantage that we know how local authorities work.

The Chairman: So long as they do not use that to skim off your good people.

Joe Henry: No, obviously we have to have very good people to do that work, and that is a recruitment challenge again, but you have to have a good balance between business as usual and the consultancy work.

The Chairman: We have to crack on. Mr de Beer, your initial comments, please.

Simon de Beer: I will not repeat anything. Some of the comments I concur with. Our authority in particular is retaining public confidence in the planning system. We in our authority have embraced neighbourhood planning and working with our local communities on the provision of neighbourhood plans. We have advised them that being in control of development in their communities is the way forward for them, which they have understood, and they have done a phenomenal amount of work locally on local village character assessments. For the first time in my history—and I have been a planner for nearly 30 years—our villages are offering us
housing sites. If a site is coming from them, they are quite happy to propose a development site—or two development sites, which I have never seen before—and nearly all our villages are happy to propose a site if it is a product of the work they have done locally. However, because you can give no weight in the planning decision system to a plan until it is adopted, if a developer comes forward midway through the process and puts an application in that is not bad enough to refuse, it usurps the local community’s hard work, and some of them are quite disillusioned with this process where there is a lot of development pressure. The fault is that there is an inability in the system to give any weight to an emerging plan that a community is producing. It has virtually no weight until it is almost right past the process. So whilst the Government and the authorities are promising to hand power to communities, it does not happen because of the nature of the system.

**The Chairman:** Are you going to unblock all that and make sure that you have the answer?

**Simon de Beer:** We are working as best we can to support them. We have devoted an officer to give them assistance so they can progress their plans as quickly as possible.

**Q70 Baroness Andrews:** I have a couple of quick questions. Do you each have a local plan in place?

**Joe Henry:** Yes.

**Simon de Beer:** Yes.

**Baroness Andrews:** So your housing sites are now basically determined. Are they very different in number and distribution from what they would have been under the old regional plan? That is one for each of you.

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** If I could go first, we have a joint plan with Newcastle. Looking at the population change, we had to take sites out of the green belt in our local plan to become housing sites, so we did a strategic land review. Our previous plan obviously did not have those sites in, if that was the question.

**Baroness Andrews:** That was absolutely the question.

**Joe Henry:** We have an adopted plan, but we are still going through a site allocation process. Where there are any opportunities whatever in our area, developers are coming forward very quickly, because of the nature of London.
Simon de Beer: We have an adopted plan. The housing figure is half what the RSS was proposing.

Q71 Baroness Andrews: That is the sort of answer we need. My next question follows from that. You talked about uncertainty. Clearly what no planning department wants is greater uncertainty about planning, yet you have the Housing and Planning Bill coming down the track. What will be the impact of that on your plans, particularly when you put it together with the changes in brownfield policy?

The Chairman: Can I just interject before the answers? Are we sure what the format is likely to be at the end of the parliamentary process on this Bill?

Baroness Andrews: Probably the greatest change will be to zoning, so that will be different. The rest of the Bill will be more targeted at changes in things like housing associations, but zoning presents a real challenge for local authority planning, I think.

The Chairman: Let us not go into that at the moment. If we have time, perhaps we could explore that.

Q72 Baroness Young of Old Scone: I have a factual question for Mr Henry. Is everything outsourced, or do you keep your plan preparation in-house?

Joe Henry: The whole planning service—regeneration, environmental health and highways—has been outsourced.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: So your plan preparation is outsourced as well?

Joe Henry: It was, yes, but the plan was adopted before it was outsourced.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: If you are coming to a review of the plan at some stage, can having it done by an outsourced organisation work?

Joe Henry: It is the same people who are employed, so I see no reason why not.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Thank you.

Q73 Lord Inglewood: Having been a chairman of a development control committee myself, I know that the relationship between the officers and the members is very important. Clearly, I do not want to embarrass you, but have you, over your careers, seen any general change in the nature of the relationship between the officers and the members? Secondly, and following on from that, do you think that the balance between what I might call political
decision-making and professional decision-making, where the officer delegation lies, is right in general? There are two parts to each question to each of you, in short form please.

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** I think it has changed over time for the better, and it is really within the hands of local authorities to make sure that that balance works between the professional officer giving advice and the members making that decision. The key to that, and one of the reasons why it has got better, is partly technology, in that for the planning committee it is easier now to provide full information in relation to the application that is being considered. We work with members to make sure that we train them in relation to any new issues on the horizon and that we get good legal advice.

The other key thing that has helped in smoothing the way, which is probably related to some of the things that Mr Henry said, is that we ensure that members have pre-application presentations, so at the first thought of a developer wanting to develop a big site in the area, or one that we know is likely to be contentious, we will ask the developer to come in front of the committee, and any other members of the council who want to come along, to give a presentation of their thoughts, so that we get a feel for the issues in the local area.

**Joe Henry:** Obviously member engagement is key. I have noticed that they have more confidence in officers, and we have seen an increase in the delegated powers that are given to them. That is key for a quicker decision-making process. Four years ago, 85% of all decisions were made by officers. Now it is 96%. The comfort that we give to members is that if they want to call an application in, they can. That is how we sell giving us more powers. They are on board in terms of the need to deliver more housing, but obviously the challenge is that people want to protect the status quo. That will always be a challenge. There will be the odd occasion where members go against officer advice, but we make sure we have training that outlines the clear risks of going to appeal. The Planning Inspectorate can of course overrule a decision and allow something. Also, we may lose contributions that have been offered, and more onerous conditions that members might have wanted and the developer was happy to put on before might not be re-imposed. There is also the financial risk of being unreasonable in the approach: if you cannot robustly defend a decision—and we are clear to members about this—there could be a big financial penalty in terms of costs.
Lord Inglewood: Taken in the round, at the most general level, are members quite sensible, in your own authority and elsewhere?

Joe Henry: In my experience in Barnet, yes.

Simon de Beer: On the whole, yes. The officers are aware that they have a different driver—a political driver, and it is about being wise to that. But at the end of the day in the planning preparation process, people make recommendations based on technical information, not necessarily on a political basis, and once they have understood that—and we have member training and a close working relationship—they realise that will be the outcome, so they need to take the technical aspects in sight and not just their own political drivers.

Q74 Baroness Whitaker: I have a question about outsourcing. I am very interested in the Barnet example. My question is first to Mr Henry on the challenges and opportunities that are associated with outsourcing. In particular, I have been very interested to see how you assure yourself that the design of the whole place, place-making, is properly contributed by Capita. I think you said that you outsourced health.

Joe Henry: Environmental health.

Baroness Whitaker: What is the liaison between Capita and your other outsourced functions in the areas that affect the whole of a place, such as health, transport, environmental protection? That is one area I would be very interested to hear about. The other is the management of your relationship not with officials of any kind, in or out, but the ratepayer and the education of the ratepayer to accept developments that might be a bit of a surprise or long-standing problems. For instance, do you have any Traveller sites in Barnet?

Joe Henry: No.

Baroness Whitaker: Anyway, the management of the relationship with the citizen is the other area I would be interested in, in view of outsourcing.

Joe Henry: The way we operate has not really changed in terms of who we consult, how we deal with interested parties who are engaged and statutory consultees. Nothing has changed in that respect. In terms of the pressure that may come about in coming to an outcome more quickly, because obviously the more quickly you come to an outcome, the cheaper it is to deliver that outcome, there are a lot of checks in place, the key ones being the public and
members. As I said, they can call any application they want to committee, and that is where the check is. We also monitor how many we refuse and how many we approve.

**Baroness Whitaker**: Am I right that you consider the involvement of local people after proposals have been made? You do not involve them in the early development of the vision for Barnet.

**Joe Henry**: Like most authorities, we encourage developers to engage early on with the community.

**Baroness Whitaker**: On specific proposals?

**Joe Henry**: On any specific proposal, yes. When they speak to us through pre-application, we advise them to engage with the community to try and get them on board, because that will make it easier to go through the process, and ultimately, if it has to go to a committee, if the committee can see that they have engaged with the community and the community are on board, or that they have at least tried to address what the community has put forward—you will always end up with a product which the community may not want overall because it is close to them but you have to look at the public interest, but at least they have tried to address those concerns—that is seen as a big positive.

**Baroness Whitaker**: Just one more on this aspect: how does that allow an opportunity for the local people to think about the externalities of a particular development—say, the impact on amenity, leisure, transport or health?

**Joe Henry**: That will still be considered, as it always was, and that is a very important consideration. We have to have robust justification of all our planning decisions.

**Baroness Whitaker**: What about the general place-making function on the part of Capita? How are you sure they have the state of the art there?

**Joe Henry**: There are strong relationships and engagement with the main client, which is Barnet Council. They have commissioners who we are always working with. We have a champion for designing the place, a director of place. That was a specific part of the contract, and was not a title or position before we outsourced, to try to ensure that we are delivering to the aspirations the council envisaged.
Baroness Whitaker: Before Lady Andrews comes in, I would like to hear from the other two witnesses the arguments for and against in-house and outsourcing, particularly in view of the two considerations that we have aired so far.

Anneliese Hutchinson: We have considered outsourcing. Obviously every authority has had to consider the best way of delivering its services in the future. For us, in terms of development, compared to what is happening in the south-east, there is not that much going on. We do not make a profit from planning alone. If it were to be considered, it would have to be part of a package with other uses. For example, our planning fees last year were just over £500,000, so not a huge amount. The other issue is exactly what you mentioned: the place-shaping element. When we have had the discussion with our councillors, one of the benefits of keeping everything in-house is that we have place-shaping very much at the forefront. It is considered at cabinets and in portfolio briefings, and there has been some concern about how we would maintain that through local decision-making if it were outsourced. We have also looked at what other authorities have done, and some are starting to change. When we are talking about shared services, those that have jumped earlier on and gone with a particular package now have less flexibility but face much stronger budget concerns than a few years ago. The issue for most local authorities in the north-east is trying to keep things in-house so that we can grow our way out of this and encourage economic growth, and that gives us the benefits to help subsidise other services in the council.

Simon de Beer: In light of the financial pressures, we continue to look at different ways of providing the service, and we have never got very far down the road of considering outsourcing. The most we have done is put elements of the service out, particularly development management, if there are high workloads or particular expertise needed. We have generally found, though, that the in-house approach provides the service more economically, and we retain the benefit of a cohesive and effective provision of service because we can retain the knowledge that you build up doing a bit of work. If you put a project out to propose, as we did to a consultancy to make proposals for some of our large greenbelt site releases, it can take a lot of time to brief them and bring them up to speed with local
knowledge. Once the consultancy had done the work, it left and that was all lost. If we had kept it internally, we would have had the benefit of that.

**Baroness Whitaker:** So it was a loss of value from your point of view?

**Simon de Beer:** In that wider context, yes, and it was fairly expensive. That bit of work cost us nearly £30,000—it was a fairly high-level project—whereas internally we could have done it with staff at a lower cost.

**The Chairman:** Do you make massive use of the developments in technology to communicate with the ratepayers, as they are called—council tax payers? I have seen towns where the local post office has the local news, say the West Ham television news, and you see that in pubs. I will not mention my town, but that is what happens, so when people queue to buy things in the post office they see this, and it is a way of communicating with them, for example, that there is a meeting in the town hall. Have you thought about that? Some companies are doing just that. It might be a way. People’s homes are their biggest investment and interest, and we want to make sure they have a bit of an input, if not a huge amount. Has anybody heard of this or thought about it?

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** I know that some authorities broadcast their planning committees on the web. We have certainly tried to make the best use of technology, for example in presentations using Street View, satellite photos—that type of thing. In terms of the local plan, we tried to do some things on Facebook and that kind of thing, and it was not that successful. We engaged with all our voluntary organisations and tried to build on that. If we knew that the local history society would be at a local pub on a Tuesday night, we went and talked to them, and we found by having a face-to-face dialogue on some of the very important issues we may be able to communicate much more closely.

**The Chairman:** I do not want to disrupt the discussion, and it is not a question, but I just thought of this point of trying to make the contact between the customer and the provider.

**Q75 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Does the national system of planning fees affect the ability of councils to carry out their planning functions? Do you have a view on whether or not fees should fully devolve to local authorities? Separately, are there other initiatives that councils
can undertake to increase their planning income? Mr Henry has already mentioned some, of course, but I would be grateful if you could deal with the first two questions initially.

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** Yes and yes. Our fees do not fully cover the costs of dealing with a planning application, so it would be wonderful if we could meet our full costs through planning fees. It is subsidised by the taxpayer, and it may not affect everybody, particularly in determination of planning applications. We recently calculated what the local plan had added to our economy, and in council tax, business rates and the new homes bonus alone it was £104 million between now and 2030, and £1.7 billion in terms of the supply chain. If you look at that for a very small authority like Gateshead and what it would be for somewhere like Barnet, obviously we have a significant impact on the economy, but at the minute, particularly looking at how local authority finance might change over coming years, I would need to be much more self-sufficient, and being able to get back the full costs of dealing with a planning application would be very helpful. Like Mr Henry, we charge for pre-application advice. We work with other authorities either on a mutual aid basis or by allowing officers to maybe work with them on particular specialisms. We are working with the development community to see what they would be prepared to pay for, but obviously, first and foremost, it is about customer service.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** So that we get a feel for what this actually means, taking one case in the past, how much would a planning fee have been and what would it be if you charged full cost?

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** I thought you might ask me that, so I have brought some figures, particularly in relation to some of the more recent changes in relation to how we now deal with permitted development. In the past a fee might be charged for a planning application for some of the smaller developments. There has been a change in the system, so now a determination of prior approval is requested and that attracts a smaller fee. In Gateshead we have had 116 of those types of applications. If we had had them in as planning applications, it would have been £19,000, so we have lost about £19,000 on that. There have been changes to the system there. We reckon that in the last year we have lost nearly £4,000 on that as well. That is a very small example of it.
The other thing is that, say, an application for a quarry would obviously involve a lot of local discussion about the environmental impacts, lots of liaison with the Environment Agency and other statutory consultees. It can take a long time to get the right decision in the right place, and the fee might be 20% of the cost.

**Joe Henry:** Fees are set nationally, and part of our concern is obviously that costs to deliver in certain areas are a lot higher than in other areas. In that sense, the fees are not properly reflective. I agree that they do not cover the cost of providing the planning service. Our response to that has been, as I just pointed out, additional services. For example, our enhanced pre-application service is projected to generate £500,000 by the end of this year, which is equivalent to all the planning fees Ms Hutchinson just mentioned in Gateshead. All those services are subsidising our services to the point where we are self-reliant, and are actually producing a little bit more than our costs, I suspect.

The cost of applications is an interesting point. We did a benchmark exercise with some local authorities about five years ago; the Government were looking at devolving planning fees around that time, so we were doing that exercise. We deal with 3,000 to 4,000 planning applications for householder extensions—lots of people want to do extensions to houses in Barnet. The fee for that at the moment is about £170, and when we did the analysis of the cost to deliver that, five years ago for Barnet it was £230 to 240, from memory, but the London average was £500, so if fees were devolved you would see individual house extension fees going up quite significantly, because meeting that cost could be justified. Major applications and other applications in a sense subsidise those smaller applications, so the residents we are trying to look after actually get a benefit from the major applications fee. All the other work that we do, all the planning performance agreements that we have the developers, all feeds into subsidising a lot of work we do. For a lot of the permitted development stuff that has come in recently, the fee is nowhere near the cost to administer, but we absorb that through all the additional services I have just mentioned. We always forget about the Cinderella of planning: enforcement. There is a considerable cost to deliver that, and very little income. There is also plan-making.

**The Chairman:** Do you have anything to add, Mr de Beer?
**Simon de Beer:** I would just add that the cost of delivering, as my colleagues have said, is topped up by the taxpayer, and that makes the service vulnerable to cuts, which then would impact on service delivery and the service the customer receives. In somewhere like Bath and North East Somerset, Bath, which is a world heritage site, some of the very complex proposals we receive are obviously nowhere near covered by the cost of a planning application, so we do what colleagues do pre-application: we give proposals a dedicated officer to take a scheme through and have a development team approach whereby an applicant can present and discuss a proposal with a variety of specialists—a paid-for service—to get an early understanding of what improvements they could make to their scheme before submitting it for a planning application.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

**Q76 Earl of Lytton:** I am interested in this question of charging the full rate for fees, particularly what Ms Hutchinson said about the relatively low economic values being dealt with in her part of the world as against the London Borough of Barnet. Would these fees be disproportionately higher in, say, the north-east compared with Barnet, where there is perhaps more activity, or in Bath and North East Somerset? Secondly, would you charge for listed building work, where a lot of applications have to be made for things that would not normally attract planning? I declare an interest as an owner of several listed buildings. Thirdly, how does all this, in terms of the permitted development policy the Government are pursuing, interact with your ability or otherwise to make Article 4 directions, which I believe is still a facility? Chairman, that is where a local planning authority can make a direction that certain permitted development rights are removed within the authority area or part of the authority area. Those are the things I am interested in on that score.

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** In terms of devolving fees locally, we have had to do a lot to be more efficient. My understanding is also that we could charge only in terms of recovering our costs. It is not something that we would be able to make a profit on, so the costs would reflect the actual cost of determining that application. Certainly across the board, with the help of the Planning Advisory Service, we are all looking at how we can cut those costs and be as efficient as possible. With that national overview, I would hope that would help in setting fees.
Certainly building control has local fee-setting, and it has had various working groups that have worked together to come up with a regional approach so, based on all the information that it has on the costs to deal with particular applications, it has come up with a level playing field on that.

Listed buildings are probably something that, again, would need to be considered locally. It is difficult to comment at this time, as obviously there are particular costs associated with listed buildings, and they would have to be considered in light of that.

In terms of Article 4 directions, yes, there is that availability, which means that we can look at areas where we may not want permitted development rights to be considered, but there is a considerable amount of work associated with that, so it is done infrequently, basically because of the amount of time and effort involved in bringing together an Article 4 direction.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** I wonder if I could have an answer to my third question: are there other initiatives that councils can undertake to increase their planning income? Mr Henry, you have had a go at it. Could you let the others have a go first and, if you want to add anything, come in?

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** I mentioned charging for pre-application advice. The other thing we are looking at is how we can offer our specialist services to other local authorities, such as tree advice or landscape advice. We have spoken to local agents and asked if they would be willing to pay for a lesser, quicker service, and their answer has been no. Again, that might be because in the north-east we deal with things quite quickly anyway, so we have to look at that. There is a limit. Obviously the other issue is that we can charge but we have to look at only recovering our costs; we cannot make a profit on a lot of what we do.

**Simon de Beer:** Particularly focusing in our case on planning performance agreements with developers on particular schemes, offering them a particular service through an agreement that we give an enhanced level of service with a dedicated officer does generate income to cover the additional costs.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Is this significant or is it at the margin?

**Simon de Beer:** I do not have the figures, I am afraid, but it does make quite a bit of difference to the council’s income.
Joe Henry: Planning performance agreements can make a significant difference to bringing in income. I have mentioned the enhanced service that we do pre-application, and I gave a figure of what is coming in now. The fast-track service is a premium service in a sense, but it is an optional service, so just because someone might say they do not want it, it is still an option, and I would rather give that option. That is our philosophy: we want to give as many services as possible to the customer, but they are optional. That is key to everything we do.

Another service we offer which residents really like is that if you want to build an extension to your house, we say, “We can send someone down there and tell you what you can do under permitted development, but if you want to go a bit bigger, you need planning permission”. We will do the drawings and submit the application for you, and a colleague will process the application. From beginning to end the process is very fast. Then we link that with the building control service. In a sense, we are trying to concentrate on a one-stop shop approach to delivering services. I apologise; what was the other question?

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: Other initiatives that a council can undertake to increase their planning income.

Joe Henry: I have mentioned the ones we are undertaking.

The Chairman: I am very taken with the option one. I think that is a brilliant way of looking at it.

Joe Henry: It is just an option.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: You get a different feel depending on where you are from what the development pressures are on it. If you are in an area where there is a lot of development pressure, it is easier to pass on costs and to have other services than it is if you do not have those pressures, you really want development and you do not want to discourage it. Is that a fair assessment of the situation?

Joe Henry: I would say, from my experience talking to developers, that they are more than happy to pay premium fees because of the land values in London. Every day is money. That is why, while the fees can be a lot higher than the planning application fees themselves, they see the benefits. Planning performance agreements are key, and most authorities now adopt
them. Where they get a bespoke, dedicated resource to deal with one particular application and they are more than happy to pay for it.

Baroness Andrews: The logic of that suggests, however, that there ought to be some sort of equalisation between the resources available for planning authorities—top-slicing some of your income and that of other boroughs that are doing really well—to be redistributed to local authorities that need all the help they can get to create imaginative development strategies. Otherwise, we are going to have a polarisation of planning resource in capacity across the country. Would you agree with that?

Joe Henry: We need an incentive to generate additional income. If we devolve planning fee setting, the concern I will have—I do not think it is shared by any of my peers—is that we are a monopoly in planning. In my opinion, there would be an upward pressure on costs and there would be no strong incentive to deliver cost savings. You can always justify increasing your fees because you say that you need to do this additional work. I am service director of building control as well, and we do local fee setting for building control, but it competes against the market. If we do not set it at the right level, you can use another service, whereas in planning you have a monopoly; you have no choice but to go to the local planning authority.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: As a bit of a sideline, can I just challenge that? I used to run the Environment Agency. We were a monopoly service, and the downward pressure on our fee structure from British business and because we set ourselves RPI-minus targets every year was huge. So it does not always mean it goes up; other fee offers are available.

Joe Henry: Going back to whether we should have a fee for listed building works, I would advocate that we should not, because there is a lot of work involved in listed building applications. They are exempt from fees at the moment, but it is very important to protect our heritage, and the last thing we want is to encourage people to do works without permission and have a significant detrimental impact on the heritage value. So I would strongly advocate that we do not set fees at the local level for listed building applications, because I see the benefit of not doing that.

Q77 Lord Inglewood: Mr Henry touched on this. Plan-making seems to me to be a community benefit that is being created there. Surely, the community as a whole should pay for it through
council tax, the rates. Secondly, specifically for Mr Henry, did you receive criticism on the grounds that the premium service was one law for the rich and another one for the poor?

**Joe Henry:** Yes, and I addressed that. I had to get it through a committee and that problem was voiced to me. I was clear that the only way this could work in the perception of the public was not to have a two-tier system, and the only way to demonstrate that is if the ordinary service—maybe that is the wrong word to use—is still an excellent service when you benchmark it against other local authorities. So long as we can demonstrate—and that is the challenge that I have to keep meeting—that the ordinary service is still excellent, if someone wants to pay for the Rolls-Royce of all services, why not?

**Lord Inglewood:** What about my comment to the three of you about whether plan-making should be paid for by the council tax/rate payer?

**Anneliese Hutchinson:** Obviously, it does benefit the whole of the community, and the spatial plan is almost the embodiment of each council’s sustainable community strategy, so yes, it is for the benefit of the community. Maybe though, when you look at the whole of it, the delivery of some of the things in the plan becomes difficult because of the difference, say, between the north and the south and the workload required to get the vision from that plan into bricks and mortar on the ground. That is where there may be a gap, in that there is not the viability in the development increase in the north as opposed to the south, and therefore maybe not the ability to fund the staff in a way to make that happen.

**Simon de Beer:** The outcome of a plan-making would be that certain landowners would benefit from land, and that is recouped to the community through CIL or the new homes bonus. At the moment plan-making is subsidised, it is paid for by the ratepayer, and the community gets the benefit through CIL payments and Section 106 contributions.

**Lord Inglewood:** My point is simply, looking at it conceptually, whether that should be paid for by the wider community or by the planning applications.

**Simon de Beer:** At the moment it is by the wider community.

**Lord Inglewood:** Yes, but is that right?

**Simon de Beer:** It is. The planning fees do not even cover the development management process.
Joe Henry: You could argue that the other people who benefit from plan-making are the developers.

Lord Inglewood: But they are paying for the applications they put in anyway. I am just raising it as a point in the debate; I am not taking any sides in the argument.

Q78 Baroness Rawlings: Could I ask Mr Henry this? This seems like a completely new approach—new to me—a different approach. Is this Capita’s first project like this? Have other councils taken on this format because they see the success of it, or is it mainly because of the area you are in? All three of you mentioned that fees do not cover the costs, and the costs of enforcement, and I wondered in what other areas fees are raised that would cover the costs. I am sorry; there are a lot of questions here. Finally—a question I think you have sort of answered—what has been the impact on planning teams of the national reforms, such as the extension of permitted development rights? I was really interested in the first one.

Joe Henry: I apologise. What was the first question again?

Baroness Rawlings: Is it Capita’s first project, and have other councils followed suit?

Joe Henry: There are a couple of outsourced planning services. There is one in north Tyneside, and there has been a secondment model in Salford, but they operate differently; it is a completely different model. The model we work under is unique; no one else has adopted that model. We have tried to talk to other local authorities to see whether they are interested in buying into our model, but planning is quite difficult to sell as a service that you could outsource because of the political pressures to keep it in-house, and you hear the benefits of keeping it in-house. What was the second question?

Baroness Rawlings: The fees do not cover the costs and the costs of enforcement, so do you raise fees from other areas to make ends meet, if it is going to be on a profitable basis?

Joe Henry: In the model that we have adopted, enforcement was seen as key. It was a member priority, so we had to protect the resources that go into enforcement. There are a number of key performance indicators, planning performance indicators, which have to be met contractually, so the risk of delivering enforcement, the cost of it, is all met by Capita. The council has a commitment to deliver those services at a certain cost, and Capita absorbs
that cost. Obviously, we then have to generate additional income through other avenues to pay for that.

**The Chairman**: Do you constantly update your negotiations with Capita?

**Joe Henry**: No, the contract is set in stone now.

**The Chairman**: For how long?

**Joe Henry**: Ten years.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: Costs as well over ten years?

**Joe Henry**: Yes. There are uplifts. I do not know the mechanisms of the contract in detail but there are changes in fee base that come in, and actually the cost to the council decreases over time, because it is anticipated that, as the business grows, with benefit to Capita and the company itself, which the council then share in any profit, which we see as a justification to reduce the core fee, as we call it.

**Q79 Baroness Andrews**: I want to ask you about the extension of development rights, and I would like to ask you one thing in particular. This is one of the things that is really changing your room for manoeuvre, is it not, within local authorities, and it presumably will be affecting you in quite different ways. I have a specific question for Bath and North East Somerset because of the weight of your historic environment and the impact on conservation areas. One of the things we are concerned about is whether, by extending permitted development rights, there is any danger that we are going to degrade the historic fabric, because people will be trying to manoeuvre around it, as it were. Are you concerned about these issues? What are the things that really concern you about the impact of that extension?

**Simon de Beer**: We have found that introduction quite unhelpful, and even quite perverse in its outcome. To my understanding, it was intended to help flexibility, to respond to the housing crisis, and for the areas where there is surplus or vacant offices, to convert that to residential. In the case of our authority, we have made provision for sufficient housing to meet our identified need, including land out of the green belt, including redeveloping brownfield sites. We are quite a growth-oriented authority. We are trying to maximise or change the nature of employment from a heavily retail, low-paid, base—which is surprising in Bath, but that is the case—tourism and retail base, to more of a high-tech, office-based
centre. A lot of our high-grade office has now gone to residential. We did not need to go there; there was a sufficient supply of housing. Also, some of the key office space—for instance, some of the starter office units and mixed use offices, and also some of the seedbed office base—now also has permission in principle to convert to residential.

**Baroness Andrews:** That is change of use regs, is it, rather than permitted development?

**Simon de Beer:** They have change of use under the permitted development rights. That did not apply previously in conservation areas or heritage sites. The extension now does, so whilst we were marginally affected before in parts of the district, we are going to be potentially severely affected by the extension, which does relate to the city of Bath.

**Baroness Andrews:** With Bath, because of the historic protections on so much of your fabric and your conservation areas, what are you most concerned about, and how will you be able to fight that?

**Simon de Beer:** We could consider an Article 4 direction. We did consider seeking exemption in the first round.

**Baroness Andrews:** Take a whole conservation area out?

**Simon de Beer:** That is a possibility, in order to safeguard at least our higher grade office base. We were expecting to lose some of the old Georgian office stock back to residential, which would not have been a particular problem; we could have coped with that. What is happening is not so much that that is going—that is staying in office; what we are losing is the change of use from modern office space to apartments.

**Baroness Andrews:** Does it lend itself to apartments?

**Simon de Beer:** It is not necessarily a good living environment. It is more the loss of the opportunity to start-up businesses that is the problem. We have units that are full of start-up businesses, the seedbed of economic growth, which the whole thrust of this proposal I suppose is intended to address, losing the office space and their base as a community group of businesses to residential. There is a loss of needed space for offices, and in an area where there is pressure, in Bath, we have very limited space to create new offices because of the heritage situation.
Baroness Andrews: So it is actually working against the development presumption in the NPPF, is it?

Simon de Beer: Absolutely perversely, contrary to what it was intended to achieve.

Baroness Andrews: That is very interesting. Thank you very much. What about the experiences in the other areas?

Joe Henry: The office-to-residential permitted development rights have led to a large number of offices being converted into residential. You could argue, though, that that is helping to deliver housing units, but the problem is twofold, as has been touched upon. One is that the offices could have existing people in them who have had businesses going for many years. We had an example recently where a whole office block was converted. It had existing tenants, and it was converted into 112 residential units. I understand that the whole floor space was occupied by businesses, and they had to find somewhere else. The other disbenefit is that there are no planning standards, so you could theoretically build rabbit hutches, as people sometimes refer to them, if you wanted to, whereas planning standards that define a good-quality size of units are almost set in stone. They still have to meet the building regulations. I am just talking about space standards.

Baroness Andrews: This is really important. You are saying that when you convert an office space to housing, you are not required to observe planning standards in relation to space.

Joe Henry: Correct.

Baroness Andrews: That is extraordinary. We did not know that. Or presumably design. What about ventilation? Building standards presumably cover that.

Joe Henry: You do not have to meet anything, so there could be environmental concerns. No, actually, if you have environmental concerns, we can raise them through the prior notification process, so there is some safeguard.

The other permitted development rights that I think you are concerned about are extensions to houses. That affects Barnet significantly, because we have a lot of suburban dwellings. They are generous but in conservation areas, which I think is your main concern, I do not think you can actually apply for the prior notification. In any case, as touched upon, if local authorities feel they need extra control, they can impose an Article 4 direction.
**Baroness Andrews:** What about the loss of gardens? Presumably that will happen. Are you losing a lot of garden space, for example?

**Joe Henry:** We will be losing garden space, but a typical garden in Barnet is quite large, so the extent of the extension would not have a significant impact on character. In inner London areas, where gardens are smaller, you might see that being an issue.

**The Chairman:** Can I just make a point to the members of the Committee? As always, we are running out of time, so can we keep supplementary questions short?

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** This is very important.

**The Chairman:** You can get important things in a few words too. Limit it to three minutes.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** In three minutes, can you tell me your feeling about the Housing and Planning Bill and the zoning proposition that is virtually de facto brought about by it? A minute each.

**Simon de Beer:** In relation to the zoning, the issues will be similar and will relate to the lack of control over quality of the new scheme. We are not quite sure how much control there will be. We often find, without being rude to developers, that a lot of their schemes are considerably improved through the process of a planning application. Some of the schemes that are submitted are quite poor in terms of the design and the urban design, and they are improved through the planning application process, whereas with permission in principle I can see that all we are going to be able to control, as I understand it, would be some of the very basic highways issues, plus flooding. I am not quite sure what the other elements are until we see the scheme, but I can imagine it would quite easily lead to a poor quality scheme in some of the key parts of our towns.

**The Chairman:** Are you following its development in the Commons at the moment?

**Simon de Beer:** At a high level.

**Joe Henry:** Yes, not at a detailed level. We wait for the detail before we put too much resource into trying to second-guess.

**The Chairman:** Good point.

**Joe Henry:** I share the views of Mr de Beer. I do not think it will impact Barnet, so I have not really looked in detail at what the impact would be.
Anneliese Hutchinson: I would echo that. The devil will be in the detail, and obviously that is not available at the minute so it is difficult to tell. I have some concerns in that I think the existing planning system works quite well, and I am not really convinced as to what improvements zoning will lead to.

Q80 Baroness Whitaker: This is the obverse of Lady Andrews’ question really. To what extent does the present system allow you to preserve workplace sites that are threatened, when they contribute to jobs and economic development?

Joe Henry: We have a policy to protect workplaces.

Baroness Whitaker: But under the system of laws now.

Joe Henry: We mentioned the permitted development of offices.

Baroness Whitaker: It enables you nevertheless to safeguard workplaces. We cannot safeguard the offices, but we can serve an Article 4. The problem with serving an Article 4 to stop permitted development rights of offices to residential is that you have to pay compensation for the difference in values, so we would have to give 12 months’ notification of what we intend to do. If you do that, you are not liable to compensation.

Baroness Whitaker: So it is cumbersome.

Lord Clement-Jones: That is for an individual office block, is it?

Joe Henry: You could do an Article 4 for the whole borough area but you have to have a justification for it, and the Secretary of State has to sign it off, so we cannot willy-nilly say that we want to serve an Article 4; there has to be robust justification for it. As I say, we would always give 12 months’ notification because of the cost implications of compensation.

Anneliese Hutchinson: Interestingly, under national policy we can safeguard land for housing but we cannot safeguard it for employment, so one of the issues might be looking at the urban areas for the future and where you might want offices. That cannot be safeguarded through the local plan.

The Chairman: Do you intend through your trade associations or whatever groupings—the National Federation of Builders, et cetera—at least to give input when the Bill comes, for example, to the House of Lords from the House of Commons? Has it struck you that this might be a way to do things?
Joe Henry: We go through our professional bodies. The Planning Officers Society is one that we would feed into, and then there would be one view put forward that represents all of us, because we feel that is stronger than doing it individually.

Q81 Lord Clement-Jones: I am going to ask what sounds like rather a general question but it has a specific point. In your experience, how can local planning teams deliver more efficient and effective planning, and what plan-making models are available to achieve this? What we are really trying to get at is that, given your experience with joint arrangements, the duty to co-operate, upcoming combined authorities, do you think those can deliver that in the light of regional spatial strategies being abolished?

Anneliese Hutchinson: I think there has been a gap as a result of regional spatial strategies going, and the duty to co-operate has been a difficult procedure to follow to try to fill that gap. Certainly in the north-east we are very keen, across all the authorities, to have economic growth, and that has been demonstrated in our SEP, our strategic economic plan, which has been produced by the local enterprise partnerships. There is a difference between that and the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of what it tells us to do for local plans, so there is an ambition, and then there is a spatial plan, which is based on the evidence, and there is a gap between the two. I think the regional spatial strategies helped us to have that discussion. It might well be that combined authorities will help us do that.

Lord Clement-Jones: You might return to some of the larger—

Anneliese Hutchinson: Yes.

Lord Clement-Jones: That will include a broader range of matters that you will be able to plan for as well?

Anneliese Hutchinson: Yes. That is one of the things we are looking at in our devolution bid for the north-east. We have suggested that we probably need a north-east spatial strategy, and one of the things we are tasking ourselves with is what form that will be in, whether it would be a strategy document or something different, and what would it need to cover.

Lord Clement-Jones: I have seen you have this great agreement with government. Does that allow you to do that under a plan?
Anneliese Hutchinson: That is one of the asks. Obviously, we are still having negotiations on what that will mean. Basically, the duty to co-operate is across seven authorities in the north-east, but they are all at very different stages in the plan-making process, so it is difficult to get agreement on where you want it to go in the overall strategic view.

Lord Clement-Jones: So people will be relying on your experience in your current joint working in order to go across seven authorities. Is that going to happen?

Anneliese Hutchinson: Yes, obviously to get our local plan—Newcastle and Gateshead’s joint plan—through, we had to work with our neighbours anyway, and that dialogue is ongoing, but at the same time the seven authorities have been developing the devolution deal and a strategic economic plan. Things also change over time, so it is definitely work in progress.

Lord Clement-Jones: We will come back to all the resource issues and so on and so forth, I have no doubt.

Anneliese Hutchinson: Definitely, working together makes life easier and has probably meant reduced cost. We shared the cost of the evidence base. Some of the evidence base we did across seven authorities, some we did across two. I think it helped with the inquiry costs in that we shared them between ourselves and Newcastle. We had a critical friend there as well, which was great in terms of getting into the detail of draft policies, actually having somebody sitting at your elbow saying, “Does that make sense? What are you trying to get to?” That has all helped, but the duty to co-operate has not necessarily filled the gap left by the regional spatial strategy.

Lord Clement-Jones: But your new structure might?

Anneliese Hutchinson: Yes.

Lord Clement-Jones: That is very interesting, because you have two entirely different contexts here. London borough?

Joe Henry: Obviously, a strategic view and vision is critical in plan-making. We could say that we are lucky in London, because we have that vision through the London plan, so, unlike colleagues, we feel comfortable in that set-up.

Lord Clement-Jones: In terms of relationships with neighbouring boroughs, you have a very clear structure.
Joe Henry: We have to be compliant with the London plan, so that brings us all together with one strategic vision.

Lord Clement-Jones: London exceptionalism in a sense already.

The Chairman: Whose idea was that? Was it Livingstone?

Joe Henry: I cannot remember, to be honest.

Lord Clement-Jones: But it is longstanding?

Joe Henry: It is longstanding, yes.

The Chairman: That is interesting.

Simon de Beer: I think it is a big ask for a small authority like Bath and North East Somerset, which has only 180,000 people, to provide both a strategic planning level and the detailed planning level. In the first round of post-RSS plans in our area the wheels almost came off all the plans. We went through a really arduous process, trying to work together, trying to work out the duty to co-operate. We managed to get through it, but I think it was a very inefficient process and took a lot longer and was a more expensive way to write a plan. We missed that level of strategic direction.

In the first review process we are joining the authorities around Bristol to do a joint spatial plan, so there will be one statutory plan covering the four authorities, to deal with high-level issues like housing, employment and infrastructure. One thing we hugely benefit from is being able to test the housing figure through some kind of examination process before we finalise our spatial strategy, but the system does not allow for it at the moment and you end up going to an examination with a housing figure and a strategy untested, and if the housing figure is wrong, the strategy is wrong.

Lord Clement-Jones: Do you have more clout as a result of having done that exercise with the other authorities?

Simon de Beer: There are benefits in terms of economies of scale, as was discussed; it is cheaper to have one commission to do the housing requirement. In terms of clout, the biggest challenge is for the politicians, because you are dealing with a big city and three surrounding rural authorities, and a city that is full and needs to overspill, so technically you can do the work but it is down to the politicians in the end. There is no obligation, so the vulnerability at
some point is that if one of them does not like what is coming their way they can pull out of the process, and I think that is a big vulnerability, which we have lost from the strategy planning.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Does the duty to co-operate provide any pressure, or could this have happened without any duty, so to speak?

**Simon de Beer:** I think it has been a bit of a lever, but it has been a very difficult learning process as to what the duty to co-operate actually means. Pressures such as five-year housing land supply are a greater lever on our political masters to actually get on and review the up-to-date plans, because obviously they want to stay in control of the development.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Can you see moving forward in terms of some sort of combined authority in your region?

**Simon de Beer:** The four authorities have made a devolution bid that entails a combined authority, but obviously the devil is in the detail in terms of precisely how that works and who has the power: the elected mayor or the authority leaders.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Quite. What is the deal?

**The Chairman:** Of course, you are very widespread geographically.

**Simon de Beer:** We are, but Bristol and the three surrounding authorities are a surprisingly compact sub-region.

**Q82 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Is green belt policy still fit for purpose, or would you like to see changes?

**Simon de Beer:** It depends on what you are trying to achieve. I know that is a bit of a glib answer, but it has been extremely successful in terms of containing the growth of large cities. We have a Bristol and Bath green belt, which has been there for the last 50 years, and has been very effective in doing it. However, we have managed to remove bits of the green belt where we have shown that there is a particular need to take land out. In our adopted plan we had to take four locations out of the green belt. They were not massively strategic; they were about 300 to 500 houses, so they were not large, but we were able to do it. We have been able to protect the outward sprawl of settlements and keep land open and meet the needs for development in a sustainable way. In a sense, from our point of view—and I know that
many criticise green belt for forcing unsustainable patterns—it has been fairly successful in the Bath and North East Somerset context.

Joe Henry: I would agree. Green belt policy, if you are looking to restrict or stop growth into those areas, has been successful. The challenge, though, is that sometimes you might identify some green belt areas and could question how valuable they are. You can review, but it is quite a cumbersome and long process. You might only identify one little site, but you have to review the green belt in the whole area to justify taking something out. If there were an easier way to take out maybe a bit of land in the green belt in isolation, that might be helpful.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: You do not think that will be death by a thousand cuts?

Joe Henry: I am just putting a view forward and suggesting that you might identify one area. I do not think it is right to put a process in place that is very cumbersome and long just to try to stop you doing something in isolation. In a sense, if the will was there to take a small, isolated area out, you will go through the whole review process, but why go through all that when you are clear about what you want to deliver? There could be proper checks and challenges. I do not know what the solution is; I am just saying that it could be an issue if you identify one particular site.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: You raise the question of small sites that you cannot see the purpose of. What sort of criteria are in the back of your mind when questioning the value of those particular sites as compared to the rest of the green belt?

Joe Henry: We have metropolitan open land as well in Barnet, which has the same protection status as green belt, so I look at it in exactly the same way. I know of one particular site sitting amongst a residential development, surrounded by the very busy North Circular Road. It was earmarked for a pavilion to be built. The pavilion was built through an old Section 106 agreement, but there is nothing in place to ensure its longevity, and this piece of land is going to waste as far as I am concerned. Car boot sales come now and again; we serve enforcement notices to stop that. That is an example I have seen on the ground where I personally think that perhaps we should look at taking that particular site out of the green belt.

Baroness Andrews: Is that green belt or greenfield?

Joe Henry: It is just a field right beside the North Circular.
Baroness Andrews: Is the distinction between greenfield and green belt a problem? There is less now to distinguish, and the degraded bits of the green belt you could say are not only more vulnerable but maybe should be a bit more vulnerable if we are so desperate for land? That is a radical proposition, but is it dangerous to say that?

Joe Henry: I think we should have the ability to review quickly.

Simon de Beer: Could I just add one point there? I think the value of green belts is their permanence and the strength of policy, but there are ways round it. As well as the four sites we have taken out of the green belt for housing, we have allowed a large Gypsy Traveller site and a small Gypsy Traveller site, and we have allowed a sub-regional fire station, all in the green belt, so if there is an overwhelming and demonstrable need in that location, you can permit development in the green belt as appropriate, but you still have the protection.

Joe Henry: You have to demonstrate very special circumstances. That is the key test for any development in the green belt. Most development in the green belt is considered to be inappropriate by definition, and you could justify development only in very special circumstances. In a sense we are looking at schools, because we have run out of sites, but we have to demonstrate very special circumstances to be able to deliver that.

Anneliese Hutchinson: Very quickly, I think the green belt policy works well. I think the issue is how we review that. It should be done only in exceptional circumstances, through a local plan process, and if it operates in that way, it works. The issue is probably the guidance on how you would do a green belt review, because there is no national guidance, so everybody adopts their own opinion as to how that should happen, which is probably why it sometimes takes an awfully long time: because it has to be justified so much in the local area. If we had national guidance about how to do it, or best practice, that might be helpful.

The Chairman: That has really been a very helpful session. Thank you very much indeed. We touched on a few things that we probably should have gone into more deeply, and we probably went too deeply into some things that we could have done more easily or quicker. If you have any ideas that come to you, particularly on your train back to Gateshead—and we are very grateful to you for coming down—perhaps you could scribble a few words, because we want to make this report really important, and we have been so blessed in having really
good witnesses, amongst whom of course I would name you. We are still not there, but it is all systems go until March or thereabouts, so we would be most grateful. Thank you very much indeed.

03 December 2015
Introduction

1. This submission has emerged from a new initiative to raise the profile of the arts in place-making in the context of the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment (www.farrellreview.co.uk). The initiative is being led by arts charity Beam (www.beam.uk.net) in close collaboration with Farrells, and with strong support from artists and other built environment and cultural professionals. In the past year over 100 individuals have contributed to the initiative through a series of open forums in London and Yorkshire. Further events and an action plan are in preparation and the initiative is now part of the recently formed Place Alliance movement (https://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/placealliance).

2. As part of the development of national policy for the built environment, we believe that the arts are a very important, and too often neglected, part of the agenda of place-making. Although there are references to the role of heritage and the historic environment, the arts are omitted from the Questions of the Call for Evidence, even though involvement of artists in place-making can contribute significantly to achieving high quality design and place-making (Question 10). Also in relation to Questions 11 and 12, community involvement and community impact, these are areas where the involvement of artists can have a hugely beneficial impact.

3. Apart from public engagement, more broadly artists have creative skills and knowledge that can contribute to all stages of the planning and design process. However there is a lack of knowledge within the built environment and public realm management professions about the contribution artists can make - a skills issue relevant to Question 9. Therefore we would like to see recognition of the role of arts in place-making becoming a priority.

4. The initiative is aimed at bringing fresh perspective and impetus to the promotion of the important role of artists and the arts in place-making and has been involved a range of artists and cultural professionals. Their ideas together with Graham Henderson’s essay, *Putting Soul in the City*, which follows, have informed the drafting of the Manifesto, included as an annex at the end.

5. As powerfully expressed in Graham’s essay, the initiative places the role of artists, and culture more broadly, at the very centre of the planning, design, and revitalization of
'place' - not at their edges nor as an afterthought. In asserting this, it also centralizes the role of individual citizens and communities.

1. **Essay by Graham Henderson**: Putting Soul in the City – towards a manifesto

**Using public art to transform the 21st Century urban landscape**

1.1 This essay is a call to radical action. It is a call to create William Blake’s *future city of the arts* in the digital age, and to use the arts and culture not only to beautify the public realm but also to express our values, provide social identity and cohesion, and provide new opportunities for science and enterprise. It is a call for a complete change in the way public art is taught, planned, commissioned, delivered and built, making it a key part of place-making in every urban development. It is also a call to empower culture and the arts, restoring them to their rightful place at the heart of the social project, encourage and stimulate the building of social capital, and contribute to a new kind of active citizenship. And it is a call to create environmentally sustainable cities, fit for the future. We live in a bland and bureaucratic age where originality, beauty and difference are usually crushed. And when a place is anonymous and without identity we describe it as *soulless*. This is a call to put the soul back into the city, and to recognise the central importance of public art to our shared humanity, to allow the free expression of a democratic culture, whether in material forms or through live street arts, and to liberate culture and the arts to create bold new public expressions of who we are in the 21st Century. It is a call for a manifesto for these public arts.

2. **Sense of place**

2.1 Sense of place is not a new idea, but is grounded in our history and philosophy. Our definition of it goes back to its classical roots. In Ancient Athens, the first ever democracy, public art was everywhere. Its streets, temples and law courts were filled with a vast array of multi-coloured statues, carvings and text art, used to embody the city’s democratic ambitions. The sense of place as we know it developed from the ancient Roman concept of *genius loci*, the idea that every place has a unique identity and a protective spirit. This idea was brought firmly into the modern age by the poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) whose ideas of garden and landscape design, and the placing of public art within them, still influences landscape architects to this day.

2.2 Modern philosophers have explored this idea from a more contemporary viewpoint. Heidegger was one of a group of 20th Century philosophers who took as their starting point the way human beings actually experience the world (phenomenology). This approach

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5 Graham Henderson, Public Art Consultant at Poet in the City
allowed him to explore the many layers of meaning and significance that people attach to the places they inhabit. The ways we regard places, and use them, is influenced not only by practical factors but by all of the ideas, associations, hopes and dreams which we bring to them. The best of public art responds to and articulates this sense of place.

2.3 The Czech philosopher Jan Patocka (1907-1977) took the sense of place a step further, connecting it not only with the human capacity for projecting or reflecting ideas, but also with our lives as social and political beings, and members of a community. Returning to the starting point in ancient Athens he noted the close relationship between private virtue, participation as an active citizen in a democracy, and the expression of these social and political values in the built environment of the city. Patocka called upon the modern age to learn from this example, and to find ways of putting soul in the city.

2.4 This was very much the project pursued by Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) the urban design campaigner and critic who fought to preserve Greenwich Village and other historic neighbourhoods of New York under threat of demolition in the 1980s. In her seminal book *The Death and Life of Great American City* she observed in great detail the ballet of the streets, the way that real people behaved and interacted in in her street and neighbourhood. Her work demonstrated persuasively that human beings like their communities to be bustling and varied, that they benefit greatly from the casual contacts with neighbours and shopkeepers, and that their world is rendered much safer and friendlier by many eyes on the street. Our public art too should reflect our need for such community and social capital, in other words the friendships, participatory networks, associations and civic relationships which characterise a properly functioning democratic society.

2.5 Finally, sustainable city theorists, activists and ecological architects like the Australian Paul F Downton are writing about the important connections between eco-cities, the environment and the arts. The sustainable city of the future needs not only to be an economic success, but also to be sustainable indefinitely in terms of its ecological impact. For instance, it needs to be able to feed itself and to have a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding countryside. It needs to power itself from renewable sources of energy, and to produce minimal quantities of pollution. And it needs to use land efficiently, to compost, recycle, and convert waste into energy. In short it needs to have the smallest possible ecological footprint. For this kind of city to be born it is clear that we also need a transformation in the approach to both politics and culture. Public art becomes one of the most important ways of symbolising and championing the values that need to underpin a decisive transformation in our approach to city-building.

2.6 In other words public art is not external to our society and its sense of itself, but is a fundamental way of expressing our identities, history and values, of celebrating, exploring,
commenting and questioning, and of championing a sustainable future. It is from our sense
of place that we construct our meanings and our communities, and from which we can
develop our social capital. Together these strands of thought provide a firm foundation for a
fresh philosophy of place based on real people in their communities, on a commitment to
the importance of art, and on a powerful sense of public virtue, civic pride and social
cohesion.

3. Reclaiming the language of place

3.1 In order to transform our approach to public art we must challenge the lazy and
corrupted use of phrases like ‘place-making’, ‘public engagement’ and ‘participation’ which
are wheeled out thoughtlessly to justify every piece of urban design. The involvement of the
community in public art must be real. Instead of clichéd talk of ‘regeneration’, ‘urban
renewal’ and ‘renaissance’ resulting in the same old soulless, windswept and
underpopulated urban wastelands, we are calling for a real relationship between place and
people. There must be a debate and a reconciliation between the demands of artistic merit
and the needs and wishes of people who use and own the public spaces concerned. We
must reclaim the sense of place and involve real communities in reinventing it.

3.2 We must challenge the tyranny of the bland, which leads directly to depression,
disillusionment, nihilism and extremism. The procurement of public art must reflect and be
inextricably linked with the education of citizens for a democracy, and their active
participation in their communities. It must allow them to influence what happens in their
place, in their town, and empower artists to make these places different and distinctive.
Artists have a crucial part to play in developing a purpose-built humanist landscape, in
creating the urban spaces, buildings and thoroughfares which reflect the values of the 21st
Century urban community. The future city of the arts contributes directly to identity,
happiness and involvement in a community of shared values. Our shopping malls,
motorways and suburbs really do damage the functioning of our societies. Our squares,
clubs, gathering places and public fairs really do make a direct contribution to them. Public
art provides a means of championing a new sense of liberty and identity in our society.
What matters in our approach to public art are the communities, identities and histories it
represents and embodies, the meanings associated with it, and the sense of place.

3.3 New approaches to public space are being informed both by the physical design of
the spaces themselves and by the virtual or transient uses to which they are being put.
‘Public art’ in this context does not just mean the monument in the square but also the
plethora of live arts, digital art, transient art and ‘band stand’ performance which has the
potential to reinvigorate our sense of place.
3.4 We have the ability to use the arts to create ‘smart’ public spaces, using a combination of virtual and physical elements, embedding technology in the built environment connected with the technologies in our pockets and worn in clothing. Public art in the digital age encompasses everything from temporary lighting installations, screen technology, augmented content, and information hubs. It also includes participatory experiences, ‘happenings’ designed to challenge our perceptions of the uses of public space, and the riotous carnival of street arts. Outdoor festivals and the cultural activities associated with them are already playing a more important part in how we live, and we are guided to them ever more efficiently by our mobile technology. Whether it is permanent or semi-permanent, physical or digital, beautifully crafted design detail or grand electric spectacle, eclectic public art has the capacity to celebrate who we are.

3.5 In the painting by Pieter Bruegel the younger, *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, we see observational scenes of a community working out its tensions and re-enacting its own cohesion through a chaotic conflict of cultural activities in public spaces. New technology allows us to imagine modern riots of colour and cultural meaning filling our streets in a similar way, witness for instance the recent Will Self installation in Brixton which displays overheard snippets of dialogue. In fact this sense of carnival has the potential to contribute directly to the new forms of community participation and social capital building we are advocating. This is a call to put the soul back into all of our places, our buildings, our squares, our streets and our parks.

3.6 And in an age where climate change, a rising human population, and the degradation of the natural world are facts of life, the need to create environmentally sustainable cities is essential. Far from being a luxury extra, an ideas-led approach to our urban environment is perhaps one of the only ways to produce the necessary change in our mind-set. Public art can represent and symbolise a new vision of what a sustainable modern city can and should be like.

4. **Transforming our approach to public art**

4.1 Planning our future built environment now requires an understanding of how the quality of our public places connects with the functioning of our communities and the health of our democratic institutions and a sustainable approach to the natural environment. This is the time for visionary thinking and for imagining a future city of the arts which is more beautiful, more connected, and more fit for 21st century democracy. In keeping with the digital age it is no longer possible or acceptable for such planning to be top-down, for grand projects to be imposed on people for whom they have no obvious meaning or resonance. Now is the time for us to reassert the importance of a sense of place and to empower local communities to make their own places *special and different*. Bringing together talented designers, architects and public artists with places and the communities who live in them
creates the opportunity for great public art which also answers the strong human desire for meaning, identity and the public expression of civic pride and values. It is that energy which will produce relevant public art and new relationships between communities and their public spaces.

4.2 Some public art may be big and ambitious, but this is not the point. Projects can also be small scale and intimate, bringing character, beauty and utility to a small plaza, an alleyway or a street corner. We should not think in terms of scale but of design quality and context. The complete change we are calling for is a revolution in the skills dedicated to making ordinary places better. Every community has a right to great public art. The triumphal arches, military equestrian statues and grand boulevards belong to the past. Public art should respect the past, and learn from it, but must also reflect the way we live now, be playful and experimental. The decisions to monumentalise or memorialise, or to embody our values in our built environment are very important. We must be sure that the meanings are culturally rich and varied in their associations, relevant to their communities, and resonant of their values. Designing public art is a project which goes to the heart of our human project. Equally, public art which is bland, ill-conceived, badly managed or poorly executed, says something about the lack of quality in our urban life and our sense of community. Public art should explode the concept of the ordinary, and introduce quality and aspiration into all of our lives. It should tell us where we are, where we came from, and what we would like to be. Real life may sometimes fall short, but the architecture constantly reminds us to aspire to be our better selves, fully engaged citizens, active participants. This essay is, in the best sense of the word, political. It calls for a fundamental change in how we regard our public and urban spaces, our polis. It draws on the passion and the expertise of many professionals across the field of architecture, planning, design and the arts.

4.3 Transforming our approach to public art requires a complete change in the approach we take: an education in the possibilities of public art (Education), an improvement in skills and techniques (Design), and a renewed association of public art with the culture, history and identities of our places, both past and present (Culture); It is also requires a clear-sighted understanding of the social and business benefits of great public art and the vital role it can play in stimulating this wider economy (Value); It is going to require government to play an enabling and empowering role, creating and implementing policy (Strategy); Finally, it is going to require bold and inspiring leadership by those responsible for all aspects of public art and the built environment (Leadership). We shall take each of these areas in turn:

5. Education
5.1 If we are to transform public art for the better we must start with education. Architecture, design and the sense of place should be taught across many subjects including design, geography, aesthetics, history, maths, technology and engineering. Young people should be introduced to the great possibilities which attach to public art. This is not a matter of top-down learning either, but an education in citizenship. The task of reflecting our values, aspirations and political structures in our public spaces is inseparable from the project of involving individuals in active citizenship and social capital building. Young people must be empowered to be creative, to solve problems, and to change things for the better. Teaching them about public art and the built environment is also promoting a better future for a pluralistic participatory democracy. If we believe in this, we need to champion it in our schools and reflect it in our public art. With the help of architecture and planning organisations teachers need to be enlisted and trained to pass on their passion and belief in a better built environment to younger generations.

5.2 A passion for place is also a necessary foundation for another important aspect of education: the encouragement and dissemination of skills. The digital age is an age of blurring boundaries between old professions and crafts, of intelligent and surprising cross-arts collaborations, making use of new technology, new techniques and new materials, by individual makers with entirely new design and fabrication skills. The training of architects, planners, landscape designers, engineers and artists should reflect this new eclecticism, and embrace its new possibilities. It is no longer sufficient to work in specialist silos. We are entering a new age of the maker, in which technology will allow artists to manufacture beautiful craft objects on a scale and at a cost that should make them available to a lot of people. Instead of waiting for others to take the lead we should be exploring and experimenting with the use of these new tools and encouraging a new generation of high tech craftspeople to innovate. The means of skills acquisition are themselves evolving rapidly, and every opportunity should be taken to promote and encourage these future makers.

5.3 Government also has an important role, especially in ensuring that this new approach to public art and the built environment extends across our schools, colleges and skills academies. It is important that the importance of the arts is taught in business schools, that the value of business is understood in architecture schools, and that planners are persuaded of the role of art and architecture in social capital building. All education should prepare students to be flexible, to engage in broader decision-making, give them cross-disciplinary understanding, and encourage them to step up into leadership roles. The one-size fits all educational model, which is rigid and over-specific, will not produce the talented individuals we need for a rapidly changing world. Lack of opportunity and creativity in education squanders the innate talents of young people and under-uses the assets of our
society. Young people should be encouraged to think creatively about their home, street, neighbourhood and urban community.

5.4 The sociologist and educational philosopher Emile Durkheim identified two distinct functions of secondary education: identifying and encouraging talented individuals and enabling them to succeed in their chosen field; and educating individuals for a life of active citizenship. In concentrating on the former it seems that we have almost completely forgotten the latter, equally important objective. In an age of new kinds of job, porous boundaries between subjects, and portfolio careers, this distinction is perhaps also collapsing. The answer to what is most important really is ‘Education, Education, and Education’ but we are still waiting for it to be given the priority it really requires for the future health and prosperity of society.

6. Design

6.1 Design has the potential to create and communicate a transformation in our built environment. Mass produced, poor quality designs for everything from cutlery to building materials are not a necessary part of our future. The age of the 3D printer opens up the possibility of an explosion of creative new design, starting in the design studio or urban room and spreading to every area of our lives. We need less stuff, but this stuff should be much better designed and built. Good design does not happen by itself. It needs skills to be acquired and passed on. It needs patrons, clients and customers who are design-literate.

6.2 This is the century of city-making. Human beings are moving to and living in cities on a scale never previously imagined. British architects and designers lead the world in sustainable city building. It is time that this great strength in design is connected to a bigger vision of how human beings should live in their communities. Public art provides an important way in which artists and architects can project bigger ideas about human values, community, and social capital building. It provides a way to champion and set out a vision for a civilised, prosperous, tolerant and inclusive future city which is also environmentally sustainable. A new era of cultural, intellectual and professional exchange between cities is emerging and there is an opportunity for British designers to be at the forefront of a new model.

6.3 We need to unlock this potential transformation by placing culture at the heart of our thinking and adopting a new approach to place-making. If we do so we can dramatically change our urban landscape, with significant implications for community development, business and international relations, and the environment. If we do so, the world will beat a path to our streets and squares, to our new public spaces, and our new symbols of popular participation. We should not just lazily evoke or imitate the cityscape of ancient Athens, we
should build our own modern and dynamic version of it here, in our green and pleasant land.

7. **Culture**

7.1 The great battle of modern versus traditional, new versus heritage, does not exist now in the same way as it did in the 20th century. Our culture is gradually absorbing the great ruptures of that century and understanding that a sense of place, identity and history can be combined with modernity and sustainability. The new era is more likely to seek intelligent and practical ways of combining the old with the new, breathing new life into historic buildings rather than demolishing them, and converting them to new social and commercial uses. New developments are more likely to try and rediscover and amplify the sense of place than they are to sweep away the past entirely in an attempt to create a brave new world. Our built environment is more likely to be built for the way we want to live rather than the way it is thought that we should live, and for a sustainable future. This bold marriage of the old and the new, this sense of place, has the potential to reinvent our streets, towns and communities. It has never been a necessity for all places to look the same or to be reduced to a similar formula. The sense of place allows us not only to preserve our heritage but to create a future heritage, transmitting what is most special about our places to new generations.

7.2 Once again the question of what makes good public art is inseparable from a wider approach to the role of culture in our civil society and its importance to building social capital. Periods of great creativity in the arts such as the Renaissance do not flow from economic success alone, but from a passionate desire on the part of patrons and clients, artists and the wider public to express cultural values on a public stage. Its symptoms are a promiscuous explosion of art and creativity led by ideas, and by experimentation, breaking down the artificial barriers between the arts and sciences, and an enthusiasm for projecting social, political or religious beliefs into the public realm, along with our aesthetic ones. Without sufficient social capital, plazas will remain empty, and open air theatres will be permanently empty. With it, you will see a proliferation of user groups and income streams.

7.3 A creative renaissance of this sort cannot be mandated by a government or a planning authority alone. It must come from the empowerment of the wider community through education, skills acquisition and ideas leadership. Above all it comes about because of a recognition of the central importance of culture to society. It is not an ‘add-on’, something which is ‘nice to have’ if there is any money left in the budget. Nor is it something merely instrumental, only of value if it helps to achieve some other social welfare objectives. Treating culture as a luxury extra is a grotesque error. Far from being something surplus to requirements and therefore easy to cut, culture lies at the very heart of what it means to be human beings living in a political community. It is not a luxury, it is a necessity.
Public art is merely the most obvious manifestation of this, and poor public art (or its complete absence) is one of the clearest indications of a society that is alienated, disengaged from politics, and vulnerable to radicalization. We neglect culture and public art at our peril. It affects the whole quality of our public life and our society.

7.4 This essay therefore opposes all those who treat culture as either a mere luxury or as an instrumentalist device to achieve welfare objectives. These views represent the historical materialism characteristic of the 20th century, and shared by both the Left and the Right wings of the political spectrum. It represents an inversion of the truth. In reality culture comes first. It defines what is valuable and important to us, as human beings and as members of a community. Once culture is given its rightful place it quickly becomes apparent that it can determine new and innovative approaches to all of society’s other issues. It mandates a broader and better education rather than a narrowly technocratic one, it calls for a questioning attitude and creative free expression over blind obedience and bland uniformity, it encourages active participation over passive consumption, it celebrates life over mere existence, and it asserts human dignity in the face of cruel and soulless systems.

7.5 The materialist demotion of culture has resulted in soulless public spaces and landscapes of bland uniformity. We fight to protect ‘heritage’ landscapes like Grantchester Meadows, the view of the Thames from Richmond Hill, or the moors behind Haworth parsonage without examining why philosophically they are so important to us. The answer in all three cases is entirely cultural. Without the poetry of Rupert Brooke, the paintings of JMW Turner or the novels of the Bronte sisters respectively it might have proved hard to resist the overwhelming of these landscapes by urban sprawl. It is art and culture which gives them their meaning and significance. Meanwhile many places have had their identity thoughtlessly crushed, despite the fact that they all have their own distinctive histories and identities. Public art provides a way, perhaps the only sensible way, of restoring these places to us.

7.6 Ideas can and do change the world. And acknowledging the central importance of culture in our lives will have direct results in the quality and experience of our built environment, a landscape which will be created for people and communities, not for machine-like automatons and mere consumers. It is time we left these 20th century ideological dogmas behind us and returned to a view of culture based on human values and on the way we actually live.

8. Value

8.1 Materialism and narrow instrumentalism ironically blind people to the very real economic and social benefits of culture and the arts. If we insist on treating these as a minor
sub-set of ‘the creative industries’ and as ‘cultural exports’ we have already gone badly wrong, putting culture, which is actually the life blood of our society, in a sub-category of business, somewhere below computer gaming. We must start by reasserting the primacy of culture and meaning to the entire social project. If we do so we shall rapidly see that culture and the arts are far more important economically than a narrow materialist ideology suggests. For instance it has long been recognised that a significant work of public art (such as the Angel of the North), or a new gallery or museum (such as the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate) can have a massively disproportionate effect on the economic regeneration of a place or a town. This is the so-called ‘Guggenheim effect’ named after the bold new art gallery built on the decayed industrial riverside in Bilbao in Northern Spain. The effect clearly goes far beyond the sale of mugs and t-shirts from the Museum shop. The art comes to represent and promote an entirely new attitude to the place concerned, providing a powerful boost to its existing businesses and encouraging innovative new industries to locate there.

8.2 We must go much further than this and assert that good public art has the potential to regenerate and revitalise all of our urban spaces. Any such art, large or small, will encourage greater footfall, sustain more small businesses, create a new sense of local pride, and make a place more attractive for new enterprise. The sense of place comes first, and business follows. Nor does it need to be a case of stealing people from one place to feed another. New community and identity in our high streets, squares and housing blocks has the potential to reverse long term trends towards suburban living, out of town superstores, and passive forms of entertainment, creating new focal points for social and community life. As Jane Jacobs shows, as human beings we thrive in mixed use communities, where we know our neighbours, establish fierce loyalties to our local shop-keepers and café owners, and look out for familiar faces on the street. The reason we flock to Soho or Greenwich Village on the weekend is because these buzzing urban places provide a simulacrum of the bustling village atmosphere which we as human beings love so much. Empty suburban streets, car parks and gated compounds do not cater for our basic human needs, and do not even keep us safe. Safety comes from neighbours and community, from eyes on the street and a sense of place.

8.3 If we challenge the obtuse idea that culture is not important we can suddenly see how new approaches to public art and the built environment can unlock new ways of living contentedly in densely populated urban communities, how it can offer us new identities and a sense of belonging, and how it can stimulate economic and social activities, creating a place where people want to live, and want to stay. Many people are groping towards this insight, for instance in the search for mindfulness, and in the increasingly interest in measuring our happiness and quality of life as well as our so-called standard of living. Where such culture-led communities are established, low rent ghettoes are rapidly transformed
into chic and desirable neighbourhoods. This transformation can be seen in Hoxton and Hackney where artists played a crucial role in changing perceptions, and making these into places where high tech start-ups and fashionable coffee shops want to locate. This often results in such areas becoming gentrified and expensive, driving out the area’s original residents. But people very rarely draw the obvious conclusion that culture can improve and render more dynamic *all of our communities*, reconnecting people with their places in a way that will have an important social and economic impact.

8.4 Public art can be aspirational, meritocratic, creative and commercial. It potentially adds value in so many indirect ways that its direct economic benefits are the least part of it. Where you have a thriving community and active citizens the opportunities for entrepreneurial small businesses will proliferate rapidly. To state the obvious, business and business success naturally follow our human determinations as to what is most important to us. In an economy based on information such success is not going to be based on consumerism of the old sort but on shared experience and participation. The choices offered by new technology also suggest that businesses will need to be more value-driven. This is the domain of culture and the arts, and the expression of this new age in public art has the potential to symbolise and unlock new ways of living and of participating in the new digitally connected sharing economy.

8.5 Most importantly, it is a question of what kind of society we want to be. If we are to create a new democratic model which enjoys the support of its citizens, this must be based on our values, on private virtue and public participation, on tolerance and respect for human rights. We need to stimulate new creativity and new forms of economic activity based on these values if we are to avoid becoming a society of masters and slaves, or one which is environmentally unsustainable. This will involve redefining the purpose of work and the role of society in caring for its weaker members, and accommodating protest and opposition. Only a culturally vigorous and educated society will be able to adapt successfully to a revolutionary new era. Public art offers us a way to express or reassert our values, to champion a pluralistic and tolerant society, and to inspire new forms of public life. Championing the transformation of the built environment is about embracing the future and ensuing that we do not sleep-walk into tyranny, environmental degradation and inhumanity.

9. Strategy

9.1 This essay is calling for a more ambitious use of public art, which has the potential to be an important revitalising force. This will require a radical step-change in collective expectations and actions to improve standards within the built environment. It is not a call for more intervention by government or for more expenditure by government, but for a smarter and more creative approach by government. Strategically it is a matter of
recognising the sense of place and accepting that sustainable cities and ways of living are intimately connected with the built environment. It is also a matter of enabling a new approach to the built environment across government and of empowering local communities. Government needs to recognise the value of good design, the civic value of well-designed public spaces, streets and amenities, and the way they connect with the character and needs of existing communities.

9.2 In practical terms government needs to revolutionise the planning process. Imaginative and proactive planning is required, with thought being given in advance to the overall artistic integrity of a given project. Instead of being reactive, the planning system needs to think creatively about the future shape and form of our towns and cities, and the role that public art can play in reinvigorating our communities. Far from involving additional expenditure, this revolution in planning will be a very cost-effective way of developing more community-driven places. Time taken developing great plans and designs supported by local communities, and then implementing them over a longer period, will pay rich dividends when people start to get the communities they really want. We are calling on government to introduce an artistic audit for all planning decisions in order to empower this new approach. We also call on it to appoint a new Chief Place Maker to champion this new approach and encourage the development of a few key places and projects designed to show what can be achieved by bold new public art with a sense of place. We also have much to learn from great public art initiatives and sustainable models for urban living from around the world. The building blocks for this radical new approach are already available. We also call on the government to support and encourage the development of the Place Alliance, a voluntary network hosted by UCL, bringing together all those who support a new approach to public art and the built environment, and providing a vehicle for radical change.

9.3 It is not the role of government to mandate change, and top-down approaches to public art and the built environment are unlikely to be successful. But what it can do very effectively is to enable change, remove barriers to creativity, and encourage the radical action we are calling for. Indeed this important strategic change of emphasis in favour of sense of place, culture and creativity must be enabled by government. If obstacles are removed and change empowered by government, thousands of talented individuals, artists, designers, makers, architects, fabricators, planners, academics and technicians will do the rest. The revolution in approach by government we are calling for in this essay will result in a far-reaching transformation in our relationship with public space, and will leave a great legacy for future generations, determining the quality of our built environment, and influencing the quality of our civil society and democracy for the next hundred years.

10. Leadership
10.1 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) once said that if he could find 70 people who thought like him he would be able to change the world. The complete transformation in public art we are calling for requires champions and advocates prepared to articulate a bold new vision of a design-led future, embedded in our built environment. We are increasingly aware of the influence of ideas leadership, and of those prepared to advocate publicly for change. We know that such ideas can start small, working their way into small group and networks, starting to appear on public platforms and in publications, before suddenly achieving a critical mass and becoming accepted as nothing more than reasonable and obvious common sense.

10.2 This essay is a call for such leadership not only from architects, developers and planners, but also from artists, politicians, business people, environmentalists and active citizens. Leadership can spring from anywhere. It will often be empowered by a strong sense of place, and will play a vital part in overcoming the many bureaucratic and institutional obstacles to the transformation of our built environment. Great leadership wins hearts and minds, builds consensus, and overcomes practical difficulties. Stepping up into such a leadership role, whether in our profession, business or in our community, is the first manifestation of active citizenship.

10.3 The ideas about public art and the built environment contained in this essay are already out there. They have found their way into print and into public pronouncements by architects, planners, artists and landscape designers. They have even been manifested in a few pieces of bold and exciting public art. The old ways are widely recognised to be inadequate for the 21st century, and the urgent need for new thinking has been recognised. And yet the old methods for the creation of public art (or its complete neglect) are still the norm, and our urban landscape is still blighted by soulless developments and damaged by false materialist arguments. The time for a revolution in our thinking about public art has come. It is up to us to be the leaders of a new school of thinking and to express this new approach in a manifesto. It is up to us, professionals, artists, politicians or citizens, to go out and champion the new approach in our own town, in our own community. We need to try, to fail, and then to try again, until a new paradigm for great public art is established. We can succeed at putting soul in the city, and the time to start doing so is now.

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2. ANNEX: Draft Manifesto for the Public Arts - The Arts, People and Place

Submitted by:
  Robert Powell, Associate Director
  Beam
2. ANNEX:

DRAFT MANIFESTO FOR THE PUBLIC ARTS

The Arts, People and Place

We are passionate about the importance of place in our society and committed to promoting the role of artists and the arts in putting culture at the heart of placemaking.

Why A Manifesto?

- The importance of place in our society is fundamental, yet our urban landscape and buildings are often marred by soulless developments.
- Culture is as important to successful place-making as business, housing, jobs, and transport, but is often seen as an optional extra.
- The arts are important to both people and place-making, but their role is misunderstood, undervalued, and marginalised.
- The arts, including the public arts, are important in the development of active citizenship, yet our education system fails to give them equal weight and provide access to them.
- Artists can contribute to all stages of the planning and design process, to public engagement, and to the animation of public space, but are not normally involved.
- Public art is often bland, disconnected from place, designed ‘by committee’, poorly executed, or ‘bolted on’ to existing designs.
- Artists’ creative vision is sometimes lost within mistaken notions of public participation, or briefs that over-emphasise social outcomes at the expense of artistic quality.
- Within the built environment and public realm management professions there are some who are unaware of, or even hostile to, the arts.
- There are also people who believe the arts, their making and enjoyment, are restricted to certain purposes, people, and contexts.

We Believe.....

- The consideration of culture through the public arts should be seen as a joyful obligation that is fundamental, not ornamental, to every significant initiative impacting the public realm.
- The public arts have the potential to help regenerate and revitalise all of our urban spaces, towns, and parks, and to play a vital role in stimulating a successful people-centred economy in the service of a democratic society.
- Artists can contribute creative thinking, design and placemaking skills; help engage people of all ages and backgrounds in discussing, understanding, planning, and designing the public realm; help animate and enhance a meaningful sense of place through their individual vision, public participation, permanent or temporary art, performance, and street arts.
The public arts should be defined as anything that artists can do, plan, instigate, design, produce, stimulate and contribute, working with citizens, communities and other professionals, in the context of the built environment and place. Like placemaking, the public arts are the concern of everyone --- citizens, institutions, agencies, the creative industries, property developers, community groups, and leaders, as well as politicians in national and local government.

We Are Calling For.....

...a renaissance of the public arts and creativity inspired by ideas, experimentation, learning and participation.

1. A step change in how our built environment and public spaces are regarded and in the knowledge and skills needed to making ordinary places better, with the arts at their core.
2. The public arts to be re-defined and practised in an imaginative, multi-artform, cross-disciplinary and participatory way, recognising the individual vision of artists within a dynamic mix of professionals and citizens.
4. The education system to recognize the value of giving young people participatory access to the public arts within a creative democratic education.
5. The inclusion of the public arts in the education and ongoing skills development of built environment professionals, engineers, public realm managers, and local authority officers and members.
6. A greater encouragement of the deployment and benefits of the arts and culture in the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework.
7. The introduction of an Artistic and Cultural Audit in Local and Neighbourhood Plans, and within or alongside Design and Access statements in mid- and large-scale planning applications.
8. An innovative and more robust approach to the funding of the public arts, initiated by the sector with Arts Council England and other key organisations.
9. Government at all levels to play an enabling role through developing, funding and implementing effective policy that promotes the public arts through its own procurement system and as part of the overall context for placemaking.
10. A new gathering of 20 sector leaders --- artists, cultural and built environment professionals, educators, politicians, business people, and active citizens – to champion the role of the arts and artists nationally.

Pledge Your Support for this Manifesto
3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF is a well drafted document that appears to contain every relevant consideration if read in the spirit of co-operation and goodwill. However, the exceptional measures that allow reasonable economic activity in the Green Belt (NPPF 89) - for sports, forestry, brownfield sites and 'limited' village infill are particularly vulnerable to developers attempting to stretch the limits of the definition in our area. For instance, to allow forestry or sports facilities in the garden...

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The role of government in this and every other issue is to provide a stable economic background for the population to thrive in. The supply of houses does not need addressing so much as homeowners’ investment in spare bedrooms. There is further intervention required to redress the position where homeowners are mortgaged and borrowed up to the maximum to buy the largest property they can possibly afford in order to enjoy the advantage of seemingly perpetual rise in property prices. When two spare bedrooms is the average there is a distribution problem.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Get the underlying economics right and the buildings will follow. A decentralising tax would reduce the pressure on areas in the immediate hinterland of cities and boost areas in the countryside. That would provide a more reasonable transition between city and countryside and offer a better chance of preserving areas of outstanding natural beauty and conservation areas which will allow them to take advantage of rural tourism and education when they can.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?
We are unable to conserve and enhance our historic assets in the face of relentless commercial exploitation of every possible loophole in the planning law to take the maximum advantage of the rising residential property market. Jam today philosophy threatens the heritage assets of our children.

**Skills and design**

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas? The skilful professional has only one aim - to get to London and work there for both the company of other skilful people and the training and rewards of being with the best. The surrounding areas are impoverished by the huge differential in potential. Some differential in skill will always be there but the economic imperative could be removed by taxing the city. Local authorities have neither the professional advancement nor excessive financial backing required to hire the skills that would balance those of London architects and specialists in planning law hired by developers.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced? Relying on ethical standards in the professions when there is so much money at stake is not balanced. Although it is wrong for professionals to put themselves in a position where money is more important than standards, even men of goodwill may find the fear of your family missing out on the property bandwagon very great. Ethical standards cannot flourish outside a just and even-handed society.

**Financial measures**

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers? The financial press publish stories and letters about site value taxation more and more frequently. Taxing land values annually is a relatively simple measure adopted by Denmark and Italy to name two; increasing the cost of owning land in the city (where sites are most valuable) while reducing it in areas that do not produce enough surplus to pay tax. Lessen the gradient between the city and the countryside, reduce the incentives to hold better property than the householder needs and the problems of design and place-making become opportunities.

*05 October 2015*
Lord Best and National Housing Federation – Oral Evidence (QQ52-63)

Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Lord Best, former Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, former Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust, and Kathleen Kelly, Assistant Director of Policy and Research, National Housing Federation

Q83 The Chairman:
Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript, where necessary. Could I begin, for the record, by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please?

Lord Best: I am Richard Best. I have been involved in housing things for 45 years as either a chief executive or on the board of a housing association, so that is a special interest. I do have other interests outside the housing association world. I have been involved with the Local Government Association as its president for nine years. I chair the Council of the Property Ombudsman for the private sector and, here, I look after your Lordships’ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People, which is a Parliamentary Group,
I should say, not just for your Lordships. But older people’s housing and care is my special concern.

**The Chairman**: That is why you thought of it in terms of the House of Lords, in terms of the age structure. Thank you very much indeed. Ms Kelly, are you Ms or Mrs?

**Kathleen Kelly**: Ms, just to be very modern about it. Hello, I am Kathleen Kelly. I am assistant director of policy and research at the National Housing Federation. Prior to that I worked at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and before that in central government, at what is now the Department for Communities and Local Government.

I am really very pleased to be here today to represent our members. We have some 1,200 members and they provide homes for around 5 million people. What is really important to bear in mind is that our members made a really firm commitment to ending the housing crisis, and last year they built more than one in three of the new homes in England. They have an ambition to do much more, building on their really good record of increasing their output of new homes during the recession, when other providers had to really scale back on their delivery.

We are the most successful example of public and private partnerships in the UK. We contribute £14 billion a year to the British economy. We are very keen to share the ambitions of government to deliver more homes and to provide more opportunities to own your own home. As well as providing homes fit for the future, it is also important to recognise that our members provide a variety of services. They help people into work, they revitalise local economies and they stick with local communities and local economies over the long term. With the right conditions, our members tell us, they can continue to do more of that. They can build more, provide more opportunities for more people to rent and own, and continue to work on revitalising local economies.

**Q84 The Chairman**: Thank you very much indeed, both of you. I am asking the first question, which is: there is a degree of political consensus on the need for more housing but, in practice, housing completions rarely meet the targets that have been set. What in your view are the reasons for this? What are the roadblocks, in simple terms, Lord Best?

**Lord Best**: The overarching roadblock is the hope, indeed the expectation, that the private sector housebuilders will do the job for us. My core message is that the housebuilders are
never going to do very much more than half of all the housebuilding that we require every year. Over the last 30 years, they have averaged 123,000 homes a year. That is about half what we need. We might get them up to 60% of the homes that are required but, if we expect them to do 100%, we are going to go on and on being disappointed that we have not built enough homes at the end of the year. We used to have local authorities doing the other half. We took them out of the picture and we have not succeeded in replacing the loss that we experienced once the councils had gone. It is the other half; it is the 40% to 50% of housebuilding that fails us. We have not put it back again.

The housebuilders are doing fine. I saw the results this week for the Berkeley Group, which is actually going to become part of the FTSE 100 now. They make some very substantial profits. Redrow has its results out. The housebuilders are doing fine. They do not have to solve the housing problems of this country. That is not their remit. They have to be profitable and do well for their shareholders, and they are being profitable and doing well for their shareholders. They are not going to be the whole story, which is why we need these other players. We need to build them up, which is going to be my theme for the day.

The Chairman: Thank you, Lord Best. In fact, if it is so brilliant and Berkeley homes are doing so well—and I declare an interest, as I live in one of their houses—surely other people must say, “Gosh, look at that sector. They are doing so well. Why do we not go in and contribute to the building of the remaining half of the houses that we need?” Is there no addition to the whole sector, in terms of the players in it, or is it all in the hands of half a dozen or a dozen major builders?

Lord Best: Absolutely it is in the hands of the half a dozen to a dozen. The smaller housebuilders, the SME housebuilders, really have not come back after the recession. They took a nosedive. It has been very difficult for them to borrow money since then. Banks do not want to lend to people who may go bust. Property is a little iffy; they have been through the crash. They cannot borrow money; they have been written out of the script. We need to bring them back.

The Chairman: How?

Lord Best: We have schemes of guaranteeing their loans, which are absolutely vital, and government support for those SME builders. I am not going to pin my hopes, though, on that
being the whole solution. We are hopeful that the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act, as it now is—I took it through the House of Lords when it came from the Commons—will enable the SMEs and smaller housebuilders to do more with people building their own homes on small plots or working with smaller housebuilders to develop small sites, to their own specification. It is an excellent piece of legislation that is starting the process of trying to get the small builders back and trying to get people doing their own thing: self-build, not actually building it but commissioning local builders. But these things are not going to produce the big numbers that we require.

The Chairman: Are there skills problems? Do we have enough architects, quantity surveyors and people who could show some flair and start another building company?

Lord Best: We are desperately short of skills in all kinds of areas, not least the operatives on site, the actual people to build the homes. The industry is pretty hopeless. I chaired an inquiry with a colleague Nick Raynsford from the other House. We came up with the statistic that we are going to need 427,000 more people in the building industry in the next five years, and 7,200 apprenticeships completed their course last year. We are just not bringing them on. What we are doing is importing those wonderful Polish workers, of course. The Big Six have their recruitment offices in Poland and so on. It is great to see them here, but this is not good for local employment, and in the end it is self-defeating. We need to train our own. We need to bring on our own, so there needs to be apprenticeships and training, and that goes right through the industry. I repeat that I do not think we are going to get the private sector to do it all for us. We are going to need other players in this.

You were talking earlier about the garden cities and that movement. It is great, but again these are relatively small numbers. It is a really important little piece of the jigsaw, but these are relatively small numbers. My Self-build and Custom Housebuilding people are in relatively small numbers. We may be able to get the institutional investors into some renting, get this new-look private rented sector, get the insurance companies and the pension funds investing, and some developers are doing that. It is just starting. If we get 5,000 homes out of that pipeline in a year, we would be doing quite well. That is well worth nurturing. I think we come down to whether the councils will get cracking again. Is there any hope of that, and what can we get out of the housing associations?
Kathleen Kelly: There are three main reasons why enough homes do not get built, in addition to the prevailing economic climate. We need better access to land for new homes. If we had only 1% of the available land, we could meet housing need for 25 years, so it is more about how we bring land forward. Secondly, we need the right investment framework, so rather than a proliferation of different funds targeted at different issues, our members could actually lever in much more of their own investment, deliver economies of scale and scale up their delivery, if we had a strategic funding network focused on outcomes, rather than a proliferation of individual funding streams.

Lastly, it is important to get red tape right and reduce the amount of red tape, particularly that housing associations face. Particularly important in that is the way that we value homes. Housing associations have something like 1.2 million homes from local authorities, but the way they have to value those homes for borrowing purposes is very low, sometimes only 30% of the actual value of a home, whereas other associations are able to use a market value, subject to tenancy, which is more like 60% of the value of the existing home. You could change that at the stroke of a pen and it would release a lot more capacity. Even individual associations tell us that could release millions of pounds, so that could be a really useful way of delivering more capacity and levelling the playing field amongst all associations.

Equally, we need to modernise the allocation framework so that we can provide for a broader range of need in local areas, consider what the local housing market circumstances require and how to deliver that. Lastly, we would be really keen to work with government to provide a rent-setting framework that avoids all the confusion of the current system, and is actually fit for purpose and fit for the future, so that it can reflect not just local market circumstances, but actually customers’ needs too.

Q85 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I wanted to pick up on Lord Best’s comment about apprentices, and wonder what the Department for Education’s response has been to the shortage of young people coming out of school, going into all the building skills sector, and whether there has been a discussion about pulling that into the teenage years of education as well, in schools.

Lord Best: Absolutely, it is the 14 to 19 year-olds whom we have to capture. We need to grow our own workforce. We need to concentrate on that age group. There are good signs that
people recognise this. Not everyone is going to go off to university and all that. Apprenticeships, in a lot of industries now, are becoming really significant. The construction industry is lagging behind, I would say. There are one or two wonderful exemplars at the top of the industry, where you get real leadership, but the mass of the construction industry cannot be bothered to get into all that, trying to work with schools, trying to bring people on, trying to change the image.

It is not about working in the rain on a nasty building site any more. There is all kinds of stuff that goes on—draftsmen, people behind the scenes, people on site doing very exciting and interesting things. It is a modern and really rather brilliant industry, if only it would get its act together and bring on that next generation.

The Chairman: Should some emphasis be put on the people who run academies? For example, I am thinking of Lord Baker, who has his technological type academy and not one NEET has come away from those academies. It is a brilliant template. I do not know why it does not get much more coverage. Surely there would be a way of doing that. You see poor kids going into these academies, and you know that they are not academic and you know they are going to struggle, whereas if they found themselves at a lathe or something, they would just be terrific. The whole education thing does need encouraging, I would have thought.

Q86 Baroness Andrews: Kathleen and Richard, you both talked about the right conditions for the housing association industry to fulfil its potential, and you have identified many of the same things as our previous witnesses, for example land supply. That came out very strongly, but you also mentioned the right financial structures and the simplification of bureaucracies around funding investment, conditions to raise money, the renting situation, rent controls, and so on and so forth. Of those, which is the most important constraint? If we had to prioritise how we were going to liberate the housing association industry to fulfil its potential, which one should we prioritise?

Secondly, could you give us your frank assessment of the impact of the Government’s decision to move on the right to buy, in relation to housing associations, and what it will do to your members and their capacity to provide?

Kathleen Kelly: That is a very good question, and one of the tricky things about answering that is that these are interconnected pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. You need all the things in
place to make that happen. The top three things would really be the priority. If we can absolutely identify where land is available for housing and take a different approach to how we identify that, such as zoning to be clear about what housing type land can deliver and what the planning requirements are, so that people then compete on the quality of the development and not on the price of the land, that would be a really useful start, and the Government have already made some moves in that direction. There are more powers you could give there.

The case for a more strategic funding framework and capital investment in the longer term is made. It is anti-cyclical; it is counter-cyclical. Housing associations have been able to carry on building during the crash, which has meant that they could keep some more of the small suppliers and the small builders going. They provided 12,000 apprenticeships. They are keen to work with the local economy and invest in the development of the local labour market as well.

Also, the red tape makes a difference, and clearly it is very difficult at the moment to answer the impact of right to buy, because we do not have a very clear framework for the policy and what it means. What we do know is that the 1% rent reduction over four years is going to take £4 billion out of the housing association sector, which comes on top of ending rent convergence a year early. These are very challenging circumstances, but our members are clear that they can deliver more and they want to deliver more. If we have those three conditions right, around land investment and red tape, our largest developers are telling us that they could increase supply by 25% over this Parliament.

**Baroness Andrews:** There are huge constraints, are there not? They are absolutely systemic to your ability to do your business. What happens if, in the next five years, we cannot or we refuse to address those issues?

**Kathleen Kelly:** The housing association sector has a no-default record, which is very impressive. It has also been very resilient in the recession. Although we saw a 63% cut in capital grant in the 2010 spending review, housing associations increased their own housing supply by 22% during the crash. They are adaptable, they are flexible, they are innovative. They plan their business plans over 30 years, and they are working through at the moment the impact of the changes and getting revisions to the board.
They are still committed to ending the housing crisis within a generation and they still want to build more homes and to up their supply. What we ask are just the right conditions to enable us to really build at scale, because housing associations are the sector that has the capacity. They are at a take-off point where they can do much more, which is why we are keen to work with the Government to deliver that aspiration.

Kate’s suggestion that it would be good for all government departments and government policies to pull together around the same aims is very important, because at the moment there are some competing tensions on those, but our members are clear that they are here to deliver and they want to deliver. They are here for the long term for their local communities and to end the housing crisis.

Q87 Baroness Whitaker: Could I just explore a little more the failure of the construction industry to create its own workforce? When I used to work with the manufacturing sector, which was quite a while ago, the construction industry was by far the least enlightened, the most dangerous, the most badly organised and the most badly invested. This did not apply, on the whole, to the larger firms; it was more a feature of the medium and the small firms.

This dearth of a skilled workforce obviously affects public sector housebuilding as well as the private sector. I think it would be important for us to know what should be done to improve the construction industry’s approach to this. Is it a question of the structure of the industry? What in your view are the main reasons why it is so bad in this area? Obviously the university technical colleges are going to make a big difference—that is one of the reasons why they were developed—but that is a generation ahead. What can be done now?

Lord Best: You made a very good point, Baroness Whitaker, that the safety record of the industry used to be hopeless. It was a very unsafe place to work. That has been fixed. At the Olympic Games, which was the largest development that we have seen for ages, nobody was seriously injured on any of those building sites. It was a triumph. We look at what happens in some other countries and you realise how dangerous this can be.

How did the industry make that huge change? There was a summit of the captains of the industry. They sat around and they said, “This is going to be a priority. We are going to fix this”. Together they understand their relationship with the Department for Education and so on. They are the people who know what they want and they how to get there. They made it
happen. The central recommendation at the end of the report that Nick Raynsford and I produced was to have a summit. “Get your heads around this. You are the guys who can fix it. Do what you did for safety”, because they could repeat it. It is not rocket science.

Q88 Earl of Lytton: Chairman, quite a lot of what I was going to ask has been passed by and I really wonder whether we should not move on to another question. It would be interesting perhaps to hear Lord Best’s view of the blocks, particularly in the light of the housing association sector, according to the Chancellor, as we see from a press cutting, questioning whether it is doing what it was designed to do: a vehicle for building homes. If he thinks of it as a vehicle for building homes, could we start with whether you actually agree that that is structurally how it is organised?

Lord Best: I must say I was very disappointed with that. They were perhaps just off-the-cuff remarks from the Chancellor, but the housing associations are feeling a little unloved generally. They are feeling that people are coming at them. When I first came into this world, they had just under 100,000 homes and now they have two point something million. They have grown very big and that has been against all kinds of pressures and difficulties. They have done a fantastically important job and now they are feeling that people are against them.

It was earlier this week when the Chancellor said that most of the housing associations, the majority—because there are over 1,500 of them—are not developing at all. “What do we need them for?” They are not all about developing all the time. Some of the old almshouse trusts have not done anything since 1592, but good. What they are doing is looking after what they have. In fact, it has been government policy to confine the development to the larger players, because that has been the more economical and sensible way of doing development on scale, so it has been Government policy. The housing associations have actually exceeded the targets set for them by the Government’s agent, which is the Homes and Communities Agency. I think they are 11,000-odd homes ahead of the target set by government, so they have done pretty well. We should not knock them too hard.

They now face these various trials and tribulations. Their tenants have had the upsets of the so-called “bedroom tax” and those welfare things. They now have been told to reduce their rents by 1% each year in real terms for the next four years. This means that their income is
The right to buy could well deprive them of a lot of properties. We could talk at length about that.

We want to stop knocking the people who really do have the opportunity to grow, expand and solve this endless problem that we do not build enough homes. We are not going to get the housebuilders to do it. The housing associations are capable of gearing up and doing a good deal more. They need the resource. What has fuelled the growth from 100,000 to 2.2 million has not been charitable money or even voluntary effort, although we have had quite a bit of those things. It has been public investment. It is treating housing like railways, like HS2 or airports. Housing we need for the economy of the nation, as well as the wellbeing of the nation. We need to invest in it.

There has been a 63% cut—Kathleen will correct me—in the grant funding to housing associations over recent years. It is quite tough for them to keep up the development pipeline and it is not kind to knock them when they are struggling to achieve that. The first thing is to be more supportive of the housing associations, because we desperately need them. We have a big quango with lots of red tape. If people are worrying about their efficiency, and there are lots of key indicators of performance they have to run through, we do not need too much more breathing down their neck. They could do with a bit of liberating to get going. Let us not knock it; they are well regulated and have the capacity to grow, if not exponentially, a good deal more than they are at the moment. Let us give them a chance.

**Kathleen Kelly:** The thing that I would say in addition to that is that housing associations and the delivery of new homes provide a really good deal for the public investment that goes in. Housing associations have raised £76 billion in private investment. For every £1 of public investment that goes into delivering a new home, housing associations put in £6 of their own resources. They fund up to 85% of the cost of building a new home themselves.

I would support everything that Richard said, because associations are working together with government, in partnership with government, to deliver. It is important to see that as a relationship that can prosper in the right conditions and can really achieve the potential that the housing associations have to deliver more new homes.

**The Chairman:** You have certainly upped my knowledge on this, so thank you very much indeed. I will look at the papers with a more jaundiced eye in the future.
Q89 Baroness Young of Old Scone: We have heard a lot about the housing associations, but what is your view on whether the local government role should have a renaissance in social housebuilding? If so, what would need to be put in place for that to happen?

Lord Best: The problem with local authority housebuilding is with all the money they borrow, the 85% that did not come in grants for housing associations. If they borrow that same chunk of money themselves, it counts against the public sector net debt. It is public expenditure, which means that it adds to the deficit. None of us would want to see the deficit grow, and the Government are not keen to see local authorities borrowing money to do more. Therefore, there is a cap on what they can do. This is very inhibiting, because although lots of local authorities have now transferred all their council stock to housing associations or especially created new ones, and they do not have the capacity to do much, quite a few of them are up for it and ready to go. They have land, even on their own council estates. Those ghastly garages that have not seen a car for 30 years can be demolished and we can get bungalows for people under occupying full family houses round the corner to move in. All kinds of good things can happen. A lot of councils are up for it, but this inhibition on their borrowing really holds them back.

Can we change that? Can we remove that cap, that ceiling, on their borrowing without affecting the deficit? We could if we changed the definition that applies to public sector borrowing, and used the same one that most countries in the EU use, the OECD uses and the IMF uses. If you can classify it as trading, if you are getting a rental income back and you are repaying what you borrow, it is in a box and does not count as public expenditure because it is self-contained. You are getting revenue to repay the debt that you have taken out, so you are in the clear.

I went with a delegation from the LGA to see Danny Alexander and say, “Come on, can we not change this definition to be like other countries?” He gave me the proper Treasury reply: “We must not frighten the horses. The international banking community, if they see us changing definitions, will get very agitated. This is not good for the credit rating of the country”. I do not think it would create such a big fuss to change our definition and allow local authorities to borrow more.
I remember well when we were first talking about this definition, when housing associations were not regarded as public bodies and could borrow, and local authorities were not. I can remember the discussions, which had a good deal of politics about them. It was at a time when generally the nation was not keen on seeing a lot more council-house building. We were all fed up with ghastly tower blocks and monolithic estates. People did not want local authorities to have the resources then and the definition actually reflected a kind of political mood at the time. I think we could change it now without the international banking community getting too upset. Although local authorities are so out of practice that you will not get all that much out of them immediately, we could get a bigger pipeline, a sensible pipeline. They have the land resources that so often are the absolute essence of getting more homes built.

**Kathleen Kelly:** I would support what Lord Best has said. I would say that there are two really important things about the local authority role in housebuilding. One is that of course everybody can make a contribution to ending the housing crisis. If local authorities want to build, they should be enabled to build. The second is that we should not forget the really important strategic enabling role of local authorities in bringing development forward and in getting homes built in their area. We would like to see them have more powers to map land in their area and bring land forward, because that sort of role is really valuable in enabling the right homes to get built at the right prices, in the right places and, in reference to your earlier evidence session, in terms of parcelling up sites in the right way as well to make sure that they come forward effectively. Local authorities have two roles and we need to see them both as equally important.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Can I have one more supplementary on that—a tiny little one? If you were asked to judge the local authorities that we have at the moment, what percentage of them are doing this strategic role of enabling and facilitating the rest of the market?

**Kathleen Kelly:** That is a very good question. I would not have the number to hand, because it is actually a responsibility that they all have. They have to develop local plans in order to identify what land is needed in their area. Capacity is very different across local authorities, and some are much more geared up and enabled to do that. If you think of an authority like Manchester, which is a combined authority and has a city deal, it has aligned all its priorities...
and is demonstrating a lot of leadership about what it wants to see in an area. Cambridge operates in a similar way, in terms of developing lots of strategic partnerships. There are examples of really good practice, and those authorities that do well at those things can be enabled to do more.

**The Chairman:** That is very interesting, because it is a mixed bag. Is there an overarching umbrella organisation of local authorities where you could put the boot in?

**Lord Best:** That might be a question for me. I have been president of the Local Government Association. Quite a bit of this is a planning question, rather than directly the housing departments at the district level, and so on. It is unitary authorities, metropolitan authorities, London boroughs and county-level planning. That probably brings us on to other planning issues.

I would say in answer to the question, “How many local authorities?”, that it is probably a minority that are taking an active role in seeing their area, what is needed in it and making darn sure that the housing associations and housebuilders are working together. That is, I am afraid, a minority sport. They feel very underresourced to me, very much the junior partner in a discussion. When you have a private developer sat there and a representative of the council sat there, very often there is quite an unequal negotiation going on. They feel an underresourced group.

**Q90 Baroness Andrews:** Can I press you both on the housing revenue account? I think this is really important. Is it not possible to raise the housing revenue account cap without bringing it on to the public account? That is my first question. Secondly, would you agree that the Government’s plans for right to buy, extended to the housing associations, would confuse the public status of the housing association and its funding, and are more likely to bring the housing association and its funding on to the public account, thereby increasing the notion of the national debt? My third question is a supplementary really: what has been the impact of the community infrastructure levy on housing supply? Has it made any positive difference or, indeed, has it made a negative difference?

**Lord Best:** We cannot get more out of the housing revenue account without affecting public expenditure, as definitions currently stand. We are trapped at the moment. We have to change the definition. The point that Baroness Andrews is making about the housing
associations is whether there is a point at which they would be treated like local authorities, with all their borrowing regarded as public expenditure. This is down to the ONS, the Office for National Statistics, which defines what is or is not a public body. At the moment, housing associations are regarded not as public but as private bodies, but you begin to worry when you see that their rents are controlled by government; there is a lot of regulation and red tape around what they do; and now there is the possibility, at any rate, that they will be told they must sell their properties to the occupiers at these discounts and they will be told what to do with the money.

At what point does one have to accept that they have become public bodies? That is something I am not at all in favour of. If we get to that point, then it is not just that their existing debt—they have about £64 billion of debt still outstanding—goes on to the national debt. That is not very good news if you are trying to reduce the national debt. All that private borrowing goes on there but, worse than that, the borrowing they want to do each year, about £4.5 billion of private borrowing that fuels what they do, would suddenly start counting as public expenditure—and, of course, the Chancellor would have to say, “Clamp down on this. We have to cap this as we do with local authorities”, and then the golden goose is well and truly shot.

**Baroness Andrews:** You must be very concerned about that.

**Lord Best:** I think it is a threat. The ONS is an independent body. People say that the Government are not going to let the ONS get away with that, but in fact the ONS has shown itself to be quite independent-minded. I think the danger is real.

**Baroness Andrews:** We had that debate about the status of the housing associations about 10 years ago. It was a hard debate and it was finally hard won. There is a real issue here for the housing associations, and I am interested in what you say.

**Kathleen Kelly:** If I take your second two points, there is clearly a risk that right to buy could be a reclassification risk for housing associations. All Lord Best’s points are true in that case. Our members tell us that you could do much more on a voluntary basis. We share the ambition to give people more opportunities to own and there may be more effective ways of doing that than through the framework, which might avoid those risks. Clearly, we are keen to work with government to talk about that.
Q91  Lord Inglewood: Can I go back to right at the beginning of the evidence, please? It struck me that if I was an avid free marketeer I would be puzzled by the pattern that Richard Best pointed to. Somewhere over a third of the housing requirement in this country seems to be unable to be met by private enterprise. That seems to be the case from the evidence. What nobody has suggested to any of us is why.

Kathleen Kelly: One thing that is really important to recognise is the difference in business model. Housing associations are there to serve their local communities, and that is based on a not-for-profit model where they do not have to pay out any dividends; they reinvest all that back into building new homes and the services they provide. That provides a different sort of model in terms of what they are trying to achieve, which means that housing associations are able to take different decisions.

We have talked a fair bit about the supply chain this morning. A lot of associations, for example, keep their management and maintenance internally and they develop apprenticeships, so that they can keep developing the local workforce. Those that build also use that as an opportunity to operate in that way. Some developers do some of those things too. Also, our members are active in local schools.

Lord Inglewood: You are saying what your members do, but were I to be an avid free marketeer I would say, “The private sector can deliver what you deliver. They would do it differently, but they would. They would be more efficient”. I want to know why it is that failure is taking place. It is a market failure.

Kathleen Kelly: I would not necessarily say that it is efficiency. It is to do with what you set out to achieve. For example, if you build a lot of new homes in a local area, you are likely to reduce prices. If your profit depends on prices, that might not be a sensible business choice. If you are a not-for-profit provider, then you tend to take decisions over the longer term and to think differently about how your return might play out.

For example, Home Group, in a recent joint venture with Gateshead and Galliford Try, have a mixed portfolio of what they are developing, because they are taking a very long-term view of the development, which enables them to do some lower-priced housing as well as higher-priced housing. The local authority has managed to put in the land on a deferred
payment basis, so that can move the development along more quickly. There is scope for more partnerships along those lines that would deliver everybody’s objectives.

**Lord Inglewood**: I am genuinely interested in this. Why can the private sector not enter into these partnerships with deferred payments and affordable housing conditions imposed on planning consents?

**Kathleen Kelly**: They can and they do.

**Lord Inglewood**: They do not particularly like it.

**Kathleen Kelly**: It is very much an individual decision for the organisation, given their particular goals. I would not say that none of them like it, but actually it is possible for them to do that and some of them will make that choice. It is their individual business choice and their board choice, rather than necessarily something that they would all choose to do.

**The Chairman**: If I understand the point that Lord Inglewood is making, and I hope I do, there is certainly a huge opportunity here for entrepreneurs to get involved.

**Lord Inglewood**: I am wondering. I do not know. I would like to know why there is this apparent black hole and I do not know the answer.

**Lord Best**: It is very difficult for entrepreneurs to break into this. The big players have access to large-scale borrowing, to the acquisition of sites and indeed to the acquisition of options on sites. We were hearing a bit about that in the previous session. They in effect have it sewn up pretty well, but you only go as fast as the market will take you in terms of what you build. I watch the developments in York. The developments stop if house prices are not going up. If, for the next lot you build, you are going to have to sell more cheaply than the ones you have just sold, you are not going to build them. You sit tight, wait and go at the speed of the market.

You are always working on the basis that the market must be driven up, but the market will not go upwards if we build houses everywhere, as Kate Barker has demonstrated. In the end, house prices will, at the very least, stabilise if we build enough houses. It is not in the interests of those who are doing perfectly well.

I think a lot of housebuilders do a very good job. In running housing associations, I know that what I never managed to do was to build exactly on budget, exactly on time. We always were pressurised, one way or another, to add some bells and whistles, and I would not say to give
in to pressures, but we would always do the right thing. At the end of it, we could never match the way that housebuilders could always produce the goods, on the button, for the price that they said at the beginning. They do their job, but they only go at the speed of the market and that is always leaving behind the 40% or whatever. That is how the market works: it does not do everything that could be done.

It is also the case that a lot of people are not able to buy on the open market. Of course they are not, and we have decided, collectively as a country, that if we are going to subsidise anybody it is probably best not to subsidise, if you can help it, those that are purely profit-making bodies if there are alternative providers who are there for the long term and are going to manage and look after the properties for years to come. We have chosen the housing associations as the bodies that we want to give subsidies to.

**Lord Inglewood:** Is it then fair to say that the basic proposition is that there is this part of the market for housing that cannot afford what the market would require to be paid to deliver it? Therefore, for social reasons we have decided that there is a need to subsidise somebody, somewhere, in order to achieve what we want. The vehicle through which we are doing that as a society is this particular sector.

**Kathleen Kelly:** That is a fair response, but we have to remember that not building enough is also a drain on the economy, not just for social purposes—there are very good financial reasons for choosing that route, too. It is not just about having a social purpose and providing homes, although that is crucial and is at the heart of our members’ core purpose; it is also helpful to the local economy. If you meet affordable housing need in full, that is £8 billion contribution to the economy in England, so there is a very good economic reason for doing it too.

**Baroness Rawlings:** I am a bit confused, because as you explained very clearly the housing association is reinvesting all its profits back into the housing association, so it is not having to give to shareholders or anything like the private sector. So why do they not have more money to build more houses? They obviously have some sort of charitable status as well, so there is some sort of advantage. I do not quite understand why they are not actually building where we need them so badly.
**Lord Best**: The process that you described is the way the system works. In the early years, they got loads of grant, so they created the new homes on the back of government making that possible. Then, because those properties all increased in value, they could borrow against the value of those properties to do the next lot of housing. But of course if you borrow 100% of the cost of doing it, you have a very big mortgage and your rents are going to be very high, so you need some subsidy to take the edge off those market rents for the rents that you charge. You are then constantly reinvesting. You are borrowing against the assets that you are creating.

That is how we have this incredible growth out of the housing associations: constant borrowing against the rising values that they have. If it was constant borrowing of 100% of what you need, with no injection of anything else, then the rents you would have to charge would be too high or the housing benefit bill would go through the roof. We still need the resource to take the edge off the full market impact of borrowing everything.

**Kathleen Kelly**: It is important to recognise that as part of that picture, housing associations have diversified, so they provide a lot of shared ownership. They provide homes with discounted sales, as well as rented houses at a variety of different rents. They have a very clear niche in helping people into low-cost home ownership.

**The Chairman**: They are probably also more risk averse than the big companies, because they probably have stacks of money in the bank anyway.

**Lord Best**: They are, you are right.

**Q92 Lord Woolmer of Leeds**: You talked at different times about the management of the built environment. One of the interests for this Committee is the quality of the built environment, place and all that. In the public sector and social sector housing, what are the principles of successful long-term management of the assets of the built environment that you own that contribute to the sense of quality for the people who live there? Is that a part of the remit to which you work, and, if it is, how is that followed through? What lessons are there for this Committee from what you have achieved, which might be sensible to take forward in the private sector?

**Kathleen Kelly**: One of the main differences about housing associations from many other organisations is that they do want to stay around for the long term. There are three key
principles that they adopt: design for the long term, managing places, and working with local communities for the long term. They are getting the design right of the wider environment, the development itself and the homes in there, so that they are fit not just for today but for tomorrow. Secondly, it is about providing good access to opportunities, whether that is employment, green space, places to meet or transport links. Thirdly, it is about providing for a wide variety of people, providing for the local community and including them in decisions about the design of places and about the delivery of new homes, as well as, in many cases, the running of some housing associations.

If I can give you an example, Regenda in Limehurst Village in Oldham has a 10-year vision to revitalise that local community. They have actually worked with partners, including residents and the local authority, to have a key role in shaping that 10-year vision. That includes what homes will be provided, what services will be delivered and what that whole community looks like. Limehurst has secured £5 million of new investment, with a further £12 million proposed over the next five years, so they really are keen to stay around for the longer term. That means you make different decisions. If you know you are going to be there in five, 10 or 20 years, or in many cases 100 or 150 years, you are very keen to get it right and to work with the people who are going to be living in those communities and working with you in those communities.

**Lord Best:** With Bournville village in Birmingham and the one that I inherited in York, the New Earswick village of the Joseph Rowntree Trust, these garden villages were the start of the idea that you look at a whole community together. You look at a place. You make a place. You think of all the things that are required for that. I have to tell you that New Earswick in York is still going strong, at 1,100-odd homes in this village, with the amenities that go with it. A garden village implies, rightly, that the landscaping and the environment are important, and there are facilities for people to meet together. There are things we cannot do nowadays; there is a very nice cricket pitch. We cannot afford those things any more, but the idea of having a masterplan, in which you look at all the elements of what will make life good, remains.

Rowntree is now doing a new garden village on the other side of York called Derwenthorpe. If you are planning any outings, I think that this is a pretty wonderful example. There is
combined heat and power. Nowadays, energy efficiency is very much at the core of these things. It has its little lake with ducks on it and some things that might look a bit superficial, but it also has high-quality housing, a mix of people, plenty of home ownership and plenty of renting as well, all mixed together. It is half way through being built.

The design does not have to be a pastiche. I am rather fond of Poundbury, but not everybody is. Derwenthorpe is not a pastiche of an ancient village; it is a modern new village, but it looks and feels great. It is about masterplanning the whole of the community as an entity. It has a jogging track round the outside, so people can have a jog in the morning. It has cycle paths across. You can walk to the school.

The Chairman: I think you sold it to us. I actually know somebody who lives in one of your villages.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: Every witness we speak to can always come up with one or two excellent examples. I am concerned about the overwhelming majority of places. In the public sector and, as you said, the private sector, some dreadful places have been built. My question was really more fundamental than that. Are there any principles that have to be abided by within the housing association movement in new developments? What assessment do you make nationally of the extent to which the excellent examples are, in general, followed through? If we simply produce a report that gives some very special examples of excellence here, there and everywhere, it betrays the truth that faces most people. I am concerned by the extent to which you have some guidelines that have to be followed through—an assessment every three or five years of how this is being followed through. What happens on that side of things?

Kathleen Kelly: Housing associations are subject to different design standards for their homes, which tend to be better quality, although those have been changing over the years, it is fair to say. They are subject to that, but some of what is different is their ethos: staying with a development for the long term and staying with the community. In answer to your question about why more of it does not happen, there is clearly a housing crisis, which means that people are very conscious of the need to build more. There are also problems with the number of resources—local planners and local authorities—and there is a skills shortage there too. That can make it difficult for everybody to make the case effectively that you need
to have a masterplan for an area, and that actually the quality of what you build today matters very much, both today and tomorrow, not least for energy efficiency and the quality of the green spaces, as Richard mentioned, which support healthy living and more use of the outdoors.

That principle is hard to deliver when you are under pressure to deliver more and more, without recourse to those plans. There could be a much stronger and clearer vision about how you make local places the thriving and prosperous communities that we all want to see, but I would say that most people do aspire to those principles. It is just in the practice that they sometimes slip. Housing associations certainly have to have higher standards in the property they deliver, and they are very aware of the risk of getting it wrong, because they are there for the long term.

The Chairman: We are running out of time again, I am afraid. I am a very bad Chairman, but I was just wondering, Baroness Finlay, whether you want to ask your question, because it dovetails completely with what you have just been saying.

Q93 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Very briefly, because you have touched on the need for healthy communities, we know that we have an ageing population. We know loneliness is a big problem. Where are the levers that should or could come in to make sure that these splendid principles that you have outlined and best practice actually become the norm, rather than the exceptional best practice? At the moment, example is not enough.

Lord Best: You are linking, absolutely properly, housing and health. This is so important, particularly of course for older people: all that business of preventing accidents, preventing people from not being able to come out of hospital because the home will not receive them, readmissions to hospitals endlessly because of the problems of the home, and people being cold and miserable in the home. Health and housing are absolutely interlinked and we need to ensure structurally that people take note of that everywhere.

We now have the health and well-being boards up and down the country, which bring together local authorities and the health service. That is a critical point at which those two things can be talked about together. I see a shake of a head.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: They are not doing it. That is the problem.
Lord Best: Some are. It is the old story: some are and some are not. Where they are, they are showing what can be done. With the combined authorities, Manchester now being a great example, health is closer to local government. There are new opportunities to think about housing and about health in the same breath, because they work together. You save a fortune for the hospital, the health service and social care if you get the housing right, as we all know.

Kathleen Kelly: We know that poor housing costs the NHS £1.4 billion a year, and we are working very closely with Public Health England and the Department of Health to put housing at the centre stage of health decisions. We have done work with NHS boards on how you can use NHS land to reduce the pressure on services, such as providing reablement services to enable people to come out of hospital earlier and to prevent people from going into hospital. Housing associations are uniquely placed in that we know our residents very well. We know all the people that they are connected with, so actually our members do provide a lot of services.

The right strategic funding framework that is very clear about the outcomes it wants to achieve, and departments working together in that way, both nationally and in combined authorities, can deliver a lot of value and what is needed in a local area. Whether that is about the ageing population or mental health, a lot of the schemes that exist have real success in reducing people’s reliance on medication or their reliance on emergency services, like A&E at hospitals.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Should we be requiring an assessment of those factors in all planning?

Lord Best: Absolutely, they come together. That is such an important point.

Q94 The Chairman: Can I ask a question that Lady Andrews, who had to go off to another meeting, would have asked? I do not want a reply, but I would be very grateful if you could scribble down a few words on it. Do housing associations involve their residents in the management of homes and surrounding areas? Piggybacking on that is even getting discussion groups going with them. That makes them feel wanted, and they would have very good ideas on the very points about health and maintenance—the point about people coming
out of hospital and even having something like a rota of visitors and people looking after them. It does seem the right way to do it. I have hogged that question. I am sorry about that. It has been a fascinating session. Thank you very much indeed. I am sure there are lots of things that you will think about, as soon as you are out of that door. You are probably thinking about them now, but could we ask you to think about them and let us know? If you were in my position, what do you think I should really be thinking about? On that happy note, I say have a very good weekend and thank you very much.

10 September 2015
When CABE was set up in 1999 it was a clear statement by the Government of the time that it wished to promote better standards of design in the built environment. There has been a debate about its effectiveness, but the decision to withdraw government funding in 2010 was also seen by many in the development industry as a clear statement of Government policy priorities, especially as the savings were tiny.

The impact of CABE in its early days under John Rouse and Stuart Lipton was significant. It did generate debate and its design reviews did carry weight and were taken seriously. They were also welcomed by many developers and their architects as an opportunity for feedback and debate that led to tangible design improvements.

I would not advocate re-establishing CABE, but I would strongly urge the Select Committee to give consideration to the establishment of a successor body that can give advice to Government and act as a focus for:

1. A continuing constructive debate about how design quality of buildings and places can be improved.
2. A client body for commissioning independent research on current specific issues.
3. A national design review system that oversees and ensures best practice in regional and local panels and would be the natural home of national large scale reviews, for example HS2. It should also have the role of disseminating the key lessons that are emerging from design review and, in exceptional circumstances, the right of call in. Its own design reviews should be a material consideration in planning decision making.
4. Act as the design advisor to Government ministers and their departments.

Such an organisation should be small and strategic and under the funding of a single Government Department.

08 August 2015
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds

Examination of Witnesses


Q29 The Chairman: Good morning and welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. It is very kind of you to give up your time, and I am sure we will have a very interesting discussion. We have certainly read all about the Bishop Review and the Farrell Review.

You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by the Members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. You cannot change the thing, but you can make just factual corrections. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please? We will start, with Professor Bishop, alphabetically.

Professor Bishop: Peter Bishop, Professor of Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. I am also a director at Allies and Morrison Architects. I was previously deputy chief executive of the London Development Agency, Director of
Design for London, and a planning director in a number of large inner-London authorities, and I am also the author of the Bishop Review.

Max Farrell: I am Max Farrell, a partner at Farrells architect planners practice internationally. Recently I was project leader for the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. I am going to ask the first question. You have copies of the questions there. What has the response from the Government been to the recommendations of the Farrell Review? How engaged have Ministers and civil servants been in delivering its ideas? Is more action required? I am sure you will say yes to the last one. Obviously we are very interested in that, but we have read what the immediate reaction was and it seemed to be that the Government were going fairly slowly. Just what has happened since then?

Max Farrell: Thank you. The first thing I would like to say is what an excellent thing I think it is to have this Select Committee. We are all extremely pleased and very hopeful about the impact that it can make. One of the things that we set out to do with the review is to try to cut across all the different silos to do some joining up. The built environment is so complex with all the different organisations and institutions involved. Hopefully this can have the same sort of impact.

We published the review just over a year ago, and our initial response was one of slight disappointment that there had not been a formal response from the Government when it was a government-commissioned review, but also after all the extensive consultation that had taken place throughout the country over a long period of time. We also understood that the Minister, Ed Vaizey, who had commissioned the review—and who was personally extremely involved and still is—felt that a number of recommendations were aimed at departments other than his department, in particular at DCLG, where we talked a lot about the planning system and the relationship between planning and architecture. So at the time it did not seem entirely appropriate for him; I do not think he felt in a position to make a formal statement.

Now that there has been a change and architecture is with a new Minister and a new department, it might be an opportune time for a statement about either the Farrell Review or the state of play with the built environment and place quality.
The final thing I would say in response to that question is it is great to see Matthew Carmona here. I only just discovered outside in the corridor that he has joined the group. We see the Place Alliance as an incredibly important organisation, or collective if you like, that will help carry on all the work that we initiated in the review, in the sense that it is a collaborative enterprise that does not have its own particular agenda. It is more about, as I said at the beginning, joining up, sharing resources, sharing research, lobbying collectively, and taking collective responsibility for place quality and the built environment. So if the Government were to make a statement or give support for anything, I would almost prefer that to be for the Place Alliance as the body that will take this forward.

The Chairman: Of course, our specialist adviser is now the chairman of it, which is even better. Max Farrell: That is excellent news, yes.

The Chairman: I can assure you that all of us are aware of the cross-cutting needed and that will come out through the evidence session, I am sure. Thank you very much. Professor Bishop?

Professor Bishop: There is not much I can add to that, really. I would not in any way play down the difficulties the Government will have in responding to something like the Farrell Review. One of the difficulties we had in carrying out the review was that there was no single point of focus. Design in the built environment is something that moves across most government departments. Effectively, for me the central point of it is how Government exercise leadership consistently to say that this is important: it is not just important at the moment, and not just next year; it is something that has continuity in policy over quite a long period of time to establish a firm platform of expectation as to how we promote high-quality design. It is not something that can be divorced from economic growth or housing or infrastructure or climate change. It has to be absolutely embedded in it.

I think that the key challenge for Government from reviews like the Farrell Review is how they respond collectively and consistently across departments. Having worked in government for a lot of my career, I know just how difficult that in fact is.

The Chairman: Yes. But, Professor Bishop, is there not another point? You also have to ensure that it works with the developers and all the other players. What is the response from the industry? Government, we know, have been slightly dilatory, but they have allowed us to go
ahead with this Committee, do not forget. What has been the response from the other players? I hate using that word “stakeholders”. What actions could help to encourage developers to embrace the conclusions of the Farrell Review and your review also?

**Professor Bishop:** That is an extremely difficult question to answer. I suspect a theme from the session this morning will be that there is no single industry, first of all. There is a significant difference between the commercial development industry and house building, for example, and engineering and infrastructure. Within those sectors there is a huge difference of response between certain organisations and others. Like any sector of the industry, there are good and bad organisations, and people who strive to produce something that is better than the average and people who are quite happy to make do. Through the course of the Farrell Review and through the course of the Bishop Review there was a general willingness to engage in that conversation. I think that is the key thing—a genuine willingness from most people to try to produce something good, if they could, if the circumstances were right. There are always rogue organisations who will probably just try to make do.

I think the key thing is to try to pull the average up. You can always get exemplary design. As a nation, we do have some of the top design firms, not just in architecture but some top design firms in the world. It is how you get the average up. It is the average that affects most people’s general lives, the communities and the environments that they live in.

**The Chairman:** It is the same in every industry, any group; Government likewise.

**Professor Bishop:** Absolutely.

**Q30 Baroness Whitaker:** Leading on to the other leg of implementation, the Farrell Review put forward quite a lot about the local authorities. What about the response in the town halls?

**Professor Bishop:** I think town halls are under a lot of pressure. That is not a particularly controversial thing to say. Most people will probably recognise that is the case. Certainly when I did my review four years ago—and I still feel quite strongly about this—local government has an absolutely critical role to play if we are going to get good design in the physical environment. It has three roles. It has a role as regulator, and that is very important. It might sound a bit unfashionable but regulation is quite important if it is applied correctly and sensitively in promoting good design. It has a role as client, and that is another area where
there has been a significant loss of expertise at the local area. It has a proactive role in trying to carry out placemaking and producing good environments.

Over the course of my career, 40 years, I have seen a huge change to the way in which local government is structured. The one thing that is particularly damaging is that local government over the last 15 or 20 years has lost a lot of talented people. In the 1970s, remarkably, it was almost the career of choice for any bright graduate coming out of architectural school. That has largely disappeared. There are some local authorities, some of the big metropolitans and the other cities and some of the London boroughs, who are still maintaining good design resources, good design expertise, and are producing extremely good results on the ground, both in terms of regulation and placemaking. But there has been an alarming stripping out of talent in design at the local level.

Secondly, there has always been the perennial problem of training local politicians up to a level where they understand the difference between design quality and personal taste, and how you can promote good design and have aspirations that are demanding and challenging for their local areas. I think there has been a steady loss across the board, and that is quite damaging. Through my own practice, we do a lot of work on training packages for local councils, and it is great when we do but it really is the tip of the iceberg.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Sorry, I should have clarified. I meant the response of the town halls to the *[Farrell Review]*.

**Professor Bishop:** I am sorry.

**Baroness Whitaker:** All the things you have said are extremely interesting. I am very glad to hear them and we shall find them useful, but I wondered, moving on, how the town halls have responded.

**Max Farrell:** I think it has been varied. Where there has been a positive response we have seen already that it has been making a difference. It is making a difference in that local authorities and local government are recognising that it is not entirely down to them and there are lots of other people involved who can make a difference. Initiatives like setting up urban rooms, for example, are now one of the great success stories of the review. We found out yesterday about another one near our office, which makes 18, I think, across the country. They have been set up through partnerships between local authorities, institutions like RIBA
but also, and quite fundamentally important, the universities as well. We had very interesting conversations recently in Newcastle with the chief executive of the council, the vice-chancellor of the university and the head of RIBA Enterprises, which is based there, all about the idea of having an urban room so that the onus does not fall entirely on one or the other—that they can collectively do something that will make a difference.

The idea of the urban room is very closely linked to the idea of proactive planning. As Peter said, everyone is very aware of what the problems are and where the shortfalls are in resourcing and skills within local authorities. What we tried to do in the review was identify solutions to that. Part of the problem with the lack of proactive planning is the way that we communicate planning and architecture to the wider public and how readily they can relate to it and get engaged with it. What a tremendous difference it makes when they do.

We have seen with neighbourhood planning that it can make an incredible difference to the way that people think about new development and new housing. If they are involved at the beginning and they can say, “If we have 50 houses, we could have a new library or new sports facilities”, it is a completely different way of looking at new development, rather than waiting for a planning application to be made and then preparing for a fight. It is choosing to say yes very early on, but yes with a number of conditions.

I think developers are supportive of that. They like the certainty, and they know that if they put their resources upfront as well, in terms of engaging with the community, having a wider master plan, thinking about the town and not just their site, then they do not have to spend the money and resources later on in having that fight, which tends to involve planning consultants, lawyers, going to inquiries and appeals and so on. It is just a different way of going about things, which I think is more of a culture change than a change to any particular policy.

**The Chairman:** So the default position is negative, but in fact what you are saying is that if there was trust, you could change the world.

**Max Farrell:** Yes, absolutely, or at least this country.

**The Chairman:** It is not just the built environment.

**Q31 Baroness Andrews:** Good morning. I have a couple of related questions. One starts with Peter and the reference that you made, Professor Bishop, to leadership and the need for
consistency. Given there have been changes between DCMS and DCLG now and you have said how difficult you think Government will find it to implement a better system of placemaking, to use the shorthand, who do you think is the champion now in Government for you and for all this? Where does it sit, and where is the capacity within central government and the conviction to make this happen?

Following that and finally, given the spread of issues that you address, both in the Farrell Report and your own report, that are related to the curriculum, the skills agenda, the proactive planning—a very wide range of interrelated issues—what are you most worried is not going to be addressed? If you get a statement from Government, what will it mean? What will it not want to address?

Max Farrell: I think it goes back to one of the things that Peter was talking about earlier on. The built environment is so disaggregated and a number of different departments and agencies are involved, so it is difficult to have leadership in one particular individual, but I think there are key departments. We did a diagram in the review about where the built environment has sat and how it has been moved around and spliced and diced. At the moment I think it sits across five departments.

Obviously the Minister for Housing and Planning, and now the Architecture Minister, has an important role to play, but equally the Department for Transport. I think a lot of big decisions that have a huge impact on places are transport-related. They are about roads, rail and airports, and quite often urban planning or placemaking are not central to those debates at all. Quite often the rail operators do not think in that way, and it is more about delivering a station on time and on budget than what impact the station has on the city and how it can create a new place. We know from projects like Old Oak Common, now Euston, that having that dialogue and shared objective and putting placemaking at the forefront, rather than as an afterthought to argue about, is a hugely important thing.

Professor Bishop: I would be very reluctant to advise on how Government should structure themselves on this, but I will have a go. I think that, first of all, there has to be a voice, and there has to be a strong voice. With a certain amount of trepidation, I think that probably has to be in Cabinet, because if you are looking at issues around infrastructure, airports, High Speed 2 and housing numbers, that is where the debate happens. Again, with a certain
amount of trepidation, because I am not an expert in this at all, I suspect the voice of the Treasury is extremely strong in these kinds of debates and discussions. There needs to be a counter-voice to try to balance that—understanding the pressures, the expediency of money and timescales against producing something that is of quality, long lasting, durable and has extremely effective lifetime costs. Sometimes it can be beautiful as well, which would be quite a nice gain to have.

So I think there has to be a voice and that voice has to be backed up by a small resource. When I was at the London Development Agency, I had endless discussions about how many architects London needed, but we never had as many architects as we had people dealing with contract compliance and, therefore, it was always a matter of political choice. Design teams can be very small, very agile and very cost effective, but I think that to have an effective voice at Cabinet level that person would need a resource. Whether that sits in DCLG or DCMS or anywhere else is less important, as long as you also have behind that a simple but clear structure to make sure that when key decisions are made, design is seriously considered and weighed up against all the other criteria the Government have to decide upon.

Baroness Andrews: I understand that there is no official now in DCLG with responsibility for design. So when you talk about resource, we are talking about a complete absence of resource within the key department that is now dealing with design and planning and housing. Am I correct in that?

Professor Bishop: As far as I am aware—well, Max?

Max Farrell: One of our recommendations was for the Government to appoint a chief architect. We said that there was a gap—that there is a chief planner at one end of the spectrum and a chief construction adviser at the other, but no champion for the part in the middle, about design, who is advising all the different departments and ensuring consistency in the way the Government approach these things.

What happened since was quite interesting, because one of the first things that Brandon Lewis suggested when he took up his new role was to have a design panel within Government and on that panel to have the institutions, but also for him to chair it and to have some private sector representatives as well. That panel initially looked at the starter homes and developed and designed templates for starter homes. I do not see any reason why that same model could
not be applied to housing more widely, or even other types of government buildings, schools, hospitals, where it is about getting the best quality for the best value, rather than just all about cost.

The Chairman: Lord Freeman, you have explained to us previously what you feel about it.

Lord Freeman: There is a ministerial committee, I think headed by Greg Clark. That committee, which in theory should be looking at the built environment, is listed number 16. It is the last in terms of the entire list of ministerial committees. First of all, do you think that his department is the right department for us to question the Secretary of State on and, if not, who else?

Max Farrell: We met Greg Clark during the review process, before he took up his current role, and he was very supportive. One of the things we talked about in the review was the need for planning to be place-based and at city, town and village level, rather than perhaps other scales. The move towards devolution and decentralisation is an important one in terms of planning and how we plan our towns and cities.

I also think local leadership is just as important as national leadership. In Bristol, for example, the mayor, who happens to be an architect, has made a huge difference because he has thought about placemaking and put that at the centre of a lot of his policymaking across a number of different areas, whether it is health or education. I would think Greg Clark, the Secretary of State at DCLG, is probably the right person, because integrating planning, housing, and architecture is a very important thing.

The Chairman: They have all been silos.

Q32 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I think some parts of my question may have already been answered, but it is really to Professor Bishop. When you recommended that the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment become part of the Design Council Cabe, you also recommended engagement with Government. We have already had bits about the hole that is there. We have also heard in evidence about a lack of policy evidence being available centrally anyway. Could you comment on the research that may be needed and whether the DCLG and BIS should be undertaking this, driving it, requesting it or commissioning it, and whether it is happening at all in practice?
Professor Bishop: With respect, I did not recommend the merger of CABE and the Design Council.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I am sorry.

Professor Bishop: It happened, and I was brought in to try to come up with a way that it could work. I think one of the sad things that has happened since that merger has been the loss of CABE’s function in terms of, first of all, being a conduit to import best practice, not just from the UK but from overseas, and to disseminate it, and to produce research and publications. The good news is that CABE still exists; that element of CABE’s work has been lost. There is a paucity of work in terms of research and design in the built environment. Unfortunately, a lot of it is anecdotal; a lot of it has to rest on case studies. The essential question that one always comes back to—which much does good design cost and what is the long-term value—is still largely unanswered. There have been various pieces of research, but it is a relatively thin field in terms of research, and I think it would be really quite important to carry out very focused research into that area. There is also the area of particular typologies of housing and infrastructure, where there is a real shortage of long-term research on the performance of buildings. Similarly, there is a real shortage of data and information about how places are being put together. Certainly, working in practice, a lot of the work we access is purely off the top of our heads; it is anecdotal; it is case studies we know of.

With CABE having disappeared, what has been lost is, first, an organisation you can go to that either holds the information or can commission it, and secondly, an independent organisation that can either be asked by Government to carry out research or, possibly more importantly, to be the client on behalf of Government to carry out the research. Both of those are rather large gaps that I would advocate should be addressed.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Has that gap been taken over by university departments at all? Are there any long-term registers of innovative design whereby other departments within the university have linked to look at the population effect as well as the duration of the actual project?

Professor Bishop: My colleague from UCL is sitting here. A lot of research is being carried out by university departments in planning and architecture in the built environment. I would say that it is not necessarily easy to access or focused, and it is not necessarily commissioned and
driven by the key issues the Government need to address. A lot of it follows the research interests of the individuals and the particular departments they belong to. When I carried out the review—and I suspect it is probably still the case—there was a lack of a real focus from Government on the key issues where research would be very useful. There are issues around how we provide decent housing in quantity; in London there are issues around tall buildings and skyline; there are issues around the green belt; there are issues around sustainable energy in the countryside. You can continue to name the key points where really hard research would be extremely valuable, but I am not aware there is any process whereby that debate happens within Government and departments make decisions together about commissioning that.

The Chairman: Is there any chance that an application to the European Commission would yield fruit here? There is lots of money rushing around in Brussels for research and development. In fact, another Committee of this House looked at the idea of research and innovation and it covered everything from medicine to—but building and architecture was not involved, as I recall. It may be that that it is an outlet. I am just suggesting that people should think about it.

Q33 Baroness Whitaker: You did touch on this, Professor Bishop, but just for the record: do you take it that it is important to have research on what design saves as well as what it costs? We have to look now at the long term as well as the short term. There is also the issue that the benefits of good design might well accrue to another aspect of public responsibility, that is to say crime reduction or better health. These things are not encapsulated in research stimulated by one government department, but they would all be long-term savings. Do you think that that is an important area? That is the main question, but also, what about the Building Research Establishment? Before it was privatised, it used to do some of this. Is there scope for it not to have to earn its living quite so much and to do this kind of thing?

Professor Bishop: The simple answer is, yes, there is a need for this and we do have organisations—the Building Research Establishment and obviously universities—that could carry out this type of research. Something that did come up when I did my review, which I found quite extraordinary, was that speaking to house builders, I could not find anyone at all who ever went back and looked
at their developments after two years of completion. Most never went back and looked at them. There are no data tracking the quality of the specification, the environmental or long-term running costs of those houses, or indeed the design quality, or on value. Therefore, you have a complete vacuum in which people are designing and commissioning volume house building, for a start.

On housing, again, anecdotally, I am afraid, because a lot of this is anecdotal, if you look around London you can see some of the housing built in the 1970s—Camden’s architectural department, Alexandra Road, for example, now listed; Lillington Gardens in Westminster; the Odhams building estate in Covent Garden—where we have done it well. These are buildings and houses with high values and that will probably still be here in 100 or 150 years’ time. We have since demolished an awful lot of the stuff we did badly. Therefore, anecdotally, it is rather clear that good design, if you look at lifetime costs, saves you a huge amount of money. Having some hard research to back up these anecdotes would make the debate a lot easier, especially in terms of persuading Government to put the resources—relatively small resources—and the focus into promoting good long-term design.

The Chairman: It is a case of commoditising, if there is such a word, housing like they used to do in the grocery sector: “pile it high and sell it cheap” and not think about the long-term implications.

Baroness Andrews: I have an example, in fact, Chair. In about 2008, DCLG looked at the cost of a lifetime home that was built to the highest standards, was fully flexible and could enable people to age in place. This, of course, turned out to be more expensive than the ordinary home, which you outlive because you cannot manoeuvre around it when you are older. There was a distinct cost to it. You referred to the Treasury; this is precisely the sort of argument you used with the Treasury. The house builders, of course, immediately said, “We will put up the price of housing”. You are talking in your reports about everyday housing, everyday planning and so on, and this is absolutely fundamental to everyday. To my knowledge, that research has never been followed up or applied. It is a precise example of the gap in the system that fails to follow through on that sort of information.
Baroness Rawlings: You were saying how they have stripped out the research department in various planning authorities and that CABE was closed from the research point of view. Where did all those research people go, because they must still be around?

Max Farrell: I would like to pick up on that point in a sort of roundabout way. It goes back to the current state of research. It is important to point out that the idea of the Place Alliance is to collectively pool all the different research reports and initiatives that are going on. It is just as much about awareness of what research there is as it is about commissioning research. What we discovered during the review process was that there is quite a significant amount going on; it is just that there is no one central place where it is all easily accessible. To have the Place Alliance as a hub where you can go to access—there is research being done all the time by the institutions, by the TCPA.

Just to pick up on Lady Andrews’ point about housing and being able to understand why poor products are accepted and sold, there is a piece of research that was done recently on home performance labelling that we thought was very interesting. It was initiated by the Housing Forum, but it is not widely known about. The idea of it, as we talked about in the Farrell Review, was to influence consumers in terms of what they expect and for that to then have a greater impact on the house builders. It is interesting that Barratts are now supporting this home performance labelling. Essentially, it challenges our current system of valuing property, which is incredibly crude. We value houses by the number of bedrooms and floor area, so design quality does not come into it. This is a website that can measure space, daylight, sunlight, storage and access to green space; it is a much more sophisticated way of valuing property. I think that that would have probably a bigger impact on house builders than this regulatory “carrot and stick” approach.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Just to follow on with that, if you are being the repository for research that has happened and therefore generating new ideas, is anybody doing the equivalent of TripAdvisor for people who are buying these new homes and new construction? You assess your holidays; you are asked, when you go into healthcare, to assess your healthcare. The biggest expenditure you will make will be on your home, and yet where is the consumer able to feed back?
Max Farrell: Absolutely. That is a massive opportunity and something that is inevitable, I think. It is happening in the rental sector, where you now get feedback on landlords but also on tenants. That is becoming more widely accessible and making a difference.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Should Place be doing that?

Max Farrell: The Place Alliance?

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Yes, Place Alliance. Should you set it up? Should you start it?

Max Farrell: I do not see why not.

Q34 Earl of Lytton: Just a comment on that last exchange, which was particularly interesting because, of course, if you go on to some of these holiday home websites, UK holiday homes, you will find more qualitative information than you would get from a house builder.

How widespread do you both consider the design review process to be at present? What is it dependent on? Is it factor of scale, is it individuals, or is it to do with investor input or lack of input, as the case may be? What are the outcomes from these reviews on the development process and its quality? In other words, is it effective?

Professor Bishop: Perhaps if go first on that. I am a big fan of design review. Design review engages in a broad conversation and a challenge. It is also a very cheap process. There has been a lot of discussion about how much it costs, but a design review will cost between £3,000 and £5,000. That is less than 1% of the consultant fees you will pay in bringing a reasonably sized development up to planning. In percentage terms, it is very small. It is non-binding and, therefore, it is purely there for advice. When you have good local authorities and good developers, they do value it. They value it because it allows a challenge and a discussion to happen that allows a scheme to develop at the right time.

Since CABE became part of the Design Council and effectively lost its unique and privileged role as the principal adviser to Government, design review has, first, grown—I believe there is more design review happening across the country, which is good—and, secondly, it has devolved, which is good. However, it has become very patchy and it is voluntary. Therefore, if a local authority is powerful enough and prepared to insist that a scheme go to design review, it probably will. Poor developers will almost certainly resist that; good developers will be very happy for that as part of a constructive process. The design review, being patchy, has also become quite competitive. You have a set of organisations, including CABE, competing
for a very constrained and constricted market. Finally, whereas most design review panels that have been set up locally are extremely good and are doing an extremely good job, I do not believe the quality is as good as the far larger and more professional ones that were run by CABE in the first place.

In my own experience, a project that goes to design review almost certainly raises questions and comes out better. I would advocate that there are times when there should almost be a call-in: the schemes are so important that they should be almost required to go to design review. In the Bishop Review, I did say that there should be a presumption that anything that is procured through public contract using public money should go through design review to set the example and the conditions for it.

Max Farrell: I agree with Peter. I think design review is a very successful and valuable process. I would argue that it is not applied widely enough and it is quite limited in its scope, because the current state of affairs is that the majority of design review takes place for new buildings that are coming through the planning process. In this country 80% of the built environment that we will have in the year 2050 already exists, so only 20% of it will be new. Of that 20%, only a very small percentage will go through the planning process. In the public realm, changes to high streets and parks do not go through the planning process.

I would argue that we need what we call place reviews of existing places, not just new buildings, which in a way are easy to focus on. Who is looking at housing estates? Who is looking at mega hospitals? I would argue that these places have a much bigger impact on a much greater number of people’s lives than a new museum or a new office building. The good thing about design review or place review, whatever you want to call it, is that professionals are happy to give up their time, either at cost or for no money, to do it. It is a good way of public and private working together for the greater good for a low cost, and I would say it should be applied more widely.

Q35 Lord Freeman: This is a follow-up question and I suspect I know how you are going to answer it, but let us see. Does there need to be a greater emphasis in the national planning policy framework on design generally but also on design reviews?

Max Farrell: It would be great if there was support for or reference to the idea of place reviews, because it is a different concept. I do not think they would necessarily need to
replace design reviews because design reviews play an important role and are very valuable for individual developments. Looking more widely, I notice that CABE does have what they are calling a place review panel to look at Oxford and what its needs are, what the transport problems are, and thinking about those things at the very early stages, which will then help inform developers who are bringing forward applications for individual sites. If there was some support for it within the national planning policy, that would be a good thing in my view.

Professor Bishop: Could I just come in on the back of that question? First of all, I think the National Planning Policy Framework is a really good document. What it has done, which I think is remarkable, is invited planning to come back into the debate about design quality in the built environment. I absolutely applaud it for doing that. It has some powerful statements suggesting that planning authorities can turn down applications on design and can use exceptional design to override some other considerations. That is absolutely wonderful. I think what has happened is you have had a very positive drift in the policy framework, which has moved completely away from the funding of the infrastructure to support it. To me, that is the crux of the problem we are facing.

Baroness Whitaker: I share your view, Professor Bishop, about the merits of the NPPF. My question is: have you any confidence that it is read across or translated down? I have in front of me the national networks national policy statement, which I would say is inadequate about design. It talks about aesthetics being a desirable consideration; there is no idea in it that good design is integral to the good functioning of a highway or similar. Do you have experience of this? Am I right that it is not read across?

Professor Bishop: I would share your view on this. There is a gap between the lead given in national policy and the application on the ground, both in terms of national infrastructure projects and how it is applied locally. Partly, the stripping out of expertise, capability and capacity at local level has been very serious. I think an awful lot of local authorities, which in theory have considerable power to intervene to promote good design, have become extremely timid even in wishing to enter that kind of debate and lack the expertise in doing so.

Q36 Baroness Whitaker: Thank you. If we could move on to the subject that Professor Bishop touched on, both the Bishop Review and the Farrell Review identify a shortfall in skills
among key decision-makers in the planning process. That is not just officials; it is also the elected politicians. Those who have been around development have also noticed it. What impact has this shortfall had on the built environment and, more importantly perhaps, do you have the impression that Government realise that there is this big gap, and what ought to be done to bring back the visionary planners? You mentioned the 1970s; I am thinking more of the 1940s and the 1950s. Where are those people? How can we get them back, or their replacements or their descendants?

Max Farrell: You are absolutely right. That is a critical part of it and the solution to this is not a silver bullet; it is multi-faceted. Design literacy and design awareness within local councils are key for elected councillors but also for highway engineers, for example, who make very important decisions that have a profound impact on our urban environment. I would point you to papers written by people following the review, whom we called champions of particular issues. There was one written by Sue Vincent, a councillor at Camden who was the deputy leader there, on ways in which we can introduce design literacy and training to elected councillors in the same way that they receive training on financial and legal matters, because it is so important and because the decisions they make have a legacy that lasts for decades.

The Chairman: Is that paper available?

Max Farrell: It is, yes. On the Farrell Review website, on the home page, there are about 12 papers. There is the one that I have just mentioned by Sue Vincent, but there is another paper, which is very relevant to what Peter was talking about, about skills and talent within local authorities, which was written by Finn Williams who is currently at the GLA and was at Croydon. We pointed to Croydon as a good example of where placemaking is a central focus within the local authority, and I think that was partly due to the leadership of Jon Rouse, who was a member of the Urban Task Force. Finn has come up with an idea for a social enterprise that is a bit like Teach First. He has called it Plan First but also Public Service. The idea is to attract the best talent into public sector planning departments, which do not have the same reputation or perception as the private sector. I think Finn himself is an exception to the rule. He could have gone to any leading architectural practice; he went to Croydon and now he has gone to the GLA. He is saying: why can we not fast track recruitment? Why can we not make it more exciting and show that it is not just about development control—that it is about
visionary thinking, about placemaking—and attract the right kind of skills into local authorities?

**Professor Bishop:** Certainly in my own experience you can carry out training for elected councillors. I do not know if this is true—I was told this in China and I have not been able to check it—but apparently Chinese city leaders are required to attend Tongji University every year for a training course in how to be a city mayor. I was told that it was four weeks a year. Now, I have not checked that. It seems remarkable but it is almost believable.

**The Chairman:** It sounds a bit like the continuous professional development we have in this country for other things, but not for design and architecture. We could easily piggyback on that with CPD programmes.

**Professor Bishop:** Certainly having a centre of excellence that does provide training packages—it is about raising expectations and having a few core skills to ask the right questions. In my own experience, what tends to happen—and Max has mentioned the question of Croydon—is that you do get certain boroughs, metropolitan authorities and district authorities where you get the very good coincidence of a leader, a political leader or the chair of a committee, who is absolutely committed, with a chief officer or senior officer, and they work together. We have seen it in Westminster and in Southwark when the Tate Modern was produced, and when it happens you do raise the internal skill level of that authority. Attracting people either as full-time staff or as long-term advisers could be quite a powerful way of raising design standards at a local level.

The last point I would make is that longevity is very important. I am slightly concerned about using the case of Leeds but John Thorp, the civic architect of Leeds, was there for 25 years and he did a fantastic job in keeping the continuity of thinking about how that city could develop. You need those kinds of timescales in a city.

**The Chairman:** That is an interesting point. Thank you.

**Q37 Baroness Rawlings:** The Farrell Review emphasised the need to consider heritage of current buildings. I have to agree with you—and this has come out in your last answer, too—about the necessity of a strong voice, resources and leadership, wherever it is. If you get really good leadership, it does not matter which field you are in, it should work well. What are your views of the new housing and commercial developments over the last, say, 30 years? What
Professor Peter Bishop and Farrells – Oral Evidence (QQ29-40)

percentage of the designs today do you think have heritage values for the decades to come, having mentioned the importance of the longevity of the buildings?

*Max Farrell*: We have quite a mature and sophisticated approach to heritage in this country, which is often the envy of the world. The rest of the world looks at us as having got our act together when it comes to valuing heritage, but I think there is still more to be done. The value of heritage is not just for the more easily analysed areas like tourism, for example, or even placemaking, but also in terms of sustainability. The fact is that existing buildings are a resource. We have limited land and our building stock can and should be looked at to be adapted and refurbished as a first point of call. Quite often, that is not the case.

There are certain things that have a dramatic effect on that. For example, the VAT on refurbishment and retrofits, whereas there is no VAT on new build, completely flies in the face of encouraging refurbishment. There is also the lack of architectural training when it comes to skills for refurbishment and retrofitting. There are a number of different things that we talked about in the review that could move us even further forward in valuing and making the most of the value of heritage in this country.

*Professor Bishop*: I am sorry, I am going to give a slightly different view here. It is far more pessimistic, I am afraid. We do produce some extraordinary new buildings in this country. On the prime sites, under the spotlight, commercially in particular, our cultural buildings and some of our housing stands with the very best in the world. That is a very small percentage of what we are building. I fear that the default is normally mediocrity and I would advocate a simple test: that you stand almost anywhere in any town outside the centre of London or the major historic cities, turn slowly through 360 degrees and ask yourself if you can see anything that is not mediocre. Most of what you see—

*The Chairman*: Anything that is mediocre?

*Professor Bishop*: That is not mediocre. Most of what you will see has probably been built in the last 25 to 30 years.

*Baroness Rawlings*: You are talking about contemporary?

*Professor Bishop*: Yes, in effect.

*Baroness Rawlings*: The last 30 years? You are not talking about 300 years ago?
Professor Bishop: No. In a lot of the home counties, in particular provincial towns and the suburbs, what you see is largely 25 or 30 years old or less and, generally speaking, of quite extraordinarily poor quality, and uncoordinated as well. The question is: will we be listing what this generation is building? Yes, we will be listing some of the prime buildings but an awful lot of what we are building, unlike the Victorians and the Georgians, we will not be listing.

Baroness Rawlings: Would you put this down to cost-cutting, or just lack of talent in architects?

Professor Bishop: Not lack of talent. We have the talent in this country. Our schools are producing some of the best graduates in the world and we have some of the best practices in the world. That assumes that people are using architects, for a start, and an awful lot of developments now are not using architects, or start by using architects but do not end up using the architects. A lot of it is down to short-term expediency and, I have to say, lack of will. Again, this might be slightly unfashionable, but having strong planning regulation that is capable and resourced to engage in a positive debate about design is going to address the people who are prepared to build it, sell on and never look at it again. That is what we are doing over a large amount of our new build, I am afraid.

Max Farrell: I am sorry, I think I misunderstood your question so I gave the wrong answer to it. I am sorry about that.

The Chairman: Do you agree with Professor Bishop?

Max Farrell: I do, and I think it is very hit and miss. What we do not do is we do not learn from where things have worked well and we do not have a consistent approach to the way we plan towns and cities. Even within towns and cities, within London the political boundaries are not the same as the place boundaries. Very often, we have projects that are divided between two boroughs that have very different ideas about heights of buildings and affordable housing rates and so it is hard, under those circumstances, for the focus to be about design quality, because quite often the focus is about all the other things that are open to negotiation. One of the key things that we called for in the Farrell Review was more proactive planning, to have a more consistent approach to things like affordable housing levels, shape, form and
even materials of buildings, so that people know and agree in advance that that is the right way to go.

Q38 Baroness Andrews: I am going to bundle this up into my proper question. It picks up on what you have both said and goes back to what you said, Professor Bishop, about the National Planning Policy Framework. I agree with you: I think it is an excellent document after a lot of hard work and a lot of negotiation with all the expertise available to the department. It was a good outcome. But in that department there is clearly a tension between protecting the historic environment, the natural environment, landscapes and so on, and the pressure for development, and since the NPPF was published, that pressure has intensified. Do you think that is making the situation better or worse? At the same time, we have lost our special planning capacities. My original question was: are we doing well enough at placemaking? But it seems to me the answer, if I may anticipate, is no, and these may be factors that make it more difficult now to do as well as we can in terms of placemaking.

Professor Bishop: I said earlier that one of the key judges of success of any organisation is how it does most of its work. How high is the average? Most organisations can do one or two brilliant things but good organisations do everything rather well. That is the kind of problem we are facing. As a nation, we do conservation rather well. We are one of the leading countries in the world in terms of conserving our built environment. We do that very well.

There is a rather strange thing underneath all of this, around the British planning system: it is a pretty unique way of dealing with planning. It is bespoke. We deal with every application on its merits and every application can potentially be negotiated, and that places a huge onus on the planner. There is little doubt that good planners normally are the ones with an awful lot of experience behind them. In the 25 years I did planning, I was probably better at the end than when I started. You learn and you amass that experience. That is very important for building a long-term capability.

As far as placemaking is concerned, I have to tell you it is not a phrase I particularly like. It implies something a bit like cooking, a bit like a recipe: you can follow a recipe and produce a good place. Good places are made by people who are passionate and engaged, and can broker broad agreements between stakeholders. There is one thing that local authorities have lost, and quite early in the process. From the 1980s and 1990s onwards, as local authorities had to
fall back on core business, plan-making and development control became the core business in planning departments. The really interesting stuff, the stuff that can make a fundamental difference to how you shape and mould a place over time, has been lost. The Farrell Review did come up with a whole series of ways in which that could be compensated for, but I think that underneath that you still need a point, a leader locally, who can rally the forces around a vision, have the stake to see it through over the long term and fight very hard to make it happen.

**Baroness Andrews:** If I may, I will follow that up briefly. You are both quoting isolated examples of where good things are happening. Bristol is obvious because George Ferguson is both charismatic and expert, but he is unique, I think. There are a handful of places where you seem to think that good placemaking is within capacity. What do we have to do in order to learn the lessons? Leadership is clearly key but we cannot replicate good leaders. We have to have something inside the systems that makes it more or less likely that this happens. It obviously is an issue of the curriculum of young planners, too. I take your point about placemaking, but it seems to me that placemaking is at least a more generous description than planning and is less likely to turn people off from the questions, challenges and possibilities.

**Max Farrell:** I would absolutely agree. I would even argue that it is important for the curriculum of school children just as much as it is for planners. In this country, it is incredible that we are not taught about the built environment when it affects so many different things. We looked at whether or not it should be a subject in its own right and we thought that that did not make sense because you could just as easily teach the built environment through maths, history, geography or physics, and it engages children. One of the most popular computer games is Minecraft, which is basically about placemaking. Making a connection to your house, your street and your neighbourhood and how that affects climate change would be incredibly powerful. I think that would then create more people who are interested in being civic champions, taking up a leadership role, asking why things are the way they are and so on. I think it starts much earlier.

**Professor Bishop:** If I could make a quick further comment on that, I want to go back to the role of Government. Government consistently saying that design is important, and putting
that into practice in everything they do and commission over a long period, will shift the
nature of the debate. Without wishing to be too blunt about it, the present debate around
housing is around numbers. You hear very few statements saying, “Yes, of course we need a
lot more housing but that has to be of high, durable quality”. That bit is always missing. For
as long as that is always missing, the message that comes down is that design is not that
important. It is number 16 on the list of priorities in terms of committees.

**Q39 Lord Clement-Jones:** I think you have pretty much answered this, at least by implication,
throughout the answers that you have given to the questions, but it would be quite useful to
get it on the record, particularly in light of your views about what might be done. It is this
whole question of the local plan value. As you know, we have had Ruth Stanier and Steve
Quartermain here giving evidence to us and they said that they thought that local plans did
have a positive impact and this led to an increased number of houses being approved. What
is your view of the work of local authorities in developing and adopting local plans? I can see
that it is coloured by the hollowing out of expertise point that you have made and so on. Do
you think they are sufficiently able to address and promote design standards, given what you
have said about the quality of our current housing and so on?

**Professor Bishop:** My view is quite personal on this. It may not be representative of other
people in my field. I think local plan-making might have resulted in more housing being built.
I would not question what Steve Quartermain said. I think that it is an incredibly cumbersome
process to go through and not one that is likely to inspire many people to participate or get
excited. The very nature of local plan-making, with its procedures and legal requirements,
tends to make it a very cautious process, normally carried through by very cautious people,
and at the end of the day what local plans quite often fail to say is: what can this place be? It
misses the key point. Having been involved in very small local design exercises, I know that
you can achieve an awful lot more in two or three weeks by getting people together around
a table, having a debate and drawing and sketching and asking those kinds of questions,
instead of the rather cumbersome processes of producing a local plan. If we could rethink
how local plans are constructed, we could probably free up some resources to apply to the
more creative process of asking the question: how do we create brilliant places in which we
can live and work?
**Lord Clement-Jones:** Can you do that in a context where you do not have a concrete proposal? I know you said that the problem is that every application is dealt with on its merits, but can you have a discussion that is not quite theoretical but certainly looking to the future, where you have a hypothetical development taking place?

**Professor Bishop:** Yes, I think you can. At the end of the day you will have to back it up with something that carries material weight in the planning process, but I would still hold to my answer that when you look at local plan-making—and I know that DCLG has spent a lot of time trying to simplify and streamline it—it is a heavy-handed process that often misses the key points that local people want to engage in.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Which bit of the process is the cumbersome part, compared with what you are suggesting?

**Professor Bishop:** It is taking it through the various stages through to adoption—as simple as that.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Does that not have a danger involved in it? A few local people get involved and it is basically the voice of the most active. You push it through and you do not have to go through the process, and yet it is adopted as your design standard.

**Professor Bishop:** With all respect, that probably happens a lot under the present process.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Yes. Do you have a different—

**Max Farrell:** I would just add that I think a local plan is probably not enough. It is symptomatic of the whole system being reactive. It is setting out a number of policies but then it is waiting for the private sector to bring forward an application, assess it on that basis, and then get into negotiations and quite often do something different or adapt accordingly. What it does not do is set out a vision and a master plan for an area that would facilitate that process and be much more proactive. That is what we have said there should be more of. The planning system has gone from one where, in the 1950s and 1960s, it was entirely the public sector doing all the planning. But I think people then lost faith with all the social housing and the motorways, and now it has swung completely the other way, whereby it is entirely waiting for the private sector to do the spatial planning. There needs to be a middle ground where the two work together.
Lord Clement-Jones: Just to coin your phrase, we need a proactive master plan as opposed to a reactive local plan?

Max Farrell: Yes.

Lord Clement-Jones: We have to work out how to get from A to B without much local expertise or the hollowing out of local expertise.

Max Farrell: I think you can do that with the private sector as well, with place review panels. They do that in other countries. They are getting together to talk and then test and then engage with the public about ideas, what their needs are and how they can be accommodated, without relying on landowners and developers to try to make those solutions for them.

I would just say one other thing, which is that the difference between a local plan and having a vision or a master plan is that they are communicated in completely different ways. Anyone who has gone on to a council website and tried to read a local plan knows it is very hard to get an understanding, especially for the layperson, of what it means for their town or their village. If you walk into an urban room and you have a model in front of you and you have some drawings, that is a completely different way of understanding. It is instant. You do not need reams and reams of planning—

Lord Clement-Jones: It has to be accessible as well?

Max Farrell: Absolutely.

Professor Bishop: If I could just comment very quickly on that. Local plans need to focus on what we want you to do, as opposed to what we do not want you to do. Planning is defensive because of precedent and because of the pressure it is under. If we can focus on what we want to happen, you are better off constructing a narrative and doing drawings. That is the difference—drawings and narratives that communicate. Then, planning has an absolutely key role: to broker between the local community and the stakeholders, put people together and to try to get the alignment so things can happen. That is a very different approach to planning. Some people are doing it, but that is quite different from the local planning processes that tend to work against it.

Lord Clement-Jones: We will have to try to capture that, clearly.

The Chairman: That is right. That is very interesting.
Q40 Baroness Parminter: Part of the process of visioning for the local plans, not from above but from below, is obviously the neighbourhood planning level, and you talked a little bit about that earlier. Is there any clear evidence that there are sufficient resources going into that process to make that deliverable? It can be done and it is being done quite well where you are getting local communities engaging with other relevant stakeholders. It feeds into the local plan and it is obviously on a statutory footing if it is accepted. There are places that are doing it well and there are other places where I have heard there is insufficient money to make it a robust and, as you made quite clear, a visioning process that local people can engage with. Do you have any sense of whether there are sufficient resources; is it working; is it too soon to say?

Professor Bishop: Again, what is happening is patchy and there are some good examples where communities are coming together very powerfully. There is a quite important issue here about the nature of communities that are far more poorly resourced than others. There will always be communities, certainly in my experience in planning and development, that are extremely able, capable, well-resourced and have the right people, and who will always put up a fight. That is brilliant. When you work with those communities, it is fantastic. There is energy. It is incredibly challenging and sometimes quite daunting but you normally get a far better result.

Against that, you have a far greater number of areas where those resources do not exist, or are extremely unfocused when they do. Something that local planning or placemaking can do is to provide a focus to try to rally those other communities around becoming engaged. A lot of the work we did at Design for London in places like Barking, Dalston and other town centres, in Tottenham, was to try to provide a point where we could actually bring people together, put a small resource in to get that debate going and then hopefully leave behind us a community that felt more engaged, more capable and more able to sustain that, to put up their own fight, get their own point of view into the debate and try to get a better result out of placemaking or out of a particular development proposal. That is a very big gap. Unless we address it, we will have a polarisation whereby the nice areas will get nicer and the worse areas will get worse.

The Chairman: Those with the strongest voices.
Professor Bishop: Yes.

The Chairman: On that note we must end, unfortunately. We could go on for ever. I am sure you have a lot of ideas that you would like us to take on board as well. Would you be prepared to send us whatever ideas you have subsequently, by whatever method, email and so on? You will have all the details on the website. That would be very good. I have to say that it has been a brilliant session and thank you both very much for coming.

22 July 2015
Dear Sirs

I have been requested to write to you on behalf of Boughton Parish Council.

The Parish Council understands that you are requesting evidence for a Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment and the Parish Council wish to make particular comment on question 12 which is particularly relevant to parish and town councils.

*How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?*

Buckton Fields, Northampton is a perfect example of how, it is believed, the major house builders manipulate the planning system to their own advantage and, or, maximise the premise that the Government wants to see development, therefore, the planning system is there to enable it rather than to give the public a real voice. Similarly, the way the boundaries have been drawn enforcing the residents of Northampton North to look all the way to their District Council in Daventry makes a ridicule of local representation.

It is felt that little account is taken of comments from local residents in relation to design and construction and how new build relates to the local area and open countryside.

Often, when dealing with new large developments, guidance and advice is required along the way and parish councils incur costs in legal fees that would be better used elsewhere.

We believe that no matter how well you know the Parish Councillor, the local MP or the Chief Executive of the Local Authority, Planning Department or Highways Department, decisions are made by the Authorities according to their own requirements, they either have no money to spend, and therefore, nothing can be done, or they have some money to be spend (within certain time scales) and that money will be spent regardless of any consultation process which is perfunctory at best.

Yours faithfully

Jayne Bunting
Clerk to the Council & RFO

06 October 2015
Dear Sir/Madam

Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment - submit written evidence

The Parish Council would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit evidence.

Community Involvement and Community Impact questions 11 and 12.

1. Landscaping conditions. Often not put in place or maintained by developers so the end result is not what was agreed and is often sufficiently less than what was promised. A pleasant and green local environment has proven health and community benefits.

2. LPA do not have to enforce planning conditions so community feel short changed.

3. PCs and the community are effectively ignored and LPAs take only a local and not holistic view. True sustainable development constantly seems to be over looked resulting in development where principle services or highway infrastructure are unable to cope and where small scale improvements and investment provided by S106 do not fully mitigate the additional development. Local schools and medical services are unable to cope with current needs let alone with a further influx of residents.

4. Local Traffic Authority. In this parish council’s experience the LTA does not take a holistic view on the knock-on effect of major developments elsewhere on the local highway network. Section 106 payments are often identified for the immediate area e.g. improving a roundabout however this only moves the problem further down the road. Some roads, even with improvements are unable to take any more traffic.

5. Planning Inspectorate public inquiry being away from the affected area even though there are local venues. In the spirit of Localism the LPA/Planning Inspectorate should be obliged to consult the lowest tier of government on the proposed venue for a hearing.

Other comments.

6. Agricultural and green barrier land is seemingly under constant threat of development without sufficient consideration to the impact of a nation being able to feed itself as well as the general health of having a green lung.

7. Developer’s primary focus is cost and profit capability and this does not generally reflect the need for smaller units for first time buyers and for people trying to downgrade. Well
placed development generally flats, close to local facilities and public transport links with adequate (preferable) secure underground parking and green spaces is more sustainable than large houses. A recent application within this parish was for 144 units (mainly flats) but once planning permission was obtained the application was changed to 77 dwellings with more houses being built because this was more profitable.

8. The emphasis for planners is to facilitate development and this is potentially a primary reason why communities, developers and planners are constantly clashing. Without a good common-sense approach to ensure the right types of property are built in the right location this situation will not change.

Yours faithfully

Pauline Bowdery
Clerk to Boxley Parish Council

05 October 2015
This evidence addresses a number of Questions posed in the Call for Written Evidence (Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7), primarily around the theme of planning for new housing. The evidence is based on an accumulation of research evidence gained through a number of research projects supported by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC, specifically the ‘CityForm’ and ‘SNACC’ consortium projects), the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the former National Housing and Planning Advice Unit, among others.

Q.1 (Are decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level?)

While it is right that local authorities play a key role in local planning, that role should be performed in a context which ensures that the essential interests of the nation and of wider neighbouring localities and regions are reflected. The present English planning system fails this latter requirement, because it has abolished the former regional planning machinery and left these interests only haphazardly catered for through the arrangements for National Infrastructure, the ad hoc/responsive interventions of planning inspectors, and ill-defined, untested and still-localised ‘duty to cooperate’.

Evidence from our and other research on the operation of housing markets, demographic processes of migration and household formation shows clearly that there are strong connections between local areas, particularly at sub-regional scale (within so-called ‘housing market areas’ or ‘travel to work areas’), and indeed significant connections between what are treated administratively as separate regions (notably London and the rest of southern England). In other words, under-provision of housing in some areas will impact adversely on other areas, in terms of migration flows, house prices, rents, affordability problems and unmet housing needs. These effects will also have an impact on the performance of the economy, as for example key workers find it difficult to obtain suitable housing, particularly housing to buy.

Specific evidence can be cited to show that, given patterns of public attitudes towards new housing, a predictable outcome of the move to ‘Localism’ in determining Local Plans was a reduction of planned levels of new housing in the areas of higher need and demand (South East of England, and wider South), with some (ineffective) increase in lower demand areas.

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(remote and northern areas)\textsuperscript{7}. Actual changes in local plans following this policy change conformed to this prediction. Furthermore, evidence from modelling the housing market at sub-regional level shows that, in general, the benefits of increasing supply in terms of improved affordability are enhanced if surrounding areas increase supply as well. In the particular, and important, case of London, the surrounding 'Home Counties’ area can make a potentially larger contribution to alleviating the pressure in London than can London itself, particularly if one takes a realistic view about acceptable densities and quality of life\textsuperscript{8}.

**Q.3 (Does the NPPF provide sufficient policy guidance?)**

The biggest weakness of NPPF is the lack of a spatial perspective (see below). On housing requirements, the Practice Guidance looks sound on paper but is unambitious and in practice unreliable and capable of being manipulated to justify inadequate plans. There is undue reliance on household projections, which are increasingly unstable, unreliable and lacking in credibility\textsuperscript{9}, and no attempt at forward forecasting of market outcomes – in contrast for example with the Chancellor’s ‘Fiscal Framework’ which is built around forecasts. Current practice examples highlight the resulting problems, including quite inappropriate judgements about the scale of housing supply adjustment which should be made in response to adverse ‘market signals’\textsuperscript{10}.

**Q.4 (Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?)**

The short answer to the first question is clearly ‘yes’. The effects of introducing a spatial element must be to some extent speculative, and will depend on the form and process adopted, although one can gain some clues from existing practice in Scotland.

The central dilemma of regional/spatial planning is to balance the perceived imperatives of economic growth and international competitiveness with the desire to spread prosperity, reduce inequalities in economic outcomes, stabilise declining areas and foster a spirit of inclusion for the remoter places. We would speculate that an explicit spatial strategy would recognise that the ‘super-region’ comprising London plus the ‘Greater South East’ is vital to the overall economic performance of GB plc, and would support facilitating the growth of


\textsuperscript{8} See Bramley & Watkins (2015), Note 1.

\textsuperscript{9} This critique of household projections is developed in conference presentations to the British Society for Population studies, particularly Bramley, G. & Watkins, D. (2014) ‘A sub-regional housing market model for England with endogenous migration and household formation: its role in assessing the adequacy of planned new housing’ BHPS Conference, Winchester, Sept 2014, Special Session on Demographic projections and Forecasts, and also in Bramley & Watkins (2015), Note 1.

\textsuperscript{10} Inadequate response to market signals, as well as questionable household projections, feature in the case of Bristol-West of England, discussed in Bramley (2015), Note 10.
employment and housing in key city-regions within that overall frame, including appropriate new settlement/garden city/urban extension elements. For these areas, more housing is a key element. Beyond that, there would be a desire to promote similar growth points in the more peripheral and northern regions; for these areas, infrastructure, land reclamation and regeneration might be higher priorities. Infrastructure priorities would be (hopefully) shaped through this spatial strategy process.

**Q.5 (Optimal Timescale for Planning?)**

In the 1990s and early 2000s you could certainly say that planning timescales had got too short in the UK. Typical structure and local plans had a 15 year time horizon, but by the time they were approved they had ten or less years to run. Within such a time horizon, it is difficult to bring large scale new sites forward and get housing completed and sold and new communities established. This was convenient for local politicians, who thereby avoided having to make potentially controversial decisions which would upset comfortable local voters. ‘Planning’ became opportunistic, grabbing ‘windfall’ sites resulting from factory closures and the like, rather than thinking about the best shape for future city regions. This approach was reinforced by the excessive emphasis in planning policy guidance (recently reinforced) on ‘brownfield’ redevelopment.

In other countries, where city and regional authorities and state governments take planning for growth more seriously, ‘urban growth boundaries’ are often set with a longer time horizon of 20-25 years or more.

The current conventional time horizon for Local Plans is 20 years. This is the minimum for that purpose. For regional and national spatial planning, where the role is strongly connected to infrastructure requirements, a longer timescale is needed (of the order of 40 years). This is similarly the case in relation to aspects of environmental sustainability, including both mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The function of planning to such time horizons is not to prescribe an infallible blueprint or trajectory – it is rather to test the resilience of urban settlements, economies and infrastructure to a range of conditions which may prevail. For example, the SNACC project we participated in highlighted the significant risks of overheating arising within typical suburban housing areas in southern England within that timescale.

**Q.6 (What role should Government play in addressing issues of housing supply?)**

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The current system in England is confused and contradictory. The ‘Localism’ emphasis post-2011 directly contradicts the emphasis in NPPF, reiterated in *Fixing the Foundations* 13, on meeting housing need and demand in full. The negative effects of the former on planned housing supply in high growth potential regions was predictable, predicted and realised14. We have already argued for a robust government-led approach on spatial planning (Q.3-Q.4 above). However, policy commitments made in 2015, particularly the emphasis on maintaining (rather than reviewing and redrawing) Green Belts, confound the problems.

While clearly housing supply has suffered disproportionately in the financial crisis and recession of 2008-12, our research supports the view that four issues hold back housing supply in the longer term: (1) not enough land allocated through planning in high demand south of England; (2) lack of funding and assured provision of necessary infrastructure to support new/expanded communities; (3) the conventional speculative housebuilding model is not responsive enough (the ‘pushing string’ problem)15; (4) quite a lot of the housing required should be ‘affordable’ (including social renting), but the funding and mechanisms to deliver this are inadequate.

To address issue (1), government should formalize the sub-regional collaboration of local authorities on a housing market area/TTWA basis16, including imposing arrangements where local agreement is lacking. Key elements of planning strategy including housing numbers and locations for major growth should be determined at this level, with statutory backing. There is a case for absorbing Local Enterprise Partnerships within these structures. Where there are significant housing numbers and market issues which spill over even these sub-regional areas, notably as between London and the Greater South East, the Government should reach a view, in consultation with the GLA/Mayor, about the balance of housing numbers to be allocated as between the GLA area and the GSE, and between the sub-regional planning areas within the GSE.

To address issues (2) and (3), local authorities or LA-led land development agencies in growth areas should have powers to acquire development land (with reserve CPO power) at existing use value plus a fixed premium, with the possibility of sharing ‘equity’ in the ultimate development profit, after meeting all infrastructural and planning obligation costs, with the original landowner. They should use such powers and land to auction sites under

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13 H M Treasury (2015) *Fixing the Foundations: creating a more prosperous nation*. Cm 9098. Alias the ‘Productivity Plan’. See esp. Ch.9, Ch.15
14 See Matthews et al (2014) (Note 2) for evidence on public sentiment and Bramley & Watkins 2015 (Note 1) for evidence on the impact on output and affordability.
licence to wider range of potential housebuilders with conditions on mix, price range, and delivery dates, with freeholds conveyed to the final purchasers\textsuperscript{17}.

To address issue (4), local authorities should have their powers to apply s.106 planning agreements for affordable housing re-emphasized, and not watered down or sidestepped as in some recent government initiatives. Relevant to both issues (2) and (4), ‘viability assessments’ relating to planning obligations should be undertaken according to a standard format with routine market information inputs updated, with a maximum profit margin (e.g. 15%), and these should be published.

\textbf{Q.7 (How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient?)}

Our research has a bearing on two particular aspects of this question, each of which is quite important.

Firstly, there is the issue of the density and form of future housing development, which is bound up with planning and location. There is a view in some quarters that the right way forward for housing supply in England is to build mainly or exclusively on brownfield sites within the existing urban areas, and probably mainly in the form of higher density (flatted) housing rather than houses with gardens at ground level (implying medium density or less). Some equate such an urban vision with ‘sustainability’, but our research shows clearly that such a single-minded focus on urban compaction will not support sustainability in important respects, including social, environmental and economic, and will not meet the range of people’s preferences and promote maximum wellbeing and happiness. Whether measured in terms of people’s ‘willingness to pay’ preferences (as in house price models) or in terms of people’s satisfaction with different aspects of their social and community life, high density living does not score well, although it does offer acknowledged advantages in terms of accessibility to services and opportunities\textsuperscript{18}. Even from an ecological perspective, in terms of biodiversity and wildlife, suburban environments (with their gardens and greenspaces) score better than the average agricultural land ‘protected’ in Green Belts.

Secondly, a key challenge in mitigating carbon emissions and climate change is to increase the energy efficiency of housing. Government has effectively scrapped targets for ‘zero carbon’ new build homes, creating uncertainty for the market\textsuperscript{19}. However, the largest


\textsuperscript{19} While the retreat from zero carbon homes as a regulatory target is perhaps an understandable response to the recession and undersupply of housing, it contributes to uncertainty which itself may harm supply chains, as emphasized in \url{http://www.ukgbc.org/press-centre/press-releases/over-200-businesses-urge-chancellor-reconsider-scraping-zero-carbon}.
challenge here is with the existing housing stock. Since most of this is owned by private individuals, the keys are to raise awareness, to motivate and to facilitate individual investment in energy-saving improvements to the homes and their systems. The Government’s current headline programme, the Green Deal, has been a conspicuous flop, with funding now withdrawn, so there is clearly a need for renewed attention to this issue.

Our research within the SNACC project showed clear evidence, from statistical modelling on the best available dataset, that even in the mid-late 2000s house prices/values did reflect the energy performance characteristics of the home, allowing properly for all the other known influences. Secondly, it showed clearly that people’s actual energy consumption and bills also reflected those energy efficiency features of the home. At that time we found annual savings in energy bills of £400 pa for homes with basic, commonly applied energy efficiency measures, equivalent of £8-10,000 in capital terms. We also found, consistently, that homes with those efficiency features commanded prices about £8-10,000 higher. With the subsequent rise in both energy and house prices, these figures would now be considerably higher.

Thus it should be possible to motivate home-owners to invest in at least the more cost-effective measures, on the basis that they will get a return on their investment through both lower bills and higher values. We would expect the effects on housing values to become larger and firmer over time as (a) the effects of higher energy costs work their way through and (b) awareness grows, partly through the influence of Energy Performance Certificates and their role in the house transaction process. Regulation of mortgage lending through the Financial Conduct Authority could further encourage such awareness and motivation, by reflecting expected energy costs in the ‘affordability’ criteria applied to borrowers.

Additional measures may be needed, however, to make such improvements happen in the private rented sector, to ensure that any financing deals promoted are value for money, and to curb the nuisance and abuse exhibited by some of the home improvement industry that has grown up around this area.

06 October 2015

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12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Response from Cllr Alan Mawer, of Braunston Parish Council (Northamptonshire)

I believe communities are readily able to engage. In particular the system of establishing a Neighbourhood Plan allows for significant engagement.

I consider the following to be barriers to greater public engagement:

- The complexity of a multi-layered system. Many people do not have the capacity or time to become aware of who has responsibility for different planning decisions.

- The reduced circulation of local newspapers and the widening of the methods of communication and receiving news also present a challenge in communicating news of a forthcoming planning decision to those who will be affected and may wish to respond.

- The greater resources available to large organisations enable them to use the planning system in ways that are to their advantage. An example might be the new warehouse on the edge of Daventry. They did not apply for the size of building they eventually wanted and had the resources to apply for a relatively small addition that may not have been allowed of the full size had been mentioned originally.

Issues could be addressed by using a leaflet drop and by including clear explanations of implications and sustainability issues.

Response from Cllr Abigail Campbell, of Braunston Parish Council (Northamptonshire)

The current planning system is fairly combative and generally limited in terms of meaningful public engagement. Much more strategic work with the cultural and creative sector could transform the means by which local communities can influence and inform the development of the built environment (see Nesta’s Creative Councils work, or the Arts Council funded project Safe House (http://www.metro-boulot-dodo.com/safe-house.html)).

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Response from Cllr Abigail Campbell, of Braunston Parish Council (Northamptonshire)
Current use of the historic environment appears fairly conservative and defensive. A more energetic, imaginative response to the historic environment is needed. Growth and heritage need not be antithetical.

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Response from Cllr Abigail Campbell, of Braunston Parish Council (Northamptonshire)

I’m aware there is a national shortage of planners – our local planning authority has found it difficult to recruit staff – and I am sure that cuts to local government and pay freezes must have something to do with this.

In our District there is a lot of emphasis on and investment in construction, but much less on design and architecture, and heritage and culture. Cuts in F.E. funding, and increasing pressures on the arts and humanities at school and in higher education make it more difficult to achieve a holistic understanding of the built environment.

06 October 2015
Submission: on behalf of Brington Parish Council, Northamptonshire

Author: Ben Thornely, Chairman, Brington Parish Council

Comment: Brington Parish Council would be happy to discuss the examples provided in this response in more detail with the Committee.

The House of Lords has established a Select Committee to consider ‘the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment’.

Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

- Decisions should be taken at a local level, informed by robust national policy, supported by detailed practice guidance which leaves no ambiguity – the use of case studies will avoid this.
- Clear and robust national policy sets the strategic approach to the built environment, with practical practice guidance enabling local interpretation – potentially dividing this into urban and rural policy approaches to suit both environments.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

- It could be improved, as the approaches can be in conflict, e.g. housing need versus the need to protect the undeveloped rural areas or biodiversity.
- Better integration between organisations could assist e.g. The assets held by organisations such as the Homes and Communities Agency could be looked at in terms of providing multi benefits to assist other organisations achieve their goals such as the Environment Agency and Local Authorities. For example, this could see housing (required by the LA) developed alongside reduced flood risk and increased biodiversity (desired by the EA).

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural
environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

- The NPPF can sometimes be open to interpretation – it should be more prescriptive in parts. For example, the requirement for Sustainable Development – this is poorly defined and open to interpretation by all parties – developers, Local Authorities, individuals.
- PPS25 used to be accompanied by a detailed practice guide which enables far greater detail to be provided – NPPF could benefit from a similar (of somewhat more rationalised) approach.
- Greater emphasis on different development approaches to urban and rural areas would be of benefit, to distinguish between the very different requirements of such communities.
- As a rural Parish, we would like to see emphasis on sustainable development being development which is proposed in keeping with the scale and nature of the existing development within the community.
- Community consultation and the right of the community to have its voice heard (in support or objection to a proposal) is also very important and should not be underestimated.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

- Potentially Yes – a spatial element would enable interpretation of national policy. For example, it would enable a clear distinction between rural and urban areas and the appropriateness (or otherwise) of certain development types/scale/nature.
- Introducing a special element would enable growth to progress in accordance with the particular requirements of an area, enabling protection of certain aspect of the environment (e.g. Historically important buildings/areas, environmentally sensitive receptors etc)

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

- Planning ahead is important, subject to flexibility to adapt plans given changing evidence/information/growth delivery etc

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?
National policy can hinder growth, particularly in rural areas. For example, in Daventry District, the local authority has recently announced that it has met its 5 year housing land supply need, predominantly as a result of large urban extensions in and around Daventry town. As a result Daventry District Council has recently refused a very modest proposal for new housing (circa 8 units) within Great Brington – a rural parish – despite the Parish Council fully supporting the proposals which were in keeping with the scale and nature of the site, and had been influenced over a three year period of community engagement by the very responsible developer.

The result is that there will be no new housing, including affordable housing, provided in the community in the foreseeable future – against the wishes of the community and as a direct result of DDC’s approach and judgement.

See DDC’s planning search page: https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-and-building-control/search-comment-planning/

Application reference: DA/2015/0364

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

- Provide a clear definition of ‘sustainable development’ – it is currently open to interpretation by all parties
- Resilience, e.g. to flooding, should be a requirement of the planning process to ensure communities are not put at risk
- Climate change must be factored into proposals now, and higher building standard required – this would not cost more but rather push down the cost of provision, as in the case of green subsidies being cut to green energy – the effect is to reduce the price of provision of the energy sources/equipment.
- Far bigger incentives should be provided to focus development of brownfield sites – this will reinvigorate use of these areas and help resolve legacy environmental issues e.g. contamination. This could be provided by business rate reductions, LAs keeping the income locally etc.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

- A more pragmatic approach to historic assets should be taken to ensure that they remain functional, usable and acceptable in the modern world whilst ensuring that the main historic features are retained. There is often a very negative approach to the redevelopment of historic buildings which would benefit from new and improved construction techniques and methods making them more inclusive places.

Skills and design
9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

- The application recently determined by Daventry District Council (ref: DA/2015/0364) shows how growth is not being considered in a holistic manner – the modest proposal is for a mixture of circa 8 units of mixed market housing and affordable housing on land that has previously been developed, within the centre of the village. The local authority has decided they regard this as important open land and the views of the conservation officer have been given more weight than the views of the Parish Council, who unanimously support the proposal on behalf of the community.
- This calls into question the approach taken as well as the skills utilised in determining this application.
- Bodies such as Parish Councils, representing the views of the local community, should have the right to ‘call in’ decisions that are contrary to the community view, for further reconsideration by the likes of the planning inspectorate.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

- Higher code level requirements in terms of the Code for Sustainable Homes
- Clearer national definition of ‘Sustainable Development’

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

- More emphasis should be placed on community engagement throughout the planning process where a community has strong views about development. This should not be a method by which to prevent development but to ensure that schemes meet community aspirations. The current Neighbourhood Plan process, which would enable this, is too long and expensive a process for smaller communities to engage in. Where communities do have input it should carry significant weight in the determination of applications.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?
• The example given above (Daventry District Council Ref: DA/2015/0364) is an example where community engagement in the decision making process has been substantively undermined by the Local Authority.

• Recognising the potential impact of the proposal on the community, when it first emerged three years ago, Brington Parish Council proactively sought to engage the developer and the land owner in constructive community engagement via a series of community meetings. This had the effect of evolving the design to be far more in keeping with the scale and nature of the location.

• The developer and land owner really engaged with the community and should be recognised for this constructive approach. We have had other developers who have come to one PC meeting and then claimed they have undertaken community engagement – this is a very cynical approach to community engagement.

• Conversely the LA has not been supportive of this level of community engagement – indeed the PC was advised by the LA not to engage in discussions with the developer!

• Consequently, the PC’s voice was not represented accurately by the LA in the report for members – see the attached letter from Brington PC to DDC Planning Committee, copying in the local Member of Parliament, raising our concerns.

• Many hours of constructive working with the developer to amend their scheme to address concerns raised by the community (before reaching a scheme which was fully supported by the PC) have thus been wasted.

• Clearer national guidance on meaningful community engagement would help.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

• Incentives for developers to provide higher design standards e.g. higher code levels for houses under the Codes for Sustainable homes.

• This would also lead to reduce energy requirements, thereby reducing the impacts of climate change, increasing resilience etc.

06 October 2015
Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds

Examination of Witnesses
Guy Bransby, Lead Director, Planning and Development, Jones Lang LaSalle, Richard Lemon, Associate Director, Planning, CBRE, and Adrian Penfold, Head of Planning, British Land

Q41 The Chairman: Welcome, Mr Bransby, Mr Lemon and Mr Penfold to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. For the interests of the record and for our transcriber, could I begin by asking each one of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee please, starting with Mr Bransby?

Guy Bransby: My name is Guy Bransby. I am lead director of the planning and development team at the private sector consultancy Jones Lang LaSalle.

Richard Lemon: Good morning, my Lord Chairman. My name is Richard Lemon. I am an associate director in the planning team at CBRE, an international real estate firm.

Adrian Penfold: Good morning. I am Adrian Penfold. I am head of planning at British Land. I was also previously a chief planner in local government, and I should declare that I am a non-executive chairman of Design South East, which is a charity promoting design quality in the built environment.

The Chairman: That is interesting: a charity on the built environment. How does it link in with, say, government? Is it for lobbying?
Adrian Penfold: No, it does not do any lobbying. It works with local government, local communities and developers promoting design quality, so it supports local government, mainly, through design review, in-house support and working sessions.

Q42 The Chairman: Thank you very much. I am going to ask the first question. What are the main constraints on the ability of the planning and development industry to grow? To what extent will recent and proposed national policy reforms help to address such constraints?

Guy Bransby: My Lord Chairman, I have a number of points that I would like to make. If it is okay, I will work through them one by one. If you would like more detail, I can obviously focus on those. I think I have identified 10 potential constraints on growth, but I will do so in one sentence for each. The first is the level of local authority resources and expertise to deal with planning applications, which have been hit further by recent cuts. Linked to that is the ability of the profession to attract young people through university to study and to want to practise. The third point is the impact of both, which is the time the system takes to deal with planning matters at all levels of governance. My fourth point, again, is related; we have a planning system that often relies on the appeal process to get to a decision, and the Planning Inspectorate also has issues with resourcing, in my opinion. Fifthly, the emphasis on localism, the involvement of local people, the development of local frameworks and how that marries up with the agenda to drive growth is a challenge, the two potentially exclusive of one another.

The next point is about the ability to bring judicial review against planning decisions. The thresholds, in my opinion, are set too low. The next couple of points relate to planning policy constantly changing and evolving, which leads to some uncertainty. This in turn links to my next point, which is that planning policy often seeks to be all things to all people and to cover potentially too many circumstances; it needs to focus in.

Penultimately, the planning system is inevitably a democracy driven by politics, and that can influence decision-making at a local level. Finally, the planning applications themselves are often overburdened by superfluous information, in my opinion, and there needs to be a tightening up on what a planning application comprises and what is truly necessary.

The Chairman: That is certainly a very comprehensive list. We have skirted around all of them and got evidence on them. That seems to be a very comprehensive fundamental list of things
that are going wrong and which we need to address. I will not ask you which is the most important, because that is silly; they are equally important. But we are going to be dealing with a lot of these in the course of the questions, for example on education and the issue of trying to encourage people from universities. Do you have a question on that, Lady Parminter?

**Baroness Parminter:** It is for the next session.

**The Chairman:** That is right. We have a lot to go through, but we have not heard the point about judicial review before. It would be very useful if you can expand on that briefly at this stage, or send us something if you have anything on that. As soon as you said it, I thought, “Gosh, yes. This is one we have not heard about yet”. Would you like to give us a few words on this now?

**Guy Bransby:** Yes, my Lord Chairman. I am very happy to send information in response, and I am conscious that I have not answered the second part of your question, which I will do in a minute. On judicial review, the cost threshold to bring a judicial review challenge was recently changed and is now at a cost of £5,000, which is a level low enough not to discourage people from bringing judicial review or, to put it another way, is actually encouraging more judicial review challenges to come forward. Second to that, the criteria on which the judge assesses judicial review at the first stage are fairly flexible and fairly loose, so a lot of judicial review challenges are proceeding to stage two, to the high courts.

**Baroness Parminter:** On that specific point about judicial review, how do you feel about the fact that local people do not have the right of appeal against a developer if a plan comes forward that is contrary to the local plan? Do you think there would be less judicial review if the Government accepted such a right of appeal at the beginning of the process?

**Guy Bransby:** I am not sure that is true. In fact, we have done a bit of work looking at the Irish planning system, which, as I understand it, does have the ability for local people to appeal decision-making. It has not solved this issue.

**Baroness Parminter:** Is that against a local plan, or is it a broader right?

**Guy Bransby:** It is a broader right.

**Baroness Parminter:** I am talking about plans that go against local plans, so it is not an exact parallel.
Guy Bransby: We can follow up with some more work on that.

Baroness Parminter: That would be helpful.

Guy Bransby: That is an interesting point.

The Chairman: I would not like to take a lead from the Irish thing. If you go out of Dublin, it is completely littered with half-built estates, but there we go.

Lord Inglewood: Can I just ask for a point of clarification, please? Is your concern about judicial review’s scope, or are you basically saying that there should not be any at all?

Guy Bransby: I am comfortable with the right of judicial review. It is more the scope and the thresholds that apply to the ability to bring one. I put it to you that there are some superfluous judicial review challenges, which are driven by non-planning interests.

The Chairman: Yes, I can imagine.

Adrian Penfold: Can I just add on the judicial review point, because I have direct experience of this, that the issue is about the length of time it takes to deal with a judicial review. We had one on a small extension to a shopping centre two years ago. It took 15 months to go through the process. It was arguable, but the judge did not agree with the case at every stage. Once it had gone through all the appeal stages, it had taken 15 months, and it got to the point where the project was no longer one that we wanted to do. We decided that we would do something different, so it had a significant impact.

The Chairman: Mr Lemon, do you have anything on judicial review?

Richard Lemon: Not on judicial review, no, but I will come back to some wider points in a minute, if I may.

The Chairman: What is your list of constraints? Then I will come to Mr Penfold.

Richard Lemon: I would certainly endorse all the points made by Mr Bransby, first of all. On the point about the constant stream of planning reform, coupled with that are the difficulties that we have with the uncertainty that causes and the lack of clarity from the Government on whether, for example, the office to residential permitted development right was to be extended. That was hanging in the air for many months and left many of our clients all at sea. Related to the point about resources in local planning authorities is expertise. There are very many fantastic planners in local authorities. In fact, the majority are, but there are also some who, when you go and see them for a discussion prior to submitting a planning application,
the advice one gets is frankly rather limited and rather woolly. One leaves without any clear steer as to whether or not we are engaging in a scheme that has a prospect of going forward and, if so, what the key issues are on which we need to engage. It is absolutely vital that we get that clear advice from every local authority on every occasion.

**The Chairman:** Is there a scheduled time for you making the application and getting the result, or at least an answer, from them? Are there delaying tactics, or do you get some people who say, “Yes, that is fine”, and you get it back in a couple of weeks?

**Richard Lemon:** No. Typically there is an arrangement whereby there is a formal pre-application process, and one submits a series of papers, documents and some initial plans, and then you have a meeting. It is at that meeting or in the follow-up advice that you are not necessarily given the clear steer that you need in order to proceed and take forward your scheme with any certainty and to engage in what you and the local authority think are the key issues.

**The Chairman:** So what you really want is efficiency and clarity.

**Richard Lemon:** Absolutely, and to engage on a professional level: two professionals talking to one another who are not that reluctant to stick their neck out, albeit that we all know that it is ultimately the decision of the members. Nevertheless, we are professional to professional, and we ought to have that sensible, constructive discussion.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. That is very useful. Mr Penfold, what are your constraints?

**Adrian Penfold:** That was a pretty exhaustive list from Mr Bransby. I can add one to the list. On the development management points that have just been touched on by Mr Lemon, in our experience the problems are at the pre-application stage. It is that engagement with the professionals. There is more and more financial pressure on local planning authorities and a loss of resources in planning departments. For some local authorities, it is quite an easy cut to make compared to other departments, so those pre-application discussions get more and more difficult. There is also the post-consent stage of getting the approvals on conditions that you need once you have the actual permission to go ahead, so there are things you need to get approved before the development can actually start, and that can sometimes take some time. Section 106 can take some time. The judicial review point has already been touched on.
My one additional point, which is a very large point to throw into this particular pool as a pebble, is the financing of infrastructure. A lot of communities, councils and developers are very concerned about going ahead with development without the proper infrastructure being put in place. For communities, it removes or undermines the confidence that this development is going to be acceptable—that it is going to have the transport, education and infrastructure that is needed. Particularly on the large strategic developments, which tend to be the ones I get involved in, that is a big issue.

**Q43 Baroness Whitaker:** On this point about the pre-application delays, in your judgment is it because of any deficiency in the capacity or the general orientation of planning officers, or is it because they do not know what the planning committee is going to do, because perhaps the members are not particularly au fait with what really matters?

**Adrian Penfold:** It is both. The worst authorities are the ones where the relationship between the officers and the members of the committee is poor. On some occasions, it seems that the members of the committee are not interested in what the officers have to say at all. That is obviously very unhelpful.

**Baroness Whitaker:** That needs attention as well, does it?

**Adrian Penfold:** I think so. The best experience is where that relationship is good, but also where you have quality officers. I agree with Mr Lemon that plenty of local planning authorities have very good officers, and you can have that discussion at a professional level about what is needed and what in your application needs to change. It is very rare that we will put in an application or go into a pre-application, when what we submit is exactly the same as what we put into the pre-application. They nearly always change.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Are your difficulties more with the officials or the committee?

**Adrian Penfold:** At the moment, it seems to be more with the committees, but I am worried about the reducing resources in planning departments.

**The Chairman:** Can I just ask a supplementary on that particular point? Do these people who are elected by local members, local people, who have never had any planning before or know anything about building, construction or anything, have teach-ins? Do they have a programme? Will everybody be given an aide-memoire or something like that?
Adrian Penfold: It is varied. As an ex-chief planner, in my planning committee I provided training for them. When I look back on it, it was nowhere near enough. We should have done a lot more, but it varies across the country.

Guy Bransby: I might just add that I am aware that a lot of planning committee members who are elected, and who quite often do not have planning and property experience, are now undergoing training programmes, often offered by people in the private sector or planning solicitors, but it is not compulsory and it is not countrywide. That is something that I would advocate.

Richard Lemon: Let us not forget that it is in the interest of local planning authorities to make sure the members understand the system. If they refuse a planning application on grounds that are not reasonable planning grounds, it will leave them at risk of cost during the appeal.

Lord Inglewood: In the old days, if you wanted to open a pub you had to get planning permission and you had to get a licence from the local magistrates. It seems to me that you can make the case, perhaps, that it would be better for planning applications and development control functions to be determined by panels of people appointed like magistrates, rather than local authority members. What would you think about that?

The Chairman: That is an interesting idea. Magistrates are usually very intensely interested people.

Guy Bransby: There is a tangential point, which is interesting, which is that officers at planning authorities of course are the professionals who are trained, who work on things with the applicant for a number of months. They have the ability to offer decisions via delegated powers, so it does not actually have to go in front of a committee. As soon as there is an objection to any proposal, be it a pub or something bigger, it automatically has to go in front of a committee. I might recommend extension of officer delegated powers as a process as a way to address your point.

Baroness Parminter: Chairman, could I just ask Mr Bransby to confirm that he is in favour of democracy in local planning applications? In his 10 points, he said that democracy and localism were both problems, but he did not say that he actually supported them. I would like it on the record that you support democracy in the planning system, as an essential part of the difficult job in planning of competing demands.
Guy Bransby: For the record, I absolutely support democracy in the planning system. It is the tenet of the planning system that we have in this country, which has been copied by other countries around the world. I did not say it at the beginning, but I am also ex-local authority, so I have experience being in both different roles.

Baroness Parminter: Good, I think that is important for you, as well as for us.

Q44 Lord Freeman: Good morning. My question relates to what happens after planning permission and then failure to deliver. The formal question is: what are the main reasons why the granting of planning permission does not always translate into new housing delivery? Is there a case for the compulsory registration of land acquired for housebuilding—in other words, in order to prevent alternative use or no use?

Guy Bransby: My Lord Chairman, would you like me to start again? I also have a few points, which I will just run through very quickly, not as many as 10 this time, I hasten to add. In no particular order, the parties obtaining planning permission are frequently not the developer themselves, so it might be the landowner or it might be another party interest that will not actually deliver the development. That is a natural state of affairs, whereby the developer does not achieve the planning permission.

Mr Penfold has already made my second point, but it is about the time it takes to discharge the large number of conditions on any planning permission, which can take time. My third point is a broader one, which is that a lot of delivery, particularly of housing, is market-driven. There are obviously market circumstances that are both local and national that will drive that. My penultimate point is a broader one as well, which is that there are wider economic factors, be they the cost of materials or the unavailability of labour, which will dictate housebuilding rates. Finally, another broader point is that, since we have entered recession and then come out of it, the number of housebuilders and developers able to actually deliver big housing schemes has reduced, in my opinion, because a lot of the smaller and medium-sized developers, housebuilders and construction companies unfortunately went out of business. There is a mixture of points there that are both planning-related and broader market-related. The registration of land is a good idea in principle, but I would probably need to understand it a little bit better. The devil would inevitably be in the detail. As a principle, if it involves
zoning of land or permission in principle on brownfield land, it is a welcome addition, but, as I say, the devil will be in the detail.

**Richard Lemon:** I think Mr Bransby has stolen my thunder again.

**The Chairman:** Next time round, I will ask you to come first.

**Richard Lemon:** On the point that Mr Bransby makes about delivery being market-driven, of course housebuilders do not want to flood the market with products on day one, so there will be a drip-feed of product to the market, otherwise the price will fall. Inevitably, it is not all going to be built the day after commission. Incidentally, it is worth considering whether or not other housing products might better serve the market here, so it is not just homes for private sale or market sales but homes in the private rented sector, for example. That might help boost delivery, but there is not a great deal of encouragement for that sector at the moment from central government. It is talked about as a broadly good thing, but at this stage there is no great incentive for it, so that might be something to look at.

**The Chairman:** We can mention that to the Minister and see what he says.

**Richard Lemon:** Thank you. On the point about the compulsory registration of land acquired for housebuilding, I am not entirely sure where it would get you and what benefit it would have. Moreover, I am not sure how it would be workable. A site might well have been pretty obviously bought for housing if it is by one of the major volume housebuilders, but if it has been bought by anybody else, then who knows what their intentions are for it? Is it housing, is it a mix of uses, or is it something else entirely? I am not sure where it would get you. Nor am I sure that it would be practical.

**Adrian Penfold:** It is an interesting question. I read Kate Barker’s response to the same question when you talked to her, and she talked about absorption rates and the idea that only 100 dwellings per year could be released from any single site. We are not housebuilders, although we do build residential and we do build what we get planning permission for. I do not think we ever get planning permission and then do not build it. That is not our business, but it sounds broadly right. That point about tenure mix is absolutely right. I will give you an example of a development in Southwark. I understand you visited Southwark.

**The Chairman:** Yes we did and we were very impressed.
Adrian Penfold: We are working with Southwark Council on a scheme at Canada Water, where we own the shopping centre and 45 acres of adjacent land, for something like 3,000 dwellings. Certainly our plan is to provide some of that as built to rent. Obviously some of it would be social housing as well. There is a mix of tenures there and we can build those different tenures out alongside each other, which should mean—and will mean, I believe—that we can get well beyond 100 units per year. Certainly our plans would be well in excess of that. I think that is an important point to mention.

Savills produced a very interesting research note on sites getting planning permission and then not being built out. If you have not seen it, I would recommend it to you. It seemed to show that in the areas of highest demand, what gets planning permission does get built out. They looked at three-year averages of consents against housing starts. I will just look at my notes here. In South Bucks and Woking, for example, there were five times as many starts on site as there were planning permissions granted in those three years. Other examples were Merton, four times; Elmbridge and Watford, three times; and interestingly in Newcastle, there were four times as many starts as granted planning permissions. Again, it seems as though the picture is varied. It is dangerous to come away with one picture or idea that covers the whole country. That is not what is going on in the whole country, although it is certainly going on in parts of the country.

Q45 Earl of Lytton: Good morning, gentlemen. As you probably know, I am a chartered surveyor. I wanted to unpick one thing that has puzzled me, and that is the alternatives and whether you have lots of small sites and a dispersed approach to dealing with housing numbers and the five-year land supply as opposed to the strategic large sites. Now, we have already had before the Committee issues to do with the cost of infrastructure and stuff like that, but some housebuilders are saying to me that the only way you are going to get the numbers up is by having lots of little sites, because that will give the choice and enable the sort of build-out rates to be delivered in practice. Is that the situation in reality? Do the strategic sites essentially always have a constrained build-out rate, because that locality can only really expect to deliver a certain proportion every year? Is that the issue?

Guy Bransby: I am happy to take this question. The answer probably lies in both, actually. There is a combination of strategic site delivery and indeed delivery through smaller sites. I
have sympathy with the view expressed by others who have come to see you; it has been my experience as well. It leads on to a recommendation that I was going to put to you that the local planning authorities, which know their boroughs better than anyone, maybe with the support of the private sector, should be encouraged to identify where those small sites are. Spending time in the borough where I live, there are plenty of vacant brownfield underutilised sites that seem ripe for delivering small pockets of housing, but there is no central database that audits where those are and what their potential is. That would be a recommendation of mine. A couple of local authorities I am aware of do have such a record of sites that are then promoted through the planning system, but that is very rare.

The Chairman: Can you give us any idea of which local authorities do it right?

Guy Bransby: I am happy to. It is near where I live, so I can refer to the London Borough of Wandsworth. It has something called a site-specific allocations document, where the officers of Wandsworth Council have been around, walked the streets, identified the sites and then allocated those for future development. That is a good example that I can refer you to.

The Chairman: That is very useful. Thank you very much. Do you think that is particularly important in London or for the rest of the country? Sometimes we are a bit metro-centred. Do you think there are any other local authorities in Nether Stowey or wherever that would have this idea?

Guy Bransby: My view is yes, that is right. I understand that you visited Birmingham as well, which is an example of a city that has done wonderful things to regenerate and grow, and to deliver housing and commercial space. Yes, I think it is more than just a London idea. It could be countrywide.

Richard Lemon: I should add, if I may, that most local authorities do or should have a site allocations document as part of their local plan. The difficulty is that many have found it so difficult to get their basic strategy in place that they have not yet got round to doing a site allocations document.

The Chairman: Are they guarding it because it is personal to them and they do not want anybody else to come along and make a bid for a site?

Richard Lemon: No, I do not think so.

The Chairman: Good, so it is open knowledge.
Richard Lemon: Absolutely. I am certain that in some cases the smaller sites do not get picked up because they are perhaps too small. That ought to be something that local authorities are looking at a great deal more. In the borough in which I live there are a number of sites that are probably in a variety of ownerships. If somebody, the local authority or another party, could assemble those sites, which are currently very low densities, with a mix of fish and chip shops and a car showroom, all one-storey, five minutes’ walk from a station where there is a train every four minutes, you would think that that really had to be a site for some decent housing development. As I say, if they are in multiple ownership, it makes it fairly unattractive to a developer. Along the way, someone has to get involved and pull those sites together.

Adrian Penfold: A lot of those sites are owned by public sector bodies as well. There is a huge opportunity there. That again relates to the resourcing and skills within those public sector bodies and whether they have people who can bring forward those sites.

The Chairman: They would just say, “Well, what about that site there?”. It is local knowledge.

Adrian Penfold: Exactly. If they have some expertise in that area, that is very helpful. The other advantage with smaller sites is that they can be taken up by smaller businesses. What we are seeing in housebuilding is an increased focus on smaller and smaller numbers of major housebuilders providing most of the housing. There is a need to try to encourage the SMEs, which are presently just going out of business. The NHBC had a figure of 400 builder SMEs having gone out of business in the last year. It would be good if some of those smaller sites could be given to smaller builders to bring forward housing development.

Guy Bransby: Am I allowed to add, my Lord Chairman, that I think those smaller sites are being missed? The in-fill sites and the smaller parcels of land are being missed. The strategic allocations and the medium-sized sites are being picked up; it is the smaller plots that are being missed.

The Chairman: That is very interesting, because big oaks out of small acorns grow. I am sure that is true. That is very interesting. Who is next? Lord Inglewood.

Q46 Lord Inglewood: On this topic, you have a planning register that shows you the planning consents on land. We know that. We have a land register, which is working towards providing a cadastral survey for the whole country, so you can combine the two together. If you have some sort of allocation document produced by the local authority, combined ultimately with
the power of CPO, if it is in the interests of planning to do, if you have owners who for some reason or another do not want to proceed and the project would be in the public interest—bearing in mind that one of the general characteristics of developing land is that you end up richer than when you started—is there really any need for anything more?

Richard Lemon: Do you mean in terms of larger strategic allocations?

Lord Inglewood: Registers and all that. If you want to find out who owns a bit of land, in reality it is not that difficult.

Richard Lemon: No, you go to the Land Registry.

Lord Inglewood: You go to the Land Registry. If you want to know if it has planning consent on it, you look at the planning register. If you want to know whether it has potential, you either look at whether an allocation document has been produced or you talk to the planning officer, so is there a need for any further registers in this area?

Guy Bransby: My view is that there probably is to pull all of that together. I can see a case for establishing who owns the land or whether it has the ability to come forward for development, but the piece that is missing is what land use and scale of building would be appropriate and what the wider community benefits should be both for the local authority and for the local people. That piece is missing for me. I gave the example of Wandsworth earlier. It has produced a document that makes very clear the land use, the height, the scale and the benefits that must accrue from any development on that piece of land.

Lord Inglewood: Is that not something that the planning authority should be doing now? Therefore, there is no need to introduce statutory registers or any other sort of register. You just need them to get on and do what they are meant to be doing.

Guy Bransby: They should, but this is where I am very sympathetic to local authorities.

Lord Inglewood: I do not dispute that. That may be a separate issue of resourcing or whatever; it is not an issue of the way the system would work if it was working as a well lubricated machine.

Adrian Penfold: I agree with that, and I am part of a government expert group looking at local plans at the moment. We are due to report in February, and I am sure that is one of the things that we will be thinking about. The land that is included on the strategic housing land assessment, which is a very important part of the plan-making process, tends to exclude the
very small sites. It starts from five houses and up or half a hectare and up, so some of the smaller sites can get missed.

Lord Inglewood: Mr Bransby’s point about his local authority’s work was that they will pick that up.

Adrian Penfold: The Wandsworth model sounds really interesting and may be something that we, as part of our group on the local plan side, ought to be looking at. I will take that away.

Baroness Whitaker: Should we have a word about viability?

The Chairman: That is the next question.

Q47 Lord Inglewood: The question that I was allocated to put is about assessing viability. Once you have the consent and everything, you then actually have to deliver as a developer and assess all kinds of aspects, which will probably be different in each site, which will then enable you to take a decision in detail about the financial worth of going ahead with a particular project. Are there any particular changes in the way that the system works that would enable you to achieve that either more accurately or quickly than at present? There is an awful lot of negotiating with various people that has to go on.

Adrian Penfold: There are two points to that, really. One is the way that viability is used in the planning system. It is increasingly used. When I started as a planner, “viability” was not a word that was used, but now it cuts across most or a lot of the planning work that we do, for example on affordable housing, on CIL and on heritage issues. It is becoming increasingly important, and I have some concerns about that.

For developers, and I work for a development company, viability is obviously an important part of the work that we do, working out whether we actually want to invest in something or build something, or not. That is not just a snapshot on value for us; it is a broad view that we would take on a range of issues on the market, the economy, where we are in the cycle, and what interest rates, values and rents are likely to do. On all those things, we will have a strategic company view and what sort of returns we would expect in order for us to invest. The sorts of returns we would expect might not be the same as the sorts of returns that somebody else would expect, so we look at all those things.

What planning could do to make that easier involves certainty. The more certainty we get about what we are likely to be able to build, and the quicker we get it, and how quickly we
are likely to be able to get planning permission, the easier it is, because a lot of this is really about predicting the future, if you think about it. The longer ahead you need to predict the future, the more difficult it gets. Speed and certainty are the two points.

On the point about the use of viability and viability assessments in the planning system, I get increasingly worried. There is a lot of cynicism and mistrust out there among local communities and members of planning committees about the way viability is used to argue about levels of affordable housing, for example, which should be provided on any particular site attached to any particular planning permission. There is this idea that developers are coming in with an assessment that is not really their true viability assessment but something that tries to argue the value down. The way it works encourages game-playing on both sides. Developers probably do that, and on the other side local authorities are putting pressure on their advisers to argue the value up for more affordable housing. It is the nature of the British planning system.

Lord Inglewood: Is this tension inherent in the system of arrangements that we have, and can you do nothing about it structurally? We just have to live with it.

Adrian Penfold: No, I do not think we do have to live with it. If you think about it, what we are trying to do is work out a level of tax or social value that is going to come from a particular development. We increasingly use viability assessments to do that. How much affordable housing? How much contribution to whatever it is—how much CIL would need to be paid? There are other ways in which you could tax. CIL in itself is another way. We do not actually apply the viability assessment on a site-by-site level; we apply it across the area, and the developer or investor comes in and knows how much CIL will need to be paid in order for that development to go ahead, so it gives you a level of certainty.

The other concern I have about all this, which applies to CIL—and this can get quite tricky—is that that payment has to come upfront. How many taxes do we know where you pay the tax collector in advance of actually having earnt any money? If the income tax inspector came to you and said, “I think you are going to earn £70,000 a year for the next three years”—

Lord Inglewood: That is what he does.

Adrian Penfold: Does he? You pay on what you earn.

Lord Inglewood: You pay on what you earned last year for next year, but I take your point.
Adrian Penfold: Perhaps, but I think it would be better, if we could, to tax profit rather than expectation of profit. If that is not possible, then it would be better to do it on an area-wide basis than on a site-by-site basis. That would be my view, largely because it is beginning to bring the planning system almost into disrepute. People do not trust it, and that is not a good thing for any of us.

Lord Inglewood: There is a lot of gaming in the system by all kinds of people.

Adrian Penfold: Absolutely, there is gaming.

Guy Bransby: I have a couple of suggestions as well, which I hope address the question. I have three ideas and maybe one debating point. As Mr Penfold has said, they all come down to the fact that you have this system where you have an applicant trying to agree a position with the local authority, and the two might not necessarily be trying to get to the same endpoint. They are driven by different things. The way the process works at the moment is that the applicant produces a viability report, which is sent to the local authority, which then reviews it independently, and they try to reach agreement. My three ideas are that, first, the local authority and the applicant could appoint a single viability consultant who is briefed by both parties, is independent and comes to an independent view, rather than the two parties paying for their own viability consultant to produce their own work, which is then discussed and hopefully agreement reached. That would be one suggestion; you have a body of independent viability consultants who represent both sides.

My second suggestion is that there should be an agreed principles methodology for producing viability assessments, which does not currently exist. Again, to give you the example of Wandsworth, because that is where I am, Wandsworth has a one-page methodology statement on agreeing principles for viability, so you know where you are starting from and you do not have to have debates about what the benchmark value should be, how you apply yields, and so on and so forth. I would suggest that a national agreed methodology for viability might be a good idea.

Lord Inglewood: Can I ask you who would agree it?

Guy Bransby: That is a good question. The RICS has guidelines, which are a good starting point, which people in my profession will use. That may be the suggestion there. My third idea is that these viability discussions can sometimes take a long time, particularly if the two parties
cannot reach agreement, so I would advocate an objective of agreeing a position within a set timescale. It must be agreed within 28 working days or similar, and, if not, there might be some sort of independent arbitration process that deals with it, because these can be long-winded open-ended discussions.

**Lord Inglewood:** Are we getting back to your previous comment about judicial review?

**Guy Bransby:** We might be. I do not know if we have the time—and, if we do not, please let me know—but I did want to touch on the point of overage clauses that sit within viability. Would that be helpful?

**The Chairman:** Could you send us a note on that? I am very conscious of the fact that I am not giving enough time to various people. For example, Mr Lemon, do you have anything to say on this particular issue?

**Richard Lemon:** Funnily enough, I took some advice from colleagues who specialise in affordable housing viability assessments yesterday, and they made exactly the same suggestions as Mr Bransby on a set of guidelines on which everyone can cluster and agree. Whether these guidelines are RICS guidelines, government guidelines or RICS guidelines endorsed by government, I am not sure, but as long as everyone is working to roughly the same template and they agree about whatever they are using existing-use values, benchmark land values or whatever they might be, that has to be a sensible way forward.

**The Chairman:** Is there a history of having guidelines in this sector? No, because there is no central trade association.

**Baroness Parminter:** Yes, because, as mentioned, they each have their own determination of what the return would be. That would be part of the package.

**Guy Bransby:** It is only the RICS, I understand.

**Q48 Earl of Lytton:** I would just say on that last bit that we had a paper sent to us that rather suggests that the profit margin on development ought to be 15%. That was the figure that was suggested. If these gentlemen are writing to us, I would really like their thoughts on whether a 15% margin is realistic and practical. Do not bother to answer now, because I am going to ask the question that I told the Chairman I wanted to ask.

I touch on things that are possibly related to social prejudice here, so I tread slightly carefully. The question relates to the affordable housing element incorporated within developments.
We have gone away from the old thing where they used to be put on mass housing estates and they were over there somewhere. They have now all dispersed around the thing. Is this universally regarded by housebuilders as a satisfactory arrangement, and whether it is or not, does that sit behind the Government’s idea of moving towards starter homes, where it will effectively be a sale of the freehold at a discounted figure, rather than affordable housing at a discounted rent, as I understand it? I wonder if I can have your comments.

**Richard Lemon**: On the point about affordable housing being secured through the planning process, it is something that developers have come to live with, although they accept that it is right and proper that in some way they make some provision for affordable housing. As Mr Penfold mentioned earlier—forgive me, Mr Penfold, if I am putting words in your mouth, and correct me if I am—it is almost a negotiable tax on the grounds of a one-liner in the National Planning Policy Framework about creating mixed and balanced communities. We must always remember that this must always sit in the context of creating mixed and balanced communities. It is something that developers are accustomed to and they accept that it is almost certainly here to stay.

On the point about starter homes, I of course support the Government’s desire to get people on to the housing ladder, but I am concerned that the measure as proposed will simply squeeze affordable housing, by which I mean intermediate products, as well as the social rented sector. If developers are being asked to subsidise starter homes as their number one priority, something else will inevitably get squeezed. A lot of infrastructure is already provided for by CIL, which is already non-negotiable, so that only leaves affordable housing to squeeze. That will inevitably be where the pain is felt.

**Baroness Whitaker**: I have a quick question and a case in point. I do not know if it was Mr Penfold’s development or not, but when we went to Southwark Council, they told us that the affordable housing proportion had been driven down. My recollection is that it was down to 25%. I just wondered what the considerations were that enabled it to be driven down if it was not your development.

**Adrian Penfold**: It was not my development. The development that we are doing is actually a joint venture with Southwark Council.

**Baroness Whitaker**: What is the proportion of yours?
Adrian Penfold: Thirty-five per cent, and that is consistent policy, working very closely with the council. What brings it down to 25% is that viability discussion we have just been having.

Baroness Whitaker: What considerations would make that the case?

Adrian Penfold: Basically the developer would say, “If we have to provide 35% affordable housing, we will not be able to afford to do this development”. That is the argument that is being made.

Guy Bransby: May I just add that it also comes back to the other question about acceptable levels of profit? That is the nub of the discussion, and whether that should be 15%, 17.5% or 20%.

Adrian Penfold: It comes down to other issues as well. We can get very technical here if we are not careful, but often the viability assessment issue is about the existing value of the site that you work off. There is quite a detailed technical argument about whether you work off what is called an existing-use value or a market value. That becomes quite important in those discussions, as do all sorts of other things. They are very complicated discussions, which is why there is such a problem with them.

Q49 Lord Inglewood: Standing back from the detail, this approach has evolved over the last 20 or 30 years. Are we as a nation better or worse off as a result of it having happened? In the old days, it was much more free market. Things happened more quickly. More houses may have been built. Is this clogging up the system or is it adding value to it?

Adrian Penfold: What do you mean by “this”?

Lord Inglewood: The whole thing: the viability assessment together with all this other haggling and negotiating.

Adrian Penfold: I will be clear: I do not think providing affordable housing is clogging up the system.

Lord Inglewood: No, but it gets more complicated than that, does it not?

Adrian Penfold: The viability approach does make things take longer. As I have said, people do not understand how you get to that 25%. Exactly that question is asked and people do not understand it.

Lord Inglewood: My question to you is whether this approach adds or detracts value, from a national overall perspective, for development in this country.
**Adrian Penfold**: My view would be that it detracts value, because it is so complicated, and there should be an easier, simpler way of doing it.

**Lord Inglewood**: Is that the view of the other two of you?

**Guy Bransby**: That is right, but inevitably it depends on where you are coming from.

**Lord Inglewood**: Of course it does. Everything is site-specific.

**Guy Bransby**: I meant more whether you are a resident or a developer.

**Lord Inglewood**: Yes, but it is also site-specific.

**Guy Bransby**: It is site-specific, yes.

**Lord Inglewood**: We have to stand above all this and try to take an overview.

**Adrian Penfold**: Can I just come back? I do not think it is a question of free market or not free market. We all accept that development should pay for infrastructure and for social goods. That was an argument 15 or 20 years ago, but it is no longer an argument. We have all absolutely accepted that. The question is how you do it: what is the best way of doing it?

**Guy Bransby**: I agree.

**Q50 Baroness Whitaker**: I would like to go to the broader question of place-making as a whole. I was interested in Mr Penfold’s design quality charity. How important are design considerations in development schemes, and where does design, by which I mean place-making—the whole place, not just an attractive something or other—rank in the priorities? How prominent is place-making in your thinking and how can it be encouraged? I also noted what Mr Penfold said about the infrastructure having to be in place. We have not talked about employment, but it is possible to have housing to such an extent that it annihilates all the workplaces in an area. Can you give us some thoughts on that, please?

**Adrian Penfold**: The answer to your first question is that place-making is crucial to our business. You just have to go to our website to see. You will land on a page that talks about place-making being at the heart of our business. Our investment strategy is focused on place-making, so we invest in places and we believe that we have skills in making and in improving places, and that by doing so we can create value—for our shareholders, which is obviously very important to us, but also for the wider community.

**Baroness Whitaker**: For the record, could you list the elements of place-making, because we often tend to ignore some of them? What are the key things?
Adrian Penfold: Probably at the heart of it sits the public realm, the places which the buildings sit around. The buildings are important, but the public realm—the squares, the streets—is even more important. Part of what goes to making those streets is what sits on the frontages of those streets: the retail, the cafés, the bars and those sorts of uses. It is also quite important how you activate those places and spaces. For example, we have a lot of farmers’ markets now. We are probably one of the biggest landlords of farmers’ markets in the country, because a lot of our places have farmers’ markets to make those places interesting to people. A mix of uses is also important, which you touched on: the mix between residential, different tenures of residential and the employment space. If you just have employment space, it can become a very sterile space in the evenings and at the weekends. If it is just residential, you tend not to get the level of activity at ground level that you would get if you had employment.

Baroness Whitaker: What about transport?

Adrian Penfold: Transport is absolutely key to the work that we do. We tend to be very involved with the transport providers of a place. When I talk about places, what am I talking about? I am talking about Broadgate. We own and manage Broadgate. A large part of Paddington is ours. Regent’s Place is a big estate up in Camden, on the Euston Road next to Warren Street Tube. Canada Water is the development in Southwark that I talked about. For all those, transport is key, and we will get involved proactively with the transport providers and the local authorities in improving transport. At Regent’s Place we spent a very large sum of money on improving the ability to walk from Warren Street Tube station on the south side of Euston Road to Regent’s Place, which is on the north side of Euston Road.

Baroness Whitaker: How can that approach be encouraged? What you say happens here and there, but it is not the norm.

Adrian Penfold: It is not the norm. British Land is not the only company that believes in this and thinks that this is a way of creating value. If you look back over the centuries, you will see great estates in London: the Grosvenor Estate, the Portman Estate, even the Crown Estate. It is their model that we are adopting in some senses.

How can you encourage people to get more involved in that? The housebuilder model is a different model. It is, “We will invest and then move on to the next investment”. Build to rent can have an impact on that, because when you build something in order to rent it out to
people, the long-term management of that place becomes of interest to the developer and the owner, so the two can come together quite nicely, which is one of the reasons why we are looking at Canada Water. Inevitably, it will not be the business model that everybody adopts. It is much easier for me. We are a FTSE 100 company; we can think a bit more long-term than some others.

**Baroness Whitaker**: It is a long-term/short-term thing too.

**Adrian Penfold**: It is long-term/short-term. We have owned the Regent’s Place development that I talked about for 30 years, and managed it for 30 years. That is a long-term commitment.

**Richard Lemon**: I wonder if I might add to that. It is also about local authorities understanding the importance of place. I have done a lot of supporting information for planning applications, where we have been looking to provide retail uses, leisure uses, food and drink, restaurants and cafés and so on, in major new developments, making the case that they are so important to creating a genuine place in these new developments.

**Baroness Whitaker**: Do the local authorities appear to you to get the point?

**Richard Lemon**: They did. We may come to town centres later, but quite rightly planning policy directs new retail, leisure, and café and restaurant uses to town centres, so that is the first port of call for a planning officer. I have been playing the role of saying, “Yes, that is absolutely right, but you also need those uses in this development as well”, not on a massive scale perhaps. It depends on the circumstance, but it is about explaining to them how important these uses are going to be in contributing to that sense of place.

**Baroness Whitaker**: Do you find yourself, the developer, explaining to the local authority, which is responsible for the whole place, how they ought to be thinking?

**Richard Lemon**: Yes, absolutely. It is partly the developer’s role, partly our role as planning consultants and partly that of other consultants. Yes, you are absolutely right that we need to tell that story to local authorities, but we also need to give them almost the excuse so that when it gets to planning committee and the planning policy says, “No, you should not have retail or leisure floor space here”, they have a reason to say that actually there are particular circumstances here and we must have these additional uses in this development.

**Guy Bransby**: I have one quick point, please. I think design is important. After the principle of the development, it is probably the most important thing when it comes to schemes, because
it is subjective, emotive and important to people. There are some excellent examples of local planning authorities doing really good things with regards to place-making, and I can think of an example in the south-west of the country—and I am happy to send you details—where they actually submit place-making plans with the planning application and, as part of that, a green infrastructure plan. As Mr Penfold was saying, this is not just about how buildings hit the ground, the transport and the landscaping; this actually sets out the greening, the biodiversity and where the water features will go in any scheme. I am happy to provide that.

**The Chairman:** That would be really helpful. And trees?

**Guy Bransby:** Absolutely. The green infrastructure plan covers all that.

**Lord Inglewood:** I just wanted to ask, in purely vulgar commercial terms, how important the difference between a well-made place and a poorly made place is to a scheme.

**Adrian Penfold:** I can give you an example. We looked back at that Regent’s Place development, which I spoke about, which we have owned for 30 years, to see what has happened to values. I am talking mainly about office rents, but also about residential. The values there have increased at twice the rate of the increase in the West End, and that is because we have made a place rather than just built a building.

**The Chairman:** Of course what we cannot quantify is the effect on the human beings who actually work, live and walk through these spaces.

**Adrian Penfold:** We looked at that as well. The area around our estate, which is mainly Camden council housing, is in the top 1% of areas in London where deprivation has gone down in the same period. I must not over-talk this, because it is something I have been involved in and I am very proud of, but everybody seems to be winning there.

**The Chairman:** Have any articles been published about that? I ask because we have a member of the Committee, Baroness Finlay, who unfortunately cannot be here today, who is very determined that we take into account the effect on human beings, mental health problems and physical health problems.

**Adrian Penfold:** We worked with the Royal Society of Arts and the New Economics Foundation and produced, early this year or late last year, a document looking back at those 30 years. That is where the figures I have just given you have come from, and I am happy to send you some copies of that.
Baroness Whitaker: I have one brief follow-up, if I may. It is about the design quality charity. Local authorities can obviously choose to use its services or not. How do you and how could the country get them to use that kind of thing more? It is obviously not appropriate for mandatory requirements, but it sounds like a really useful thing. How many use it now?

Adrian Penfold: I do not know. We could probably find that figure. I will see what I can find on that. The NPPF has been helpful, because it has a specific reference to design review, and a lot of local authorities are taking that very seriously.

Baroness Whitaker: They use you.

Adrian Penfold: They use us and there is the design alliance across the country. You have heard evidence from David Waterhouse from CABE, which does similar sorts of work, so there is cross-country coverage of design review. We are seeing a pattern developing that is quite interesting and positive: towns are working with CABE, with us or other members of the design alliance to provide a panel that can look at a number of different schemes. They are working with a design review body, rather than setting it up. Generally setting up your own design review body is more difficult. I looked at this when I was in local government. If you can work with somebody like Design South East, CABE or other members of the design alliance, as a local authority, that is a positive way of doing it.

Q51 Baroness Parminter: I would like to tease out a bit more about the revitalisation of town centres and high streets. Mr Penfold, you have already said quite a lot on this, so perhaps we could hear from Mr Lemon, because you mentioned that this is something you wanted to come back to.

Richard Lemon: Yes, certainly. I am sure the Committee is well aware that the general thrust of planning policy for the last 15 or 20 years now has been to direct new retail and leisure development towards town centres. I think that is an established principle and one that most people support, but we are seeing a changing context in which the retail world is operating now and people are gravitating towards the largest town centres and the smallest town centres. The largest ones are for their comparison goods shopping, their clothes and shoes. They spend a day there, maybe have something to eat as well and go to the cinema. At the other end of the scale they do their day-to-day shopping, but the town centres in the middle are the ones that are being squeezed and are now looking for a role. My view is that this is
going to have to be guided by local authorities and the main landowners in those centres to identify their future role. How do they reinvent themselves so that they are fit for purpose and meet a genuine need? There may be a slightly bitter pill to swallow, which is for those centres to consolidate in some places, so that the fringes, the straggly ends of some of these centres, are converted to residential. As I say, some careful thinking needs to be done about those centres in the middle.

On a more practical level, again you will no doubt be aware that the Government have, in recent years, introduced a number of new permitted development rights allowing the change of use of certain units to other uses. For example, we have seen a new permitted development right allowing the change of use from A1 shops to A2 financial services, which includes banks. That is a very welcome move. The likes of Metro Bank operate some very large glassy buildings that are open seven days a week and throughout the day. They really generate footfall in a town centre. If town-centre vitality and viability is about generating footfall, getting people into their centres and using the facilities, that is certainly a good move.

Some of the other changes have been slightly smaller-scale. Frankly, they are not particularly useful. They are limited to very small floor spaces, so we are really just talking about very small-scale shops. All this has been done through legislation, through permitted development rights. It would have been easier, and it could still be done, to add a single sentence to the NPPF that simply says that local authorities should not resist the change of use of units in certain parts of the town centre—outside the primary shopping area, for example. This comes back to the point earlier about people wanting to spend more on eating out, and so on and so forth. There is a real resistance to opening up restaurants in some places, when actually they are playing a key role in the health of our town centres. There have been some useful initiatives so far, but there is more to do. A slightly less prescriptive and rigid approach is required by local authorities in some cases, which may take some changes to national policy in order to drive it.

**Guy Bransby:** I have another view, or would you like to move on?

**The Chairman:** No. How many points do you have this time?

**Guy Bransby:** I will make it two. The first is making the high streets physically attractive to people, so I am talking about landscaping, public realm, decent, affordable, accessible public
transport, making them clean, secure and safe. All that should be funded either through the community infrastructure levy or through planning gain associated with planning schemes. That is about the physical.

The second point is more about planning and policy and builds on Mr Lemon’s point. I do think that our town centres should become more diverse. Planning should be more flexible on the uses it allows. I have come across a lot of policies that restrict the introduction of restaurants, bars or types of retail to town centres. I think we should do the opposite and make it more flexible, because that is how places become active, vibrant and attractive. Those are my two points.

Adrian Penfold: The one point that I would make is the impact of the internet. It is worth thinking about that. I had a look at the figures, and something like 4.7% of all shopping in 2008 was on the internet. Now it is nearly 12% and is projected to go to 18% by 2020. That is having an impact. I also had a look at Experian’s latest figures projecting a growth in floor space for retail. It is projecting a 13% growth of floor space in retail over the next 10 years, so there is scope for new retail in town centres. We as a company are investing in town centres at the moment.

The Chairman: How strong is that knowledge that there is scope for increasing town centres? I was thinking the other way round—about these big out-of-town areas and even town centres, which always seem to have a John Lewis at one end and something or other at the other. Most people now think that they cannot park their car. They are also becoming much more aware that digital skills are an essential part of their toolbox, so to speak. A lot of this stuff is going to close.

Adrian Penfold: We are the biggest retail landlord in the UK, so this is quite an important issue for us. We are finding that actually there is a synergy between the internet and physical retailing. A lot of the people who are shopping on the internet are also visiting our shopping centres, but they will not visit our shopping centres unless they are nice places to be. Our strategy at the moment is very much about investing in the basics. Investing in car parking is important, you are right, but investing in loos, for example, is also critical, as is investing in the training of our retail shop assistants in the way they greet people and work with people as they arrive to do their shopping to make it a pleasant experience for people. When you do
that, our belief—and we have some proof of this from the studies that we do—is that footfall can be held up and can increase. The internet is not all doom and gloom.

Q52 Lord Inglewood: My cynical friends tell me that people go to the shopping centre, look at the goods and then buy them across the internet, because they are cheaper. Is your footfall turning into money taken?

Adrian Penfold: Some people are doing that, but click and collect is an important phenomenon. People are going to collect something that they have clicked on, and while they are collecting what they have clicked on they will look at and buy other things. Interestingly, even when they are returning something that they have had delivered, and they return them because they do not want to hang about and send them back through the post, they return them to the shop at the shopping centre and also look in other shops and buy. We reckon, when we look at the internet and physical shopping, that there are 10 different ways in which people shop now. I have them, but you will not want them, having had Mr Bransby’s 10 points. I will not give you the 10.

The Chairman: All these points have been very useful.

Adrian Penfold: Indeed, but perhaps this is another one I can follow up to give you the 10. Only one of them is actually to click and deliver at home, and that is it. The other nine all touch on physical retailing in one form or another.

Richard Lemon: My Lord Chairman, if I may respond to your question earlier about out-of-town retailing, you are quite right that people increasingly like to shop out of town. In order to respond, town centres have to make sure that they offer what out of town offers, which is plentiful free parking. The town centres must provide the sites for large-format units where people can go and shop and know they will have the size of trousers, dress or whatever it is they are looking for. In order to push that over the edge, it comes back to this place point. It is about going and enjoying your experience as a shopper. I think Mr Penfold made that point a moment ago.

The Chairman: Mr Penfold, how many psychologists do you employ?

Adrian Penfold: We do not employ any psychologists, but we have been working with a Canadian company called Happy City. If you get a chance, have a look at Happy City. I think it has a website. It looks at the psychology of shoppers and people in town centres.
The Chairman: I think it is a very important point. Thank you very much. Lord Woolmer.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: Given the time and that this is a huge topic, do you want me to ask it?

The Chairman: Give it to them and see if they can agree to send us some information.

Q53 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: You have touched on some trends, looking into your crystal ball, but apart from the internet and so on, what other trends affecting property markets and sustainability will have the largest impact on the built environment? Do you think national policymakers and local authorities have this kind of time horizon, as well as the immediate?

The Chairman: There are a few more lists coming.

Adrian Penfold: I am afraid I have a list. I have seven actually, but I will go through them very quickly. Technology and the internet is a big one, but there is also 3D printing, for example. I noticed Professor Worthington is here, who will probably know about this than I do. I am told that in China they can produce 10 3D blocks in 24 hours. The only problem is that they cannot produce the roofs for these buildings, but they can produce the building. It is one to keep an eye on. From our perspective, the key one is still globalisation and the global movement of capital around the world, from which obviously London and the UK more generally are benefiting at the moment, but that can change. It is very much something to keep an eye on. Some of the drivers by the Government relate to devolution, for example. Devolution is an important theme for planning, and we are looking at it very carefully in our local plan work to see what it might have to offer. We have touched on sustainability and place. Climate change is a huge issue, as is an ageing population and what that means for the sorts of developments that we build and the sorts of places that we manage. Finally, there is the growth of London. There is just huge growth going on in London, and the question is how we accommodate that and provide the infrastructure. How well government is doing and how capable it is of dealing with all those things is probably another session and a half, is it not?

The Chairman: It is probably more than that. Thank you, Mr Penfold. Mr Lemon and then Mr Bransby.

Richard Lemon: I will pick up three points very quickly, if I may. Call them trends, call them challenges, or whatever you like, but I picked up three. The first is the continuing and overwhelming need for new homes, which we must deliver, and we are not getting to grips
with that. The second is the future of our town centres. How do the secondary ones I mentioned earlier reinvent themselves? Thirdly, how do we deliver the necessary infrastructure? Are we getting to grips with that? We are still not quite delivering enough homes, by all accounts. We are getting there in town centres, but there is more to do. On infrastructure, some of the recent moves have been welcome. It is worth picking up on or giving some credit to the Mayor of London and the GLA on their infrastructure 2050 document, which tried to look a bit further ahead, not just until the end of this mayoral term but well into the future. There are signs that things are being done, but there is far more to do, I think.

Guy Bransby: I will make my four points, but I am happy to make a submission to cover the detail, given the time.

The Chairman: That is very kind, thank you.

Guy Bransby: The topic headings are release of green belt land for new housing and whether that is something that we feel can be supported and is appropriate. That is the first one.

Baroness Parminter: That is not a trend, that is your proposed solution, but carry on.

Guy Bransby: It is not, actually. I am happy to make a submission on that point, if you would welcome it, but it is not my personal view. The second point I was going to make was about energy performance and the need for carbon reduction, which touches on some of the sustainability points that we have made. The third is climate change, which Mr Penfold has touched on that, but more than that it is about subsidies, increased taxation and scrapping things like the Green Deal improvement funds. A lot of decisions are being made by government that are changing that landscape, which addresses the second part of your question. The final point goes back to where we started. I touched on, but did not explain very well, the difference between conflicting demands of localism and growth. My personal view is that both are incredibly important. There needs to be democracy in the planning system. Local people need to be involved, but how that marries up with the agenda to drive decision-making, growth and investment is something we still need to tackle.

The Chairman: In our very first session we heard about BANANA, which is “build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything”. It is the new word for nimbyism, I am told. This localism is a big question. As you can see, I think we have bitten off more than we can chew, but we were
given the remit. Your contribution, from all three of you today, has been terrific. Thank you very much indeed. If you wake up in the middle of the night and think, “Oh, we should have said that”, you know where to find us. We would be very grateful. Thank you.

19 November 2015
1. The British Property Federation (BPF) is the voice of property in the UK, representing companies owning, managing and investing in real estate. This includes a broad range of businesses – commercial property owners, developers, the financial institutions and pension funds, corporate landlords, local private landlords – as well as all those professions that support the industry.

2. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Select Committee’s inquiry on National Policy for the Built Environment. In the interests of brevity this response provides headline observations, a more detailed response can be provided.

Q1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

3. It is crucial that decisions are made at the correct administrative and geographical level, with neighbourhood plans being consistent with strategy decided at local authority level. Decisions at the national level should therefore focus on setting the broad policy framework.

Q2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

4. Whilst great strides in coordination have been made, our interactions with Government departments suggest that improvements could still be made to encourage a more joined up approach.

5. For example, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) currently gives the same weight to all designated heritage assets (including Registered Parks & Gardens, battle fields, World Heritage Sites) but this is not reflected in legislation, which protects only those under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Q3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?
6. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee report published in December 2014 identified many of the challenges that arise from the operation of the NPPF. We welcomed the report and the recommendation that the NPPF should not be dismantled but merely subject to some small amendments. It was also seen as crucial that a proper evidence base be established in order to make the right changes in the future.

Q4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

7. While the government is clear that planning is largely a decision for local authorities, there are difficulties in planning strategic nationally-important infrastructure without any broad brush national spatial policy.

8. We welcome the recently-announced creation of a National Infrastructure Commission, and we hope to see swift decisions over important projects to ensure clarity and certainty for investors.

Q5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

9. To help with boosting the supply of housing, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and keep up-to-date a deliverable five year housing land supply. It seems, however, that this is a somewhat arbitrary figure.

10. Those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy should be encouraged to look outside the length of a parliamentary term. Development is not instantaneous, and the effects of policy change can take time to be seen in practice.

Q6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

11. Housing delivery takes place within a local context and therefore is not totally within the control of central Government. We represent the Build-to-Rent sector, which has taken time to reach a critical mass, but is making good progress at adding to housing supply, with 18,000 units in the London development pipeline alone. Whilst central Government has been very supportive at reshaping planning guidance to reflect this new phenomenon of pension fund investment in large-scale rental housing, it has
taken time to inform and educate local planners and politicians about this sector. No blame is being ascribed, but it shows that innovation in the housing sector is slow, because there are so many participants who have been brought up over the past 30 years on a model of building for sale with an affordable housing requirement.

12. The other significant challenge the sector faces is ensuring there is an up-to-date local plan in place. Decent investors do not want to foist unwanted development on communities, but to work within a framework where the local community is welcoming of development and clear about its needs and intentions. We welcome the latest initiatives for central Government to intervene where local plans are not put in place by early 2017, and the expert panel set up by the Housing and Planning Minister to look at speeding up the local plan process.

13. Some of the most innovative housing delivery we see is where our members work in partnership with local government through joint ventures and other structures, where public land is invested as part of the structure. They can offer local councils valuable income and control of their public land rather than outright sale to the highest bidder for that land, but many councils remain nervous of best value rules and we believe there needs to be clearer guidance on what is allowable.

Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

14. There is a pre-existing commitment within European Union legislation for new buildings to be ‘nearly zero energy’ by 2021 by virtue of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive Recast. The same Directive mandates energy efficiency standards for major renovation of existing buildings. While the withdrawal of the zero carbon target by the Government was in our view misguided, there remains this imperative and it is vital that the Government and industry work in concert to examine how it can be delivered.

15. The overall policy framework which seeks to mitigate energy consumption and emissions associated with the occupation of existing non-domestic buildings has evolved incrementally, and we believe that there is scope for rationalisation of the policy framework without detriment to the headline objectives of carbon reduction, energy efficiency and green growth:

- There currently exists no agreed framework for the collection and expression of energy and carbon performance among Government policies – the differing
frameworks used to collect data pursuant to Greenhouse Gas Reporting, the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme, Energy Performance Certificates and the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme could be better harmonised to reduce nugatory costs upon property owners and occupiers;

- **Clear signposting of policy trajectory** to the owners and users of non-domestic buildings should be given in order to provide investment certainty to owners and occupiers (with a compelling case for upwards revision set via the Green Construction Board Low Carbon Routemap);

- **The distribution of policy instruments throughout the building lifecycle from planning to demolition is uneven** – there is currently a lack of policies designed to stimulate energy efficiency and carbon reduction in and around building transactions. When properties are vacant, there are greater opportunities for renovation and retrofit than when properties are occupied;

- **Standard setting** - the Government intends to mandate a minimum energy performance rating of E on letting non-domestic buildings by 2018, and a consultation is expected shortly on the detail of how this policy will work in practice, but we urge due consideration as to the future trajectory for these minimum standards. If it is the intention to ratchet up standards over time, then this should be done so via a regulatory escalator. The rationale being that property owners and occupiers will be better able to understand the risk profile attached to their ownership or occupation of property and react accordingly when considering capital expenditure (e.g. around major refurbishment).

- **There is a need for stronger Government/industry dialogue on the development of new policies** – such a dialogue can provide insights as to the effectiveness of policies, a view on market conditions, advice on minimisation of policy overlap and identify triggers and nudges which can be capitalised upon. We support an ongoing role for the Green Construction Board in this regard.

Q8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

16. Using the historic environment as an asset, and giving it new life, has been one of the cornerstones of the economic and social revival of our towns and cities.

17. For developers, there must be a clear economic argument for why heritage assets should be incorporated into a scheme. Developers need certainty and clarity, but there are often risks and costs not associated with modern buildings: running and maintenance costs may be higher than for comparable modern buildings, and work
to listed buildings can be more complex meaning consultants and contractors are more expensive.

18. That this deters some is frustrating, as there is significant added value to be found from including assets in regeneration schemes: Colliers research in 2011 showed that listed commercial and office property generated a higher level of total return than their non-listed counterparts for three, five, ten and thirty year time periods.

19. Over-protection risks deterring investment and development, and it is not just the developer who loses out: there are clearly associated economic benefits to the local area that are put at risk. Examples such as the regeneration of Kings Cross and St Peter’s Square in Manchester show how heritage can form a vital part of a regeneration scheme.

20. Local planning authorities often lack the required resources to understand how heritage assets can be sensitively incorporated into development, and many in the sector itself have been slow to recognise the benefits of such development.

21. With resources also being squeezed in all heritage bodies, the required knowledge of what should be listed, and why, could be limited.

Q9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

22. Successive skills reviews (e.g. Egan, Latham) have identified that periodic downturns in the construction sector lead to the flight of skilled and semi-skilled workers away from the industry. Such reviews were largely predicated on the likely numbers of workers for traditional trades, but fewer estimates have been made in light of future technology change and the advent of relatively new techniques such as Building Information Modelling, which will require less parochial work practices on the part of individual professions and more integrated supply chains.

23. Still less has been done to assess the contribution of economic migration to the construction sector in the UK. Government policy toward such economic migration needs to take account of skills shortages, particularly given the Government’s focus on construction as an agent of recovery.
24. Finally, the onset of new methods of construction, such as 3D printing and new materials as well as the onset of more complex building services are likely to lead to a heavier emphasis on the role of building services engineers and engineering. The recently announced low cost loans for masters degrees were subject-agnostic, for understandable reasons, but more needs to be done to incentivise entrants to these disciplines in order to ensure that we have the requisite skills to build buildings that are energy efficient and low carbon, and responsive to their occupiers’ needs.

Q10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

25. Designing a high-quality place where people want to work, live and enjoy their time should be at the heart of development. While it may be helpful for government or bodies such as the Design Council to set the tone of this, it is important that the detail is developed at a local level, allowing communities the opportunity to work with developers on what suits their specific area.

26. Recent appeal decisions where permission has been refused for otherwise acceptable developments solely on design grounds has shown the importance of high quality design.

Q11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

27. The effect of the built environment on those living and working in the area is of fundamental importance. Developers and investors often have an interest in an area which stretches beyond the immediate future, and involving people who will be affected by any scheme is crucial to secure its long-term sustainability and success.

28. There is significant research on the benefits of encouraging activity through the design of the built environment, from active office buildings to public realm which encourages walking and cycling. Examples of this are now becoming the norm in many developments, such as hiding escalators behind staircases in public buildings or pedestrianising streets.

Q12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?
29. For developers engaging in the large-scale regeneration of an area, fully engaging with the community at a very early stage is vital, as it allows those living and working in the area to shape the place-making and have a sense of ownership over the changes. However, difficulties remain, particularly in reaching those who traditionally do not engage and particularly younger people or those in deprived areas.

30. It is important to note that while engagement and place-making should be a key part of any development, the level of engagement should be proportionate to the scale of development. Those involved in a major regeneration scheme should undoubtedly be more involved in the community than those working on a single building. People could better be involved here through shaping the local plan, but many do not engage in that process.

31. Engaging at the earliest stages of development by visiting schools, local community groups, etc. and using games and models to engage with people and gauge their views is extremely useful, and is a method used by many BPF members.

32. There are innovative methods of engagement: the ‘Yes Plan’ developed by Newcastle University is a toolkit for engaging with the younger community, youth groups, and schools in planning and development matters. While it has not yet been used widely, it has been entered into the RTPI North East awards.

33. Local authorities can also contribute to this by ensuring relevant local planning policy and guidance is up-to-date and has public support will mean prospective developers are fully aware of local concerns and priorities from the outset.

Q13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

34. Investors in the build to rent market will have a greater interest in high quality place making as they typically look to retain their investments for the longer term. As such, removing the tax barriers to investment in this market could encourage better design and place making by the private sector – as well as contribute significantly to the Government’s housing targets. For example, reducing the rate of VAT on residential repairs and maintenance would make investment in the private rented sector more attractive. This change would enable large scale players in the professional private rented sector to compete on a more level playing field on the price they can pay for land.
35. The riskiest phase of a new build to rent asset is the development/construction phase. As such, finding the finance for this period is often very difficult – even though there would be plenty of investors interested in the end product. In order to incentivise the development of new built to rent assets, the government could look at options to help mitigate the risks of construction. For example, government could consider an income guarantee during the construction phase of new build to rent developments, which would be repaid once the development is complete.

36. The Government could explore options to increase demand among buy-to-let retail investors for new homes. There is currently significant demand from individual buy-to-let investors for existing housing – if this investment could be diverted to new housing, it would directly contribute to the county’s housing stock. For example, a CGT taper relief could be available for investment in a new build property. Alternatively, allowing a full tax deduction for interest costs could incentivise investors.

06 October 2015
Promoting awareness and protection of the built and green heritage of Bromley Town Centre and its resident and trading communities

Registered with Civic Voice, the London Forum and the Federation of Bromley residents Associations

Comments on National Policy for the Built Environment – Lords Select Committee

Q1, Notwithstanding the rhetoric around localism, there has been an increasing centralisation of planning control through DCLG through the de-regulation agenda which has seen a dramatic broadening of permitted development. This serves to reduce planning control over development at a local level undermining Local Planning Authorities' and interested stakeholders' ability to manage development in their areas. National policy makers should concentrate on national issues and high level policy setting, but how this is implemented should remain in the hands of council planning departments and be subject to the normal democratic processes as now.

Q2, High level co-ordination does appear lacking, particularly given the apparent dominance of the Treasury over the DCLG planning and DCMS heritage remits. The recent move of heritage to the DCLG remit should hopefully enable planning and heritage decision making and policy setting to be more coherent and complimentary.

Q3, The NPPF does not provide sufficient policy guidance in a number of areas including design, heritage and viability. Hence other guidance in the National Planning Policy Guidance is now having to be significantly expanded to deal with this. The ability to balance public benefits against disbenefits in the NPPF when considering heritage impacts and to allow harm to heritage assets where 'public benefits' are considered to accrue is one example of where greater clarity is needed on what are public benefits. There is also far too much emphasis on viability in the NPPF which is being manipulated by the development industry to avoid providing the necessary affordable housing and infrastructure payments that new developments require. Such arguments are also used to justify greater densities and harm to heritage assets than would have been considered before. The established planning considerations need to be re-emphasised in their importance.

Q4, A spatial planning perspective is required at national level to guide more clearly where growth can be more easily accommodated, which can in turn guide infrastructure, jobs, housing and services. This is needed to create a more balanced economy across the country rather than seeing the South East and London overheat and the cities in the north see the collapse of their housing markets through lack of demand.

Q5, When planning significant infrastructure and long term housing need a 15 year planning timeframe is sensible. However, development plan reviews should occur at least every 3-5
years as part of the plan, monitor and manage approach, to ensure that they are kept up to date in the interim.

Q6, To increase housing supply the Government should halt the de-regulation agenda through permitted development relaxations as this is only serving to raise land values and create conversions of poor housing quality. These measures also make no contribution to affordable housing undermining the requirement to create mixed and balanced communities. Government should also reduce the emphasis on viability in the NPPF which is undermining the delivery of affordable housing and raising land prices for landowners and returns to developers beyond a reasonable profit level. There is still a lot of land banking occurring where developers are sitting on land with planning permission and not building, or drip feeding their stock into the market to ensure that prices continue to rise. Delivery should be encouraged by charging a higher level of CIL where implementation of a planning permission has not occurred within 3 years.

Q7, To build sustainable developments we should see the built heritage as an asset to economic growth and not a hinderance as it sometimes appears to be viewed. This should be emphasised more clearly through national policy drawing on the excellent research and examples from bodies such as Historic England. VAT exemptions should also be granted for conversions of existing building considered to be of heritage value to encourage their re-use.

Q8, See answer to 7 above.

Q9, There is an increasing crisis developing in the fields of planning, conservation and design given the unprecedented squeeze on public sector funding which is leading to dramatic reductions in staff in councils and other public sector bodies. This is already leading to a huge reduction in capacity to deliver the sustainable growth this country needs and to create the successful places where people can live, work and visit.

Q10, High quality design and placemaking is being undermined by the cuts mentioned in Q9 above and the over reliance on a 'developers' agenda' where viability arguments are being manipulated to trump all other issues.

Q11, national policy should be clearer in requiring true consultation earlier in the process, rather than the tokenistic notification that is still too commonplace on schemes large and small.

Q12, for effective community consultation there needs to be concerted efforts to build capacity and expertise in the community so they can engage in the process and be on a more level playing field with other stakeholders and participants. The broadening of permitted development and the move towards Permissions in Principle on brownfield sites will only serve to exclude communities from key states of the planning process and opportunities to positively influence outcomes.
Q13, See comments above regarding reducing the reliance developers can place on viability arguments which is undermining design and place making principles. Examples of good practice should be emphasised more clearly in national guidance.

Tony Banfield - Chair of Bromley Civic Society - 6th October 2015
Dr Tim Brown, De Montfort University – Written Evidence (BEN0088)

Summary

- Better co-ordination is required at both national and local levels. In relation to the former, a spatial plan that brings together existing commitments would be a useful starting point.
- At the local level, strategic policy making at city region / sub-regional levels that reflects the realities of local housing and labour markets is required.
- There is a strong case for an independent in-depth review of green belt policy – the results of which would feed into the national planning policy framework.
- Boosting housing supply requires a multiplicity of measures as out-of-date local plans and poor development control performance are only a small part of the issue.
- Local authorities should be encouraged and supported financially to re-engineer their facilitating / enabling role in promoting development.
- This will necessitate building capacity in terms of real estate & development viability skills as well as those covering design.
- Community-led housing development (e.g. community land trusts) should be even more strongly supported so that there is a scaling up of outputs.
- The provision of affordable housing requires some form of subsidy.
- There are a number of

1. Introduction

1.1. This evidence submission focusses primarily on housing supply. It, therefore, addresses, in particular, the questions on policymaking, buildings & places, community involvement & community impact and financial measures.

1.2. The author was previously Director of the Centre for Comparative Housing Research at De Montfort University and has been involved in a number of studies on lesson learning from other countries on boosting housing supply. These have included a relatively recent project funded by the Economic & Social Research Council on boosting housing supply using low income housing tax credits that are widely utilised in France and the USA.

2. Policymaking, integration and co-ordination

2.1. There are two issues – national government co-ordination (and see sections two & five) and the geography of policy making at the sub-national level.
2.2. In terms of co-ordination at the national level, it is not clear to outside organisations including the public how co-ordination is achieved where there are inevitable overlaps between departments. For example, in the case of rural housing supply, responsibilities overlap between the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. This is compounded by the presence of government agencies such as the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), National Parks Authorities etc. A relatively straightforward solution would be for the Cabinet Office to have website guidance on how these overlaps are dealt with.

2.3. An increasingly important and linked issue is the role and power of the Treasury. For instance, the devolution and city region / sub-region debate is led by the Treasury but involves strategic housing and planning policies. The current assessment of the 38 devolution bids by the Treasury focuses on enhancing economic productivity. However a significant number of the bids have planning and housing ‘asks’ that have been discussed with the DCLG but do not appear to meet Treasury criteria. Again, clarity is needed from the centre.

2.4. The devolution debate also raises the issue of ‘what is the most appropriate geographical scale for housing and planning strategies?’ There is no straightforward solution as housing and labour markets no longer reflect the current realities of local government boundaries either individually or in city regions and sub-regions. The way forward is that adjacent councils must co-ordinate their strategies and work in partnership. In some cases, this might result in formal sub-regional strategies. An interesting initiative is that authorities in the West of England (i.e. the Bristol City Region) are producing a joint spatial strategy. But in such situations the issues of accountability and transparency need to be addressed. In other cases, a strategy based on a single council area could remain appropriate. But it would require robust co-ordination with adjoining areas. The example of Coventry and Warwickshire illustrates the challenges. The lack of land in the city and a tightly drawn green belt requires Coventry’s housing needs to be met, in part, in adjacent districts. However, there are on-going planning issues with at least one local plan being withdrawn because of ineffective co-ordination and co-operation.

2.5. In addition, there is a strong case for the design of neighbourhood plans where extensive change is likely e.g. major new housing development on greenfield or brownfield sites and large scale housing regeneration projects. Of course, it might be argued that there is a danger of an overload of plans and strategies. However, evidence from Western European countries indicates that the successful development of new housing areas and the regeneration of older areas requires co-ordinated sub-regional plans and neighbourhood strategies. Swedish cities such as
Malmo and Gothenberg are illustrative of this type of approach for successful policy making.

3. **National policy for planning and the built environment**

3.1. Reference has already been made to the need for much more effective co-ordination and co-operation between councils. This requirement in the national planning policy framework (NPPF) is simply not strong enough. It must be strengthened and initiatives, such as joint spatial strategies, should be highlighted as potential good practice.

3.2. A long standing and highly contentious in housing and planning is green belt policy. Many reports from a housing supply perspective have argued for the release of some green belt land to boost housing supply. There has, however, been widespread popular support for the protection of green belts since the 1950s with it being frequently claimed that it is one of principles and successes of town and country planning in this country. Nevertheless, there has been research since the 1960s that parts of the green belt are far from ‘green’ e.g. poorly managed and underused farm land, unauthorised tipping, vacant and derelict buildings etc. There is this a strong case to have an independent review of the role of green belts. This should include consideration of (i) land allocation swaps between the green belt and other countryside sites, (ii) stronger protection of green wedges and open space within the built-up area of town and cities, (iii) consideration of the designation of ‘white land’ i.e. sites that should be developed in the medium-long term but will remain in their existing uses for, say, the next decade\(^{22}\) and (iv) effective management of land designated as green belt.

3.3. This links to the bigger issue of the need for a spatial plan for England. Research by the University of Manchester for the Royal Town Planning Institute through the ‘map for England’ initiative has shown that there were over 100 national policy plans that had to be pulled together to produce a single national spatial strategy.

4. **Buildings and places: New and old**

\(^{22}\) White land was a key feature of local plans in the 1960s and early 1970s and functioned as a zone / area between the green belt boundary and land allocated for residential and commercial uses. By the end of the 1970s this land had been developed so the green belt boundary was often also the boundary of the built up area.
4.1. Boosting housing supply is a fundamental challenge. There is consensus that we need to build 250,000 new homes per year in England and of these approximately 100,000 should be affordable. The reality is that we are delivering 50% of the overall total. There are many small scale government initiatives with, at least, 20 currently in operation. This has created its own problem of ‘initiatives’ with new modest schemes emerging at every Autumn Statement, Budget and Spending Review.

4.2. Planning is frequently seen as impediment to housing supply through the lack of up-to-date local plans and slow and inappropriate development control decision making. The Government has, thus, emphasised though its policies on planning performance measures that it wishes to see local plans in place as soon as possible and quicker development control decisions.

4.3. However, the reality is much more complex. Reference has already been made to green belt policy as a constraint on development. To this can be added many further issues such as (i) attitudes and strategies of land owners who may wish to maximise the sale of land by releasing it to builders only at the top of the market, (ii) some housing developers who build out sites over an extended period so as to maximise the return on each house sale and (iii) lack of funding (see below) for affordable housing.

4.4. A further consideration is the quality of the built environment. There have been a number of comparative studies that have highlighted that new housing areas in some other Western European countries are of a much higher quality than in this country. It is, therefore, imperative that there is a refocus on not only numbers but also on sustainable communities.

4.5. There is, thus, no single magic bullet solution to boost housing supply. A range of measures are needed such as speeding up the commissioning process on the release of public land. The pilot scheme announced earlier this year by the Treasury and the HCA for Northstowe in Cambridgeshire is an interesting approach. It involves the HCA in directly procuring housing rather than selling land to a developer. There are similar schemes being developed at a local level e.g. Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust which is a City Council initiative to boost affordable housing supply and is now the largest provider of new homes in the area.

4.6. From a planning perspective, no one would argue against each local authority having an up-to-date local plan or making effective development control decisions (assuming, of course, that councils have the resources in a period of austerity to staff their planning departments appropriately). But there has to be an acknowledgement

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23 See, for example,
that a balance has to be achieved between boosting housing supply and other aims and objectives such as protecting the countryside. Thus, these ‘planning reforms’ will not necessarily lead to more homes being built.

4.7. A further but hugely neglected aspect of planning at the local level is facilitating / enabling the implementation of local plan policies. Activities include (i) the use of compulsory purchase orders to resolve land ownership issues, (ii) preparation of planning briefs (including design briefs) for large and complex sites to guide developers and (iii) master planning for areas where there is to be major new developments or regeneration projects. These activities (and the skills underpinning them) have generally been lost since the 1980s. Yet there are an essential part of the development process for housing and indeed for other uses.

5. Skills and design

5.1. The lack of capacity in councils to produce local plans, make effective development control decisions and facilitate developments stems, in part, from the impact of austerity policies on local government. There are, however, ways in which this can be addressed. They include (i) sharing skills between councils – for example, there are an increasing number of district councils that share staff with expertise in real estate and development viability so as to be able to negotiate planning agreements, (ii) partnering with developers on projects that enable the planning expertise of councils to be shared with those development and funding skills available in the private sector.

5.2. In terms of design skills, the Farrell Review in 2013 commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport discussed many opportune ideas. It is, thus, disappointing that there is relatively little reference to this material on the Department for Communities and Local Government website pages on planning.

6. Community involvement and community impact

6.1. There is a wealth of material and a long history of debate, discussion and practical measures on community involvement in the planning process that started with the Skeffington Report on public participation in 1969. One aspect that is sometimes underplayed is direct provision by communities themselves.

6.2. From a housing supply perspective, there are many grassroots initiatives in cities, towns and villages to provide affordable housing. They include community land trusts, custom-build/self-build schemes and co-operatives. Although these are usually small-scale, they frequently have a galvanising effect on strengthening local communities. This sometimes results in further activities such as neighbourhood
planning etc. Although there is a paucity of in-depth research on their scale and geography, some areas appear to be particularly strong. For instance, community land trusts are concentrated especially in Devon & Cornwall and Cumbria. In urban areas, there are many initiatives in Bristol e.g. an urban community land trust, a self-build scheme and a project to convert empty office buildings into homes.

6.3. Nevertheless, these types of schemes have remained small scale and highly localised. If they could be scaled up, they would make a much more significant contribution to tackling the housing crisis (as well as enhancing community involvement). In each case, lessons could be learnt from other countries. Community land trusts are much more significant in parts of the USA with rural examples in Vermont having a stock size of over 1,000 units. Housing co-operatives are much more common in Scandinavian countries. Large self-build schemes exist in parts of the Netherlands e.g. Almere.

7. Financial measures

7.1. Boosting affordable housing supply requires some form of subsidy. This can take many forms such as provision of land at less than market price, grants and/or loans, cross-subsidisation between schemes etc. For many schemes, there will be a number of different subsidies to make a project viable. For instance, a project might involve free land, grant from the HCA and a sum of money from a commuted sum negotiated as part of a planning agreement. Bringing all these elements together is a complex activity.

7.2. At the same time, private sector developments on difficult brownfield sites may require subsidy as can new types of development where there is no track record of performance e.g. the recent push to attract institutional investment into new build private rental schemes.

7.3. Therefore, there is no straightforward simple solution to funding housing provision especially affordable housing. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to explore new ideas. These include (i) the use of social and community investment tax relief to support community initiatives such as self-build, (ii) lesson learning from low income housing tax credit schemes in the USA and France24 and (iii) local housing companies. The latter are joint partnerships between a local authority, a financial institution and a builder to deliver a range of types of housing. It normally involves a council putting land into the company at less than market price. There are at least 50

councils in England either that have or are in the process of establishing this type of delivery vehicle.

05 October 2015
Building & Engineering Services Association – Written Evidence (BEN0134)

Introduction:

The Building & Engineering Services Association is the UK’s leading trade association for building services engineering contractors, representing the interests of over 1,370 firms active in the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of heating, ventilating, air conditioning, refrigeration and electrical products and equipment.

We welcome the setting up of the Lords committee on National Policy for the Built Environment and are pleased to submit our response for consideration. We would be delighted to have the opportunity to give oral evidence.

A. Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

National policymakers currently set standards and regulations for buildings, which are added to through local planning requirements. This leads to layers of regulation and policies such as the requirement for onsite energy generation, which can lead to perverse results notably biomass boilers in cities and heat pump installations in social housing projects with access to the gas network – actually creating higher emissions and higher energy bills for occupants.

A more imaginative and pioneering role in shaping the built environment could be taken by setting minimum environmental standards that developers would need to adhere to when submitting applications for planning permission.

In line with this, B&ES would like government to take a more holistic approach to planning and building regulations; we would like to see regulations that are more focused on actual performance, more sympathetic to local people affected by building work (eg. in terms of the impacts of noise and poor air quality) and which are less prescriptive.

This would provide the greater flexibility necessary for the construction supply chain to innovate and also put more focus on the end product, which is delivering a building with the intended carbon, energy saving, and wellbeing benefits.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?
Overall we feel that coordination across departments is less than ideal. For example, DECC, DCLG and the DEFRA can often have responsibility for different aspects of policy, but appear to work in silos. On a positive note, B&ES is encouraged by the current Bonfield Review of energy efficiency in domestic properties, looking at issues from a cross-departmental perspective. This is a model for future initiatives.

We also welcome the ECC select committee’s current inquiry into home energy efficiency and demand reduction.

B. National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

B&ES does not have a view.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

B&ES does not have a view.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

It is impossible to give a substantive answer on what the optimum timescale might be – 10, 20 or 40 years – because of the impact of climate change and rapidly changing worldwide societal and economic circumstances. A vivid example is the current European migrant crisis; the rapidity of which could not have been predicted. Most experts were anticipating a slower migration resulting from climate change and, therefore, our planning is already out of step.

C. Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

B&ES does not have a view.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be
able to adapt to changing needs and circumstance in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The government should consider a change of direction on building regulation that sets a performance standard for the completed building, encourages innovation and discourages the current ‘tick box’ approach that undermines the original design.

A recent UK Green Building Council report indicated that, on average, building energy use is 200% over design intent – while Carbon Buzz\(^1\) statistics indicate that buildings consume between 1.5 and 2.5 times their predicted values.

This is a consequence of the frequent failure of all involved in the construction process (architects, builders and the myriad of contractors and consultants) to actually build and deliver what has been designed and agreed at the planning stage.

The process of ‘value engineering’ is a euphemism for cost-cutting and means that, in most construction projects, there are usually a number of minor deviations from the original building specification. These minor changes mount up and the aggregate impact is the large performance gap between design intent and finished, operating building. This collectively results in the building not being able to deliver the benefits that were committed to when the original planning application was submitted and approved.

For example, building designs require the increased use of integrated systems as they become more complex; yet the fragmented supply chain delivers products assembled at the lowest price and often in complete ignorance of the overall design intent. The result is often a building that is a facsimile of the design produced for planning consent. It may look the same as in the original design, but in performance terms is a long way from what was first promised and approved.

This issue is compounded by the lack of checking and enforcement by Building Control authorities. The planning and building regulations drive a culture where checking effectively ends when planning permission is granted. There is little or no focus on what is built. Also, when none of the stakeholders in the construction process picks up the energy bill, because of the nature of the developer / landlord / tenant relationship, there is no financial incentive to meet the design intent.

Therefore, a better approach than that of the current building regulations would be to specify the building performance based on a value of energy use (w/m\(^2\)) and the equivalent carbon usage. This would allow designers to innovate rather than tick boxes against design criteria.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

B&ES does not have a view.
D. Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area have the skills to consider adequately the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

The construction industry is struggling to maintain the correct skills levels and is working hard, with support from government, to ensure that the skill base is maintained and developed through various training and learning initiatives. The current initiatives around high quality apprenticeships and trailblazers and University Technical Colleges are good examples of this.

However, local authorities do not have the requisite skills and certainly do not have anywhere near adequate resources. We feel there is a particular issue with Building Control (around the checking and enforcement of Building Regulations), where developers can contract out these services. This means that the contracted companies often have a vested interest in maintaining a commercial arrangement with the applicant to gain repeat work.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and place-making at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

No we are not. However, the increasing commitment towards Building Information Modeling (BIM)\(^2\) can help ensure that high quality design is consistently delivered.

Apart from the problem of ‘value engineering’ the other is ‘build and design’ where developers, keen to get the project started, break ground before the design is completed. The result is that the design is always chasing the build programme and poor decisions and lengthy delays result, particularly where budget pressures influence decisions.

This could be solved in two ways:

1) Planning authorities could approve the scheme, so giving the developer certainty, but refuse the applicant the right to start work until a design has been properly developed. That design would be verified by an independent professional appointed and paid for by the developer.

2) The construction professional could also be responsible for the building’s efficacy and fitness for purpose on completion.

These innovations would reduce the amount of time spent on site, reduce disruption to neighbours (the costs suffered by affected businesses are never calculated) and, in turn, present the industry in a more favourable light, which would also help with future recruitment.
The availability of BIM, which offers the prospect of more thoroughly designed, better planned projects, has the potential to turn this vision into reality.

The current poor across-the-board performance of the construction industry is illustrated in the latest key performance indicators compiled by the CITB, Constructing Excellence and BIS against targets that were set under the Construction 2025 industrial strategy published in 2013. Only 45 per cent of schemes were delivered on time or earlier; and only 69 per cent of overall projects were delivered on cost or better.

The median profit margin on construction projects before interest and tax was 2.8 per cent, illustrating the financial pressures inherent on developers and constructors to cut corners. This accounts for many of the problems within the supply chain including, crucially, cash flow when sub-contractors are paid late (or not at all) by those further up the chain looking to maximise profits. This, inevitably, has a knock-on impact on quality and delivery.

E. Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

No they do not. Here I should like to share a recent personal experience of ‘having construction done to me’ (and my neighbours).

The project to which I refer involved the £8.6m refurbishment a council-owned facility consisting of swimming pools and a sports centre – which happens to be located next to the block of flats in which I live in London.

It was undertaken by a chartered builder – a member of the National Federation of Builders; registered with Constructionline, Exor and CHAS – so should not be considered a ‘cowboy’ outfit. However, the way the project was ‘managed’ is symptomatic of the construction industry’s principal ills.

From my first floor window, I had a grandstand view of the building site, which I can only describe as chaotic – and the result of inadequate contract planning, incompetent co-ordination and indicative of a lack of a professional and coherent approach to design. It was evident from the planning application that insufficient design had been carried out before work started on site.

The (inevitable) result was a build-and-design project that ran months late, and was seriously over budget, evidenced by the lodging of a revised planning application, the reason for which was given as ‘value engineering’.
The residents were subjected to dust, noise and disruption for twice as long as programmed and on completion continued to suffer noise and pollution issues from the installed plant, caused by fundamental design flaws, that have yet to be resolved, some six months after completion.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

People can often feel that the environment around them changes without their views being taken into consideration. Projects increasingly appear to pass through the planning process with little apparent regard for citizens’ comments and ignoring residents or action groups who opposed them. The granting of planning permission for the contentious ‘Garden Bridge’ project, proposed for central London, is a very good example.

We commend to the committee an article on this subject in Architects Journal of 24th August 2015, by Will Jennings; the organiser of a contest seeking rival ideas to Heatherwick Studios’ Garden Bridge proposals:

http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/comment/jennings-people-are-tired-of-being-duped-by-developers/8688025.article?blocktitle=Comment-&-analysis&contentID=14299

In the example affecting my property, a revised planning application was lodged in November 2014 requesting a relaxation of the noise levels. 11 months later this has still not been either approved or rejected by the Council, who incidentally own the building in question, yet the residents have been subjected to the increased noise levels throughout this period.

These noise levels are 200% higher than the requirement set in the original planning permission and well above World Health Organisation (WHO) health limits. Had the author of this response not been a mechanical services contractor, who understood the issues and commissioned an independent acoustic report to prove the discrepancy, this application would probably have been waived through.

Is it any wonder that many feel disenfranchised by the planning process?

F. Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Developers, as the people ultimately responsible for ensuring that the resulting building delivers on what was originally specified, submit planning applications. Yet so often the reality falls significantly short of what was promised – buildings are completed late and with
poor performance. When this happens, there is no comeback on the developer from the planning authority.

In fact in most cases, the planning authority won’t have inspected the building and therefore won’t be aware of any shortcomings.

The macro impact of the performance gap seems to have been lost. If the average building uses 200% more energy than the developer said it would then we need to generate more electricity, supply more gas and oil. This means the UK will be forced to build more power stations to compensate and that comes at a considerable cost to the tax payer.

A social contract is formed between the electorate/tax payer and the developer when a planning permission is approved. The developer promises to construct the building in accordance with the planning application or seek to change the application.

It seems that too many people in the process are taking this promise at face value and accept that it has been met without checking the detail. How else do we explain the performance gap and the long list of disappointed building owners?

Submitted by:
David Frise, Head of Department, Sustainability
Building & Engineering Services Association

FOOTNOTES:

1 Carbon Buzz is a free, online tool that enables users to record, share and compare the energy use of their building portfolios and to track the operational energy use of existing buildings against design assumptions.
2 BIM is a process involving the generation and management of digital representations of physical and functional characteristics of places.
3 Source: BIS_CITB_Constructing Excellence_Glenigan, September 2015.

ADDENDUM: Press report; September 2015
LABC President attacks DCLG’s lack of concern for consumers and council taxpayers
Outgoing LABC President Peter Keates called on the government to tackle increasing building control costs suffered by local authorities and property owners.

He noted that over the past 10 years the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had gradually failed to maintain a coherent building control system despite calls for such a system by business users.

Keates, who is Head of Building Control at Central Bedfordshire Council, described the gradual unravelling of the building control system - an unintended consequence of the way
competition was introduced. Private sector inspectors unilaterally using ‘building regulations opt-outs’, among other inconsistencies, means that local authorities have to notify the public of which parts of the Building Regulations the private sector isn’t covering. This is creating a confused mess and leaving building owners at risk, he said. It also increases cost burdens on local authorities and creates additional costs for property owners who have to undertake regularisations when they realise they haven’t fulfilled their building regulation responsibilities.

Similarly, Peter referred to the dumping of additional notifications into local authorities without arranging either a central repository or the right to charge the private sector originators. He said this was unfair on council tax payers and increases costs on building control teams who need to reduce overheads.

“It seems to us that the government is losing the thread and making it impossible to run a holistic building control system,” he added. “This has nothing to do with new regulations or new burdens. In fact, it’s the opposite. By creating more loopholes and muddling the system, DCLG’s actions mean that property owners get less out of the system and end up paying more. It’s a slipshod way to maintain a regulated system and the reputational backlash will be bad for everyone.”

06 October 2015
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT:

Dr Kerry Burton and Dr Richard Newman

Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol

The response outlined below primarily addresses Question 12, however we also provide a short response to Question 9.

Q 12: How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?:

AUTHOR SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:
[1] Dr Richard Newman (Civil Engineer) and Dr Kerry Burton (Geographer) are based at UWE and undertake research into urban sustainability and transitions to more sustainable urban water management, with their key focus on urban flood risk management. In July 2015 they hosted an agenda setting workshop on the future of urban water and strategies for flood risk management for water management practitioners and academics. Their previous research into urban flood risk management, and the outcomes from the workshop provide the basis for the following evidence. The co-authors are affiliated to the Centre for Flood, Communities and Resilience at UWE, but put forward this evidence as personal researchers not on behalf of the research centre. A list of used references is provided at the end.

EVIDENCE SUMMARY:
[2] Policy makers have acknowledged the need to re-think urban flood risk management. The Living with Water: Report into flood resilience of the future states that 5.2 million homes are at risk of flooding, with a water infrastructure (supply and drainage) that cannot cope with environmental demands (House of Commons 2015). Echoing the findings of the Pitt report (2008), it places an emphasis on increased public understanding of flooding, increased public participation in responding to vulnerability, and the need for localised solutions. In particular, moves toward sustainable systems for flood mitigation and water capture, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and non-structural responses such as flood education. Water management practitioners also responded to the floods of 2013/14, with fifteen of the nation’s leading landscape, water, and environmental management bodies calling for ‘urgent action’ on urban water management; to ‘rethink and plan both the natural environment and the built
environment of our towns and cities to make them more resilient...This must be coherent and adaptable to local circumstances, to allow it to be rolled out countrywide’ (Landscape Institute).

[3] Our research establishes that a key area of concern within many urban built environments is flood risk and surface water damage. Current problems exist within governance, implementation, and expertise. There is an urgency for urban flood risk needs to be addressed through context sensitive approaches that involve a higher level of stake-holder engagement and increased expertise in non-structural solutions and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) highlighting the need for capacity building through social learning across both public and professional spheres to be taken seriously (see Newman 2011, Ashley et al 2011). Too much emphasis is placed upon technical solutions (including SUDS), with little accounting for their suitability to the social and ecological context. Community level responses to flood risk (and surface water) management tend to be more successful where there is a high level of stake-holder ownership; by which we mean, access to professional knowledge, inclusion of local/lay expertise and knowledge, involvement within decision making.

[4] There is very little scope within current practice to engage with the psychological barriers to change and adaptation which are experienced by communities facing the risk and/ or aftermath of flooding. Emotional, affective, and embodied responses, such as place attachment, can be powerful in shaping reactions to vulnerability, sometimes challenging prevailing techno-managerial and economic rationalities and mobilising ‘counter-support’ through high profile media and social media attention (see Sandover 2014) or shaping transformative material responses. This was illustrated during the flooding on the Somerset levels in 2014, particularly the widespread support from the grass-roots campaign group FLAG (Flooding on the Levels Action Group), whose calls for dredging, prompted an additional £10M government funding to Defra’s flood defence budget for the region despite contestation by hydrologists and engineers. As New Civil Engineer (NCE 2015) explains, “it was a very interesting time...we basically watched as the Prime Minister tore up 20 years of flood risk management (FRM) policy for the Somerset Levels in an instant”. This occurred in a well-established context of uncertainty over the technical and ecological efficacy of dredging (Scrase and Sheate 2005, NCE 2014).

[5] We argue that community participation in the co-constitution of their local environment is an everyday occurrence; however the majority of community participation around water and flood management is indirect (outside of formal participatory processes). Understanding expertise as knowledge that is dispersed through both lay and formal networks can help to bring more contextual understandings into discussions, aid community ownership of projects and reduce tensions through co-production, which in turn will deliver community ownership of the project, the problem and solutions.
[6] In addressing the urgency to transition toward context appropriate FRM that includes the participation of a context appropriate range of stakeholders, there is also a need to re-consider how participation and public engagement have been framed and practiced. Crucially, this includes a need to investigate the under-acknowledged barriers (psychological and processual) that prevent people from fully engaging with localised vulnerability and change. Here, we acknowledge the need to take both material and non-material considerations into account, in considering the urban not just as the built environment, but as the ‘product of distinct place-based relationships; specific geographies, social milieux and inhabitants’ (Greenfield 2013). In considering flooding as an event that is both public and private, we examine individual and community responses to flood vulnerability in order to understand the impact of these on the ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions. In gaining a better understanding of the role of human values, concerns, and relationships as shaping responses to vulnerability, more context sensitive flood risk and water management strategies can be adopted. Context sensitivity that takes account of social, ecological and technological complexities can better counter the entrapment within prevailing normative flood management frames that have failed to adapt to changing conditions and, in turn be more responsive to change; more context-centric.

[7] More progressive urban water/flood management schemes outside of the UK have involved a higher level of public participation. A number of successful urban water management projects in the USA have adopted principles of common management, where communities are given more control and ownership over decision-making and management of schemes (Grant 2012).

Q 9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?:

[8] The response to this question focuses on an over-reliance of technocratic ‘expertise’ within the arena of urban flood risk management. Reducing flood risk in urban and suburban catchments using flood defences is rarely appropriate, creating a driver for a shift of emphasis in suburban flood management. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in suburban catchments can provide multiple benefits including sustainability and liveability but this local approach to managing flood risk requires engagement with a wider group of stakeholders than is currently typical including community groups and initiatives, urban designers and landscape architects, planners, civil contingencies, etc this list is not exhaustive. This type of engagement requires a wider set of skills than ‘technical’ professions such as engineering typically possess. The Institution of Civil Engineers and the Royal Academy of Engineering recognise this skills deficit (ICE (2014),
Lucas et al (2014), NCE (2013)). More focus is required on training both professionals in accessing and communicating and exchanging information with communities to access lay knowledge, but also on encouraging communities to engaging is awareness raising and capacity building of themselves. We anticipate that engaging communities in the design process will engender greater buy-in to schemes by promoting the positive benefits that SuDS can lend to the build environment, leading to more context appropriate designs.

[9] References
Grant 2012 Ecosystem Services Come to Town: Greening Cities by Working with Nature
Institution of Civil Engineers (2014) the State of the Nation Infrastructure 2014. Institution of Civil Engineers, One Great George Street, London SW1P 3AA. June 2014. http://www.ice.org.uk/getattachment/8185ef54-ca0d-457d-8a1f-d0e2212e1fb3/State-of-the-Nation--Infrastructure-2014.aspx (Downloaded 26th June 2014)
Landscape Institute (February 20 2014): Open letter to the Prime Minister on flooding and water management
Sandover (2014) The role of the media and social media in the Somerset floods in RSPB
This document is structured as a set of replies to your questionnaire and the answers are numbered accordingly. I have confined my replies to areas where my own or my council’s experiences are clear and relevant. I have occasionally generated “common sense opinions” base on local contacts and conversations over the years.

My overall intention is to show what is happening at “ground level”.

1) Correct administrative level. No! Local knowledge and wishes are profoundly undervalued at higher levels of administration, although high-level problems appear to be broadly understood at lower levels.

2) Coordination is poor. Sustainability is not just a magic word, although commonly used as such. It and other policies cannot be properly considered without clear, pre-existing, technical policies followed by factual assessment of individual cases.

3) NPPF seems to be heavily biased towards housing development regardless of local issues, opinions or of true sustainability.

4) Spatial policy, as for all policies, should be managed at the lowest administrative level capable of handling the technicalities. The lower the level, the more fine-grained should be the detail addressed. “Can’t be done” is an acceptable answer, if evidenced.

5) Time frame for policies. A human lifetime is about eighty years. The working life of a house is at least the same. So—eighty years!

6, 7, 8) I suggest maximum delegation of decisions to the lowest local levels.

9, 10) I suggest local ad hoc recruitment of necessary skills and opinions.

11) I suggest obtain, and use, local opinion at the lowest addressable levels.

12) Communities feel that their opinions are not invited and if offered, even with good reasons, are not listened to.

13) Improved fiscal or financial measures. The market, and hence the current value of land for housing, is highly artificial, being driven almost entirely by planning constraints and decisions. If all housing developments of more than one or two houses were on leased land the landowner could receive an attractive annual rent and the cost of the houses would be bricks and mortar only—possibly half what is now paid.

02 October 2015
Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research – Written Evidence (BEN0109)

Submission From:
Professor Michael Oxley, Director, Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR), Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge.

1. Introduction

1.1 This submission focuses on two questions from the call for written evidence:

**Question 6:** What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system? And

**Question 13:** Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

1.2 The focus of this submission connects with the emphasis of the activities of the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research (CCHPR), which has over 25 years of experience in producing world class policy related research on many aspects of housing and planning. An overview of our previous and current work is available on our website: http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk

2. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

2.1 Government should seek to promote additional house building by all forms of house builders. This includes building for social as well as market sector housing. Thus additional building by housing associations and local authorities as well as by private developers is essential. Government has a role in prioritising increased house building as a policy objective, incentivising production and coordinating the national provision of land, infrastructure and house building. This can be done in ways that are compatible with a large degree of devolution of detailed decisions and which support local democracy. There is a large body of evidence that suggests that whilst land use planning reforms that increase the supply of land for house building have an important role to play in promoting increased house building, changes in the planning system alone will not be sufficient. A wide range of other changes are needed to encourage all forms of house builders to do more.

2.3 Changes in land use planning that promote more house building have been an important aspect of the work of CCHPR. This has included a broad range of topics including learning from how planning works in other countries, the role of section 106, CIL, and planning constraints. Some examples of this evidence base are given below:


More information on all of these is available from the CCHPR website: http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk

3. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?
One option that might be considered is the use of a form of Low Income Tax Credits as used to promote investment in low income housing in the USA. LIHTCs, which have been in operation since 1986, are income-related investment incentives. Developers are able to obtain these subsidies if dwellings are occupied by households whose incomes are low with respect to local median levels. LIHTC support is a federal scheme operated through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The Federal Government allocates annual quotas (based on population levels) to each state. Each state allocates their quotas according to a qualified allocation plan (QAP). The QAPs enable each state to prioritise funding for locally important issues (for example, new build or improving existing stock, urban or rural areas). The tax credits last for ten years and projects are required to meet the particular project’s low income requirements for a 15-year initial "compliance period" and a subsequent 15-year "extended use period". Rather than using government to fund, build and manages affordable housing, LIHTCs are used by the federal government to stimulate the private and non-profit sectors into partnership arrangements targeted at providing subsidised housing for specific income groups LIHTCs have helped to build, renovate or conserve more than 2.5 million affordable housing units. The system accounts for 90% of all current affordable housing provision in the USA.

More information is available at

Oxley et al (2014) Boosting the supply of affordable rented housing: learning from other countries, ESRC Project http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/ES.K007564.1/read

CHHPR has also made a short film on boosting housing supply which features LIHTCs: http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/Projects/Start-Year/2014/Promoting-policy-change-to-boost-the-supply-of-affordable-housing/Affordable-Housing-Film

There are further ideas on “financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply” in the studies indentified in section 2 above.

Michael Oxley

06 October 2015
Response to the House of Lords Committee on a National Policy for the Built Environment’s Call for Written Evidence on ‘the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment’

Prepared and submitted by Simon Pitkeathley, Chief Executive of Camden Town Unlimited
6 October 2015

1. Camden Town Unlimited (‘CTU’) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and would like to focus its response on the impact that recent changes to the UK’s planning policy landscape have had on businesses in built-up, urban areas.

2. CTU is a Business Improvement District (BID) elected by its local business members and works to make Camden a better place to live, shop and visit. For that reason the built environment of Camden and its surroundings are a key priority.

3. This paper responds directly to the themes raised in the Committee’s Call for Written Evidence, specifically those relating to community involvement and community impact. The view held by CTU – both by its leadership team and its members – is that business in Camden has suffered from major changes to the planning regime in recent years. This response therefore focuses on the questions, stated below, raised in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Committee’s Call for Written Evidence.

Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it?

4. Many small and medium-sized business owners collectively form Camden’s creative hub; an area featuring world famous markets and an iconic high street. Its entrepreneurial, start-up culture has meant Camden is home to a number of London’s leading-edge companies. Many of these firms are tenants and have relied on the affordable, well located office space in Camden’s business district, similar to the situation in other commercial hotspots of the capital.

5. These firms’ ability to do business has been impacted by the Government’s amendment of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order. This allowed developers to convert office space to homes without the need for planning permission. This permitted development right (PDR) was extended for a three year period until March 2016. As that date approaches, however, there is now a very real prospect of an extension of expedited permissions and the removal of what were exempted areas (including London’s Central Activities Zone) – without a formal application – on a permanent basis.
6. Though well intentioned, this policy has been devastating for many small businesses which have been turfed out of neighbourhoods by landlords eager to convert property into more lucrative residential space. According to data collected by London Councils, 834,000 square meters of office space have been lost since the introduction of PDR; an indicator that the policy is throttling the operations of small businesses within the capital.

7. The impact on the fabric of Camden’s built environment has therefore been significant in the instance of office-to-residential PDR. Camden has thrived as a workplace to architects, tech start-ups, designers and artists because it offers an iconic location at the centre of a creative business district, well-served by good transport and infrastructure. Yet we have seen that it is often more lucrative for a private landlord to convert creative workspace in London’s key business clusters into high-value flats.

8. As the local BID, Camden Town Unlimited has been cognisant of how unique, open plan work places help young entrepreneurs thrive. Our own Collective spaces have underscored this principle – with some housing up to 500 employees, including many local entrepreneurs – in shared offices in and around the high street and Camden’s culturally-significant buildings. Carlow House was a particular example where the Collective initiative had been a great success, with employees estimated to be spending on average £70-£80 a week in the local area, supporting other local firms in the process. The building itself has now been emptied with the businesses moved on to make way for residential development.

9. CTU therefore believes that Camden presents a strong case study that highlights how reforms to the planning application process have had an adverse impact on the local built environment, in terms of stymying entrepreneurial growth and changing the shape of an iconic and creative economic hub. Going forward, and as an organisation representing a number of SMEs located outside of the Central Activities Zone, CTU is keen to see national policy focused on exempting all of Greater London from office-to-residential PDR. This is the best way to safeguard against potential job losses and ensure an appropriate business-residential balance in London’s neighbourhoods.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work?

10. It is the responsibility of BIDs, such as CTU, to represent the views of the firms that they are elected by. This often means that the CTU team is required to engage with national policy makers and other stakeholders in order to put its message across. In the context of planning reforms, CTU has spearheaded a campaign on behalf of all of the BIDs operating in the capital against the proposed extension of office-to-residential PDR. This saw the drafting and delivery of a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (signed by 38 of the aforementioned BID teams) and engaged with Parliamentarians.
representing various political parties, along with other Ministers in HM Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.

11. Individual business members, who are more often than not commercial tenants themselves, therefore rely on BIDs to put their case to Government. Yet despite establishing an ongoing dialogue with Government, CTU still represents a number of concerned SMEs which remain in the dark about the detail of the anticipated extension of office-to-residential PDR. Even still, Ministers have not issued a formal response to the consultation covering the planning reforms, opened by DCLG back in summer 2013. In this respect, communities have been able to engage constructively have not received an answer to their concerns. CTU will continue to make this case, and is encouraged by the work of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Built Environment for the opportunity that its Call for Evidence has presented in allowing us to put across these anxieties.

Simon Pitkeathley
Chief Executive

06 October 2015
Memorandum of evidence by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) to the inquiry by the House of Lords Select Committee

Organisational views submitted by Paul Miner, Planning Campaign Manager

Introduction and summary

1. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to this inquiry. We are a registered charity with over 60,000 members and a branch in every English county. We are a strong supporter of the planning system as a tool for helping us to use land efficiently in order to provide new development, while also protecting and improving the countryside, and enabling public involvement in these issues.

2. We have focused this submission on particular areas where we have taken an interest in recent years:

   We do not believe that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), even when taken together, offer sufficient guidance on planning, development and protection of the built and natural environment. Both the NPPF and PPG promote a short term, narrow approach of releasing more land for housebuilding in locations attractive to large scale housebuilding companies, and offer little in the way of a long term strategy for providing more new housing while making efficient use of land and protecting our countryside assets. (paragraphs 4-6)

   The Government has committed to protect the Green Belt. Since the establishment of the national Green Belt policy in 1955, Green Belts have been a long-established part of a strategy to prevent England’s largest or most historic urban areas from sprawling and encourage regeneration of previously developed land within those areas. CPRE is greatly concerned, however, that the overall short-termist approach of the NPPF is leading to a gradual and unnecessary erosion of the Green Belt through Local Plan reviews. (paragraphs 7-12)

   We can do much to both meet housing need and safeguard our land resource by developing the majority of new housing on brownfield (previously developed) land, the supply of which is renewable and far from drying up. The Government has committed to a range of welcome initiatives to help redevelop suitable brownfield sites. Again, however, a short-termist approach to planning threatens to undermine these initiatives. In particular, the proposed new register of brownfield sites may only include large brownfield sites that big
housebuilders consider to be immediately ‘deliverable’; this would lead to large amounts of brownfield potential being left untapped. (paragraphs 28-30)

The Government’s introduction of neighbourhood planning is a welcome step towards more effective community engagement in planning. In several cases, however, local neighbourhood planning initiatives have been frustrated or undermined by developers looking to promote large housing sites against local wishes. CPRE believes that neighbourhood planning bodies and parish councils should be given a limited right of appeal, to prevent speculative housing applications in situations where neighbourhood plans are in preparation or adopted. (paragraphs 37-8)

Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

3. For decades, decisions have not been made at the right level, and different aspects of development need to be considered at different levels to be effective, taking into account the principle of subsidiarity. While we support neighbourhood planning, we always need to be mindful of the demands it places on the sustained enthusiasm and commitment of people who are largely volunteers - this is a fragile resource, particularly if their efforts are frustrated by a lack of control over speculative development, or by the actions of higher tiers of decision-making. On the whole, district councils have been proved to be too small to be able to participate effectively in the proper strategic planning of wider areas, and many are also too small to be able to retain specialist skills and resources necessary to understand the proper functioning of their areas (including skills in demography, economic development, ecology, built and natural heritage, energy, etc.) to the detriment of their ability to plan properly. The formation of combined authorities to address strategic planning and economic development issues currently being pursued under the devolution agenda is potentially a better solution than the top-down imposition of the old regions that were often remote from communities and their cultural associations with places. But the current scatter-gun approach to powers and responsibilities could lead to a governance structure that is very difficult to navigate for communities and for investors; devolution does need to be considered more carefully. In particular the new devolved structures need to take explicit account of the complex relationship between urban and rural areas.
2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

4. CPRE is currently unconvinced that planning policy is well co-ordinated between Government departments. In particular, Defra aims on food and farming, and on landscape and environmental protection appear to be sidelined in the implementation of DCLG planning policy in the rush for new housebuilding at all costs. This is despite the NPPF appearing to give significant weight to such issues – apart from the protection of soils, on which it is very weak.

5. Also, the Committee will be aware that the Government’s current programme of devolution deals is leading to combined authorities or other groupings of local authorities taking on more powers to plan strategically and co-ordinate housing growth with transport investment. CPRE is concerned that the new devolved arrangements should result in bodies that are both open to public involvement, and skilled in issues such as urban design and environmental assessment. The Greater Manchester combined authority has shown what results such an approach should lead to by consulting (in late 2015) on the evidence base for a draft spatial framework, and the CPRE regional group has responded to this consultation.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

6. We do not believe that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), even when taken together, offer sufficient guidance on reconciling planning, development and protection of the built and natural environment. Both the NPPF and PPG promote a short term, narrow approach of releasing more land for housebuilding in locations attractive to large scale housebuilding companies, and offer little in the way of a long term strategy for providing more new housing, or making efficient use of land and protecting our countryside assets.
7. The Government has repeatedly committed to protecting the Green Belt. Since the establishment of the national Green Belt policy in 1955, Green Belts have been an established part of a strategy to protect farmland and woodland, prevent England’s largest or most historic urban areas from sprawling, and encourage regeneration of previously developed land within those and other areas. International comparisons suggest that without the strong protection Green Belts offer against many forms of development, much more farmland and woods would be consumed by urban sprawl, especially around large cities. Yet with the increasing global pressures from climate change and population growth, our farmland and woodlands will become more valuable in future, not less. The calls for more development in the Green Belt assume that this land is only valuable if built on, an assumption that is fundamentally flawed. The Green Belt is needed now more than ever.

8. Around two-thirds of Green Belt is in agricultural use, and so also provides, at a minimum, an intrinsic sense of well-being for people by providing views of an open landscape. The permanent protection of the land from most forms of development, particularly housing, has safeguarded and enabled the further provision of a range of environmental benefits including a particular concentration of local nature reserves, public rights of way, and broadleaf or mixed woodland. CPRE is greatly concerned, however, that the overall short-termist approach of the NPPF is leading to a gradual and unnecessary erosion of the Green Belt through Local Plan reviews.

9. The Prime Minister stated before the general election that ‘Development on Green Belt is at its lowest rate since modern records began 25 years ago.’ This is unlikely to remain true for much longer. Research carried out in June 2015 on behalf of BBC Radio 4’s File on 4 programme by Glenigan, a leading provider of construction data, found a sharp increase in the number of houses securing full planning approval in the Green Belt. In 2009/10, 2,258 homes were approved. In 2013/2014, the number had risen to 5,607. By the following year, 2014/2015, it had more than doubled to 11,977.

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10. CPRE analysis has found that Local Plans are proposing more than 226,000 houses on the Green Belt. As proposals in Local Plans are at an earlier stage in the pipeline than full planning approval, the vast majority, if not all, of these houses will be in addition to the figures mentioned by Glenigan. Ministers have taken action to address some of the most unnecessary Local Plan proposals. The Government now needs to act on the national imperative to protect the Green Belt by making clear that Green Belt land should only be developed in truly exceptional cases, and that economic growth does not in itself justify an ‘exceptional case’.

11. CPRE has noted that the Committee has already taken oral evidence on the issue of Green Belt from other sources. We are deeply concerned that a range of developers, economists and think tanks have made calls for a major weakening of Green Belt policy in recent months, based on often highly questionable evidence about both the value of the Green Belt in its current largely undeveloped form, and the gains that would result from developing it as housing27.

12. More woodlands and wetland in the Green Belt could also play a highly significant role in enabling the recovery of nature and adaptation to climate change in urban areas, as the Government’s Natural Capital Committee has also pointed out28. In April 2015, leading environmental economist and Chair of the NCC, Dieter Helm, published a paper which also seeks to challenge many of the arguments for Green Belt deregulation put forward by developers and other economists.29 As Helm argues, where the quality of Green Belt land is poor, the solution is to improve it. For example, the Community Forests initiative has turned more than 20,000 hectares of often degraded Green Belt land into woodland or other natural habitats since 1990.

13. We would be keen to discuss these issues further with the Committee.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning

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27 See, in particular, CPRE, Green Belt Myths: CPRE’s guide to what you need to know, August 2015.
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) – Written Evidence (BEN0084)

and built environment policy be looking?

14. Ministers are already formulating a spatial perspective to national policy in their agreement of Growth Deals in the early part of 2015, and currently through assessment of bids for further devolved powers over housing (mentioned above). But this is neither explicit nor transparent, and for the most part protection and improvement of the natural environment have been considered fleetingly if at all. The lack of a long term strategy for land management, in particular, is meaning that we are not taking sufficient steps to address the decline in biodiversity within the natural environment.

15. CPRE believes that there is a strong case for introducing a spatial framework for land use policy in England. A more explicitly spatial element to national policy would enable Parliament and civil society groups such as CPRE to better consider progress on rebalancing both the economy and the balance of growth between regions, reducing pressure on the South East and making progress towards the ‘Northern Powerhouse’. This would allow better use of resources, for example more use of both brownfield sites and existing capacity in airports outside the South East in preference to a new runway.

16. CPRE commends the broad methodological approach taken by the Government Office for Science in its Foresight Land Use Futures project30. CPRE had input to this study, which reported in February 2010, although we did not endorse all of its conclusions. The approach taken, however, was broadly sensible: it had an integrated analysis of land use looking at agriculture and forestry as well as expected trends in housing and development of the built environment, over a 50 year horizon.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

17. New homes are most efficiently provided through the plan-led system. This is the best means we have of ensuring that development decisions are based on democratic and transparent policies, and that environmental, social and economic needs are met. Local

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plans are taking longer to produce, primarily because of issues around deciding housing numbers. Unclear national guidance on how to assess housing ‘need’ and the requirement to meet that need in full are creating difficult decisions for local authorities. The result is that environmental constraints are given little weight compared to meeting arbitrary, inflated growth targets. Setting high housing targets will not mean those targets will be met. It simply provides developers with a selection of sites to choose from and only the most profitable, usually green field sites, will be developed. CPRE has commissioned consultants to prepare research into housing need methodologies and issues that they are causing. This research will be ready by the end of October and we are keen to share this with the Committee as soon as it is available.

18. A proper plan-led system should also give confidence to all investors - not just housebuilders - as well as communities, thereby helping to reduce local opposition to schemes and speed up delivery. The current system undermines this principle by allowing the five year land supply rule to render local policies on housing void. A 2014 CPRE report found that 72% of appeal decisions for housing developments on green field sites were approved when a local authority could not prove they had a five year land supply31.

19. Greater capacity, diversity and competition would ensure more of an emphasis from housebuilders on quality and design. In order to help more small and medium size builders enter, or re-enter, the industry we suggest that more could be done through the NPPF and local plans to prioritise the allocation of smaller sites for development. Consideration should also be given to amending the NPPF to require local authorities to allocate land specifically for self- and custom-build housing. This could be through a requirement that any sites allocated for a development of more than 20 houses should include a proportion of the site being allocated and available for self- or custom-build.

20. If the Committee is to promote ways in which a sustainable uplift in housing delivery is to be achieved they must advocate the changes necessary to enable local authorities to become significant providers of social housing once again. In doing so, however, they should be clear that homes being provided by local authorities should be in addition to, not instead of, those affordable houses provided by housing associations.

31 CPRE, Targeting the Countryside, September 2014.
21. It is also essential that increasing housing output is not considered in isolation from the provision of services, employment sites, retail, leisure, education and other social facilities. In order to boost housing numbers in a sustainable way, that meets defined needs, recognition should be given to the importance of the location of these houses and where and how future residents will do their grocery shopping or send their children to school. This is why the plan-led system, which seeks to consider all of these issues in the round, while operating in the wider public interest, is so important.

22. The Productivity Plan announced a number of measures aimed at speeding up housing delivery. CPRE welcome the Government’s recognition that the local plan process is taking too long. As of the end of August 2015 only 27% of local planning authorities had a post-NPPF local plan in place. However, it is not clear how the Secretary of State intervening in the production of local plans will actually speed up the process or how the views of local communities will be safeguarded.

23. The Productivity Plan also proposes extensions to the existing performance regimes. CPRE believes that the Government’s emphasis on the time taken to process planning applications, to the exclusion of other important considerations, is both insufficient and unhelpful as the basis for an analysis of performance within the planning system.

24. We believe that ‘quality’ of decision making is best measured by rates of local plan adoption and progress towards the achievement of key planning outcomes and objectives, such as the re-use of brownfield sites and maintenance or improvement of the natural environment. An oversight of the rates at which local planning authorities approve applications that are departures from their development plan should also form part of any quality assessment.

25. Both the Starter Homes initiative and extension of Right to Buy to housing associations are likely to lead to a reduction in the construction of new homes, especially of rural affordable homes. Communities and landowners in rural areas are supportive of new housing when it meets a local need. Both of these measures, however, will mean that there is no guarantee that housing association homes or Starter Homes will remain available to meet local needs in perpetuity. Landowners will be reluctant to sell land for housing which, within a few years, will be available at full market rate. The local community will also have
no incentive to support the development of houses which will likely end up in the hands of commuters or as a second home.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

26. CPRE welcomes the pledges of the Government, following the 2015 general election, to introduce (i) a new statutory register of brownfield sites; and (ii) a new brownfield regeneration fund worth up to £1 billion. In 2014 we commissioned the University of the West of England to compile and analyse evidence submitted to the National Land Use Database of Previously Developed Land, but not published by Government, which showed that there is enough brownfield land suitable for at least 975,000 homes. Our report also demonstrated that brownfield land is not a finite resource. The supply of brownfield sites is constantly being replenished, and usually, many more homes can be delivered on a brownfield site than an equivalent area of greenfield land. Government land use change statistics show that, in every year since 2004, we have consistently built an average 50% or more houses on brownfield sites than on equivalent areas of greenfield.

27. CPRE has continued concerns that the NPPF does not sufficiently encourage brownfield redevelopment. There is no policy requiring that brownfield sites in an area should be reused before greenfield, and local authorities in areas such as Cheshire East and North East Lincolnshire have been prevented by Planning Inspectors from insisting on such an approach at the local level. Following the conclusion of City Deals, CPRE has seen encouraging signs that a number of the bids submitted up to September 2015 by local authorities for further devolution in areas such as Cheshire, Hampshire, the West of England

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32 CPRE, From Wasted Spaces to Living Spaces, report by the University of the West of England, November 2014.
33 DCLG, Land Use Change Statistics, Live Table 223.
34 See CPRE briefing Community Control or Countryside Chaos?, March 2014.
(or the former county of Avon) and West Yorkshire are bidding for further powers and/or resources to help bring brownfield sites back into use. A brownfield first planning policy would help such initiatives go further by encouraging housebuilders and lenders to do more to provide supporting finance, rather than to divert this into competing greenfield development.

28. We are also concerned that the Government may seriously undermine its welcome new pledges by linking the proposed new register with further deregulation of the planning system. There are particular concerns that the new ‘permission in principle’ route proposed in the Productivity Plan may short circuit the Local Plan process, and create additional cost burdens for already stretched local planning authorities.

29. CPRE also has concerns that the proposed new register could significantly underestimate the potential of brownfield land. It is essential that the register is backed by policy and guidance that encourages local authorities to proactively seek out redevelopment opportunities on existing developed land which is currently in use, but could be used more intensively, and does not yet have planning permission. Such an ‘urban capacity’ approach worked well in the 2000s and continues to work well in London, but in the rest of England local planning authorities largely depend on sites being nominated by potential developers.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

30. The UK has a very good skills base in the built environment, one that is world renowned. But local government institutions have comparatively little (and reducing) resources to use them, whereas investors and developers have almost unlimited resources by comparison. This leads to a power imbalance that is detrimental to local democracy as well as to the natural environment, as the agenda for local planning policy is increasingly dominated by accommodating housing numbers.
31. Local planning authorities and communities should be given the right to reject development proposals that do not meet their aspirations, and national government, through their executive agencies, such as the Planning Inspectorate, as well as statutory consultees and advisory bodies, such as Historic England and Design Council CABE, should support councils and communities in demanding better quality development.

32. CPRE would commend the use of design panels and reviews as an excellent means to deliver a multidisciplinary approach. We have been involved, for example, in the Visual Impact Provision Stakeholder Advisory Group, formed by National Grid with the objective of reducing the impact of high voltage overhead lines in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and to this end deciding on individual schemes where this objective could be best achieved.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

33. Tranquillity is a central part of why the countryside matters deeply to so many people and the reason many want to spend time there, and CPRE’s work on tranquillity can be used to help identify areas of the countryside that can be used as a resource to help people minimise or avoid negative impacts of land use such as excessive noise and light pollution or visual intrusion. The Government first acknowledged tranquillity as a special quality of the countryside in 2000. Since then it has been recognised by bodies such as the Civil Aviation Authority in its Future Airspace Strategy, High Speed Two Ltd, and Natural England, as well as many National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). In 2012, tranquillity gained recognition in national planning policy for the first time. The NPPF now encourages local authorities to identify and protect areas that are valued by the public for their tranquillity.

34. In May 2015 CPRE surveyed local planning authorities to find whether they had a tranquillity policy in place, for how long and if it was due to the NPPF. The key findings highlight the need for the Government to issue more clarifying guidance and monitor the
take up of the policy in the NPPF. Two fifths (29 of 69) of planning authorities or AONBs had a policy and most (four fifths) were in AONB Management Plans or National Park Local Plans- designated landscapes with higher protection and generally higher levels of tranquillity. Most of these have had policies in place for five or more years, and do not reflect the more recent policy in the NPPF. Of local authorities covering urban and rural areas outside of ‘designated’ landscapes or the wider countryside, relatively few (one in seven) have tranquillity policies in their Local Plans. A small number – four - had developed an entirely new policy due to the NPPF and four others had adapted theirs to comply with the NPPF35.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

35. CPRE strongly supports the planning law principle of a plan-led system of managing development. (See response to Question 6 above.) We have therefore welcomed the Government’s policy, stated in the NPPF, of seeking to get Local Plans in place in all local authorities across the country; as well as recent statements36 by both the new Secretary of State Greg Clark and Housing and Planning Minister Brandon Lewis that have sought to encourage further progress. But in our view the preparation of Local Plans is being actively hindered by the lack of clarity around the NPPF policies on housing land supply, leading to constant disputes between developers and planning authorities. Principally for this reason, the rate at which local authorities are getting finalised (sound or adopted) plans is now significantly slower than the two year period prior to the NPPF coming into force37. Planning Inspectorate figures show that 27% of local authorities do not have a post-2004 Local Plan in place, and fewer still have had a plan adopted or ruled ‘sound’ since the NPPF came into force.

36. The Government’s introduction of neighbourhood planning, below Local Plans but capable of having the same or greater weight than Local Plan policies, is a welcome step towards more effective community engagement in planning. Progress in the actual making of neighbourhood plans (as distinct from the designation of neighbourhood areas) has

however been much slower than officials originally hoped\textsuperscript{38}, and CPRE believes that much of this is due to either (i) the lack of up to date Local Plans in many areas, or (ii) direct challenges by developers, or both. In several cases, neighbourhood planning initiatives have been frustrated or undermined by developers looking to promote large housing sites against local wishes, but encouraged by policies in the NPPF. Since May 2015 CPRE has only been able to find one instance in which Greg Clark has intervened in and directly refused a planning appeal for a proposal which would compromise a draft neighbourhood plan.

37. CPRE believes that neighbourhood planning bodies and parish councils should be given a limited right of appeal, to prevent speculative housing applications in situations where neighbourhood plans are in preparation or adopted. We believe that such a mechanism would be rarely used in practice, but would be an active incentive to developers to help bring more neighbourhood plans forward.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

38. At present, the New Homes Bonus scheme is the most significant financial incentive used by Government to encourage local authorities to release more land for housebuilding. CPRE believes that it should be substantially reformed, because in its present form it has the damaging outcome of encouraging local authorities to permit or accept poor quality new development, without having had a chance to plan properly for it. The scheme has been widely criticised, including by both the National Audit Office in March 2013 and the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in October 2013. In July 2014 an investigation by the Financial Times highlighted that the scheme had served in effect to redistribute public funding away from areas in the Midlands and the North in need of regeneration, to areas of London and southern England\textsuperscript{41}.

\textsuperscript{38} Based on a comparison with the figures provided in DCLG: Localism Bill: neighbourhood plans and community right to build Impact assessment, January 2011, p.14 and figures on current take up published at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/notes-on-neighbourhood-planning.
39. We believe therefore that the New Homes Bonus should be substantially recast. Some elements of the current scheme are valuable: in particular those which support bringing empty homes back into use. In other cases, the scheme should explicitly support the successful delivery of schemes in a development plan (local plan or neighbourhood plan) or local development order that is either adopted or at examination. This would retain the focus on rewarding an increase in housebuilding, as the New Homes Bonus originally intended. It would also be more likely to reward well planned, good quality development that is supported by the local community. The scheme could also be used to encourage the granting of planning permissions on brownfield sites.

40. One other potential barrier to the promotion of custom-build (see Question 6 above) at the moment is that zero-rated VAT, which is normally applied to labour and materials for new build houses, does not apply. This anomaly needs to be addressed if we are to promote a more diverse housing supply sector. Alongside this, CPRE has long opposed the differentiation between VAT on materials and labour for new build houses compared with the refurbishment of existing homes. But as custom build is about providing new build properties, this seems to be a particularly significant barrier to this approach becoming more of a prominent part of the housing delivery sector, as in other countries such as France and Germany.

CPRE

Paul Miner, Planning Campaign Manager

05 October 2015
Campaign to Protect Rural England and Town & Country Planning Association – Oral Evidence (QQ109-120)

Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Inglewood
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

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Examination of Witnesses

Dr Hugh Ellis, Head of Policy, Town and Country Planning Association, and Paul Miner, Planning Campaign Manager, Campaign to Protect Rural England

Q54 The Chairman: Good morning and thank you very much for giving up your time to come and see us. You know that we have been doing this campaign, or at least this inquiry, since July. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee’s website and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to introduce yourself briefly? This is for the record, because everything is being broadcast, and for the help of the transcribers, who will want to know who is speaking.

Dr Ellis: My name is Hugh Ellis and I am Head of Policy at the Town and Country Planning Association.

Paul Miner: My name is Paul Miner, I am Planning Campaign Manager at the Campaign to Protect Rural England. I am also a chartered town planner and fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.
The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. You have copies of the questions. I am going to ask the first question. How could the National Planning Policy Framework be reformed to improve its effectiveness? We will take it in alphabetical order: Dr Ellis.

Dr Ellis: It would need fundamental reform. The NPPF does not provide the framework to deliver the kind of high-quality communities that the TCPA has the aspiration to deliver. This is partly not because of its individual content, some of which is actually very positive; it is also about the weight given to that content in planning. It is particularly to do with a couple of very powerful clauses, the viability test being one of them and the presumption in favour of the developer perhaps being the other.

There is a really important question about whether or not the Government’s outward commitment to place-making is matched by a comprehensive structure for town planning in this country and by a comprehensive set of policies. In our view, it absolutely is not. Place-making in England is certainly in its poorest state since the 1947 town planning settlement. That settlement was extremely important, embodying as it did all the learning that had gone before and setting a framework for extremely ambitious high-quality development. We are not delivering that framework at the moment, so, certainly from the TCPA’s point of view, we would like to see a fundamental change to policy that really emphasises not simply numbers and quantity, but critical issues around the complexity of place-making.

The Chairman: That is very interesting. Does that mean there has been no progress at all since 1947?

Dr Ellis: It means that the 1947 system created tremendous ambition as a settlement around town planning, with everything from national parks right through to a strong concern with the built environment. Broadly speaking, that settlement has been undermined and, compared to other European countries, certainly in relation to design, we have not achieved what they have managed to achieve. That is measured precisely in the reduction in standards. We have lost a tremendous number of critical standards from the built environment. Those standards were absolutely important; they started with Parker Morris but you could go on and end with zero carbon. The abandonment of key place-making standards in the built
environment has been an absolutely distinctive feature of English planning, certainly over the last 10 years.

**Lord Inglewood**: Chairman, could he tell us which ones he recommends we look at?

**Dr Ellis**: I would start with Parker Morris. That was an attempt, for example, to set important space standards, and I would reflect on the kind of space standards being delivered in London—for example, accommodation with flats of 10, 12 or 13 square metres being delivered. Parker Morris was an attempt, not perfect by any means, to try to set a bench floor below which the performance of the built environment should not fall, and it was abolished in 1980.

Since that time, we have had a variety of different ways of dealing with space standards and other kinds of standards, culminating most recently in the Government’s building standards review. That is really worth looking at, because it sets a set of standards for the built environment that is not a national minimum. All those standards are a menu that local governments can choose from, but each standard has to pass through the viability test, which is being used to strip out local plan policy on built environment standards, because the private sector can argue convincingly that it cannot afford to include them. The outcome of that for the kind of built environment we are shaping is a lower level of performance, which has important implications for health, wellbeing and the future of communities and place-making.

**Q55 The Chairman**: That is very interesting, and also very disturbing. You said that other European countries started off in 1947 at the same sort of level—at least, that is the implication—and they have built on and improved their standards. Is there any published evidence to that extent, other than the eyes, when we go and look?

**Dr Ellis**: That is important. Certainly from the TCPA’s point of view, we spend a lot of time in Europe and there is a mass of academic and practice work from the Netherlands, in places like Almere, or from Germany, in places like Freiburg and Hamburg—all sorts of places that have delivered and surpassed our cutting edge. It is important that the town planning inheritance in Britain is the inheritance of Ruskin and Morris. It was extraordinarily ambitious and extraordinarily high-performing, and we have lost that edge, certainly compared to Germany. Perhaps the clearest example is the housing performance standards of the
Germans; certainly, their ability to build Huf houses and zero-carbon homes is quite extraordinary.

**Paul Miner**: The CPRE has always seen the planning system as hugely important to addressing some of the most fundamental questions that this country faces, in particular how we make best use of land, which is a very restricted resource in countries as small as England or the wider UK with such large populations. We need a long-term approach to how we address issues such as how we build the housing that we need, while protecting our valued and increasingly important natural environment.

Our concerns with the National Planning Policy Framework have always been that it is far too short-termist. It privileges getting a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites above everything else, and it does not really think about where these housing sites should be best located or how they might be delivered best over time to get better places, in the fashion that we have been talking about.

Also, planning, for us, is hugely important in protecting our natural environment resources, and there is very little in the NPPF about how we might get a better natural environment through things like promoting landscape-scale conservation or the recovery of nature. It encourages local authorities to address those issues, but the encouragement is very weak.

We have seen time and again with the plans that are coming forward that the overriding main issue has always been how we get these short-term housing sites.

**The Chairman**: If we just look at the question I asked you—how the National Planning Policy Framework could be reformed to improve its effectiveness—what two things would each of you want at the top of your list?

**Paul Miner**: From our perspective, the NPPF needs to give more encouragement to the local plans and to set a clear lead, such that large-scale speculative planning proposals for housing that are not in accordance with local plans should generally be refused. That would enable local authorities to put more resources into plan-making and developers to work more constructively to get local plans into place. We would also like to see stronger protection for the green belt. The Government should largely maintain existing policy, but they need to be clearer when exceptions to policy are and are not acceptable.
**The Chairman:** We will be coming to the green belt, but that is very helpful, thank you. Dr Ellis, what two things would you like to see?

**Dr Ellis:** A fundamental but perhaps more minor one is that the NPPF needs to reflect the place of town planning and spatial planning at the heart of the creation of a civilised society. So far, we have had reform driven by the idea that planning is anti-competitive and that planning is somehow a brake on innovation of design. All these things are not evidenced and they have been hugely destructive to the creation of long-term sustainable place. The NPPF must recognise and create a line that establishes planning as a truly creative enterprise, as much technical as artistic, so ambition needs to come back into planning.

Secondly, the viability test is the critical issue. It is economically illiterate, if that is the right phrase, in the sense that it creates an economic frame for development that ignores the fact that creating, for example, lifetime homes that do not have to result in large costs to adapt buildings for people perhaps in later life is important. Those policies and requirements are being struck down using the viability test, because it simply focuses on the needs of landowners and developers in the short term. That needs to change.

**Baroness Andrews:** I was just going to ask whether we could have a note on the viability test. Mr Ellis has exemplified it in relation to lifetime homes, which is extremely important, but you can also exemplify it in relation to the things you have been saying in your evidence about zero carbon, design and so on. We have discussed it in the Committee in relation to our volume of housebuilding, but we have not drilled down into the general impacts, so I thought that might be useful.

**The Chairman:** It would be very useful indeed if you can do that for us.

**Dr Ellis:** Yes, certainly.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** If you are going to give a note, could you also list, as Lord Inglewood asked, the building standards that you believe have gone in the recent past—perhaps not 40 years ago but in the last 10 years?

**The Chairman:** Cutting corners, yes; quite.

**Q56 Baroness Whitaker:** One of the things we have lost is a national spatial standard. We have had a bit of discussion about that. The Government evidence was very clear that it was
not needed, but I would like to ask both Dr Ellis and Mr Miner how a spatial framework for land use policy in England could help to develop built environment policy objectives. Do we need one for that purpose?

**Dr Ellis:** We absolutely do. Nothing could be clearer. We are one of the very few advanced economies that have neither comprehensive national planning nor regional planning. It is very important to say, by the way, that this argument gets bogged down in people saying you are implying some kind of Stalinist end-state vision, but nothing could be further from the truth. The process of planning is about the messy business of trying to mediate change. Having some sense of engagement with that change at a national level simply reflects functional geography, and geography is something that is absent from public policy at the moment, in the most extraordinary way.

As a quick example, and there are many, High Speed 2 was a railway without a plan. It is the idea of the potential demographic opportunities. Whether you think the railway is a good idea or not is a separate issue, but, if you are going to have it, the idea that you would then link that to a series of critical developments that could deal with demographic change in England seems sensible, yet that was absent.

There is absolutely no doubt that the kinds of challenges that play out at a regional and national tier, particularly climate change, demographic change and transport, are critical in a small nation. A national plan would not tell people what to do. It would set out the evidence very clearly—if you like, a laboratory of spatial evidence—at a national level, and then it would perhaps set out strategic areas of growth and it would be relatively light-touch. That is the model that other nations use. That then supports the work of local action, does it not? The terrible tragedy for England is that it cannot have a sensible debate about national and local. Both things have to happen effectively to have an effective and efficient economy, and an inclusive society.

**Paul Miner:** Ministers are already doing some form of national planning, but they are not doing it in a way that is perhaps as accessible or transparent as it could be. For example, the recent round of city deals that have been agreed all have some kind of planning implication in terms of schemes that Ministers have said they will support, but we need to see that
delivered in a more transparent and accessible way that also looks at opportunities to improve the natural environment. It is very much focused on short-term economic growth projects and much less on how we can manage our environment in the longer term for public benefit.

When we talk about a national plan, Government departments have done this kind of work before. If you take the national policy statements created since the Planning Act 2008, there is one on nuclear power which actually says where in the country new nuclear power stations will go, so the Government can do it, but it is a question of their being prepared to be open and honest with the country about the choices we face in terms of land. As Hugh rightly pointed out, we need to have a better geographical understanding of the pressures we face. If you look at the UK and England in a wider international context, we are a country that is probably better placed than many others in the world to deal with the pressures of climate change, for example, because we are in the northern hemisphere. We have seen recently through growing immigration that the UK is a desirable place to live and people want to come here, so we need to think about how we can best manage demographic change and other issues in the longer term if we are to avoid some huge pressures coming up unforeseen to bite us in the long run.

I would pick up in particular on evidence given by one of the people who previously came to this Committee: Mark Tewdwr-Jones, who was involved in the Foresight Land Use Futures project. Some of the points he made were incredibly valuable, and the approach taken by the Foresight study was sound. We did not necessarily agree with all its conclusions, but the approach it took was a very good one and it is a great shame that the issues it raised and the points it made have been buried. That work could be very beneficially dusted off and brought back into the public limelight.

**Q57 Lord Inglewood:** I begin by pointing out that I am a member of the advisory panel of the Friends of the Lake District, which you will know is the Cumbrian branch of the CPRE. I would like to ask each one of you—I think you have already intimated what your reply is likely to be—whether you think the plan-led system for development planning is fit for purpose. Following on from that—and concisely, please—are there any particular changes you would like to see?
I would also like to go back to the earlier question: are there any other countries, bearing in mind that nothing is exactly comparable, which you think point our country in a better direction?

Dr Ellis: The quick answer is that the plan-led system is critical, but it is not fit for purpose. It is very important that, in legal terms, England has never had a plan-led system compared to European-style systems, for example. It has always had this element of discretion, which is a very important part of the process of the 1947 settlement.

I have to preface my comments by saying that we are at an extraordinary time. The Housing and Planning Bill will transform local plans, so the question framed here has to be in the context of the Government’s introduction of zonal planning. Zonal planning is a radical change, and Clauses 102 and 103 of that Bill mean that future local plans in England will be of an entirely different character. Attempts that are passing around to say that this is an evolution of English planning are really quite wrong. Zonal planning plays out in the United States in a particular form. Its implications there for social and racial segregation have been enormous. It has been challenged in the Supreme Court on the basis of its outward use for racist motives in American cities, so there is an enormous issue about how zonal planning plays out. However, zonal planning in European countries can be very positive. There is something here that perhaps we could use as a model.

The core of it, certainly from communities’ points of view, is that it is very difficult to understand why plans are made and ignored. That is a great difficulty for the planning system and something that brings planning into disrepute. We have to grapple with this critical issue of whether we have a plan-led system or not, if plans are going to be overturned in the way Paul has described. The appeal success rate on major housing is up at 50%, which is historically unprecedented; it has never been that high in the post-war period—it reached about 43% in 1986-87—so we have an appeal-led system, truth be told.

The Chairman: We heard about that before and I understand why it arose.

Dr Ellis: In that sense, there is a need for a fundamental look at the plan-led system.

Lord Inglewood: Have you a clear idea of your own of what you, as an individual who has knowledge and considerable expertise in this area, would do?
**Dr Ellis**: Yes, I would go straight to the Dutch system. Although the Dutch system is currently being deregulated, which is a lesson they are learning from us, it has a combination of elements and cultures and is a very strongly public-sector-led planning process. The private sector, of course, is the developer still, but that sets plans. If you want to change—the success of Almere and those places is having a very strong progressive plan. People buy into that plan and the plan is then delivered through development corporations and other mechanisms through the public sector. That was the framework; of course, they got that framework from us. That was the framework we created in the first 20 years post-war, and the Dutch said, “That looks very effective. We will copy that”. In some senses, we are just borrowing our learning back.

**Paul Miner**: It seems to me that we are moving towards a zoning system but, if we are to do that, then we must properly manage that and make sure that local authorities have the proper amount of time to adjust to a new zoning system. Some of the measures in the Housing and Planning Bill—for example, the proposal for a new permission in principle—are going to have a huge effect on how local plans operate. In future, local plans are going to have to go into a lot more detail about how individual development schemes are brought forward, the absolute number of houses, how they are designed and the supporting infrastructure. That will need to be properly managed. There are only one or two local authorities—Cherwell in Oxfordshire, for example—that currently have local plans that could in any way be described as following a zoning approach.

Yes, it matters hugely what kind of zoning approach you take. In Germany and the Netherlands, zoning works well, encouraging custom builders to come forward very quickly with new developments that look very good. But, regarding the American system, Hugh made the point about entrenching racial segregation and there are big problems in terms of urban sprawl as well. The kind of zoning that has been entrenched in America has encouraged a particular model of very low-density housing development, and there are serious dangers if we started going down that road in this country. We are seen as a leader across the world in preventing urban sprawl.
Baroness Andrews: I want to try to roll up my two supplementaries, Lord Chairman. First of all, I want to take you back to the spatial thing, Dr Ellis. How can we reintroduce a spatial element back into planning? What would be the process? Would we be talking about reintroducing the regional spatial strategies, or about taking the duty to co-operate and adding something extra? What do you think has been the impact of the absence of a spatial strategy on the power of developers to drive their plans through the system by appeal, as it were? My other question is not really related; it is to do with the Housing and Planning Bill and what you are saying about the march of deregulation. To what extent is that Bill going to exacerbate the failure of the planning system, because deregulation has simply gone too far to guarantee any standards of quality and spatial proportion, shall we say?

Dr Ellis: In reverse order and as quickly as possible, the proposition behind the deregulation of planning is that you unleash a private sector tiger that will build enough housing at a high standard. The extraordinary thing about the deregulation of planning is that, up until March 2015, in that calendar year, we approved 261,000 new units of housing through planning, and the private sector on its own, without housing association support, built 112,000, and starts are declining.

The interesting thing about the European model is, if we could take the ideology out of this, we would have a dreamy scenario. When I talk to the Germans about the debate in planning in England, they say, “We see planning as a toolbox. We take tools out of the box and we use them to create places. You see the toolbox as intrinsically bad before you have opened it”. The debate on planning and place-making needs to go back to where it was when the 1947 system was there. Four eminent lawyers, establishment figures, solved the problems of how you manage land democratically, and the 1947 system was born. Those principles, by and large, should remain.

Deregulation is not the answer, because the built environment is so special. Land is such a special commodity. Housing is also a special public good. All these things mean that the character of building places has always been unique; it has been unique for 4,000 years and it remains unique as an enterprise. It should be one of the great enterprises of a civilised society. The deregulation of the built environment will not help the Government’s objectives
in building more homes. In our view, it certainly is building a quality of home that is substandard. Gardens are not heresy—it would be quite nice to have some for people. The same is true for space standards and important design standards. This debate is heading in one direction and it is the wrong direction.

Yes, of course the end of regional spatial planning was politically expedient, but it was intellectual vandalism. Regional planning contained data and data are not intrinsically bad or political; they are simply data. What we needed there was a way of reflecting that. Now, the duty to co-operate can never be made to work. It is fundamentally a process of getting people to speak to each other and demonstrating that they have spoken to each other. That is not a proxy for strategic planning.

I will just give one final quick example, which could make our lives so much easier. Everyone thinks the new towns programme was a big programme imposed on local communities. It turns out that Milton Keynes was a locally led development. Buckinghamshire County Council made a judgment in the early 1960s that they did not want urban sprawl in all their villages. They wanted to concentrate a housing growth problem and deal with it strategically. The duty to co-operate cannot let you do that. In terms of what this nation needs, where there are 20 district councils and 18 of them might be constrained, the logic surely has to be for sustainable development. This is what regional planning did. You decide on strategic growth areas, as a well-service of infrastructure, that do not have the impacts on the natural environment that Paul described, and you develop places along those lines.

Baroness Andrews: Does this need legislation?

Dr Ellis: No, the legislation is all there. In fact, the legislation for the new towns programme, the New Towns Act, which we are suggesting needs to be updated, is still very powerful. The issue is that people do not want to use it because they think it is about central imposition, but, actually, the programme was locally led, in part.

Baroness Andrews: It could be done by leadership and practice incentives by Government.

Dr Ellis: It could be done, yes. It does not require a new law. It requires a new understanding and a new culture to see the meeting of housing needs, not in whole—I am not suggesting all of it is met like that, because places need to grow more evenly—but there is a very powerful
case for meeting some of the major housing need through strategic new highly sustainable communities. That is an idea we pioneered and it is an idea, interestingly, that we have turned our back on. Bicester/Cherwell is an example, obviously, and then you have Ebbsfleet, which I am slightly more dubious about. There are issues about how we get strategic growth happening. The tools are with us; the issue is much more about whether we care to use them.

**Paul Miner:** There is no doubt that the way regional strategies were abolished had the kinds of effects Baroness Andrews was highlighting in her question. Many local authorities across the country put a lot of work into regional plans. Although they are often characterised as top-down plans, in fact, conferences of local authorities put these plans together. Many local authorities relied on regional plans to give them the kinds of strategic policies they needed. I do not think many people are suggesting that we return to the old model of regional planning; also, Ministers realise that they need to bring strategic planning back. In many cases, we are seeing with the city deals that local authorities are being specifically encouraged to have some kind of formal arrangement for doing a strategic plan. Greater Manchester, for example, is now producing a joint spatial plan. We think that is an encouraging sign, because you need to do planning at that level.

What particularly concerned us about the way the regional plans were abolished was that it was done in a way that did not allow local authorities to retain the policies or the evidence they needed. Also, it got rid, in practice, of the brownfield-first approach that we had in national policy during the 2000s. When the regional plans were in place, they looked to concentrate development on brownfield sites within the major conurbations but, since the NPPF has come into force, local authorities have had to work out what their own housing need is and then meet it in full within their own area. The way that has been done in practice has caused huge problems, because there is no clear agreed method for assessing housing need or deciding what objectively assessed need is. We are going to produce further evidence on this shortly, which we would be very happy to share with the Committee, but it has caused huge problems for local plan-making and we need government to be clearer about how housing need should be met and give more encouragement to local planning again and, in particular, strategic plans.
The Chairman: Anything you have that you think would enlighten us would be very useful. I know we are making a rod for our own backs; we have a huge amount of evidence already, but we still have to try to do this well.

Q59 Lord Inglewood: Mr Ellis, you said that we have an appeal-led planning system. Do you think this is the absolute antithesis of a democratic planning system? Invariably or very frequently, you have councillors who take decisions at development control level or plans that have been put together with public consultation. We are then seeing the wider system saying, “Actually, we do not want to do it the way you want to do it. We want to do it the way the system wants to do it”. As you yourself said, planning is an art and it is also a technique. It is not random. How do you see the relationship between the appeals end of it and the democratic input interfacing?

Dr Ellis: It is very troubling. Zonal planning on a European scale removes that tension, because it genuinely is a plan-led system. There is no doubt that is why the Dutch system has those advantages. High levels of appeal traditionally bring the system into disrepute. It also raises this question again, which is fascinating but unresolved, of how much power we want to give communities over their future. The appeal system really brings that into focus. There is an insufficient amount of public policy time devoted to resolving that problem. The last full investigation of people and planning was in 1968—the Skeffington report. It is extraordinary that no government since that time have set anything up, neighbourhood planning aside, which is not a full solution to the problem you describe; it is a separate problem. We have not worked out how much power we want to give communities.

For us as an organisation primarily focused on providing a decent home for people, we want local communities to face their responsibilities for providing people with a home, but you have to have a system for doing that, it seems to us, that retains that democratic element. People will reference the Chinese system of planning and always say it is much more effective than ours, but it is the wrong exam question, surely. We are trying to plan democratically, which is eminently more complex.

Lord Inglewood: If you have extreme nimbyism, you have to somehow counterbalance it with an appeals system, do you not?
Dr Ellis: You absolutely do. The difficulty we have is that that process is not worked out. One of the reasons why there is a relationship between those appeals and why regional planning was such a good idea was precisely that issues of major growth could be resolved strategically. What is happening now is a fragmentation. Each district has to consume its own smoke, in housing terms. You could argue that that is a good thing and what responsible communities should do, but it fails to understand that places are very different. Where they are heavily constrained by designations or not having proper services, for example, then plainly a strategic response would be better. It would be much better to resolve it through Milton Keynes than through 1,000 appeal decisions. So there is a strong relationship between having a logical narrative for town planning and reducing the amount of appeal; but that fundamental issue about people and planning being at the heart of it really needs some attention in policy terms.

Paul Miner: If I can add to Hugh’s points, this problem with appeal-led development is a very serious one. In our written evidence, we highlighted that in about 72% of cases, a local authority could not demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites and appeals were granted. There is another effect on local democracy, which is blatantly financial, because local authorities having to defend their position for appeals is hugely expensive. To give one example, Cheshire West and Chester Council recently published a cabinet committee report that showed that they had spent about £1 million defending themselves in losing planning appeals. That is money that could be far better spent on forward planning and setting visionary aspirations for where housing should go and how the environment should be protected within that district. Many local authorities see what is happening in these other cases and often throw in the towel and just grant permission for substandard, poor quality or inappropriate development, because they do not feel confident defending their position at appeal.

Q60 The Chairman: I would just like to ask if you are going to deal with skills or people’s ambitions to become planners. Has there been a dearth of planning? How is it that, in 1947, things were great and there were good planners, and there are no planners now? Is it just that they are all so frustrated?
Dr Ellis: There is a massive demoralisation in the planning service; it is true. We really need to transform that. Planning education needs to be transformed. You cannot expect the young enthusiastic people I meet all the time in planning schools to stay in planning when there is such a weight of criticism, most of it unfounded, loaded on to the profession. I am not interested in defending planners per se. It has to be about outcomes and what we actually produce but, if you want visionaries to get back into town planning, we have to make sure that we all agree that planning can be a visionary activity. I would stress that issue. I know it is an unpopular one, but planning was about art. If you look at development plans from the 1950s, they always begin with a piece of Tolstoy and are brilliantly illustrated. It is interesting that it would be inconceivable now for a local development plan to say, “We have aspirations for people’s wider welfare, wider artistic ambition or cultural ambition”. These documents are likely to put you to sleep within 20 minutes, because that visionary element has been ironed out of them and that is a great shame.

The Chairman: I am breaking my own rules on not interrupting, but you have not made any reference to local areas that have a completely different culture. The people in South Yorkshire, for instance, would not thank you for the stuff from Lancaster or whatever, so you have to take that into consideration too. It is the local history.

Dr Ellis: The original local plans had a remit to strongly reflect, in their opening chapter, that kind of context. It is true that one of the great flaws of the National Planning Policy Framework is it has no recognition of the diversity of place that exists in England. It is extraordinary when people talk about planning being a barrier. Certainly in my own patch, in the North Derbyshire coalfield, we have been trying to plan for almost anything of any kind, for ever. There is no barrier to development. There is an extraordinarily strong sense of wanting to develop brownfield sites; what there is not, is the supporting infrastructure and supporting regional plan.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I was wondering, from the way you are talking about this, how we can get an assessment of the impact on the health of the community, on living and on biodiversity, and an assessment of the wider impact of decisions. The effects on health and
biodiversity go much further than a narrow geographical site. How do we get that impact assessment in the system?

**Dr Ellis:** I will say a quick word about health. There has been a transformation in the last five years, from Public Health England working, certainly with the TCPA, on producing guidance for local authorities on the connection between the built environment and health. It is extraordinary that we had apparently forgotten that connection, since planning had partly emanated from a health background. There is now the most extraordinary set of very real evidence about how the built environment affects people.

The NPPF mentioned green infrastructure just once and removed and abolished the guidance without any replacement, as a result of this review of guidance that was on Natural England’s website. There is now an active conversation going on with DCLG about whether we can get some guidance back on green infrastructure. Green infrastructure has a multi-functional impact on flood risk, wellbeing, people’s health, recreation, obesity and all these issues. The difficulty about getting health impact assessments formally into this process is that they should be there and, for some major developments, they are there. Now we have devolved public health back into local authorities, we hope for a more fruitful relationship between planning and public health, but the cultural gap between the two professions is very big. Planners are constantly saying, “We do not have time for that. We are just going to do the very bare minimum”.

One of the most important reviews under way at the moment into the local plan is the ministerial review of the local plan process. In our evidence to that, we made it absolutely clear that they must not use that review process as a way of making planning more stupid. Plans do not have to be long, but they have to have a complete set of policies to understand how people work, particularly in relation to public health.

**Paul Miner:** On the biodiversity point, picking up on what was said about the local plan review, what gives us particular cause for concern about that is that many people have argued over a long time that local plans are too long, they take far too long to prepare and they have far too many detailed policies. When you drill down into it, a lot of these so-called far too long and detailed policies are actually well established policies that do not involve too much of local
authorities’ effort in reviewing and updating. They are policies, for example, such as the protection of local wildlife sites and policies that show what the landscape character of an area is and how it should be best protected. It is vitally important that we keep those policies in the future and that, when we talk about local plan preparation, we do not get too hung up about how long plans are, because how long a plan is may not be that related to how much effort goes into preparing it.

I would also refer back to my earlier point that, since the NPPF has come into force and probably before that as well, to be fair, there has been this overriding obsession with meeting housing targets, to the exclusion of the other valuable functions that planning performs. Biodiversity and landscape are good examples of that. I know that later you will be coming on to the green belt but, if you look at the green belt reviews that have been carried out in this country, they nearly always focus on what sites could be released from the green belt for development. They do not really look at how you can achieve a policy that is in the NPPF—paragraph 81, I think—which says that local authorities should plan positively for the beneficial use of the green belt. In many if not most green belt reviews, you will find few examples of local authorities thinking, “We could probably plant more trees there or extend a local wildlife site here”, or something like that. That illustrates the kinds of problems we are facing.

The Chairman: It is an afterthought.

Paul Miner: Yes.

Q61 Baroness Parminter: For the record, I ought to declare that I was previously Chief Executive of the CPRE. In the evidence submitted by both of you, you cite how much you welcome the introduction of neighbourhood planning, but seem to suggest that there are opportunities to make it work better. Could you be specific about how that could be achieved?

Paul Miner: There are two points to make here. One is that, certainly from CPRE’s perspective and I think TCPA as well, we have strongly welcomed neighbourhood planning. We think it can be a very beneficial means of getting communities more involved in planning and getting more people skilled in the process as well, by making it more open to involvement at the local
level. We have seen a very positive development in terms of the number of neighbourhoods that have designated themselves for the purpose of making neighbourhood plans. There are probably about 1,200 across the country, which is broadly in line with what the department was expecting.

But the department has probably underestimated the amount of skill and effort that is needed to get a neighbourhood plan through the various processes, from consultation to examination to adoption. We have about 100 neighbourhood plans that have passed through examination, and 57 that have been adopted or made. In some cases, that is due to the fact that there are insufficient local plans in an area that give neighbourhoods a context within which to work, but there have also been a lot of cases where we have had this problem with appeal-led development, where developers have been looking to frustrate neighbourhood plans by getting in speculative proposals ahead of the local plan and causing a huge amount of controversy and opposition in the local community, who would prefer to see different sites developed.

What we think needs to be done is that, on the one hand, the Government could encourage local authorities to support neighbourhood plans more. There are some measures in the Housing and Planning Bill that might possibly help, but they need further scrutiny to make sure they are doing that. We also think that communities should be given the right of appeal, where they are well advanced in producing a neighbourhood plan, to resist these kinds of speculative proposals that we have been seeing in many parts of the country. That way, not only can they be confident in producing a neighbourhood plan that it will not be trumped, but it would also encourage developers to put some of their resources into supporting neighbourhood planning too. As we have seen over recent years, there is a growing inequality of resources between the public and private sectors in planning. Currently, the private sector holds most of the resources, but they should be encouraged more than they currently are to use them for constructive ends and to work with communities, rather than trying to foist development upon them.

Dr Ellis: I would only add that, in respect of our concerns about how socially inclusive they are, you cannot argue with the scale of implementation but, in our experience, it is mostly
people like me who participate in neighbourhood plans. There is nothing wrong with that, I guess, but it is extremely worrying in complex urban environments, particularly when neighbourhood forums, which are not accountable, in urban areas are making plans. There is insufficient targeting of resources. The department, essentially, does not target resources in relation to those silent voices who find it very difficult to participate in the planning process. Neighbourhood planning should have been a real tool to make that happen. The fact that neighbourhood plans will be allocating sites and that those sites will benefit from automatic planning permission will transform the nature of neighbourhood planning, and I am not sure that it will help, because it will create an additional burden on the neighbourhood plan and it will potentially invite a lot more controversy. It is not necessarily a wrong proposal but, certainly in urban areas, neighbourhood planning is not enough. It does not solve that people and planning problem. It would be great, for example, to see positive and creative measures concerning how people could be involved in local plans and wider regional and national planning.

Q62 Baroness Andrews: You just said something really important, Mr Miner, about the inequality of resources available to the public and private sectors, because that has implications for everything. I have two very short questions. First, is the ministerial review of local plans going to include a review of neighbourhood planning and neighbourhood plans as well? My second question relates to the Housing and Planning Bill. You have touched on the deregulation that may follow from that Bill. Will that impact on neighbourhood plans too, and to what effect? What will the Housing and Planning Bill do for neighbourhood planning? Can you unpack that a bit for us?

Paul Miner: I will say a couple of things briefly. As I understand it, neighbourhood planning is specifically outside the terms of reference of the local plan review, but, in practice, I think they will have to look at it to some degree.

Baroness Andrews: Do you know the timetable for that review?

Paul Miner: It should publish fairly quickly. The deadline for the call for evidence was the beginning of this week, I think, or the end of last week.

Baroness Andrews: It is an internal Government CLG review.
Paul Miner: Yes, it is.

The Chairman: How long do they normally take?

Baroness Andrews: Often, the CLG has gone outside for chairs, but it sounds as if they are doing this rather quickly. Is this prompted by the general anxiety about the low number of starts, et cetera? It is a housing-driven review.

Paul Miner: The main anxiety is that it has taken longer for local plans to get in place than Ministers perhaps said they thought it would, in the past, and there still is no comprehensive local plan coverage across the country. There are some figures in our evidence, but we can send the Committee further information on that, if needed.

Baroness Andrews: Have you given evidence on how local plans can be speeded up? You have already said that the suite of documents that goes into a local plan does not have to be altered. You can still have your sustainability plans, your environmental protection plans and so on.

The Chairman: Where is the call for evidence? Is it on a website?

Paul Miner: It is on the gov.uk website, yes, and we would be happy to share our submission to the local plan review with the Committee.

The Chairman: That would be very useful. Thank you very much.

Dr Ellis: On the Bill and deregulation, it is very important that the Bill, which introduces this very radical zonal planning system, was not subject to a White Paper, so we cannot understand it. It is impossible to understand what is being proposed, because it is a Treasury proposal implemented by DCLG which is not worked through in a way that we can fully understand.

One very important point is that the Bill sits in a wider context of deregulation, particularly permitted development. Permitted development means that local plans and neighbourhood plans are intrinsically less powerful, because we are removing controls that they previously dealt with and it is absolutely not an exaggeration to say that, in places like London, we have lost control of the urban environment. The transfer of a building from office use to residential is perfectly legitimate, so long as it has planning permission and has gone through the process. It can now happen with no consideration for child play space, no contribution for education
and no contribution for 100 other place-making issues, because the prior approval process considers only three things. That may be very powerful for growth, although that is debateable—the evidence is not so clearly there for that—but it is potentially leading to the kinds of places that really are the slums of the future.

**Baroness Andrews:** Again it is housing-driven. Change of use has been primarily designed to release things like retail space for housing. All I am saying is that a lot of these things that have perverse consequences, which are to do with this rather subtle bit of planning, are going to have catastrophic effects on place-making. They will certainly be intensified if you have zonal planning with a permitted development. It essentially means you have ghettos without sufficient infrastructure. Am I right about that?

**Dr Ellis:** That is right. The critical unresolved issue with zonal planning is where you locate the place-making quality standards. You have to give permission in principle in the plan. This negates the whole basis of the fact that detail and principle in planning are intimately related. How is it possible to give permission for something in principle, without understanding its detailed design or flood risk mitigation or sustainable urban drainage or proportion of social housing? I could go on. It misunderstands the intellectual process of making planning decisions and it is certainly not like the Dutch system, by the way. It is certainly not that.

**Paul Miner:** As we understand it, many of the changes in the Housing and Planning Bill are directed towards requiring local authorities to support neighbourhood forums through the process, whereas at the moment neighbourhood planning is purely discretionary. It has been suggested by some that some local authorities are preventing neighbourhood plans coming forward. We are not sure how well founded that is, but it may well be influencing some of the proposals in the housing Bill. To go back to what I said earlier, the far more significant reason why many neighbourhood plans are struggling is gaps in local planning coverage.

**Q63 Lord Clement-Jones:** So far, you have both been agreeing quite heavily on most issues. I want to come on to something I think you might disagree on, which is the whole issue of brownfield development and housing, and whether or not it should be encouraged and prioritised for housing. The context, to some degree, is the fact that we have heard evidence that there has been over-reliance on large strategic sites, which can limit the potential output
for housing. It therefore may be better to concentrate on some of the small sites. It is part of that same debate, I suspect, but do you think that housing needs can be met through brownfield development? What policy changes are needed to ensure that the supply potential of brownfield land is developed?

**Paul Miner:** We believe that there is a strong case for a brownfield-first approach in national policy, and it goes back to what we were asked about at the beginning—about changes to the NPPF. That would be one of our leading changes, too. It is not just about the large sites; it is also about the small sites. One of the problems that we have been seeing since the NPPF came into force is that local authorities are not being encouraged to identify the smallest sites. In their strategic housing land availability assessments, they are generally encouraged to focus on sites of 10 dwellings or over but, if they did more work to identify the small sites, not only would they pick up on a large reservoir of brownfield potential; they would also be encouraging small and medium-sized housebuilders back into the market a bit more, by making available the kinds of sites they can thrive on.

When we talk about brownfield-first, it is important to remember that it is in terms not just of planning but of prioritising Government investment. We should not underestimate the amount of support the Government are putting into encouraging new development, especially in the northern regions. We can send the Committee a bit of further information that we picked up about the amount of new housing stock in the north-west, for example, which is actually being funded by some kind of public subsidy through the Homes and Communities Agency or others.

We have seen some good statements by Ministers about looking to get brownfield sites through the system, but it is important that the Government are backing up those words with financial support. Some brownfield sites are being supported through city deals, but a lot of what we would say is unnecessary greenfield development is being supported as well. We need a clearer approach from Ministers so that, when they are working on devolution with local authorities, when they are supporting the delivery of new housing, they are taking all the opportunities they can to use brownfield sites, because it is not just about providing
housing; it is also about a range of public benefits that, in many cases, could include getting rid of an environmental nuisance, like a contaminated site.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: Of course, they have made certain proposals that encourage brownfield sites, including something you probably would not approve of: permission in principle. How far do you go as a Government in encouraging the use of those brownfield sites?

**Paul Miner**: We think that the Government are right to encourage more brownfield development, but it is important to remember that it is not just about housing. If we are going to build the kinds of communities that people want to live in in the future, it cannot just be a narrow, single focus on housing development. That is part of the problem with increasing these permitted development rights from office to residential, for example. It is just leading to houses in a place that could have much better development if there were more of a mix of uses.

We would support what the Government are doing on brownfield but, on the permission in principle issue, there are some serious potential problems that need to be looked at. We need to make sure that these developments are properly planned for and are in the right places, because the relationship between permission in principle and local plans is not clear enough at the moment. We are concerned that it could be used to short-circuit the local plan process.

I have one further point, if I may. There is also the suggestion that permission in principle could be granted for sites on the Government’s proposed new brownfield register. We strongly support a register of brownfield sites, because we showed in the recent report that there was no clear understanding of how much brownfield land is available across the country. This register will help with that, but the register is part of the evidence for local planning. It is not enough in itself for a site to be on the register and then just to be given automatic permission. There needs to be a proper local plan process as well to make sure that we are getting the right development in the right places.

**Dr Ellis**: This is just very complicated. Developing brownfield sites has to be a priority. The planning system has been pretty good at it. The question whether there is any planning problem with the development of brownfield sites is very dubious, in terms of whether there is any evidence at all that planning has been a problem. There is certainly not in any of the
local authorities that I have ever talked to or worked in, in the north of England. There has always been a desperate priority to develop brownfield sites and the problems of development have been technical—such as remediation—and they have been about investment.

Brownfield is part of the solution, but the wider enterprise of place-making means that such sites are not always the right place to develop. Sometimes they are important for biodiversity and sometimes they are unsuitable for housing in other means. Whether they can meet the whole housing need currently presented to us we are quite sceptical about. After all, even with the great suppressed demand in terms of household formation—because people cannot afford to form households—some 230,000 to 240,000 households are still forming each year. We are going to publish some new research on that next week. Those figures create an enormous challenge for us.

Finally, we have also reached a point in planning and development—this is one of those conversations that CPRE and TCPA will no doubt go on having for the next 100 years—whereby it is possible to develop sites, green and brownfield, at much higher levels of biodiversity and design quality than the existing use, sometimes even when that is intensive agriculture.

**Baroness Andrews**: And density.

**Dr Ellis**: Density—absolutely right. This is a wider issue, is it not? There is a sense that development has been problematised, and the reason is that we have been very poor at it. When people say, “Shall we have some new housing development?”, they picture an extremely poor quality built environment.

If you ask the people who live in Letchworth, which is arguably the finest design concept we have ever developed in this country, they are very happy living there. The master plan for that site did not fell one tree, and that was in 1903. The sense that we can build extraordinary places that can deliver net benefits to nature and also to human wellbeing is a vision that was at the heart and beginning of the planning movement.

**Lord Inglewood**: Can we afford it in the round?

**Dr Ellis**: Letchworth paid for itself.
Lord Inglewood: That was middle-class people.

Dr Ellis: No, Letchworth is still 35% social housing. I am not suggesting that there are not lots of middle-class people living there, but there is a significant contribution.

Lord Inglewood: The good stuff tends to cost, and this is one of the problems.

Dr Ellis: There is something very important there. Letchworth has a self-funding model. The garden city model, which I know we may not talk about, was so important because it did something that the planning system and European planning systems do. It captures a proportion of the increase in land values, pays down debts and reinvests. Letchworth Garden City funds its three philosophy societies, its theatre, its cinema and a health centre out of a fund created in 1903, based on its ownership of the commercial estate. This is a John Lewis town, if you like. That is the shorthand. The mutualisation of key assets in the town means not only can we build to extraordinarily high standards, but we can self-finance it. The first 10 new towns, although they had design issues, were incredibly profitable. They were so profitable, they lent money to other public utilities.

Lord Clement-Jones: Can I take it from that that you are therefore not convinced, either, by the small site versus large site argument? You are arguing for development on a very big scale.

Dr Ellis: Actually, I am arguing for a programme of all of it. What we do not do is “big”. Big is not necessarily intrinsically bad, is what I am arguing. Sometimes it can be the most sustainable option. I am curious about why our conversation—not here but in the wider sense—is so polarised. Surely in some places it will be about developing existing villages but, in the Milton Keynes example, it was about Buckinghamshire remaining Buckinghamshire and also producing an extremely economically successful and socially successful place, strategically. It is that bit that we seem incapable of examining at the moment.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Just linking to all that, I am wondering whether the areas that a planning group is responsible for are large enough now to allow that type of broad consideration to develop infrastructure that can pay for itself, or are they too small and therefore acting in silos?
**Dr Ellis:** They are too small at the moment. Paul has talked about the devolution agenda and what that might do. One or two combined authorities have asked for development corporation powers, because you need a development corporation to capture those land values. That is the critical mechanism for doing that, so that requires a new planning tool. That is what the New Towns Act did so brilliantly well.

On how you work this out and where they go, yes, that gets back to the geographic question—that in the south-east of England, where pressures are greatest, you need Government to co-ordinate, facilitate and mediate a conversation about where strategic growth will go. If you do not want to do that, you will get multiple fragmented housing development which is poorly serviced, has inadequate infrastructure and sets a problem. We have done this before in this country. It sets a problem that you then have to spend 100 years trying to resolve.

**Q64 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** This is the reverse side of what you have just been talking about, which is the green belt thing. It has done its stuff in many ways, but is now a bit creaky in terms of piecemeal nibbling. Do we need a new policy for the green belt, in order to reshape it for a modern set of purposes, including this broader-scale strategic development perspective?

**Paul Miner:** We think that green belt policy still works well. The fundamental principles of green belt policy are sound and they should be kept. It is important to remember that, when green belts were first established in national policy, back in 1955, they were part of a wider sub-national city region approach to working out how the development of a city should take place, and they were usually accompanied by a strategy for regeneration within the inner cities and the building of garden cities and, by that time, new towns around places like London, Liverpool and Manchester.

We are pleased that the Government have restated their commitment to the green belt, but the policy has been put under pressure through death by a thousand cuts in local plan reviews across the country, because there has not been a proper strategic approach to working out where housing need is best met. We are seeing increasing calls to change the policy and to allow much more development, and we think those calls are misconceived, because they underestimate the true value of the green belt to society.
For example, the Adam Smith Institute reckoned that the value of the green belt to society was about £889 per hectare. It based that value on a study, in 1992, of a few fields near Chester, but green belts also surround places like London and Manchester. They are of huge value to urban communities in those areas. The work of the Natural Capital Committee, and in particular its Chair, Dieter Helm, has shown how much more value there is to the green belt—not only its possible biodiversity value, but its value to the public in terms of being able to see an agricultural landscape.

Also, we have seen many claims that you could do a lot to meet this country’s housing need by building a million homes on just 1% or 2% of the green belt, but that is massively overstating the benefits of that approach. If you built in the way they are suggesting, you would be building dormitory suburbs. You would not be building proper new places; you would be building stuff tacked on to the edge of train stations. That would lead to a lot of urban sprawl, in many cases, because there are very few, if any, train stations in the green belt around London that do not already have some development around one side or the other. By building on the remaining bit of undeveloped land near the train station, you would be completely defeating the purpose of green belt.

We need the green belt as a tool to prevent urban sprawl, more than ever. We have seen studies by UN-Habitat and the European Commission that show that urban sprawl is one of the most pressing problems facing the world today. It is most pressing in the areas around big towns and cities, which in England are protected by green belt policy. That is the particular value of it and that is why it is not fanciful to say that, if we did not have the green belt around London, it would sprawl for 50 miles beyond its centre like Los Angeles does.

Dr Ellis: From our point of view, the green belt remains extremely important. Again, I would just like to point to the complexities of green belt policy. The green belt is a very successful policy and should be retained, but it plays out very differently across England. The case to retain London’s green belt is very powerful, and the original idea of building highly sustainable new places beyond London’s green belt still seems to be extremely important, but the gap between Nottingham and Derby is a few hundred yards. There, the issue is urban containment and definition. That is very important. Oxford is a freestanding community.
There are highly controversial plans at the moment to think about reviewing Oxford’s green belt, but the issues are very different there. Again, it is very difficult to come up with a one-size-fits-all review of green belt. I would say that, in London’s case, it is critical to things like urban cooling and climate change—issues that have not really been properly considered. I would say that we are very positive, though. The original concept for green belt 100 years ago was as a very active resource for local food production, local energy and much greater access for people. The idea that urban populations need to have contact with nature and should not have to travel too far to do that relates very closely now to the issues around the health evidence.

Finally, there is this piece of heresy that we have accepted completely that we will focus the entire demographic future of England on the development of London and the south-east. Liverpool has lost 50% of its population. Liverpool was engineered for a million people in 1938 and now has a population of 400,000. Immediately post-war, Belfast had 440,000 people. Now it has a population of 220,000.

The Chairman: That is a bit different.

Dr Ellis: It is, but all I would point out is that there is opportunity in other parts of the United Kingdom and other parts of England, which seems to us to be important to examine before we accept solely focusing on the south-east.

Q65 Baroness Rawlings: I was going to ask about garden cities and new cities, but you have explained it so clearly with 1903 and Letchworth. Following on from what Lord Inglewood said, basically in 1903 the country was very wealthy at that time. It was thriving. Milton Keynes developed and was successful. What I was not sure about—perhaps you could expand on this—was the point about 1947, which was after the war when money was scarce. In the 1950s and 1960s, money was quite scarce. There were horrors built in that period—massive concrete high-rise buildings that were really not very successful—and a massive amount of old buildings were just pulled down willy-nilly. There was the division of cities like Sheffield and a few others. It was not so wonderful then, and today rather successful developments have taken place around the country. I just wonder what your views are. I would be fascinated to hear.
Dr Ellis: It is a very good set of questions about what planning got wrong, and we have to be honest about that. The new towns programme post-war mostly did not include that kind of high-rise commitment. Interestingly, at the time the TCPA argued its heart out against the high-rise modernist move and lost that argument. We deployed Ruskin and they deployed Le Corbusier and we lost. The social consequences of that were very important. The garden city design ethic was very much a vernacular design, a humanist design in its broadest sense, and we forgot that; we decided to put that down. I would dearly love the architectural profession to take some of the responsibility for that, as well as town planning, because they bear it as well.

There is no doubt that—probably more than anything else, whether fairly or not—it was high-rise modernism that discredited the practice and ambition of town planning, because people associated it with being top-down, lacking any sense of human value and all those issues, which was tragic given where it comes from and what the core values are. The new towns programme is interesting. They struggled with a shortage of materials, for example, so they used a lot of concrete. There was a desperate housing shortage, so there is a sense of expediency about it, but it is worth pointing out that we built 34 places in 20 years that house 2.8 million people. Some of those places, economically and socially, remain very successful.

The difficulty was—and this is heart-breaking—they were all financially viable until the forced repayment of loans in 1980. In 1980, the Treasury insisted on the early repayment of the 60-year loans that had founded the new towns movement. Some of those assets have ended up with the HCA. The HCA still owns assets that were paid down. The new towns programme had to pay the penalty clauses for early repayment, even though they did not want to pay the loans back early. If the programme had continued and run its course, new towns would have had an economic model like Letchworth. They would have had an asset value. It seems to me that, rather than this being some sort of very strange and radical idea, this is really a very English, mutualised approach to building places but, because they do not have that asset value, they all age at the same time and they cannot reinvest in themselves. All of the built environment in new towns now needs a lot of work. It was all built in that 20-year period.
One final thing that is very important, though, is the car culture. Milton Keynes reflected the lesson from America and the fashion to build cities based on the private car. That proved to be a very short-lived idea in design terms, but with massive consequences for cities. Probably no other single design element has done more damage to UK cities than the urban motorway. It is extraordinarily socially divisive; it is environmentally damaging. Now, of course, we face this extraordinary process. The gap between ripping up our trams and trying to redeploy them was about 18 to 20 years—it was that short-sighted. When you pulled up the roads in Sheffield to relay the tram tracks, the old tram tracks were still there. That tells you something very important about this nation: we invented planning, we invented long-term vision and then seemed determined not to plan at the right spatial scale, to forget the visionary sense of it and to be completely obsessed with short-term cycles.

**The Chairman:** That is absolutely right. It reminds us of the thing we were reminded of in Birmingham—the concrete collar around the centre and the damage that did to the centre of Birmingham.

Thank you so much. It has been an absolutely fascinating session and we are very grateful to both of you. If you think that we are going off down quite the wrong track and you have some more suggestions for us, we would be more than willing to accept them and very grateful for them. Thank you.
Response from the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

CPRE Kent is the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England which is part of the national CPRE charity. Throughout Kent we represent 2,783 individual members, 189 Parish Councils and 40 local amenity groups and civic societies. We are glad to have the opportunity to offer our evidence to this Select Committee.

1. GENERAL.
   Our comments relate primarily to Question 3 insofar as National Policy, at least from a Kent perspective, is often perceived to be formulated or applied without regard to the full impact of housing development on the county’s already severely depleted water resources. There are also questions to be raised with respect to the inroads made on our remaining productive farmland.

2. WATER RESOURCES.

2.1. Potable water supplies to domestic and commercial premises are managed by reference to Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP) formulated by the water companies on the basis of short term (5 year) and long term (25 year) population and household forecasts. All of the four companies operating in Kent face a progressive decrease in the balance of supply vs demand, with continuing pressure on levels of service. This condition was recognised by the Environment Agency in their assessment of July 2013 which classified these and other companies in the south east as “Seriously Stressed”, a measure of the magnitude of the current deficit. And it has added further momentum to the compulsory metering programme as a key demand management measure.

2.2. It is recognised, however, that the full range of demand management and water efficiency options will not match the predicted deficit, and provision will have to be made for substantial capital investment in new sources of supply at some stage in the medium term. OFWAT, the industry regulator, will almost certainly challenge any capital schemes likely to incur what they would regard as excessive increases in charges to consumers. But unless the deficit is addressed, we must expect a further decrease in levels of service. To judge from past performance, most water companies would not be able to deliver their expected supply of water under the sort of drought conditions we can expect about once every 10 years. There have, of course, been new network connections to improve operational flexibility and facilitate inter-company transfers, but we have the lessons from relatively recent long droughts such as 2004-2007 which had wide impact, simultaneously affecting a number of neighbouring supply zones, thereby largely negating the effectiveness of mutual transfer arrangements.
2.3. The special circumstances of Kent, with its existing deficit and the prospect of an increasing impact of climate change, would seem to make this county particularly vulnerable to the additional demands that must come with further housing development. By way of example, South East Water, which serves approximately 800,000 customers in Kent, have forecast a peak period deficit of 25ML/day by 2025 and 55ML/day by 2040. This takes account of:

- a forecast 1% per annum population growth and corresponding housing requirement in line with DCLG, Local Authority and ONS estimates, and
- Continuing impact of climate change, with increasing rates of evapotranspiration losses.

However no allowance has been made for:

- increases in the migration component of population growth (expected to be relatively high in Kent)
- mid-term decreases in water company deployable drought output resulting from reductions in authorised abstraction imposed by EA in accordance with European Directives to restore sustainable abstraction and improve river and groundwater quality. Additional sources of supply will therefore need to be identified in the next WRMP period. Quantities have yet to be confirmed but could exceed 20ML/day
- a potential increase in demand arising from shale gas/oil exploration and development in Kent, comprising supplies for high pressure fracking operations and any loss of public supply capacity which could result from pollution of groundwater sources (which in Kent support 70 to 90% of the total demand).

These three components will add significantly to the out-turn deficit which could, in consequence, exceed 80ML/day.

2.4 No figures are to hand for the other 3 companies operating in Kent and Medway but the SEW WRMP can be taken as a fair representation of the overall supply/demand picture for Kent. Of the options for addressing the deficit, most are essentially short-term with an emphasis on demand management and water efficiency. As to any new sources of supply, some of the groundwater development schemes are speculative and not likely to achieve the anticipated net increase in deployable drought output.

2.5 Water companies are not statutory consultees but nonetheless have an obligation to provide a supply, irrespective of the state of resources in their supply areas. South East Water make the point in their draft WRMP 2014 that:

“Additional measures to manage demand for water and developing new water resources are still required for all zones throughout the lifetime of the plan.” Furthermore they make the

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42 Non technical summary page16, para 3.4  
43 Ibid, page 23
very telling point that “many of the longer term water resource solutions ... have long lead-in times and are potentially complex operations that carry a degree of planning and deliverability risk”.

2.6. This prompts the conclusion, from an NPPF perspective, that for Kent the only manageable component of the supply/demand deficit would seem to be housing growth. Unless this is more closely controlled, we will have to be reconciled to a progressive decrease in drought resilience and a corresponding down-grading of public supply levels of service.

3. LAND UPTAKE.
3.1 We are no longer immune from the increasing pressures on the world’s food production capacity. Britain has become heavily dependent on imports to fill the shortfall in our own agricultural output, which continues to grow with the advance of house building onto productive farmland. Approximately 70% of UK land is used for agriculture but we currently import 60% of all our food requirements (including 85% of our fresh fruit and vegetables).

3.2 Much of these imports are from countries now experiencing strong economic growth, and an increasing proportion of their exported produce will be diverted to home consumption. Some of these countries are also becoming major importers and competing with Britain for a wide range of high value produce, pushing up prices. The acceleration of global food demand has also resulted in increased use of water for irrigation in tropical regions, resulting in the progressive depletion of river and groundwater resources, with corresponding stress on rural communities; a process exacerbated by desertification and forest clearance. World food production can no longer keep pace with demand and we must expect to see commensurate increases in global prices.

3.3 This could be the spur for the UK to increase home production of food, but our options in this respect will decrease further with the encroachment of housing development onto productive farmland and grazing. The greatest pressures are in the south east, and Kent is particularly vulnerable with development targets for the county totalling approximately 140,000 households. This is equivalent, assuming plan densities of 25 dwellings/ha, to a land-take of at least 5,600 ha. If we take the total area of Kent’s productive farmland (including grazing) to be 100,000 ha (i.e. 25% of the county area) the planned land-take of 5,600 ha would therefore represent a potential loss approaching 6%; a considerable sacrifice, given the recommendation by the Government Chief Scientific Advisor that UK food production will need to be double that of current levels by 2040.

4. CONCLUSIONS: A NEW STRATEGY?
The combined challenges facing the sustainable use of our best and most versatile agricultural land and water resources call for a radical shift in the principles underpinning planning strategy, making the safeguarding of these resources a key factor in determining national policy for the built environment.
Questions & Answers

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

There needs to be transparent and accountable national, sub-regional, local and neighbourhood planning. Currently we do not have this.

Despite the Localism Act 2011, too many decisions are being made by central Government and the planning inspectorate. This is largely due to the inadequacy of the NPPF as an exposition of government policy, resulting in unpredictability in decision-taking and consequential distrust of the planning system. See below.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

There needs to be improvement in the coordination of national, sub-regional, local and neighbourhood planning so there is spatial coherence in plan-making and decision-taking. We need integrated connectivity between geographically related settlements. We ask, for example, “Why cannot Oxenholme to Windermere be like Munstertal in the Black Forest, Germany?” and “Why can’t the Ribble Valley be like Dornach, Switzerland?” There is also need for coherence in regulation to protect the environment; for example, we have had recent experience of the worrying gaps in planning and environmental regulation in regard to shale gas developments and the disposal of hazardous waste by landfill.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

No it does not. The NPPF is frustrating desirable outcomes for the development of the built environment and is particularly deficient in facilitating the production of local plans because of the malign influence of the 5-year housing land supply rule (5YHLS rule) as defined in paragraphs 47
and 49 and qualifying Note 11 of the NPPF. Savills\(^{44}\) show 222 of 293 LAs did not have a post-NPPF adopted local plan in place. Considerable delay is caused at the examination stage because inspectors are taking the view that housing numbers estimated by LPAs are too low.

Ministerial Statements encouraging the preferential use of brownfield land and the preservation of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land are rendered meaningless by the omission from the NPPF and the PG of any provision for the sequential allocation of land for housing.

In relation to Green Belt land, the Planning Practice Guidance (PG), while it makes provision for the exclusion of Green Belt land from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, it makes no comparable allowance when estimating the housing requirement/target (Objectively Assessed Need subject to policy-on). In consequence, it becomes progressively more difficult for LPAs to satisfy the 5YHLS rule which is a necessary condition for a sound local plan; this is because, as LPAs grant planning consents which are not implemented within the 5-year limit, the available land supply is progressively eroded.

For this reason, CPRE Lancashire urges that the NPPF and the PG make it clear that assessing the housing requirement/target is a two stage process (ref. Gallagher Homes [2014] EWHC1283 (Admin)). Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners\(^{45}\) also evidence that inspectors responsible for examining local plans are now neglecting the second stage, so that the housing requirement/target is actually Objectively Assessed Need subject to policy-off, rather than to policy-on as required for implantation of the second stage. In 2015, 71% of local plans that were adopted made provision for more houses than was required by the DCLG sub-national household projections. Because of this over estimation of houses, restricted land (e.g. Green Belt) is being released for housing without due regard to the protections afforded to Green Belt land by the NPPF, the PG and Ministerial Statements.

The result is the needless loss to future generations of natural habitats and their flora, fauna, beautiful rural landscapes and precious high quality farmland, while depressed urban areas remain neglected and without the provision of new or refurbished housing accommodation of the right size and tenure as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and embodied in a well-considered, community approved, local plan. Anecdotal evidence\(^{46}\) is that there is no longer a market in brownfield land in Lancashire due to the market being saturated by planning consents for greenfield sites. This is a problem for public sector organisations with land holding interests, particularly in Lancashire where there is in excess of 5,000 hectares of vacant brownfield land\(^{47}\).

\(^{44}\) Comments from a surveyor who represents public sector organisations in Lancashire
\(^{45}\) CPRE, 2014 From Wasted Space to Living Spaces: The availability of brownfield land for housing development in England
\(^{46}\) Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, 1987
A contributory reason why this undesirable result is happening is that the NPPF is unclear about the definition of its central concept namely ‘sustainable’ development. Unhelpfully, the NPPF states that sustainable development is development conforming to the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole - in our view this is a circular statement and therefore meaningless. In the preamble to the NPPF, reference is made to Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly definition of sustainable development, but the fundamental principle embodied in the resolution is not reflected in the policies of the NPPF itself. As a priority, we believe that the NPPF should be clear on its definition of sustainable development (after all, it is the only kind of development with which the NPPF is concerned) and we ask that it is based on the Brundtland Commission Report 48 in combination with the three roles of development, namely economic, social and environmental. Since the introduction of the NPPF, CPRE Lancashire would be hard pressed to find a single application that has been refused due to the site being located in an unsustainable position, in the sense that access to essential amenities such as shopping, schools and health care was totally dependent on the use of the car.

LPAs can cannot build houses - they can only allocate suitable land for housing, and grant planning permission for sustainable development. This is because LPAs cannot raise finance to build houses themselves, yet the criterion for LA-compliance with the 5YHLS rule is based on the number of houses completed within 5-year time limit. Present policies mean that large developers have an incentive to acquire substantial land banks, a) because it enhances the book value of their assets, and b) they are able to control the supply of housing at a rate to maintain the premium selling price and hence the highest return on their investment. The system favors large developers and has all but squeezed out smaller developers and builders needed for the development of the very many small sites (many of them brownfield) which are of no interest to the large developers.

These are not new considerations. Historically high rates of housebuilding have only been achieved when LAs have been able to build houses by borrowing against their own assets.

On the assumption that the Government will not change the 5YHLS rule, CPRE Lancashire advocates measures that will inhibit land banking, viz.

1) An LPA, in determining a planning application, should be able to take into account the record of housing completions of an applicant with a significant number of extant planning permissions for the same housing-market area (as was the case with PPS3 2006: Housing).

2) As an incentive to developers to build out housing permissions within the 5-year period, failure to do so should incur a financial penalty, e.g. the payment of the council tax and possibly the New Homes Bonus in respect of each house yet to be completed.

3) A developers should have the right to surrender a planning permission so that the land involved can be restored to the housing land supply and thereby become available to another developer.

48 Shelter, July 2014 Missed opportunity: Changes to public investment in housing
CPRE Lancashire believes the following factors are more important than others.

National planning policy ought to ensure a sequential development of land to ensure brownfield land is routinely brought back into use and recycled rather than remaining in an under-used, or worse, in a vacant and neglected condition. Greenfield development ought to be an easier option. CPRE Lancashire welcomes the announcement that a Brownfield Package will provide funding and powers to unlock the potential of some brownfield sites, but it is in reality modest in scale and the ambition for brownfield must be more fully enshrined in policy if it is to be successful.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

See answer to Q2 concerning the need for a comprehensive spatial perspective.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

National planning policy should plan for 50 years ahead, but local planning needs to be more medium terms for 25 to 30 years.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The Government should consider the recommendations of the Rural Affordable Housing Review49 and stop ‘Right to Buy’ as a priority. The selling off of public sector housing is exacerbating the affordable housing shortage.

Powers for LAs to deliver houses is important. LAs should be able to build houses if this is the measure on which their performance is assessed. This includes being empowered to borrow money to build houses, for sale or long term management by housing associations. A Shelter50 report shows had public investment in housing been maintained, England could have built one million more homes than it actually has.

Changes to Compulsory Purchase Law are required in order that LPAs can acquire brownfield sites (contaminated or land-banked) to unlock potential (remove constraints,

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49 National Audit Office Report 2014, The impact of funding reductions on local authorities
prepare for development, sell with outline planning permission, planning gain to be reinvested to unlock further brownfield). Owners could be given the opportunity to develop sites prior to CPOs being progressed. Former owners should not to benefit from CPO enabled development.

7. **How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**

   Development should not be permitted in the flood plain.

We advocate ‘Smart Growth’ based on good urban design, sound town planning and sustainable development principles and recognition of importance of interdependent transport networks to ensure public transport and sustainable modes, such as cycling and walking, are a realistic option for commuting and other activities.

8. **To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?**

   Refurbishment and modernization of older housing stock of architectural merit or merely sound construction is far preferable to demolition; it is environmentally sustainable and helps protect not only the historic fabric but also the social integrity of areas like Salford’s Seedley and Langworthy.

   In the evaluation of LPA performance on net-housing supply, houses brought back into use should be counted as a credit, not as a debit as happens at present (cf. 5YHLS rule).

**Skills and design**

9. **Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?**

   LPAs are under resourced and are suffering disproportionately as a result of the reduction of government support to LPAs. The role played by LPAs is too important for this to continue.

10. **Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?**

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There is much consideration of housing quantity, but not enough concerning suitability and quality.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

See answer to Q1 concerning mistrust of the planning system.

Communities when engaged need to see evidence that their concerns have been addressed, and, where appropriate, community opposition should be a material consideration of sufficient weight to warrant refusal of an application.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Communities need transparency and accountability in the planning system. When the consultation for an application includes a recognised holiday period, the period should be extended by a fortnight.

**Financial measures**

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Refer to answers to Q6 concerning ability of LAs to borrow money to build houses, and to Q9 concerning the poor resourcing of planning departments.

05 October 2015
Maidstone District Committee

Response to the Select Committee on National policy for the built environment

Q 1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Response: Decisions on overall needs are currently taken at District level, which is too low, particularly on housing targets where build rates can fluctuate wildly as estates come on stream, erroneously affecting projections for future needs. County level can be more strategic, and is much more satisfactory. National policy should play a greater role in getting the balance right between housing, infrastructure, green spaces and ensuring brownfield first.

Q 2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Response: Greater recognition that the English countryside is one of the country’s greatest assets would help. Also a reduction of the significance of the economic aspects and the Treasury inputs which can overwhelm the other considerations in place-making.

Q 3. Does the NPPF provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are there some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

Response: All “needs” are based only on projections, which produces the bizarre result that the more a District builds the greater its “need” becomes, and if build rates are reduced or delayed then “need” reduces. This is where requirements across Counties rather than Districts would help to smooth out unnecessary fluctuations. The need for a District to have identify a five year supply of land, which is not well defined, distorts the planning process as it seems to be taken as a “free-for-all” by developers where it is not seen to be met. Brownfield first needs to be emphasised.
Q 4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Response: We are unaware of any spatial policy. One should be developed to reduce the north/south divide and the current London-centric situation.

Q 5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Response: We believe that ten years is a realistic working maximum.

Q 6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address the current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Response: Interventions such as permitting redundant offices to be converted to residential, more freedom to extend existing dwellings (including upwards) are helpful. Limiting the time for developers to start building properly after gaining planning permission, such as three years, would help.

Q 7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Response: Both sustainability and resilience ultimately mean that the quality of life and wellbeing of people are recognised as being the most important aspects of development, and therefore all facilities are required to be built alongside housing, including green spaces.

Q 8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Response: All development should be grounded around the historic environment to ensure social well-being. Greater protection is needed.
Q 9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Response: Planners generally do not plan, they respond to planning requests. Developers put forward plans only where they have acquired options or have bought land, which may be far from the most suitable places. Surveyors and architects work to the requirements of developers. Planning needs to change to being more constructive and include local well-being as a basis for decisions.

Q 10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and “place-making” at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Response: More detailed character assessments required to be carried out to serve as guidelines.

Q 11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those that live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Response; certainly not – planners need to have much more responsibility for assessing the effects on the well-being of the current population with new developments. It should be an explicit item in their job descriptions, which it appears not to be at present.

Q 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Response: As in Q11 above, planners need improved job descriptions, and have consultations made compulsory. Pre-application consultations must be made public rather than the cosy private discussions that currently occur, which seem to result often in the planner taking some “ownership” of proposals.
Q 13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Response; Developers should be restricted from land banking with development potential. Planning approvals should require genuine start-up within three years. Ways of offsetting any extra costs in developing brownfield sites should be explored. Self-build schemes should be encouraged.

03 October 2015
Canterbury Society – Written Evidence (BEN0107)

1.1 In presenting our evidence we have aimed to answer the questions which the Select Committee listed in the Call for Written Evidence. So our responses below are set out following each numbered question. We have not sought to answer all the questions listed by the Select Committee but only those where the Canterbury Society has relevant experience, highlighting our key points with a bold font.

1.2 The Canterbury Society is the city’s leading civic society, bringing together a diverse group of local people with a shared sense of civic pride and an interest in improving the built environment and the quality of life of local residents. The Society comments regularly on planning applications, is engaged in consultations over the Local Plan, works to enhance the built environment and has produced its own Vision for the Future of Canterbury. It is a founder member of Civic Voice, the national body for civic societies in England, with 275 civic societies representing 75,000 individual members. Representatives of the Canterbury Society would be happy to appear before the Select Committee if that would be helpful.

**Question 3.** Does the NPPF provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so what should be prioritised and why?

3.1 Paragraphs 6 to 10 of the NPPF define sustainable development as “a balance between the economic, social, and environmental roles of development” and states that these roles cannot be carried out in isolation from each other. Specifically paragraph 10 states that: “Plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.”

3.2 Our experience in Canterbury is that central government places undue pressure on local authorities to give the utmost priority to economic considerations, and to downgrade social and environmental impacts. Central government policy makers seem to take the view that sanctioning development, regardless of local circumstances, will feed through to a better quality of life. This is a questionable hypothesis to say the least. In our view local planning authorities and the communities they represent should be allowed to decide for themselves, within a broad framework, how best to interpret the requirements of the NPPF in a way that recognises local opportunities and constraints.

3.3 This cannot be achieved without meaningful participation by the local community in the Local Plan process at a much earlier stage than is presently the case; we refer again to this issue in our response to Q12 of the List of Questions.

**Question 4.** Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?
4.1 The second of these two questions implies that the answer to the first question is already known! The NPPF is certainly lacking specific references to spatial objectives but much of the content is of an implicitly spatial nature – as is inherent in planning. In the Local Plan (LP) for the Canterbury District there was almost no explicit spatial strategy. The problem here is that there is a conflict between having a spatial plan that attempts to optimise location versus the NPPF demands which simply state that a LP must be “sound”. To be sound is effectively saying that the content of the Plan must be must be “passable” or “adequate”. To achieve these rather minimal aims means that optimum spatial considerations can be ignored, as indeed can the optimisation of any element of the LP. There is thus no compulsion to be cognisant of spatial perspectives.

4.2 In the case of the Canterbury District LP there was no compulsion to undertake proper, spatially variable, traffic/transport analyses, though this would seem to be an essential spatial element in planning. Canterbury suffers from severe traffic congestion round its small medieval core. The LP proposes 4000 new homes located in one quadrant of the city, meaning that the current levels of congestion will be significantly exacerbated.

4.3 However, strategic housing and employment land allocations across the whole district were selected solely on the perceived deliverability of large greenfield sites. The limited traffic modelling that was undertaken indicated that these sites would again result in increased traffic congestion but this was ignored by the PINS inspectorate.

4.4 We would propose that a strong spatial element must be explicitly stated in the NPPF and that it should be compulsory for planning authorities to optimise locations for built developments.

**Question 5.** Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 There is no optimum timescale for planning our future built environment – this depends upon the facet of the built environment being examined. For example, a new high speed train link needs a very long term time span compared with smaller scale planning provision. We believe that a 10 year time span is to be preferred, but with an important review at year 5. In order to ease pressure on local authorities, perhaps there could be overlapping tranches of planning for development in process, so that they were not occupying the same 10 year periods. For instance, employment land considerations could form an individual tranche, housing a separate one, the natural environment a third, and so on. A main advantage of this would be to ease the huge pressure felt by local planning authorities under the present 10 year LP cycle. Clearly smaller scale Examinations in Public could take place for each tranche. A well-managed Planning Department could readily integrate the work on various tranches where required. Contingency arrangements would need to be in place for when “emergency” planning is required.
Question 6  What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 There are several ways in which the government could intervene to address current issues of housing supply. Chief among these would be the initiation of a programme for the building of affordable housing by local councils or housing associations. This would require central government support, as it did in the past when the country was faced with a shortage of housing which people could afford.

6.2 Action on empty homes could also help. There are many empty houses which could be renovated to provide decent homes. Some valuable work has already been done, but we would hope that the work of the Empty Homes Agency will be supported and extended. One problem is that VAT is charged on housing repairs, but not on the building of new homes. The effect of this is to increase the incentive to build from scratch, as opposed to repairing existing stock.

6.3 The incentive to let empty houses lie vacant is increased by the reduction of council tax in many areas. In order to increase the use of such homes, council tax should always be levied on empty properties.

6.4 Inequality of income and wealth has led to a situation where some people can afford to own two or three homes while others cannot afford a home at all. Some of these second/third homes are in areas of acute housing need, such as London. Others are in rural areas where average incomes are low and housing costs have risen. It might be hard to devise a system for charging higher council tax on such second homes, but if this could be done it would go some way to redress the current housing crisis in these areas.

6.5 Action on housing supply should focus on building more affordable housing, bringing empty homes into use and limiting second homes in areas of housing need.

Question 7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1 In order to be both sustainable and resilient the built environment needs to achieve high qualitative standards. For too long new housing stock has been mass produced to standards that, compared to most of western Europe, are of very poor quality. Here quality is represented by materials used, quality of workmanship, density of dwellings, and the amount of open space and “natural” planting of shrubs and trees. Estates have tended to be both sprawling and lacking in variety or any conception of “attractiveness“.
7.2 It is easy to think in Canterbury of several developments that were so shoddily built that after just a few years they have deteriorated so badly that one almost suspects that builders or developers are constructing with a view to built-in obsolescence. The buildings we have in mind will be virtual “slums” within a few decades. Developers and local authorities must adopt much higher design standards and insist that these are adhered too. Too often we see development briefs that paint a glossy picture of what is to be built, but which turn out to be “mirages” dreamed up to draw us in.

7.3 Higher design standards also require that qualitative energy efficiency standards are built into all new dwellings (and other buildings). Some planning authorities, such as Woking Borough Council, already insist that new dwellings are built to what used to be Level 6. This ensures real sustainability in terms of impact on the environment. We deplore the fact that the government has withdrawn the Code for Sustainable new homes, except for legacy cases. Additionally, it would be immensely beneficial if the retrofitting of older buildings with enhanced insulation, plus efficient heating, plumbing and lighting, became obligatory. This could be achieved via the aid of grants, or interest free loans to be repaid over a suitable time scale, and this investment would have a strong positive effect on the local economy.

7.4 Creating sustainable dwellings depends on local authorities being able to enforce high standards in the energy efficiency of new buildings and to encourage the more efficient insulation of existing dwellings.

Question 8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

8.1 The heritage based tourist economy directly accounts for at least £5 billion and 134,000 jobs across the UK (Oxford Economics, 2013). However, in a place like Canterbury heritage plays an even more important role, attracting some two million tourists and being part of the reason why around 37,000 students choose to study in the city. Despite this, the historic environment often seems to be neglected, with priority given to new developments and short term commercial interests.

8.2 Civic societies in a number of historic cathedral cities have become increasingly concerned about the tension between the conservation of the historic fabric of the city and the current drive for growth. Many of these cities are threatened with over-large developments, which endanger the very qualities which make them so attractive. This concern has led to some excellent research (Green Balance 2014) and to the setting up the Civic Voice Historic Cathedral Cities Alliance, which will be launched at the Civic Voice annual conference at the end of October 2015.
8.3 The value of heritage means that protecting and conserving the historic built environment is vital. The following specific changes would demonstrate the government’s real commitment to heritage and quality of place:

a. Urge local authorities to ensure they have the necessary expertise in conservation and that councillors understand the value of heritage
b. Require every local authority to produce a Place Improvement Strategy
c. Strengthen policy to support collaborative community planning for major developments and local plans
d. Enable local authorities to control use classes and permitted development rights to meet local need

8.4 Addressing these issues does not have to be at the expense of economic growth. On the contrary the measures we are proposing would protect and enhance the historic framework and bring about a revival of our towns and cities, making development more acceptable to local people, rebalancing the economy, unlocking the potential of heritage and helping places retain graduates and attract visitors and investors.

8.5 Research has shown that the most important factor affecting attention to the historic environment is the cultural approach of the local authority. It is vital to impress upon local authorities the importance of protecting the historic built environment to enhance the quality of life and prosperity of towns and cities.

**Question 9.** Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How do we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

9.1 We consider that the issues raised in question 9 are very relevant to the poor quality outcomes that can be seen in our built environment today.

9.2 Our experience in Canterbury is that the local authority planning department has lost much of its expertise over the last 5 years or so, especially in the areas of conservation, enforcement and tree preservation. The reductions in central government funding have forced local authorities to severely downgrade the number and quality of the staff they can engage in planning, shaping and managing the built environment. Planning has now become largely a matter of numbers and meeting targets rather than quality of outcomes. Central government policy is focused on economic growth and speed of decision making and whilst the NPPF makes reference to the necessity of good design local authorities no longer seem to have the resources to implement these parts of the NPPF. This pursuit of economic growth above all other considerations has resulted in the abandonment of any holistic approach to the planning of the built environment in our towns and cities.
9.3 There is no shortage nationally of skills amongst planners, architects and engineers but these are now to be found mainly in the private sector. In the private sector these skills are employed first and foremost to deliver profits and shareholder value. A holistic approach to the delivery of quality in the built environment is low down the order of priorities. Central government needs to ensure that local authorities have sufficient financial resources to enable them to deliver quality as well as quantity as the NPPF envisages.

9.4 Not only is there a lack of skills available to local authorities from amongst their officials but there is an equally noticeable lack of any appreciation for the quality of the built environment amongst elected council members. We have observed in Canterbury that in the absence of any expertise themselves, councillors often rely on officer recommendations to cover their own skills deficits. For the reason given above this is a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs as neither officers or elected members have the skill sets to deal with these important issues.

9.5 It is important to give local authorities the necessary resources to deliver the requirements set out in Chapter 7 of the NPPF and to provide proper training for elected members, many of whom have never heard of the NPPF.

**Question 10** Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

10.1 Chapter 7 of the NPPF (56-68) Requiring Good Design states: “The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.”

10.2 The Canterbury Society considers that the issues raised in question 10 are at the heart of so many poor quality design outcomes that can be seen in our towns and cities. Local authority planning departments have lost much of their design expertise over the last 5 years or so. The reductions in central government funding have forced local authorities to severely downgrade the number and quality of the staff that they can engage in assessing design. This, coupled with the relentless pursuit of economic considerations above all others has resulted in almost complete disregard for design issues in the consideration of planning applications. These two factors taken together account for a noticeable reduction in examples of good quality design.

10.3 This is particularly noticeable in a small historic city such as Canterbury where we have seen recently seen controversial planning applications nodded through at committee despite considerable public concern about the design issues. In one particular case, where the local authority were both property owner and planning authority, officers overrode design problems in favour of short term financial gain, despite the proposal being in an important conservation area within the city walls and close to the Cathedral Precincts. At
the planning committee meeting most members criticised the design then proceeded to
grant consent. In this particular case, it was clear that elected members, on their own
admission, had no expertise on design in the built environment and were unaware of the
guidance in the NPPF.

10.4 We would recommend that in the case of Local Plan allocations and large scale
development proposals, or where the quality of design is a matter of public concern,
planning authorities should be required to undertake an Independent Design Review and
to have regard to the recommendations of the design review panel, as set out in
Paragraph 62 of the NPPF. It would also be good to adopt design standards such as the
Greater London Housing Design Guide.

Question 11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including
decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built
environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration
of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and
upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 It has been striking to see how little consideration of health issues there is in the Local
Plans currently being prepared by local authorities. The quality of the built environment
impacts on health in a variety of ways. Air pollution is responsible for much morbidity, in
the form of chest and lung disease, and for increased mortality. Poor housing impacts on
health and welfare, while those who are homeless have a much reduced expectation of life.

11.2 Now that Public Health has been moved into local authorities there is a real possibility
that these sorts of health inequalities could be ameliorated.

11.3 We would urge central government to ensure that local authorities see the public
health input as crucial to the development of Local Plans.

Question 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision
making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any
barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed? Page 3 of 4

12.1 Currently there are many barriers to public engagement with the processes which
shape the built environment. Many civic societies, including the Canterbury Society, have
experience of a pattern of community engagement which essentially involves consultation
after, rather than before, decisions are made.

12.2 Typically local authority officers work on a given issue, produce a draft report, discuss
it with elected members – and then invite the public to comment on the draft report.
Comments then come in from interested members of the public. However, by this stage so
much work has gone into the report that all those involved are very reluctant to make any
serious changes. The result is that those members of the public who did engage see that
their comments have had little impact on what is finally proposed. The end result of such ‘public consultation’ is public disillusionment.

12.3 We would suggest that councils be urged to, ‘Consult on the question and not the answer’. That is to say, consultation should take place at the time when the issue is still being discussed, questions are still open and solutions to problems have not yet been firmed up.

**Question 13** Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are their financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place making by private sector developers?

13.1 The quality of the built environment is not just about the design of buildings but whether the built environment we create adds to the quality of life for the people who live and work in it. Those who create our built environment need to develop this wider vision rather than a narrow view based solely on financial considerations. Creating built environments that communities enjoy and value is well within the skill sets of those concerned but more often than not finance is an obstacle to providing the holistic solutions that communities need. These might include social infrastructure such as schools, medical centres, community buildings, parks, playing fields community woodland and so on.

13.2 When a local authority grants planning permission for residential development on previously undeveloped land the value of the land can increase anywhere from around £8,000 an acre to £1.5m to £2m per acre or more in the south east of England outside London. This increase, though subject to general taxation, is released to the landowner, whilst the future liability to support the new communities that are created is left with the local authority. In a free market economy the competition for land with planning permission keeps land values and house prices high and this acts as a constraint on the quality of the built environment.

If a fair proportion of the increase in land value were captured and managed locally for the benefit of improving the built environment and the quality of life for local communities this could produce a step change in the quality of our built environments.

13.3 Trying to capture land value in the past through such mechanisms as Development Land Tax have failed but if we are to address the challenges that we currently face to create better quality built environments then we need to introduce policies into the NPPF which enable local authorities and the communities they serve to capture locally a fair proportion of the increase in land value. This can be used to secure some of the wider built environment policies in the NPPF.
13.4 The Select Committee might consider recommending that a Royal Commission be set up to investigate how a proportion of the large increases in land values created from the granting of planning permissions can be captured to improve the built environment.

13.5 The reform of council tax is long over-due. At present this is a highly regressive tax, in that poorer households pay a higher proportion of their income than richer ones. The bandings have not been revised since 1991, despite the enormous rise in the value of property. The result is that those living in a house worth £5 million can pay the same council tax as those in a house worth a tenth as much.

13.6 Extending the bandings for council tax, so increasing the council tax paid for larger houses, and charging council tax on empty houses, could provide more income for hard-pressed local authorities. This in turn would enable them to do more to enhance the built environment.

05 October 2015
1. About Care & Repair England

1.1. Care & Repair England is an independent charitable organisation set up in 1986 which aims to improve older people’s housing. Its vision is that all older people have decent living conditions in a home of their own choosing. It innovates, develops, promotes and supports practical housing initiatives and the related policy and practice which enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they choose, particularly for older people living in poor or unsuitable private sector housing.

2. The focus of Care & Repair England’s evidence

2.1. The focus of this evidence is the failure to take account of the 'demographic revolution' underway in England in the fields related to shaping the built environment - planning, architecture, building regulation and control. We would draw the Committee's attention to the headline conclusion of the House of Lords 'Ready for Ageing?' report (2013):

"The UK population is ageing rapidly, but we have concluded that the Government and our society are woefully underprepared. Longer lives can be a great benefit, but there has been a collective failure to address the implications and without urgent action this great boon could turn into a series of miserable crises."

2.2. Our central argument is that there is a critical need to shape a built environment to support positive, active ageing and that failure to do so will result in costs to society eg through higher health and social care costs.

2.3. We note that the aspiration of the vast majority of older people is to live safely and independently at home for as long as possible, usually in general/ mainstream housing. People wish to remaining socially engaged, to get out and about in their neighbourhoods, stay involved with family, friends and the wider community. The shape of the built environment is critical to achieving that aspiration.

2.4. The design, quality and suitability of homes and the wider built environment in enabling safe, healthy ageing is of paramount importance in terms of public expenditure as well as individuals’ quality of life. There is a causal, quantifiable relationship between housing conditions and many of the most common chronic &
acute health conditions. Failure to plan a built environment for an ageing population thus has a direct impact on the NHS.

2.5. Housing conditions have a significant and quantifiable effect on health. The Building Research Establishment quantifies the costs to the NHS of specific aspects of poor housing as over £1.3b pa. Many of the chronic health conditions experienced by older people have a causal link to, or are exacerbated by, particular housing conditions. This housing/health link becomes more important with age, as people become more prone to trips and falls and more susceptible to cold or damp related health conditions.
3. Questions posed by the Committee: *Policymaking, integration and coordination*

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

3. (Q1) No, they are not.
   (Q2) Policy is not co-ordinated and there are particularly weak links between housing/planning and health, the latter bearing the consequences of a poor built environment.

   National minimum housing standards are necessary to create an all-ages accessible, inclusive built environment that supports inclusion and healthy active ageing at home. As a starting point this would require all new homes to be built to a new minimum set of design standards. These would build on those originally created as 'Lifetime Homes Standards' and also apply the large international evidence base (eg WHO) concerning health and the built environment.

   3.1. Only 4% of UK homes meet even the basic accessibility standard (*Level access, flush threshold, wide doors & circulation space, WC at entrance level*). This is in stark contrast to the growing number of people with restricted mobility and whose lives would be transformed by accessible buildings.

   3.2. The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing [ELSA Wave 6] reported that 46% of women and 36% of men aged 75-79yrs received help with mobility (defined in terms of activities of daily living - washing, dressing, preparing a meal etc). This rises to 71 & 55 for those over 80yrs. Most of these activities can be made easier through home adaptations / built environment modification.

   3.3. The legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act to make the public/commercial built environment accessible has made a very significant difference. Whilst the Lifetime Homes Standards' (LTHS) obligations previously placed upon social housing providers [under Code for Sustainable Homes] and requirements for all new homes in London, has result in the building of more homes which meet LTHS, this will now cease outside London.

   3.4. Exhorting the building industry to apply such standards without legal obligation has resulted in no discernible level of adoption - rather the reverse as ever smaller, and increasingly un-adaptable homes are built.
3.5. In a competitive market place leaving each individual local authority to make the case for a higher design standard in their locality is both wasteful in terms of duplication and also unrealistic in areas outside London and the Southeast where land is at a premium and where local authorities are competing to attract builders of new homes.

4. Questions posed re: National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

4.1. (Q3, 4,5) There needs to be a specific requirement in the NPPF for all planning decisions to specifically address population ageing and to make homes and neighbourhoods healthy places for all ages, setting minimum space and design standards for domestic dwellings.

4.2. At the current rate of replacement, homes would have to last many hundreds of years, hence anyone involved in shaping the built environment need to be tasked with making homes as flexible as possible, rather than the current 'niche' build/market segmentation which presumes that people will move home each time they reach a new phase of life (eg, form life partnerships, have children, grow older) rather than being able to live in a home long term in a future shape of society that we can only begin to guess.

5. Questions posed: Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?
8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

5.1. Please note points made in (4) above re key role of government in setting housing standards, taking the long view concerning resilience to change/ sustainability, creating flexible places.

5.2. With regard to making best use of the existing housing stock/ built environment assets, there needs to be a fresh look at the role of government in stock maintenance, addressing disrepair and area regeneration. This issue has fallen totally off the policy radar in recent years, but this disconnection brings risk of stock decline.

6. **Questions posed: Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

6.1. The primary driver for those involved in shaping the built environment today, particularly the building of homes, is profitability. There are decreasing government controls over the quality and standards of the built environment, particularly housing, with regard to addressing mental and physical health of future occupants, especially with regard to the ageing of the population and there is a lack of vision about creating positive, sustainable, mixed communities for all ages. Hence we build amongst the smallest homes in Europe, which are poorly adapted to ageing in both size and construction, particularly at the 'lower' end of the market.

6.2. A significant body of international knowledge and research about creating, designing and building healthy, inclusive, flexible places is not utilised.

7. **Financial measures**

Q13 Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

7.1. The current major programme of disposal of public land offers a unique opportunity to lock in considerations of long term social gain from any planned building on
public land disposed of. Unfortunately, the primary driver for the programme is to secure the greatest immediate financial return (ie the highest price) with no consideration of long term consequences.

7.2. With regard to 'encouraging' better design & place making, nearly two decades of exhorting the private sector to do so without regulation eg. lifetime homes standards, has resulted in minimal take up - it is only when a standard becomes mandatory that we see widespread application. In commercial terms this makes absolute sense.

7.3. We are also told anecdotally that unless there is a 'level playing field' when it comes to setting local standards for new homes, areas outside London/ SE which have to work very hard to attract builders will not feel able to set higher local standards if the response of developers is likely to be to go to another locality where such standards are not required.

8. **In summary the Committee is asked to consider:**

1. The importance of creating a built environment that supports healthy ageing at a time of unprecedented demographic change.

2. The link between the quality of the built environment and the long term costs to the state of housing/ built environment that is low quality, fails to support health and well being, noting that improved national, mandatory standards bring corresponding health/ social care gains.

*05 October 2015*
Are there any further measures – such as financial incentives or initiatives, and changes to national planning policy – which might help to encourage greater provision of suitable housing?

1. We would suggest that a 'carrot and stick' approach is required to bring about significant changes to the built environment to make it both healthy and older age friendly.

2. More than a decade of exhorting leading players (builders, designers, planners etc) to build homes that are inclusive, accessible and healthy has resulted in minimal discernible improvements.

3. The sea change in making the wider built environment accessible came about as a result of the Disability Discrimination Act, and the application of Lifetime Homes Standards came about primarily in social rented housing where it was a requirement through the Code for Sustainable Homes, whereas it was applied across the board in London where it became a minimum standard requirement for all new homes across the capital.

4. Only nationally set, legally required, enforceable Building Regulations would create a set of minimum standards that all builders have to apply. Only national standards would create a level playing field for all home building in all locations. As most major national builders of domestic dwellings use a 'pattern book' approach, this would have the benefit of creating a nationally applicable minimum 'pattern' that they could apply in all locations.

5. This national approach is also necessary as it creates a level playing field for local authorities, particularly those who have to work hard to attract developers to their area. As things currently stand in areas which are considered less attractive for new housing
development there is a perverse incentive to drive down standards / requirements. As one local authority in the north put it, ‘If we set Lifetime Homes Standards for all new homes in [yy] the developers will just go over the boundary and build in [xx authority] where they don't set that standard’.

6. Even if the current system for setting local accessibility standards of residential buildings is retained, there is an urgent need to change the assessment criteria so that social gain in the longer term becomes central to the analysis, rather than profitability for builders.

7. Changes to National Planning Policy Framework which go beyond and strengthen the current limited mention of creating healthy places to live, backed up by specific Guidance - possibly Public Health England supported - would help to create a new national vision for a healthy wider built environment, which encompasses housing and neighbourhoods.

8. Likewise, specific requirements in the NPPF to create a built environment which supports independent and healthy later life, rather than the general clause concerning addressing demographic change, would be an important addition and strengthen the drivers for change.

9. Large scale disposal of public land is being undertaken by the Homes and Communities Agency. We would put the case that social gain related conditions should be attached to such disposals in order to make best use of this national resource to create healthy places to live, thereby generating long term social gain eg reduced healthcare costs (currently the priority is to maximise income receipts).

10. At a local level, the role of the Director of Public Health and Health and Well Being Boards could be enhanced with regard to having oversight and powers over of planning proposals and standards of new build homes. This would need to be resourced but Public Health England is well placed, with access to a strong international evidence base for such an approach.

11. Local Government clearly plays a critical role in shaping local homes and neighbourhoods. However, with current funding constraints there are significant local issues with regard to powers and capacity to enforce even the current local building standards and planning. National government needs to work with the LGA and others to consider how they can support implementation and improve the national framework for planning and enforcement.

12. Taking the long view, there needs to be a change to the training of planners, designers, architects which embeds consideration of health and wellbeing and the connections to the built environment, alongside the implications of population ageing and creating inclusive places, as a core part of basic training in all of these professions.
13. On the 'carrot' side of the equation raising the profile of the benefits of creating healthy, older age friendly homes and neighbourhoods a national competition, maybe a partnership between Dept of Health, DCLG and the LGA, to highlight good places to grow old would be one approach. There could be sub-categories such as shaping neighbourhoods, visionary planning policy, building inclusive, healthy new homes and wider regeneration.

14. This could build on and extend the current NHS England & Public Health England supported initiative to drive the creation of Healthy New Towns and extend the remit to address population ageing and improvements to current towns, cities and villages.

15. However, we would reiterate the point that small scale, isolated examples of good practice, whilst useful, are unlikely to drive major change at a national scale unless backed up with a strong, national government backed vision and mandatory requirements.

15 December 2015
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Ms Sue Adams OBE, Chief Executive, Care & Repair England and Mr Paul Gamble, Chief Executive, Habinteg

Q66 The Chairman: Good morning. Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on the National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript, where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please?

Sue Adams: My name is Sue Adams. I am the chief executive of the charity Care & Repair England, and I chair the Housing and Ageing Alliance.

Paul Gamble: I am Paul Gamble. I am chief executive of Habinteg Housing Association, which, in the context of today’s meeting, has been the steward and developer of the Lifetime Homes standard and the wheelchair housing design guide.

Q67 The Chairman: Thank you very much. We are looking forward to a very interesting session. We are keen to have good evidence on ageing, disability and housing because this has been fairly seminal to the whole outlook that we hope to improve with our report, when we produce it in March. We are very glad to have you here.
The first question is, what are the main built environment challenges faced by the ageing population, and how well co-ordinated is the response to these challenges at the national level? Also, what are your ideas on what is likely to happen in the next 30 years—not year by year, but where are we likely to end up?

**Sue Adams**: The built environment roughly divides into the external built environment and the personal—the housing built environment. We have seen strides made in the commercial and public environments through the Disability Discrimination Act, which was not an Act with improvements specifically directed at an ageing population, but because older people are more likely to have mobility problems, reduced vision, reduced hearing—sadly, all the things that tend to come with age—the external built environment improvements have been very beneficial to that ageing population. What we have not seen are any major improvements to the personal housing stock. Currently, we have a housing stock where only 4% of the housing contains the four basic accessibility criteria.

**The Chairman**: What was the percentage?

**Sue Adams**: Four per cent.

**The Chairman**: I did not know whether it was 4% or 44%.

**Sue Adams**: Sadly not. Very often, we think ageing is a minority issue when it comes to the built environment, but a third of all households are already occupied by a head of household who is over 65, and that is going to grow. To actually create a built environment for ageing is a majority issue; it is not a small minority issue.

The other big issue around the challenges is that it is not just about having the right number of boxes for people with particular disabilities and physical limitations; it is about creating spaces that are visitable, where people can be included. It is about having a built environment where you can go and stay with your daughter when you are not very well, visit your friends and help to look after each other. The really big challenge for an ageing population is to create spaces where people remain less isolated, can still be socially engaged and involved, and can look after themselves. As much as we might hope that we will be in the minority who stay incredibly fit and well until we are 90 or 100, we know from the data from the *English Longitudinal Study on Ageing* that around half of people have problems. It is different for men and women, and changes over time, but you already have around half of people who have
problems with mobility and the activities of daily living. That has huge implications for the built environment. I very much agree with the Ready for Ageing report by Lord Filkin, which said that our society is woefully underprepared. It certainly strikes us that the built environment is woefully underprepared, particularly the housing environment. What you are doing is incredibly important because it gives an opportunity to say, “We want to create a world which is a healthy place to age”.

Without going on too long, and taking up too much time, a key connection around the built environment and ageing is, sadly, as we age we are more likely to have health problems and long-term health conditions. There is a very solid evidence base on the connection between the commonest long-term health conditions of later life and the quality of the built environment, particularly the housing environment. The headline figure people always pick out is the cost of falls to the NHS, and the clear connection there. You can actually identify the cost of falls and the risks in people’s homes: steps, stairs, baths, bathrooms. It goes beyond that: COPD, respiratory complaints, heart attack, stroke. So there is a direct cost to the public purse, through the health service, of having a built environment that is not suitable for ageing. That is a really big issue.

The Chairman: I am sure it is. I know countless examples of that where I live. You are concentrating on housing, and the built environment is not just housing. I am also very aware of elderly people who are fearful of going outside their own door because of hazards such as roads and pavements. They seem to think that they will trip on something. Is enough attention paid to that aspect of the built environment? It is part of the infrastructure, but the infrastructure is really the built environment.

Sue Adams: I totally agree. I thought I would start with the home and the built environment. I started by saying there had been improvements to level access and transport systems through the disability legislation, but it still needs to go beyond that so that we create lifetime neighbourhoods. Care & Repair England works very closely with older people’s groups and forums around the country, because they are people who are experts by the experience of being old. We have some great pioneers, like the Elders Council of Newcastle, which has done age-friendly audits. We know the things that can be done to the built environment, and they are quite simple. It largely boils down to pavements, seats, lighting. Instead of seeing this as
the information being there about what makes the wider built environment good for ageing—we have known that for more than a decade—it would be so welcome to see the impetus to actually implement those changes, which has been lacking.

The Chairman: Where do you think that impetus should be focused?

Sue Adams: Planning. We need national standards. I have not seen the exhortations that this would be a good thing to do result in any physical, concrete changes.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. That has been most useful. Have you anything to add to that?

Paul Gamble: I think Sue has covered most of it. The key issue is that the existing housing stock is clearly not fit for purpose, and that is made worse by the replacement rates of housing. Kate Barker did a review some years ago which suggested that the replacement rate of English housing was 1,200 years, and that was when we were building 200,000 homes a year, which we are not at the moment. It is that long-scale issue that is the real problem.

The Chairman: We have seen that.

Paul Gamble: My organisation’s particular focus is disability. In functional terms, as Sue said, there is that crossover between disability and ageing. We know that the most common form of impairment caused by ageing is issues with mobility. We have quite good experience and clearly, there is a wide spectrum of housing need. For our particular customer group, which is predominantly wheelchair users, we did a research report with South Bank University which suggested there was a shortage of wheelchair-standard accommodation of around 78,000 in England, which is not a huge number.

The Chairman: It is not many. I would have thought it was more than that.

Paul Gamble: That is specifically in relation to wheelchair household need. The issue is that there is a whole spectrum of people with low mobility needs. We provide some homes specifically developed for the needs of wheelchair users when we know they are going to live there, but we also have this inclusive design standard, Lifetime Homes, which is the standard we would like to see generally incorporated within the standards of general needs housing. It focuses on those key elements of homes that need to change with the advent of ageing or impairment.
The big ticket items—the most expensive items—are ensuring that the doors are of a certain width, that there is level access to the property, and the ability to fit a ground-floor shower. We know from experience that those are the most common forms of adaptations required if we are talking about an occupant or visitor to the dwelling. That is our focus in suggesting that that is the move that we are finding in housing standards, not just in the UK but across the developing world. Obviously, most western countries are dealing with this demographic challenge of the ageing population.

In design terms, for us, the high-water point was the approach we took to the Olympics, not just the Paralympics, but the design of the services on that site. For me, in relation to housing, but also the wider built environment, it is about encouraging that sense of inclusive design. If we went to an airport now, we would think it very strange if there were steps anywhere. Equally, with commercial retail properties, the ability to assist consumers means not finding steps everywhere—that people find the property easily accessible, be they a wheelchair user, a parent with a buggy, or a wheeled suitcase user.

For some reason, in housing, because it is seen as the private rather than the public realm, seeking to provide those basic standards we expect to see in a private dwelling is seen as some gigantic step.

**Q68 Baroness Andrews:** I should declare an interest. It is probably well-known to both of our witnesses, with whom I worked closely when I was a Minister. We developed the policy for housing and ageing, which came out in the publication on Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods, and proposed a set of national standards for the built environment. There is a question later on about planning, so I am going to leave the planning aspect.

I want to ask about policy. My first question is, do you think our understanding of the impact of ageing and the requirements on the built environment is any better than it was a decade ago, and is this in any sense reflected in policy? Secondly, you have been talking about policies for keeping people safe at home and, therefore, not being dependent on the health service and cutting costs—ageing in place—and about the shortage of suitable accommodation which older people can move into from inappropriate housing, thereby freeing up the housing supply chain as a whole. Do you think these things have to go together? Are they anywhere in policy these days, either at a local or national level? Thirdly, do you have any sense that the
demographic issues are effectively beginning to inform policy successfully in the UK at a local level or inside DCLG?

Sue Adams: There are a few questions there. Is it any better than a decade ago? I have to say, sadly, I think things have gone backwards. The shift in the housing world and housing policy field has been totally on the shortage of housing, the problem of accessing and buying your first home. We are seeing a very segmented approach to housing, which does not look at housing and homes and think about it across the life course. It says we have this here and now problem—which is much more of a finance problem, it has to be said—of how people buy a home when they are a younger person. Given the average age of purchase is 38, “younger” is the word I would use. Sadly, we have gone backwards from an idea that homes are potentially for your lifetime—that we are building homes that have to last a long time and, therefore, how do we second-guess what the shape of society is going to be in another few hundred years’ time? We are not taking the long view at all about the built environment, which is the strongest argument for a government vision and government policy about shaping the built environment. It is not quite the same as buying an iPhone that you can swap for a better model, and the market will sort it out. What we build has a massive influence on the whole shape of our society, be it the education of children, educational attainment or the health of the population. Sadly, I think we have rather gone backwards in relation to any ageing focus within DCLG at the current time.

The current debate about building numbers of homes, starter homes, seems to ignore the fact that people might age in those homes. Even if you can grasp that first rung of the ladder, we might find a lot of people cannot ever get beyond that first rung and there is a strong possibility they will have children and will age in those starter homes. That vision about the long term does seem to have gone.

On living safely and well in the current housing stock, versus moving to specialist and supported housing—

Baroness Andrews: Moving to suitable accommodation, which is not supported accommodation but just the right sized home.

Sue Adams: As I said at the beginning, the housing stock is the stock we have and quite a lot of it was built when life expectancy was around 48, in 1900. That puts it in context: the way
that society and ageing and households and people have changed enormously, but the stock
does not shift with that. We have 7 million older households—living in a third of the housing
stock. As I said before, only 4% of that stock has basic accessibility standards and of that 4%
a high proportion will be social housing, whereas 76% of our older population lives in the
owner-occupied sector, simply because of the way that regulations and the code for
sustainable homes was applied. We do have a shortage of good quality, age-friendly general
needs housing stock; not just of specialist housing for older people.

The Chairman: Can I ask one question that is burning away in my head? Does any other
country handle it better than we do?

Sue Adams: Paul will probably have a better international perspective.

The Chairman: The demographics, particularly in Europe, are more or less the same.

Sue Adams: On building standards and the quality of the built environment, I would have to
point to the Scandinavian countries.

The Chairman: And the Netherlands?

Sue Adams: Yes, the Netherlands, Finland, Austria, Switzerland.

The Chairman: Why is there no read ac
ross? Why do we not learn from them?

Sue Adams: I would like to know. I think it is the perspective of the role of the state in shaping
the built environment. We have World Health Organization age-friendly environments
knowledge from 2006.

Paul Gamble: There is a structural issue in relation to housing. Most of these standards are
controlled by building codes. In most of Europe they are often regional building codes. There
is a more political element to it in England, if you like, because building standards are applied
nationally. That tends to mean they become more politically fought over. One of the
interesting aspects is that we have regional planning devolution in London, and it is London
that has adopted the highest standards, in terms of adopting the Lifetime Homes standard
since 2004. It is interesting that, internationally, that is seen as an example of good practice
in changing the design of buildings to make them more inclusive. London is quoted
internationally as the standard, whilst we do the usual wandering around a number of other
countries looking for other examples.
In Australia, New Zealand and the US there has been far more emphasis on trying to adopt voluntary codes, with limited success, especially in Australia and New Zealand. In America, it is dominated by the Americans with Disabilities Act—the American forerunner to our Disability Discrimination Act—which sets standards for housing developments above a certain scale.

Sue Adams: On the built environment, we need a continuum; every single unit of housing we build in an ageing population is a very precious resource, so we need to set some bottom-line standards. There is certainly a role for specialist housing, and housing which is built for older people with support needs, because that is currently half a million—probably 700,000 households. There is some scope for growth there from around 5%. Maybe it could double but it depends on affordability.

Last but not least, you asked whether demographic issues are informing policy. They are certainly informing policy in the Department of Health. I do not see the join-up across with DCLG anymore.

Q69 Lord Inglewood: I think I understand what you are telling us, and what each of you told us in the evidence you submitted, but can I be clear. I am seeking a “yes” or “no” answer. Is what you are seeking a mandatory set of requirements dealing with the problems of ageing and disability to stipulate the way in which all new housing from here on is built? Is that right?

Sue Adams: We think there needs to be a bottom line of building regulations to set a basic line below which you cannot fall around accessibility standards to make homes flexible across the life course.

Lord Inglewood: Any sort of dwelling?

Sue Adams: Any sort of dwelling, yes.

Lord Inglewood: To try to get the context, have you any idea what the economic implications of that would be in adding to the cost of houses built, in the simplest terms?

Paul Gamble: There is some debate, obviously. The study that DCLG did suggests in relation to Lifetime Homes there is an additional cost of £500 per unit on average.

Lord Inglewood: The lifetime cost?

Paul Gamble: Lifetime Homes. The cost of introducing this new standard, based around what was the Lifetime Homes standard, is £500 per dwelling, roughly.
Lord Inglewood: That is £500 upfront on the capital cost, the purchase price?

Paul Gamble: I would challenge that. There is an obvious place to do the comparison. That standard has been in place in London since 2004, and we would argue that it has not been seen to slow the rate of development in London.

Lord Inglewood: You are saying something should be compulsory across the piece and you estimate that it will probably cost £500 for each house?

Sue Adams: We do not estimate. DCLG did their assessment on the application of Lifetime Homes standards, and they have been applied in London for more than a decade.

Lord Inglewood: The figure that emerged, to achieve what you want to see universally, was £500 per unit, full stop?

Sue Adams: If you applied it to a pattern book across the whole country, you could argue that you could reduce costs eventually.

Lord Inglewood: I am trying to get a sense of the financial implications of what you are telling us you would like to see.

Paul Gamble: It is a matter of controversy as to how precise the figure is. From memory, DCLG’s figure was £547, which was the cost difference between producing what we called the Lifetime Homes standard and the existing standard, which was Part M of the Building Regulations. We would say that cost is likely to reduce over time.

Lord Inglewood: Whether it is £400, £500 or £600 I do not think matters very much in the context of this debate.

The Chairman: It would not matter if it was £5,000, £6,000 or £7,000.

Earl of Lytton: Following on from Lord Inglewood’s point, the construction cost of housing where I live, down in Sussex, is about £150 per square foot, so a £500 increment per unit, I would have to say, does not seem to register in the correct order of magnitude as I see it.

We have housing of all different sorts, ranging from young people’s bedsits all the way up to millionaires’ penthouses, and everything you can think of in between. Some of it is built in what I might call topographically challenging locations, like the area of West Country where I was brought up; others are much easier to deal with. I am interested in the age versus disability issue. I am 65 and you would say, “He would say that, wouldn’t he?” Age does not equal disability, necessarily. Given the range of topography, different demands, different
profiles all the way through the strata of society—ranging from people who are young, fit, healthy, agile, to those who are older, or older plus a disability, or older plus a disability plus requiring care—how do you unpick all of this in providing a policy that makes sense in the built environment?

Paul Gamble: Let us say that at one end of the spectrum, you have someone who is a full-time wheelchair user, perhaps a full-time wheelchair user with a requirement for a carer. That has certain design considerations, but it is at the far end of the spectrum. We think about it as a functional triangle, with non-disabled people, fully mobile and then a range of different experiences. As you say, that is not necessarily linked to disability; it can be due to functional requirements of having children, having buggies and prams—those kinds of issues.

The Lifetime Homes standard is about trying to design and build homes that are as accessible and adaptable as possible, concentrating on the high-ticket items. They are not about a space standard. The standards are about focusing on areas such as the very expensive items of converting homes, such as increasing the door widths. If they are designed in at the start as the standard, which varies but is about 850mm, and we can get that standard built into the way home builders design their homes, that has virtually no cost because that is changing the specification. That is why we are quite confident about the savings. It is not about the need to have additional space. Of course, there will be sites which are steeply sloping, that require designers to think about things more carefully.

One of the reasons for trying to introduce this concept as an anticipatory standard or duty is the issue that was raised earlier. I disagree with Sue—I think the arguments about demographics have changed from 10 years ago, in the way that some of the climate change arguments have. I very rarely have to make the argument that society is ageing and that has a significant impact on the way the environment is changing. The problem is, it often appears as an introductory sentence and is not carried through in the detailed policy. We need planners and developers to think about disabled and older people as part of the customer base and society, rather than thinking of them as a special needs group.

The real problem with the construction industry, and even the housing association sector, is we tend to think about older and disabled people as separate, as a special needs group, not part of the wider community. Once you start thinking of them as mainstream, even on a
steeply sloping site, you can design buildings which are very accessible by arranging multiple
access points in the same way as you would arrange for car access. You do not think about
level access in terms of car access, but that is effectively what you are talking about. You are
talking about easy entry points to buildings.
I would agree with you that it does have an impact on the design. It changes some of the
vernacular house types we use. For instance, there is a particular house type with an integral
garage, often with a very narrow frontage. That is not a house type that we think is particularly
useful, but it has been quite popular because it is a way of developers meeting planning
requirements for car parking, for instance. Planning has impacts on the type and design of
housing you get. We are trying to ensure that ageing disability impacts in the same way as car
parking policy does.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I was going to improperly ask Lord Lytton a question, and that
was whether he ever had a mother.

The Chairman: I bet he had a mother.

Q70 Baroness Young of Old Scone: I was very taken by your point about visitability and the
fact that older people in households are excluded from family events, often, because they
cannot access housing with their children.
I have two questions. What have we learnt from the London experience of applying the
Lifetime Homes standards, and are there any changes you would like to see? Particularly, is
the Government’s requirement that anything above the national baseline can be challenged
on viability causing problems, and what can we do about it?

Paul Gamble: The positive side from the London experience is that it had a significant impact
on the Government developing its own standards, rather than effectively borrowing
standards that, for instance, my organisation wrote. The new building standards include
something very similar to Lifetime Homes called—rather awkwardly—M4(2), which is the
second category of Part M of the Building Regulations, and Category 3 of Part M of the
Building Regulations, specifically for wheelchairs. It suggests that Government is supportive
of having that range of higher standards. We are particularly concerned that the inadvertent
implications of these standards may reduce the number of accessible homes being built,
rather than increase it. That is because of the viability, as you have mentioned.
Government have looked at viability standards in constructing the review of the new standards purely in terms of the financial viability of the housebuilding industry: effectively, what is the impact on the first sale price of that property? What they have specifically excluded from financial viability is any wider societal or health benefit for an individual or local authority or health authority. What we consider to be the benefits of this approach—having planning that incorporates thinking through the requirements of these revised standards—is removed from the viability. What looks like the viability assessment that local authorities will have to adopt will be one where, effectively, the housebuilder is able to say, “This is what we can build. If you expect us to introduce these voluntary standards, then, potentially, our development will be financially unviable for us and therefore you cannot have those standards”. How that precisely is going to work is being tested at the moment. At the moment, viability is purely the housebuilders testing their own financial viability. We think that is a huge opportunity lost.

**Sue Adams:** It takes out all the cost/benefit analysis of the social gain over the lifetime of a Lifetime Homes standards property. All the work that was done by DCLG, which could quantify the gain over the first decade—about £60,000 social gain—is completely taken out. Viability is purely in terms of the profitability to the developer; it does not look at the life course of the property and the social benefit. I do not see any other part of the country being able to apply those standards as the current assessment is shaped, and we might lose London.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Why is it working in London at the moment?

**Sue Adams:** Principle.

**Paul Gamble:** Because it is an explicit part of the policy. One of the key issues is that it was adopted in London as a universal standard, so all homes which required strategic planning consent from the GLA were required to be designed to Lifetime Homes standards. That meant developers did not gain benefit from trying to reduce the number. It equally meant that developers knew they were under no competitive disadvantage compared to another developer; those standards were applied across the board. The industry accepted that was the price for developing in London, and it became incorporated into their standard designs. Critically, an independent developer could not get a competitive advantage by trying to game the system or reduce the standards.
Viability testing works by potentially creating an environment where developers will game the system. It will mean that they potentially can gain financial competitive advantage by reducing the number of accessible homes built, by arguing that they should develop 30% rather than 40%. From the kind of test cases we have seen, in reality, developers are talking about 5%, rather than 10%.

Baroness Andrews: Do you think it is going to change in London?

Paul Gamble: The London Plan is subject to examination in public. That has just been held and we are waiting for the examiner to come back. The Housebuilders’ Federation made very strong representations that the new standard, the new Category 2 of Part M, should not be a universal standard.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: If the developers outside London were saying, “I’m sorry, I can’t get this site to stack up and, therefore, I won’t build on it at the level of accessible homes you would like to see”, what is the solution to that? Is there a solution? Do you think it is generally gaming?

Paul Gamble: The practical example of that has been the operation in London since 2004. Since 2004, it has not been one long boom; there has been quite a major property slump, even in London, after the financial crash in 2008. The fact that developers have taken that on board demonstrates—I am not trying to present the developers as bad guys. But if they have a financial advantage in gaming a system, clearly, they will do. The problem is, we are creating that.

In London, developers were convinced that was the direction of travel in policy terms. They thought, “Lifetime Homes is being introduced in London; it’s only a matter of time before it will be introduced elsewhere in the country, so we might as well just get on with it. That’s the price of us developing in London”. They were starting to incorporate it into their supply chain, so their supply chain was being geared up for the standard width of doors, for example. The real concern we have is that developers may now have an interest in trying to reduce those standards, thinking that there is a chink in the armour and that perhaps we are not moving inexorably towards those higher access standards. It is that external change that we are particularly worried about. From our perspective, that movement was really positive. When the new standards came in, DCLG estimated how many Lifetime Homes were
produced—last year, when the standards were being discussed—and they said that 31% of all English housing was built to Lifetime Homes standards, and took the view that it would increase to 45% if the Government did nothing on changing standards by 2025. That was very encouraging. Unfortunately, now, the game has changed because the new standards and individual viability testing has been introduced.

**The Chairman:** Are you suggesting that it would have been better to stay with the original one and not introduce this new standard?

**Paul Gamble:** We welcome the fact there is a national standard. The Government have introduced the standard, so there is a presumption that they think the standard is a good thing. What we have always said is that, providing it leads to an increase in accessible housing, that is fine; the question is holding Government to account and gaining the figures. We know what was being produced and we obviously want to see that increase. Our fear is that that 31% figure is likely to fall very considerably. One of the things we will do, along with organisations like Sue’s, is to try and ensure that information is a standard part of what DCLG produces.

**Lord Inglewood:** When you were talking about planning developers, I think you referred to strategically identifying sites that required planning permission, or some such. Does that mean that the standards do not apply for the odd conversion? What about a warehouse conversion into flats?

**The Chairman:** A church?

**Lord Inglewood:** What about the other possible ways of creating dwellings? Do these standards apply in London?

**Paul Gamble:** Conversions are exempt.

**Lord Inglewood:** That is quite important, is it not?

**Paul Gamble:** When the policy was adopted, in London the GLA only had planning authority for significant strategic sites.

**Lord Inglewood:** My point is, if you build the odd infill house here, there and everywhere, they do not apply.
**Paul Gamble:** For a brand new infill house, the standard Building Regulations would apply. That would not necessarily mean the GLA had planning authority for a single dwelling; it is the larger sites.

**Lord Inglewood:** That is what I wanted to establish. Thank you.

**Sue Adams:** What is interesting is that it is different in Spain. Spain is the first country I have heard of that is now applying accessibility standards to renovation and conversion, largely because they have an oversupply of housing, so it almost became academic to have accessibility standards. The really important part became the improvement and conversion of the existing stock, such as blocks of flats that were being renovated. They have introduced accessibility standards and are doing great work on the training of designers and architects, so it becomes part of their thinking as opposed to an add-on.

We keep coming back to the ageing issue being somewhere that you never want to go, especially if you are a young architect and designer, but it is about bringing it in at the very early stages. We have very much focused on Lifetime Homes standards, and that is important, but there is a bigger issue about housing for ageing and inclusive places that goes above and beyond Lifetime Homes standards. It is very disappointing that only a few smaller builders have tended to be slightly more imaginative in thinking about small developments that are age-friendly and are not just of Lifetime Homes standards, but even better.

**Baroness Andrews:** They are among the most popular with builders?

**Sue Adams:** It is difficult for them to get land, of course, because of the land banking issue. They are small beacons. Those pioneers need to be encouraged. We have new opportunities, like Ebbsfleet—I think you are hearing evidence about that later—what a fantastic opportunity to create healthy places for the life course.

**Q71 Baroness Andrews:** This takes us slightly wider than housing. I heard what you said, Sue, that ageing is somewhere you never want to go. I presume that is because it is so unwelcoming at the moment in the built environment. You have also referred to the lack of joining up, particularly between health and housing. To what extent do those statements apply to the non-housing elements of the built environment: town centres, highways and roads, public realm, and so on? Can you describe for the Committee what a Lifetime
Neighbourhood would look like? We cannot go and see one now, but is there somewhere we could go to see one in this country or elsewhere?

**Sue Adams:** There are two questions there. Where could you go and see one? I am stumped on that. I cannot think of a place where I could say, “Go and have a look” and they have done it all. Manchester has led the way on the age-friendly cities network group, but we are still not seeing it applied to the physical built environment in Manchester. Elizabeth Burton has fantastic materials on assessing the physical external environment for being age-friendly, but we have not seen huge steps taken anywhere in this country towards a neighbourhood implementing those changes.

**Baroness Andrews:** What about the first part of my question, about housing and health not joining up? Are any of the other aspects of the built environment joined up?

**Sue Adams:** I do not like to keep sounding so negative. On the connection between what is being built and the shaping of neighbourhoods, I am not seeing health and wellbeing boards, for example, taking on a lead role in planning. I think that could be a role for the future. So far, the health and wellbeing boards have largely been concerned with how you use the better care fund and the pressing here-and-now issues around integration of health and care services—very focused around services. In relation to future recommendations for a widening of that role, the area that we have put a lot of effort into is working with Public Health England and trying to reach directors of public health to say, “You have a fantastic opportunity here”. Now that public health is back in local government, they could be a very positive force for shaping planning for health and ageing in the future. I do not see anyone being there yet.

**Paul Gamble:** Delft, in the Netherlands, is quite commonly used as an example that has done a lot in neighbourhood planning. Equally, the Legacy Olympic Village is a good place to start, and the development of the new park and sports facilities. If you want an example of integrated transport, shopping, developed to inclusive standards—there is an interesting tale of how those standards came about and what they were in the Olympic Park—that is being used internationally as an example of inclusive design.

For me, the benchmark of a Lifetime Neighbourhood is just a neighbourhood that is well cared for. We are talking about no potholes, and pavements and crossovers that work for all. We
are talking about well-kept communal areas where bushes do not knock you over or force you out into the road. We are really just talking about a good neighbourhood.

**Baroness Andrews**: Good for everybody?

**Sue Adams**: Good for everybody, yes.

**Paul Gamble**: Part of the problem is that how we are able to illustrate inclusive design principles is often by a lack of things. For instance, when we promote accessible homes, it is very difficult to take a picture of an accessible door and show that it looks like anything other than a door, or a window that you can open whilst sitting down. These are not things that feature in architecture journals.

**Lord Inglewood**: Is your point that one of the problems is an inadequate system in general for the proper maintenance of the public realm?

**Paul Gamble**: Yes.

**Lord Inglewood**: Does that go back to money?

**Paul Gamble**: In part, but the initial design as well. With new developments such as crossovers, it is about the ability to move from the pavement across the road and up to the pavement—it is about getting that detailing right. My focus is wheelchair users, but for anyone in the street who is slightly infirm, has a temporary injury or is pushing a buggy, that requires good design to start with and then maintaining it. It is about thinking through not just what is a good quality neighbourhood, but the functional importance of allowing people to enjoy and access that environment. That is the kind of issue that stops older people venturing out—when they think they have a six-inch kerb to get over, that there are roadworks, that there is an overhanging tree that blocks their path. It is about good neighbourhood management, but there is a real inclusive design aspect to it as well.

**Sue Adams**: The people who have done the most thinking and are trying their hardest to get this implemented are the Newcastle groups. They have worked with the local planners and are trying to make Jesmond an age-friendly place.

**Baroness Andrews**: Is this the Newcastle Elders Council?

**Sue Adams**: Yes. The Elders Council has worked with the local school of architecture on planning. It comes back to trying to normalise this, as opposed to seeing it as an add-on. That is the key. It is setting this as a vision that is good for everybody. It is about the way you look
at a lot of local housing strategies. They will have a general housing strategy and then say, “Oh yes, we’ve got an ageing population so we’ll review our sheltered housing scheme”. That is 5% of their elder population. It is about setting that vision.

I did not think of the Olympic Village because, interestingly, it has evolved into a very popular place for young people. In some ways, it is very disability-friendly and inclusive, but it does also shout at you, “This is a good place for young people”, because these fully accessible, well-designed buildings have been marketed at the young, fit and well.

**Q72 Lord Freeman**: I have a very specific question. How might the Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 provisions be reformed to encourage a more adequate supply of suitable housing for older people, or those with restricted mobility?

**Sue Adams**: Do you want to start on that one, as a developer?

**Paul Gamble**: It is limited because the prospects for Section 106 agreements are diminishing anyway. Our concern is that they become part of the negotiation. Our concern is that issues to do with access and inclusive design are tradeable features that can be offset, for instance, by the percentage of supply of affordable housing or a grant to a local school, or a transport project. Our real concern is trying to make the standards non-negotiable. These are things we feel should be at the forefront of developers’ and designers’ minds from the outset of the project. It is something they should be expected to incorporate. To answer your question, we are nervous about the idea that it is seen as an add-on that could be negotiated out.

**Sue Adams**: We understand that the retirement housing sector, the builders of specialist housing sectors, put a very strong argument that their footprint is larger because they have communal and shared spaces and corridors, and want that to be taken into account, so that there is not a perverse disincentive to build that sort of housing because of CIL. That is a slightly different argument from tradeability.

**The Chairman**: That is a very useful point. There is one more question, but I am wondering whether you could write to us with the answer? The question is, are there further measures, such as financial incentives or initiatives, and changes to the national planning policy, which might help to encourage greater provision of suitable housing? If you could, we would be very grateful. I think I am a bad Chairman, but we always seem to end up not getting that answer.
It is such an interesting and broad subject, of course. Thank you very much indeed; it has been very illuminating and very useful.

Paul Gamble: Thank you.

Sue Adams: Thank you very much for inviting us.
Transcript to be found under British Land
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) - Written Evidence (BEN0063)

The development and implementation of national policy for the built environment

Evidence of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)

Executive Summary

1. CIfA continues strongly to support reforms which facilitate the timely delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2. However, there is concern amongst CIfA’s membership that environmental safeguards in the planning system (including those which protect and promote the historic environment) are erroneously seen as a constraint on development, rather than as an integral part of regeneration, place-making and sustainable development. National policy for the built environment must maintain those safeguards and can best contribute to recovery by ensuring that we have a functioning planning system, supported by appropriate expert advice, which recognises the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

CIfA

3. The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. It promotes high professional standards and strong ethics in archaeological practice, to maximise the benefits that archaeologists bring to society, and provide a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves. CIfA has over 3,300 members and more than 70 registered practices across the United Kingdom.

Specific Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level?

4. Broadly, yes, since decision-making in the planning regime remains largely a matter for local planning authorities which facilitates community engagement and the consideration and protection of heritage assets at a local level.

5. However, there is a tension in Government policy between localism (which seeks to devolve planning and other powers to a neighbourhood level) and streamlining and centralisation (through which the Government seeks to redress perceived blockages in the delivery of development). This was highlighted most recently in the planning proposals of the Government’s Productivity Plan which include proposals to introduce a zonal planning system
for brownfield land and powers for the Secretary of State to write the local plans of ‘defaulting’ local authorities.

6. CIfA supports the Government in its efforts to produce a planning system which facilitates the timely delivery of sustainable development, but believes that this will not be achieved by by-passing or undermining the crucial role of local government in managing and protecting the historic environment (and thereby promoting sustainable development).

What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

7. National policymakers should set a framework in the planning and other fields for local authorities to deliver sustainable development, but must not be overly prescriptive, allowing local circumstances to be fully taken into account.

8. Government should also support local authorities in carrying out their planning duties and, in particular, in ensuring that they have access to appropriate archaeological and heritage services and up-to-date and professionally-supported Historic Environment Records.

9. Of course local authorities need resources to maintain such services, but central government’s supporting role goes beyond ensuring that such resources are available and includes

- helping local authorities to determine how archaeological and heritage services might best be delivered. The report of the Vaizey Inquiry into the future of local government archaeology services (http://www.archaeologists.net/news/140115-english-culture-minister-commissions-inquiry-future-local-government-archaeology-service) has still not been published and Government needs to move this initiative forward
- providing strong policy support for the management and protection of the historic environment as a key element of sustainable development (see for instance, http://www.theguardian.com/science/2011/jun/27/archaeologists-furious-bunny-huggers as one example where strong endorsement of archaeological policy was needed) and
- making clear that local planning authorities which do not fully address the implications of development on the historic environment are failing in their duties.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

10. There is increasing recognition across Government of the contribution of heritage to sustainable development, regeneration and place-making, but there is still work to be done. Departments such as Defra do not always recognise the historic environment as an integral part of the environment and consequently fail adequately to take it into account in considering sustainable development.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment?

12. Yes, provided that sufficient regard is had, and weight is given, to the guidance and advice which sits below the NPPF, including the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Good Practice Advice Notes on the historic environment (GPAs).

Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

13. All three limbs of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are equally important. Particularly in times of recession care must be taken not to prioritise economic factors at the expense of social and environmental considerations. What is required is a balanced approach to recovery through genuinely sustainable development.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

14. No comment, save that the introduction of a spatial element to national policy should not in any way undermine the appropriate assessment at a later stage of the implications of development for the historic environment.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

15. No comment.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?
16. Government’s attempts to streamline and centralise planning powers (as noted above) are based upon a judgement that it is ‘blockages’ in the planning system that are preventing development coming forward, rather than, for instance, market forces. CIfA, as a body concerned specifically with the historic environment, questions this judgement but does not present evidence to refute it. What we can say is that proposed reforms such as the introduction of a zonal system for brownfield land risk bringing forward development without adequate consideration of its effects on the historic environment. This would reduce the level of protection for heritage assets and run contrary to the principles of the NPPF (including the presumption in favour of sustainable development) and of localism.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

17. So far as the historic environment is concerned, these aims will best be achieved by ensuring that heritage issues are fully addressed in the decision-making process. This requires access to information (contained in up-to-date Historic Environment Records) and appropriate expertise (provided by competent practitioners acting in accordance with professional standards). Government can assist in this regard by

- formulating clear policy and guidance which recognises the value of the historic environment and ensures that its value is fully recognised in practice. The NPPF is a good start, but a desire not to be prescriptive in guidance and advice has in practice diluted the force of the message
- introducing a statutory duty for local planning authorities to maintain or have access to an up-to-date, professionally-supported Historic Environment Record
- ensuring that professional standards are consistently applied (including those of CIfA: http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa) by expressly endorsing those standards
- expressly endorsing the accreditation of practitioners and organisations by professional bodies such as CIfA and, where appropriate, requiring work to be carried out by accredited practitioners and/or organisations

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

18. The full potential of the historic environment to contribute to regeneration and place-making has not been realised. At present, local authority archaeology and heritage services are under severe financial pressure (with the future of many in doubt) and in many cases do not have the resources to ensure that that potential is fully realised. Government needs to provide meaningful support for these services and to address the matters identified in paragraph 17.

Skills and design
9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

19. The archaeological profession does have the skills to consider the archaeological implications of development. Local authority access to those skills is threatened by a lack of resource. The answer is not to suggest that other professionals, such as planners, can fully address those implications (as some local authorities have tried to argue), but to support local authorities in providing archaeological and heritage services and professional bodies such as CIfA in ensuring that the skills of practitioners are accredited and up-to-date.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘placemaking’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

20. No comment.

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

21. Greater account should be taken of this. One way to improve communication may be to formulate and apply sustainability and other indicators relating to the historic environment.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

22. No comment.

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

23. No comment, save that we await with interest the conclusions of the Vaizey Inquiry into the future of local government archaeology services (see paragraph 9 above).

Peter Hinton
Chief Executive, CIfA

05 October 2015
1. About the CIOB

1.1 The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is at the heart of a management career in construction. We are the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. We have a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, which we have been doing since 1834. Our members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment. We accredit university degrees, educational courses and training. Our professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and other professionals procuring built assets.

1.2 Professionalism at all levels and stages within the construction industry is at the core of our work. We play a leading role in the development and continued improvement of standards in the industry at a national and international level. We recognise the challenges facing the built environment, such as the unprecedented skills shortage in the professions, the ageing workforce and the complexity of developing policy that improves coordination, design and the overall decision-making process, and we work with government and industry to outline and implement solutions.

2. Summary

2.1 Ensuring the construction industry has a sustainable supply of labour with the necessary skills is of paramount importance to the built environment.

2.2 Even as industry output levels recover and show signs of steady growth, concern over the resilience of the construction workforce remains, with a significant number of hard-to-fill vacancies recorded across the professions.

2.3 Difficulties recruiting the right calibre of candidate have been felt across the built environment professions. With the numbers enrolled on construction courses and apprenticeships having fallen sharply over the last few years, more needs to be done
to reverse this trend and ensure that the workforce is both sustainable and equipped with the necessary skills.

2.4 Official statistics value the UK’s construction programme at more than £100 billion\textsuperscript{52}. However, this ignores much of what most people think of as construction or construction-related, including the crucial design work contributed by architects and engineers, cash-in-hand work, construction work undertaken directly by non-construction firms, and it also ignores all the real estate activities central to the development, management and sale of the built environment.

2.5 When drawing up its construction industry strategy, the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) recognised this disparity between how construction is measured and what it really is. It defined the sector as: (i) the construction contracting industry; (ii) the provision of construction related professional services; and (iii) construction-related products and materials\textsuperscript{53}. On this basis it estimated the industry to comprise of over 280,000 businesses, covering some 2.93 million jobs; 10% of total UK employment.\textsuperscript{54}

2.6 Calculations by Dr Stephen Gruneberg of the University of Westminster, based on official sources, suggest that construction is actually equivalent to 15.3\% of GDP\textsuperscript{55} - significantly higher than the official 6.4\% quoted by the ONS. That would make its contribution equivalent to about £250 billion annually.

2.7 With the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 under the coalition government and plans for devolution laid bare in the Queen’s Speech, we forecast profound changes

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\textsuperscript{52} CIOB, \textit{No more lost generations: Creating construction jobs for young people}, February 2015

\textsuperscript{53} BIS UK construction: an economic analysis of the sector, a supporting document to Construction 2025: industrial strategy for construction - government and industry in partnership, 2 July 2013

\textsuperscript{54} BIS, \textit{UK construction: an economic analysis of the sector, a supporting document to Construction 2025: industrial strategy for construction - government and industry in partnership}, 2 July 2013

\textsuperscript{55} Provided in a note for \textit{The Real Face of Construction}, published by CIOB September 2014, by Dr Stephen Gruneberg: The question of the size of construction as a percentage of the economy rests on the difference between the net contribution of construction as an on-site activity only (i.e. the last stage in a process of assembly), and the share of the production of the built environment as a final good. Construction value added represents 7.4\% of all value added, a concept used to establish the total size of the economy, avoiding counting the inputs into the construction process from other sectors such as manufacturing, real estate etc. When you take them into account then the value of construction output (i.e. GDP) increases. As the size of the economy remains the same, the result is that construction is 15.3\% of the economy. If this method were applied to aggregate all sectors of the economy there would be double counting in some areas and so, in theory, one would need to subtract those inputs from the relevant manufacturing sectors and do the same in other sectors to get an idea of how final goods make up the economy. The reason for this issue is that the share of construction in GDP is based on value added, which is used to find the total size of the economy without double counting, not the relative importance of construction gross output as a measure of an industry producing final goods. Dr Stephen Gruneberg is Reader at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment University of Westminster. He is an expert in construction economics and the measurement of construction output
to the way we approach the built environment at a regional level and think about both planning and design.

2.8 To reduce the sector’s reliance on the current system of development control and to deliver more projects ahead of schedule and within budget, as was outlined in the coalition government’s Construction 2025 industrial strategy, professionals in the built environment must work towards a more proactive approach to planning and design.

2.9 Amongst other factors, education and training will be central to this. Crucially, the task of ensuring excellence in the built environment will require current educational frameworks to go beyond the boundaries of each profession and deliver a well-connected, integrated syllabus.

3. Full response

Q1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

3.1 Following the outcome of the 2015 General Election, the Conservative government announced its intention to enter a new phase of dialogue with the construction industry. This transition marked a shift from a relationship which was previously built on the idea of a ‘partnership’ between industry and government. The implication is on ensuring the industry itself can create solutions to the major challenges it faces.

3.2 This change in positioning has been combined with the decision to discontinue the role of Chief Construction Adviser, a much valued resource and voice for construction professionals in the built environment. Given the economic importance of the sector, we believe the industry must be given a clear and effective channel to engage with government.

3.3 These changes, when combined with the government’s commitment to devolution, which was laid bare in the Queen’s Speech, signal a greater role for local authorities in the decision making process. As was expressed in the 2014 Farrell Review, a more proactive approach to planning would likely allow local authorities to use their time and resources more effectively. Whilst it is encouraging that the government’s reforms aim to give neighbourhoods a greater say over the decisions which affect them, there remains a strong case for a degree of centralisation in the decision-making process. To this effect, the government should aim to provide the industry with a sense of overall direction and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Q2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport,
infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

3.4 There is an inherent complexity associated with the coordination of policy that covers the built environment. With a plethora of government departments linked to the built environment on issues as wide-ranging as economy, energy efficiency, building regulations and procurement, alongside departments such as DH, DfE, MoD and MoJ who spend billions of pounds on construction, it can often be difficult to decipher which department should assume primary responsibility for the implementation of each announcement and policy development. Currently, the failure to join the dots with each of the respective departments has created a somewhat fragmented approach to construction and the built environment.

3.5 Integration and coordination could be improved across each of the listed areas by providing an effective and direct channel for professionals in the built environment to engage with policy makers. Over the course of the last six years, the Chief Construction Adviser has provided an effective channel for the industry, including professional bodies, to engage with policy makers and we therefore welcome an independent review of the decision not to continue the role. However, overall the CIOB welcomes the recent BIS changes to the Construction Leadership Council and the indications of a greater level of dialogue between industry and government are positive. The use of prominent construction business leaders spearheading work streams provides a solid platform to deliver improvements to working practices and skills provision in the industry.

3.6 Another possible solution to improve the level of integration and coordination between departments would be to establish an independent infrastructure commission, as was previously recommended by Sir John Armitt. We believe the establishment of an independent commission has the potential to set a long term vision which could outline what infrastructure would be needed – and by when. By devising a vision and planning ahead in this way, the commission would also have the potential to manage industry expectations and clarify the demand for skills and labour. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that better integration and coordination in the decision making process is no guarantee that this will be accurately reflected on the ground. And while there is scope for government departments to improve coordination, it is vitally important that this integration is both horizontal and vertical in scope.

Q3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built environment and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?
Q4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Q5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

3.7 To deliver an increasing number of projects ahead of schedule and within budget, we believe there ought to be a rethink to how we approach both planning and construction. In order to help deliver the government’s priorities for the sector, the majority of which were outlined in the Construction 2025 strategy, we welcome a shift towards a more proactive approach to planning.

3.8 To create a long-term planning approach, we recommend government to consider adopting a 10-15 year timescale for planning major developments. Given the significance of the sector in terms of its contribution to UK GDP, any timescale proposed should go beyond the duration of each parliament and seek to provide industry with a sense of clarity and stability. We believe a forward plan, such as the one proposed, has the potential to help the industry manage its expectations and workforce more effectively. Although the adoption of a 10-15 year timescale may be a useful place for policy makers to start, some of the pressures facing the built environment may require a longer approach to be taken. In particular, issues related to climate change, such as efforts to mitigate against flooding, may require an even longer consideration.

3.9 The construction industry itself should not be immune from criticism in the process of planning future built environment needs and requirements, particularly the business models of many major contractors, which are characterised by multiple levels of subcontracting and bidding low for work. This increases risk throughout the supply chain and means margins are often very low - typically 1 or 2%. Such low margins, which often turn into losses if there are problems on projects, inhibits investment for the future, decreases the scope to improve productivity and significantly reduces the opportunity to build a steady and stable workforce.

Q6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

3.10 The government has a significant role to play in terms of helping the industry to overcome the current issue of housing supply. And, whilst the government has committed itself to extending Right to Buy to housing associations, it is important to remember that such schemes are demand-side responses to predominantly supply-
side problems. Whilst the CIOB welcomes the government’s intention to build one million homes by 2020, it is essential that there is an added emphasis and focus on ensuring quality in the built environment. Housing built to poor standards affects not only its longevity, but the wellbeing of residents. In 2010, Ecotec produced various estimates of the impact of poor housing. While the estimates can be challenged, the study put the added cost to the police of responding to crimes related to poor housing at £1.8 billion a year, the costs associated with poor health at £2.5 billion a year, and damage to the economy by £14.8 billion a year through poor housing’s effects on educational standards.  

3.11 Ensuring high quality is, however, just part of the solution to the housing crisis. Affordability is strongly linked to the supply of housing. And whilst increasing the supply of housing has the potential to improve affordability, it is essential that properties are bought and occupied, and are not simply purchased as foreign investments. This, as has been frequently documented, does little to address the current shortage of housing, especially in the capital. Additionally, services associated with the wider home improvement sector of the construction industry – documented in ONS figures as the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement (RMI) sector – benefit economically from greater levels of owner occupation, and suffer from lower levels. This has been recently documented with home improvement retailer B&Q announcing the closure of 60 stores.

3.12 To ensure quality in the built environment, we need to see a greater commitment to improve training and professional development. According to research by the CIOB into the value of professionals and professional bodies, a poll reveals that 77% of the general public who had some prior knowledge about the role of professional bodies would be more inclined to trust a professional if they knew they were a member of one. A further 83% of the public who had prior knowledge of professional bodies agree that they help to raise standards. We believe these findings have important implications for professional bodies across a range of sectors, and we encourage government to fully recognise their role, and indeed ability, to develop and drive up industry standards and indirectly improve quality.

3.13 The CIOB also notes that the All Party Parliamentary Group for Excellence in the Built Environment will launch a consultation on the subject of building quality in the near future, which it will be issuing a response to and we ask the Select Committee to engage on this debate also.

Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and

56 Danny Friedman, Ecotec, *Social impact of poor housing*, March 2010
57 CIOB, *Understanding the value of professionals and professional bodies*, 29 September 2015
circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

3.14 To create buildings and develop environments which are sustainable we need to ensure that professionals in the built environment are suitably qualified and receive proper training. In the existing building stock, we need to see a greater commitment towards energy efficiency and insulation in order to reduce our reliance on unsustainable sources of energy. Adapting existing disused buildings to other uses is also vital and cost-effective. The recent trend in major towns and cities for disused office buildings to be adapted as domestic dwellings is a good example of making the best use of existing buildings and the legislative arrangements and incentives that encourage this should be continued and potentially extended to other types of development.

3.15 Decisions on whether to re-use buildings or replace them with new ones will very often be flawed because not enough is known about the energy performance and sustainability of either new or existing buildings. Indeed, the design vs as-built performance gap for new properties just highlights this disparity. However, the majority of construction activity concerns what we do to existing buildings and not in the construction of new ones. There are also various estimates of how many of today’s buildings will exist in 2050 with a figure of between 70% and 85% commonly quoted. That means a necessity to focus on what we do with our current building stock in terms of its use, re-use, management, retrofit and refurbishment.

3.16 As buildings are such valuable assets, mistakes can be costly. Consideration for refurbishment and new uses is made via feasibility studies and options appraisals. These take account of potential viable uses, the investment needed and ongoing in-use costs. This can then allow a comparison between re-use of an existing building with the construction of a new one. Whilst there can be a fair degree of accuracy in costing the initial work, the costs in use are much more difficult to accurately calculate and will increasingly see energy costs as a significant proportion that will increase in size over the life of the building.

Q8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

3.17 In keeping with the recommendations from the Farrell Review, more should be done to encourage these buildings to open to the public. Local authorities should identify those historic buildings most at risk and devise a strategy for their conservation.

3.18 Good practice repair and maintenance of pre-1919 buildings in particular can have a profound effect on energy performance. Building services and equipment has an obvious connect with this, but it also relevant to building fabric. Damp walls, for
example, could be over 30% less energy efficient than a comparative dry wall\(^{58}\) and manufacturers of liquid water repellents for use on masonry are now using the energy efficiency benefits as their main selling point. This and other evidence points towards maintenance and repair being a primary energy saving measure. It means that basic maintenance such as clearing overflowing gutters that discharge water onto walls is necessary to save energy.

**Q9.** Do the professions involved in this area (Skills and design) (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects and engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

3.19 The number of individuals starting construction apprenticeships has increased for the first time since the recession. The number of apprenticeship starts in 2014 was 18,493 – a 15% increase on 2013 – though many typically drop out\(^{59}\). A recent parliamentary commission set up by CITB and think-tank Demos found that 120,000 apprentices were required over the next five years to 2020.

3.20 According to figures from The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)\(^{60}\), there will be a need for an average of 100,000 new recruits across the built environment a year between 2012 and 2022. Part of the reason for the high projection is the older than average age profile of the construction workforce; approximately 20% of the construction workforce is expected to retire in the next five to ten years.\(^{61}\)

3.21 UKCES projections suggest the construction industry in 2022 will employ more people than at any time since 1990, with the biggest growth rates in management and technical occupations rather than in the more traditional skills; in those ten years UKCES predicts almost 400,000 new and replacement management, professional and technical roles will be needed. The implication is that the profile of the construction workforce will steadily become more white collar. The shift is expected to be mirrored in the educational background of those within the industry. The numbers with higher degrees and doctorates is expected to more than double. To make this scale of transformation within the industry, newcomers to construction are therefore expected to be on average far more highly educated and the role for professional bodies in accrediting courses and providing relevant qualifications will likely expand in scope.


\(^{59}\) Building, *Apprentices in construction: One step forward*, 6 March 2015, David Blackman

\(^{60}\) UKCES, *The Future of Work: Jobs and skills in 2030*, February 2014

3.22 Aside from the professional roles, one of the more stand-out statistics from UKCES is that, with the steady decline in skilled trades in manufacturing and other sectors expected to continue, more than half of all new skilled trades jobs created in the UK between 2012 and 2022 are projected to be in construction. The UKCES projections suggest the industry needs to find 461,000 skilled tradespeople in the period 2012 to 2022. The combination of this and the ever-increasing array of professional roles should place construction central in the minds of careers advisers.

3.23 Even as industry output levels recover, concern over the sustainability of the construction workforce remains, with a significant number of hard-to-fill vacancies recorded across the professions. The increase in university tuition fees in England and Wales in September 2012 has also attracted a great deal of controversy and attention for its effect on the number of students applying to university. As a result, universities are now able to charge students up to £9,000 per year to study. According to the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) the numbers studying built environment related courses has slumped significantly, with UCAS reporting a 16% drop between those applying in 2011, and those applying in 2012.62 And whilst the government has committed itself to deliver three million apprenticeships over the course of the next five years, employers in construction have reported difficulties attracting and retaining the right calibre of candidate.

3.24 For many individuals, degrees remain an expensive route to a professional career. And, whilst apprenticeships often come without the cumbersome debt that is associated with university education, more needs to be done to advertise the various routes through which individuals can gain the necessary skills to progress in the industry. We believe that by protecting the term apprenticeship in law, and by increasing the routes through which it is possible to join the industry and progress, the sector will increase its ability to attract skilled recruits.

3.25 The CIOB has published a number of skills audits which document the shortages present in the industry. We have been clear that to address some of the skills problems, we need to see a greater commitment to help the industry help overcome some of the issues surrounding its image. Current perceptions of the industry reinforce the assumption that it is a dangerous, male-dominated and dirty field of employment. Initiative such as Open Doors (opendoorsweekend.co.uk/) do help to engage the general public and particularly schoolchildren by allowing access to construction sites, but more is needed to be done to change the image and reflect the fact that much of the work within the industry occurs off-site, and away from view. This includes showcasing the vast array of careers available within construction.

62 Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce), Data about demand and supply in higher education subjects – undergraduates in higher education disciplines, table 2.2.5, July 2013
3.26 Currently, there are a number of issues with the supply of labour to local authorities. To help overcome this, we believe teaching that covers the built environment should begin as early as possible. In keeping with the findings from the Farrell Review, local authorities should be encouraged to partner with schools specialising in subjects with clear ties to the built environment. Schools should also be encouraged to offer more built environment courses - similar to the Design Engineer Construct! (DECI) curriculum, which falls under the Class Of Your Own (COYO) initiative.63

3.27 Furthermore, to improve skills within the industry and help local authorities to source skilled personnel, educational establishments should also look to increase the integration of education courses which concern the built environment. To this effect, schools should be encouraged to offer exchange courses and placements to allow students studying construction-related courses with a greater appreciation for both architecture and planning, and vice versa. This, we believe, would provide professionals with more of a holistic understanding of the built environment, and its requirements.

3.28 As highlighted in the Richard Review of Apprenticeships, there has long been a social stigma attached to apprenticeships which place them as second-best to university degree programmes. There are perceptions that apprenticeships are for those who did not achieve the grades required to get into university and, as stated in the Review, this is a view that is shared amongst young people, friendship groups, parents and teachers. However, high quality apprenticeships provide one of the very few debt-free education routes that also enable individuals to ‘earn-and-learn’.

3.29 The work of the coalition government in raising the profile and social status of apprenticeships was positive. In 2011, £1.2 billion was invested into apprenticeship schemes, describing them as the ‘new norm’ for school leavers opting to not go to university. In the same year, 457,200 people started training (more than double the average number starting in the last decade). However, we believe the term ‘apprenticeship’ was used far too generously and many employers badged any retraining or work-experience under the name. These standards fall short of those proposed in the Richard Review. Furthermore, despite the positive number of apprenticeship starts, the National Audit Office (NAO) suggested that many of these apprenticeships were created in ‘fast growing’ sectors such as IT and telecoms and over a fifth of apprenticeships lasted less than six months.

3.30 Although the figures seem positive and it is clearly important to get young people into work, there must be rigorous and high standards to ensure they lead to fully fledged careers. With short term training in jobs that do not require any extra

63 Design Engineer Construct! - http://designengineerconstruct.com
learning badged as apprenticeships, it is no surprise that they are not an attractive option for young people. Furthermore, as the National Minimum Wage for an apprentice was until recently £2.73 per hour (and as of 1 October 2015 is £3.30), apprenticeships may be perceived as a way of recruiting cheap labour.

3.31 The erroneous perception that construction is a low skilled and low paid career choice makes recruiting apprentices even more challenging. This is disappointing since apprenticeships in Construction, Planning and the Built Environment tend to be considered among the most beneficial in any sector in terms of training quality. They often last two to four years and are designed by the sector skills councils that work with business representatives from relevant industry sectors to develop course content. Most courses are also recognised at Level 2 and Level 3 under National Apprenticeship Frameworks. Indeed, official statistics from BIS rate apprentices in Construction, Planning and Built Environment frameworks as being particularly effective in improving apprentices ability to carry out their job, with almost all (98%) reporting an improvement in this case. This compares to the lowest ranked subject in Business Administration and Law frameworks, where just over two thirds (69%) reported an improvement in ability to carry out their job.

3.32 Overall, the skills crisis in construction is complex and there isn’t one direct contributing factor. One consequence of the lack of available skills is the importing of migrant labour. Construction globally has always relied on migrant labour and, looking at the supply side, migration is essential to provide the flexible supply of labour needed to meet volatile demand generated at a local level. It reduces shortages when activity expands rapidly. It reduces unemployment among construction workers when workloads plunge. And it can help to smooth otherwise volatile wage rates, reducing financial uncertainty for clients, contractors and workers. But while migrant labour will always have a role to play in a flexible industry such as construction, it should not become a substitute for training UK citizens in sufficient numbers to provide a sensible base of workers needed within the nation’s construction sector.

Q10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Q11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

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64 CIOB, An Analysis of Migration in the Construction Sector, March 2015
Q12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision-making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

3.33 In order to increase the public’s engagement with the decision making process, local authorities should look towards creating a series of online forums. In doing so, this would provide the public with an opportunity to have their say on planning decisions which affect them.

3.34 However, it is important to realise that knowledge of what makes good buildings may not be widely held amongst the public. It is therefore important that the public have the opportunity to engage with planners, architects and professionals in the construction industry. If the public have a greater understanding of what makes good buildings, it may spur individuals to demand higher quality buildings and indirectly drive up industry standards.

02 October 2015
Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) – Written Evidence (BEN0102)

CIBSE is the primary professional body and learned society for those who design, install, commission, operate and maintain the systems and services both mechanical and electrical, which are used in buildings. Our members therefore have a pervasive involvement in the performance of buildings in the UK which makes a key contribution to a sustainable built environment. Our focus is on adopting a co-ordinated approach at all stages of the life cycle of buildings, including conception, briefing, design, procurement, construction, operation, maintenance and ultimate disposal.

CIBSE is one of the leading global professional organisations for building performance related knowledge. The Institution and its members are the primary source of professional guidance for the building services sector on the design and installation of efficient building services systems to deliver healthy, comfortable and efficient buildings.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 National policymakers should work closely with local decision makers, helping to set the strategic framework but allowing communities to have an influence on how their built environment develops. There should be more considered decision making across geographical boundaries, focusing on the best outcomes rather than what is possible constrained by bureaucratic / administrative / financial boundaries. For example, community renewable energy networks can be very effective if supported appropriately.

1.2 It is important that there is a distinction between planning requirements and technical standards relating to buildings and structures. Planning requirements should be sympathetic to local situations and needs, but technical standards should very largely be consistent across the country.
2 How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 Currently there is fragmented responsibility between Government departments which leads to significant gaps in implementation, enforcement and maintenance of policy related to the built environment.

2.2 Integration and coordination could be improved by taking a systems thinking approach. With any system, the whole is different to the sum of its individual parts. If the desired outcome of a sustainable built environment balancing the economy, society and environment is the whole, then the policy parts shouldn’t be developed in isolation without regard for the relationships between them. There is a history of a disjointed policy landscape in the UK which has led to poor outcomes e.g. energy and carbon reduction policy. Coherency is required to provide appropriate market signals to developers, and to provide the public with confidence that the Government is taking a long term view.

2.3 A stronger voice is needed within Government to champion a high quality built environment. Giving existing scientific staff within departments a built environment brief reporting to a Government Chief Built Environment Adviser (similar to the Chief Scientific Adviser model) would help to improve coordination across Government.

National policy for planning and the built environment

5 Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 Those involved in the development of strategic planning and built environment policy should be looking at least 20 years ahead. In particular, the issue of climate change demands this scale of activity. A timescale in decades rather than years or political electoral cycles is more appropriate. The creation of the National Infrastructure Commission indicates that there is recognition of the need for a long term view when it comes to the built environment.
Buildings and places: New and old

6 What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 It is difficult to predict the impact of the most recent changes, some of which have only just come into force. In theory the streamlining of technical standards for housebuilding should reduce costs for housebuilders, enabling them to build out existing consents more efficiently. But it is too early to know whether this will actually be the outcome. Some of the exemptions for small scale developments of a few homes may prove to provide a significant loophole for piecemeal development to less demanding standards, particularly for energy efficiency. Again, this needs to be monitored as the new requirements take effect.

7 How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1 Finite resources will require careful management, and part of developing sustainable and resilient built environments will be embracing the age of limits. Resource security is becoming more of an issue, with risks affecting the availability and price of materials essential to industry. Construction clients are becoming increasingly interested in resource efficiency, particularly in terms of the embodied energy of buildings. Energy efficiency is a core principle of sustainable development that should be promoted, doing more with what we have rather than using up further valuable resources.

7.2 “Resilience is the ability of assets, networks and systems to anticipate, absorb, adapt to and / or rapidly recover from a disruptive event. In its broader sense, it is more than an ability to bounce back and recover from adversity and extends to the broader adaptive capacity gained from an understanding of the risks and uncertainties in our environment.” (Cabinet Office). The Government needs to ensure that the whole definition cascades through all their work on the built environment so that everyone has a shared understanding of what resilience means and can embed it in their area of activity.
7.3 Climate change has already, and will increasingly in the future impact on the built environment, for buildings in particular with regard to cooling and ventilation, leading to implications for the quality of the indoor environment, energy consumption and carbon emissions.

7.4 Assessment of these factors at the design stage is essential to evaluate how buildings will cope the demands that future climate will place on their envelopes, interior spaces and systems. The following adaptation measures are likely to be requiring attention: thermal performance and dealing with overheating; water conservation and dealing with flooding risk; and material durability.

7.5 There are also important questions regarding existing buildings; how, when and to what extent they will need to be adapted to cope with future climate change. Existing housing stock and built environment assets should be upgraded, at least half of the existing building stock will still exist in 2050. There have been numerous practical projects and research studies focusing on retrofit of different types of buildings, both domestic and non-domestic. These need to be brought together and the findings used to inform a scaled up national programme of retrofit to improve both sustainability and resilience of buildings.

7.6 A key focus is energy efficiency which should be made a national infrastructure priority. Our energy system is wasteful, costing consumers money as well as harming the natural environment. Reducing energy demand in existing buildings through better facilities management and retrofit is an effective way to reduce consumption and costs. We have the experience and knowledge to improve the performance of building stock, but need Government to provide an appropriate policy and legislative infrastructure to support and implement this on a national scale.

7.7 For new buildings, there has been a growing awareness for some time that many 'low energy buildings' use more energy than the designers thought they would. The performance of low energy designs is often little better, and sometimes worse, than that of an older building they have replaced, or supplemented. The difference between expected and realised energy performance has come to be known as the 'performance gap'.

7.8 There are two main reasons for this performance gap. The first is that the method of calculating energy use for the purposes of compliance does not take into account all the energy uses in a building such as energy used by lifts and escalators, for catering facilities, or for server rooms. The second is related to site practice. To deliver a building
that uses as much energy as expected requires that the design is built as intended, the 
engineering systems are commissioned effectively and the operators and occupiers of 
the building understand how to operate and maintain the building so that it delivers the 
expected performance. Making an accurate estimate of the operating hours and likely 
occupancy of the building is key.

7.9 Prioritising value rather than cost, and long term operational expenditure and 
environmental impact rather than just immediate capital expenditure will help to make 
the built environment more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. 
There are many examples of people, products and projects that demonstrate 
engineering excellence in the built environment, as recognised by the CIBSE Building 
Performance Awards. The focus is on actual, measured performance, not design intent 
or performance specifications.

7.10 Again, a systems approach is required, considering the interconnectedness and 
inseparability of components of the built environment. For example, the interplay of 
buildings and existing underground infrastructure or the multiple benefits of both 
building level and site-wide green infrastructure. Standards are required to ensure a 
consistency of approach in developing the built environment (see also 9.4 and 9.5).

Skills and design

9 Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers 
etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? 
How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to 
the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in 
their areas?

9.1 There needs to be a significant increase in both trans-disciplinary education and working 
in the built environment. The Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism, 
Collaboration for Change highlights that the siloed nature of the built environment’s 
education system needs to be reviewed, demonstrating relevance, encouraging greater 
integration and preparing future professionals for work in a multi-disciplinary 
environment.

9.2 For example, four Centres of Excellence in Sustainable Building Design have been set up 
in collaboration with Royal Academy of Engineering. They aim to enhance the curriculum 
for engineering students, enabling them to experience interdisciplinary, collaborative
problem solving to help them unlock the potential for innovation. This should be the norm rather than the exception. Without the different built environment professions working together and understanding each other’s skills and roles, a holistic approach won’t be possible.

9.3 There is little understanding of the built environment professions amongst school children which means that few will aspire to a career in this sector. Programmes such as Design, Engineer, Construct! which applies pure academic subjects to the latest construction industry practices, providing secondary-school age children with real world practical experience and employability skills, are valuable but unfortunately not widespread.

9.4 There is also a need for craft and technician level skills. Many tradespeople are competent in the areas that they have been trained in but for newer technologies that require integration with traditional services e.g. solar thermal systems, there is a significant training need. Training should be linked to common standards which in most cases do not exist. Setting minimum standards is a key step to provide greater confidence for specifiers and clients and these can also be included in the tendering/contracting process.

9.5 For example, the Heat Networks Code of Practice which has been produced as a joint project between CIBSE and the Association for Decentralised Energy (ADE) seeks to provide clear and measurable outputs which will ensure that a heat network operates effectively and meets client and customer expectations. If heat networks are to form a significant part of our future low carbon energy infrastructure in the UK then they need to be designed, built and operated to a high quality to deliver customer satisfaction. A programme of training and registration of heat network professionals has been developed to ensure that the skills necessary to implement the Code of Practice are available across the sector. The Code of Practice, supported by these trained professionals, should provide a step change in the heat network sector.

9.6 Local authorities need to be properly resourced to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas. The 2013 Farrell Review highlighted the longstanding and systemic skills gap in the public sector. A lack of capacity will hold back the delivery of a sustainable and resilient built environment for the UK.

Community involvement and community impact
11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 Those involved in delivering and managing our built environment should really focus on how they would feel working and living in the spaces that they are creating. Rather than classifying people as stakeholders and users, we need to think of them as people who aren’t separate from the built environment, they completely shape each other.

11.2 We can’t treat people as components with predictable properties that can be incorporated into a system. People just don’t behave in the ways that designers, planners and policy makers expect.

11.3 The Royal Academy of Engineering’s recent report, Built for Living, notes that the design of the built environment, in combination with other factors has the potential to influence human behaviour and therefore have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, performance and productivity and the stewardship of resources. Behavioural considerations need explicit consideration from the very beginning of any project and throughout its lifecycle.

06 October 2015
Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management – Written Evidence (BEN0078)

Call for written evidence

Background to CIWEM

CIWEM is the leading independent Chartered professional body for water and environmental professionals, promoting excellence within the sector. The Institution provides independent comment on a wide range of issues related to water and environmental management, environmental resilience and sustainable development.

Summary

CIWEM is concerned that the current and proposed reforms to the planning system are producing a deregulating effect when higher standards and quality design are needed to meet the challenges of a growing population and for the built environment to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. CIWEM considers a National Policy Statement for planning and the built environment should include:

Support for ever tightening building standards for thermal efficiency and water use

A presumption that new developments have sustainable drainage systems

Funding for parks and greenspace should be statutory within local authorities

A new national retrofit programme for energy and water efficiency

Appraisal tools, valuations and planning policy to adequately reflect the impact of the built environment on health and wellbeing

Incentives or regulations for developers to build on land within their ownership

The Government to work with the insurance industry to include ‘betterment’ policies for climate resilience

Further investigation into how to incentivise the development of distributed heat / energy networks

Strong championing for design principles that include social and environmental improvements

A national framework of low emission zones and active travel promoted within urban areas

Answers to the consultation questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination
Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

National planning policy should establish the guiding principles, so that local authorities can develop tailored Local Plans to reflect local needs. Neighbourhood plans allow for further local input. However the main issue in shaping the built environment is that local authorities are under increasing financial pressure, which is only going to increase, and do not have the resources to cope in their planning departments. There is evidence that the Planning Inspectorate has required Local Plans to be re-consulted on when national policy (not legislation) has changed, which can prove to be a very costly exercise and results in the plan being stripped of detail required to ensure a high quality built environment, rather than updated with re-consultation.

There is a concern that Permitted Development rights (that is, without planning permission) are extending and the Housing Bill will deregulate this further. This takes decision making away from the Local Authority. There is also a risk that in some areas of the built environment that Local Enterprise Partnerships may have too large an influence on neighbourhood plans and skew development towards business interests over those of the community.

Overall there is a lack of strategic perspective in England on decisions about resource use and ecosystems beyond the local level, such as renewable energy, waste policy, river catchment management (affecting the downstream built environment), integrated transport and green infrastructure. Some of this is left to local authorities to plan for and others are overridden nationally. There is a contradiction in some aspects of planning policy with local communities able to veto wind farms developments but unable to block hydraulic fracturing developments. The two should be more closely aligned to avoid contention and provide genuine local engagement.

How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

From an outsider’s perspective it appears that matters are not well joined up in Government. For example there are multiple savings that can be derived from proper planning such as, improved public and mental health (reducing costs to the NHS), mitigation and adaptation to climate change and social inclusion which decrease costs to the public purse in the long term.

Integration is difficult in any realm, however there could be a place for a cross department panel or similar to provide the holistic view. Design and sustainability professionals specialising in built environment should be included.

National policy for planning and the built environment
Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF provides the minimum in policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment. It relies upon Local Planning Authorities having in place a Local Plan and a planning department that is adequately resourced and skilled to provide more robust guidance and planning control.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Planning policy does not lack a spatial perspective as it is plan-led, however this relies upon all the plans being in place. The NPPF is not spatial in itself. Local planning authorities are best placed to create the spatial perspective as they have the local knowledge necessary.

It could certainly be said that a strategic rather than spatial perspective is lacking in England. Matters that require a broader outlook such as climate change adaptation, ecological networks, infrastructure projects and energy are difficult to integrate within and between Local Plans without an overarching spatial plan.

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Planning practice guidance states that Local plans should have a 15 year time horizon and be kept up to date. We agree with this, however ideally there needs to be a strategic assessment above the local scale to ensure that we can adapt to new risks as they appear and address issues of national importance. Rather than setting a specific time horizon, planning for future built environment needs should build in resilience to future financial, political, and environmental shocks. In this way the built environment can be flexible to different situations that may arise in the future.

Buildings and places: New and old

What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The forthcoming Housing Bill aims to drive housing development on brownfield land both through the Starter Homes programme and a statutory register of brownfield sites where local development orders can be made. There is a worry that in a bid to cut costs (developments will be exempt from financial commitments (Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy) and weaker building standards adopted), the Starter
Homes scheme may result in inadequate housing and areas with improper services and infrastructure. New homes should be built to be more resilient and higher efficiency standards for water and energy.

The Housing Bill will effectively give automatic permission on brownfield sites identified in the register through Local Development Orders. The government expects to see Local Development Orders in place for homes on more than 90% of brownfield land suitable for new housing by 2020. The Royal Town Planning Institute notes that imposing LDO requirements would be likely to slow down progress and implementing unused planning consents would do more to increase brownfield housing. The Government needs to outline whether land affected by contamination will be included on the brownfield register as this will have implications for environmental and public health (see also answer to question 9 on skills).

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Planning policy and building standards are the best way to make built environments sustainable and resilient. As some of the measures are costly in the short term (though not over the lifetime) developers are less inclined to include them unless they are made compulsory.

Communicating the benefits of sustainable and resilient buildings to people is key in ensuring these techniques are adopted, and government has a role here. People are much more likely to change their behaviour when they feel connected, for example, if they have their own solar panels they will be more likely to use their energy at times of the day when it is sunny and energy is in surplus. Education can also drive an improvement as people demand more sustainable and resilient homes and products that meet high standards for efficiency.

It is of great concern that the requirement to meet various levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes has been removed as this was driving positive change in delivering low carbon homes. Building standards need to be regularly tightened to increase change, for water and energy efficiency. It is also worrying to see that some domestic and non-domestic buildings are currently being built to 2006 Building Regulations because the development of these sites were started then.

It is easier to put in place measures when homes are being built. Installing water tanks beneath new homes to collect and reuse rainwater would reduce the impact on the water environment especially in the south east where there is water scarcity. This would be a fairly minimal capital cost but would need to be put in the planning conditions of large

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65 ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE. 2014. Building more Homes on Brownfield Land.
developments to ensure uptake. Only exemplar developments are currently doing this when it should be becoming mainstreamed.

The government could also work with the insurance industry to explore how ‘betterment’ policies can be included to increase resilience. For example when a home is being refurbished following a flood, the insurance should pay to make sure it is more resilient to future incidents, with resistant flooring and electrics being moved above the water line. This change would mean that future insurance claims would be less.

Given that heating homes is a large contributor to England’s carbon dioxide emissions much more needs to be done to improve energy efficiency. The existing housing stock will need to be tackled by a successor scheme to the Green Deal which incentivises improvements. Whilst this has been a success for the private rented sector, lessons need to be learned as to why uptake was not greater in the wider population.

Local authorities need to be resourced to be able to put in place measures that increase the resilience of the wider community such as green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems. More strategic sustainability issues can be solved locally such as putting in place decentralised energy providing homes with heat that would otherwise go to waste. Most energy is imported into cities where it could be produced and distributed locally.

Skills and design

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

The skills are available however they tend to be in consultancies rather than local authorities. There is no problem in this, however it means that local authorities need to have the resources to pay for these services.

There need to be more sustainability professionals with a built environment focus in design teams within consultancies. There are currently a lot of professionals in this area however they are not used in all projects as they are seen as an added cost. Without standards such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, they will be used even less in housing projects.

The Government’s plans to increase the redevelopment of brownfield land may include areas affected by contamination which presents a risk to a range of receptors including humans, ecosystems, water quality, and property including crops and animals. Dealing with contaminated or derelict landholdings requires many technical skills, not least in dealing with regulatory and operational requirements. On any individual site, there may be only a single pollutant linkage or there may be several. To ensure technical skill and competence, a person qualified by Chartership through a relevant professional body should be used.
Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The Code for Sustainable Homes encouraged better quality design in housing. It is difficult to see how standards will improve without this driver. The Building Regulations still offer some good practice, however some Building Control Officers do not look the developments in a holistic way, they just compare the regulations and compliance. On a building scale, more integrated tools and techniques should be used, such as Building information modelling (BIM).

National standards and leadership will be needed with strong championing for design principles that include social and environmental improvements.

Community involvement and community impact

Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Urban green infrastructure can play a role in increasing social inclusion. In the UK and in cities around the world it has been noted that the distribution of socially excluded areas often coincide with sparse green space of poor quality. Planning at a city scale can help alleviate these discrepancies and create green spaces with a high aesthetic and cultural value.

Increasing contact with nature can offer an affordable, accessible and equitable choice in tackling health and well-being through preventative and restorative public health strategies. Academic studies have shown a positive relationship between access to green space and improved mental health and recovery from many chronic illnesses.

Appraisal tools, valuations and planning policy do not adequately prioritise the impact of the built environment on health and wellbeing. Although evidence is available and being

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66 MALLER, C., TOWNSEND, M., PRYOR, A., BROWN, P., ST LEGER, L. 2005. Healthy nature, healthy people: contact with nature as an upstream health promotion intervention for populations. Health Promotion International: 21, 1. 47. and


05 October 2015
assembled continually, the case for good urban design is already proven and requires leadership and appropriate investment.

People who are physically active reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases (heart disease, stroke, some cancers and type II diabetes) and the risk of premature death. Increasing participation relies on changing personal attitudes towards physical activity and this will involve making our environments more conducive for active living. Active travel is one of the easiest ways to achieve regular exercise but must be accommodated through the quality of the physical and natural environment with opportunities for recreation and exercise. The consequences of an ageing population will also have implications for improving accessibility in our towns and cities.

Air quality is an important influence on health that may be impacted by urban development. High traffic densities in urban areas can result in pollutants exceeding EU and UK targets for NO2 and PM10. Encouraging active travel, increasing uptake of low emission zones and providing more pollution free thoroughfares should be central to Local Plans.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Neighbourhood plans allow for great engagement with the public, however they may not have the skills needed and could be susceptible to the influence of an articulate minority.

Developer led consultation events are sometimes fairly poorly advertised with limited information. There should be more open dialogue with the Local Authority, local people and developer. Local Authorities should take more interest in the developments in their area. Perhaps charging for pre-application advice is not the way forward and instead they should be actively involved and potentially take the lead role of consulting locals.

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE. 2014. Building more Homes on Brownfield Land.
1. Does national built environment policy take sufficient account of environmental resilience? Is the regulatory framework fit for purpose?

Built environment policy is ultimately governed by the National Planning Policy Framework which refers to resilience to the impacts of climate change, including flood risk and water supply and demand considerations. However since it was adopted building standards and planning conditions have been gradually weakened, doing little to encourage water efficiency (particularly in areas of water scarcity), green infrastructure and SuDS implementation remains limited and inappropriate development still takes place in areas of flood risk.

There is a risk that at a time when greater resilience is required, the Environment Agency is facing resourcing issues and the lead Department of Communities and Local Government has little regard for climate change and resilience. Green infrastructure remains to be perceived as additional cost to development and new housing targets and the removal of requirements for section 106 contributions will only result in cheap and poor quality delivery.

The majority of improvements to the built environment need to be proactively retrofit into existing development, be this housing stock, public or commercial space. This requires strong leadership and drive at the local level. Local Authorities are also facing further cuts in funding and play a pivotal role in coordinating resilience in public spaces.

2. How does environmental policy integrate with other national policy priorities? How might built environment policies be better integrated to improve outcomes?

Cross-government integration of the environment with other policy areas remains poor. When approached DCLG officials have stated that they do not want to discuss climate change. Climate change adaptation staff in Defra have been reduced from 38 to 6. The Department of Transport and Health are not fully integrated so that transport policy encourages low carbon modes or good air quality, nor personal mobility on any meaningful scale, although NHS England is quite well engaged with the mobility issue. It is instructive that the Government has recognised that there is a need for improved cross-departmental cooperation in relation to flood risk management, with insufficient coordination of the various and extensive responsibilities. This principle might be applied to a whole range of other issues which are manifested in the built environment, such as health and wellbeing for example.
3. Is national policy on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) effective? What are the challenges associated with delivering SuDS through planning policy and does policy need strengthening?

The direction of national policy was changed somewhat with the decision not to commence Schedule 3 of the Floods and Water Management Act requiring Lead Local Flood Authorities to establish SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs). Instead, SuDS are now driven through the planning system which does not provide for adoption of sustainable drainage infrastructure, which is essential and which SABs would have done. This is a key obstacle to the widespread implementation of SuDS in England and in the absence of any clear provision for adoption under current policy, it almost certainly will require strengthening.

Possible Supplementary: What else can be done to support the provision of SUDS as part of new developments?

Simply a resolution to the issue of adoption is required. The decision not to commence schedule 3 in 2014 may need to be re-examined.

4. How can a spatial or ‘catchment-led’ approach to water management help deliver better outcomes? What are the other key issues in relation to securing effective water management in the built environment?

Current flood events illustrate that there is a need for serious focus on a full package of measures to manage water in catchments. Conventional defences are part of this package but catchments have been so heavily modified that downstream towns and cities have to be protected against ‘unnaturally’ high levels of flow.

The built environment should be seen in the context of the wider environment or catchment in which it is situated. Upper catchment measures, in combination with in-situ defences in the built environment may be able to significantly reduce flood risk. There is considerable potential for improved land management practice in upper catchments for the purpose of ameliorating flood risk downstream but there is a lack of quantifiable data available to support the principle of this. Very often measures which improve flood risk will also improve drought resilience, water quality and biodiversity. Improved methods of valuing such ecosystem services are being developed which will help lead to payments between beneficiaries and land owners.

5. How can the need for new housing supply be reconciled with the need to restrict building in high flood risk areas?

Housing may be built in areas of flood risk provided that it is designed and constructed in the right way. However building resilient homes will not prevent issues around safe access.

Pressure to build new housing stock both quickly and cheaply is unlikely to incentivise good design and construction standards but these are essential. Short term economic savings of
poor standards of design and construction are likely to be exceeded by costs of subsequent damage and recovery in the medium term.

The Environment Agency note that their advice is taken in around 97% of cases regarding development in flood risk areas. However the vast majority of planning applications have nothing to do with the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency is only required to comment where a development involves a Main River or the coast. Often planning authorities are unaware that there may be surface water flooding risk as they have taken a ‘no comment’ from the Environment Agency to mean that there is not a flooding issue. The Committee on Climate Change has found that 4,600 homes a year are constructed in areas of high flood risk.

6. What are the key challenges in relation to the environmental resilience of the existing building stock?

There is an extensive legacy of building stock in the UK which is vulnerable to flooding and which is also of poor thermal and water efficiency. Given that extensive replacement of such buildings is not a feasible (nor a sustainable) proposition, an extensive programme of retrofit will be necessary for thermal efficiency and in some cases for property level protection for flooding. The Green Deal did not deliver the intended outcomes but there is no policy or scheme in place which yet indicates that it will deliver the kind of widespread improvement necessary. Strong and ambitious policy will be required to achieve this.

Property level resilience can be effective. There is scope to include ‘betterment’ when insurance payments are being made following a flood, but it is unlikely a company would voluntarily include this without policy direction to do so.

Upper catchment measures and property level resilience should be prioritised, alongside hard defences, particularly in areas of high flood risk. Carlisle could be used as a pilot for such an approach.

7. Is there a case for a national committee, on the model of the Natural Capital Committee, to advise the government on the value of the built environment?

From the point of view of climate resilience and water and environmental management in the built environment, there is a real need for greater buy-in by DCLG (and other departments) and cross-departmental working to ensure that we have high quality, resilient built environments.

We do not consider there is a need for an additional committee as there are already two committees that can provide sufficient advice to Government on the value of the built environment. The adaptation sub-committee of the Committee on Climate Change would be able to provide advice on resilience whilst the Natural Capital Committee could advise on ecosystem services associated with nature in the built environment, spatial and catchment-
related issues as well as wider issues surrounding health and wellbeing (including mental health) which relate to the built environment.

21 December 2015
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Tony Grayling, Director of Sustainable Business and Development, Environment Agency, and David Wilkes, Honorary Vice-President, Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM)

Q283 The Chairman: Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment, Mr Grayling and Mr Wilkes—and members of the public too. We hope you enjoy it. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to it where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please? This is for the purpose of making sure that the transcriber knows who says what.

Tony Grayling: I am Tony Grayling. I am director of sustainable business and development at the Environment Agency.

David Wilkes: I am David Wilkes. I am an honorary vice-president of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management.
Q284 The Chairman: I am sure we will have a very good session today, particularly on the issue of water, so thank you for coming.

The first question is from me. Does national built environment policy take sufficient account of environmental resilience? Is the regulatory framework fit for purpose?

Tony Grayling: I think that the national framework is there, and at the heart of it is the National Planning Policy Framework and the supporting planning policy guidance. Alongside that are the adaptation provisions of the Climate Change Act and the framework that sets in place, so there are the vehicles for the integration of resilience into the built environment. I do, however, think that there is always a need to keep things under review and to learn from experience, and I am sure that there is always room for improvement.

The Chairman: I think that is a very apt description of the situation. The other areas that need resilience are the National Planning Policy Framework and the guidance. The way things are happening at the moment, they have to be up in the air. Life is going very quickly through this area with the issue of climate change and the local issues regarding the floods that have happened. It is in a state of flux. Are you taking that into account? Is there anything that should be firmed up in these agreements?

Tony Grayling: It is certainly the case that our approach as a statutory adviser in the planning system is to take account of our latest understanding of climate science and the likely impacts on England in particular. Our work incorporates the latest UK climate projections, but they date back to 2009, and we are about to go through a process of updating those projections. With the events that we have had over the last few days, with the serious flooding in Cumbria and Lancashire, it is important that we stand back and take another look.

The Chairman: Indeed, because it is not only the UK situation with the frightful flooding that we have had but also what is going on in Paris.

Tony Grayling: Absolutely. Primarily, Paris is about the world coming together to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced so that in the future there are fewer impacts from climate change. However, as a result of greenhouse gas emissions already made, we know that inevitably there will be further climate change.
The Chairman: There is no point in double-guessing. We will have to wait a while. When are we going to have the conclusions of the discussions taking place in Paris at the moment?

Tony Grayling: It is not an area of responsibility for the Environment Agency; the lead department is the Department of Energy and Climate Change. I am watching eagerly, as I am sure you are, and I believe the organisers in Paris think that they could reach conclusions by the end of this week. Experience has shown that these UN climate change conferences tend to overrun, and there are all-night sittings, but they eventually get to a deal, and the signs are reasonably positive on this one.

The Chairman: Mr Wilkes, what are your views on that?

David Wilkes: I would agree broadly with that. We will see the headlines through the newspapers and through the television. I am cautiously optimistic that common sense is prevailing. I would amplify what Mr Grayling has said; there is a lot of evidence that greenhouse gases have been emitted into the atmosphere over the last 200 years, and there is so much inertia in our climate systems that, precautionary wise, we should not expect the weather and the climate for the next 100 years to be the same as we have seen for the previous 100 years. I think we are set to see change.

The Chairman: Change like the change that we have had over the last three or four years?

David Wilkes: I fear so, yes.

The Chairman: That is not a very happy scenario, is it?

Q285 Lord Clement-Jones: In that context, the Greenpeace report suggesting that something like nine out of 20 sites identified for housing are at risk of flooding does seem to be quite an interesting counterpoint to overall national policy. How can that sort of situation arise? Is the report correct, and therefore do our policies need to be reviewed?

Tony Grayling: I have seen that report and I would say in response that the critical thing is that when there is a major housing development, the local authority, when it receives the planning application, is obliged to consult the Environment Agency, and we will give our advice as to whether we think the location is suitable for housing and whether particular design measures need to be built in to ensure environmental resilience, including resilience to flood risk. The evidence from our work is that in 98% of cases where we respond on flood...
risk, the outcome is in line with our advice, either because the planning application was suitable, or was amended in line with our advice, or was withdrawn or refused. In 98% of cases where there are housing developments, our advice is taken.

The Chairman: For clarification, is that statutory? Do they have to ask for your advice, or is it a “nice to have”?

Tony Grayling: No, they have to. We are a statutory adviser in the planning system.

The Chairman: So they cannot go ahead with a development unless they have advice from you on this issue?

Tony Grayling: For major developments that is absolutely correct, yes.

Lord Clement-Jones: Despite what Greenpeace says, these sites will be resilient as a result of having taken your advice?

Tony Grayling: I cannot comment on the individual sites because I have not seen that level of detail, but our advice might be anything from, “Yes, go ahead. Your planning application is suitable”, to, “No, we do not think that the development should be allowed to go ahead”, or something in between with resilience measures built in.

The Chairman: Do you have a similar situation with your responsibilities on water?

Tony Grayling: We also advise on issues to do with the management of water and waste water, and land quality and water quality.

The Chairman: And that is statutory also?

Tony Grayling: That is a complicated question. It is statutory for flood risk and a number of other things, but not for everything.

The Chairman: Would you like it to be for everything?

Tony Grayling: We have been in discussion with the Department for Communities and Local Government about rationalising where we are and where we are not a statutory consultee. The fortunate thing is that local authorities tend to take our advice even where we are not strictly a statutory consultee but where they consider we have the relevant expertise.

The Chairman: That is good. Have you anything to add to that before I open it up to the Committee, Mr Wilkes?

David Wilkes: No, I do not believe I have.
Q286 Earl of Lytton: I am a chartered surveyor and in the past professionally I have suggested that there ought to be an approach to dealing with surface water run-off in existing housing stock, which of course by bulk is the major portion of what we are dealing with. The suggestions have fallen on completely deaf ears as to whether there should be some conditionality when a property is extended, and whether there should be surface water attenuation, if not actually a SUDS approach. Is that because it is not considered relevant or that the stock of older buildings is safe from this surface water surcharge? Why has that suggestion seemed never to have had any traction?

Tony Grayling: Surface water is a real issue and the risk of flooding from surface water is likely to increase with climate change, as is the risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Under the framework for flood risk management, the primary authority for surface water flood risk is the lead local flood authority. Generally speaking, that is the county councils, so they ought to be incorporating into their local plans and into their approaches to development in their area policies that are about the management of surface water flood risk, as well as the management of flooding from the rivers and the sea.

Earl of Lytton: Do you scrutinise local plans to see whether that sort of provision is included or not?

Tony Grayling: We are also a statutory consultee on local plans and, yes, we will inspect local plans in relation to the flood risk policies that they contain.

David Wilkes: The Earl of Lytton’s point is well made in that there is significant surface water risk to existing properties. It is sometimes very surprising why people do not take advantage of grants opportunities to reduce their risk. There is almost an apparent philosophy that people are in denial and think that it probably will not happen, so they may as well save their money and energies for doing something else.

The Chairman: What about the car having precedence, in other words people concreting over their gardens?

David Wilkes: That has to be something that we discourage.

Q287 Baroness Young of Old Scone: I should declare some interests having been the chief executive of the Environment Agency and also a trustee of IPPR when Mr Grayling was there,
and I have also been an honorary fellow of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, so I am compromised in both directions, but nevertheless—

**The Chairman:** Any more?

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** There are probably a few more in there. I have two questions, one for Mr Grayling and one for Mr Wilkes. Clearly, the assumptions that are made about the future increased risk of flooding from climate change are very important, because houses and buildings last for a very long time. Do you think that the current assumptions that are being made about future flooding risk are sufficient, or are we building houses in those parts of the flood plain that may be resilient against the sorts of floods that we have experienced in the past but not the future? A one-in-100 year risk of flood will rapidly become a one-in-50 year risk, and perhaps even a one-in-30 year risk in the very near future.

I will give Mr Grayling time to think about that while I ask Mr Wilkes his question. In your very useful evidence, you said that you did not think that the current policy arrangements were particularly good on several fronts, including building standards for thermal efficiency and water use, sustainable drainage, parks and green space, energy efficiency and water efficiency, retrofit and join-up across the whole spectrum of the green environment, and the environment in general. Could you tell us more about that part of your evidence? I will leave you time to think about that while Mr Grayling tells me the answer to the first one.

**Tony Grayling:** The current approach is based on our best understanding at the moment of the likely impacts of climate change in the future. Over time our understanding gradually improves, but it is only a gradual improvement. For example, I would not expect the next iteration of the UK climate projections, which are due to be developed by about 2018, to be radically different from the projections that we are currently using that were published in 2009, just as those projections were different, but not radically different, from those published in 2002. There is a gradual change, and I think we have always to be updating our approach in line with the best available science. It is quite hard to judge that against individual events such as the serious flooding we have seen over the last few days. The truth is that it is almost impossible to make a direct attribution of those events to underlying climate change,
because you have a lot of natural climate variability and underlying that is a longer-term trend of climate change.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** It is true to say, however, that that phenomenon of storminess, if it happens as predicted, will become more frequent with climate change?

**Tony Grayling:** That is right. The climate predictions suggest that we can expect warmer and wetter winters, with a higher propensity for intense rainfall events. There has been some statistical attribution of, for example, the serious flooding that we saw in 2000, and I think the Met Office has recently published some evidence that suggests that if you have the kind of atmospheric circulation conditions that we saw in the winter of 2013-14, an intense rainfall event over a 10-day period is more likely than it would have been in the absence of climate change, yes.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** On that basis, are we achieving tough enough standards on flood protection and prevention of building in the most vulnerable parts of the flood plain, or is the Environment Agency in the position where it has to walk a dreadful line of not declaring too many areas unsafe because it does not have the money to protect them?

**Tony Grayling:** We do, honestly, try to use the best available science. In the light of the events over the past few days, we have made a commitment to have another look at the process by which we design flood schemes, particularly in the areas that were impacted, and the allowances that are built into climate change. I would not want to pre-empt the outcome of having that look. I believe that we are doing our best to incorporate the best available evidence about climate change and its impacts on the UK.

**The Chairman:** Mr Wilkes, do you want to add anything to Lady Young’s question?

**David Wilkes:** I think my colleague has adequately dealt with that part of it.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Could we have Mr Wilkes’s comment on his evidence, because Mr Grayling seemed to be implying that everything in the garden is rosy, when the evidence is very much the opposite—that it was not, particularly?

**David Wilkes:** The first on the list was to do with the thermal efficiency of buildings. Given that almost a third of the UK’s contribution to climate change emissions comes from the heating and cooling of buildings, that is an area where we could be looking at making
considerable savings. With the Code for Sustainable Homes and the codes for commercial retail buildings, the problem is not so much new stock but our existing stock of buildings, and the lack of incentive, and lack of easy ways in which people can afford to make their buildings more thermally efficient, so cooler in summer, healthier for people to live in, and using less fuel to heat them in the winter.

**The Chairman:** But the general public are not really aware of these implications, are they?

**David Wilkes:** Absolutely, and the philosophy, I suggest, is much more short-termist: how much do I have to spend for heating this winter?

**The Chairman:** We have dealt with this in previous sessions. If you had meters and everybody could see how much it is costing them to keep the lights on or to keep the heating at 20 degrees, or whatever, it would be all right, but there seems to be objection to putting them in. I do not know why. Would you be for these meters in homes?

**David Wilkes:** I am very much in favour of education and then making it easy for people to understand what actions they can take to retrofit existing property.

**Q288 Baroness Andrews:** I would like to follow that and come on to a couple of other areas. Some developers are still building to Code 5 but very few. There are a lot of new technologies that would enable some retrofitting. Do you have any idea how much it would cost to retrofit 22 million houses built before 1922, or whatever it is? That is the scale of the problem, is it not, because, as you say, a third of our carbon emissions are coming from homes?

That is a very specific question, but the general point you are making in your evidence, Mr Grayling, is there is a loss of regulatory impact because so much has been effectively deregulated in recent years. You propose a policy statement for planning. Do you think that the NPPF could be strengthened in such a way as to put back into it, with any effect, some of the things we have lost? What arguments would you use to persuade the Government?

If I may ask our other witness a question, we lost PPG25 in the course of creating the National Planning Policy Framework. PPG25 was the old planning policy guidance on flood control and was extremely popular and very effective policy guidance. Have we lost anything from that through the NPPF which we could make a case for restoring in the NPPF?
Tony Grayling: I will, if I may, pick up on that first because part of my own team’s responsibilities is planning policy guidance. We are satisfied that all the important elements of PPS25 were incorporated in the National Planning Policy Framework and in the supporting planning policy guidance. There is always room for us to have another look and to improve things. We have had some success in that. For example, we have been able to influence the development of building standards so that a higher standard of water efficiency can be applied to new housing in water-scarce areas, for example. Looking at planning guidance and reviewing it and making sure that it is fit for purpose is an ongoing process.

Baroness Andrews: That is guidance, is it not, and councils do not have to follow that guidance, do they? It is not compulsory.

Tony Grayling: No, in principle they do not have to follow our flood risk guidance either, but in practice they do because they accept that our advice is authoritative.

The Chairman: It sounds as though we need to strengthen the statutory implications of this. It seems as though you can take it or leave it if you are a builder. Is that right?

Tony Grayling: It is the planning authority that makes the decision.

The Chairman: So the planning authority can take it or leave it?

Tony Grayling: The developer puts in a planning application, but it is up to the local authority whether to accept that planning application, or to reject it, or to require amendments to be made that build in resilience conditions, including flood risk, water resources, energy efficiency and so forth.

The Chairman: So it is actually the local authority? It is not the local authority under a statutory order?

Tony Grayling: Local authorities have to balance a lot of different factors when they make decisions on planning.

The Chairman: Do you think it is too loose, in other words?

Tony Grayling: I do not, no. If we continue to have serious concerns about planning applications, there is provision for them to be called in. A necessary feature of our system is local democratic input into planning decision-making, as well as having a national planning framework within which those decisions are made.
David Wilkes: Could I come in and amplify that? I speak as one of the authors of PPG25 and the guidance to PPS25.

The Chairman: Really? We have just asked to get it.

David Wilkes: I am pleased to report that many of the provisions of PPS25 still exist through the National Planning Policy Framework. When we were drafting the guidance to PPS25, we attempted to make the concepts as simple as possible to understand. We said that it is the elevation—the height of your property/assets—relative to the likely height of flooding which is really important. We worked on a sequential test and a vulnerability test, and what we tried to enshrine within the guidance is the principle that the most vulnerable property/assets—hospitals, electricity substations, residential bungalows for elderly or infirm people—should be chosen deliberately to be sited in areas of the highest elevation, and then there is a cascade down and, as the vulnerability decreases, you can have offices, shopping precincts and car parks, which it may be more acceptable to flood occasionally, right down to open water space for sailing and recreation, which is entirely flood-compatible type land.

One of the underpinning principles is that you need to look very carefully at the levels of where you want to do your new building. We were mindful that there are economic forces and existing development and you cannot be absolutely pure, so there was the concept of the exception test. Although there are some undesirable characteristics of potentially developing in flood-risk areas, on balance, there are social, economic and existing land use reasons whereby, knowingly, you will accept that development.

My observation, since we were writing those policy statements 10 years ago, is that it is applied in a fairly patchy way dependent upon which local authority you have, the skills and competencies of the planning officers and the understanding of planning committees.

The Chairman: Where do the insurance companies come into this, because the fact remains that, if you are going to buy a new house, you would want to know the risk, and, if they say it is high risk or low risk, surely that should be available to all of us?

Tony Grayling: I confess that is not my area of expertise.

The Chairman: Just as Mr and Mrs Ordinary in the street, so to speak.
Tony Grayling: I think that incentives should be built into insurance policies for householders to build resistance and resilience measures into their homes. I believe there is an aim to build that into the new Flood Re scheme, but I confess to not being familiar with the details of that.

The Chairman: That is interesting.

Q289 Baroness Rawlings: I wanted to follow up on an earlier question very briefly. It all sounds wonderful and there is the admirable policy today to build the houses that are desperately needed. I have visited a few housing developments, and none of them has gardens, and there are very few trees and more and more concrete, as you were saying. I imagine that is because of the cost to the developers and they do not want to waste land on gardens that people do not seem to want because of the upkeep. How does this pass the advisory capacity that I see you have? To bring in insurance, surely insurance is vital for any of these developments or any new houses? That might be hugely expensive, with the very sophisticated, special draining systems that they have now that do not allow any natural seepage. What is your view on that?

Tony Grayling: For a major development, our advice is bespoke, so we would tailor it to the particular proposed development.

Baroness Rawlings: “Major” means what?

Tony Grayling: More than 10 houses. The National Planning Policy Framework first of all steers development away from high flood-risk areas and, as David was describing, there are the sequential and exception tests where, if there is a proposal to go ahead with a development in somewhere at significant risk of flooding, then you have to be able to demonstrate that development is really necessary, that it could not be put somewhere else, that it is safe, that resilience has been built in and, indeed, that it is not adding to the flood risk for existing properties. Our advice would cover all that. The planning guidance also says that preference has to be given to sustainable drainage systems as part of that. The advice of ourselves and the lead local flood authority would cover that.

Baroness Rawlings: So you would prefer sophisticated drainage to having any grass or trees?

Tony Grayling: The drainage system can include water storage areas and areas where the water can filter into the environment, which may be through grass in some cases.
David Wilkes: I agree with your point. It is well understood that rain falling on vegetated areas has more chance of soaking in and being stored within the catchment. At a macroscale, if the house builders and people are choosing to have smaller gardens and maybe porous areas to park cars, then one of CIWEM’s recommendations is to counterbalance that with the provision of more parks and more open space. If people live in high-rise flats, then maybe they should be within five or 10 minutes’ walk of public open space, where there are the health and recreational benefits, and there is a mimicking of natural water movement through the catchment, through that green and open space.

Q290 Baroness Andrews: Can I broaden this out beyond flood risk and talk about the co-ordination of environmental assessment and impact? Mr Grayling, you said something about patchy implementation across local authorities, which I presume would apply to the way environmental impacts are weighed up anyway. It has been argued by other witnesses that within the planning framework we have now moved away from assessment of planning based on land use and capabilities and choices to contestability and viability due to housing pressures and so on. There is a question there of whether environmental impacts are being sidelined or parked while we get on with other priorities.

The third thing we have heard is that the loss of spatial policies is making it extremely difficult to plan across boundaries and across sectors, which again would have an impact on your ability to make your voice felt in big infrastructure schemes or even housing schemes. It all seems to be adding up to a situation that was never well co-ordinated but which is now more fragmented and more likely to reduce your ability to influence planning as a whole—positive planning, or indeed even defensive planning. Is that too negative a statement?

Tony Grayling: I think the framework is good. The National Planning Policy Framework instils the principles of sustainable development within it. It sets out some of those principles quite clearly and seeks to balance the different objectives of development, which are economic and social as well as environmental. Planning policy guidance seeks to do that as well. I would say that the proof of the pudding is in how that framework is implemented, particularly at local level. The local plan that a local authority is responsible for producing is absolutely key, in our
view, in ensuring that there is a spatial plan for that area and also in ensuring that it is joined up with neighbouring authority areas. As you know, there is a duty to co-operate.

Baroness Andrews: Is that working?

Tony Grayling: By and large, it is working. You will probably be able to find instances where it has not worked well, but you will find instances where it does work well. The framework is there, but it needs to be well implemented, and that requires ongoing attention. It is not a one-off event. We feel able to play our role in providing advice at various levels, and that includes providing advice on the local plan as well as advising at national level the shape of our responsibilities in relation to national planning policy. We are also a statutory consultee on nationally significant infrastructure projects. Major developments also require environmental impact assessments, and we provide our advice on those as well.

Baroness Andrews: In recent years, have you lost capacity? Has your budget been cut?

Tony Grayling: Our budget has been cut. That is an absolute fact. We have had to find ways of carrying out our responsibilities more efficiently, and targeting our resources so that we give advice on the most important things.

Q291 Baroness Andrews: How concerned are you that you are not able to give advice to the smaller local authority, for example, with a big challenge? How do you prioritise your advice? If you are now having to prioritise your advice in different ways, as many arm’s-length bodies are, how do you make those choices?

Tony Grayling: We make those choices on the basis of environmental risk. We target our bespoke advice on major developments where there are significant environmental impacts and significant flood risk issues. We have adopted a system of more standard or standing advice for smaller developments and ones that are less risky.

Baroness Andrews: So you are still a statutory consultee in every intent and purpose, but for smaller—

Tony Grayling: Not every. It is quite a complex picture as I was describing earlier. It needs a bit of rationalisation, in our view.

Baroness Andrews: Are small developments required to come to you for advice or not?

Tony Grayling: Not minor developments, no.
Baroness Andrews: So 10 and fewer?

Lord Inglewood: Is “minor” below 10 houses?

Tony Grayling: Fewer than 10 houses, unless there are very specific issues, for example critical drainage issues or high flood risk.

Lord Inglewood: I wondered whether “minor” was being used in the sense of extensions or garages. I am now clear what you are talking about.

Tony Grayling: We tend not to be consulted on things as small as extensions.

The Chairman: You have a huge amount of experience in giving advice, and sometimes it may be taken and sometimes it may not. I have been struck by a couple of our site visits. On one of them, it looked as though they had this particular issue well sorted. They had a water feature that took off the water that was lodging on flat roofs, et cetera. Do you have a catalogue or some sort of reference, even on your website, to say, “If you are thinking of building, do think about this and look at the way X in Nether Stowey or somewhere has dealt with the advice that we gave them freely”—or whatever—“It is not only a nice thing to have, it is pretty essential, and long term you ought to be thinking about that”? What I am trying to say is that the general public gets bombarded with stuff and we do not know how much is important and how much is merely nice to have. You must be the repository of all this, so should you make it available and would you make it available, and is this an area where the Government should encourage you to make it available?

Tony Grayling: We try to promote good practice and best practice. In partnership with Natural England and others, we have published a handbook for that. Again, it is an evolving situation, but we are always trying to promote case studies that show good practice.

The Chairman: Good. And is uptake okay?

Tony Grayling: The honest answer is it varies, because there is a tendency to do the minimum that complies with our advice rather than necessarily going to the next stage, but there are lots of examples of good practice.

Q292 Baroness Young of Old Scone: The Earl of Lytton talked about one aspect of sustainable urban drainage and the issue of retrofit and why that had not happened. Can we look at the whole issue of SUDS? Is the policy working well and does there need to be any strengthening
of planning policy? There is the issue of SUDS maintenance, which was always a big challenge. It is comparatively easy to get planning authorities to introduce SUDS, but who looks after it after it is in, because it is there for ever?

**David Wilkes:** I believe that SUDS is a very sensible precaution. It is motherhood and apple pie. The technical advice and the landscape ideas are all there but, as you say, take-up is slow and disappointing. I would like the country as a whole to say, “We are going to grasp this and make it work”, and we should not be too afraid about what the likely maintenance costs are. We have universities across the land and we have joined-up thinking across the institutions that this has to be the way forward.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** What changes in policy would you like to see to make the implementation of SUDS more universal?

**David Wilkes:** Ultimately, for the lead local authorities to show leadership, to say that this is what will happen and to get to grips with it. We learn with experience how we operate and maintain those systems.

**The Chairman:** Are you looking for statutory recommendations, in other words, not leaving it to the councils but the Government saying, “This is what we have to do”?

**David Wilkes:** Professionally we have been thinking this way for 20 years.

**The Chairman:** And nothing has happened?

**David Wilkes:** We have seen in other countries—Australia, mainland Europe, North America—much better uptake of these systems because in those places there has been just a bit more confidence to say, “This is the right thing to do. We will do it. We are not going to end up with increasing the national debt if something goes slightly adrift in our forecast of what it would cost to maintain it.”

**The Chairman:** That is very useful. Thank you very much indeed.

**Q293 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Perhaps I could add another question before Mr Grayling responds. We have in the Flood and Water Management Act a provision for statutory implementation of SUDS that has never actually been commenced. In your view, should it be a statutory provision, because relying on the good will of local authorities may not have the right effect?
Tony Grayling: The Government decided to go down a different path and not to implement SUDS advisory bodies as proposed and for which there is provision in that Act, as you rightly say. It has taken a while to get the framework in place, but there is now a good framework. It is different from the one the Act proposed, but at the heart of it again is the lead local flood authority providing advice as a statutory adviser to district councils in relation to proposed developments. We have been working alongside the lead local flood authorities to ensure that they have the capacity and skills to take on this task, and, by and large we do. Defra published the guidance in April of this year and the framework is a little untested, so I think we need to give it time to see whether it is working properly, in the same way that we review whether our flood advisory statutory role is working properly. We need to take a look at whether the advice given by lead local flood authorities is taken up in planning decisions.

I think there is also a key issue, as Baroness Young has said, in relation to the ongoing maintenance of sustainable development schemes once they have been implemented, and that requires resources. In the Environment Agency we have also been thinking about whether there could be some incentives for householders or developers in relation to this. One idea, for example, is lower water bills for developments that have sustainable drainage schemes because they are putting less pressure on the existing water infrastructure, which is therefore reducing costs to the water company, but I think these things need further thought, and at this stage it is just an idea.

The Chairman: Could you not enlarge it and come up with a great proposition? If we are so behind other countries in doing this, why do we not get a move on? It is lovely to say that it is nice to have, but just say, “Please, we need it”.

Tony Grayling: We are constantly working alongside our colleagues in Defra—

The Chairman: Tell them to get a move on.

Tony Grayling: —to improve policy. As I say, it has taken a while to get the framework in place and we need to give it time to see if it is working or will need further review.

The Chairman: Time rather than a kick. Lord Lytton, do you want to come in on this?

Earl of Lytton: I am sorry to come back to another aspect of this. In the context of the very large number of homes that we are being told are required, some of which will be new
build, some of which will be secured by conversions and permitted development and things like that, I am interested to know how your advice as to best practice on matters of surface water drainage feeds through into the development control process, given this pressure from on high for these new things. You say that you are a consultee. What is to stop your advice being overridden by other factors? How quickly would you be able to step in and remedy that situation if, for instance, a quarter of a million homes are built per year over the next five years?

**Tony Grayling:** I guess the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and we keep an eye on it constantly. Every year, we review how effective our advice has been. In the last year for which we have full data, 2014-15, our advice on flood risk was taken in 98% of cases. In others words, the outcomes of the planning decisions were in line with our advice in 98% of cases. Our advice goes wider than flood risk for new homes and, if you look at our overall advice, outcomes in line with our advice amounted to 96% of cases. That includes our advice on water resource management, waste water management, land water and quality. Advice on sustainable drainage comes from the lead local flood authorities, not from us, and they probably need to put in place similar monitoring arrangements for understanding whether the advice they give is actually taken by district councils in making their planning decisions.

**Earl of Lytton:** Is that something Mr Wilkes would agree with?

**David Wilkes:** I do not think there is any more I can add to that; I agree with it.

**Q295 Lord Inglewood:** You said earlier that if you thought your advice was not going to be adhered to, and you really felt strongly about it, that you could approach the Minister with a view to getting a call-in. Is that a frequent happening, or is it a very rare occurrence in practice?

**Tony Grayling:** It is a relatively rare occurrence. It only happens in a handful of major developments each year, and then of course it is up to the Minister.

**Lord Inglewood:** Do they tend to listen to you?

**Tony Grayling:** I hope they listen to us, but of course Ministers are weighing our advice as an expert adviser against other local democratic factors and it is up to individual Ministers to balance between those things.
The Chairman: Reverting back to what you said about good practice being spread, when you have successes with these bigger cases, do you make a big song and dance about it so other councils realise they should be doing it? Imitating the best.

Tony Grayling: We try to within the limits of our resources, as I was describing earlier. We also work with developers, and, alongside Natural England, we have a forum with the major developers where we are regularly discussing these kinds of issues and the design features we want to see them incorporate into developments.

The Chairman: You could be the heroes of the sector and get a gold star.

Tony Grayling: That would be nice, but it requires constant attention to get a gold star.

Q296 Baroness Parminter: On that point, Mr Grayling, you said you have a forum with the developers and that is going well. Might it be more effective if that was a process that was led through DCLG and there was clear guidance to the developers about what standards were required to meet resilience requirements in the future?

Tony Grayling: To be clear, the forum was set up by Natural England, and congratulations to Natural England for doing that. We have joined in, and DCLG is also invited to that forum. During all this the developers have to operate within the framework of the National Planning Policy Framework and the planning guidance, upon which we also advise, as well as the local plans that are put in place.

Baroness Parminter: Indeed, but I want to press you on this. The guidance is very high level. It is strategic objective level rather than providing clarity. As the Chairman was saying, we want to promote best practice, so would it not be better if there was clear guidance from the department that could assist developers as they look to meet the resilience requirements of the future?

Tony Grayling: We have published that kind of best practice guidance.

Baroness Parminter: You have?

Tony Grayling: Yes, in consultation with government departments we developed a handbook and we have published it.

Q297 Lord Inglewood: We all know there is enormous pressure for more housing. At the same time, as recent events have shown, it is not a good idea to build houses where they
might flood. Is there any obvious way of getting round this problem? Clearly, if you do not build on certain sites, you have to build somewhere else, and you then run into all kinds of other planning constraints. We are a relatively small country with a large population, compared to many. What is the way of getting out of the vicious circle?

**Tony Grayling:** I honestly believe that the National Planning Policy Framework and the associated guidance provides the right framework for reconciling the different pressures on development and the different objectives you are trying to achieve.

**Lord Inglewood:** It is not a structural, systemic policy problem; it is a much more specific, site-by-site assessment where we think things may be going a bit wrong.

**Tony Grayling:** I am not sure the degree to which you could argue they are going wrong, on the basis of our data, which is that our advice is taken in 98% of cases where there have been developments.

**Q298 Lord Inglewood:** In the recent flooding in the north-west where I actually come from, a lot of the houses that have been flooded are not new houses but old houses, and that poses a completely separate problem about how you deal with a set of circumstances where the incidence of possible flooding suddenly becomes much greater than before. What do you do about it?

**Tony Grayling:** I agree with you that existing housing and development is a different problem and an increasing one in the face of a changing climate which is increasing flood risk in various ways. You have to deal with that by looking at whether you can cost-effectively enhance existing defences or build new flood defences or other types of flood risk management scheme. You cannot eliminate all flood risk, so you also have to look at property-level protection measures and ensuring that they build in resistance to water getting in, and resilience, so if water does get in, the property can rapidly recover. There are costs associated with that and it includes things such as having stone floors and having electrical sockets higher up on the wall.

**David Wilkes:** The height to which you build and the height at which you put other land use is really important. For instance, we have talked about areas of public open space when you have high-density residential living. If that open space is at a lower level to the built property,
in extreme conditions the public open space, the grass, gets wet and is out of use for a couple of days, but it is not the end of the world. It is attention to detail on quality design that is really important going forward. As you say, we are a small island and we really need to make every square metre of our land use work for the benefit of humans and wider nature together.

**Q299 Lord Inglewood:** Can I just go back to flood defences? How should the cost of doing some of these major schemes be apportioned? Is it right that the state should pay for it all, or should the affected householders pay for it all? If a new house had flood mitigation measures, then the purchaser of the house would be paying for them. If you have an existing house which suddenly becomes liable to flooding, is it right—and I am not saying it should or it should not—that the state picks up the bill for protecting them?

**Tony Grayling:** We have partnership funding arrangements in place, so in relation to grant funding from us, the state does not meet the full cost of all schemes. There is an expectation that there will be a local contribution, and that contribution can come from other public sector authorities, yes, but also from the beneficiaries and from the private sector.

**Lord Inglewood:** Do you think that is the right way to approach it?

**Tony Grayling:** I think you have to strike a balance in that sense, yes. There is a case for a substantial amount of public funding, but that does need to be balanced by beneficiaries also contributing.

**The Chairman:** But the beneficiaries contribute anyway by way of insurance, do they not?

**Tony Grayling:** The insurance money does not necessarily go to pay for the big schemes.

**The Chairman:** Of course, yes, that is right. Lady Young, you wanted to come in on this?

**Q300 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I am sorry to bang on about the effectiveness of the current policy. I am delighted to hear that advice from the Environment Agency being implemented by local authorities is now way up in the 90% level. Nevertheless, the Committee on Climate Change told us that 1,500 new homes are built on average per year within areas that are currently at high flood risk, which is a one-in-30 year risk, which is a considerable high risk, and a further 3,100 homes are built within areas with a one-in-100 year flood risk. Thus we are still seeing 5,000 houses a year being built against your advice, presumably?

**Tony Grayling:** There are two parts to the answer to that. We have had a debate with the Adaptation Sub-Committee, whose members are good colleagues and friends, and I think they were to some extent misinterpreting the data when they published those figures, because there is no absolute prohibition on building housing in flood plains. In some cases, it is appropriate if the right design features are put into the development. Even so, in 2% of cases, our advice is not taken so, yes, there are houses being built against our expert advice on flood risk. It is a small proportion, but it happens.

**Lord Inglewood:** You would recommend to any possible purchaser that they should not buy them. Is that right?

**Tony Grayling:** I do not think it is for me to make that sort of recommendation, but I would say that there is a buyer-beware issue.

**Lord Inglewood:** Caveat emptor.

**Tony Grayling:** There is a developer-beware issue here, too.

Q301 **Baroness Parminter:** Pressing on that point a little further—as Baroness Young said, it is a small percentage but a real number affecting real people—your response earlier to Lord Inglewood was that there are costs attached to making these properties “safe”.

**Tony Grayling:** Yes.

**Baroness Parminter:** Would it be your contention, then, that these costs are incorporated into the process such that, if planning permission is given to a developer to build in an area of flood risk, certain resilience measures have to be part of the scheme and they have to be met by the developer, so there is a mandatory obligation for planning applications being granted in those few occasions, as you put it, that are contrary to your advice?

**Tony Grayling:** We would want our advice to be taken in 100% of cases.

**Baroness Parminter:** Indeed. I accept that.

**Tony Grayling:** We also accept that there are local democratic factors that legitimately need to be taken into account. I do not think it is for the Environment Agency to overrule local democracy. The final decision needs to be taken in a democratic manner.

**Baroness Parminter:** With respect, I was not arguing that you should in any way subsume the democratic process; I entirely support that. I am asking whether, if a decision is made contrary
to the Environment Agency’s recommendations, the costs to make those properties flood resilient should be met in full. You said earlier that you have guidelines for making properties flood resilient. There should be a standard that says that these have to be taken into account and that the costs have to be met by the developer in advance.

**Tony Grayling:** There you are into buyer-beware territory, because you may find that unless those properties have those features built into them, that property will not be insurable.

**Baroness Parminter:** It is too late.

**Lord Inglewood:** A house exists at that point. The developer might catch a cold because he could not sell it, and I would not have much sympathy for that particular developer, but if you happen to be the poor person who has bought it, albeit foolishly, you have suddenly found yourself in a rather damp position.

**Tony Grayling:** True.

**Q302 Baroness Rawlings:** With all that you have described very clearly, are there any other key issues in relation to securing effective water management in the built environment that you would like to suggest that we have not covered, or have we covered it all?

**Tony Grayling:** Our conversation has been quite wide-ranging. If you are talking about major developments, from our perspective it is quite important that right at the outset of conceiving those developments a proper strategic flood risk assessment us made, proper water cycle studies are done, and the local authority and the developer think from the outset about what you might call the environmental infrastructure that needs to be put in place to ensure that development is environmentally sustainable in terms of water use and waste water management, and whether it is properly safe from flood risk and is resistant and resilient. Those are the key issues from our perspective.

**Q303 Lord Inglewood:** On this topic—and I speak as somebody who actually has some land upstream of some of the flooding in Cockermouth—if you can establish large areas upstream of houses that you can flood, you mitigate the effect of the water on the dwellings, obviously. Do you think that enough priority is given to making sure that we can increase areas where water can go sideways in a benign way, because if you can have flood plains and water
meadows you can mitigate this problem relatively inexpensively, although it might require payment?

**Tony Grayling:** I think there is further to go in that direction. Landscape-scale flood risk management is going to be an increasingly important feature. Our own approaches require that we look at landscape-scale approaches before we decide whether that alone or that in combination with a physical barrier is the appropriate approach to flood protection. Part of the issue is more confidence in the properties of a wall that retains water than in our understanding of upstream water storage, and I think we still have to learn from experience as to how effective those approaches are, but I think that is the direction we should be going in.

**David Wilkes:** I would support entirely the concept that whatever we can do to slow the movement of water through the catchment has multiple benefits. We have talked about flooding, but there are also benefits for drought, for keeping vegetation, for wildlife—

**The Chairman:** And fishing.

**David Wilkes:** They are all there if you see water as a precious resource and not a threat, and you try and hold within a catchment. Technically, it is more about how you reduce peak flood flows from heavy rainfall through our towns and cities. You almost have two bites of the cherry: you have an attempt through making better use of the flood washlands and the floodplain rivers. We are becoming very good at doing relatively minor engineered interventions to maximise the timing and the amount of storage of water within the valleys and within the flood plains. The second concept is rain falling on the surface of the hills on a catchment and then running off towards the river valleys. There are simple techniques you can use such as planting hedges along the contours rather than across the contours, which will slow down the sheet runoff for all the benefits that I have tried to articulate. Then of course there is the choice of vegetation and trees. Vegetation with deeper roots will help absorb more water and store it over a longer period. Of course there is a tension between that and feeding ourselves and agricultural production. We are back on to some of these weighty issues of how we find a point of balance between what is sensible and what is a real danger to human well-being and our economic way of life.
The Chairman: You have painted a very interesting picture, Mr Wilkes. It must be juggling with so many things at the same time. Is it beyond the wit of man?

David Wilkes: There is evidence that enlightened landowners and organisations such as the Forestry Commission are really making very positive steps forward. We also have some great academic institutions, which are capturing this science and writing it up. I truly believe that here in the UK we have some of the best ideas and some of the most creative brains, equal to or better than those in other countries.

The Chairman: That is encouraging.

Q304 Baroness Young of Old Scone: The ideas are there, but the question I would ask—I am unclear and I am seeking after fact—is: who is actually responsible for making sure that landscape-scale, activity and approach happens? Is it the Environment Agency? Is it a series of local authorities collaborating with each other? Who takes the lead in order to get that vision to happen?

David Wilkes: From what I observe it is a coming together of minds, it is a willingness of organisations to say, “This seems very sensible”.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: What happens if they do not come together?

David Wilkes: Then it is not happening yet.

The Chairman: A Country Life campaign.

Q305 Earl of Lytton: We come to the question of the key challenges in relation to the environmental resilience of the existing building stock. Mr Grayling, you have answered the questions regarding making individual properties resilient to flood, and I hope that the guidance is explicit and out there somewhere. I want to look at the other environmental parts—energy conservation, water use, sewerage, surface water dispersal issues—all of which are largely, and necessarily, on a per-property basis. What are the challenges in broad environmental terms in making the existing stock more resilient in that way?

Tony Grayling: Your question identifies some of the key challenges in addition to flood risk. We know that climate change is going to affect the distribution of water resources so that we will sometimes have too much of it and sometimes too little. I think we are going to have to become more efficient in how we make use of water resources. Of course, that pressure is
exacerbated by new development and population growth as well as the effects of climate change. There are things you can do at a property level to make properties more water efficient by retrofitting measures.

Another key issue is the danger of heat stress as temperatures gradually increase, and of course peak temperatures will also increase significantly. We know that events such as the heatwave we saw in Europe in the summer of 2003 are likely to become more and more commonplace as a result of underlying climate change, so we will need to take measures to ensure that people do not overheat in their properties. You are right to identify reducing emissions as a key challenge, although, in a sense, that is not about resilience of the individual property; that is about the contribution of the household sector to the UK’s overall commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit, as part of an international agreement, future climate change. It is a much bigger question in that respect.

I have to say on that latter one we are not the chief adviser; the chief adviser is the Committee on Climate Change. Our core responsibilities relate to flood risk, water management, water quality and land quality. We also operate an advisory service called Climate Ready, which deals with heat as well as those other issues.

Q306 Baroness Andrews: I would like to give Mr Wilkes an opportunity to answer the question I asked some moments ago about the extent to which developers are able to implement Code 5 to the highest standards, because that addresses many of the issues about water conservation, heat conservation, lifetime homes and so on.

We live in an ageing population. Quite a lot of attention is being paid to how we make houses fit for older people to stay in, or to building houses that are suitable and desirable so they will move out of houses that are inappropriate and sometimes unsafe. A lot of that is to do with design. Is addressing issues of conservation and resilience in the housing stock part of a policy to promote well-being in general in the environment? Is there a policy issue there?

David Wilkes: Perhaps I should confess that I would not style myself as an expert on these matters. I know that Code 5 sets some very ambitious standards, and I would hope to bring it on. Personally, I thought Code 4 set some very high standards, which amplifies the point I
tried to make about us having good ideas in this country. Part of my frustration is that we do not get on quickly enough with implementing those ideas.

**Baroness Andrews:** We have a deregulatory impulse at the moment.

**David Wilkes:** There is this continued tendency towards deregulation. Again, it is about the correct point of balance in saying that we are building properties that we would expect to be here in at least 70 years’ time, maybe in 100 years’ time. Would we want future generations to say, “Why were they so slow? Why were they so backward looking in 2015?” It is about how we get that balance right. We have good ideas.

**Q307 Baroness Whitaker:** We have heard evidence that national government does not join up very well the departments whose interests bear on this, which you have both laid out: economic, social and environmental. We have also seen evidence that the Natural Capital Committee was a useful model in that at one point it brought together a certain number of disciplines. Is there a case for a national committee perhaps on the model of the Natural Capital Committee to advise the Government on all the elements of the value of the built environment and to strike the balance that you refer to from time to time but you do not exactly characterise?

**David Wilkes:** Valuing natural capital is a very interesting concept. I think we are doing well.

**Baroness Whitaker:** We do not have that committee any more.

**Tony Grayling:** It is about to be re-established, actually.

**Baroness Whitaker:** That is very interesting.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** It is only for the natural environment.

**Baroness Parminter:** It is not statutory.

**Baroness Whitaker:** I will rephrase my question. Do you think that could encompass advice to the Government on the total value of all the elements of the built environment, or do you think there should be a parallel committee of some sort, or even a person?

**David Wilkes:** I have a dislike of too many organisations. I have a natural tendency to recommend that you try to communicate the right thing to do, and you try to engage people and carry them with you.
Baroness Whitaker: Could that remedy the holistic deficit, if I could call it that, which we have heard quite a lot about?

David Wilkes: Valuing natural capital can help give real evidence to counterbalance what is a risk of short-term economic and growth tensions—

Baroness Whitaker: How is that advice to be brought together and pushed towards the attention of decision-makers then, if there is no organisation to do it?

David Wilkes: If you do the work, if you gather evidence and get the data, then you are able to present it.

Baroness Whitaker: Who is doing this then? Is it separate institutions? Who or what is going to bring it together?

David Wilkes: It is coming together through the universities, through taxpayer-funded research and through the committees, I believe.

Baroness Whitaker: You do not think there needs to be a co-ordinating mechanism or person?

David Wilkes: I would look first to existing mechanisms and encourage people to listen to what is happening on matters that are relevant to their present responsibilities.

Tony Grayling: I think it is an interesting idea, although I have to say it is not one the Environment Agency has taken a view on, so I do not feel I can say one way or the other whether it is a good idea. I do not think you could join it to the work of the Natural Capital Committee. One of my other responsibilities is leading the Environment Agency’s work on natural capital. It is focused on the natural environment rather than the built environment, and I do not think it would make a good fit. If you were going to establish such a body, you would need to think carefully about how its remit related to existing bodies’ remits. For example, the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change, in relation to the resilience of the built environment, already covers those issues. Are we lacking a holistic approach? We might, but that is not because there is not the potential within the existing framework for there to be one. The National Planning Policy Framework and planning policy guidance are the vehicles for integration in this arena.
The Chairman: We have come very close to this decision in some of our previous sessions and it is always ends up with the word “leadership”. There is no doubt that there are people out there who could build things together. It could be the Chief Scientific Adviser. It could be anybody. If you have any further thoughts on that, or indeed on anything else that was raised today, or something that we have not thought about at all, we would be very grateful for a few scribbled words. We do not want take any more of your time, but it has been a fascinating session. I am sure I speak for the whole Committee when I say thank you very much. You have engaged brilliantly with us all, so thank you.

10 December 2015
Memorandum from the City of London Corporation

Submitted by the Office of the City Remembrancer

Local Control over the Balance of Office and Housing Uses in the City

1. The City is an office-based employment cluster at the heart of the world's leading international financial and business centre. It is recognised as being a ‘nationally significant area of economic activity’ and has been granted a local exemption from national permitted development rights for change of use from commercial to residential. It is also recognised in the Mayor’s London Plan as being “a strategically important globally-oriented financial and business services centre”. This recognition justifies a distinctive City of London Local Plan that reflects the importance for the UK of the financial services industry centred on the City and that places greater emphasis on employment growth than housing growth.

2. The current planning system allows for a distinctive local plan to be prepared if justified by local evidence. The City Corporation argues that the balance between national and local policy should continue to allow such local flexibility. In particular the City Corporation wishes to retain local control over change of use from offices to housing in the City to ensure that it can protect existing office stock and encourage additional office stock in the City to accommodate projected employment growth. Housing growth in the City would be directed to identified existing residential areas. Recognising the need to boost housing supply nationally, the City Corporation is meeting London Plan housing targets and actively working with neighbouring boroughs to boost the supply of affordable housing. However, the Corporation believes this should not be at the expense of employment space that is still making an active contribution to economic growth.

Local Autonomy to Set Planning Application Fees

3. The City Corporation currently operates planning application fees based on fee scales that are set nationally. It is known that the nationally-set planning fees do not cover the total costs of processing planning applications and, therefore, there is a public subsidy to planning applicants. There is also a cross-subsidy between planning applications of differing complexity. The actual processing costs vary across the country as building occupation, staff and other costs vary. Where the fees received are significantly below the processing costs there is the likelihood that local planning authorities will not be able to fund the skilled staff needed to support timely and
effective decision making. As the economy continues to recover, planning authorities will play a vital role in delivering the development needed to sustain economic growth. Local planning authorities need to be resourced properly to be able to perform this vital role and to avoid unnecessary delays in the development process. Local fee setting would provide a mechanism to help ensure these resources are available.

4. If it is the intention that applicants should pay the full cost of processing planning applications then it would be appropriate for local planning authorities to have local autonomy to set planning fees locally, based on the actual local costs. This would improve the resources available to local planning authorities and attract the best skilled. As a consequence, the quality and timeliness of planning decisions would be improved, to the benefit of the built environment and the economy.

**Local Involvement in the ‘Listing’ Process**

5. Local authorities should continue to be involved in the evidence gathering process that is part of the consideration of buildings to be ‘listed’ for special architectural or historic interest. Local authorities have specialist local knowledge of the site, area, history and planning policy context that should form part of the consideration. Local consultation during the listing process will enable communities to engage with the decisions that shape their built environment.

**Local Consultation Requirement at Pre-Application Stage**

6. Major development proposals should be the subject of consultation with local people before submitting a planning application. Although this obligation formed part of the Localism Act 2011, the provision has not yet been brought into force (except for onshore wind farms). Therefore developers in the City are encouraged to consult local people voluntarily and to demonstrate what account has been taken of local views received during the preparation of the planning application. Making pre-application consultation a requirement, through bringing into effect relevant provisions in the Localism Act, would improve the engagement of local communities in the decisions that shape their built environment.

**Review of Duty to Co-operate**

7. The Government has appointed a panel of experts to consider ways to streamline the local plan-making process. In parallel, the Government is reconsidering local government powers and structures in order to encourage greater regional
cooperation between local authorities. Both subjects should be considered together as changes to local government structures and powers may provide scope to simplify some of the existing local plan-making processes, for example the ‘duty to co-operate’.

8. The ‘duty to co-operate’ created by the Localism Act 2011 applies to all local planning authorities, in part in recognition that the abolition of most regional planning organisations after 2010 increased the importance of co-operation between the remaining local planning authorities. The existence of some strategic planning authorities, such as the Greater London Authority led by the Mayor of London, and the possible creation of new regional groupings led by new mayors, provides greater scope for more strategic planning issues to be considered at a strategic level – for example the relationship between major cities and their hinterland. Issues that would benefit from more strategic planning include the strategic pattern of housing, transport and other infrastructure investment, the balance between employment space and housing needs, waste management and air quality improvement initiatives. If such matters were dealt with effectively at the strategic level, there would be scope to simplify the existing ‘duty to cooperate’ required of local planning authorities and thereby to streamline local plan-making.

**Importance of Green Space**

9. In addition to its responsibilities as planning authority for the City of London, the City Corporation also acts (in its private capacity) as custodian to 11,000 acres of open space across the south east and fully appreciates that the built environment cannot be considered without also giving due consideration to the natural environment. As well as the ‘grey’ infrastructure necessary to foster economic growth – eg transport, utilities, services – it is also important to ensure the green infrastructure is right. Not only does this mean providing quality public places and parks but also consideration of safe walking routes, cycle ways, places to play and surface water drainage. This has been illustrated to good effect recently with the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park which has benefited from a long term master plan and investment in both green and grey infrastructure.

16 October 2015
Colchester Borough Council – Written Evidence (BEN0083)

Response to Questions

Colchester Borough Council

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

More might be done to devolve powers to the immediate local authority and neighbourhood levels, though this would require additional resources (e.g. to support local communities develop neighbourhood plans) and offering options on possible policy taking into account local issues.

A priority issue, is the lack of local control involved in guiding and making decisions with regard to local transportation matters which typically have significant impacts in shaping our built environment, e.g. relating to development densities (determining how much land needs to be allocated and whether this supports sustainable transport modes), layout and public realm design. Local highway matters do not appear subject to any meaningful levels of public consultation, democracy and national arbitration, unlike say the planning system, with the problem made worse when Highways Authorities are in a higher tier local authority (e.g. County) rather than that of the Local Planning Authority. For example, most Highways Authorities do not meaningfully adopt Manual for Streets which was produced by government to promote a more holistic transportation approach though is not mandatory to Highway Authorities and cannot be forced upon them by local authorities.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Planning and Transportation teams should be combined given the wealth of overlapping and competing agendas. Where two tier structures deliver these functions then agency agreements should be sought to embed highway engineers within the authority responsible for planning functions.

Treasury considerations and development industry advocacy appear to consistently trump built environmental considerations and without reasonable consultation, debate and consensus, as evidenced by emerging national policy, e.g. office-to-residential permitted development rights have promoted development though at the expense of preserving some of the worst built environments in the country. In this respect, decision-makers should be better informed by the value of place-making on quality of life and economic growth, supported by further research.
National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF provides a concise document which generally serves its national outline strategic purpose, though should be stronger in charging local council’s with formulating local policies (including those which provide more detail such as design guidance), supported by adequate local resources and further guidance to help form such policies.

Specific issues with the NPPF include:

The section on ‘Requiring Good Design’ is effectively contradicted by only suggesting that “poor design should be refused”, putting uncertainty in the planning system and which inevitably leads to a much lower enforceable minimum requirement of “not bad enough to refuse”. Government should make ‘Requiring Good Design’ more implicit in policy.

There is no statutory requirement for local authorities to employ/access specialist design expertise (e.g. urban and landscape designers) to guide development and advise on proposals at pre-app and application stage, despite planners generally being ill-equipped to provide this at an advanced level. This should be addressed by setting standards for employing specialist design expertise to guide development, advise on proposals at pre-app and application stage, and represent on planning committees (as happens in Australia).

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

No, given the strategic level that national planning operates. However, it should be stronger in charging local council’s with formulating local policies with spatial elements, supported by adequate local resources and further guidance to help form such policies. A priority would be the need for allocations to be better informed by a range of spatial elements tested through visualised analysis and design.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

There is no consistently optimal timeframe, though the 20 years typically planned in local plans appears generally appropriate.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level,
required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Policies will have some impact on housing supply, though this will continue to be hindered by brownfield viability and delivery issues, local resistance to greenfield development, land banking and inadequate or onerous CPO powers.

Increased CPO powers offer the greatest potential. In particular increased CPO powers for greenfield land should enable local authorities to facilitate growth in the right places (subject to consultation), capture land value, generate local support based on local benefits; avoid the currently confrontational developer-led allocations process which adds cost and delay; and promote self-build and community-led development more likely to deliver development quicker, better respond to local need, achieve higher design quality and empower local communities. Such an approach is advocated in more detail by Urbed in their winning Garden City proposal to the Wolfson Economics Prize 2014.

Priority sites affected by viability issues should be subsidised by public sector funding or tax breaks to incentivise. There needs to there be greater acceptance of lower capital receipts with regard to land being disposed of by the public sector where this will help delivery of homes and to facilitate high quality design and place making.

Higher density development formats should be promoted which are palatable to the public and take the pressure off locally unpopular greenfield land requirements, e.g. discouraging traditional retail and business park formats involving high levels of surface parking; relocating overhead electricity infrastructure underground where this eats into development areas; reducing landfill tax relating to underground car parking and basement accommodation; and reducing car parking ratios supported by greater proportions of shared/unallocated spaces, remote multi-storey parking, and significantly increased investment and priority with regard to car clubs, car sharing, rapid transit, cycling etc.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come?

Transportation is arguably the key to promoting more sustainable and resilient built environments, though Highway Authorities are generally car-orientated, detached from local planning authorities and have unquestioned authority. Recommended solutions include:

Either devolve Highways Authorities into local planning authorities (e.g. boroughs/districts) or ensure central (e.g. County) teams work directly to and for local planning authorities.

Require most transportation proposals to be subject to planning permission or support at borough/district level.

Make it mandatory to promote Manuel for Streets compliance.
Significantly increase investment in sustainable transport.

How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

The historic environment is relative and should therefore better reflect local as well national importance, lower status as well as higher status buildings and places of local significance, the weight afforded to undesignated buildings and places needs to better take into the account the views of local people. For example, what might be considered unimportant in York might be relatively important in Basildon, and humble working-class areas often need greater levels of protection as demonstrated by the misguided pathfinder programme which unnecessarily demolished much valuable Victorian terraced housing areas across northern England.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Most local authorities do not employ specialist design expertise (urban design) and a 35% reduction in conservation capacity (IHBC 2015) has occurred since 2006. During this period Historic England (English Heritage) has suffered significant cuts with a commensurate reduction in capacity. This capacity is essential to help guide development, bridge the different design strands and advise on proposals at pre-app and application stage; despite planners generally being ill-equipped to provide this at an advanced level. This had started to be understood and occur, but was curtailed by budgetary cuts and not being a statutory requirement.

Planning committees need to be provided with relevant training and would otherwise often struggle to fully understand specialist built environment aspects. This might be addressed by and having specialist experts supporting the committee alongside democratically-elected local representatives.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The promotion of design review in the NPPF would be more effective if this was more clearly defined to include design officer review as well as panel review, and if local authorities could charge developers for panel review, i.e. the cost/time involved this would
encourage LPA’s to access these paid services; currently the costs are a barrier to resource challenged authorities.

Funding cuts to Design Council/CABE mean it is not fit for purpose as a national design champion. Its status and resourcing should be significantly increased to provide national leadership

‘Building for Life’ is a useful tool for ensuring the design quality of homes and neighbourhoods, though the lack of nationally accredited training and arbitration, absence of scoring and ease with which awards are achieved, means the initiative has been excessively watered down.

The Homes and Communities Agency seem distracted by capital receipts and numbers as opposed to quality of the built environment and should revert to weighting quality criteria when disposing of land and funding affordable housing.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

No, the system is under intense pressure from Governmental priorities, developers, development numeric targets and under-resourcing, and as a consequence often inadequately takes into account such matters. Improvements might focus on greater devolution to better supported local communities, and more research and guidance related to the role of the built environment as a key driver of growth and wellbeing.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The planning system is effective in trying to engage and take views on board in shaping growth. However, there is room for improvement. The importance of strategic policy and the allocations stage of plan delivery is often not understood and therefore missed by the general public. This should be addressed as part of a wider overhaul of the allocations process, i.e. which is less developer led and better aligned to a more ‘engaging’ strategic planning process benefitting from visualised analysis and design, i.e. master planning. Planning committee processes may inadequately allow local people
to represent themselves, i.e. a 2 minute slot with no involvement in the follow-on debate prior to decision can appear unfair and frustrating; especially where they also possess relevant expert skills.
Local highway proposals, which invariably have a significant impact on the built environment, do not appear subject to any meaningful levels of public consultation, democracy and national arbitration. This should be addressed by (i) either devolving Highways Authorities into local planning authorities (e.g. boroughs) or ensure central (e.g. County) teams work directly to and for local planning authorities, and (ii) ensure transport proposals go through the same engagement processes as planning.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Measure could include:

- Extension of tax relief on new builds including works to protected heritage assets and publicise/extend tax breaks on brownfield land.

- Reduction of landfill tax relating to underground car parking and basement accommodation, to increase development densities and avoid car parking dominated environments.

- Encourage design quality as well as capital receipts when disposing of public sector land, e.g. by promoting development briefs and giving design adequate criteria weighting/thresholds for assessing bids.

- Increase funding in sustainable transport, which in turn would facilitate reduced parking ratios, enabling increased development densities and completing the self-fulfilling cycle by providing the catchment populations to further support sustainable transport.

05 October 2015
Policymaking, Integration & Coordination

1.1  Decisions are taken at the right level but are not necessarily the right decisions. National Policy should be set at government level but it frequently fails to achieve the housing that is required as the end result.

1.2  Not enough affordable homes are being built because they are not cost effective for developers; naturally, developers will seek ways around the policies, such as keeping the developments to small pockets of large market-houses to keep below the threshold for being required to build affordable homes.

1.3  With the abolition of the former detailed national Planning Policy Guidance has come a lack of ability by local authorities to enforce the good intentions of National Policy, because there is now a lack of clarity about how Policy should be interpreted.

1.4  With the adoption of so many Local Plans around the country either being delayed or challenged, there is little that many planning authorities can do to safeguard the built environment for which they are responsible.

2.1  It would help if Government departments communicated with each other properly and clearly set out the requirements for infrastructure to be included in all developments large and small, and ensured that the needs and requirements of communities are put in place first, not as an afterthought which is open to ‘re-negotiation’.

2.2  We have seen evidence in East Northamptonshire of a developer so anxious to secure permission for a large housing development that it downplayed the projected costs – and now is unable to make sufficient profits from house sales to meet the S106 obligations imposed with the planning permission. The developer is now ‘re-negotiating’; in other words being excused the S106 contribution.

2.3  Lack of resources at local authority level appears to be the reason why planning enforcement has become almost non-existent, and officers appear to prefer to cultivate a ‘positive working relationship’ with erring developers rather than work primarily to safeguard the amenity and wellbeing of neighbours affected by condition breaches.
2.4 National Policy is doing nothing to protect local character and heritage through design principles, nor ensuring that infrastructure is prioritised rather than negotiated away when development is almost complete.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3.1 The NPPF is far too vague to be useful at the sharp end of planning, building and protecting the built environment. It relies on Local Plans to provide local detail, and provides no contingencies for where there is no adopted Local Plan.

3.2 The principle of ‘brownfield first’ has been all but abandoned in the race to provide as many houses as possible.

3.3 The NPPF is silent as to the required mix of housing types, or indeed a method for assessing what types are needed; the proliferation of smaller households (because of population growth, ageing population, divorce, etc) cannot be addressed by the market alone because developers require the profits that come from selling larger properties.

4.1 The spatial perspective has, in effect, vanished. Local designations that formerly protected rural areas from overdevelopment have been abolished or weakened. Landscape character no longer seems to carry weight.

4.2 The loss of a regional perspective has made it difficult to tie together the local and the national dimensions and to take account of cross-border implications of planning proposals.

5.1 Superficially, the principle of a five-year housing supply seems to be working reasonably well from a strategic point of view. However, what is actually delivered, for the reasons given in paragraph 3.3, bears little resemblance to these figures.

5.2 Factors affecting long term outcomes are either unpredictable (eg economic downturn) or a response to changes in political strategy (eg after a General Election) so there seems little point in tinkering with planning timescales other than ensuring that policymakers at all levels remember to keep an eye on the long term.

Buildings and places: New and old

6.1 It seems likely that the relaxing of the planning system combined with the current local government budget cuts will result in more building of unsuitable housing on unsuitable sites.

6.2 It will not achieve the thousands of affordable houses of good, sustainable, environmentally friendly (green, carbon neutral etc.) quality that is required in this
country.

6.3 Selling off social housing will only exacerbate this trend; that policy should be abandoned immediately, and if anything the Exception Site rules should be expanded so that more social housing can be built and occupied by those who need it.

6.4 It is well known that there is a huge demand for smaller properties, so if the commercial developers cannot or will not provide these, then the housing associations should be encouraged and even incentivised to do so – rather than being required to sell their existing stock.

6.5 The redevelopment of brownfield land, which by definition tends to be located in the vicinity of existing infrastructure, should be incentivised, especially in comparison to the development of greenfield sites and Green Belt.

6.6 Either there should be financial levies imposed for building on previously undeveloped land, or tax relief on remediation and decontamination work that can discourage developers from seeking to build on brownfield land.

7.1 Policies should be put in place to ensure all new development and repair and restoration of existing housing stock is carried out to sustainable standards.

7.2 Grants for retrofitting insulation and other energy efficiency measures should not be limited to people on benefits or so-called ‘low incomes’; since the late 1980s there has been a massive growth in the number of self-employed people who do not qualify for benefits no matter how badly their business may be going.

7.3 It is not enough to decree that new houses must meet modern standards; provision must also be made for existing properties that do not have cavity walls, etc.

7.4 Proper funding needs to be made available so that existing housing stock can be brought up to standard; this will not only improve quality of life for people, but will reduce the long term reliance on fossil and other fuels for heating – at a national level.

7.5 Infrastructure is key to sustainability and resilience, and it makes sense to maximise what is there already, especially when developers seem unable to deliver it and still make a profit.
8.1 Considerable care should be taken by all planning departments and authorities to preserve all national and historical assets to the best of their ability. Housing development should not be given if it will ultimately be to the detriment of these.

8.2 The historic environment is not something to be ‘used’, primarily for economic gain, but it can be incorporated into creating public places that are social, welcoming and beneficial to quality of life; I refer to a recent article by the Project for Public Spaces for details of how this may be achieved in a practical sense. http://www.pps.org/reference/11steps/

**Skills and design**

9.1 An understanding and appreciation of Design, and of the social implications of building development, are two areas that seem to be lacking across the board within planning authorities.

9.2 The division of responsibilities between Planning Officers (who look at the site) and Highways Officers (who look at access but not necessarily at the site in real detail or over a period of time) is an obvious example of why it is at present impossible for planning decisions to be considered ‘holistically’.

9.3 Too often, the only people in a position to understand the day-to-day implications of, say, allowing gates across an entrance next to a busy road, are the most local consultees – ie neighbours and parish councillors; lip service is often paid to their ‘local knowledge’ but in reality it carries no weight at all if the planning authority fears that its decision could be Appealed.

9.4 An understanding of the real risks and costs of Appeals, by planning officers as well as councillors and the public, would be beneficial – as would a National Policy that ensures the Planning Inspectors do sufficient research before making their Appeal decisions.

10.1 Every region should have universities providing accredited Planning degrees. The East Midlands is chronically under-supplied in this regard.

10.2 Awards and public information films that highlight design excellence would raise appreciation by the general public, who will also include developers, designers, clients and planners.
10.3 Resourcing planning enforcement is essential for when things go wrong; funding it centrally could be one way to ensure the money is ring-fenced, rather than undermined during a time of austerity.

10.4 Developers are by nature interested in ‘viability’ and ‘profit’ rather than ‘high quality design’ and ‘place making’ so it cannot be left solely in their hands to provide these things.

Community involvement and community impact

11.1 Tower blocks built in the 1960s and 70s that have subsequently been torn down, and ‘ghetto’ towns where gangs and so on rule the areas with people afraid to venture out at night, are examples of the result of bad planning.

11.2 Throwing unconscionable sums of money at public building is not the answer either.

11.3 Town planners now seem to realise that cramming people into high-density housing does not work, and that integration of old and new styles, and large and small houses, produces a healthy mix of people and integrated resilient communities.

11.4 However it may be that academic studies to prove these common-sense lessons will be needed before any government would dare to make these a matter of National Policy and make them the norm in the real world.

12.1 Opportunity to engage is theoretically available through the planning application process but this does not ensure that the ‘voice of the community’ is actually heard.

12.2 Planners and planning committee members do not always seem to see the same ‘street scene’ as the community; this can lead to, for example, allowing town houses to be built in small rural villages otherwise consisting of small cottages and farm workers’ dwellings.

12.3 At a local level, the planning process is off-putting and seems to the general public to be more like a lottery than a real process with firm rules and obvious consequences.

12.4 The rules governing the public’s ability to address Planning Committee meetings are draconian and poorly-explained, and often feel unfair because of how they are applied at Committee meetings.
12.5 Inaccuracies in legal advice during these meetings cannot be challenged, and a lack of local representation during Committee discussions can lead to one-sided debates and poor decisions.

12.6 Whilst it is extremely helpful to be able to view planning applications online, there are a number of issues which deter the public from doing so: drawings scanned the wrong way up, large drawings that cannot be viewed properly on a normal computer screen nor printed out on a domestic printer, layers of click-throughs and poor signposting, emails used to send generic letters but without even a link to the correct application. These should be simple matters to address, yet it seems that some planning authorities do not feel any need to do so.

Financial measures

13.1 I refer to the recommendations given in paragraphs 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 above.

– End –

27 September 2015
The Committee on Climate Change was established under the 2008 Climate Change Act. We advise the Government on carbon budgets and report to Parliament annually on progress against budgets and the 2050 target. Our Adaptation Sub-Committee reports to Parliament every two years with an independent assessment of the progress being made with preparing the UK for a changing climate.

Changes to the built environment are needed in order to achieve carbon budgets, while the impacts of climate change on people and communities will to a significant degree be determined by how well the built environment is adapted to the future climate. The CCC and ASC’s first joint progress report to Parliament in June 2015 found that policies to reduce emissions from buildings need strengthening. We set out that:

- **GHG emissions from buildings** - 17% of the UK’s direct greenhouse gas emissions are from buildings, as well as indirectly accounting for two-thirds of power sector emissions.
- **Energy efficiency** - improvements (e.g. insulation) to existing homes contributes both to reducing emissions and alleviating fuel poverty. Recent policy changes have resulted in a slow-down in the rate of installation of insulation measures. The Government needs to address this and set out the future of energy efficiency policy, ensuring that both carbon budgets and fuel poverty targets are met. This may include a greater role for local authority-led delivery, based on positive experience from Scotland and Wales.
- **Decarbonising heating** - is one of the biggest challenges for carbon budgets. Currently, low-carbon heat accounts for less than 2% of heat demand. The Government needs to develop an action plan to address this shortfall, also ensuring a better integration with energy efficiency. Such an action plan should allow various options to be pursued (e.g. individual heat pumps and district heating infrastructure).

At the same time, many aspects of England’s built environment are ill-prepared for a changing climate. We highlighted in particular:

- **River and coastal flood risk** – many towns and cities are located on the floodplain, with over 240,000 properties in England currently located in areas of high flood risk (with a 1-in-30 annual chance of flooding or greater). These numbers are projected to increase in the future with sea level rise and projected increases in peak river flows. Furthermore, 1,500 new homes on average are built each year in areas that are currently at high flood risk. A further 3,100 homes are built per year within the 1-in-100 year floodplain, many of which will be in the high risk category in time. Existing flood risk management policy focuses on building bigger defences where possible and affordable but fails to address
the increasing numbers of homes and other properties elsewhere that are falling in to the high flood risk category.

- **Surface water flooding** – progress has been slow with managing this risk in urban areas, which is projected to increase in the future due to heavier rainfall events combined with the continued paving over of front gardens, in-fill development and an ageing public sewer network that is already near to capacity. Many of the recommendations of the Pitt Review into the 2007 floods have not been implemented, particularly on the use of sustainable drainage systems in new developments. Local flood risk management strategies, a requirement under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, have yet to be finalised by the majority of local authorities in England.

- **Overheating** – up to 2,000 premature deaths per year can be attributed to hot weather, and this could increase to 7,000 per year by the 2050s. However, there are no policies for tackling the risk of overheating in the built environment. A number of drivers are increasing vulnerability, including an ageing population, the condition of existing buildings such as hospitals and care homes, the loss of urban greenspace and the design of new buildings. Building Regulations do not currently require consideration of heat stress or the fitting of passive cooling measures in new development.

- **Water scarcity** – the risk of significant supply-demand deficits during periods of drought is projected to increase due to the combined effects of climate change and population growth. This could affect public water supply. Although some progress is being made, with per capita consumption gradually falling, further steps to increase water efficiency in buildings are required.

Most of England’s existing homes and other buildings will still be in use in 2050. Extensive retrofitting will be required to make the building stock more energy efficient, suitable for low-carbon heat sources and resilient to even a 2°C rise in global mean temperature. This is not, however, currently happening at any scale. Coordinated and targeted actions that support both emission reductions and adaptation will be more efficient than considering each issue in isolation.

As well as the significant challenge of retrofitting the existing building stock, consideration will also be needed of longer term and more fundamental changes to the built environment in relation to opportunities this provides for both reducing emissions and for adaptation. Planning and transport within existing urban areas, as well as the location and design of new centres of population and transport and infrastructure links between them, will become increasingly critical. Climate change is likely to become an increasingly important driver in the future, affecting where centres of population will and will not be viable. Nowhere is this more the case than on the coast, where rising sea levels will have significant implications for many major conurbations over the rest of this century and beyond, including the capitals of all four UK countries. The ASC is currently undertaking a major climate change risk assessment for the UK, required by the Climate Change Act, which will explore the latest evidence of risks to the built
environment.

The joint CCC and ASC Progress Report Summary can be found here.

The CCC’s 2015 Progress report can be found here, with chapter 2 covering progress in buildings.

The ASC’s 2015 report can be found here, where chapter 2 of the report covers the Built Environment. A more detailed technical annex to the Built Environment chapter, which contains the range of data underpinning the ASC’s analysis, can be found here.

As statutory independent advisers to Parliament, members of both the CCC and ASC frequently meet with a range of Select Committees to provide input into their hearings. We will, of course, be more than happy to provide further evidence as the inquiry develops.

06 October 2015
Confederation of British Industry – Written Evidence (BEN0054)

CBI input to the House of Lords Select Committee on national policy for the built environment

1. The CBI is the UK’s leading business organisation, speaking for some 190,000 businesses operating across the UK. With offices across the country as well as representation in Brussels, Washington, Beijing and Delhi, the CBI communicates the British business voice around the world.

A robust planning regime is integral to improving the built environment

2. The business community is concerned that the UK is falling behind its international peers on infrastructure quality and delivery, with serious implications for investment across the wider economy. A 2014 CBI/URS survey found that three-fifths of firms believe that EU countries possess better infrastructure than the UK, while 99% of companies want the UK to raise capital investment levels in line with the G20 average to narrow the gap in infrastructure quality. Energy and transport are regarded as particularly problematic sectors, with a majority of respondents expecting these areas to worsen in the next 5 years.

3. Housing offers a similarly alarming picture. In 2013/14 there were just over 140,000 homes built across the UK, but England alone requires 240,000 homes delivered annually to keep pace with population growth and new household formation. The shortage of housing is considered especially acute in London, where roughly half of all firms reported difficulty recruiting junior and midlevel staff in the 2015 CBI/CBRE London Business Survey.

4. The problems facing infrastructure and housing delivery are interconnected. Improving the quality and speed of project delivery for the English built environment requires greater policy clarity and certainty, including at national level, and a more efficient planning system which can address national needs strategically instead of tackling problems in isolation. Only an integrated approach to housing and infrastructure planning can fully provide the homes, roads, power plants and runways the UK needs to remain at the forefront of the global economy.

Planning reforms in recent years have been encouraging, but still more needs to be done

5. Firms have seen a growing recognition among policymakers about the importance of a strategic approach to planning. The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012 was a major step in simplifying and streamlining the planning system, while the National Infrastructure Plan has offered some clarity about potential investment opportunities in the pipeline. Recent announcements in the Productivity Plan introducing a brownfield register and a zonal system for housing have continued this encouraging trend.
6. However, maintaining progress on planning will require these reforms to embed to create political stability and certainty for business. The politicisation of the planning process is widely regarded as a leading barrier to creating a modern, high-performing built environment. More than half of respondents to the CBI/URS survey regarded political rhetoric as a major barrier to infrastructure investment.

7. Sustaining planning reform will also require improvements in planning performance. With planning authorities under severe strain due to skills shortages, under-resourcing, and capacity constraints, business and government must find innovative ways to help planners reach decisions in a prompt manner. There is some discussion in the business community about the pros and cons of paying higher planning fees if there are assurances of timely and quality decisions, while other efficiencies such as creating pooled planning authorities should be trialled to maximise existing capacity.

**Communities must be engaged at an early stage to gain local support for national ambitions**

8. Policymakers will have to connect the infrastructure England needs with the built environment communities want through early engagement and an appropriate mix of incentives. Many developers already go well beyond statutory requirements and engage communities early during the pre-application stage. Communities do not wish to feel bribed to support new housing or infrastructure developments. Accordingly, pre-application consultations should therefore ensure that those most affected by development have the greatest voice about the services or opportunities they wish to see, creating a constructive and ongoing dialogue with business throughout the development process.

**The greatest scope for improving the built environment in the long term is by creating a joined-up, cross government approach to planning at both national and sub-national level**

9. While depoliticising the planning process, boosting capacity among planning inspectorates, and strengthening local incentives can offer quick wins for creating a better built environment, these improvements are dwarfed by the potential of creating a cross-government, long-term outlook on housing and infrastructure delivery, as envisioned by the recent announcement of an independent infrastructure commission. A “national needs assessment” laid out by the commission must go further than the existing National Infrastructure Plan and offer short, medium and long term views on development and infrastructure needs and priority areas for the built environment as a whole, with spatial considerations for supporting new housing projects and vice versa. In addition, combined authorities and metro areas can use the national approach as the guiding framework for developing their own spatial approaches to building the homes and infrastructure needed for the future.
10. The benefits of a joined-up approach through the independent infrastructure commission would be most apparent at the pre-construction stage. Businesses would not only possess greater investment clarity for individual projects, but have insight into the nation’s long term priorities for the built environment when deciding to fund development. The local variations in the planning process would also diminish. Once a project begins, land disposal could be effectively coordinated among departments, allowing development to start quicker and at lower expense to firms and government.

**Transforming the planning system requires political will**

11. The infrastructure commission must be kept objective and apolitical to fulfil its purpose of strategically planning England’s built environment, with accountability for the assessment of national need assured through regular reporting requirements to policymakers and the public.

12. Removing the politics from planning demands bold and brave thinking from decision-makers. We urge the government to sustain the positive direction of travel on planning to better develop England’s built environment in the months and years ahead and help the nation thrive.

05 October 2015
Construction Industry Council – Written Evidence (BEN0053)

CIC Flood Mitigation and Resilience Group
Submission to the Lords Select Committee for the Built Environment

Submission made by Sue Illman, CIC Champion for Flood Mitigation and Resilience

SUMMARY
This submission reflects the discussions and conclusions of the APPG for Excellence in the Built Environment Commission of Inquiry, published in April 2015 entitled ‘Living with Water’. The responses are therefore specifically around water management, and their relationship to the built environment, with a particularly emphasis around flooding and resilience. The responses have been provided around the questions posed by the Call for Evidence, but it is hoped that the Committee will consider the full recommendations of the APPG report and its summary, which is included below.

- **Strong leadership**: Government needs to foster clear leadership on water issues and appoint a Cabinet champion to set in train a longer term vision for delivering a co-ordinated long term flood and water management strategy and it must ringfence funding to do so.

- **Strategic land review**: This new water champion should instigate a review of land use policy, placing water and climate change alongside a range of other emerging priorities for a multi-functional landscape.

- **Public debate**: There needs to be clarity on what level of disruption the country finds acceptable as a result of water exceedance. At the moment there are differing standards around the country.

- **Learning to live with water**: We need a high profile programme to inform and educate the public on the importance of making homes flood resistant and resilient and managing expectations about water.

- **More cash for maintenance**: There needs to be even stronger emphasis on maintenance funding to ensure that existing flood protection assets are sustained.

- **Retrofitting for resilience**: Government should undertake an investment programme to retrofit towns and cities to make them more resilient, as an additional aspect of their flood defence spending. Seeking synergies through every aspect of regeneration and ongoing maintenance programmes and by working with all relevant stakeholders (highways, water companies) will also make retrofitting more cost effective.

- **Better design standards**: Everywhere in this country is in a water catchment so we need to reduce water runoff from every building, whether new or existing – helped with new Building Regulations for designing for flood resistance and resilience.
● **Using insurance to incentivise resilience**: The insurance industry needs to give thought to how it can incentivise improving flood resilience of properties, rather than simply reinstating structures to inadequate pre-flooding standards.

● **Using Flood Re insurance to promote resilience**: The Flood Re scheme, should be used to drive households’ resilience & recommend the measures by the Sub-Committee on Adaptation are adopted.

● **Considering the most vulnerable**: Government needs to consider how we protect those who cannot afford flood insurance, particularly in tenanted properties. Local authorities can no longer support them.

● **A bigger role for professionals in the built environment**: Promote greater co-ordination of professionals through a new Construction Industry Council grouping which could act as a sounding board through which to channel flooding policy.

● **SuDS and maintenance** We believe the greater uptake of Sustainable Drainage Systems is vital and that the Government is mistaken in not implementing Schedule 3 in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. to provide clarity over their management and maintenance and standards.

**Policymaking, integration and coordination**

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 The NPPF is the main instrument for delivering decision, but it may now not be prescriptive enough related to some aspects of water matters, resulting in a wide variability in approaches across the country; some of which are not delivering good decision-making for the built environment. Local differences should be accommodated, and may not always accord with ‘bigger picture’ national policy. Localism was intended to reflect that.

1.2 The Local plan process seems to be suffering from too many drafts being rejected – suggesting there is something wrong in the process, whether that is at the Local Authority level, governmental or with the Planning Inspectorate. This may also reflect the difference between the local view (which may understand local issues better) and national policy.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 Policy is generally poorly coordinated, as departments do not appear to share their knowledge, concerns and objectives. Specialist advice is not taken where authoritative research is available in another department, (or the Environment Agency or Natural England)
and they are frequently unaware of what other departments are doing and their knowledge/research base; nor do they collaborate to ensure that the key purposes of new policy, and the way it is integrated within the system is coordinated. A more systemic perspective of the relationships between physical, biological, economic and social processes would allow the effects of actions in one area, sector or initiative to be better understood by all and could then properly inform decision making. This would encourage the convergence between spatial planning and water management.

2.2 Policy does not appear to take the opportunity to maximise the opportunities available, for example, by taking advantage of multi-functional and multi-beneficial opportunities. This has resulted in surface water still being seen as ‘a problem’ and not as a valuable resource in all forms and in all places. The complex mix of organisations involved in the water domain (their roles and responsibilities) also militates against an integrated and coordinated approach.

2.3 This has particularly been seen with the intervention of DCLG taking over the role of implementing SuDS from Defra, and the consequent abandonment of the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act. The Ministerial Statement that now guides planning was not rooted in all the research and development that had been undertaken by Defra over the last 10-12 years. It has created:

- voids in policy as aspects of Schedule 3 are now unresolved;
- uncertainty and diversity of interpretation over what will be acceptable at planning;
- encouraged issues of dealing with drainage properly to be seen as a factor in the ‘planning mix’ rather than as a part of critical infrastructure;
- no structure for the formal adoption or long term maintenance of SuDS;
- no measures to address resilience to flooding at the local scale;
- no integration with urban design so that addressing flood volumes could be aligned with requirements under the WFD to address water quality, or to improve biodiversity, green infrastructure and amenity in all new development;
- a complete lack of understanding (or belief) of the financial and environmental benefits that can accrue by adopting a multi-functional approach to sustainable drainage design, despite Defra studies which support this approach;
- lack of teeth in setting clear standards which mandatory compliance through legislation would have achieved;
- policy appears to have been influenced by lobbyists, whose beliefs around water management have prevailed with government who fear that housebuilding may be compromised; this opinion being at odds with the rest of the industry, and government’s own research and advice.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?
3.1 The most recent edition has gone some way toward clarifying the approach that ‘all
development that is clearly sustainable should go ahead’, so there is now a more reasoned
and structured approach. However, there are still difficulties in terms of how broad and non-
prescriptive the NPPF is in detail. This allows too much variability in interpretation locally and
seemingly similar and adjacent jurisdictions to plan and utilise significantly different
infrastructure systems.

3.2 DCLG currently see the NPPF as the main instrument for delivering SuDS, but key elements are
missing. To make it work for water management, it needs to refer to the CIRIA SuDS manual,
which is comprehensive. The issue of SuDS adoption is still unresolved, with house-builders
anxious to have procedures put in place, and a proper adoptive framework available through
local authorities that applies nationally.

3.3 If multiple benefits are to be available through development, then DCLG would need to
recognise and promote ecosystem services and natural capital to enable this to be achieved,
not only through SuDS, but whole site design. SuDS design and planning should be about
delivering all possible benefits, not just flood risk.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects
of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 Yes, we have lost the ability to consider policy outside defined administrative boundaries as
LLFA’s relate solely to County or Unitary authority boundaries. With regards to water
management, it works best within the devolved nations, but even here boundaries do not co-
incide between administrative authorities and water catchments, making the relationship
between planning and water management on a catchment basis more difficult, despite the
introduction of river basin and catchment management plans. Water company boundaries
don’t align with administrative boundaries either, and there are a raft of other organisations
at a local scale who have an interest, so that planning can be fragmented, and does not allow
for a large-scale spatial vision, although Defra’s Catchment Based Approach (CaBa) is gradually
becoming more effective, delivering coordination, collaboration and partnerships in local
water management with benefits for both local communities and the economy..

4.2 National policy doesn’t reflect the variation that occurs throughout the country, where the
needs and requirements of (for example) the south-east, are very different to the north-west.

4.3 Spatial planning has also not addressed the continuing problem of inappropriate building on
flood plains as repeatedly highlighted by the Adaptation Subcommittee on Climate Change.
5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 The original Foresight Flooding Report, was started in 2000 and published in 2004 looking forward 100 years, but it developed a vision for the next 30 years to be implemented from 2010-30, and encompassed all aspects of water supply, management, flooding and coastal change arising as a consequence of both our existing environment, and the development needed as a consequence of population growth and climate change. This was updated in 2008 and again in 2014 in response to flooding in the Somerset levels. These matters require long term sustained and consistent policy, outside the range (or control?) of any single government, and are best addressed via a rolling programme of policy that reviews, adapts and builds on understanding how policy may need to develop in response to a changing world to deliver society’s long term needs, and environmental stability.

5.2 Ideally this would be an adaptive management/adaptive policy pathways approach that supersedes strict planning time horizons. It is predicated in this concept that if and when there is a change in external and internal drivers, an alternative policy pathway (pre-defined) is pursued. This has worked very well for the Thames Estuary (TE2100), optimising the life of the Thames Barrier. The approach, developed in the 2000s is still seen as a global flagship concept. The planning process could consider this approach, as it needs ‘agility’ ie to be easily modified to ‘enable’ rather than to be constraining ‘preventing’ until new knowledge has been incorporated that then allows change in regulations/policies.

5.3 Consequently, any future vision/policy should consider the next 20-30 years as a minimum within the context of up to the next 100 years.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 The last government’s insistence that planning decisions should permit new development if the authority did not have a proper 5 year housing land supply has probably now been satisfied by the large number of permissions that have been granted over the last 2-3 years. Sadly, obtaining permission doesn’t guarantee that houses will be built, nor that their locations were appropriate in land planning or environmental terms.

6.2 It is inevitable that there will be a need for major new settlements to accommodate the housing numbers likely to be required, but there are no strategic land planning policies in place to ensure that major urban extensions or new towns (see the Wolfson Economics Prize winners strategies for new garden cities) can be developed in appropriate locations, or to
guide their planning, siting and design, as was undertaken by the development corporations in the past. Environmental factors must increasingly play a key role alongside the provision of, and access to infrastructure.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1 Surely to be ‘sustainable’ is by definition to be ‘resilient’? There seems to be some confusion (in government) as to what these terms mean? At present, sustainability is only narrowly defined/utilised in policy, with resilience becoming a favoured term. Resilience is currently about ‘bounce-back’, but should be about ‘bounce-forward’. For example, ‘bounce back’ is where insurance companies pay to reinstate a property that has been flooded. What is needed, however, is to ‘bounce-forward’, which would make the property more resilient than it was before the damaging event.

7.2 Efficiency in approach allows multiple changes to be brought together, such as integrating retrofit SuDS with highways renewal. This is regularly undertaken in the Netherlands, and is growing elsewhere in the world in a process termed ‘mainstreaming’. As major refurbishments come up in our building stock or urban environment, all appropriate opportunities to make these climate proof (and ‘bounce forward’) should be taken.

7.3 NEW HOUSING

- We should require all housing to be built with Sustainable Drainage Systems that address managing surface water to 1 in 100 years plus 30% for climate change. Both the storm event and climate change% should be periodically reviewed to ensure its adequacy. SuDS have been shown scientifically to be more flexible, adaptable and hence resilient than piped drainage systems.
- This should apply to ALL new housing, wherever it is situated, as all development affects housing and buildings downstream regardless of the size of the development, and nearly 50% of all new housing comes from small scale developments.
- All new housing in areas of flood risk (flood zones 2 and 3), must have resilience to flood water in-built when they are constructed.
- All housing areas should consider exceedance, and understand how water can be managed through a site without risking people or property
- The approach to water management should encompass supply and recycling of water as well as disposal and flooding – closing the water cycle within any scale of development, also know as Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) – and integrating that approach with urban design, can achieve a wide range of multi-functional benefits, and provide a robust, attractive, biodiverse and healthy environment for people to live and work.
- Any infrastructure must be appropriately managed and maintained in the long term if it is to provide its services. SuDS is no exception, so that long term responsibility for its management and maintenance must be clear, and then properly funded (but need not be excessively expensive), and its ownership held within an organisation who has long term capacity to do
so. We must not allow short term expediency of saving money to determine inappropriate long term planning (passing the responsibility to volunteer groups that are not robust or well-established and who could disband/move away).

7.4 EXISTING HOUSING

- Houses affected by flooding must be grant aided to provide the additional monies necessary to make them resilient rather than insurers just paying to reinstate to the same standard – thereby allowing them to continue to flood when the next extreme rain event occurs. Flood Re does not address this.

- Almost all of our major towns and cities are built on rivers, and are drained by combined foul and surface water systems. These are not designed to take the additional flows that now occur as the cities have expanded, become increasingly dense as they are redeveloped, or to cope with the increasing number of storm events. This has been recognised through the requirement for LLFA’s to produce Surface Water Management Plans, and through the implementation (at a very slow and small scale) of SuDS retro-fitting projects around the country. The problems caused in our existing towns and cities far exceed the problems caused by new buildings, but in combination the effects are becoming more extreme. There is therefore a need to promote and support a long term approach to retro-fitting.

- There is a role for flood alleviation and flood management schemes both in and around cities directly affected. However, such measures are expensive, and only of benefit for short periods of time in any one year. So whilst essential, these need careful design and integration to ensure that whilst providing physical benefit, they equally provide features that enhance the quality of the urban environment in which they are constructed. Well planned schemes can also release land for development, which could help part fund the flood relief measures.

- At the larger scale, we need to comprehensively consider catchment management issues, as towns and cities are invariably sited in the middle and lower parts of catchments, and are directly affected by land management upstream and consequential down-stream flooding. ‘Water-friendly’ land management practices should be promoted through our agricultural grant systems, based around the existing Catchment Based (CaBa) approach. As with urban retrofitting, small scale measures at the farm scale can have a significantly beneficial effect when they are aggregated in any particular area. These measures are currently available, but only implemented at a small scale.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

No response

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
9.1 The professions at present are reasonably well skilled, but need to press on strongly to embed modern approaches to sustainable design, and to genuinely value and understand the skills of their co-professionals, particularly within the more specialist professions. The key is an openness and willingness to genuinely collaborate, to admit lack of knowledge, and to acknowledge that the profession of the project leader may need to vary from project to project, to ensure that projects have the requisite skills sets required.

9.2 Local authorities have had their staffing resources significantly reduced during the recent central government cut-backs. Delivering sustainable water management through the planning system, or indeed highways or other works can require the authority to provide comprehensive and coordinated advice across the full range of professions (planners, urban designers, landscape architects, drainage and highways engineers, arborists and ecologists). Few authorities now have that resource in house, or the ability to buy independent advice to support them.

9.3 Many District and Borough councils do not have the skills to determine planning applications that are required to have SuDS (which fall within the scope defined by the DCLG Ministerial Statement). They lack the in-house expertise to do so, and many do not have the financial resource to seek advice from their County Council, which is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). This means that the drainage aspects of planning applications are often not properly considered, and are often treated as just another element within the ‘planning balance’ instead of part of essential infrastructure, leaving homes and development potentially vulnerable to flooding through inappropriate consideration of the proposals.

9.4 The lack of understanding of this area of design, compounded by a lack of diverse professional input means the following problems can arise:

- that the policy base and appropriate SPD’s may not be in place,
- that sufficient information is not required for a planning submission,
- that inadequate pre-application advice is often given, and
- that planning conditions are not appropriate.

9.5 It also means that the opportunity for the good quality, multi-functional benefits of integrated sustainable design in new developments is often missed.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

10.1 Despite whatever may be said, high quality design and place-making is subservient to ‘lowest cost’ which is perceived as good value. It isn’t. In relation to water, Defra’s own studies have demonstrated that multi-functional integrated SuDS are cheaper both in capital terms and whole-life costs. Additionally, these studies do not consider the value of the benefits that will accrue when such good quality design is used – this can now be measured using the Valuation tool produced by CIRIA (BeST), which will measure the financial value of all benefits relating to SuDS and the green spaces within which they sit, from the improvements to air and water quality, to health and well being.
10.2 Government has been mislead by arguments that SuDS can be too costly due to land take, but it is easy to see that those wishing to oppose such systems can produce deliberately uneconomic schemes. Most of the volume house-builders accept and understand the need for SuDS, and some use good quality integrated design to maximise the value of their open space, and achieve higher values, and easier sales.

10.3 The concept of a ‘Chief Architect’ has been promoted through the Farrell Review in particular, and this role has been effective in other countries in promoting quality design at a National Level, particularly where other professional roles are also included (Chief Planner and Chief Landscape Architect are also used). Construction Industry Council has, however, argued for a more generic title for such a post that is reflective of the wider construction industry.

10.4 The Farrell recommendation was based upon the role of Chief Construction Adviser but since publication of the Farrell Review, the government has announced that the post of the Chief Construction Adviser (CCA) is to be discontinued from November 2015. This decision has been universally criticised within the construction industry and is likely to lead to even less integration of policy across government departments since the CCA provided the opportunity for much of that co-ordination.

10.5 The APPG Report advocated that the Cabinet should include a member with the specific role of water management, and this role could and should encompass high quality design as an inherent part of this role.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 This area is not adequately addressed in the currently planning system, which is a ‘numbers-based’ approach to the provision of specific facilities (xmx2 of open space/’000 of population, a ‘Local Area of Play’ within xmx walk distance to each house etc). The way that the urban environment affects those who live and work in it is well documented in research. In addition, a number of the built environment professional institutions have published guidance documents that articulate the problems, promote solutions and demonstrate how they work through a range of case studies, both in new build and through regeneration projects (see the Landscape Institute’s ‘Public Health and Landscape: Creating Healthy Places’ for example).

These comprehensive approaches to site design and place-making should be promoted through national and local policy, and at the local level through inclusion in Development or Regeneration Plans. Sadly, the aspirations of such Plans are rarely realised, due to over-development of sites, but can be improved through integrated sustainable design. However, this requires healthy outcomes to be comprehensively planned into the development from the initial conceptual design stage.
12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

12.1 Public engagement must be genuine if it is to be effective, with those organising the process being open and honest about the extent to which the public can help to shape or determine change. Engagement must give the community the opportunity for real choice that is meaningful, otherwise the process becomes irrelevant or even destructive to local relations. However, such engagements are time consuming and consequently costly, and therefore have to have a scope that has defined limits, whilst also being flexible in its approach.

12.2 It is important to remember that where new communities are being proposed, the consultation only engages with those who live in the area, not the people who will be the ultimate direct users/residents of that new development.

12.3 Most planning consultations do not genuinely consult with a view to empowering local people in the decision-making process, and are invariably about informing the public about development and change that is potentially already determined, but with a superficial ability to influence minor or peripheral issues – such as, ‘would you like a pond or a wetland in the public open space?’, rather than, ‘is the scale of the development proposed suitable for this location?’. Enabling Community Groups and Community Champions to arise, and then embedding them in the process, can and does enable better places for people that fulfil their needs now and in the future, whilst delivering sustainable attractive landscapes that are valued by the community.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

No response

05 October 2015
Preamble

The professions that procure, plan, design, construct, maintain and manage the built environment form a major part of our national economy. The construction industry employs millions directly but it is also an enabling sector for the wider economy. The building and upkeep of new offices, warehouses, homes, infrastructure, service facilities and new places generate jobs, development and growth. Unlike most economic sectors, construction activities and the built environment professions are widely dispersed throughout the country.

All development must have a construction component. Our health, education and transport systems all rely on the construction industry to design, build and maintain the built environment which underpins our social and economic frameworks.

To achieve national economic growth in tandem with best value, the construction industry needs a commitment to a programme of investment in infrastructure and housing; a commitment to quality in the built environment; and co-ordinated planning for construction.

The Construction Industry Council is the representative forum for the professional bodies, research organisations and specialist business associations for professional services’ providers in the construction industry.

It provides a single voice for professionals in all sectors of the built environment through its collective membership of 500,000 individual professionals and 25,000 firms of construction consultants.

Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

National development needs not only investment in housing, infrastructure and skills; it also needs a suitable administrative framework in which to flourish. Strategic planning is vital but so too is the context in which this planning takes place.
Sustained investment in transport infrastructure is essential as a catalyst for economic growth. However the slow speed of decision-making is hampering development and often this is because decisions are not being made at the right level. More effective strategic planning is required, particularly at the sub-regional level, to drive forward economic regeneration.

We strongly welcome the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s decision - announced on the day responses to this inquiry closed – to create a new independent National Infrastructure Commission. The decision to put this Commission under the leadership of a former Labour Minister and to give it a cross-party consensus is also remarkably refreshing, in principle, and appears to place major economic decisions beyond the usual confines of party politics and into the collective consciousness of the country as a whole.

It is essential that major decisions to shape the connectivity within England’s (and Britain’s) built environment are taken at this independent, strategic level. This must incorporate a high-level view of HS2 phase 2 and HS3 and action on the choice of airport options following the Davies Commission report. This new infrastructure should be effectively delivered and well co-ordinated with other transport modes.

While we support and endorse the establishment of a public company to manage the strategic road network, the maintenance of the whole highway network (including local roads) should remain a key priority.

There is scope for transport planning by fully integrated transport authorities within city regions.

2. **How well is policy co-ordinated across those government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and co-ordination be improved?**

Too many government departments have split responsibilities for various aspects of the built environment and there is far too little co-ordination between them.

Fragmentation is apparent in the many diverse roles of government as policy-maker, sponsor and regulator. Various responsibilities for housing, infrastructure, construction, planning, design, sustainability, heritage, building regulations, health & safety are split across at least ten departments. The role of government as a client is split across every spending department with little or no co-ordination.

In the past, procurement processes have often been wasteful across government. With public sector construction contracts totalling more than £37bn per year, there is much
scope for improvement beyond the strides made by the government across the last parliament with its Government Construction Strategy. However, procurement is still costly and time consuming on both sides and more needs to be done. In particular, there needs to be a cross-government drive towards new outcome-led procurement models with a clear business case for value; and buildings and infrastructure should be procured on the basis of both capital and operating costs.

The only apparent and effective co-ordinating mechanism was provided by the Chief Construction Adviser (a role established in 2009 following a recommendation of the Trade and Industry Select Committee). A fundamental responsibility of the CCA was to provide advice across government in matters relating to construction and the built environment and to act as “the glue” in terms of integrating departments on these issues.

The Government has recently taken the decision to discontinue the role from November 2016 without any review of the effectiveness of the post over the past six years and without any plans whatsoever to fill the void in this co-ordinating role. It is a retrograde step that has been roundly and universally criticised by the industry at large.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment?**

Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

After a long period of significant change, the new planning system needs to be allowed to “bed down”. Some improvements, however, could usefully be considered.

It is essential that an adopted local plan is in place, alongside a five-year land supply programme, in every local authority.

As land supply is a critical factor, particularly for new housing, local authorities and other public bodies need to bring forward more land for development.

We should monitor the operation of changes to the planning system to ensure that land for house-building is coming available at a rate that is sufficient to support local demand for new homes and to create demand-pull for innovation in the delivery of housing including the increased use of offsite construction solutions.
Some flexibility is needed to permit large-scale housing in sustainable locations (such as a new Garden City) as this is likely to be preferable to developing multiple small sites for which it is much harder and more costly to provide infrastructure.

With local authority finances under unprecedented pressure, administrative delays are occurring in development and renewal programmes, which can kick-start economic recovery at a local and national level. Local Government reform cannot be allowed to hamper economic development.

4. **Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

Yes. Access to green space, high quality housing, active transport (involving significant opportunity for walking and cycling) and clean air are all elements of a healthy built environment. Planning and creating this environment generates long term savings in health spending.

5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

The former (coalition) government’s timescale for industrial strategies was looking forward from 2010 to 2025 and this elongated timescale of three full parliaments is an essential requirement for planning future built environment needs and establishing policies to meet them. A longer timescale to 2050 is essential in relation to reducing and changing the energy use from the built environment.

**Building and places: New and old**

6. **What role should government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly co-ordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?**

There is a crisis in all sectors of housing affecting affordability and access to the housing market. Huge sums are spent on housing benefits that could be better used to construct homes and generate jobs.
The housing market is not currently capable of delivering sufficient houses to prevent a serious stock shortfall from continuing to escalate. The number of homes built each year is significantly below the 250,000 that are needed and the shortfall each year increases the numbers that are needed for the future.

We must increase the number of new homes built each year, especially in the affordable sector. These homes have to be of a suitable quality and size to allow for changing and diverse needs. Actions are required to create an atmosphere of confidence in which new market entrants and existing players are willing to invest in house-building.

A secure and reliable stream of land that is suitable for house-building is a fundamental requirement for a healthy house-building industry and a healthy society. We should bring forward Government and local authority land disposals and address concerns about the suitability of those sites for housing development and introduce a mechanism that delivers “oven-ready” plots for house-builders to develop with short lead-times.

In particular, we recommend that Local Authorities should be allowed – and encouraged – to sensibly borrow to build new homes; and a fresh look at the funding of affordable homes is urgently required.

Increasing the number of new homes each year will require a much greater number to be manufactured offsite for onsite installation. If the UK is to benefit from an increase in manufacturing capacity to produce offsite components and assemblies - and at the same time create jobs in an expanding manufacturing sector – capital investments must take place. The Government should therefore incentivise investment in the development of offsite construction systems. We recommend that a joint Treasury/Industry working group be established to consider how best this might be done.

We must develop new models for the delivery of housing, which encourage the engagement of the best possible capabilities and expertise from across all segments of the industry, including those that can best influence the contribution that offsite solutions can make to process efficiency, quality and value.

Government and industry should consider the case for establishing an Institute for Future Housing Research and identify the priority requirements for an initial work programme and options for funding such an Institute.

7. **How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking?** Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?
Energy security, affordability and the need to decarbonise continue as challenges both for the UK government and for industry in general. Each of these factors must be managed carefully and a mixed approach is required to meet current and future needs.

Government must do more to drive energy efficiency within businesses and also in relation to the vast number of existing buildings. In particular, a new approach to retrofitting insulation to our ageing housing stock is needed. In this respect, we welcome the establishment – by DECC – of an independent review led by BRE Chief Executive, Peter Bonfield, to examine standards, consumer protection and enforce energy efficiency schemes to “ensure that the system properly supports and protects consumers”.

8. **To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?**

No response

**Skills and design**

9. **Do the professions involved in the area (eg planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?**

There is a serious problem of both skills shortages and skills gaps within the construction industry, in general, and this also affects the built environment professions to some degree. The industry is also disproportionately older, white, male and more able-bodied than other sectors of the economy.

Outreach programmes in schools that highlight the range of career opportunities within construction and the built environment and to encourage younger people – from diverse backgrounds – to join the industry should be encouraged on a national scale.

Skills shortages in the professional sector need to be addressed by a more flexible migration policy.

Professional training opportunities, both full-time and part-time, for construction occupations need to be encouraged and a cross disciplinary approach to training within the built environment professions should be fostered.
Structural changes in the economy and the construction industry are highly likely to impact on the type, level and nature of activities undertaken by built environment professionals.

The skills requirements for new systems of working – such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) and the effective use of offsite construction methods - must be met if the new systems are to achieve long term savings and efficiencies and we are to maintain our international competitiveness.

There will be an increasing focus on the whole life performance and operational costs of buildings and infrastructure, particularly with regard to systems operation and energy usage. This will require increasing levels of understanding on the part of the built environment professions of whole facility performance and how the different elements of a facility inter-relate to drive overall performance and cost.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The built environment is an essential part of our quality of life. Good design and an integrated approach to creating communities and the landscape in which they sit are all vital. Central to this vision, is a long-term approach to creating sustainable buildings and infrastructure, which will have a low impact on the environment and can be easily and safely maintained.

We need to understand that good landscape planning helps to make the best use of land by identifying the most sustainable sites for development.

A commitment to cohesive national standards in respect to energy, water, space, access and security needs to be maintained.

The use and promotion of environmentally sustainable building designs and techniques is cost effective in the long term.

Government and the private sector alike should make the Design Quality Indicators (DQI) - a quality measurement system that assesses and evaluates input from all stakeholders to a project - a commonplace – or even mandatory – requirement for all new buildings.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment
affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

The Design Quality Indicator (DQI) mentioned in response to Q10 above, enables a full and detailed consideration of the views of all those whose lives are impacted by a new building to give their views from the start of the project. Thus, those stakeholders consulted at the outset of a school project would include teaching and ancillary staff, pupils and parents and those who may use the school after-hours as a community facility; similarly stakeholders engaged by the DQI on a new hospital project could involve all medical and other staff, patients and their families and those who simply pass by everyday.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

There needs to be clarity in the role of the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in relation to other local structures and their role in setting out the strategic priorities of the local area.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Local Authorities could be incentivised to provide land for housing through targeting of City and Growth Deal funds to those authorities with local plans and five year land supplies in place.

We should look at the development of new financing models for future house-building programmes, including the removal of local authority loan caps and the engagement of more open-market sources of finance.

Government should consider the case for capital investment in the design and development of new offsite production systems for housing to be subject to tax breaks.

Government should also consider the case to incentivise and grow the self-build sector. This could include incentives to encourage house-builders, landowners and others to offer for sale construction-ready plots for self-builders.
Government and industry to examine the case for the introduction of a stimulus fund to encourage new housing schemes involving a significant percentage (by value) of offsite construction methods.

There could be improved co-ordination and evaluation across the range of current initiatives (eg Enterprise Zones. Housing Zones, City Deals and the Regional Growth Fund). An expert resource within central government is needed as a point of contact with local authorities to connect them with the local strands of funding and implementation.

If city regions have greater powers and fiscal devolution together with the flexibility to borrow and retain revenue generated by growth, they can be much more rigorous in pursuing co-ordinated programmes of development and construction that will benefit the local population.

Note

The CIC Flood Mitigation and Resilience Group has made a separate submission of evidence.

Many of the statements in this submission are taken from Constructing a Better Future [Recommendations on achieving quality and best value in the built environment] published by the CIC in May 2015; and the Offsite Housing Review, published by the CIC in February 2013.

Further information about the CIC – and a full version of the Constructing a Better Future report - can be found at www.cic.org.uk and further information about the Design Quality Indicator (DQI) can be accessed at www.dqi.org.uk.

On behalf of the Construction Industry Council

05 October 2015
RESPONSE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

“The development and implementation of national policy for the built environment”

Section 1: Policymaking, integration and coordination

There needs to be greater coordination between Government Departments and national and local government to address the skills challenge faced by construction, if we are to meet Government targets across housing, design, transport, infrastructure and sustainability.

Construction will create over 220,000 new jobs from 2015-19, as the industry grows 2.9% annually over this period. The industry wants to attract the best talent, creating thousands more apprenticeship opportunities, to ensure future requirements across the built environment are met. We also need to upskill the existing workforce, supporting schools, colleges and universities to develop relevant training that will create a skills legacy in the UK people can be proud of.

To do this, national and local government, working with construction, need to develop more coordinated policy on the built environment, with skills and people at its heart. Skills policy should be based on evidenced future skills demands and a clear understanding of whether we have the recruitment and training in place to meet them. National strategies on infrastructure and housing should be coordinated with local place-based growth strategies, to ensure the right skills are in place to deliver the built environment we want and the long-term employment opportunities it brings.

Any national skills policy on the built environment should support the right information, incentives and requirements for training providers to meet construction’s skills needs – from careers advice to more relevant training. Where there are clear skills pinch-points, appropriate skills interventions should be made, to ensure the industry has the skilled people it needs to respond to our housing, major infrastructure and sustainability targets.

CITB, working with construction employers, is contributing through:

- Ground breaking Labour Market Intelligence, which, for the first time in any industry, will show how the supply of qualified people matches future industry demand for skills.
- The first industry-wide careers portal for construction Go Construct, showcasing all careers across construction and promoting apprenticeships and other vocational education.
- Supporting schools, colleges and universities with a new Provider Strategy, clearly outlining the training the industry will need to meet future skills needs.

Significant changes to training programmes, qualifications and apprenticeships will be needed to incorporate new technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM); increase awareness of energy issues; and develop new skills in response to big projects such as New Nuclear Build.
This pressing need for a coordinated approach comes at a time of great change for the skills sector, with the introduction of an Apprenticeship Levy on large employers, reform of further education provision and the roll out of new apprenticeship standards. These initiatives should be targeted to support any new national policy on the built environment.

Recommendations:

- That skills be put at the heart of built environment policies, with clear evidence on the future skills requirements of construction and the training in place to deliver this – identifying and addressing skills pinch-points.

- National policy on the built environment should encourage greater coordination between key Government policy areas, including infrastructure, housing and apprenticeships, and Local Enterprise Partnership growth strategies.

- Policies should be developed in partnership with existing initiatives, such as the Government’s Construction Leadership Council.

Section 3: Buildings and places: New and old

Creating a better built environment in the future requires new approaches to the design and construction of buildings and infrastructure, and also a new philosophy of repair and maintenance of our existing buildings, which represents almost 40% of all construction output in the UK. Policy on the built environment needs to recognise the different environmental conditions our built environment will be subject to in future decades and the skills and behavioural changes that will be required across industry to meet them.

We believe that this transition can be achieved through education and training, giving industry the knowledge and motivation to promote and adopt alternative, more sustainable and resilient solutions and to integrate these as part of business-as-usual activity. Government too has a vital role to help educate employers of the need to adopt more sustainable and resilient solutions, both in setting a clear policy direction and as the largest client of UK construction.

It will be the SME supply chain, which makes up over 98% of the construction industry, who will transform the UK’s built environment. Government have a key role in supporting SMEs through:

- Incentives, for example a new programme to replace the Green Deal initiative.
- Procurement, where there are few SMEs currently successful in securing government contracts and benefitting from the new approaches to doing things they demand, such as BIM.
- Training, where Government will have to intervene to address skills gaps through regulation and funding.
Recommendations:
• National policy on the built environment should articulate a clear vision for upskilling construction SMEs, including how to encourage the uptake of more modern methods of construction through incentivisation, procurement and training. Key opportunities include a replacement for the Green Deal and increasing SME participation in public procurement.

Section 4: Skills and design
Further and Higher Education courses in design, allied to the construction sector, but which do not contain a work-based element to training, often do not provide necessary skills levels. This is particularly true for understanding Health & Safety risks on-site.

Research by the Green Construction Board (2014) also identified a number of critical barriers to the adoption of a holistic (lifecycle) approach to the design, construction, repair, maintenance and demolition of the built environment. These include:
• Lack of understanding of the business case to invest in higher efficiency options
• Insufficient training on communication/business case skills
• Lack of understanding and ability to communicate the business case for low carbon to client
• Inadequate training on linking project costs to carbon/energy outcomes and whole-life costings
• Variable quality of CPD for sustainable outcomes

On other specific skills gaps, research has outlined the need to dramatically improve levels of energy literacy across the design professions, increase the incorporation of building physics into the teaching of design principles and ensure the design of inclusive environments is embedded through the design and build process.

Inclusive environments are places that work better for everybody including schools, parks, homes, or community resources. Inclusive design is the responsibility of everyone who works in the built environment: planners, those who commission new buildings and places, access
consultants, designers, architects, engineers, surveyors, property owners and facilities managers; however, there is currently very limited training available.

More systemic is the issue of the silo nature of construction occupations and the barriers this presents to improved collaboration and communication. The professional bodies need to work together to break down these occupational silos and support the growth of a more holistic approach to the built environment, particularly on cross-cutting issues like sustainability, building energy performance and inclusive design.

Improving communication and coordination between professional disciplines involved in design, construction and management of building and infrastructure assets would undoubtedly unlock opportunities for a more widespread adoption of a holistic approach to the built environment.

Recommendations:
- The Professional Engineering Institutions and Royal Institute British Architecture who set design courses should consider including a Health and Safety element.
- A widespread adoption of collaborative planning processes with training and CPD to support the uptake between construction firms, architects and end users should be facilitated by Government and Industry.

Section 5: Community involvement and community impact

Ensuring the built environment meets the needs of the wider community is the essence of inclusive design. If we are to meet the needs of the current and future population, designing and building inclusive environments is essential. People involved in delivering and managing our built environments must embrace inclusive design and inclusive environments which in turn will impact:

- An ageing population
- Stronger communities – tackling social disadvantage
- Economic growth – through environments where those requiring care are more self-sufficient
- Buying power – where disabled people are welcomed into the community and then have the opportunity to spend
- Regulation – access for all is a component part of legislation

Critical to this will be ensuring that those involved in building the communities where we live have a clear understanding of how this environment impacts upon us. Equally important are the long-term benefits the building process itself can bring to local communities through training and employment.
There are currently a range of different initiatives by both Government and industry to improve the social benefits from construction locally, including the Social Value Act, new guidance for construction procurements over £50 million and a range of industry diversity and inclusion initiatives the industry itself is running.

CITB, working with construction employers, is contributing through:

- To support skills and employment in local communities through procurement, CITB will continue to set up **National Skills Academies for Construction** on government projects over £150 million **pounds**, and use the **Client Based Approach** to help government achieve greater value on projects with smaller budgets.

- Our **Shared Apprenticeship Schemes** bring Local Authorities together with SMEs to share the cost of apprenticeship training between multiple employers on procurement projects.

It is crucial that any social outcomes from construction projects are lasting for those people who benefit and sustainable for the construction industry to create. A range of reports have talked about an apprenticeship post-code lottery that has been created as a result of individual local authorities looking to drive higher and higher numbers of apprenticeships in their local area without understanding if these will lead to long-term placements and careers. Instead, local authorities should work in partnership with construction at a LEP level to drive lasting training and employment outcomes through procurement.

**Recommendations:**

- **The Cabinet Office should work with local government and the construction industry to increase awareness and take-up of powers coming out of the Social Value Act, with a focus on driving lasting and sustainable social value outcomes from construction procurement.**

- **National and local government should use CITB’s, industry approved, National Skills Academy for Construction’s and Client Based Approach to drive social value outcomes in a way that is sustainable for the construction industry.**

**About CITB**

CITB is the Industry Training Board for the construction sector, working with industry to train a safe, professional and fully qualified workforce. Through the Construction Levy, CITB provides direct funding and support for skills to help construction employers of all sizes become more innovative, productive, lower cost and lower carbon, supporting construction to compete effectively for work at home and abroad.
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Professor Rachel Cooper OBE, Professor of Design Management, Lancaster University, Dr Richard Simmons, Former Chief Executive, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), 2004-11, and Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, Professor of Town Planning, Newcastle University

Q1 The Chairman: Good morning and welcome. I have already welcomed two of you. I particularly welcome you, Dr Simmons, because you were not waiting outside, so to speak. It is very good of you to give up the time. It is for us an exciting opportunity and an exciting day, because it is the first of our formal witness sessions. We have still not produced the call for evidence or issued a press notice on it, because we have had all sorts of complications with this Committee, which we do not need to go into; I am very happy with the Committee we have. You have had your copy of the questions. A list of the interests of all the Members has been declared and they are in front of you. As this is our first meeting, Members who have interests to declare will also need to read them into the record—they have already been made aware of that—before they ask their question. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website, and you will have the opportunity to make corrections.
to the transcript where necessary. Before I ask the first question, would you please introduce yourselves?

**Professor Cooper:** I am a professor of design management and policy at Lancaster University. My research over the last 20 years has been concerned with the built environment, particularly design decision-making and the people who make design decisions: not just designers but planners, policymakers, developers—anybody involved in creating the urban environment and, indeed, all sorts of other products and services. I have looked at agendas such as sustainability, resilience, well-being and liveability generally in cities. At the moment I am doing a five-year study on liveable cities. I focus mainly on well-being and the physical environment. I am currently a member of the lead expert group for the Foresight programme on the future of cities. I am also a non-executive board member of the Future Cities Catapult. A lot of my work at the moment is about the future of cities. I have also done a very detailed piece of work on density and the built environment.

**Dr Simmons:** I am Richard Simmons. I am a chartered town planner and I am currently practising as a consultant and as visiting lecturer at the Bartlett School of Planning at UCL. Until recently I was visiting professor of city design and regeneration at the University of Greenwich, and before that I was chief executive of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment while it was a statutory body. When I speak about it, if I do later, I will refer to “statutory CABE” or “CABE”. By that I mean as it was when I ran it, as opposed to how it is now as a charity. My interests are town planning, design, master planning and the way in which the built environment can be improved.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Good morning. I am professor of town planning at Newcastle University. I am also director of Newcastle City Futures, which relates to the Foresight future of cities programme and is a collaborative arrangement between the city council, the universities, the local enterprise partnership and the private sector in Newcastle to think about the vision for Newcastle’s future. My areas of expertise are in relation to governance, politics and planning, and I have some interest in housing and economic development. I served on the Government Office for Science’s Foresight land use futures project between
2008 and 2010, and I now lead a Newcastle demonstrator project as part of the Foresight future of cities programme in Newcastle.

Q2 The Chairman: Thank you. As you are all very busy people, I thank you very much for giving up your time. I hope you did not have too difficult a journey.

I am asking the first question. What are the main built-environment challenges that we are currently facing and how might these change in the near future? How ready are we for the demographic changes, such as migration and ageing, climate changes and increasing resource demands? You could spend two hours answering that, but I am afraid we do not have that time, so we need really good, pithy, quick answers.

Professor Cooper: In my experience over the last 20 years, and most recently on the Foresight programme, we have a lack of foresight ability at both national and local level. Thinking about the demographic change—the increasing population—is a challenge. A lot of smaller cities do not have policy units. They really do not know how to address it and often do not think in the long term; they have a small planning department that is concerned with planning today and they do not think about the future. Alongside that, we have the capacity to look at statistics and data—satellite data, land use—but the ability to access that data, use it and make intelligent decisions is quite challenging.

Dr Simmons: I would like to pick up on the question of how we get lots of new housing built in ways that are going to make places attractive to live in. At the moment we are short of both skills and the ability to think strategically about how to provide a new built environment that will be more than just a repetition—but with housing for sale—of the kinds of out-of-town estates that we used to build historically. This is both about the quality of the places where people live when they get new housing and about how we decide where to put those new houses strategically. Those are two of the really big issues.

Professor Tewdwr-Jones: I am interested in the relationships between the different sectors. If we know the population is increasing and that we are going to have an ageing society, what is the implication for housing, for infrastructure and for the built environment? What are the assets—I do not mean economic alone; I mean social and resource assets as well—that can be identified in places and could perhaps be capitalised on by individual local authorities and
others? Where, then, are the intelligence gaps and the data gaps? As Professor Cooper highlighted, local authority planning departments are a shadow of their former selves these days; they have been hollowed out. The question then is: where does the intelligence and data come from to inform policy-making and to create some advantage for places to shape their own future? In Newcastle, the university has stepped into that vacuum to some extent by providing the expertise and the knowledge, but there is intelligence, there is mapping and there is data, and it is essential that the public consultation—the democratic element—is there as well. At what stages are the public, citizens and businesses given an opportunity to come in and discuss those opportunities? Last and by no means least are issues to do with governance and policy. Having worked on the land use futures project, I recall how governance and policy operates: it is through different sectors and silos. Places do not work in that way; they work the other way. That is why it is important to get those intersections on the ground: to overcome the silo issues that are apparent in policy and governance areas. At national level you can tick all the boxes and say, “Economic growth, social and environmental”, but on the ground there are trade-offs.

**The Chairman:** You must have a secret plan yourself.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** I wish I did have a secret plan—or at least if I did that anyone would take notice of it.

**The Chairman:** This is a completely British problem at the moment, where there is silo management in everything. You are steeped in all this and you obviously care about the people who are going to be living in these places, how they are going to be living, the feel-good factor, et cetera. You must have come up with some radical views. Are you going to share them?

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** “Treading carefully on eggshells” seems to be the most appropriate phrase I can use. Essentially, you have to build coalitions. There has been some advantage in being an academic and in Newcastle for only three years—I will not be an honorary Geordie for decades yet. Nevertheless, as a new kid on the block I have gone in and talked to different institutions, different groups and politicians and played a bit of naivety, to some extent, to get them to work together and think together. That is the first stage. Then it is about starting
to bring the public in. There may be not only silo mentalities but an element of suspicion and mistrust on the part of different organisations working together. Get the public involved. Start with visual exercises about facing the future. The public are steeped in knowledge about the concerns of places. On the back of that, you can start to persuade hearts and minds to come on board and share some of the ideas. Only at that stage can you really put some what you might call innovative ideas on the table about how you overcome a silo mentality through social innovation and linking age into housing, into digital and so on. That is when people start to see the potential.

**Professor Cooper:** I totally support that. I have done the same thing. I have embedded research fellows in local authorities to look at how they behave in planning, retrospectively and prospectively. You do need these facilitators at different levels of policy-making. In local authorities there is often a lack of relationship between the transport department and the planning department and so on, and you need another role. Some cities, like Manchester, have a policy unit and do foresighting—they think ahead—but if you are a small place, like Preston or Lancaster, the ability to do that is limited and you need that facilitator, that integrator. We have engaged with the public too. At Lancaster University we did an 18-month engagement with 3,000 people talking about the future of a part of Lancaster. You get a very detailed and thick report, but somebody then has to interpret it and make intelligent decisions that cross the whole policy domain locally and regionally and then nationally. We do not seem to have many of those sorts of people.

**Dr Simmons:** I want to pick up your point, or the one that you implied, about international comparisons. I did a research project with an American charity for the Government of Singapore a couple of years ago. We tend to think about ageing in terms of care and so on. The Government of Singapore wanted to benchmark the whole of Singapore against five global cities, including London, to find out if their built environment was good enough for people who are ageing, because they have an ageing population. We came up with a methodology to compare Taipei, London, Chicago and a number of other cities to find out which were best prepared for providing things like access, so you could get from your home to the shops or to the doctor’s surgery. It is important to look at what people are doing
internationally. It is quite hard sometimes—the translation is difficult—but that was a way of
thinking about the built environment and ageing outside the silos.

**The Chairman:** Absolutely right. Is there any chance that we can have a copy of that, or
excerpts or articles about it?

**Dr Simmons:** I can share the methodology. The Government of Singapore have not, as far as
I know, put it in the public domain, although it did show that Singapore was way ahead of the
rest of us.

**The Chairman:** As it is in everything, apparently. There is just one question from me before I
pass to Baroness Andrews. You were talking about getting the public involved. We have done
quite a lot of work here in the House of Lords about getting schoolchildren involved to tell
them what we are all about. I wonder if architects, construction companies, builders or
designers have ever gone in a group to schools or said to the Department for Education, “Why
do you not do it?” or, “Why do you not facilitate it?”—a lot of manufacturers do things like
this, and they have an eye to the main chance—i.e. making sure that people are interested
and have the skills and can join them. It is just a thought and I am not going to hog it.

**Q3 Baroness Andrews:** Good morning. I need to declare my interests before I ask questions.
I am a vice-president, like many people, of the National Parks association; president of the
Friends of Lewes, which is where I live; trustee of the Prince’s Regeneration Trust; and ex-
chair of English Heritage, which is not on the list.

My question has been slightly overtaken, Chair, by some of the answers that have already
come. You have described the role of Foresight and its land use futures and cities programmes
and so on, and the importance of getting additional intelligence. That in a way is part of the
answer to the question, “Are the problems long-standing?” because these are long-standing
problems that deal with intelligence, information and lack of capacity to analyse what is going
wrong. I am going to turn the question around a little, because I know you have had this. Of
those problems, which do you think we are least informed about and which are the least well
understood? Where could the Committee look to draw out some positive recommendations?
Is there a need for more information in particular areas?
A supplementary question is: are we being taken by surprise at the moment by any changes in the planning landscape or the local authority landscape that are making the systemic difficulties more intense?

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones**: We are aware of the trends in each sector. There is a difference between whether that knowledge of the trends is then informing policy development at national level and how it is being dealt with on the ground locally. Perhaps in the absence of cross-cutting national policy or spatial visioning, that does not mean to say that nothing is happening on the ground in individual places. There is a lot of entrepreneurship on the part of local authorities where they are able to work with others in identifying the problems, overcoming them and identifying opportunities for working with others to address some of these problems. What is missing is a geographical perspective—a spatial perspective—from national policy, which would reveal where the critical geographies are, for want of a better phrase. In other words, some of these trends are more problematic in some areas of England and Wales than in others. For example, if you take parts of England where we think there is going to be a great increase in population in the next 30 years, we roughly know the areas that will receive that population. It will be an arc that will stretch all the way from the Wash down through Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire to Hampshire. That is the corridor for population growth over the next 30 years. If you then add in other sectors—this is not necessarily a popular thing to do in Whitehall, believe me—such as climate change threat, the threat of rising sea levels or grade 1 agricultural land, you realise that you are talking about the same area. You are talking about predominantly, say, the Fens. Naturally, it is the best agricultural area because it is drained, but it is also a growth area in terms of population and therefore of housing demand. It has an incredible amount of infrastructure associated with it that might be vulnerable to rising sea levels. There is no perspective in Whitehall that puts all those different departmental sectors and policy areas together to look at specific geographies of vulnerability. That is where the geography—the spatial element—could come in. If you go to that area, there are local authorities and others that are working on some of these issues because they need to. Even if there is an absence in policy terms,
they are still working on these things on the ground. So there is the geography: the spatial element.

In the future, increasingly maybe under devolution, how do you make the public an integral part of discussions about long-term change across areas that are larger than communities or individual local authorities? That is where the issues lie.

**The Chairman:** Is that not something that could be batted back to you as a group of professionals, like the point I made about schools and talking to the public about it?

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Indeed, yes.

**Baroness Andrews:** It sounds as if you are regretting the loss of the regional spatial strategies. Would that make a big difference?

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** My view of the regional spatial strategies is that they were an essential part that captured all these different trends in a synoptic way. Unfortunately, the plans became dominated by the housing numbers issue, and with their loss we lost a great deal of other essential intelligence work associated with them, to the point where there is now a vacuum in strategic thinking at local authority level.

**Dr Simmons:** Another area where we have a gap in policy understanding is in the rapid pace of change outside the built environment and how it impacts on the built environment. Things are changing faster and faster, but the built environment moves at a fairly glacial pace, and unfortunately policy does, too. Combined with that, we have an issue about not fully understanding policy risk and reward. At the moment, we spend a very long time worrying about building airports and railways, if I can pick two random examples. I am just about to go off to Japan and there is no debate about high-speed anything there; you just get on the Nozomi Shinkansen. We struggle to keep our built environment policies up to speed.

In terms of the regional spatial strategies, I would say that there was a benefit in bringing together something like a regional development agency and a regional planning something. I know that “regional” is not necessarily a word that people like to use, but something larger than local where you connected the economic into the spatial. There is a positive there. We need to be able to do things much faster and to change our plans more in the way software gets updated, so that rather than updating the whole operating system we update parts of it.
Professor Rachel Cooper, Dr Richard Simmons, Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones – Oral Evidence (QQ1-12)

**Professor Cooper:** I would advocate not so much a strategy that is set in stone but a national vision that can be interpreted as the context demands locally or regionally. One of the other things is exactly what you were talking about, Mark: interdependency. We really do need to understand the social, economic and environmental interdependencies and all those factors at a national, regional and local level—just to sum up that answer.

**Lord Inglewood:** I will not declare my interests now. What you are saying is both very abstract and very complicated, but is it getting anybody anywhere? Are we just bogged down in a cat’s cradle of systems and consultations and processes controlling change, and as a result nothing much happens?

**Professor Cooper:** Interesting. There are lots of systems and processes. If you look at the national policy framework and the guidance, there is an enormous amount of guidance and processes that are available that a lot of people do not use, do not understand or do not integrate. Maybe we need a radical look at all those intervening factors and to change the structures in some way. For instance, lots of neighbourhoods are producing their own neighbourhood plans on a very local scale. They do very well, I would say, if they have some active residents who get involved, who are skilled enough to contribute to a plan, who can develop a survey as volunteers, and they produce a neighbourhood plan that can go into a local authority plan. Some places are really pushing forward with their neighbourhood plans without a wider regional scale and without a wider simple vision. There are all sorts of stipulations about the environment, social aspects and economic aspects, but people look at a local level and do not have a simple, straightforward vision at a national level. We may need to un-complicate the systems.

**Dr Simmons:** The inverse of your question would be that sometimes those systems enable difficult decisions, which are political decisions, not to be taken. There is a quid pro quo: if we had better and simpler systems—which I agree we need, and when I was at CABE I argued very strongly for simplifying both planning and building control—we would also need decisions and decisiveness. As I said in my submission, there are many wicked issues. The built environment itself is a complex cat’s cradle, both of systems and of politics, so you have to find a way of addressing that.
Lord Inglewood: What you are saying is that you want politicians with guts.

Dr Simmons: And to get to decisions quicker and to take them. I recognise that that is really tough in this environment.

Professor Cooper: And the potential to take innovative approaches. We still build houses in the same way we have always built houses, but there are all sorts of methods, such as using offsite manufacture, and quicker ways of doing it.

Professor Tewdwr-Jones: There is also the issue of governance. As well as systems and policies, you have a multitude of different agencies that have to work together in order for development to be delivered. That sometimes causes the delay in the system—the fragmented nature of governance between landowners, developers, local authorities, the public, utility companies and numerous transport operators, all of whom have their own strategies and their own plans. For specific projects, they have to come together and work together. This is about overcoming some of the wicked problems that Richard mentioned that relate to the institutional landscape that we find ourselves in today.

Q4 Lord Clement-Jones: My question is about understanding the policy failures of the past. Was there ever a golden age? Have we ever got it right?

Professor Tewdwr-Jones: In the past things were easier, one might say, when fewer institutions were involved, but I am not advocating turning the clock back to some golden post-war era. I do not think it was golden anyway, to be honest; there were difficulties even at that stage. If you look at analysis of the evidence of the impact of policies over different time periods, you will see similar problems occurring, albeit in a different context. In the 1950s, for example, the policies of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government expected towns to prepare development plans for the future—20-year futures—on the belief that people would live and work in the same place, while the Ministry of Transport simultaneously rolled out the motorway programme, which encouraged people to work in a different place from where they lived. One policy effectively cancelled out another policy in specific localities. It is in the nature of the land problem and of the built environment and flows over land where these things happen. We do not run away from them; we address them, but there will always be another set of issues that we have to pick up at some point in the future. What is lacking
today is the policy evidence. There has been a hollowing-out of research on the impact of policy. That has gone. There are no CLG research projects any more that evaluate the impact of policy.

**Lord Freeman:** I am expecting a very quick answer from Professor Tewdwr-Jones. Would you encourage this Committee to look at the structure of central government and the cross-cutting responsibilities? For example, this area from the Wash down to the south coast is covered by at least five different ministries. Should we focus on that particular issue?

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** At the end of the land use futures project, we suggest that this can be co-ordinated only by the Cabinet Office. It cannot be co-ordinated by different spending departments; we need a synoptic vision of the spatial impact of their different policies. From that point of view, I agree that a strategic vision, as Rachel highlighted, that was centrally located would be of benefit. It might actually save on cost later on as well.

**The Chairman:** Before we move on to the next question, I leave you with the wonderful picture of Coventry and of Ground Zero: the two “born out of disaster” types of issue? One is fantastic and one has to be knocked down.

**Q5 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** If I may, I will start off with my interest, which is in the health and well-being of people. That is why I have declared that I am incoming chair of the National Council for Palliative Care: because of things like hospice and hospital design and the impact on the way patients respond to illness and how families cope with dealing with it. I am also clinical lead for palliative care for Wales, and we see the long-term effects of poor housing and so on. I also have to declare that I am personally involved in a planning dispute, which is not the nice end of things.

We really wanted to ask you about the buildings that we build today that will be our future heritage and whether what we have now from the last 30 years of commercial and residential developments will have any kind of legacy value and whether it will be able to adapt to changing needs, so we particularly want to ask you about the long-term survival of buildings, energy efficiency and use, and the use to which those buildings are put and how you see that. If I might I will just throw in that listening to the previous discussion I began to wonder whether there needs to be almost a national vision for what our built environment should be.
achieving in all the different areas that people are signed up to. In different areas in life in the country we have mission statements and so on, but there does not seem to be any common agreed purpose as to where our built environment is going and what we intend to leave behind.

Professor Cooper: There is a lot there. From the point of view of the housing stock, I did a study about six or seven years ago of various buildings in parts of Clerkenwell. What was revealed was that the older buildings—let us not take the sustainability and energy aspect, because that is another issue—were much more flexible for different types of families. The newer buildings were one-bedroom apartments, probably not very well built, that were not flexible if a family wanted to stay there and were probably okay for young people but not necessarily for the older generation. Developers, I have found in various other studies, tend to what I would call value-engineer out issues to do with sustainability such as social sustainability—anything that might be put in by planners or regulation that say, “Build it this way for the long term”. If costs or profit margins come into it, they tend to value-engineer those out, because they can. That is one thing about the stock that is currently being built, particularly when it is dense too—when they are building a lot in one area.

The other issue is health and well-being in communities. Local authorities now have the responsibility for public health. I am not sure they think about the relationship between their role in delivering public health and social care and the design and development of their cities. They do not connect those two. They now have to deal with the social care and public health and the funds they have for it, and they are making decisions about the walkability, the accessibility and the green spaces in their local communities without thinking about the impact on health and well-being in the long term.

Another piece of work that I am just about to start on is looking at how we think about where healthcare is provided spatially in cities. Often local authorities do not think about that. We have had this concentration of healthcare in the bigger hospitals, but then we talk about beds being blocked because there is nowhere locally for older people to go. Again, spatial thinking and planning about where we place and deliver healthcare that will not always be telecare
for people in their homes but will be community hospitals for people who are not blocking beds in acute hospitals has not been undertaken. I think that answers some of your questions.

**Dr Simmons:** If you move on from housing to the commercial world, a lot depends on whether you think that in, say, the next 30 to 50 years the private car and the lorry will be the dominant modes of getting around. Over the last 30 years, we have moved a very large amount of retailing out to the periphery and have put it into relatively short-life—I would imagine—tin sheds quite a lot of the time, and we have built huge distribution depots on motorway junctions, so we are now pretty dependent on that lifestyle. People who do not have access to a private car are seeing their city centres and town centres hollowed out and do not have the same access to retail opportunities unless they go online. Then we are pushing lots of vehicles back into town to deliver from these out-of-town centres. I would say as somebody who uses those services myself that they are very convenient if you have a car and a computer, but I doubt that they are really very sustainable for the long term. I also doubt their environmental sustainability. If we can move to a form of movement that does not require us to put carbon into the atmosphere, which we may do—at the moment even electric cars do that, just from a power station rather than from the car—there may be something to be said for it. But if the economy changes radically around the internet, even more so than it has done already, we may find ourselves with lots of empty or unmarketable sheds around the outside of towns as well as inside towns. If manufacturing goes to smaller locations using new technologies like 3D printing and so on, we might find ourselves with quite a lot of legacy that we do not know what to do with. That is a pessimistic scenario. There may be more optimistic ones that no doubt Mark will be able to give us.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** I was just going to comment on the health and planning relationship. Quite a lot of work has been undertaken over the last six years or so on planning for health and looking at, say, planning out obesogenic environments or how young people use public spaces and certainly public squares, and whether alcohol is involved. Quite a lot of work has been done to try to overcome some of those problems through policy development work and evidence base. I was involved with a NICE group called the Spatial Planning and Health Group, which sat from 2009 until we were abolished in 2010, and with a Department
of Health/CLG-funded report on spatial planning and health that reported in 2010 as well. Unfortunately, that came out at a time when the policy backing at national level to encourage planners and health professionals to work together basically went. The work has continued on the ground. There are some very interesting groups such as the Spatial Planning and Health Group, and there is some very innovative local authority work such as in Tower Hamlets, where the different professionals are working together on these issues, but, unfortunately, without the national policy legitimation it is difficult in some cases to persuade practitioners on the ground to work together to address these problems.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Can I just follow up on that with my question to you about a national vision and whether you feel that there needs to be some very clear health-related requirement within buildings? I am horrified by the number of times in new hotels you cannot find the stairs—they are only fire escapes—whereas going up and down the stairs would be a good thing. Having been a GP in an area with high-rise blocks, I know perfectly well what happens when the lift does not work and you are trying to go up the back stairs, which are awful. I just wonder whether there are some very simple things that would be energy efficient and would switch behaviours of people without having any kind of major cost implication, really, or government involvement.

Professor Tewdwr-Jones: There is a desire at national level to address place and well-being. Those are the most appropriate phrases, not “planning”. As soon as you say “planning”, people immediately think construction and development and change of use. It is about a larger perspective of the contribution of well-being and place. There might be economic development potential and there is certainly planning housing potential of doing so. On the ground, that could be addressed through changes to building regulations for example requiring certain standards, and the threshold could be raised accordingly. But you need that awareness. In Scotland, its national spatial planning framework and land-use strategy deliberately address issues like well-being, health and education, which in a narrow statutory sense are not planning issues. Technically they are not planning issues. If you address them from a spatial planning perspective, you can suddenly say, “It all relates to place, it all relates to the well-being of communities”, so it is a legitimate issue—addressing how these problems
Professor Rachel Cooper, Dr Richard Simmons, Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones – Oral Evidence (QQ1-12)

relate to the opportunities through design, planning and so on. That is a way of bringing different Ministers together around the Cabinet table.

**Q6 Baroness Andrews:** It is another example of the failure of integration and it picks up on the demographic point about an ageing society. It is what you said, Professor Cooper, essentially. It is a bigger picture. We need to plan for ageing, not just to solve bed blocking but to plan for a whole range of options within the housing supply system, so that houses are flexible enough for people to age in place as well as having specialised housing for people who are frail and dependent and have different sorts of needs. We began to address this issue in CLG some years ago, but, like the health and the housing integration, it has tended to collapse. My question is: what could drive the policy changes here? We are beginning to articulate the notion of a national idea. With the well-being boards, could we incentivise local authorities to begin to have a bigger sense of place creation, particularly in relation to demography?

**Professor Cooper:** Yes, we should. It is about designing and planning for the life course of communities. It is a mode of thinking of interdisciplinarity, integration and planning through the life course, and enabling communities to take on foresight. Often communities think about now or tomorrow or five years and do not understand the long-term implications for them and their communities and their children. I spoke at the Cheltenham Science Festival a few weeks ago and I did something for the public—10 tips for designing a healthy city. Somebody left and said, “We are doing the marketplace in Cheltenham. I am going to take your 10 tips”. That was a member of the public. It is complex—planning regulations are complex—but you can make it easier for people to understand some of the basic principles of designing places for the long term and help people to engage in it without it feeling burdensome.

**Dr Simmons:** I am slightly concerned that we have not mentioned the market at all yet. The market is very important as probably the major provider of the built environment. In this context I once saw a scheme that was half housing association and half private sector. The scheme had smaller doors in the private sector part. That is because the house builder had bought a shedload of doors but the housing association specified a larger door. That is a market issue and there are only two ways to deal with that: one is by regulation and the other
is by the market dealing with it. In Canada, the mortgage companies insist on certain standards before they will mortgage a property, including things like larger doors. They have their own building regulations through the mortgage companies. It seems to me that before we fall back just on regulation we should think about whether there are market mechanisms that we can use to drive change as well.

Q7 Baroness Young of Old Scone: I really just want to make things more complicated. I thought that the debate about health and the built environment and planning was very good, but then there is replication if you bring in the green environment, future-proofing against climate change or land-use constraint. Are we at the point where this thing is now too complicated to be decided at a local level?

Professor Cooper: Some solutions work in both ways. Green spaces support health and well-being. Some recommendations will work across those complex dimensions, but again there are some competing issues. Increased density to reduce going into the green belt, and density around interchanges—train stations—in the built environment works because in some senses it reduces movement, travel, energy use, et cetera. On the other hand, if it is not designed well and built well and does not have access to green spaces and views, it affects our physical and mental health, sense of crowding, fear of crime, et cetera. We still have to understand those interdependencies and find mechanisms to do that. With visualisation and new technology we can do some of that modelling. That does not mean that it remains in the domain of the professionals who can understand the intelligent, but visualising these issues and doing them in such a way that the communities can get involved is very important.

Dr Simmons: I have experience of working with communities on these kinds of projects. I have worked, for example, in inner-city Hackney on the reconstruction of a housing estate with people who have very poor educational opportunities in the first place. Two of them got degrees at the end of the process of involving them. It is about engaging people with information. They knew why they were poor. What they lacked was agency—the ability to address that. They were also able to understand more complex issues, interestingly, than their councillors. What is needed is resource, because you cannot have that kind of conversation just by turning up and saying, “Here is a plan. What do you think of it?” You have to sit down
with people, go through all the issues they are dealing with, leave some of them at the door and deal with the ones you have to address. It requires resource, which we do not provide at the moment.

**Q8 Baroness Whitaker:** Still with the concept of better place-making. I declare my interests as honorary fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, president of the South Downs Society, and president of the Newhaven Historical Society close to where I live. We have the impression that most of the professionals have place-making pretty clearly in their minds. It is certainly very evident in the Farrell review, and Professor Cooper has drawn our attention to the pros and cons of urban density. I will not read out her extremely good text on it, because we have all had it. But those who are not professionally expert in this area perhaps have not yet come to it—and I do not exclude politicians from this. My question is really about the process of improving decision-making and the capacity of those making decisions. How can we ensure that new developments respect their surroundings and improve the area in which they are sited, and how do you foster a sense of community and place both in the residents, which is not so hard, and in those who make the official decisions?

**Dr Simmons:** You are right; we know a lot about making good places, and I think we have all provided some information for you on that. You are also right to point at decision-makers, because places arise as a result of a series of decisions, some of which are quite small, such as someone putting up a garden shed and it annoys their neighbour, and some of them are extremely large, such as somebody building an airport near you. Those are all decisions that affect the quality of place. As my colleagues at UCL have said, a degree of subsidiarity is required. You have to decide where you are going to make those decisions.

The first thing is to be clear about where those decisions get taken, who has the right to take them and who has the right to contribute to them. I do not think we are always clear about that. Dealing with that issue first would enable you to get an honest conversation going. Going back to my previous comment, the second thing is that everybody needs information. We now have access to masses of data and to huge numbers of case studies about how to do things well, but not everybody gets at it and not everybody gets it.
The second thing is for us to provide people with data and information. The third is to enable people to have the skills they require. That does not mean that you have to train to be an architect. If you think about it, the built environment is the one thing we all understand, probably, because we spend all our time in it—we are in it now—so we are all experts. The question is how we extract that expertise. At CABE we ran a programme called Design Review. At the end of it, I started to get my team to engage local people on the Design Review panel. They were initially resistant. They said, “Well, they are not experts”. They came back from the first review and said, “It was fantastic. They are real experts on their locality”. I said, “Yes, obviously”. It is important to be honest with people and to say, for example, “We need 3,000 new homes and we are going to have 3,000 new homes, I am afraid. I am sorry about that. Now we want you to help us to produce the best result”. Or, alternatively, “How do you feel about having 3,000 homes?”. People often ask the wrong question. My final point is: ask the right questions.

**Professor Cooper:** I did a study of decision-making in local authorities, retrospectively over 20 years and 10 years, and prospectively. Multiple parties get involved in decision-making, but often they do not understand where they are in the process and they do not know what the values are that they are bringing to the table. I looked at a prospective process of decision-making in Salford and nobody ever mentioned sustainability when they were starting to make decisions such as who they selected to do the strategic plan, and they did not articulate as a group at the beginning what their values were. This comes back to a national and local vision. What are your values for a place? What do you want to achieve? If you do not have that at the beginning, you cannot work out who you are choosing, what decisions you are making and why you would make those decisions. You cannot track them back. We need to have a clear understanding of the process that people are going through and when they need to articulate the values and the criteria on which they are making decisions—the politicians and what I would call the decision-makers, the decision-takers and the decision-informers. There are different groups of people making decisions: the local community, the planning officers and developers. They sometimes really do not understand their roles in that process.
Professor Tewdwr-Jones: I have had experience of working in rural areas enacting innovative public participatory processes for communities. In the Brecon Beacons, 34 villages were covered with “planning for real” exercises. I have also worked in inner-city areas of Newcastle undertaking the same sort of work. It strikes me that in planning and policy-making the current terms are very much on consultation of existing strategies and existing processes. In other words, it is not a blank bit of paper. We need to move to a process of participation, so you start to enact processes that are very much on the terms of the communities, not necessarily on the terms of the experts. That is the first stage.

Then there is the issue of the translation of community desires and community voices into something more meaningful through the policy process. You need experts to be able to do that translation—the mediation. In neighbourhood planning and localism around England at the moment, a whole industry has emerged very rapidly in training to be a mediator in the translation of the community desires into a neighbourhood plan where suddenly there are constraints—legal constraints, difficulties of policy wording and statutory constraints. The mediator becomes an essential person to do that. It could be a planner, it could be someone else. It could be an architect. It could be someone who is not trained in the built environment but who understands the policy syntax of use here. From an academic point of view, we started to look in architecture and planning at whether there is a necessity to train up place leaders—not planners, not architects, not civil engineers, not surveyors but place leaders—who have some skills in the mediation and the translation, who understand where the public are coming from, who understand businesses but who understand the wider issues to do with infrastructure, land acquisition and all the wicked problems that are associated with delivery on the ground. I am not saying that we are producing a super-professional here, but someone with a clear understanding of the difficulties and complexities. That is probably what is needed in the future, and existing professional disciplinary areas in universities, such as planning and architecture, will have to go through revised curriculum design to take account of that.

Baroness Whitaker: That is a very interesting suggestion. I have come across organisations that do that, but we ought to develop that. I have a two-part supplementary, if I may. It would
be helpful to us—and if you have one on the stocks already, maybe you could send it in; if not, maybe the secretariat will be able to help—to have a map of decision-making as it works now, not as it has happened in the past but what it is really like. We also would find it extremely useful if you have any good and bad examples of, say, density in urban areas: places where the decisions have worked well, places where the community—perhaps New Islington in Manchester—have really come in. It would be very helpful to us to be able to explain our points to our audience later on.

**Lord Inglewood:** Professor Tewdwr-Jones, you were talking about developing community thinking and community ideas and then you suddenly dropped in the need for the mediator because of the conflict between policy and community. That is crucial, because policy is top-down and community is bottom-up. If you happen to be a community in a nice village somewhere, for example, where they are proposing to build a new town, that community is going to get rolled over. It is a nice idea, but is it realistic?

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** There has to be a meeting of minds.

**Lord Inglewood:** But in most of the world there is no meeting of minds.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Of course. You are dealing with land and you are dealing with a scarce resource. Land is either a resource or a commodity, depending on which side you look at it. Those issues will never go away when 90% of the land is owned by 10% of the people of the UK. I am not advocating a change in that, incidentally, but there will always be the need for mediation. When Stevenage new town was designated in 1946 there was enormous opposition to it from the locals, not surprisingly, who did not want to see concrete put down near them. That has never gone away. Your Lordships will probably know about nimbyism. I am sure you know about BANANA—“build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone”—as a mantra, increasingly so these days. People will give their opinions about development irrespective of whether they live near a development these days as well. It is a democratic right, you could argue, but there has to be a meeting of minds. Planners are currently performing the role of mediator, but they are caught as well in having to take account of national policy requirements, local core strategy policy requirements, and infrastructure and land-ownership constraints, along with the desires of the public. That is not to say that we
should not do that. We should acknowledge and be honest with the community about where there is discretion and where there are limits to what can be done. So, there are issues of principles, there are issues of design and there are issues of delivery. The public can be involved with any one of those stages, but let us not pretend that the public have carte blanche over all those areas; there will have to be some constraints.

**Q9 Baroness Rawlings:** Good morning and thank you for your clear explanations. My declaration of interest is that I am a trustee of Chevening in Kent. I have been listening very carefully to what you have been saying. The word “sustainability” seems to keep cropping up. Professor Tewdwr-Jones, you have written that you prefer to use “resilience”, yet Dr Simmons is using “lasting”. I wondered perhaps if we could clarify “sustainability”, and I wondered who you thought would be responsible for making certain that the standards are sufficiently high on all this. I will, if I may, include the integration of recreation areas in this, rather than coming back with a supplementary. We have not really mentioned trees, greenery and areas that unfortunately are so littered nowadays in places. I wondered where volunteers came into this. Sorry, that question is a bit muddled and all over the place.

**Dr Simmons:** I suppose we could go back to Vitruvius, the Roman author and architect, who came up with “firmness, commodity and delight”, as it was translated in the 17th century. There are a number of dimensions to resilience. I quite like the term “resilience”, but it tends to be seen as quite technical. Whenever there is an emergency in London, London resilience rolls out and that is how you deal with terrorism. The language can get quite confusing. I would like to talk about how we make buildings and places that last for the long term that people love and that go on providing what I have called built environment services over a long period of time. Not everything can be lasting. Some stuff for the Olympics, which I was involved in, was just temporary, so we are not saying that everything has to last, but even that was reusable. It is really about creating things that go on being useful for us over time. That is how I see it in simple terms.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Spot the academic, moving from one “ism” to another. I have tried to move away from “sustainability” because to some extent, in my personal view, it has been politically appropriated. If a Minister stands up and says, “Sustainable development is defined
as job creation”, for me that is no longer sustainable development. That was why I moved away from “sustainability” to look at “resilience”. It relates to land use futures. How do you take account of a series of wicked problems? How do you bounce back from shocks to the system, whether extreme weather events or economic shocks to the system? Resilience is about how you bounce back, keep on going, keep calm in the process and think about policy in that way. I acknowledge that there are sustainability elements and they are enduring—

**Baroness Rawlings:** They are lasting elements.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Absolutely, and possibly embedded in forms that we can take forward. I would think that there were sustainable processes in how the Olympics was done that could be long-lasting—not just the developments, but the means by which everyone collaborated institutionally—and that should serve as lessons for all of us.

**Dr Simmons:** That is the point about who owns this. No particular person owns it. The investor should own it, coming back to the market, and we are seeing some of the big investors starting to look at the question of whether things will last and be suitable for their tenants or their investments over the long term. That is a really good thing. Some of the banks take that perspective and they will no longer invest in stuff that is only for the short term.

**The Chairman:** Can I interrupt just for a moment? I was wondering whether we would make the full hour before anybody mentioned finance, money or bankers, and we have not.

**Dr Simmons:** No. They are very important.

**The Chairman:** They are.

**Dr Simmons:** I mentioned them earlier as well. The market has a role to play. The customer also needs to be better informed. I do not just mean people buying houses, I mean people such as Marks & Spencer, with their plan A. There is no Plan B. They are now quite demanding tenants on issues of environmental sustainability and energy, for example. It is a shared responsibility. The Government need to create, if you like, the playing field and set out where the corner flags are, but then it requires others to engage, as you say, in a collaborative way.

**Professor Cooper:** I did a four-year project on sustainable cities. There are 300 or more dimensions of measuring sustainability—I have just done a study of well-being—and 1,000 different individual items that you could think about that contribute to well-being. It is
impossible. But making a place liveable for today and the future and understanding the context-specific criteria and values for each place become important. There is a high-level national vision of a liveable nation and the cities in it. Then there are local visions that are specific to a place. This is what I meant about decision-makers knowing what the vision is and what the values are for that place and using those as criteria when they make decisions.

**Baroness Andrews:** Would you agree with me that we have probably lost this argument? We argued passionately in this House that the principle that should underlay the national planning policy framework should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development, instead of which we got a presumption in favour of development. Does that not articulate the conflicts of interest between growth, development and sustainability?

**The Chairman:** Thank you. Good point.

**Baroness Rawlings:** I am just wondering about the integration. We have not really talked about trees, greenery and litter and volunteers all in one package.

**Professor Cooper:** That is what I was going to add to my comments about values, vision and knowing. I come from Manchester. Every time I go down Oxford Road, there is an empty site where the BBC was that is a car park at the moment. Manchester has very little green space in the centre of its city. We can use technology—we can use satellites—to understand the provision of green space. Green space is essential for people’s well-being, particularly in dense places, and we need some simple, clear policy about the provision of green spaces: spaces for children—not just manicured parks and swings, but places that they can take risks, and water and so on—and spaces that are accessible for older generations. We need to think about green space through the life course in liveable places. I am not in the planning area so I do not know about regulation, but I do think that Manchester could consider that the BBC area should be a park rather than a car park or another development.

**The Chairman:** We will see what we can do.

**Dr Simmons:** I try to avoid special pleading, given my former role at CABE, because it sounds like whingeing, but one of the things that did not survive the closure of statutory CABE was CABE Space. It was a fantastic resource and nothing has replaced it, I am afraid. It made exactly the kinds of advocacy points but also helping people develop skills in a very tough
environment for green space, and encouraging volunteering, which is probably the only way we can keep our green spaces to the standards we would like, given what has happened to public expenditure. If I was going to rekindle anything of statutory CABE, I would start with CABE Space.

**Q10 Lord Freeman:** May I first declare an indirect interest? My wife is involved in the field of necessary preservation and renovation of historic buildings. Can I also say as a former Minister for the Cabinet Office that I shall certainly follow up Professor Tewdwr-Jones’s comments? My question is: how effective are we at rejuvenating existing housing developments and communities, and what lessons have been learnt?

**Dr Simmons:** I have done some of it in the past. We are quite good at it when we do it. There are different levels of doing it. There is sweeping away the disasters of the past and replacing them. When we have engaged the communities concerned in the process of rebuilding places, we have done some really quite good work. We have done some good stuff in Brixton and in the Stonebridge estate, if I think of London examples, and in Hulme in Manchester. I worked on Holly Street in Hackney and I went back after 10 years and said, “What is it like?” They said, “We got exactly what we wanted. We are just an ordinary Hackney street now, not an estate with a postcode any more”. We have some brilliant successes. When it comes to things like retrofitting, which I know may come up later on, smaller-scale refurbishments and so on, we have lost some of that. We used to have housing action areas, which I worked on as a young lad, and general improvement areas. Some of that has faded to some extent, so we are perhaps less good at those kinds of large-scale refurbishments. When it comes to environmental work, such as large-scale insulation projects, we are perhaps less strategic than we used to be. We rely a lot more on the energy companies through their obligation, for example. We have lost some of the strategic tools that we used to have, but when we do it, we do it pretty well.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Some of the rejuvenation involves getting rid of crime that estates have fallen into. Do you have some good advice about that?

**Professor Cooper:** Hulme was a 1960s disaster that was knocked down because it was full of crime and redeveloped. They redeveloped the park and thought very carefully about all the
principles of what we call “designing out crime”: eyes on the street, being able to see across the whole park, and areas that enabled youths to hang out without it destroying the place. There are principles, particularly on designing against crime.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Have they been effective?

**Professor Cooper:** They have.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Before and after research would be helpful to us, too.

**Professor Cooper:** Yes.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** One of the aspects of retrofitting that is on the increase, as far as I can see, is the switch from office buildings to residential. I just wondered what the implications of that were.

**Professor Cooper:** That brings in issues not just of retrofitting office buildings into apartments, which you probably get in London, but of whether mixed-use space works or not. Again, we did a study in 2005 and 2008 and looked at various parts of London, and mixed-use—there is a view that it creates a community—does not necessarily work. Choosing the right buildings to retrofit into apartments and the use of mixed-use has to be thought about much more carefully and, again, context-specifically.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Often it is just land values.

**Professor Cooper:** Exactly.

**Dr Simmons:** Often you are not retrofitting a whole community, so you are building homes but there is no school to serve them, for example. You have to think about some of the strategic implications.

**Q11 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** I have no interests to declare in relation to this inquiry, you will be delighted to know. An awful lot of people would think that we were talking about airy-fairy things. There is a huge shortage of housing and it is now very acute. House prices and rents have shot up. Why have we failed to build sufficient houses? Not merely not sufficient, but vastly under provided for. Is this to a degree a matter of public policy? Secondly, if we are somehow to improve on that, will that bring about problems in place? In other words, in the haste to get something done—private buildings or otherwise—will they just get the things built?
Professor Tewdwr-Jones: There are a variety of reasons why we are in the current housing predicament. It was popular for a while to suggest that planning, not just the lack of housing, was to blame for everything, but it is not quite that simple. Yes, there are delays in the planning process, but that is because, as I said earlier, of the fragmented institutional landscape, the need for consultation; sometimes overwhelming public opposition to schemes against professional advice—which might suggest approval, and delays between outline permission and detailed permission. There are also issues to do with land supply and the appropriate location that the market is interested in—mismatches between where local authority planners might suggest that land could be available and where the market would prefer to build. Housebuilders do not build major developments in one go; they phase schemes as well, so there may be land with permission but it is not yet implemented, and market reasons as well as physical constraints why that is the case. Also, there is a tendency to view new housing almost as a lifestyle choice, certainly in the way it is advertised, so I question whether even an increase in housing supply will make any difference to affordability unless it is vast. We have done it well in the past. The loss of state housing did not help matters—the loss of local authorities being able to build for all sections of society—and maybe the figures demonstrate that the private sector cannot do it alone and that there needs to be a mix, or at least that we need, certainly for our cities, to begin to realise that mixes of tenure are more appropriate than chasing owner-occupation as a desirable goal. All these issues are very relevant. Some attempt is now being made to release public land to get that developed quickly, but I share your concerns that if we build too fast we might see history—what happened in the 50s and 60s when we built too fast—repeating itself: namely, that we will have to replace very shortly because the housing is not of good standard. There is also an issue about the size of housing, going back to density. In the 50s and 60s, houses and apartments had much better densities and layouts than they do today. I do not want to point the finger of blame at any one problem; there is a range of issues. What could be done? Certainly I advocate building new settlements and garden cities as one solution. It is going to take that sort of Herculean effort to be able to address the backlog, let alone future demand from population increases, but you are looking at areas that are under considerable
pressure, and that means looking at the south-east of England, and we know there are political and public sensitivities with that.

**Dr Simmons:** We do have a real challenge. I agree that the planning system is not necessarily the only problem, but we have a problem now with the so-called duty to co-operate. As you will be aware from what has been happening with the London Plan and the Bedford 51, the local authorities around London all got together to say that they did not want to take any housing to serve London, even though the south-east of England has been London’s dormitory for over 100 years. There are issues with somebody having to say, “Sorry, but a strategic decision is required here”. It is also a very complex market. I agree that there are risks. The risks in creating places would be less if garden cities were addressed as garden cities as opposed to a solution to the housing problem—in other words, if we were talking about creating genuine multifunctional cities. Very often, people see them as an opportunity to use a good brand, because garden cities are a great brand, to popularise new housing. What we should be doing is looking at creating places that function and that have sufficient housing for their needs and recognising that some places, like London, are bigger than the artificial boundary created by local government.

**Professor Cooper:** There also needs to be some creative thinking about how we design and build homes and whether we can do them quicker, using off-site manufacture, and make them faster but better-designed and to last longer and to be flexible. We really need to think about what sort of homes we want, whether they will work though the life course, how they can be designed quicker and how they can be implemented on the ground quicker.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Would all the good ideas that we have heard today about place and improving things, and the need for new systems and to do things differently, slow down achieving better house-build even further?

**Dr Simmons:** I do not think so. We already know what needs to be done. When I was at CABE, housebuilders at a DCLG seminar I was at said that they preferred brick construction to off-site manufacturing because they felt that it was something they understood and they had the people who could do it. This is a question that we do not have time to answer today, really,
but there are all sorts of structural issues in the industry that need to change as well. We have all the components; it is assembling them in the right order that is the issue here.

**Q12 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I am going to put a thesis to you and I want you just to say yes or no. Is it true that the resistance from local authorities to the housing targets would not have existed if we still had the same scale of public housing development by local authorities that we had in the 1940s and the 1950s?

**The Chairman:** There is no yes or no answer.

**Professor Cooper:** Possibly.

**Dr Simmons:** It would be easier to do it if we had that.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Yes.

**Dr Simmons:** But not everywhere.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I just want to make the point that we have not built affordable housing on a sufficient scale since we stopped local authorities doing it themselves.

**Professor Tewdwr-Jones:** Yes.

**Dr Simmons:** Yes.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I rest my case.

**The Chairman:** I am afraid that my time-management skills have failed me totally on this one. I had no idea that it was going to be so riveting. I really feel very sorry for Lord Clement-Jones and Lord Inglewood, who had good questions too, and, indeed, Baroness Young. Would it be really dreadful of me to ask you if you could look at those questions and just do a few lines? I do not want great sheaves of paper from you. I apologise. I shall just say mea culpa.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** On Question 9, Lord Chairman, you have woven criticism of the planning system into what you have had to say to some degree, have you not?

**Lord Inglewood:** A lot of what I was going to ask has been covered.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Even if I am not asking a question, perhaps I ought to make a declaration.

**The Chairman:** Yes, you should.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** I am London Managing Partner of DLA Piper UK, the law firm, and a member of council of UCL.
Lord Inglewood: Chairman, while they disappear, can I make my declaration, as it is still in public, even though nobody is listening? I am a non-practising chartered surveyor. I own Hutton-in-the-Forest, a grade 1-listed building open to the public. I have agricultural and residential property in Cumbria. I am a trustee of the Elton Estate, Raby Estates and Thoresby Estate. I am a political adviser—unpaid, I fear—to the Estates Business Group. I am a director of the Historic Houses Association and a trustee and on its parliamentary and tax committee. I am chairman of the Cumbria Local Nature Partnership. I am a member of the advisory council of the Friends of the Lake District. I am president of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust, patron of the Lakeland Housing Trust and, like Lady Andrews—I have missed it out—I am a vice-president of the National Parks association.

Lord Clement-Jones: And a jolly good fellow.

The Chairman: That is exactly what I was going to say. Now, the Earl of Lytton, please, likewise.

Earl of Lytton: I am in the thick of this. The simple ones: I have a house in west Sussex. I have tenants and a lodger. I am a co-owner with my wife of rural estates in Somerset and Sussex and I have various residual interests as lord of the manor of manors in Surrey, west Sussex and Somerset. I was until recently a director and sole principal of my own chartered surveying company, John Lytton & Co Ltd, now finished trading. I am now a part-time employee with a firm of chartered quantity surveyors, Lawrence Foote & Partners (London) Ltd. I am a director of a farming estate that also runs sporting interests. I am a previous commissioner of the RICS Land and Society Commission, which looked at localism and community ownership. I am current chairman of the industry consultative committee of the University of West London, which brings together industry and students and the academic side, and chairman of the Rights of Way Review Committee, which deals with public rights of way. I am a trustee of the South of England Agricultural Society, which runs the South of England Show. I am a vice-president of the National Association of Local Councils and of the Local Government Association. I am a current sponsor of a private Bill aimed at determining property boundaries more simply. I am a member of innumerable professional bodies: the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation; the Chartered Association of Building Engineers; the Chartered Institute
of Arbitrators; and RICS. I am also a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Private Rented Sector and—it is not here—of the APPG for the Built Environment. You will understand why I have remained relatively silent.

The Chairman: Just finally, Baroness Parminter, who has only just joined us.

Baroness Parminter: Apologies for being late. I am a very dull bear in comparison to my colleagues. I just declare that I am the spokesperson for Defra matters in the House of Lords for the Lib Dems.

The Chairman: And I have nothing to declare. That is why I am doing the job I am doing. It is all in the past. I do not think I have anything, other than that I have been a householder for many years. The biggest investment people make in their lives is their houses, and the one they are most disappointed with is their houses.

Witnesses, thank you very much indeed. It has been extremely kind of you and you have been battered by our questions, but you have been more than useful.

09 July 2015
Create Streets – Written Evidence (BEN0195)

Policy on the built environment should focus more on what is popular and what is correlated with good wellbeing outcomes rather than on ‘good design’ where evidence shows a material disconnect between the preferences of planners and architects and the rest of the population.

1. Focus of our evidence

This submission only answers questions where we believe we have something to contribute. Some of our research could have ‘slotted in’ at various points so please excuse us if we have not perfectly chosen. We have focused on our areas of expertise, research and work which are primarily to do with increasing popular support for housing at sufficient density to meet housing needs and in a way correlated with wellbeing and happiness. Our primary focus is London so our evidence is London-centric. We hope that this is not too distracting. Although the land-value points are less acute elsewhere most of our points will still hold true for most (not quite all) of England.

2. About Create Streets

Create Streets is a social enterprise that encourages the creation of more urban homes in conventional, terraced streets rather than complex multi-storey buildings. We do this through research, arguing for policy change, working with communities and consulting to councils and landowners. Our work has created considerable controversy and discussion as well as support from both sides of the political spectrum. According to Sir Simon Jenkins, former Chair of the National Trust, ‘Create Streets speaks London’s language’.

3. Response to your specific questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Two thirds of British adults say they would never even consider buying a newly-built home and only 21% say a new home is their preferred option. This is an astonishing fact that would probably not be replicated in any other ‘market’ in the UK outside the world of antiques. When you consider that new homes should be better, more sustainable, lighter, cheaper to run, this failure of most modern ‘place-making’ is profound and systemic.

Changing this so that new homes, streets and places are not just acceptable to the general population but actively desired, sought and lobbied for (seen, as they should be, as better) seems to us the most critical role of national planning policymaking. National (and local) policymakers should be far far more interested in asking questions such as:

- What types of place do the public like?
- What types of new building do the public like and want to see built near them?
- What types of place and home are correlated with good wellbeing outcomes (probably largely composed of evidence on happiness, physical health, mental health, community engagement and sociability levels)?
- What types of building and place prove popular over time and thus hold their value?
- What types of building maintain reasonable maintenance costs over time and thus last longer and are more ‘sustainable’?

The evidence on matters such as this currently being used to support policy is, in our view woefully, recklessly inadequate. In all the talks we have given to local housing or planning teams we have never once met an official who can confidentially set out with numerical precision and data what residents or potential residents want to see built.

Our research has shown that most of us crave a ‘sense of place’ that most contemporary housing just fails to provide. Figure i sets out a summary of our wider research on what seems to work for most people most of the time or to be correlated with good wellbeing outcomes. In a nutshell it could be summarised as well-connected walkable streets nearly always at human scale, with green space interleaved throughout, with variety within a pattern and normally with at least a good proportion of the architecture feeling like it ‘belongs’ locally. People like a ‘sense of place’. High rise should normally only be for the rich or for commercial uses and almost never for children.

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Page 539 of 1964
These preferences matter in the fight to build the homes we need. Most of us prefer not just more human scale homes but also more conventionally-designed ones. An Ipsos-MORI poll that Create Streets recently commissioned asked respondents what buildings they would support being built on brownfield land near where they live.

**Figure ii – Findings of Ipsos-MORI poll into support for brownfield building**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connectivity</th>
<th>1. Streets that ‘plug into’ city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>2. Highly walkable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenery</td>
<td>3. Minimal internal semi-private space (unless high end residential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>4. Control over who meet, how &amp; when (no corridors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>5. Open space below normally &lt;90m in breadth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homes</td>
<td>6. Lots of green space but mainly (not entirely) modest in scale (squares, pocket parks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>7. A high proportion via private or communal spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>8. Street trees wherever possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Human scale height (2-7 storeys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Limited high rise &amp; only with commercial or high end residential. No children in high rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Blocks not too big or too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Buildings as buildings not blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Fewer than ~10 units in apartment blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. As many houses as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Homes in conventional streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Maximum private gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Minimal children in flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Strong sense of place “Couldn’t be anywhere” – including style &amp; use of materials that normally at least reference memory &amp; locational heritage (though not exclusively)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Variety of streets types, design, green spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Streets that bend &amp; flex with contours of landscape – some surprises !</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Dense enough to be walkable while providing space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. From suburban to ~230 units / hectare – much harder beyond that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2 I am now going to show you five different types of new housing... to what extent would you support or oppose the building of new homes similar to the photo in your local area on brownfield land?
This survey found that 64% of adults supported the building of new homes locally on brownfield land. 14% opposed it. Respondents were then shown five photos illustrating different types of housing and, for each, asked if they would support or oppose the building of 10 similar style homes in their local area. The most conventional in form, style and building materials won 75% and 73% support. Less conventional, more innovative homes won 34% and 23% support. Popular design can clearly change minds. Among the 14% who opposed building ‘in principle’, half changed their mind for the most popular option.\(^\text{71}\)

These preferences matter in the fight to build the homes we need. Most of us prefer not just more human scale homes but also more conventionally-designed ones. An Ipsos-MORI poll that Create Streets recently commissioned asked respondents what buildings they would support being built on brownfield land near where they live. This survey found that 64% of adults supported the building of new homes locally on brownfield land. 14% opposed it. Respondents were then shown five photos illustrating different types of housing and, for each, asked if they would support or oppose the building of 10 similar style homes in their local area. The most conventional in form, style and building materials won 75% and 73% support. Less conventional, more innovative homes won 34% and 23% support. Popular design can clearly change minds. Among the 14% who opposed building ‘in principle’, half changed their mind for the most popular option.\(^\text{72}\)

*Figure iii – Vicious circle of land supply, land prices, credit inflows, housing codes, design culture and political support for new development*

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Our failure to build sufficient homes is arguably the most profound failure of public policy over the last generation. We are in a vicious circle created by a plan-led, supply-constraining planning system which pushes up land prices and creates barriers to entry. Together with misconceived housing and building rules (see below) and, in London, large capital inflows this imperfectly aligns new housing in type and style with the type of housing for which there is most support. This makes it harder to reform the planning system and increase, systemically, the supply of new housing (see fig iii.) Planning policy should be about breaking this vicious circle. One way to do is by better aligning what we build with what people actually like.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved? We have no view on this.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

In the NPPF as implemented throughout England insufficient focus is placed on what people like. What planners and architects like (which is too often not the same) trumps a rational approach to creating popular places. It is worth setting out at length why this matters.

In 1987 a young psychologist was conducting an experiment into how repeated exposure to an image changed perceptions of it. A group of volunteer students were shown photographs of unfamiliar people and buildings. They were asked to rate them in terms of attractiveness. Some of the volunteers were architects and some were not. And as the experiment was
ongoing a fascinating finding became clear. Whilst everyone had similar views on which people were attractive, the architecture and non architecture students had diametrically opposed views on what was or was not an attractive building. Correlations ‘were low or non-significant’. The architecture students’ favourite building was everyone else’s least favourite and vice versa. The disconnect also got worse with experience. The longer architecture students had been studying the more they disagreed with the general public on what is an attractive building.73

The young psychologist was David Halpern and he now runs the Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights team (often called the ‘Nudge Unit’). Two decades on, he is very clear that ‘architecture and planning does not have an empirical, evidence-based tradition in the sense that … sciences would understand. There are very few studies that ever go back to look at whether one type of dwelling or another, or one type of office or another, has a systematic impact on how people behave, or feel, or interact with one another.’ 74

If he is right then the process of a professionally-derived borough plan, of planning consent and of expert design review is the very worst way imaginable to build our towns and cities. The very act which confers value on a site (the granting of planning permission) is a process whose key players are, empirically, the very worst judges available of what people want or like in the built environment.

But is he still right? A glance at the criteria of architectural prizes is not reassuring. Few if any place value on evidence of popularity or provable correlations with wellbeing. Certainly RIBA’s prizes specifically demand evidence on sustainability but not on what members of the wider public think.75 Similarly, in a 2004 study into attitudes to housing conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, nearly 60% of the public said they disliked flats. Only a little over 20% of ‘experts’ shared that view.76

To investigate this further Create Streets recently conducted an informal poll. We asked our twitter followers and the members of our e-mail distribution list (in total about 4,000 names) to take part in what we termed a ‘pop-up’ poll. In total 283 took part. We asked respondents ‘which of these would you most want to see built on an urban street very near to where you or a close friend live?’ and presented four options whose order was randomised. We also asked their profession. 37% of respondents worked as architects, planners or in creative arts.

Figure iv – Options in Create Streets Pop-up poll77

75 Though it is reassuring to see the August 2015 launch of the RIBA Journal McEwan Award to fete projects ‘a clear social benefit, right across society.’ This is a step in the right direction.
77 The poll ran online between 1 April and 22 May 2015.
We were not surprised to find that among our overall respondents place trumps time. 87% of our respondents preferred the two options which most clearly referenced historic housing forms (at the top of figure iv) and which had a very strong sense of place. This was nearly seven times more than the 13% who preferred the two more original forms which prioritised a sense of time over a sense of place (at the bottom of figure iv).

We also found that the sharp and important distinction between what non-design specialists and design specialists would like to see built is still there. 25% of supporters of the more popular two options worked in planning, architecture or creative arts. 46% of supporters of the less popular two options worked in planning, architecture or creative arts. People are from Mars. Professionals are still from Venus. In other studies it has been shown not only that architects have different views on buildings to the rest of the public but that they cannot predict what the general public will like.78

The melancholy implication of this is that architectural awards are a good indicator of popularity – but only if you invert them. We are aware of nine architectural or planning prizes awarded to the two least popular two options. We are not aware of any architectural or planning awards garnered by the most popular option has received.79

These prejudices of too many in the design and planning establishment are not just idle personal preferences. They palpably influence what actually happens. In a 2014 design meeting for a major London site, the ‘traditional’ built form of conventional developments was openly ridiculed and dismissed as unworthy of discussion even though it is what the

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79 The second option has not been built so is not able to win awards.
Similarly, in a June 2015 meeting of very senior officials and architects at which Create Streets was present the Director of Housing and Regeneration at an important London borough spoke (without apparent irony) of the ‘horrid Edwardian streets that most of us live in’ and complained of ‘dreary terraces.’ When a senior and respected decision-maker does not just disagree with the vast majority of the public but is actually contemptuous of their views it must be time to ask if the whole public procurement and planning prioritisation process needs dramatic rebuilding from the bottom up. Certainly, in public sector design competitions for city-centre development and estate regeneration marks are routinely (in our experience always) awarded very materially for ‘innovation of design’. In at least two cases that we are aware of this was despite the explicit request from councillors that a more conventional, even traditional, design would be more appropriate.

The point is not that design innovation is necessarily bad. Clearly it is not. It is often excellent. But it needs to be balanced with the familiar. And in at least two case, design competitions was being run in contradiction to what had been requested by council leadership. It is hard to conclude that the system is under effective democratic control.

4. **Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

We are quite not sure what you mean by a spatial perspective. It is true that it is insufficiently possible for local people’s spatial likes and preferences to be reflected in what is built. But the main issue, is that planning, housing and building rules have too many perspectives.

Certainly in London, these remain misaligned with what most people want. It is worth exploring this point. Borough rules on light seem to tend to larger blocks with more open space between them as opposed to narrower streets. They also make it hard to trade off high levels of light in some rooms versus less light in others. A recent report by four important residential architectural firms explained;

> ‘Given their enduring popularity (and value) you might suppose that they [Edwardian Mansion blocks] would provide the ideal model for today. But, sadly, modern planning and building regulations outlaw some of the key design features that enabled Edwardian architects to create such opulent buildings on such small footprints. Apartments of this era typically offer spacious and bright front rooms with bay windows and balconies forming their distinctive street facades. Meanwhile the rear rooms are quite dark and have privacy distances way below current standards. To us it seems a satisfactory trade-off, which should be encouraged rather than prevented.’

Rules on streets themselves matter too. In our 2014 survey, a majority felt that (borough-level) highway rules acted as a barrier to street-based regeneration. In our prompted survey of barriers to street-based regeneration the ‘Need to build wider or different streets to meet

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80 Private information. A member of Create Streets was at the meeting which was for an (ultimately) public sector client.
council rules’ achieved a score of 5.9/10. Many industry practitioners were particularly vocal on this point with some of the most emphatic comments we received criticising the impact of highway engineers on good design and place-making via issues such as required turning circles, refuse collection standards, lines of site and road access. Alastair Mellon, of Providence Developments, was clear that ‘Highways engineers should not be allowed close to any development. They insist on a whole series of regulations that kill a development.’ Mike De’Ath of HTA Design agreed; ‘the worst streets are designed by highway engineers and refuse collection people. They’re dead but technically proficient.’ Others complained about inappropriate minimum road widths. There was, however, a sense that the situation was improving with John Spence, an architect at calfordseaden and also a member of Create Streets, one of several commenting that their impact ‘seems to be getting less.’

The ban on recycling open space between buildings into private gardens can make it very hard to redevelop estates into streets. Key Performance Indicator 3 states that there should be, ‘no net loss of open space designated for protection in Local Development Frameworks due to new development.82’ When estates are regenerated this can and has impacted this metric.83

However, we also know that most people would sacrifice poor open space for small private or communal gardens.84 But they cannot. The GLA are quite categorical that, ‘the definition of open space ...does not include private residential gardens.85’ In our 2014 prompted survey of barriers to street-based regeneration the ‘Need to include more open space to meet the London Plan’ and the ‘Need to include more open space to meet local council’s requirements’ both achieved scores of 5.6 out of 10 as a barrier. It was generally felt that planners cared about this more than residents. In the same survey the ‘Need to include more open space to satisfy local residents’ only achieved a score of 4.9/10. Ingrid Reynolds, Director in Housing and Public Sector at Savills summarised the majority view when she said that, ‘the reduction of open space is potentially a barrier. It is more likely to be the planners saying you’ve got keep or add to the open space than residents. Part of the general planning strategy is to retain public open space.’

Although not as widely felt, in our prompted survey of barriers to street-based regeneration ‘Difficult to build this form of flats and comply with London Plan’ achieved a score of 3.9/10. ‘Difficult to build this form of houses and comply with London Plan’ achieved a score of 3.6/10.

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84 Evidence has shown for many years that people prefer private gardens (however small) to less usable communal space. In an early 1980s survey of residents’ views of London multi-storey housing, the main dislike was the way the estate was set out and the lack of individual gardens with 54 complaints. Coleman, A. (1985), Utopia on trial, p. 33. Recent evidence from RIBA supports this. In a survey of apartment block residents they found that, ‘private gardens were preferred to shared gardens’. This was particularly true in London. ‘Those in urban London [were] most keen across all the groups to have some outside space in their new property.’ RIBA found that typical apartment block residents interviewed ‘appreciated that the properties were set in a natural area [but] they felt that this space was difficult to use as a personal outdoor area as sharing the area with others did not tend to work well.’ RIBA (2012), The way we live now, p. 49., p.52.
The impact of national rules on building terraced flats and houses was felt to be less. (3.2/10 and 3.1/10 respectively to the same questions). Andy von Bradsky the chairman of PRP, one of the architectural practices designing many homes in London at present, commented; ‘Lifetime homes are potentially a barrier… [for example requiring] level access from street to threshold. But sometimes a raised ground floor is a benefit in terms of house typology.’ Alastair Mellon also complained about ‘the insistence on elevators over four storeys.’ (this has now reduced to any non-ground floor entrance). Nigel Franklin of calfordseaden and a member of Create Streets was more concerned about the impact on spatially efficient terraced houses: ‘The London plan works well for flats. It is less easy for houses. Stairs have to be shallow pitched – this needs more floor-space. The through the floor lift is easy for two storeys. It is difficult for three or four storeys. It adds challenges all round and costs as well as less ideal storage provision due to the area required for stairs and lifts.’

To summarise the access and internal barriers;

- Requiring lifts in all apartment buildings makes it more expensive to recreate the typology typical of many dense, street-based areas of London with apartments on a number of floors off one staircase. This also incentivises higher building as the cost of lifts does not increase substantially as more floors are added, once the initial cost is incurred.  
- Rules against staircases being too narrow or too steep make it harder to build the conventional tall but thin London terraced houses
- A requirement that ten percent of homes be fully wheelchair accessible and for all homes to be built to ‘Lifetime Home’ standards biases the system in favour of large blocks

Four contributory barriers add to this;

- A dislike for on-street parking biases the planning system against conventional terraces and streets
- Heavy requirements for bike storage, make it much harder to build terraced flats and conventional terraced homes
- Heavy requirements for bathrooms on storeys with bedrooms make it harder to build the conventionally tall but thin modest London terrace homes
- Finally, requiring ‘weather protection’ over front doors adds yet more cost to terraced streets with multiple entrances

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86 Key rules are clauses 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.7 and 4.3.2.
87 Key rules are clauses 3.2.8, 3.1.3 and 4.10.2..
88 Key rules are clauses 4.9.1 and 3.2.7.
89 Clause 3.3.3.
90 Clause 3.4.1.
91 Clauses 4.6.2 and 4.6.3.
92 Clause 3.1.4. This is not as material a cost as others mentioned above.
A range of rules on windows and room heights also make it harder to build houses which obey the classical rules of proportion and ‘fit in’ with historic neighbourhoods.\textsuperscript{93} Regrettably the situation is currently getting worse. Proposed changes to the London Plan will require lifts in all blocks with apartment entrances on more than one floor (currently only required in blocks of four or more storeys). A better disincentive to building human scale terraced streets, particularly in the suburbs, it is hard to imagine. Hopefully the next Mayor of London will stop this insanity.\textsuperscript{94}

It should be stated that not \textit{all} practitioners agree with this analysis. Some feel they have evolved adequate work-arounds which allowed them to deliver good schemes under the current rules. Alex Ely of Mae Architects (and one of the authors of the London Housing Design guide) told us unambiguously in 2014 that ‘Planning and design is not a barrier’ and that the current rules made it ‘easier for streets.’ Most, however, at least in private, seem worried by their cumulative impact. Peter Redman (the former head of Notting Hill Housing and of the housing teams at both Lambeth and Southwark), told us that the ‘standards required by those who lay down the rules’ mean that ‘attractive streets just don’t conform.’

When we started to complain about the way that some (well intentioned) regulations were making it harder to build our most popular street forms and housing types it was a lonely battle. One very senior London politician even commented privately that there was no political chance of opening up these issues. Another told us we would be ignored at best, eviscerated at worst. It seems that the situation is, slightly, beginning to shift and that more planners and architects who care about the built form of London are daring to put their head above the parapet and to challenge the collective ‘group-think’ to which the whole industry has subscribed in recent years. Richard Lavington (of Maccreanor Lavington Architects) said in evidence to the GLA in March 2014:

\begin{quote}
\textit{One very efficient way of delivering family housing at a certain density is with narrow-frontage terraced houses, but actually Lifetime Homes [embedded in the London Plan] is very obstructive to making that work particularly well. Once you get to three bedrooms, you need a very large bathroom on the entry level and that actually obstructs the width of the plan; which means you have to go into a very narrow kitchen and through that into a living space at the back. . . . you are prioritising the lifetime use of the home and disabled access over its efficiency and use for a family; a family without disabled kids and things like that, admittedly. We are applying that across every new-build single home in London.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} Clauses 4.4.6 and 5.4.1. The point is not that new streets should necessarily obey classical rules of proportion but it seems perverse actively to prevent them – particularly when the consequent buildings seem to be so popular. Boys Smith, N. (2013) \textit{Why aren’t we building more streets in London} explored these issues in more detail There has been some consequent movement (for example the relaxation of standard 3.2.5). Mayor of London, \textit{Funding Prospectus} (2013), p. 26.

\textsuperscript{94} ‘Boroughs should seek to ensure that units accessed above or below the entry storey in buildings of four storeys or less have step-free access.’ GLA, (May 2015), \textit{Minor alterations to the London Plan}, p.8.
Then at a talk to the National Housing Federation, in December 2014, Ben Derbyshire the Managing Director of HTA Design, one of the larger London residential practices, agreed: ‘it’s actually quite difficult to design streets which are streets in the sense that citizens will recognise.’ The architect Peter Barber echoed this in a lecture to the Royal Academy in July 2015: ‘planning law makes it very difficult to design streets.’ The report cited above, *Superdensity the Sequel*, rightly picked up on these concerns. Andrew Beharrall of PTE architects stated publically at the launch that ‘it is time for a review’ of the London Housing Design Guide which is ‘leading to rising homogeneity’ and, he stressed, making it impossible to build well-loved housing types such as the Edwardian Mansion block.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has agreed with much of this analysis though also made clear he plans to do little about it. In GLA Questions in July 2014 he stated;

‘One of the difficulties of course is that within the London Plan there is this stipulation that any building above 3 storeys must have a lift. Now we could take that out and say that you wouldn’t need to have a lift till you were at 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 storeys. The trouble is that I think we’ve got to the stage now where people would find that suddenly a restriction on the accessibility of the building and people would say ‘are you really seriously taking going to take lifts away when we have so many elderly people, so many disabled and so on and so forth. Walk ups which are so attractive are limited in their flexibility. And that is one of the problems that we face. If you put in a lift for a building of 4,5,6 storeys people will say well why, the economics of it won’t add up. You’ll be spending an awful lot on the core and shaft of the lift and not actually maximising the potential habitation in the building.’

Hopefully, the next mayor will be bolder. Because it *does* matter. In case this discussion about regulations seems abstruse, here are two real world examples of the impact that the rules are having. Firstly, in January 2015 an architect in East London explained to us in the presence of senior DCLG officials that he had not been able to meet residents’ passionately felt preference for streets of terraced houses. ‘Of course we couldn’t do that, we wouldn’t have got planning…the council would have insisted on open spaces, you just can’t build houses like that any more, all the space standards, all the rules….’

And currently being built in a (good) development in Kensington and Chelsea are a row of terraced houses to the north of Portobello Road. They are in the right of figure v.

*Figure v – Terraced houses from 1825 and 2015*

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95 Ben Derbyshire, lecture to National Housing Federation, London Development Conference, 2 December 2014.
96 Cited by Peter Murray, the Chairman of New London Architecture on twitter, 3rd July 2015, [https://twitter.com/PGSMurray](https://twitter.com/PGSMurray)
The houses are manly 7.5 or 7.9m wide and are shallow with wide corridors and gently-sloping wide stairs. Of course they are fully compliant with all national, London and borough requirements. But they are also grossly inefficient terraced houses in consequence and compared to historic norms. The house on the left of figure v was built in 1825. It has narrower staircases, a narrow corridor and is slightly deeper. It fails current London rules on at least 13 separate points (and probably far more). It is also, like many thousands of similar houses across London both very valuable (because very popular) and a very spatially efficient way of building a house - the preferred type of home for about 80-90% of Britons. It has an almost identical Net Internal Area as the new homes which are 35-45% wider than it. If the modern homes had been built on the template of (though not necessarily in the style of) the historic homes there would have been about 22 of them not 16. That is an example of the ‘price’ of the London Plan. We are sacrificing what most Londoners want on the alter of narrow codes and ill-informed dogma.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking? We have no view on this.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The Government should remove unnecessary internal rules and require local planners to reference, empirically, what people in their area like. It should be less possible to frustrate neighbourhood plans in urban areas via multiple rounds of questions from councils over many months. The new brownfield zoning approach set out in the recent Bill should firmly reference evidence on popularity of different built forms and styles.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places
be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made? We have focused our answers on other points.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets? We have focused our answers on other points.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

In short, no but we’re out of space to address at greater length. More understanding of what people like and want and better data on wellbeing are key. Design of homes and places has become dangerously over-specialised and obsessed with innovation at the expense of normality. Place-making should be a service industry. It thinks it is an art form. And local planners are too busy micro-managing to these rules to actually be able to spatially plan in their areas.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

No. Design needs to be dramatically democratised with far greater use of design codes, co-design, direct planning and empowered neighbourhood plans.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

No. The growing research on wellbeing and the built environment is being insufficiently used or actually misapplied because so little read or understood.

To give two examples, it has become axiomatic that ‘green space is good for residents’ and that ‘light is good for people.’ These are both true points but, as in all things, they require compromise. Not all green space is good. It can be scary, little-used, ill-kept. Worse, the trade off for over-providing open green space can be less private green space (which most people prefer), less modest elements of green space scattered through a development, more flats,
higher rise and fewer houses (all likely to be correlated with less good wellbeing outcomes\textsuperscript{98}). Similarly, the search for maximising light at every window frequently has the effect of ‘pulling urban developments apart’ into a series of larger more discrete buildings with large elements of green space between them. More windows may have more light but the price, again, is a less fine-grained urban form with fewer houses, flats in bigger buildings, probably less private green space. We are categorically not using emerging

Another example. Current UK national rules demand level access for all homes to a property. In an urban context where properties almost always have only one public primary entrance this prevents steps up to a front door as used to be common in terraced streets of houses or flats. This is ostensibly to help elderly or disabled residents. Clearly some, perhaps many, new homes should have this stipulation. It must be right to increase access for the disabled and the infirm. But should all? Might we actually be making worst. There is actually very credible evidence from the US that older residents actually stay healthier for longer when they have steps up to the front door. For example, one US study found that ‘elders who resided on blocks with more front porches, stoops, and buildings built above grade had significantly better physical functioning at 24-month follow-up than did elders who resided on blocks with fewer of these architectural features.’ \textsuperscript{99} This level of interaction between evidence and housing and building regulations, or their interpretation at local level is just not taking place remotely sufficiently.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

It is very hard. Much (not all) consultation is a faked ‘post hoc’ PR exercise. Consultation should follow pre-application review not vice versa. Strong and credible quantitative evidence of public support for a development should be a good reason to consider it appropriate even it fails detailed borough, GLA (for London) or UK specifications.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

The problem for London and the South East is that land values are so high that development volume is pushed to absurd densities as higher build cost becomes irrelevant in comparison. Where high density is not permitted and density is capped then downward pressure on build costs is likewise immense. In the South East it is hard to resolve the problem in the short term.

\textsuperscript{98} See Boys Smith, N., Morton, A., Create Streets (2013) and Boys Smith, N., The Wellbeing of Place (forthcoming) for much more evidence on this and similar points.

However, one (partial) solution is to encourage investment from long term patient capital who properly understand how the values and maintenance costs of different types of places pan out over time. This would be better correlated with more conventional urban forms. Long term pricing data is fascinating in this regard. The Halifax data series shows that ‘traditional’ pre-1919 homes in a ‘conventional’ street format in London have risen by 1284% in price since 1983. Their more modern contemporaries have risen by half as much. Older homes are worth 50-70% more as well.100 Meanwhile, Savills research shows how parts of London which are well-connected and in the form of high-density terraced streets and squares are more valuable, other things being equal, than areas which are not.101

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Page 553 of 1964
**Figure vi– Streets provide better long term returns**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre 1919, terraced house</th>
<th>Pre 1919, flat or maisonette</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price in 1983</td>
<td>Price in 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre 1919, terraced house</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre 1919, flat or maisonette</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Same pattern is replicated in UK data, in other regions & in comparison with 1946-1960 housing
- In 30 years market shows consistent & ubiquitous preference for traditional buildings in conventional settings
- This has been the most rational ‘product’ for long term landowner / investor to hold

Source: Halifax UK Prince Index. Other sources & regions demonstrate similar trends

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19 October 2015
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Call for Written Evidence

Croughton Parish Council, Northamptonshire

1. Context:

1.1 Croughton is a small rural Parish (380 homes) in south Northants. It is located 4 miles south of the local Northamptonshire market town, Brackley, within 3 miles of the Oxfordshire border and 5 miles of the Buckinghamshire border. The area generally is close to areas of vigorous economic and housing development (large-scale housing developments in Bicester (7 miles), Banbury (10 miles) and Brackley itself. There are also major plans for the expansion of the nearby American USAF Base (USAF Croughton) over the next 8 years. There are issues and concerns for the increased flow of traffic through the village resulting from these developments and pressure for housing developments within the Parish.

2. Community involvement and community impact

Question 11: Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

2.1 Overall, the relationship between decision-makers at District and County levels and the Parish Council and local community has been reasonable. There are however times when the local community are frustrated because clear account is not taken of the understanding local people have of their local context. For example,

a) a new affordable housing development utilised red bricks not in keeping with any other materials in the vicinity (Decision by District Council) despite the District Council being excessively pernickety with many small planning submissions from the community.

b) a small number of business on a small scale industrial estate in the Parish continually flout terms and conditions by working outside their required time limits and noise levels making life very difficult for residents with no fear of penalty from the District Council.

2.2 Sometimes planning officers and other local authority administrators act without a sense of accountability to the local community and act belligerently in their dealings with individuals within the community. Are regulations so complex and rigid that it is impossible to enforce them in a reasonable and effective way that is in the best interests of the community?
2.3 The key to improving the impact of the built environment upon the well-being of residents is to design appropriate procedures to ask them listen to them and act upon that advice in the spirit of localism and when the local community are proactive in voicing their concerns to district and county councils, respond in an appropriate manner with decisions that reflect a clear accountability to the community.

Question 12: How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

2.4 Consultative procedures that are meaningful need to be designed that involve the local community voice. Possibly create a citizens forum for wards that feed into the decision-making process. Give more credence to the data (quantitative and qualitative) that Parish Council’s submit to argue cases. If local advice is not taken it should be mandatory for other Councils to state objectively why that advice has not been taken.

2.5 Boundary issues need to be overcome where there are factors affecting a case that lie across administrative boundaries that should not deter case officers from investigated all relevant factors that affect a case to arrive at a balanced judgment. Joined up thinking is required. A case officer should be compelled to consult with all relevant agencies irrespective of whether they lie outside their geographical administration area. Currently, often, administrative officers have a narrow blinkered view when they research cases.

2.6 All communities should be required to have a local plan with standing (agreed between Councils and community) which should always be the key reference point for the decision-making process.

National Government should not have the legal right to overrule this.

2.7 Barriers to effective public engagement include apathy and feelings of disempowerment. What facility is there for local communities to fight causes they feel are unfair? Parish Councils and local communities do not have the resources to do this. There should be an appeals mechanism that allows Parish Councils to appeal what appears to be decisions that do not act in the interests of the local community. Local development can be divisive. All decisions should be subjected to a transparency check.

30 September 2015
Dear Chair,

Thank you again for the invitation to The Crown Estate to give oral evidence to the national policy for the built environment select committee on Thursday 17th September 2015.

As outlined at the evidence session, we operate as an independent commercial business, created by an Act of Parliament, returning all our profit to Treasury. Our business takes in a diverse range of assets, including Regent Street and much of St James’s in London; regional retail; large swaths of rural land; the UK seabed and around half the foreshore.

Following on from the evidence session, there were two points which we promised to follow up on in writing. These included our disposals strategy, following a question from Baroness Rawlings, and any work we have carried out in relation to natural capital accounting, following a question from Baroness Parminter. These have been addressed under the headings below.

**Disposals and our investment strategy**

The Crown Estate operates across four core sectors: London’s West End (Regent Street and St James’s), dominant regional retail, strategic land for housing, and offshore wind. By concentrating on these areas, where we have critical mass and specialist skills, we are able to gain competitive advantage and outperform the market.

Last year we undertook nearly £1 billion of capital activity, around half of which was disposals alongside acquisitions, development, and asset management. Our disposal of assets is informed by our investment strategy to raise working capital to allow us to invest in our core sectors. This is particularly important to us as we are not allowed to borrow.

The other way in which we raise capital is through the use of strategic joint ventures, for example we manage Regent Street on behalf of ourselves and our partner, Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM), after establishing the Regent Street Partnership in 2011.
This saw NBIM acquire a 25 per cent leasehold interest in the Street. In total, we manage strategic joint ventures containing over £1.5 billion of our partners’ funds.

**Natural capital accounting**

Leading businesses increasingly recognise the importance of being able to understand, measure and communicate the value they create beyond financial return. This helps demonstrate transparency, inform decision-making and ultimately underpin commercial success.

The Crown Estate has developed an approach called ‘Total Contribution’, which in broad terms covers our economic, social and environmental contributions to the UK and takes account of material issues affecting our performance.

As part of strengthening our understanding of how we measure value, in particular the significant natural resources we manage, we have worked with the Natural Capital Committee to pilot a scheme in Windsor Great Park, part of our rural estate.

Windsor Great Park is uniquely protected within The Crown Estate Act, which means it cannot be traded. It currently runs at a net income deficit of £1.4m a year and is therefore sustained by the financial support of the wider Crown Estate and the profit that it generates from actively managing assets throughout the country.

It is our aim to generate a net profit from Windsor for the first time ever during the 2015/16 financial year by being more creative in what we offer to our customers, whether they are the public or private businesses based on the Estate, and by achieving a better understanding of the opportunities that the Estate offers.

The Corporate Natural Capital Accounting framework identified the high environmental and cultural value not fully reflected in our financial accounts, which is an important part of understanding the long term risks and opportunities of the business’s assets. For example, it identified that the enjoyment of about 3 million visits to Windsor Great Park annually can be valued at an additional £1.9m per year.

Taking account of these wider social values, the Windsor Estate delivers a significant net benefit to society. This is equal to £4.4 million per annum gross external benefit. The reporting statements record the net benefits that accrue to The Crown Estate and the external values that the Park delivers to the local community, visitors, and globally.

If the committee would be interested to learn more about how we measure value, we would be happy to arrange a meeting. Alternatively, there is also more available on our website: [http://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/our-business/how-we-measure-value/](http://www.thecrownestate.co.uk/our-business/how-we-measure-value/)

I hope the committee finds this detail useful. If there is anything else which we can provide to clarify or help inform the select committee, please do not hesitate to get in touch.
I would also like to extend the invitation to you or a colleague from the select committee to visit Regent Street where we have overseen a £1bn regeneration of the Street, focussing as much on place-making as the individual buildings, to create a world class business, retail and leisure destination.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Melligan  
**Strategic Land Manager**

16 November 2015
Examination of Witnesses

John Grinnell, Deputy Head of Development, and Steve Melligan, Strategic Land Manager, The Crown Estate

Q73 The Chairman: Mr Grinnell and Mr Melligan, were you sitting in on the previous session?

John Grinnell: No, we were not.

The Chairman: I did not want to have to repeat something that you had already heard. Welcome to this evidence session. We are very grateful that you have given up the time. You know what we are about; we are supposed to report in March on national policy for the built environment. Some of us are very expert and some of us, including me, are completely the opposite. You have in front of you a list of interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each one of you briefly to introduce yourself to the Committee?

John Grinnell: My name is John Grinnell and I am deputy head of the development team at The Crown Estate. I am a chartered surveyor with 25 years’ experience in the property industry, primarily in the development sector. I have been involved over that period of time with the development of retail, offices and residential property throughout the UK, both in...
The Crown Estate – Oral Evidence (QQ73-83)

an advisory and client or principal role. I have worked in partnership with many other
developers and investors over that period of time and also with public sector local authorities
on many challenging and very complex developments.
Perhaps I may offer a few words about The Crown Estate itself and its activities. The Crown
Estate is an independent commercial property business that takes its mandate from The
Crown Estate Act 1961. We have two principal stakeholders: first, the Treasury, which is the
beneficiary of the net revenue that we generate; and, secondly, the monarch, who is the
owner of the capital of the business. Consequently, income and income growth very much
lead the total returns to our business. I am pleased to say that we have been very successful.
Our total returns over the past financial year were over 20%, which is in excess of the
benchmarks set for us, and we generated some £285 million back to the Treasury, which itself
is about a 6.7% increase on the previous year.
If we look to what our business actually looks like, we are a specialist real estate business and
operate in four key sectors. First, some 50% of our portfolio is based in central London, in the
Regent Street and St James’s area, which many of you may well be familiar with. These are
world-class leading assets that we hold. Secondly, we have a regional portfolio of prime retail
and leisure-based assets of very high quality. We are one of the largest owners in the UK.
Thirdly, our rural portfolio provides the opportunities for housing. Fourthly, there is the
offshore wind sector.
Our ownerships derive partly through inheritance and partly through the positive choices we
have made through our investment strategy. The key characteristics of that business are, first,
the critical mass of our assets. These are in carefully chosen sectors and locations throughout
the UK. Secondly, we have a high level of expertise in our staff. We have a very diverse range
of professionals within our organisation, but we work together very much with a common
purpose. Thirdly, we have a mid-long-term outlook on the supply and demand dynamics that
impact upon the business.
The value of The Crown Estate last year was £11.5 billion. In addition, we have some
£1.5 billion which we have invested in our strategic joint ventures with a number of partners,
such as Norges Bank Investment Management, which is the Norwegian sovereign wealth
fund, Oxford Properties, Gingko Tree Investment, and a number of others.
Over the past six to seven years we have actively managed some £500 million to £1 billion worth of capital movements. This is through a mixture of activities: selling, buying and development.

Lastly, we seek to ensure that our developments and investments very much deliver real benefits back to the local communities and UK plc as a whole. Why do we do that? We do that because that is very much aligned with our long-term commercial interests, our reputation as a business and the relationships we have with our stakeholders.

The Chairman: That is very clear. We have read quite a lot about it, but that makes it much clearer. Mr Melligan, you are the strategic land manager of The Crown Estate.

Steve Melligan: I am indeed. Thank you for inviting us to this session. I am very pleased to be here. We will do our very best from The Crown Estate’s perspective to help you out with your work on the national policy for the built environment.

My background is in planning. I am a chartered town planner; I have been in the sector for about 25 years. I have had a wide variety of roles within that remit. I have been in the public sector; I have worked for planning authorities writing local plans, so I have direct experience there. I have worked for house builders in finding, delivering and promoting sites. I have spent a long period in consultancy acting for a variety of public and private sector clients. More recently, I have moved towards the client sector. I spent seven years with the Church Commissioners for England in a role similar to the one I am performing here at The Crown Estate.

In terms of my role at the Crown, I manage a portfolio of about 70 potential development sites. This is land we have held over many decades or land we have acquired for that purpose. We use our own internal resources; we promote our own sites through the local planning process; and we seek to get allocations in local plans. With the benefit of an allocation for a change of use, be it residential, commercial, industrial or retail, we will submit an outline planning application, get outline consent and then go to the market with that outline consent in place. It is worth emphasising that we are not house builders. In effect we deliver consented sites to the market and then work with the house builders to deliver those sites in the future.
Finally, to give you an idea of the scale, the 70 sites we deal with probably have a capacity of about 15,000 to 20,000 new homes and 5 million to 6 million square feet of commercial space over those 25 years.

Q74 The Chairman: In this session we are going to concentrate on place. We have a specialist adviser who is Professor of Planning and Urban Design at UCL. You describe yourselves as successful place-makers. What are the lessons for good place design and development, and what considerations are necessary to ensure that developments are sustainable, lasting and integrate well with their surroundings?

John Grinnell: Perhaps I may take the reference point of Regent Street, which is perhaps the easiest place to start. Regent Street itself is the subject of a £1 billion investment programme by The Crown Estate and our partners Norges Bank Investment Management. We are now some 13 years into a 20-year vision for that estate. That is of critical importance to how we approach our work. To take a step back in time to 12 or 13 years ago, those of you who may have been familiar with Regent Street at that point will know that it was very drab and had poor-quality occupiers of buildings both in terms of the retail space at the lower levels and the offices above in terms of the public realm and environment within which we operate. If you contrast that with how it is today, it is a world-class, leading destination. It is hugely popular with massive global appeal. We have had nothing but positive feedback about that. How did we achieve that vision? We adopted a very proactive approach in establishing that vision, implementing that vision and ultimately delivering it. That vision itself is informed by the contiguous ownership we have in Regent Street and therefore by the strategy. The strategy is what devolves from having the vision in the first place. Ultimately, it is very much a commercial strategy; it is a revenue-generating asset. We adopt a mid-long-term outlook, so this is about building over time. Rome was not built in a day, putting it very simply. It is an incremental approach. We start with a series of initiatives, such as buying in long leasehold interests. If we go back 10 or 12 years ago, the control of the street had gone to other parties. Having wrested that back, we undertook a very strong period of engagement and established relationships with all the parties we work with, which is the next part of our strategy and approach.
One of the key elements is the engagement with those stakeholders. The obvious stakeholders are Westminster City Council, the GLA, the Mayor of London, Historic England, or English Heritage as it used to be in terms of our relationship on the street, and all the parties who touch upon that estate. They are the retail occupiers—those already there and those not there. The same applies to the office occupiers—those who are there and those who are not there. There are also the residents, the shoppers who come into those buildings and the users of the place in which we operate. That is absolutely key to what we do.

**The Chairman:** That is all terrific for somebody in your position who has the two masters of the Treasury and the monarch. You are also dealing with what start off as wonderful historic buildings. What are the lessons we could incorporate in our report that tell us what considerations are necessary to ensure that developments are sustainable, lasting and integrate well with their surroundings? If you want to be a successful place-maker, that is very important.

**John Grinnell:** Very much. The key lesson learnt is that place-making must be local; it must be relevant to the community in which you operate. That itself is a strong commercial driver; it is imperative for what we do. If we do not understand that community, engage, listen and respond, we are simply not going to create the places we should be making. If we do not create the right places, of course people will not come. If people do not come, no revenue is generated. The two things are totally intertwined.

**The Chairman:** The very difficult one is getting the consultation right and getting people to engage. People might have wonderful ideas, but still will not bother to go along to a meeting or get engaged. It is a matter of how you drag them in, but I guess that in your position you do not have to do that. The very mention of The Crown Estate will drag them in.

**John Grinnell:** That certainly helps, but I hasten to add that that helps because of the reputation and credibility we have.

**The Chairman:** Of course.

**John Grinnell:** That reputation and credibility is about how we have gone about our activities.

**The Chairman:** It is about consultation in the first place.

**John Grinnell:** Exactly.
The Chairman: But it could have been 400 years ago, could it not, whereas here we are today in 2015?

John Grinnell: Absolutely. That is what we do; that is how we go about that activity.

Another lesson we have learnt is strong leadership internally of our business. That is based on creating that strong vision in the first place, and being very clear about what we need to do. Having had that earlier listening, it is a matter of looking at that, analysing it and working out how we can put back the right buildings. Ultimately, it is about ensuring durability and sustainability, and that is achieved not only through the beauty of the architecture in its own right and its materiality, but the quality of the public realm and the uses within those buildings. Ultimately, those uses have to attract people in and we can do that only if we listen and understand that wider audience.

Q75 Baroness Whitaker: Mr Grinnell, you described the principles of your process. I want to get a better feel for the outcome. Could you quickly tell us what your vision is of this public realm? What do you want Regent Street to look like, and how do you want it to work?

John Grinnell: The starting point is making sure that you have the right occupiers in the buildings in the first place: the attractors or the pull.

Baroness Whitaker: For instance?

John Grinnell: It is the quality of the retailers who operate within the street, so it is the names. If you look at the types of retailers we have in the street at present, we have a flagship store for Burberry. We have many other key retailers. We recently opened one of our schemes called 10 New Burlington Street where we have J Crew, an American clothing retailer. That is their first store in the UK. It is the quality of that retail that draws people to the destination. In addition, we have the support facilities that sit behind it. If we look at consumer trends occurring at the moment, people want a much broader range of opportunity. When they arrive in a location they want the quality of the urban fabric and the environment that we occupy, but they also want to have that range of uses, so that when you go into Regent Street it is not just about retail; it is about the oases and so forth of the leisure uses that we have; it is the quality, range and mix of the restaurants that operate within that space. We are very fortunate in London that we also sit on the doorstep of massive cultural facilities; we have the theatres and everything else. It is also about ensuring that the highways and pavements
work. For instance, we have undertaken a lot of widening of the pavement and tried to get a balance between that and ensuring the free flow of vehicles and public transport through that area. The recent diagonal crossing at Oxford Circus, with which you may well be familiar, was the product of some five years or more engagement with TfL, GLA and various other parties to get that openness and freedom of movement of the population. We are sitting there with Oxford Circus. I think the tube station is the third or fourth busiest in London. The others are generally busier only because they have mainline stations sitting on them. That is where you tend to come to when you arrive in the west end if you are going to go shopping or go to these other facilities. It is a matter of getting that balance between how that works and the competition between users. Often, they clash with one another. For us, it is about listening, learning and working out how we can achieve, through the use of the expert advisory teams working on our behalf, the right outcomes.

Q76 Baroness Andrews: Talking about retail, you are probably one of the few landowners in the country that can choose how they spend or use their land. Do you sell your land or do you always keep control of it? We have been talking about places that are made already, such as Regent Street, but there are these places which you are now creating by virtue of investing in out-of-town retail centres. The question is: how do you make a good place without impacting in a detrimental way, say, on the nearest town centre, for example, or the nearest agricultural and rural environment? Those two questions are connected.

Steve Melligan: In terms of our urban sites outside London and the main cities and the housing sites we promote throughout the UK, broadly speaking we sell freeholds, because the UK housing market certainly in these areas is very comfortable with freehold disposals. I think occupiers and new home buyers want to buy the freehold of their property. Long leaseholds have not caught on outside London and the main conurbations. Generally speaking, we are happy to sell freeholds in that context.

In terms of your question about the impact on agricultural estates, pretty well all the sites we promote for housing—they are mainly greenfield but some are brownfield—generally come from our agricultural portfolio. These are farm estates that are situated on the edge of existing urban areas, be they towns or villages, where a local plan finds a need for new housing in an area. If it so happens that The Crown Estate has some land that might suit that need, we are
very happy to work with planning authorities, local communities, parish councils and town councils to bring forward those sites, promote them within the system and get consent.

**Baroness Andrews:** Are you doing that on an accelerated basis? Given the intense pressures for development, you must be a really prime target for a local authority that wants a bit of land.

**Steve Melligan:** In terms of our commercial mandate, we are more than happy to accelerate our sites as quickly as possible. We might talk later about the local plan system and the extent to which that might be holding up the process, but from The Crown Estate’s perspective we are more than happy to promote our sites quickly and effectively in tandem with planning authorities, and get them to the market and sold to developers for them to deliver the sites. For example, the idea of us land banking is very far from the case.

**John Grinnell:** To pick up the second question, if I understood it properly, we have our existing ownership of retail parks, shopping centres and so on. What happens in terms of the new space and centres we create? The two are totally connected. We talked earlier about the lessons from Regent Street. The way we approach our assets is the same. We apply the same standards in London as elsewhere. The retail parks themselves are very much a reflection of consumer needs and aspirations. It is about accessibility and convenience in those locations. We cannot escape the fact that we have big car parks at retail parks. It is part of the nature of the beast in that sense. For us, though, it is about creating durable and sustainable returns on those assets. When we look at our existing parks and at our new parks, this is very much about ensuring that we have a broad range and mix of uses, rather than just a few odd retailers sitting in close proximity. To reference one of my earlier points, it is also about a community function.

For us, a successful business is very much intertwined with the whole point about the drive on sustainability. There are a number of issues that roll out of that. On our new developments, we work very closely with the planning authorities, the highways authorities and others we are engaged with to understand how the impacts of those movements can be mitigated. At its most basic level, we are talking about things such as travel plans and others, but it is about the detail; it is about the content; it is about how you manage that process. It is about ensuring that there is the appropriate infrastructure, the appropriate highways and
pedestrian areas, to allow people to move comfortably. It is also moving beyond that to ensure that, in responding to people’s desire to go to retail parks, we are firmly embracing technology and innovation on those parks, whether that be through simpler elements such as electric vehicle charging points and so forth, or through recycling, making use of the fact that you are drawing people to a location and providing recycling facilities.

This year, for instance, in addition to that, we had what is known as our Thrive series of summer events. This was about engaging with the communities we operate within. For that particular event, it was about encouraging people to be fit, to be active, to do things. We will bring people from our business along with other experts, people who work and operate in that field, and try to encourage our customers, the users of the retail units, the restaurants, the facilities on those parks, to get fit and active. We rolled that out this year. It has gone across 10 retail parks, as well as Princesshay shopping centre in Exeter, of which we are 50% owner, with TH Real Estate Henderson investors, where we in fact had the leader of the council involved in this. It is great because it is impacting at all levels of the community and people can see this. It is an enjoyable event; it is getting people in. In that sense, it is about community. It is being a part of the very fabric of the areas we work in.

Again, we have a large range of experts who work with us to see what we can do in the future. There is no such thing as the status quo in our world; you are constantly having to respond, activate and move forward.

The other aspect that I suppose is probably relevant to pick up is that the consumers—and I am sure we are all consumers around this table—are becoming ever more conscious of how the retailers and other operators work, whether it be in their manufacturing sectors, how they source their produce, the quality, the pay, all those elements. We therefore want to work very collaboratively with the best retailers. We want to ensure that that landlord and tenant relationship moves well beyond what we have all been used to in the past, to being a true collaboration where we understand each other, we understand the buildings we operate, within retail parks in particular, typically with big wide open doors on the frontage, lots of air coming in and out, lots of heat, et cetera. It is not only embracing the technologies, but also working with the operators as to how they can improve themselves, and there are some very good retailers out there who really take this to heart.
One key element we implement is what we call our post-occupancy evaluation when we create a new building. It is to then look at performance of those buildings, so we capture the data, say, for the next three years and analyse that data. We look at how those buildings are performing in their own right. Have we got things right? Is there more we can do, moving forward? It is that constant process again.

**The Chairman:** We are going to have to have shorter answers. I am sorry about that.

**Q77 Lord Inglewood:** In your opening remarks and in your last response, you referred to the money you generate and the returns you give to the Government. If my memory is right, in the case of Regent Street there are those architectural historians who say that the demolition of the Nash Regent Street between the wars was one of the biggest architectural disasters to strike London. First of all, does the Crown Commissioner believe that in the long run they took the right decision at that time? Secondly, is the return you have to give back to the Government something that inhibits you from designing good schemes, taken from the perspective of society as a whole?

In this context, when you were, for example, doing the Regent Street scheme, obviously the land use in there is not that debatable, but in the detailing of what you were doing, particularly in the case of listed buildings, there is really quite a scope for alternative approaches. Do you feel the planning system and the listed building control system assisted you, or would you have done it better had you been left to your own devices?

Finally, you say you are two-thirds of the way through a big scheme. How many changes have you instituted as you have gone along? Is it a very flexible scheme, or is it a rigid approach you have?

**John Grinnell:** I will make a note of that before I forget. Perhaps I can very briefly deal with the first question. That was a decision made well before our time.

**Lord Inglewood:** I appreciate that. That was a bit of a tease, I am prepared to say.

**John Grinnell:** If I reference very quickly the comments I made earlier about the vision, the changes that have occurred on the street over the period of that vision are testimony in their own right to the success and the correctness of what we do and our approach to doing it.

**The Chairman:** But are you not changing it all over again?
John Grinnell: It is a constant process of change. The reality is that we are a commercial organisation operating in a constantly changing environment, as I said before, so we have to be responsive to that. That is the only way we can respond to what people want. It is the only way we can respond to the customers and ensure, therefore, we are addressing these—

Lord Inglewood: Can I stop you there? Who are the customers here? Are they the customers of your tenants? Are they the people in the street? Are they the people who just come to London as tourists, walk down it and do not go into the shops?

John Grinnell: All the above and more. You asked the question with the use of the word “inhibit”. As I said earlier, we are a commercial business. We invest in sectors for sound commercial reasons. As it happens, within Regent Street and indeed elsewhere, we are the owners of historic buildings or buildings that sit within conservation areas. In addressing the challenges that those buildings provide, it is about ensuring the future sustainability, the durability of those buildings, that they are retained, that the relevant historic elements that we have, the key parts, are retained successfully for the future.

How do we do that? That is very much within the vision that we have. The listed buildings we have, the historic elements of the buildings we have, are very much a part of that eclectic mix of the quality of the urban fabric that we have. What you will see, though, is that, working with the local authority, Westminster City Council in this case, working with Historic England—English Heritage, as it was—over a long period, and with, sitting alongside us, huge expertise in the teams of professional advisers that we have, we work through the details of how we respond to that consumer-driven piece and all the customers we have, whilst at the same time preserving the elements of those buildings that have that historic merit, the pieces that should be retained, but in a sound commercial way that ensures we secure the right retailers that will have a longer term on the street, the occupiers of the office buildings that will have a long-term presence on the street. That is a very detailed, very complex process. We are very fortunate that, because we have worked so hard at that, we have become very credible; we have a great reputation as a result. You would only need to walk down the street to see that there has been a positive outcome as a result of that, so, no, we do not believe that inhibits it. It is very much part and parcel of what we do.
Steve Melligan: You also asked about whether Treasury targets effectively inhibit our abilities.

Lord Inglewood: Does the requirement to give that particular rate of return, in practice, make any difference to the way in which you carry out the developments, or are the commercial imperative and the quality imperative such that the two come together?

John Grinnell: Certainly, if you take Regent Street as an example, absolutely, those two things are totally intertwined. There is no question of that. It is a commercial driver in its own right.

Steve Melligan: If I may complete the answer, that applies across the board in all our core sectors. In terms of what I do, in terms of the rural housing sites, we are driven forward by our commercial mandate and we will seek the best commercial return we can possibly have. That is entirely in line with achieving good-quality design on site at specific locations.

The Chairman: Which has the last say?

Steve Melligan: I do not think I can recall a position where there was a last say on these sorts of sites.

The Chairman: Oh, I see—very smooth.

Q78 Baroness Whitaker: Looking at it from another angle, you have a very successful commercial operation. I would just like to know whether your explicit remit is mainly fiduciary—i.e. the effective stewardship of the capital you employ—or whether you have anything articulated, written down, about other objectives. May I give you one example in relation to out-of-town shopping centres? The sustainability of these has been questioned, because not all but most people rely on car journeys to get there. Does that kind of factor come into your thinking, and, as a matter of fact, how do you assess the effect of internet shopping on shopping centres anyway? What other objectives do you have and what is the prioritisation in your explicit, written-down remit that every employee has that says, in effect, “This is our mission.”?

John Grinnell: Essentially, we are here to drive commercial revenue back to the Treasury. That is basically what we do. We are hugely conscious of the issues you have just mentioned when it comes to retail parks.

Baroness Whitaker: How conscious? How expressed and how communicated?
John Grinnell: It is at the forefront of our thinking. As I said before, we apply the same standards wherever we work, and it is ensuring those assets work within that community. We work very closely with local authorities on travel plans. We would like to ensure that public transport facilities are available on new developments as much as they are accessible and convenient to normal car users.

Steve Melligan: It is quite interesting. In terms of the housing sites that we promote, invariably when we go out to public consultation and invite comments from the local communities, traffic is always the number one issue. Certainly, it is one of many, many planning issues that we have to deal with directly in terms of site promotion. What that tends to generate is that we need to understand what the impacts are locally and what mitigation is required to deal with them. That then will generate, probably through Section 106 agreements, a whole variety of mitigation measures, which our developer and we will be bound into. Typically, in terms of traffic generation and impact, we will be talking about increasing public transport, more buses, maybe free bus passes for a given period. It could be simple things, such as providing cycle racks at local retail centres or community halls. There are a whole variety of measures built into the design element of a scheme, attached to obligations in a Section 106 agreement, to make sure that the developer feeds these through and delivers these obligations on the ground.

Baroness Whitaker: Would it be accurate to say that you, as it were, pay attention to the climate of opinion and current thinking about all these externalities to the commercial operation, but you do not have a responsibility to initiate anything like that?

Steve Melligan: In terms of the broad approach to planning and development, as we have said several times today already we are driven by a commercial mandate that is absolutely clearly out in the 1961 Act, so that is where we start. We have said that, in terms of promoting any form of development around the country, there is a whole variety of issues that we have to grapple with. We spend often many, many years on working through what those issues are, how we deal with them and delivering mitigation.

Baroness Whitaker: Would the appointment of a government chief architect or a general place-making adviser have any effect on your operation at all, do you think?
Steve Melligan: I think it would be a positive move. There is already quite clearly a person who fulfils that role in a planning policy context, but not in design. On the question of dealing with planning authorities around the country over the past few decades, there used to be quite a strong design input available to officers to draw upon in dealing with detailed design matters for all schemes, and that is often missing these days in dealing with applications, unfortunately. I think that then leads to officers maybe feeling less able to be a bit more robust in working with developers for better design. The system is there to be used.

The Chairman: There are architects looking at you.

Steve Melligan: Absolutely right. There is far more scope for better design, through things such as housebuilding schemes, in this country. Maybe there needs to be a bit more dialogue, discussion and impetus from local authorities in taking that forward.

Q79 Baroness Parminter: You have made it quite clear that you do not see that you have any duty to make your developments environmentally sustainable. Nevertheless, is there anything that you are doing on building a circular economy or measuring natural capital that is distinctive in the marketplace?

John Grinnell: As we were discussing earlier, sustainability is very much at the heart of what we do, in each and every asset that we own, and it is commercially driven. That is what our customers want to see, and what they want to hear is what the best retailers want to see and hear, so it is very much within what we do. What was the second part of your question?

Baroness Parminter: I was asking whether there was anything distinctive either on building a circular economy or on measuring natural capital. I heard something about your scheme in Windsor, where you are looking at natural capital, so I am just interested.

John Grinnell: I am afraid that is totally outside my remit and understanding.

Steve Melligan: I am very happy to provide details after this session on that particular issue, if that is helpful.

Baroness Parminter: Thank you.

Q80 Baroness Young of Old Scone: It is clear you do not think local authorities are quite up to the job as you would like them to be. You talked about them being part of the delay issue in housing development and, just recently, about the need for their design skills to be
sharpened up. What do you think should happen to make local authorities more effective partners with folks like you?

**Steve Melligan:** In dealing with 70 sites around the UK, we deal with many dozens of local authorities. We have quite a depth of experience in dealing with a wide variety of planning authorities, departments, offices and members. It is fair to say that our experience is pretty variable. We find some authorities are well resourced, professional, expert and very good to deal with; in other cases, less so. In terms of the local planning system particularly, I think the NPPF has been very effective in driving forward planning consents in the past couple of years. It is a big improvement compared to maybe a couple of years ago. That national policy push has had a very strong positive impact in producing local planning policy and consents for delivery.

Having said that, there is no question that most of us in the industry would agree that improvements could be made, though not to fundamentals; I think the fundamentals are probably good and need to be kept in place to provide us with some certainty and consistency.

I could pick out the duty to co-operate as a good example. When I started out in planning, many, many years ago, we had a very complicated four-tier system, from national planning, through regional planning and county planning, to local planning. I think everyone thought it was very comprehensive, but it was very unwieldy. It took many, many years to do anything at all.

When the middle two tiers were excised and we were left with national and local planning, I think we all thought that would be a big step forward. It has been, broadly speaking, but the duty to co-operate is all about getting local authorities together jointly to work out and resolve sub-regional issues between them, and although there is a duty in place it is not necessarily being carried through with sufficient impetus to give the right answers quickly enough. We are finding that authorities of maybe different political persuasions find it quite hard to work together to deal with quite difficult development issues. They often concern issues such as greenbelt, major housing leases in more difficult areas of the country, a whole variety of issues on which we would quite like government to add some additional push in making that duty a bit stronger.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: Is that the primary cause of delays in local authority consenting, or are other things getting in your way?

Steve Melligan: For what we do, because we get sites allocated and get to an outline planning consent stage, we find the planning application stage is broadly speaking a lot better than it was, that is for sure. Again, it is variable, and depends on resource around the country in terms of planning authorities. When we contract with a developer to take on a housing site, they have to get their reserved matters approved, get their pre-commencement conditions signed off with the planning authorities. Our contracts are often tied in to certain stages of performance before our commercial returns come in, so we are very interested as to how they get on through the reserved matters stage. They tell us and we see directly that often they are taking far too long to get their reserved matters consents approved.

One issue is that if a site is allocated in a local plan for a certain use, should there be a need for a planning application to go back before a committee? If the authority has already approved that scheme in principle, is there a need for endless detailed debates about quite minute issues relating to a scheme such as brick colour, or elevational treatment where there are professional officers in place who are quite qualified and able to deal with those sorts of issues? Should that not be something that trickles down to officer level?

The Chairman: It is overegging the pudding in trying to check things.

Steve Melligan: I think so.

John Grinnell: We could certainly make exactly the same comment on the commercial sector in that sense. Even with the slimmed-down NPPF, which is definitely taking a much more positive, more favourable approach to growth—that growth is good and development is good—even where sites are allocated, as Steve has just said, we are still finding quite a variety of approaches from local authorities in terms of the sheer volume of material that needs to be submitted for something that is essentially already agreed upon.

As developers, when you are investing significant amounts of money at the front end, which is all about trying to build confidence that this scheme is capable of being taken forward and being delivered, that can be quite off-putting. We have been very fortunate, very lucky, in most of the authorities we have worked with, but I certainly know of experience from others.
in the industry who have not had that same position. That reduced amount of involvement and expectation at the front end definitely is patchy across the country.

The Chairman: Is this a case, though, where they are more risk averse than in normal commercial activities? It worries me, because you think about piles of documentation that have to be sifted through for planning applications and things such as that, whereas it is only simple reduced things. What we need are people who are confident enough at the top of the business who say, “Yes, we do not need to go through all that or do this, that and the other”. I am not being derogatory about it, but it is a local authority type of mentality, because they have not been allowed to take big decisions, so they are risk averse, I think.

Steve Melligan: That is not entirely inaccurate.

The Chairman: In other words, yes.

Steve Melligan: Historically, as planners, we all enjoyed the halcyon days where you had a red line around a plan and that was basically it: you put that in on a plan and you sought consent, with very little information. Now, maybe that was insufficient, and clearly there are impacts that we need to deal with in a sensible, technical way.

The Chairman: We need more confidence.

Steve Melligan: Absolutely right. We ask for a huge amount of information. From our point of view, we are a strong commercial operation and we can afford to invest our own resources in employing armies of consultants to produce volumes of work. A lot of landowners, promoters, SME developers and small builders cannot do that, and that is a frustrating factor.

The Chairman: It is an interesting point. Maybe we will investigate that further.

Q81 Baroness Rawlings: One of your four themes was education. I have to declare my interest as having been responsible, possibly before you were both in post, for securing from The Crown Estate the old Public Record Office in Chancery Lane for King’s College London library, which is highly successful and which over 10,000 students now use daily. It won the award for the best garden of the year. I can say that this is a concrete example of all that you have been saying this morning. I wonder how many other sites like this you sell off completely or sell the leases for, and how you develop the policy for future certain uses of these areas that you have disposed of.
**John Grinnell:** In terms of trying to understand the question, we have our four sectors that we have invested in. The London assets—Regent Street, St James’s—are our core assets. They are in our long-term ownership, so we do not dispose of those in their own right. We will undertake swaps, purchases, sales, disposals around the edges of that, to facilitate development and ensure further investment into those. The regional portfolio is about a wider investment strategy, which is about an active process of purchase and sale. Beyond that, for the wider Crown Estate business I am afraid it is not something I can comment upon, but we could come back to you with a written answer.

**Q82 Baroness Andrews:** As part of my question, I should declare an interest as the ex-chair of English Heritage. I would completely endorse what you said about it working very closely with you, particularly recently on the Recent Street development and the development of the Atlantic Bar. A wonderful conservation job was done to bring that back to its art deco brilliance. It is an absolutely splendid piece of work. Lord Inglewood asked about the impact of having to deal with listed building regulations, and you have answered that, so my only question is this. You are very good at working within the constraints of the historic environment and trying to balance the issue of harm versus development. Other people find it much more difficult. What sort of advice might you have for your typical developer on how to get the best benefit out of that balance?

**John Grinnell:** Dare I say probably copy what we do, if that does not sound arrogant?

**The Chairman:** If it is not broken, do not fix it.

**John Grinnell:** Our approach is one we have evolved over time and we constantly seek to improve upon that. It is one of working directly or very closely with people such as English Heritage—Historic England, as we now have it—the local authorities and all those other parties, working through with groups such as the Twentieth Century Society and others, to understand what the issues are, what is absolutely key to retain, what is important to retain within a very commercial environment, what therefore is going to ultimately help to add value to that environment and how we can bring the best of the new and the best of the old together to ensure that we create those spaces. Our approach is an approach about openness, honesty and integrity.
Baroness Andrews: It is also about the vocabulary you use, which is that the historic environment, whether you define it as a building, a streetscape or whatever, is an economic asset, so you are able to show developers and place-makers that it is going to be of a real benefit in economic and social terms, not just, as it were, a heritage issue.

John Grinnell: Totally. If we look outside London for a moment, we are also jointly the owners with Land Securities of the Westgate shopping centre in Oxford, one of the most highly known heritage cities on the globe. We have a major scheme there, with 800,000 square feet, the best part of 80,000 square metres, depending on which currency one uses, of new commercial space, but within an incredibly sensitive historic environment. The amount of time and effort we and our partners have expended on trying to ensure we bring about the right form of development, with the right form of buildings, the right quality of the public realm and all those pieces we have already referenced, is huge. It is a massive, massive investment of time and energy, but, ultimately, it comes back to that same point: it is commercially driven and it does drive value. The two things are totally linked together.

Q83 Baroness Parminter: I want to talk more about digging down into your initiatives with local communities and how they get involved in the developments. Are there any specifics you would cite as being absolutely critical in making developments work for you and meeting your financial responsibilities but bringing people on board at the same time?

Steve Melligan: Shall I start with the housing sites we deal with outside the main conurbations? In a planning context, all applicants are required to consult on schemes. At The Crown Estate, we believe it is far more important than a box-ticking exercise. We genuinely believe that close community consultation has huge benefits for both sides. For us as a commercial operation trying to achieve something on the ground, it is through consultation that we can try to engender some support locally for the particular scheme. Clearly, that will help us get through the application and committee process, which helps us directly.

From the other side of the fence, local communities deserve to understand and to participate in the way the scheme will be affecting them, because, although we are landowners in their environment, we are outsiders looking in. Often, the best people to understand the local issues, things such as traffic, educational implications, resourcing certain things, are the
people who live in that village or in that town. We do an awful lot of consultation. We probably do far more than most people in our situation and we are very proud of doing that. We tend to do it a little earlier; we tend to do it more often; and we tend to do it a bit more openly, with more information to hand.

We tend to do it as a two-stage process. First of all, we will go into a local community and hold an exhibition. I will go along personally, with my team. It is important that The Crown Estate is represented personally, because people do not just want to see an army of consultants; they want to see the person who will actually benefit from this, which is fair enough. We go in with basically a blank piece of paper and invite people to tell us what they think the issues are, and then we will go back, maybe in a few months’ time, with some more detailed proposals worked up. We might use things such as charrette workshops to try to get some genuine feedback and ideas.

Public consultation gets a bad press, because the public do not really believe it is being done genuinely. It is easy to go along a tick-box process, achieve what you have to and then move on, and that achieves absolutely nothing. What we are trying to do is to achieve schemes we can look back on in years to come and be quite proud of, and, if the local community is not proud of it, I do not think we can be either. From that point of view, the consultation we do, which is lengthy and can be quite costly, is always beneficial in terms of engendering real ideas and inputs about the design of our scheme and the master-planning.

**The Chairman:** How often would you do that? Say you had done a development and, three years after it was up and running, you do a post-audit, so to speak, of the contribution to people of place-making. How do they feel? Do they like it? Are there great improvements? Are there any improvements they think could be made, or is there anything else?

**Steve Melligan:** That is a very good point. We have some larger schemes that are a thousand or several thousand homes in scale, so these are effectively new communities starting from scratch. These schemes will take 10, 20 or 25 years to develop out, so not only do you have to be very flexible in planning at the start so you have that flexibility as things change over the years, but you have to work closely with local authorities and local communities to ensure you have that flexibility built in. As The Crown Estate, where we own the land in its entirety, we have a lot of control over the way sites are taken forward, which is a huge advantage. One
of the many drawbacks of the planning system is site-delivery, and when you have multiple land ownerships that is often the biggest constraint to getting sites delivered quickly and efficiently. Where we own land in its entirety, we have far more ability to plan things appropriately at the outset and then stay in the scheme right to the end, in that way delivering the sorts of outcomes you are alluding to.

The Chairman: That is exactly what I was saying. Also, it gives people confidence that they have made the right investments and that they are happy.

Steve Melligan: It does.

The Chairman: That could easily trickle down to the following generations.

Steve Melligan: Agreed. Also, from a commercial point of view, if we can get the scheme right at the start, if we set the right tone in terms of quality, that will help house prices, which will help our commercial returns. It suits our commercial purpose to have high-quality schemes.

The Chairman: I have always believed in, “Love the consumer”. They say, “The customer is always right”, although we all know they are nearly always wrong, certainly in the areas where I have been. You just have to listen, and together you can get the thing sorted.

This has been a great session. Thank you both very much indeed. I just have a final question. Are there any other issues you would like to raise with us? If so, please write to us, because I think we are just about worn out after our long session today. It has been great, and we are not worn out because you have bored us, but there is so much to try to grasp and get into my tiny brain. Thank you very much indeed.

John Grinnell: It has been a pleasure to meet you.

The Chairman: It is lovely to meet people from The Crown Estate, because I have known about them for years, but it has always been way up there. Thank you.

17 September 2015
Summary

1. The Government places great importance on the quality of the built environment. It is the space in which people live, work, and interact on a day-to-day basis. It is about creating places, buildings, or spaces that work well for everyone, look good, last well, and will adapt to the needs of future generations.

2. National planning policy and planning guidance is clear on the importance of the built environment to future development.

3. All sections of society have a role to play in the delivery of a high quality built environment. The Government sets the overall national framework for development with local authorities, local communities, industry bodies and companies using their skills, knowledge and techniques to deliver quality design in their local area.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

4. Organisations and people at all levels of society have an interest in and therefore an important role in shaping the built environment.

5. The Government’s main role is to set the framework and conditions to facilitate development. Through the National Planning Policy Framework, the Government sets out planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The Framework sets out requirements for the planning system that are relevant, proportionate and necessary. It provides a structure within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of their communities.

6. Local government is critical in the delivery of great places. National planning policy strongly incentivises plan making – encouraging all councils to engage their communities and put up-to-date Local Plans in place as soon as possible, to set out a vision and a framework for the future development of their local area.

7. Recent Local Plan progress is positive, 65% (217) of local planning authorities have adopted a Local Plan and 82% have at least published a draft Local Plan. The Government
wishes maintain this momentum and set out its intentions for all local authorities to produce plans by early 2017. This was set out in a Written Ministerial Statement on 21 July. This may be found at:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150721/wmstext/150721m0001.htm#15072122000005.

8. To support delivery the Government will publish league tables on how areas are progressing their plans. In addition, to accelerate production of a Local Plan, the Government will intervene to arrange for the plan to be written, in consultation with local people, where no Local Plan has been produced by early 2017.

9. The move of public health teams into local government is an opportunity to improve the health of local communities and address some of the most pressing health issues. This new context provides a strong base for good practice in the integration of health, planning and design, as well as engagement with the local community.

10. The Government recognises that infrastructure plays an important role in shaping the built environment. Decisions and funding for infrastructure is a matter that is determined jointly between Government and local authorities. Expectations for sustainable infrastructure delivery are set out within the national planning policy – both at plan-making and decision-taking stages. Local planning authorities have a range of powers to ensure that infrastructure is provided at the appropriate time in respect of development.

11. Through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning regime established by the Planning Act 2008, Ministers make decisions on projects of national rather than local significance in the sectors of energy, water, waste, waste water, transport and can also do so with some major business and commercial projects. For example, Thames Tideway Tunnel and Hinkley C Power station were consented through this system. Although decisions for such projects are taken nationally, the process entails rigorous and mandatory community engagement and consultation by developers and provides a key role for local authorities. The independent inspectors who examine each application, and Ministers, have to take account of local views and representations in coming to their conclusions and decisions.

12. Local planning authorities may raise their own funding for infrastructure delivery through the Community Infrastructure Levy. The levy can help foster a community’s acceptance of development by giving communities real power in deciding and delivering the infrastructure priorities for their area. A proportion of the levy is made available directly to address local community priorities with 15% of levy receipts going to parish or town councils; 25% where there is a neighbourhood plan or development order. There are currently 97 levy charging authorities, including the Mayor of London. Section 106 planning obligations are individually negotiated agreements between the local planning authority and developer that assist in mitigating the impact of unacceptable development to make it acceptable in planning terms.
13. To help facilitate high quality development, and relating to the recommendation in the Farrell review for a Chief Architecture Officer, the Government has created a Design Advisory Panel. This Panel is made up of high quality architects and representatives from a wide spectrum of architectural and design industry bodies with a remit to help ensure delivery of good design, particularly housing.

**How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

14. The Government has established strong policy co-ordination of matters affecting the Built Environment. Cabinet Committees provide the official forum for decision-making and consideration of inter-departmental issues. Alongside these, the Government has established a number of Implementation Taskforces to monitor and drive delivery on the most important crosscutting priorities, including a Housing Implementation Taskforce chaired by the Secretary of State. These bring together senior Ministers and officials on a regular basis to track progress; spot potential problems and blockages and agree plans for resolving them; maintain momentum and ensure accountability; and make sure that actions are followed through. Each taskforce reports to the Prime Minister and Cabinet on a regular basis.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

*Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?*

15. The Government attaches great importance to developing and protecting the built and natural environment. The NPPF is explicit that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieving sustainable development, and that the three ‘pillars’ of the environment, society and economy are mutually dependant and should not be pursued in isolation. The NPPF supports growth and helps create the homes and jobs that the country needs – permissions for homes has now risen to 242,000 in the year to June 2015, an increase of 35% from the year to March 2012 when the NPPF was issued. Communities have been given greater power to shape the places in which they live, and help protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment. Over 8 million people now live in areas covered by a neighbourhood plan. The NPPF also has a role in developing healthy communities and tackling some of this country’s most pressing health challenges, such as obesity, physical inactivity and the needs of an ageing population.
16. The Framework should be taken into account when preparing local plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The opportunities for delivering sustainable development, and what it means in practice, will depend on the individual proposals and the local context. The weight that is attached to any particular aspect of sustainable development will depend on the type and location of the proposed development.

17. To supplement the Framework, the Government published online and streamlined planning guidance in March 2014, reducing over 7,000 pages of guidance to a simple accessible online guide.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

18. The Government does not consider that it is necessary to have a national spatial plan in England. In 2010, the Government inherited a broken planning system which was centralised, bureaucratic and complex, and which alienated and disempowered local communities. Planning reform delivered through legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework were essential to deliver the necessary homes and infrastructure by working with and not against local communities. The Localism Act 2011 and the Framework reaffirm the importance of local and neighbourhood plans as the primary basis for identifying what kind of development is needed in each area and puts power in the hands of communities to shape the places in which they live. To date, 65% (217) of local planning authorities have adopted a Local Plan and 82% have at least published a draft Local Plan.

19. The Localism Act 2011 abolished previous top-down regional strategies, and devolved power to encourage development of neighbourhood plans. It also created the Duty to Co-Operate, which requires local authorities and other public bodies to work together constructively, actively and on an on-going basis when they are planning for strategic cross-boundary matters in their Local Plans. The Government announced in its Productivity Plan “Fixing the foundations: Creating a more prosperous nation”, published on 10 July, its intention to strengthen guidance on the Duty.

20. The Government is promoting further locally led action for proposals by groups of local authorities to use devolution deals to seek to work together delivering the best approach to planning for their areas jointly. Building on the successful Growth Deals, 38 towns, cities, counties and regions submitted ambitious proposals to the Government in September to take control of how public money is spent in their area. On 2 October, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a deal with Sheffield City Region, details of which may be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-hails-historic-deal-for-sheffield. This deal will give the newly created directly-elected Mayor powers over strategic planning.
21. In addition, the introduction of a national spatial plan in England would take a considerable time to prepare, and would be a costly undertaking. We do not consider that it would be as cost effective as the current system.

*Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?*

22. The built environment is constantly changing, albeit at very differing rates according to the location. Buildings and streets in some communities have stayed in place for many years - even though their use may have changed – whereas in others they only remain so for a limited period. Examples include large housing estates which are in need of regeneration.

23. In planning terms, there is a trade-off between local plans being sufficiently forward looking but not going so far into the future that plans cease to be useful. National planning policy requires local plans to be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15-year time horizon, to take account of longer term requirements, and be kept up to date with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change. This does not prevent an individual planning authority from creating a longer term vision for development in its local area.

24. For specific areas of land – particularly on large scale schemes – specific tools such as masterplanning can help make sure that local authorities, in partnership with developers and local communities, can actively plan ahead to take account of specific circumstances. For example, creating a sense of place which encourages walking and cycling and promotes physical activity may reduce health needs in future years.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

*What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?*

25. Since 2010, the Government has carried out a range of measures to fix the broken housing market and drive up housing supply to help meet the housing needs of this country. Over the next Parliament we want to maintain this momentum and press ahead with new measures to increase access to home ownership, including doubling the number of first time buyers, and increase housing supply.
26. The Government is committed to helping more people to own their own home including extending the Help to Buy schemes, extending right to buy to tenants in Housing Associations and delivering 200,000 Starter Homes exclusively for first-time buyers under 40 years old. On 10 August, Government launched a one-off £36million funding package to accelerate the delivery of starter homes. Government will support councils and directly buy land, in order to bring forward brownfield sites that would otherwise not be built for starter homes. We have also committed to further increasing housing supply including 275,000 affordable homes between 2015 and 2020 and doubling the number of custom and self-built homes by 2020.

27. The Productivity Plan combined with the Rural Productivity Plan contain a number of new policies to boost housing supply. These include:

- Ensuring that up-to-date Local Plans are in place by 2017, and looking at ways of reforming and streamlining the Local Plan process;
- Measures to speed up delivery of the planning process, such as introducing a permission in principle;
- Making home ownership more affordable for young first time buyers by committing to building 200,000 Starter Homes offering a 20% discount exclusively for first time buyers.


and the Rural Productivity Plan may be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-a-one-nation-economy-a-10-point-plan-for-boosting-rural-productivity

28. We will be doing further work to progress these and other housing-related commitments ahead of the Spending Review in the Autumn 2015.

29. These new measures build on the many actions the Government has taken since 2010. On planning these included:

- Abolishing regional strategies which built widespread local resentment;
- Publishing a clear, streamlined National Planning Policy Framework including the presumption in favour of sustainable development and measures to increase the supply of housing;
- Introducing neighbourhood planning which gives local communities more influence over where housing should go in their local area. So far over 1,600 neighbourhood planning communities are engaged in preparing their own plans and over 8 million people live in an area covered by a neighbourhood plan;
• Making planning more efficient by removing unnecessary steps for the system through extending permitted development rights to make better use of our existing building stock by allowing change of use of certain types of buildings to homes.

30. These planning reforms are delivering real results:

• Planning permission granted for 242,000 new homes in England in the year to June 2015, an increase of 44% on year to June 2010
• Plan-making has significantly improved. 65% of local planning authorities have adopted a Local Plan and 82% have at least published a draft Plan;
• Over 608,000 new homes have been delivered since April 2010;
• Completions are up 22% over the same quarter last year. Housing starts in the year to June 2015 totalled over 136,320 and are at their highest annual level since 2007;
• 100 successful neighbourhood planning referendums to date – first 81 plans and orders are now in place;
• The British Social Attitudes survey reveals that local support for housebuilding has doubled in the last four years, from 28 per cent in 2010 to 56 per cent now, while opposition to local housebuilding has more than halved during the same period.

31. In addition, more than 260,000 affordable homes have been delivered since April 2010, including nearly 186,000 homes over the last four years through the Government’s affordable homes programme with £19.5 billion of public and private investment. This achievement is 16,000 homes above our target.

32. The Government has also taken action to increase supply and improve choice, quality and cost in the private rented sector through up to £10 billion of Housing Guarantees supporting investment in large-scale, professionally-run private rented and affordable homes. The £1 billion Built to Rent Fund is helping to fund up to 10,000 new homes for private rent and has supported delivery of over 4,000 homes to date.

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

33. The Government’s has set a national policy framework to encourage and facilitate a sustainable and resilient built environment which has placed sustainable development is at the heart of the planning system. The policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, taken as whole, constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means for the planning system.

34. Building Regulations, which set requirements for building work, address issues of sustainability as well as the safety and health of those who use buildings. They set minimum
requirements for energy performance and water efficiency and address other aspects of construction such as structure, and rainwater drainage which reflect likely climatic conditions over the building’s design life, and which help to ensure resilience. The Government reviews the technical standards to ensure that they address both societal and environmental challenges and undertakes research to ensure that the requirements of the Building Regulations are based on robust evidence.

35. The Government recognises the importance of action in the built environment to reduce carbon emissions and build resilience to climate change. Reducing emissions from buildings will require improved energy efficiency measures and changes to heating systems in properties. Government is committed to considering both together through a stable long-term framework which explores the potential role of regulation, and to thinking about them from the perspective of consumers, home-owners, landlords, tenants, tenants and industry. In the last Parliament building energy efficiency standards were improved by 30% helping to ensure that buildings in England are built to sustainable standards which reduce carbon emissions.

36. The Government also recognises issues such as overheating in new and existing buildings which have been identified by the Committee on Climate Change and supported by the evidence of the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment. The Government will consider research to understand better what an overheating standard might look like and the options to help industry and others address the risks.

37. The Government has increased flexibility in the planning system through permitted development rights which allow the best use of existing buildings. These include permitted development rights for the change of use to retail, restaurants and cafes, assembly and leisure, schools and nurseries, and homes from specified previous uses, and extending permitted development rights for extensions to existing commercial buildings and homes.

38. For the promotion of delivery of healthy sustainable neighbourhoods, the key to successful places lies in the communication between services and proximity of amenities, from healthcare facilities to green infrastructure to local transport networks. Compact neighbourhoods that feel safe, well connected and provide access to several amenities and destinations, seem to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

39. Conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is one of the principles of national planning policy. This helps to ensure that the UK meets its international commitments towards protecting our cultural heritage for present and future generations (including those in relevant Council of Europe and UNESCO conventions)
40. National planning policy recognises that the historic environment can be a stimulus to economic development by acting as a catalyst for regeneration and inspiring high quality design. It requires local authorities, in developing a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, to take account of opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place. It sets out a clear expectation that all planning processes should respond to local character and history and that local authorities should look for opportunities for new development in relation to heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

**Skills and design**

*Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?*

41. The Government recognises the importance of adequately-resourced local planning authorities to deliver high quality places. Local authorities need to give planning the priority it needs, to support local growth, provide new housing and safeguard the quality of both existing and new environments.

42. Planning application fees were increased by 15% in November 2012. This has provided an additional £32 million per annum for local authorities. We are considering the future delivery of planning services with a range of organisations, and the wider resourcing of local authorities is being considered as part of the Spending Review. It is for local authorities to decide how to deploy their resources, including working with local partners and employing external assistance where necessary, to deliver a quality service for their communities.

43. The Government funds the Planning Advisory Service and welcomes the sector led support it provides local planning authorities in strengthening skills and expertise for both planning officers and councillors.

44. The Government recognises the need for the UK to develop the higher level of skills required for its long-term economic success. Apprenticeships are our priority for equipping people with the high level skills that our industries need. The Productivity Plan sets out radical ambitions to deliver 3 million apprenticeships this Parliament. We are introducing an apprenticeship levy to help fund the increase in quantity and quality of apprenticeship training. The levy is designed to increase employer investment in training and apprenticeships.
45. The Government is working closely with the housebuilding and wider construction sector to help it grow the skills it needs. This includes helping to ensure that the apprenticeship levy is right for employers and that there is a range of training opportunities available.

46. The built environment professional bodies such as Royal Town Planning Institute, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, and the Royal Institute of British Architects also have an important role in anticipating future needs, trends and supporting the development of skills and capacity in the sector. Institutes of Technology registered with professional bodies have the potential to significantly maintain and enhance the skills needed to deliver a sustainable built environment.

47. Use of tools such as design codes, design review, the Building for Life 12 housing design checklist and community involvement techniques can help to engage the right people in design discussions at an early stage and this can help to gain support for development and drive up design quality and gain support for new development locally. We welcome the sector led support provided by organisations such as Design Council CABE in helping to promote the use of these tools.

48. We also welcome the many industry-led awards schemes such as the Housing Design Awards, Royal Town Planning Institute Planning Awards, Royal Institute of British Architects Architecture Awards, that aim to encourage innovation and promote good design and place-making. These highlight successful schemes and reward effective collaborative working amongst built environment specialists such as local authorities, developers, architects, landscape architects, surveyors and construction teams.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

49. The Government attaches great importance to improving the design quality of new homes and neighbourhoods. A good framework has been established through strong messages in the National Planning Policy Framework and planning guidance. Section 7 of the Framework emphasises how local authorities should plan positively for design, while the guidance sets out key principles and practical tools for delivery such as the use of design codes.

50. The Government is also showing strong leadership and commitment to design through its housing programmes by:

- Encouraging good design through its support for the development of large sites such as at Ebbsfleet. The Ebbsfleet Development Corporation has set up a design panel to work
with home builders as they develop their designs and layout for new housing at Castle Hill, which has already set a high bar in terms of quality of design.

- Promoting good design through its flagship Starter Homes programme. The Design Advisory Panel, involving leading figures from the design and architecture sector, played a lead role in developing a Starter Homes design exemplars document, published in March 2015, to help ensure that new starter homes are popular with buyers and communities and designed to stand the test of time.
- Involving design experts to ensure that the Government’s estate regeneration programme improves the design quality of new homes and the local area.
- Encouraging industry-led innovation through the Government’s support of the Housing Design Awards

51. In order to support action on health through the built environment, Public Health England has published or co-produced a series of guides, evidence briefs and reviews that recognise the role of the built environment and has been working with NHS England on the Healthy New Towns Programme.

**Community involvement and community impact**

*Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?*

*How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?*

52. The Government recognises the health, economic and social benefits to individuals, communities and the nation of increasing physical activity levels and promoting healthier lifestyles. The Government’s response to the Health Select Committee report on the Impact of physical activity and diet on health recognised the need to increase level of physical activity, improve diet and reduce obesity as key public health priorities. The report may be found at: [http://www.parliament.uk/documentscommons-committees/Health/Cm-9001-government-response-sixth-report.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Health/Cm-9001-government-response-sixth-report.pdf).

53. National Planning Policy is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which includes the health, social and cultural well-being of local communities. Through the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting guidance local authorities are encouraged to ensure development plans and proposals promote active, healthy lifestyles and well-being including
active travel, like cycling and walking, and access to high quality open space and sport and recreation facilities. It is for councils and local communities to use their local and neighbourhood plans and existing planning powers to shape where development can go and create well-designed, safe and attractive places.

54. The Government’s reforms have increased the emphasis on community engagement and the Framework sets out that a wide range of people should be involved in plan-preparation such that plans represent, as far as possible, a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of an area.

55. More people are engaged with the planning process simply as a result of more Local Plans coming through the system, as well as through strong take-up of the new powers introduced through the Localism Act 2011 enabling development of neighbourhood plans.

56. Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. Communities are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

57. A neighbourhood plan qualifying body should be inclusive and open in the preparation of its plan and ensure that the wider community is kept fully informed of what is being proposed and has opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging neighbourhood plan. The community has a final opportunity to express its view on a proposed neighbourhood plan through a popular referendum.

58. To date, over 1,600 communities have begun the process, with over eight million people living in a neighbourhood planning area. Over 340 plans have reached consultation stage, and over 80 have passed referendum and been formally ‘made’. All the neighbourhood planning referendums so far have been successful, with an average Yes vote of 88% on an average turnout of 33%.

59. Qualifying bodies have come up with many ingenious ways to engage with and consult their communities in the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. For example:
- Downham Market residents were invited to write and draw all their ideas on the village hall, which was due to be painted the next day. Photos were then taken of everything that they wrote;
- In Tattenhall, a disco was thrown for the town’s teenagers, who had to fill in a survey on the future of their community to gain entry; and
- in Heathfield Park in Wolverhampton, a 3D model of the town was produced to allow the community a chance to say what they did and didn’t like and where new development should go.

Financial measures
Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

60. Paragraphs 25 to 32 of this response include a number of practical financial measures which the Government has put in place to unblock development and make more land available for housing.

61. The government also intends to create a £1 billion Brownfield Regeneration Fund to focus on unlocking homes on brownfield land for additional housing.

62. The Government will be undertaking a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy later this year, which will provide an opportunity to consider how it can better support the Government’s housing and growth agenda.

63. Paragraphs 49 to 51 of this response include a number of mechanisms through which the Government is encouraging better design and place making by private sector developers. Our planning guidance lists a number of planning processes and tools, including:

a) good consultative and participatory techniques – particularly to capture the views of local communities, who best understand the way in which their places operate;

b) good design codes, masterplans and briefs; and

c) design review – local authorities with local design review arrangements in place can provide assessments of individual proposals to support high standards of design.

14 October 2015
DCLG Response to further information requested by the Lords Select Committee on the Built Environment

Baroness Whitaker: Retrofitting – an analysis of what has been done and what needs to be done

The Government’s Carbon Plan, published in 2011, sets out illustrative scenarios to demonstrate different ways in which the fourth carbon budget (2023-2027) could be met through different combinations of actions in the buildings (domestic / non-domestic), industry, power, transport and agriculture sectors.

In the domestic buildings sector the Plan said that:

Looking beyond 2020, we may need: between 1 million and 3.7 million additional solid wall insulations by 2030; and between 1.9 million and 7.2 million other energy efficiency related installations, such as improved glazing.

Many energy efficiency measures are inherently cost effective and help people and businesses save money on their bills, but barriers, such as upfront costs, disruption and lack of information can make it challenging to deploy some measures.

Current deployment in Great Britain versus Carbon Plan scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Deployment in 2014</th>
<th>Remaining potential (as at end March 2015)</th>
<th>Carbon Plan Scenarios (2023-30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solid Wall Insulation</td>
<td>63,000</td>
<td>7.5m</td>
<td>1m – 3.7m delivered by 2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavity Wall Insulation</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>4.7m</td>
<td>All remaining potential captured by 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loft Insulation</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>7.1m</td>
<td>All remaining potential captured by 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As at end March 2015, in Great Britain:

73% of 19m suitable homes had cavity wall insulation

70% of 24m suitable homes had loft insulation

4% of 8m suitable homes had solid wall insulation


Baroneess Finlay of Llandaff/Baroness O’Cathain: Research into overheating as a health issue in relation to building regulations.

Improving and decarbonising buildings will require changes to both energy efficiency measures and heating systems in properties. The Government is committed to considering both together from a consumer perspective.

In order to make the transition to a low-carbon economy we need to change the way we generate, distribute and use heat in buildings. The Renewable Heat Incentive is the main policy influencing the uptake of low-carbon heat technology, by providing the long-term financial support needed for households to make the switch to renewable heat.

The Renewable Heat Incentive is currently supporting almost 35,000 domestic heating systems and over 10,000 non-domestic installations. As at the end of May 2015, 3.75 terawatt hours of renewable heat has been generated and paid for through the scheme which is enough to heat the equivalent of almost 250,000 UK homes for a year.

Other policies such as Building Regulations have been successful in reducing heat emissions from buildings, for example through the requirement to install a condensing boiler when a heating system needs to be installed.

Baroness Whitaker: Some examples of countries of similar population density that do/do not have a spatial plan.

Using the 2014 World Bank data of population data (people per sq. km of land area) we have looked at countries of similar population density and the existing planning system.

Spatial Planning
Since May 2010 the Government has reformed the planning system to deliver the homes and infrastructure that this country needs by working with, and not against local communities. Our reforms have simplified and streamlined the planning system, removing the previous Government’s top-down approach and making it more accessible to local communities.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies in England and how they are to be applied. It is intended to support growth and help create the homes and jobs that the country needs, put power in the hands of local communities to shape the places in which they live, and help protect and enhance our natural and historical environment. The Duty to Cooperate, introduced in the Localism Act in November 2011 requires local councils in England to cooperate with adjacent planning authorities and related organizations on cross-boundary strategic issues for example homes and jobs, commercial development, infrastructure, health, security and cultural infrastructure, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In Europe various compendia of spatial planning systems can be found. For example, Denmark, Germany and Italy have a similar system where central or federal government set overall guidelines for planning while the municipalities are responsible for translating the overall guidelines and visions into actual spatial planning through municipal plans and local development plans.

Several European countries - Cyprus, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands included - have a spatial strategy which in general operates on three tiered planning system – national, regional and local. For example the Netherlands has a Spatial Planning Act but in so far as possible spatial planning policy and its implementation are shaped at the municipal level. The municipalities are able to set appropriate regulations based on their knowledge of the local situation.

In Poland and the Czech Republic there is no strategic coordination. The municipalities have the main responsibility for managing the spatial processes.

Within the United Kingdom Scotland, Wales and Ireland all have a national spatial plan. Northern Ireland has a Regional Development Strategy

In the Far East – Japan and The Philippines have a national spatial plan.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Also, some information regarding the work on homelessness policy.
The Department for Communities and Local Government analyse the national and the Combined Homelessness and Information Network rough sleeping statistics to better understand the intelligence they provide on demographics, trends and emerging needs within the rough sleeping population and consider what that means for how we design policy, and target funding for tackling and preventing homelessness.

We do the same with the P1E statistical returns from local authorities that report on specific aspects of statutory homelessness, for example the reasons for loss of last settled home, why people are found to be in priority need etc. These provide a robust time series of information that demonstrates key trends. For example we used this data to shape the delivery of a programme of funding to help local authorities to test innovative and sustainable approaches to tackle the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children. The data allows us identify those areas facing the greatest pressures which helps us design the scale of the programme and understand any area effects. The availability and the use of the data in designing the programme prompted Ministers to create a new publically available table (Table 793 families with children in B&B over 6 weeks) showing all those authorities making use of bed and breakfast accommodation for the first time.

The lessons learnt from the funded areas has been used to help other authorities to reduce their use of this type of accommodation.

A set of this data is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness.

Lord Clement-Jones: A list of people and developments that have been considered for awards.

There is a range of Government-supported and industry awards which recognise the achievement of quality in the built environment. A selection of those are listed below with a summary of each and references to further information about the people and developments that have been considered for or achieved commendations.

Construction - The Prime Minister’s Better Public Building Award is the pinnacle of the British Construction Industry Awards which aim to recognise excellence in including overall design, construction and delivery of buildings and civil engineering projects. The Government has sponsored the award since its inception in 2001. Lead sponsor is the Cabinet Office with the department for Business, Investment and Skills as a sponsor partner. Any Government project nominated across a selection of categories is eligible for the award.

The award provides an opportunity to celebrate excellence in public sector construction and infrastructure. It also highlights the Government’s construction priorities of fair payment,
supply chain integration, efficient procurement processes, sustainability, whole life value, design quality, use of apprentices, safety, and performance against milestones. The award also considers the replicability of the project, ensuring best practice can be shared and reused. Government can use the Award to emphasise its priorities and help ensure industry is well placed to support the delivery. The winner of this year’s award will be announced in October 2015 and past winners include:


University College Hospital Macmillan Cancer Centre, London

Manchester Metropolitan University Student and Business Hub

Tate Modern, London

City Learning Centre, Bristol

Bournemouth Library

A650 Bingley Relief road, Yorkshire

Jubilee Library, Brighton

City of London Academy

Dalby Forest Visitor Centre, Yorkshire

Royal Alexandra Children’s hospital, Brighton

Joseph Chamberlain sixth form college, Birmingham

New Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow

Velodrome, Olympic Park, London

Housing - The Housing Design Awards partnership, supported by Government, runs the Housing Design Awards which aims to celebrate and reward excellence in new-build housing design. Information about the scheme and recent and past commendations is found at - [http://www.hdawards.org/](http://www.hdawards.org/).

Industry partners, House Builders Federation, Design Council CABE, Design for Homes also run the Built for Life scheme which aims to give the homebuyer confidence that important design elements of new homes have been checked during the planning process. Further
information including recognised new-build housing schemes is here 
http://www.builtforlifehomes.org/

Parks and green spaces - The Green Flag Award Scheme, launched in 1996, is the national benchmark for quality public green spaces. It is highly regarded and credited with being a cost effective way to raise the quality of urban green space and local people’s engagement with it. The Scheme is recognised and used by the majority of local authority green space managers and increasingly by community and voluntary groups. The Scheme is not a competition or a means to rewarding excellence; it delivers a recognised and consistent standard for green space. The Scheme has predominantly covered parks and community gardens, but its range extends to woodlands, nature reserves, allotments, cemeteries and open spaces around social housing. This year (2015) over 1500 sites were successful in reaching the standards required. The Scheme is currently run, under licence from DCLG, by Keep Britain Tidy. Further information is available here -
http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/

The Landscape Institute Awards aim to encourage and recognise outstanding examples of work by the landscape profession. Further information about the scheme and recent and past commended schemes is here - http://www.landscapeinstitute.co.uk/awards/

Heritage - The Angel Awards, supported by Historic England and co-funded by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, celebrate the efforts of local people in saving derelict and damaged historic buildings and places. Further information about the Awards and recent and previous winners is here https://historicengland.org.uk/news-and-features/angel-awards/.

Planning - The Royal Institution of Town Planners runs the Awards for Planning Excellence scheme designed to encourage and reward outstanding achievement in planning. Information about the scheme and recent and past commended schemes is here - http://www.rtpi.org.uk/events/awards/.

Architecture - The Royal Institute of British Architects annual Awards, including the Stirling Prize, recognise excellence in Architecture. Further information about the Awards and recent and previous commended schemes is here - https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Awards/Awards.aspx

Built environment including public realm - The Civic Trust Awards aims to recognise high quality architecture, design, planning, landscape and public art where this has made a positive cultural, social or economic contribution to the local community. Further information about the scheme and recent and past commended schemes is here - http://www.civictrustawards.org.uk/
Urban areas - The Urbanism Awards, run by the Academy for Urbanism, aim to identify, promote and share lessons from great places. They aim to recognise the best and most improved urban areas. Further information and commended schemes is here - http://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/awards/

**Baroness Whitaker:** Some good examples of local authorities engaging the public in the planning process and of neighbourhood planning.

In this section we have provide details of 4 Local Plans and 4 neighbourhood plans which were prepared innovative ways of engaging and consulting local communities.

Local Plans

**Winchester - Local Plan adopted March 2013.**

In 2010 Winchester Council designed and introduced a Blueprint as a new community engagement toolkit. The toolkit aimed at helping local people to tell the Council what they think their local communities need now and in the future. It asked the local community to consider the needs of different people, how their needs may be supported and how things may need to change so that emerging planning policies reflect local requirements. The Council also prepared Blueprint 'packs' to help Parish Councils and local groups to run their own discussion events.

The Council challenged people to put themselves in the position of others and to help provide focused responses. Using the toolkit the community discussed the role of characters in their local area and how their housing, employment and community requirements may change over the longer term and whether their needs are, or should be met in their local area. Parish Councils and local groups were encouraged to run their own events and many took the lead by not only organising their own events, but encouraged other local groups and individuals to participate.

The planning engagement project ‘Blueprint’ won a regional Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) award in 2011 for its innovative approach to the planning process.

**Tower Hamlets - Local Plan adopted September 2010.**

Tower Hamlets Council strive to undertake consultation that is suitable in exploring key planning matters and is inclusive of all communities within the local area.

In 2010 the Council uploaded a short animated film to its website to make it easier for Tower Hamlets residents to understand how they can have their say on local planning issues and get involved in consultation activities. The Council included links to YouTube where the
animation is available in both English and Bengali and with subtitles; on YouTube these animations have a combined viewing total of 2,695.

More recently in March 2015 the Council uploaded a short film called Looking to the Future: Raising Aspirations in Tower Hamlets in order to help parents, carers, children, young people and school staff discuss the importance of having aspirations to raise achievement. The aim of the film is to improve outcomes for individuals, their families and the wider community. On YouTube this short film had a viewing total of 192.

Harrogate - Local Plan adopted February 2009 and is expected to be reviewed in 2016

Brandon Lewis MP wrote to Harrogate Council in March 2015 to encourage them to maintain their efforts on the review of their adopted Local Plan and to offer support from the Planning Advisory Service. In the past the Planning Advisory Service have helped the Council to scope and run an event to plug in to their existing Parish and other groups.

The Planning Advisory Service have helped the Council to scope and run an event to plug in to their existing Parish and other groups.

The Council has started working towards a new Local Plan for Harrogate district and in March 2015 they went live with their new online consultation system. To support the consultation process the Council have published several ways for the local community to get involved this includes registering directly with the Council to receive notifications when consultations start.

The Council distributed details on the Local Plan consultations with Council Tax and Business Rate information in advance of the first consultation setting out, how to register on to the consultation database and where to view the documents on the website.

Ashford - Existing Local Plan adopted July 2008. The Council are currently reviewing the existing plan and preparing a New Local Plan for the Borough; it is expected to be published for public consultation in early 2016.

Taking the lead from the award-winning idea from Winchester Council, Ashford have created a set of ‘characters’ to represent a cross section of a local community – all with different situations and issues that need to be addressed. The idea is that people can use these characters to communicate their own aspirations but also think about issues that might affect others in their community. There is also the ability to create your own character. The Plan-It consultation links closely with the government’s approach to neighbourhood planning.

The Council has sent Parish council’s a copy of the Plan-It consultation documents and information about how to complete it.
Neighbourhood Plans

Tattenhall, Cheshire West & Chester

The Tattenhall Parish Council wanted to engage with the teenagers in their village so that their views could be represented in the neighbourhood plan. To achieve this, the parish council held a disco in a warehouse loaned to them by a local property owner. The price of entry to the disco was to complete a survey, and in total 62 responses were submitted. These surveys provided invaluable feedback on retail and sports facilities and bus services amongst other issues.

Uppingham, Rutland

In Uppingham, the town council was not struggling to engage with teenagers in the development of their neighbourhood plan, as they readily contributed their views on social media. However, they found it hard to engage primary school children, who would be impacted just as much by a plan with a lifetime of more than a decade. Members of the plan steering committee therefore held discussion sessions in the local schools, leading debates on open-ended questions about the area. A number of interesting issues emerged on topics the adults had not considered, such as where children did not feel safe, how green spaces could be improved and where wireless signal was poor. All these views helped inform policies in the final neighbourhood plan.

Downham Market, King’s Lynn and West Norfolk

When Downham Market first decided to produce a neighbourhood plan, they wanted a way to quickly inspire and engage the community, as well as finding out what it was they were most interested in and what they wanted dealt with in their plan. They decided to take advantage of the fact that the town hall was due to be repainted to invite the whole community to attend an event whereby they could all draw, paint and write their ambitions for the town on the walls. This inspired a great outpouring of ideas that helped set the agenda for the development of the plan. The next day, the walls of the town hall were painted over, but not before photos were taken of all the ideas.

Heathfield Park, Wolverhampton

In the deprived inner city area of Heathfield Park, those preparing the neighbourhood plan needed a way to engage those living on the local estates. Working with local specialist manufacturers, they produced a 3D model of the area and its buildings, alongside models of proposed new developments. The models of existing buildings were coloured black and the future buildings orange (in homage to Wolverhampton Wanderers), and this provided a great way to visualise the neighbourhood in a simple and accessible way. It allowed people
to understand the impact of development and the power they had to shape it, and inspired high levels of engagement with the neighbourhood plan.


Although Public Health England does conduct some primary research relating to the built environment, particularly in the field of environmental hazards, it mainly commissions a range of evidence reviews and tools to guide and support local practitioners in the delivery of key policy aims.

Public Health England have summarised below a range of factors in the design and access to the built and natural environment which have an impact on health, including:

Healthy Communities and Neighbourhoods: Design of the Public Realm

Transport and Active Travel

Housing

Healthy Food Systems

The table below is a summary of the evidence according to the four dimensions noted above, adapted from existing literature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy Communities and Neighbourhoods</th>
<th>Walkable built environment is supportive of physical activity, including walking and cycling for active transport and leisure; Walkable neighbourhoods positively influence overall mobility and physical activity levels of older adults Having access to a variety of amenities within close proximity of home makes active transportation and physical activity more convenient; Enhancing street connectivity can promote social cohesion and sense of community, as well as active transport; The location and treatment of green and open spaces facilitates contact with nature, as well as contact with the community. Proximity of housing to noisy areas can result in sleep disturbance, fatigue and other mental health problems.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Page 604 of 1964
| Healthy Natural and Sustainable Environment | A loss in biodiversity and biological productivity can result in direct negative impacts on health, such as the loss of the mental and physical benefits of being in and viewing nature; Research supports strong relationship between exposure to nature and reduction of stress, chronic diseases, anxiety and helps cognitive function; Vegetation has the potential to clean air of pollutants and consequent promote health and wellbeing; Vegetation can have cooling effects, reducing impacts of extreme heat events on health; Green spaces can help mitigate against flooding and assist in the delivery of sustainable environments; More deprived areas have less access to green space therefore less opportunities to harness the benefits of exposure to green space and nature, and are also more exposure to air pollution. |
| Transport and Active Travel | Traffic calming methods, such as narrow traffic lanes and residential traffic diversion can reduce traffic speed and volume which reduces pedestrian and cyclist injuries and encourages active transportation; Traffic reduction measures can also have positive impacts on reduction of air pollution and noise pollution; Expansion of out-of-town centres can have a negative impact on active travel, particularly levels of walking and cycling, consequently reducing opportunities for physical activity. Traffic volume contributes to community severance and makes it harder to maintain social networks. |
| Healthy Food Systems | There is a link between exposure to unhealthy food options and unhealthy eating, as well as increasing levels of obesity; There is a clear link between deprivation and obesity; Research suggests that small scale urban agricultural activities can promote local access to healthy food and can support the building of community networks and increase in social interaction. More deprived neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods with lower built environment quality seem to also be linked to higher alcohol consumption. |
| Healthy Housing | Energy efficient housing helps people afford to live comfortably in their homes and avoid illnesses that are caused by cold and damp housing conditions; |
Adequate quality housing with suitable ventilation contributes to good indoor air quality by reducing the presence of contaminants such as dust mites, mold, as well as other chemicals; Evidence shows that elderly people and children seem to be more vulnerable to poor housing conditions; Evidence shows that the highest proportion of “non-decent” homes is within the private sector, particularly the private rented sector. Homeless people suffer from a disproportionate amount of ill health and make significant use of health resources.

Sources: adapted from:


Other sources of evidence

The reorganisation of the public health system as part of the Care Act 2012, and the new responsibilities which local government has for the public’s health, provides a new context and an opportunity for developing good practice in the integration of health, planning and design into the built environment.

The Office for National Statistics has been measuring national wellbeing since 2011 and this is recognised in their measurement framework, which was developed on the back of a national debate on what matters to people in their lives. The framework includes objective indicators of progress related to the built environment and where we live e.g. levels of crime, greenhouse gas emissions, access to and use of the natural environment and access to transport. These indicators are augmented by people’s subjective view of progress and of their life experiences in this area e.g. fear of crime, satisfaction with accommodation and sense of belonging to the community. [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/publications/index.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/publications/index.html)

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Body of literature and research on the built environment, brought together from different disciplines – is this collated and if so where?

The link below provides a body of literature on the built environment that has been commissioned by Her Majesty’s Government.
Lord Woolmer of Leeds: Estimates of what proportions of housing (new and existing) will be social rented and private rented over the next 15 years.

Since 2010, over half a million additional homes have been delivered in England. More than 260,000 affordable homes have been delivered since April 2010, including nearly 186,000 homes over the last four years through the Government’s affordable homes programme with £19.5 billion of public and private investment. This achievement is 16,000 homes above our target.

The Government has also taken action to increase supply and improve choice, quality and cost in the private rented sector through up to £10 billion of Housing Guarantees supporting investment in large-scale, professionally-run private rented and affordable homes. The £1 billion Built to Rent Fund is helping to fund up to 10,000 new homes for private rent and has supported delivery of over 4,070 homes to date.

The most recent English Housing Survey report, shows that in 2013-14, of the 22.6 million households, 64% were owner-occupiers, 19% private renters and 17% social renters.

Going forward, the Government is committed to helping more people to own their own home including extending the Help to Buy schemes, extending right to buy to tenants in Housing Associations and delivering 200,000 Starter Homes exclusively for first-time buyers under 40 years old.

We have also committed to further increasing housing supply including 275,000 affordable homes between 2015 and 2020 and doubling the number of custom and self-built homes by 2020.

We will be doing further work to progress these and other housing-related commitments ahead of the Spending Review in the Autumn 2015. This will draw on evidence from a range of sources including:


Department for Communities and Local Government’s house building stats: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/house-building-statistics
Department for Communities and Local Government’s stats on the housing market and house prices: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-housing-market-and-house-prices


26 October 2015
1. How will the Housing Growth Partnership assist in the entry of smaller house-builders into the market, and what progress has the Partnership made to date?

The Government recognises the issues that Small and Medium size Enterprise (SMEs) face in accessing development finance. It has already put in place a number of initiatives to help SMEs builders access the finance they need to build more homes and grow their businesses including through the Housing Growth Partnership. This is a partnership between the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Lloyds Banking Group to help smaller builders access the finance they need to build more homes and grow their businesses. It will provide £100m of funding from Lloyds Banking Group and the HCA and is supporting the growth of SME house builders and expansion in the UK housing stock. It aims to support around 50 investments, with the aim to provide an additional 2,000 homes. It is early days but Lloyds report that demand has been strong with a number of deals in the pipeline.

In addition, the Autumn Statement announced further measures to support SME builders including the Housing Development Fund which aims to provide access to £1 billion of loan finance for up to 5 years supporting the delivery of 26,500 homes through to 2024-25. The new fund brings together and expands the Builders’ Finance Fund and Custom Build Serviced Plots Fund providing added flexibility to enable the Government to support emerging markets. We are working now to further develop the fund which will be introduced later this year.

2. Are design policies and priorities within the National Planning Policy Framework likely to be subject to any change as a result of the current NPPF consultation? Will the present level of emphasis on design be maintained?

No, we are not proposing changes to the design policies and priorities within the National Planning Policy Framework as part of the current consultation.

We continue to attach great importance to improving the design quality of new homes and neighbourhoods and believe that the strong messages in the National Planning Policy Framework and planning guidance should be retained.

We are also showing strong leadership and commitment to design through our housing programmes by encouraging good design through our support for the
development of large sites such as at Ebbsfleet, promoting good design through our Starter Homes programme, involving design experts to ensure that the Government’s estate regeneration programme improves the design quality of homes and the local area and encouraging industry-led innovation through the government’s support of the Housing Design Awards.

3. What are the pros and cons of recent changes to permitted development rights which have increased the potential for office to residential conversions? What tools are available to mitigate and manage any potential negative aspects?

Permitted development rights play an important role in the planning system, providing flexibility, reducing bureaucracy and allowing the best use to be made of existing buildings.

The permitted development right for the change of use from office to residential has been successful in achieving what it was intended to do – simplifying the planning process to encourage more conversion proposals to come forward. The policy delivers much needed additional new homes, while making the best use of brownfield sites and reducing the pressure to build on greenfield land.

Since April 2014 there have been nearly 4,000 permissions under the temporary right. The British Council for Offices estimates that the right has resulted in 7,600 homes.

These new homes are additional to the range of measures we have announced to support affordable homes to buy or to rent. We expect local planning authorities to continue to plan for affordable housing to meet local need.

To support our aim to deliver one million new homes by 2020 we announced in October 2015 that the temporary permitted development right for the change of use from office to residential would be made permanent.

The right allows for the local authority to consider whether transport and highways impacts of the development; contamination risks on the site; and flooding risks on the site.

Local planning authorities have planning powers to make an Article 4 direction to remove the right where it is felt that it is necessary to protect the amenity or wellbeing of an area. This can be in respect of an individual building or an area.

It is open to Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums to discuss with the local planning authority the scope to bring forward an Article 4 direction in respect of individual buildings or groups of buildings in their area. Evidence gathered as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process can support such discussions.
4. What levers are available to the Government to promote healthy design and outcomes within the planning system? What levers are available to local authorities – and to what extent will central Government ensure that health is given an appropriate level of priority within local planning?

The link between planning and health has been long established. The built and natural environments are major determinants of health and wellbeing. The importance of this role is highlighted in the promoting health communities section of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Our planning guidance also highlights the range of issues that could be considered through the plan-making and decision-making processes, in respect of health and healthcare infrastructure and recognises the importance of close co-operation between planning authorities and health professionals to deliver each other’s objectives.

In order to support action on health through the built environment, Public Health England has published or co-produced a series of guides, evidence briefs and reviews that recognise the role of the built environment and has been working with NHS England on the Healthy New Towns Programme.

The move of public health teams into local government is an opportunity to improve the health of local communities and address some of the most pressing health issues. This new context provides a strong base for good practice in the integration of health, planning and design, as well as engagement with the local community.

5. Given the increasing role played by viability assessments, can the system of developer planning obligations still deliver enough affordable housing, and supporting infrastructure, to meet the needs of communities?

- Statistics which illustrate trends in affordable housing provision within planning approvals since the introduction of the NPPF.

- Statistics which illustrate trends related to the introduction of Section 106B, allowing the review of affordable housing obligations, in the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013.

The provision of affordable homes remains a high priority for the Government. In our previous Affordable Homes programme we exceeded expectations delivering 16,000 homes above our target and we have already allocated £1 billion towards our commitment to deliver 275,000 affordable homes by 2020. This will be the fastest rate of affordable housing building in the last 20 years.

We recognise that the supply of affordable homes can be achieved in various ways. The Housing and Planning Bill will require local councils to sell high value vacant
properties once they became vacant, and once sold to use the proceeds from these sales to build a more affordable property on a one-for-one basis. In addition to building new replacement homes cash raised from these sales will also fund the Right to Buy extension discounts.

A ‘Right to Build’ in the Housing and Planning Bill will also help increase housing supply and diversify the housing sector by giving people the right to be allocated land with planning permission for them to self-build or commission a local builder to build a home that is tailored to their specific needs. We are committed to doubling the number of custom-built and self-built homes in England by 2020. The Bill will also give over 1.3million housing association tenants the right to buy their homes.

Our ambitious package of housing programmes, including the Help to Buy scheme, have already helped more than 100,000 households buy a home. In a further move to support aspiring homeowners we introduced in March 2015 a new national starter home exception site planning policy to provide more discounted, high quality homes for young first time buyers. Our manifesto committed us to build 200,000 Starter Homes by 2020, exclusively for first-time buyers under 40 at a minimum 20% discount on market value. We are bringing forward a major package of planning reforms through the Housing and Planning Bill and national planning policy changes (which we are currently consulting on until 22 February); and providing targeted funding to deliver this commitment.

In August 2015 we announced a £36m Government funding to pave the way for the first wave of Starter Homes; deliver top-quality designs and show aspiring young homeowners the different types of properties they can come to expect from the scheme. This will help to accelerate Starter Home delivery, leading to hundreds more homes being built for young first time buyers over the next three years.

Our initiatives which help support home ownership will not only help buyers get onto the property ladder, but will also accelerate further output across the industry enabling both affordable and market homes to be built.

Infrastructure investment underpinning economic and housing growth plays a critical role in shaping the built environment. National planning policy is clear that Local Plans should be supported by evidence to establish what level of infrastructure is needed to support all the development proposed for the area and how it will be delivered. It is for each authority to assess whether adequate infrastructure exists or can be created to support whatever development it is minded to approve. We have already achieved much to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided for in new housing: 66% of authorities have an adopted Local Plan in place.
We do recognise that some large strategic sites still need Government support to deliver the necessary infrastructure. Our large sites programme has unlocked sites with capacity for over 100,000 new homes. We have supported the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation to support delivery of a garden city of up to 15,000 new homes in Kent – making the most of the first high speed rail line in this country. And we have been working with local leaders to support the housing potential around the new High Speed 2 stations. We have also provided capacity funding for new garden towns and communities at Bicester, Basingstoke and in North Northamptonshire with the potential to deliver at least 40,000 new homes.

We do need to use the planning process to ensure funding for infrastructure comes forward and capitalise on the community infrastructure levy. There are now 102 charging authorities – including the Mayor of London and over 200 authorities in total making significant progress on bringing forward the levy. We are currently reviewing how the Levy is operating and how it can better allow us to better support the Government’s housing and growth agenda.

The National Infrastructure Commission will meet the need for a coherent, overarching and independent process for assessing the UK’s long-term infrastructure needs. The Commission will have a mandate to examine all sectors of economic infrastructure. It will consider the potential impact of infrastructure decisions on housing supply. This will support a more structured and efficient way for infrastructure needs and priorities to be reflected in planning policy.

**Statistics which illustrate trends in affordable housing provision within planning approvals since the introduction of the NPPF**

We do not hold information on the level of provision within planning approvals. The below table shows all section 106 nil grant completions in England over the last three years. We do not have comparable data for further back than this. However, they may serve as useful illustration. The year-on-year change will have been driven by the improvement in market conditions and the overall increase in house building over the same period – so it would be inappropriate to present these changes as a result of the Framework.
New build affordable housing delivered through Section 106 (nil grant completions, England)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total section 106 nil grant affordable housing completions</td>
<td>7,630</td>
<td>11,570</td>
<td>14,370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DCLG Live Table 1000. Previous years are not calculated comparably.

Statistics which illustrate trends related to the introduction of Section 106B, allowing the review of affordable housing obligations, in the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013

We do not collect information on renegotiations, and there have been under 50 appeals under section. The below table shows the number of residential units on ‘stalled’ sites, which the developer has described as “shelved/on hold”, since December 2013. It is not possible to say how much change is due to section 106B. The numbers of units on sites with permission, and the number of additional units completed have increased, and generally market conditions have improved, over this period. It would therefore be inappropriate to present these changes as mainly a result of section 106B.

Units on residential sites which have not yet started (England)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Units on sites which are yet to start but progressing</th>
<th>Units on sites which are yet to start and have stalled</th>
<th>% change in stalled units, compared to 12 months earlier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec-13</td>
<td>184,000</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>-17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-14</td>
<td>184,000</td>
<td>55,800</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-14</td>
<td>195,000</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>-16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-14</td>
<td>203,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-14</td>
<td>197,000</td>
<td>51,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-14</td>
<td>211,000</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-14</td>
<td>226,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-14</td>
<td>236,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. First, do you believe that if we are going to carry on with viability assessments there should be a standard format with, for example, an agreed acceptable maximum level of profit margins and market information so that everyone knows what the parameters are?

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that to ensure scheme viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing and infrastructure contributions should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Development Cost</th>
<th>Infrastructure Cost</th>
<th>Margin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug-14</td>
<td>241,000</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-14</td>
<td>244,000</td>
<td>48,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-14</td>
<td>242,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-14</td>
<td>245,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-14</td>
<td>246,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-15</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-15</td>
<td>267,000</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>-37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-15</td>
<td>269,000</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>-36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-15</td>
<td>276,000</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>-33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-15</td>
<td>278,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-15</td>
<td>273,000</td>
<td>34,000</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-15</td>
<td>267,000</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>-34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-15</td>
<td>264,000</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>-37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-15</td>
<td>260,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>-38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-15</td>
<td>271,000</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-15</td>
<td>267,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-15</td>
<td>276,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-16</td>
<td>288,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>-39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DCLG analysis of Glenigan data on residential development
Competitive rates of return can vary between projects to reflect the size and risk profile of the development and the risks to the project.

The Framework and national planning guidance sets out the policy principles relating to viability assessment. There is also a with a range of sector led guidance on viability methodologies in plan making and decision taking which is widely used by the development sector.

7. Secondly, is it important that developers know right at the beginning what costs they are going to have to meet? Of course, this Government got rid of the Code for Sustainable Homes and the requirement for zero-carbon homes by 2016, so developers are not now putting money aside to invest in sustainability, which is also a welcome government requirement. Without building requirement updates, how are you going to make sure these viability assessments have any legs? Will there be a standard format and are you going to update building regulations?”

National planning policy continues to have an important role to play in setting standards for resilience, sustainability and design. We have a well-respected and effective set of Building Regulations which ensure health, safety and welfare in buildings. These cover fundamental aspects of building performance including structural safety, fire safety, energy efficiency, public health and accessibility, and apply to both residential and commercial buildings.

The Building Regulations are kept under review and we have a research programme which supports this process. Current projects include work on fire safety, ventilation and accessibility, and we are considering what other areas of work we should be undertaking in this Parliament.

Furthermore, the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive requires all new buildings to be nearly zero energy from 31 December 2020, and public buildings to be nearly zero energy from 31 December 2018. In order to meet those commitments, the Government has said that it will keep the energy efficiency requirements in the Building Regulations under review.

The review of housing standards focused on keeping the best and most important of the technical standards for new homes that local authorities used to apply through the planning system and moved them into a new form of “optional” building regulation. These will only be applied where there was a local plan policy based on evidenced local need, and where the viability of development is not compromised.

Policies for seeking planning obligations should be set out in a Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, or in relation to London, the London Plan, to ensure that these have been tested through public consultation and independent examination.
Where authorities charge the Community Infrastructure Levy, applicants will know up front the level of levy that is liable for their development.

In the Autumn Statement of 2015, we made a commitment to bring forward proposals for a more standardised approach to viability assessments.

8. Some information about the Government’s proposed reforms to compulsory purchase arrangements; in particular, the Committee is keen to know whether the proposed changes will offer greater potential for local communities to benefit from development (and potential uplift in value) of the sites in question.

Phase 1 of the government’s programme for compulsory purchase reform is mostly in the Housing and Planning Bill. These changes are largely focussed on process improvements, not compensation. Phase 2 of the Compulsory Purchase Order reform programme will extend beyond further process improvements. While I cannot pre-empt the outcome of consultation on a paper which we will be publishing shortly, I can confirm that as part of this second package, the Government is considering and will be consulting on how to ensure that compensation in relation to compulsory purchase can be assessed in a way which is both clearer and fairer, for example, ensuring that the public purse will not have to pay for the uplift in land values caused by public expenditure on associated infrastructure.

Additional information requested

- Figures referring to neighbourhood planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Numbers</th>
<th>NPs at each stage</th>
<th>NPs Cumulative</th>
<th>Weekly Increase</th>
<th>CRtB</th>
<th>NDO</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas applied for designation</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1739</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1739</td>
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<tr>
<td>Areas designated</td>
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<td>1604</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1604</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-submission consultation</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitted for examination</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully passed examination</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not successful at examination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Successful referendums</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made and now in law</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Key: NP -Neighbourhood Plans, CRtB - Community Right to Build Orders, NDO – Neighbourhood Development Orders)

- A list of pre-conditions regarding land permissions
A list of requirements that may have to be met before an applicant can implement a planning permission is outlined below. Whether these requirements apply will depend on the specifics of each case.

- Discharging any pre-start conditions e.g.
  - Remediation of site contamination
  - Archaeological investigation
  - Approval of landscaping or drainage scheme
  - Approval of building materials

- Obtaining non-planning consents e.g.
  - Traffic regulation orders
  - Species licenses
  - Listed building consents

- Off-site infrastructure works e.g.
  - Utilities
  - Flood defence scheme

- Completion of any legal agreements e.g.
  - Section 106 (of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) agreement for planning obligations
  - Section 278 (of the Highways Act 1980) agreement for highways improvements

14 January 2016
Members present

Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witness

Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, DCLG

Q330 The Chairman: Good morning. Thank you very much for coming. I know how hectic it has been, and as a result it has been hectic for us too, so we are both in the same sort of position. We welcome you most sincerely. If we do not manage to cover all the points that you think we should in the curtailed time we now have, I hope you will write to us or get someone to write to us. Also, I think we are probably going to request to see you some time in late February, if that can be organised, because there are lots of unjoined-up issues – but we will see how we get on today.

This is the final evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. There is an additional interest from Lord Inglewood.

Lord Inglewood: I have just been appointed president of the Ancient Monuments Society and feel that I should declare it.

The Chairman: Congratulations. We are being broadcast on the parliamentary website and a transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections, where necessary, to the transcript.
How does the Government’s policy agenda, particularly the deregulation of planning, help to support better outcomes in the built environment? How does it seek to balance the need for new housebuilding with other priorities?

Brandon Lewis: In opening, thank you for inviting me to give evidence and to contribute today on the work you are doing on the national policy for the built environment. I also appreciate your patience with us, particularly today as my right honourable friend, the Secretary of State for the department, is making the local government financial settlement Statement. Obviously protocol dictates that I should be there, so I am happy to deal in writing with any questions we have not covered by the time I need to leave just before 11 am. I note your comment about February, and in principle I am very happy to come back and give evidence in the future.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Brandon Lewis: On the question you asked, we do attach huge importance to improving the design of homes and place. I have spoken personally on this on the Floor of the House of Commons and actually more widely at conferences, because I think we need to make sure that we move away from what has sometimes happened in the past: we see very nice homes being built, but ultimately they are housing estates, and we need to get back to building communities. I have visited far too many developments—I have them in my own constituency—where there are some very nice homes that people enjoy and love, which is great, but people leave their house, get in their car, go to work, go to do their social engagements, get back in the car, go home, go indoors and never meet their neighbours. If, on the estate, there is a piece of open ground, at some stage somebody at the council has put a sign on it saying, “No ball games”, “No children”, “No looking”, “No touching”, et cetera. We have all seen those. Actually making sure we are getting back to building proper communities—and that is happening—is really important. There is a big onus on local authorities and developers themselves to play their part in doing that. I want to make sure, through a locally led planning system, that communities have the power that they need to make sure they can reflect those kind of local aims, desires and, quite rightly, needs.

Since 2010 I would make the case that we have made significant progress not only in speeding up and simplifying the planning system but in putting local areas back in charge of those kinds
of things through their local plans and, I would argue more powerfully in this regard, through neighbourhood planning, which is really starting to get a grip across the country. 125 areas have now gone through a referendum in that process and some 1,600 areas are still going through it at the moment.

What we have done as well is made a range of reforms to the process that I think are giving these kinds of results. Over 240,000 homes were given planning permission last year through a locally-led system. What people are doing, because local communities are more involved, particularly through neighbourhood planning, people are actually contributing by giving their views on how to bring communities together and how to make sure that any development is contributing to their communities and not becoming an adverse impact. I think that is the way we go forward.

Ultimately central government has its part to play. We have a very loud voice and I think we should use that voice, but it is also for local authorities and developers themselves to take responsibility to make sure that they are building and masterplanning. We have a role in masterplanning obviously in areas such as Northfleet, Ebbsfleet, Northstowe and elsewhere, with the garden city developments and new settlements generally. But local places should also feel that they have the power to do that, so that we will end up building communities not just for the residents but for the people involved in the process, so that they can look back later and feel very proud of creating a community. There are some very good examples of that coming through now.

Q331 The Chairman: We have had two site visits where we have seen that: one in Elephant and Castle and one in Birmingham. They are very impressive, because obviously the people on the ground want exactly what you want.

Brandon Lewis: I am sorry to interrupt, but I think that is a really important point. Whether you are looking in London at Elephant and Castle, the Packington estate in Hackney, or City Mills, there are some really good examples of where regeneration work is doing that. Equally, if you go out of London whether it’s Poundbury, or to Didcot and the new garden town we announced there, there are some really good examples of where people are getting involved and creating proper community structures.

The Chairman: We are going to Poundbury once we have finished our report.
Brandon Lewis: I am a big fan of that.

The Chairman: You said that 125 communities are doing that, or at least that they are planning it.

Brandon Lewis: One hundred and twenty-five have now passed a referendum and are done and finished, and there are about 1,600 going through the process.

The Chairman: How many others are there? When you give figures like that, we want to get some sort of idea of what percentage of areas might end up being finished.

Brandon Lewis: At the moment, of the 125 that have gone through, every single one that has gone to referendum has been approved. I can confirm these figures for you in writing, but the approval rating for neighbourhood plans is about 88%, and that is on a percentage turnout in the higher 30%, touching 40%. Most local councillors—and I have been one myself—would really like those kinds of figures of touching 40%, with an 88% approval rating. That is really good, bearing in mind these are happening not at the time of another election but generally these are happening every week, where you would expect turnout to be very low. Actually it is much higher than a local council by-election anyway. That is good news. The 1,600 covers about 6.2 million people around the country, so there is still a long way to go.

We are using the National Association of Local Councils, again in those 125, and parish and town council organisations to spread the word and getting those that are working with us doing roadshows around the country to go out and talk to areas about why this is a good thing—it is not the easiest thing an area will ever do, but it has weight in law so it has to be robust, but it is worth doing and it is not necessarily as difficult as people might think—to encourage more areas to do it.

Q332 The Chairman: Finally, because we have to rush this session, where did the idea of a referendum begin? How did it crop up? Has there been a willingness on the part of most councils to have a referendum, because I guess it is the councils that will have to run one? What has been the response from Mr and Mrs on the street?

Brandon Lewis: From the very beginning, neighbourhood plans have had to have a referendum. Without a referendum they are not binding. That was about making sure that the entire local community was involved in the neighbourhood plan and had a chance to have its say. Generally when we talk to areas doing neighbourhood plans or areas that have done...
them, we find that they get more people involved than before. Planning tends to involve people. If somebody is talking about building in their area, people take an interest. They are getting more people involved in their villages and areas than they have had before. That is a good side benefit as well. The referendum means that everybody is involved. So everybody in the relevant community gets a say on that plan, so it is absolutely the community’s plan. The local authorities do run it. We have had one or two councils—and I mean literally one or two—who have not been keen to let a particular parish get on with its neighbourhood plan and have delayed the referendum by one and two years. In the Housing and Planning Bill, we are taking powers to deal with that so that a local authority cannot prevent a neighbourhood plan going forward in an unreasonable way in the future.

The Chairman: That is very useful. Thank you very much.

Q333 Lord Inglewood: Might I turn to a topic that no doubt you are thinking about a lot: housing? It is slightly startling that there is a significant gap between the number of homes for which planning permission is granted and the number that are actually built. Do you have any thoughts about that and, in particular, any thoughts about how you might speed up the process from permission to construction?

Secondly, we know that there are problems in finding sufficient sites in urban areas on brownfield and so on, which in turn appears to be threatening the green belt. Are you as resolute in defence of the green belt as previous Governments have been?

Brandon Lewis: Yes, is the short answer to the last part of the question. In fact, I think we have gone further. Certainly towards the end of the last Parliament we strengthened the guidelines on the green belt. We also need to be very clear that green belt has remained at around 13% of the country in total, and to remove any piece of land from green belt a local authority has to prove exceptional circumstances and it has to do it through a very proper process, which means consulting local people. The amount of green belt that has been used over the last year period is 0.01%, so it is a very, very small amount. But overall, it has stayed pretty steady. It remains a very important part of our planning structure. It prevents urban sprawl and it provides a lung around communities. So whether it is green belt, or indeed a green wedge in some areas—obviously some parts of the country do not have green belt—it has a very important part to play in keeping the identity of areas quite sacrosanct.
One of the things that we are doing about the gap at the moment—I have been working on this for a while now and will continue to do so with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England—they have identified a huge amount of brownfield land and so have we: we have made a pledge to get 90% of that into planning permission in this Parliament. Through the Housing and Planning Bill, we are making brownfield land easier and more attractive to develop on both by having a brownfield register and indeed planning permission in principle, both of which are in that Bill, which will come to your good selves in due course to discuss and look at. All of that will make brownfield land that bit more attractive and easier to develop.

Lord Inglewood: Sufficiently or just a bit more?

Brandon Lewis: Significantly. The change of planning permission in principle and having a brownfield register that is transparent, clear and in the public domain is a substantial difference, particularly planning permission in principle, where you move away from having a piece of land where it might be said, “Look, you might be able to get planning permission, if you are lucky with the council, on this brownfield land that everybody is happy to have developed”, to knowing that you can build houses there. The debate on your plan is then what the houses will look like rather than whether you can build. In terms of access to finance there is quite a big shift.

Lord Inglewood: Do you think it will drive forward the process of turning consent to construction?

Brandon Lewis: That is the other side of it. Coming on to your opening query about the gaps between consent and construction, I think that is a really complicated area and I think there are several things going on. What I am going to say now is not an exhaustive list, but it gives a flavour of the larger issues there. We have had in the last year a record number of homes getting planning permission—over 240,000—but we are still building out almost 100,000 less than that. I think there are a few things going on. One of those is that some of those planning permissions will be very large sites where 2,000 homes are given planning permission, but obviously they are not going to build out 2,000 homes in a year. I want to see build-out rates increase from the average of 48 per site per year, but I do think that even I wouldn’t imagine that we are going to get to 2,000 a year. That is one part of it.
That is added to by the fact that within that the 242,000-odd homes given planning permission are on less sites, which means that we are getting more larger sites, which expounds that problem. One of the things that we are doing, and that I have been doing at various conferences, is talking to local government about making it more aware, particularly in its local plans—indeed, neighbourhood plans have a part to play as well—of identifying more small sites, because they get built out quicker and are normally more appreciated by the local community as well.

**Lord Inglewood:** Is there the capacity?

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes, there is. One of the challenges we have is because developers prime business model means that they will tend to build out, on average, 48 homes a year on any given site, so if there is a site of 900 homes with one developer, it will take 15 years. If you have three developers building 300 each, they will do it in five years. Therefore, local authorities need to look at that. I visited Didcot last week. That is a site where over 400 homes were built out in a year, but it has four developers on the site competing with each other to build in a high-demand area, so it can be done. We need to encourage more of that. We also need more small sites. We also promised and said in the Autumn Statement, and in the productivity plan that we published last summer, we want to look again at the planning process, not policy but the planning process, because one of the other challenges is that you can get planning permission but you can then spend a year or two discussing and debating a Section 106 agreement, pre-start conditions and various other bits and pieces. We need to look at condensing that so we still get the right result but do it without too much slowing down of bureaucracy. There are various things going on in there and they are things that we are very very focused on. Equally, it is about us as a Government releasing land. That is why we have such a big public land-release programme going on now that we announced in the Autumn Statement.

**Lord Inglewood:** So you are expecting to be able to get the supply and demand equilibrium in balance?

**Brandon Lewis:** My aim and my desire is to see the 240,000-plus permissions going up but also to see the percentage of build out for the year going up. As I say, a whole range of things need to happen for that. Some of those are within central government control, some of those
we are talking about to the development industry because they are in its control, but there is also a very big chunk of that, in terms of how we allocate land, in local government control.

**The Chairman:** Could you give us a list of those additional requirements? You must have one.

**Brandon Lewis:** The pre-conditions and things like that?

**The Chairman:** Yes.

**Brandon Lewis:** It is probably not an exhaustive list, because every time we create one a developer will say this council has given them something else to do. We can give you a flavour.

**The Chairman:** That would be very interesting and useful. Lady Young, you wanted to come in on the back of this one?

**Q334 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** I wanted to explore what the safeguards are going to be for the speeding up of release of small-scale brownfield sites. I understand that there are still going to be conditions at some point in the process, or perhaps I should ask you the question whether there are going to be conditions at some point in the process to look at things such as energy efficiency, the impact on infrastructure, flood risk, biodiversity impact, those sorts of issues? Do they come as part of the technical assessment, which is the second stage, or do they come somehow in this process of them being put on the register? I am sitting in the bank manager’s seat and thinking, “Why am I going to be more reassured if these same hurdles still have to be crossed?” At what point in the process are they going to be crossed and have we a guarantee that they will still have to be crossed?

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes is the short answer, but, to give some more flavour to that, we are not going to be adding any more bureaucracy or red tape to the process. If anything, I want to try and speed it up. But in terms of making sure the land that comes forward for the planning permission in principle will be driven by the local areas, not from the centre; it will be the local council that comes forward with a piece of land that it wants to get into production more quickly. It will nominate this land. It will be driven by it and it will be identified through its brownfield register, or, as it goes forward, it may do it through its local or neighbourhood plan as well. It is very much the case that the local community will say, “For these reasons, we are happy with this piece of land”. I am not going to prejudge how they would assess that, because that is for the local community, but they will have done some element of work to decide that land is appropriate for it.
That does not change the fact that they will still need detailed planning permission, so the
details around the infrastructure, what the homes will look like and whether they have the
right flood protection and that kind of thing, will be done as part of that process. It still makes
quite a significant difference, because, at the moment, even if land is identified in a local plan
and a neighbourhood plan, if a small developer wants to build five or six homes and wants to
get planning permission, they have to go to a lender. At the moment, it costs on average, I
think, £24,000 per plot to get planning permission. So if you are a small developer building
out five or six homes, that is a substantial investment of money to get planning permission
and even if that land is identified in a local or neighbourhood plan, it does not mean in
principle that you will be able to build. You can still be turned down flat on building anything
at all. When trying to get finance, you are going to a bank or a lender and asking them literally
to gamble on planning permission. So no matter how good your business model is, you are
initially taking a very substantial gamble, which is why we have seen a 75% fall in the number
of small developments; that and the financial crash, which has obviously made lending even
tougher. I think we will find this is quite a significant change in the ability to go to a lender
and say, “I know I can build five, six or seven homes here; what I have to work out is some of
the detail of what they will look like. So my business case will have that worst and best case
scenario”. It is a significant change, but the protections regarding detailed planning will still
be there.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I would find it extremely useful, and I am sure the Committee
would, if we could see an explanation of what stage you would anticipate each of those
factors that I outlined being taken into account, because I am still not clear how, as your bank
manager, I would be reassured if, at the detailed planning permission stage, somebody could
still say, “I am terribly sorry. This is in a flood plain and is not protectable, so it cannot go
ahead”.

Brandon Lewis: Obviously if it is a flood plain without the right protections, it is unlikely that
the local authority would have put that in as a planning-permission-in-principle area in the
first place, but that would be a matter for them locally.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. Lord Freeman?
Q335 Lord Freeman: You have partially answered my question in response to the last one. Evidence given to us by the small housebuilders is that a major constraint is that the clearing banks will not lend them money. What is the solution? Is it the Housing Growth Partnership?

Brandon Lewis: There are a few things. I would not underestimate the problem of a small developer going to a bank to borrow money to gamble, which effectively is what you are doing. I have encountered a lot of situations where very successful small builders have had banks turn them down, not because they do not like their business plan but purely because, until they have the planning permission in their hand, they haven’t got a product. Planning permission in principle is a substantial move in the direction of being able to say, “Look, I might be able to build a development that is going to benefit my bottom line and my profit and loss by X or Y, and it could be anything between those, but within that business plan that is where I am at, and I know I can build something. What I don’t yet know is the detail of whether it will be Tudor, modern, Norfolk-style, etc”. I think that is a very substantial change for lenders.

However, there is more than that. In the Housing and Planning Bill we are making it much easier and we are going to continue to promote self-build and custom housebuilding. That is a huge opportunity for small builders. It is why the small builders’ membership organisations are very keen on it: because obviously self-build and custom housebuilding means very rarely that you physically build it yourself—and I certainly would not trust myself to do that—but that you will use a small local builder. Advanced construction techniques, which we are looking to promote, work very well for the small construction companies, because they can buy, bring in, assemble and finish. Also, in the early summer of this year I extended the Builders Finance Fund, which was predominantly lending to medium-sized and larger builders, and brought it right down so that it is now available to small builders as well and obviously there is also the British Business Bank and other things. We are looking at all these things, and my colleagues and I at the Treasury are meeting builders regularly to make sure that we can do something about that. The fact that it costs £24,000 on average per plot to get planning permission is probably a large part of the problem.

Lord Inglewood: Does that include the costs of those that do not get planning permission, averaged out?
Brandon Lewis: Yes.

Q336 Baroness Whitaker: As you have indicated, it is not merely a matter of getting the houses built; it is what kind of houses they are. I would like to ask you about three interacting developments. First, in the light of the removal and revision of national design codes—my colleague, Lady Parminter, will ask about the sustainability aspect—how can national policy ensure that new developments are well designed? Then there is your consultation on the NPPF, which does not, to my mind, seem to say very much about neighbourhoods. Finally, there is the transfer of responsibility for architecture to you. We very much welcome what you said about enabling better communities, but how can these three interacting developments, not all of which appear to be conducive to good design, ensure that more uniformly higher standards prevail in order to build whole neighbourhoods where people can thrive and their economies can prosper? How do you see all that?

Brandon Lewis: Taking the last point first, I would hope—time will tell and you can quiz me on this or take a view on it in due course—that the transfer of architecture from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to my portfolio is a positive thing, because it makes a very clear statement that the quality of architecture in the delivery of homes is important. I actually think there is also a separate point, which I made at the Royal Institute of British Architects just a couple of months ago, that developers themselves need to be more aware of the fact that good quality design does not necessarily cost more money. There are some very good examples of this. The Chairman mentioned Elephant and Castle a few moments ago, and I mentioned City Mills in Hackney. Both are good examples of where I would make the following case Part of the challenge with the quality of design is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and we will not all agree on what we think good quality design is and what attracts us. But if you look at some of the buildings that were taken down in Hackney, which I would argue were immensely ugly, concrete tower blocks from the 1950s and 1960s, and, with the greatest respect to the architects who designed them, I don’t think they did architecture any great favours, are now being replaced—Elephant and Castle is another good example of this—by mid-rise and low-rise developments, street scenes are being brought back and density has been increased substantially and that is thanks to really good quality masterplanning and design. So I have been making the point to developers that they should
invest a little more in architecture in some cases to get good quality design, and not only in London and those kinds of densities; if you look at areas such as Cambridge, Countryside Properties has a pretty good reputation for the way it does environment. It designed a development about 10 years ago in which it gave up space where other developers had wanted to put more houses and did not. Instead, Countryside Properties put in more greenery, wildlife and environmental measures, and it is a fantastic, award-winning example of what can be done. Developers can benefit from that because it increases the value of what they are doing and increases their reputation so that customers will want to buy from them. We can probably all think of developers around the country whose reputation is such that we want to buy from them.

On the development side, I think there is a thing for us to do on an educational aspect. I appreciate that not everybody agrees with this, but I think there is a danger that if we try to dictate good quality from the centre, we will end up with something far too uniform, and often with unintended consequences. I would rather encourage, motivate and embarrass those who get it wrong and do some really bad things, but, equally, this comes back to my opening remarks about moving this to the local. What is absolutely appropriate and beautiful in the City of London or in the heart of London would not necessarily work in a Norfolk village, and what is brilliant in a Norfolk village would not necessarily work in Birmingham or, potentially, Nottinghamshire. We have to make sure that the people in those areas have control over what is right for them.

I also think that sometimes we underestimate the power of the nudge, as they call it. The Committee is going to see Poundbury. For me, that is one of the best examples of good masterplanning. I like the architecture, and different people have different views on that, but I have not heard anybody argue against the concept behind it. Cranbrook, which is not too far from there, is similar. The masterplanning has created residential, commercial and retail mixed use. People are walking to the shops. There is no restriction on cars and it is very easy to drive and park, but because of the way it is masterplanned you are naturally more likely to walk around, and because you are walking around, not only are you healthier and fitter but you get to know your neighbours and you have a community spirit going on, and it really works. That has not come about because somebody in an office like mine in Whitehall has
said you must do it that way; it has come because that local area and the developers there have gone forward and developed in that way. I think we need to drive that kind of local approach.

The NPPF consultation, and the NPPF more generally, reinforces that, because it drives these decisions locally. What is appropriate in both design and masterplanning will differ, in whatever area you are, so it is right that is done in the community. I think I have gone through the three areas.

Q337 Baroness Whitaker: The removal of the design codes will mean the removal of general design principles. Is it your contention that local authorities in small places with not much capacity are better off if there are not some general design principles?

Brandon Lewis: There is the London design code and some of the combined authorities do this, but I would challenge the underlying issue around councils and their capacity. Local authorities have increased their reserves from £13 billion to over £22 billion now. They have done some very good work in some cases around shared management and shared senior administration. They have not scratched the surface of that in their planning departments. I used to lead a small district council and I am an MP for an area with a very small district council. I started trying to do this when I was leading my council and we did not quite finish it when I retired.

I would be the first to say that actually it is untenable for small district councils to have stand-alone planning departments for a couple of reasons, not only financial and what it costs to run, but in an area such as Norfolk where there are a number of small local authorities, it seems to me much more logical to bring them together in one or two single units you get a couple of benefits. One is a cost saving, because we are finding across the country that shared management arrangements save up to 18% on average, but you also get a better resource, because you cannot argue for Great Yarmouth, my area, that you could afford or would be able to recruit specialists in heritage and various other things. If you have a wider group you can have the odd specialist within it and keep them busy.

Equally, you have a better career offer for your planners. When I was leader of Brentwood, we were on the edge of London and the Thames Gateway. It was not about money, but I could not keep a really good planner because they moved to London or the Thames Gateway where
the action is, rather than being in Brentwood where people might extend their house a few feet. You get a much better offer for the employees as well. I think that is absolutely the way forward. Very few councils have done this yet, and I think they need to. They also need to understand regarding where they put their resources; they need also to understand that their planning department is their economic regeneration department. I say that on two levels: either the council is working its money and its planning around the best interests of its community and it wants a well-planned, well-designed community and environment, in which case it needs a good planning department, or the council is effectively run by its Section 151 officer, who wants to keep the council’s coffers full, in which case you need business rates growth, the new homes bonus and council tax, all of which need a good planning department. Whichever point of view you come from, councils need to have good focus on a good-quality planning department.

The Chairman: That is a very comprehensive answer, as indeed all your answers have been.

Q338 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I think that leads very neatly to the question I wanted to ask you. You have outlined the problem of the shortfall in resources in the planning sections of councils. What do the Government plan to do to improve the situation along the lines that you have outlined: bringing the resources together to avoid the gaps becoming wider? Linked to that, is there a case for the full devolution of planning fees to local authorities? If you can hold on to those thoughts for a moment, I want to go back to the green space question, people walking and all the health issues that are now so very clear in our society, with lack of exercise, obesity and environmental pollution being major causes of mortality and morbidity and a huge drain on the NHS coffers. There was a paper out this week about cancers and environmental factors being probably much greater than anyone had ever estimated before. How do you plan to marry up at central government level that health agenda with planning for where people live, and make sure that those walking routes and cleaner air routes and so on are there for them?

Brandon Lewis: In terms of the planning fees there was an increase in planning fees in 2012. I said recently on the Floor of the House of Commons in the Committee stage of the Housing Bill that I am going to have a look at some proposals that were put forward by members of the Committee on whether we can have some more flexibility in planning fees, linked
particularly to better process and speed and a sort of fast-track system. I would not go any further than saying what I said in Committee: that I will look at that. I have promised the Committee that I will come back to them on Report in the Commons, so, if you bear with me, I am going to stick to that format. You will also appreciate that we have the local government financial settlement Statement in a few minutes’ time, so I would not want to prejudge what is going to be put forward on the Floor of the House. Generally with planning fees, the reticence has always been around making sure that we keep planning cost effective. As I say, councils still have substantial resources that they can choose to allocate in that way anyway. I am sure there are no local authorities out there—and I say this with only part of my tongue in my cheek—that would use the planning fees, if it had complete freedom over them, either to price development in its area out of the market or to line its coffers, but we have to look at all these things. There is a balance for us on that. If you do not mind, as I say, I am looking at the other side of it at the moment, and I will report back on that before the Bill comes to your Lordships’ House.

On the environmental side, obviously I am not a Health Minister and my less-than-athletic build may hide the fact that I enjoy doing triathlons from time to time, but I think you make a very good point. It comes back to the point I made earlier that we need to be looking at this. Some of the research that was done—again, if you are visiting Poundbury I am sure they will take you through this—and I know this from when I was the Minister looking after high streets, there is some research that shows that on average people will not walk more than five minutes from home to a shop, and if it is more than five minutes they will get in a car or use public transport, and once they do that they will not necessarily therefore use the closest small shop; they will go to a big development, a big shopping area.

That is why I am quite interested in looking at how we get more footfall and more people living in and around our town centres. This needs some help and support. It is good for footfall but obviously also has the benefit that people might walk to their shops and get a bit more involved. The moment you are walking around, human nature dictates that you walk past someone and you might nod and smile, and the next time you walk past them a few days later you might actually say hello, and suddenly you are getting to know people.
This works in various ways. I saw a development in Plymouth built by Redrow where cleverly, but simply, rather than putting car parking in courtyards round the back out of the way, which creates dark areas, they had put the parking with some garages on the street. The way it was laid out was relatively attractive, but it also meant that as neighbours were going out to get to their cars, they saw each other. Little things such as that can start to create a community.

I accept fully that a well-designed area will help to improve health, but it can also improve community, and, as a Minister at the Department for Communities and Local Government, that is key for me as well. The problem for us at the centre is as soon as we start trying to go too far with how it must be, we start to get unintended consequences. Again, we have to trust local people to work out what is right for them, and neighbourhood and local planning is the right way forward to do that.

Q339 Baroness Rawlings: Thank you very much indeed for your very clear explanations. As you are the Minister in charge, how do you see, come the end of February/March, Lord Adonis’s report, the Housing and Planning Bill and our report working together? How will you take the proposals further?

Brandon Lewis: I cannot prejudge what will be in your report, but I think the three things could be very complementary, not least because the Housing and Planning Bill is only part of the work. I used the phrase on the Floor of the House on Tuesday that it is “part of the work” to see that more homes are built in this country, and to make sure that we are building good homes that are the right homes, for the right people, in the right places, at the right tenures. That work is ongoing. The housing market is always developing. The case I would make is that we have possibly the most complex housing market in the modern world, in the sense of the amount of niche products we have. That is a good thing, because it means there is a big range of offer out there for people, but it is always developing and changing, so we have to keep looking at it. Whatever this Committee’s report comes out with, we will look at and work with, and, particularly if there are some things in there we could take forward, I think we should be looking at that. We should always be looking to improve. We should never look back and think we have finished the job.

Lord Adonis’s work is hugely important from both sides. First, I want to make sure that we are maximising the opportunity for creating homes in places that have good access to transport
infrastructure. I do not think we have gone far enough in this country with density, particularly around transport hubs. London is a very good example of that. We are one of the least dense, lowest-rise cities in the world for one of the most popular, arguably the most popular, city in the world. This is true right around the country. Even in my own constituency the train station is quite a long walk from any residential accommodation or the high street, which seems to me a crazy situation, bearing in mind that no bus goes to my train station either. Integrated transport has not quite reached Great Yarmouth. If we want to see those places regenerated, some retail and commercial development in and around the stations, as Crossrail is proving, could work. It is also partly why the Hong Kong-Shanghai railway company is the only profitable railway company in the world: because it works as a property developer as well. We need to look at that, and I know my colleagues at the Department for Transport are very keen to look at it and at how we learn going forward from what Crossrail is doing on that kind of model. We also need to make sure that we are building homes where we can put the right infrastructure in place.

Public satisfaction with housebuilding has gone up by about 50% over the last few years, and I put that down to a couple of things. One is people feeling involved in the process, particularly through neighbourhood plans and through local plans. It is also through making sure that the infrastructure is there. I do not think the nimby thing is as bad as we sometimes think it is. We discredit people on that. Where it exists, it tends to be for genuine reasons such as the fear of inappropriate development, which is usually about bad quality of design or lack of infrastructure. I think that what Lord Adonis is doing to make sure that the infrastructure is there for the country, and for my interests directly for housing, making sure that we link the two things together, is really important.

Q340 Lord Clement-Jones: Minister, I have a two-tier question, and I am sorry that it is a bit of a package. You have placed a lot of emphasis on local plans, particularly in the context of housing. Is local plan-making delivering its objectives overall? Are any measures needed to restore the primacy of the plan-led system? I am thinking particularly of your ideas about extending planning consent in principle and so on. You have also mentioned that local authorities should not plan in isolation, and that brings us on to spatial planning. Does the duty to co-operate provide an adequate mechanism for strategic and spatial planning? I think
you have recognised the need to improve the operation of the duty to co-operate. Then, of course, we have the question of the role in the built environment of regional spatial frameworks in London, Greater Manchester and so on.

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes, I think I got to three. In terms of local plan-making and having primacy, particularly when you take into account initiatives coming forward such as planning permission in principle, I think planning permission in principle will further enhance the local aspect, because the areas that will be covered by planning permission in principle are not going to be set by me or anybody like me in a suit in any office in Whitehall; they will come from local people. Initially, it is about those brownfield registers, which will be done by local authorities. It will be land that is allocated and notified through the local plan or a neighbourhood plan, both of which are done locally. Even if in 2017, through the powers in the Housing and Planning Act, as it will be by then hopefully, or in the Bill as it is now, if we intervene where areas have not done a local plan, I have no intention of writing a local plan and giving it to the community. We will be facilitating the local community getting its own local plan. It will still be a locally driven plan. That further endorses it and, hopefully, gives even more encouragement to areas to want to do a neighbourhood plan, to look at these things and to have that local control, and if anything to take the control away from the developers. If you do not have a local plan and you are reliant on the NPPF, the developers are in the driving seat saying, “This is where we want to develop”, and the community is having to take a development control system. So my logic is that we move from what has been a development control system for a few decades, and councils looking at how they can say no, to a plan-led planning system. Terry Farrell used a brilliant phrase: that we move through local plans to a plan-led system, and with neighbourhood planning to an active plan-led system, which I thought was quite a good way of describing it, in a way Terry can do better than I can.

On the issue of isolation and the regional side, as a Government we got rid of regional spatial strategies, and I have no desire or intention to go anywhere near bringing them back. The difference with what is happening in London, and indeed what Manchester is looking to do, and what other areas may choose to do, is by coming together and looking on a wider basis as an area region, or whatever the structure is, it is driven by them locally. It is not me or an
inspector somewhere sitting with a map and a red pen; it is coming from that local area, working together to develop something for their area. I think that is a very sensible thing for them to do, but what is important is it is them doing it, which matters.

In terms of the duty to co-operate, it was always very clear, and the Planning Minister at the time, who is now my Secretary of State, was very clear at the Dispatch Box, if I remember correctly—and as I sat on the Localism Bill Committee, I remember these debates—that it is a duty to co-operate, not a duty to agree. We come back to the fact that we have to be adult enough and grown up enough to expect that local authority leaders—councillors and their senior officers—will actually take that responsibility seriously and work together to fulfil the duty to co-operate. Equally, I am a realist, and I appreciate that in some parts of the country some councils will find it harder to work together than others, but generally it is working. We will certainly get involved in trying to bring parties together and to get them talking to each other, if we can, where there are real issues, but it is generally working. The evidence of that is that we have seen more than double the number of local plans published, up to 82% or 84%, with 67% or 69% now adopted, and, as I said before, if areas do not have them adopted by 2017 we will look to take the power to start getting them done.

Having said that, I am also very aware of at least one local authority leader, when I quizzed him about why they do not have a local plan and have not even started one, who said, “I really like the NPPF, and I am happy to make my decisions based purely on the NPPF, and my community is happy with that and we are very pro-development, so I don’t need one”. That might be a very valid argument. I think we need to be aware of people having that view as well.

Q341 Lord Clement-Jones: Obviously, you have quite a lot of carrots in place for the combined authorities, and they have responded pretty well, except for one. Are you planning to use carrots for encouraging the duty to co-operate? Do you have any levers that you can use to get that co-operation?

Brandon Lewis: We do in the sense that if an area is shown not to have fulfilled its duty to co-operate, it could fail its local plan, and inspectors have failed local plans based on the failure to fulfil the duty to co-operate. Whether that is a carrot or a stick is probably in the eye of the beholder, but there is quite a good motivation there, and that has worked.
Q342 Baroness Young of Old Scone: You are proposing a housing delivery test. Will that mean that local authorities become more subservient and anxious to move ahead with things that perhaps local people are less comfortable with simply in order to avoid being penalised under the housing delivery test?

Brandon Lewis: No. The intention comes back to Lord Inglewood’s query about the gap between permissions that are granted and the build-out rate. In some areas at the moment, local authorities are giving planning permission for some very large sites and saying, “Right we have done our five-year land supply”, but actually they have not, because these sites take so long to build out. The idea is to make councils think a bit more about the sites that are coming forward, particularly as they allocate them in their local plans, and whether they are deliverable and are the sites that people will want to develop and can develop, and probably to encourage them to look again at the small sites that we want to see brought through, because they are quicker to build out and are better for local people and small builders. It is about getting councils to be a bit more aware of getting things that are developable.

Q343 Baroness Parminter: The evidence that we have been getting on viability assessments is that their increasing use is leading to public goods such as affordable housing being squeezed out because developers are saying they can no longer afford it. I have two straightforward questions. First, do you believe that if we are going to carry on with viability assessments there should be a standard format with, for example, an agreed acceptable maximum level of profit margins and market information so that everybody knows what the parameters are?

Secondly, is it important that developers know right at the beginning what costs they are going to have to meet? Of course, this Government got rid of the Code for Sustainable Homes and the requirement for zero-carbon homes by 2016, so developers are not now putting money aside to invest in sustainability, which is also a welcome government requirement. Without building requirement updates, how are you going to make sure these viability assessments have any legs? Will there be a standard format and are you going to update building regs?

The Chairman: Can I interject? I know that you need to be away in one minute, so if you cannot answer it in that time maybe you could write to us.
Brandon Lewis: I will give the speeded-up version. The short answer to the first point is no, because, again, I think that starts to move away from the position that local areas will have different local needs and different things are viable in different places. That kind of uniformity is potentially quite counterproductive and might have unintended consequences. However, I agree with the point that it is healthy for developers coming into an area to know what it will cost to build in that area.

One of the reasons we are doing a review of the community infrastructure levy - and I am interested in looking at how that interacts with Section 106 - what I like about the community infrastructure levy is the developer knows upfront what it costs to build in that area. The problem with the community infrastructure levy is it works when you have lots of small and medium-sized sites; it is not so good when there is one big site because the money could be spent anywhere and you could still need infrastructure on that one site. For that you need the flexibility and the focus of a Section 106 agreement, but that is not very transparent. You get planning permission subject to 106, you spend several years negotiating it and it is down to the quality of negotiation between a developer and a local authority. This is an area I am very focused on, first, because I think it slows down planning quite dramatically, and I want to fix that, and some of that is in the Housing and Planning Bill, and, secondly, because you are then caught up in the vagaries whereby some local authorities are better than others at negotiating. We need to look at that, but I am not going to be able to say to you today I have the answer to that.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. It has been a real rush through, but you have been fantastically generous with your time and your answers. If you think of anything else, please let us know. Let us keep in touch during this period because it would be helpful for us regarding the Bill and our report.

Brandon Lewis: I am happy to and I really appreciate the chance to come and speak to you today. Thank you for persevering with my timetable as well. I really do appreciate that.

17 December 2015
Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Culture, Media and Sport - Oral Evidence (QQ13-28)

Members present
Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Gill Graham, Head of Heritage, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Steve Quartermain, Chief Planner, Department for Communities and Local Government, Ruth Stanier, Director of Planning, Department for Communities and Local Government, and Bob Ledsome, Deputy Director, Building Regulations and Standards, Department for Communities and Local Government

Q344 The Chairman: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by the members of the Committee. The process is that a transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to the transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please, starting on your right, my left?

Gill Graham: My name is Gill Graham. I am head of heritage in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and I have been doing this job since the end of last year.

Bob Ledsome: Good morning. My name is Bob Ledsome and I head the building regulations and standards division at the Department for Communities and Local Government.
Steve Quartermain: Good morning. My name is Steve Quartermain and I am chief planner at the DCLG, a post I took up in 2008 after a career in local government.

Ruth Stanier: Good morning. I am Ruth Stanier. I am the director of planning at the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. You have had a complete list of the questions, and I am going to ask question number 1. What are the Government doing to prepare the country for the big challenges in built environment policy such as migration, ageing, climate change and growing resource demands and any others you can mention? There seems to be a huge menu. Who would like to start?

Ruth Stanier: I will take that question, thank you very much, my Lord Chairman. The work that we do in government is very much focused on seeking to promote high-quality built environments where people will want to live and work. In doing this work, we are acutely conscious of the need always to be forward looking in our approach. This is about getting things right for the years ahead.

My starting point on this is to talk about the planning reforms that have been put in place under the last Government and that we are continuing to take forward. As I am sure you will be aware, the last Government undertook a fundamental review of the planning system and put in place in 2012 the new National Planning Policy Framework. This sets out the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, the social and the environmental. It is very clear that these need to be considered together and that the role of the planning system is very much about looking for solutions that deliver gains across those three.

To turn to the specific themes that you raised in your question and to go through those briefly one by one, on migration and ageing the Framework is very clear that local planning authorities are required both to assess and critically—and this was the big innovation of the new Framework—to plan to meet the future housing and other infrastructure needs of all sections of the population, thinking very carefully about the different needs within the population, including those of ageing people. This work needs to involve looking at a range of evidence, looking at the future, household projections and, crucially, consulting very closely with local communities.
The Government is also very much focused on seeking to improve the housing offer for older people, to increase the supply and choice of housing of all types and to make sure that a range of attractive housing is available, particularly for those ageing people who want to downsize to more suitable accommodation.

Thinking now about the issue of resource demands, similarly the Framework sets out very clear requirements for councils, in drawing together their Local Plans, to look very carefully at the evidence on future requirements for things like water and energy. I also see from the background evidence you have been looking at that the issue of food security has arisen, which again was an issue that we very much highlighted and specifically mentioned in putting together the new planning Framework, which includes strong protection for the best quality agricultural land in this country.

Finally and briefly on climate change, local planning authorities are similarly required, in their Local Plans, to plan proactively to mitigate and adapt to climate change. That really means avoiding new development in areas that will clearly be at increased vulnerability in the future, and managing risks in other areas that are not quite so exposed through adaptations such as green infrastructure, which again is very much promoted through the Framework. Building regulations also have an important role to play, and in the last Parliament energy efficiency requirements were improved by 30% for new buildings.

That is just a quick run through of the key issues. These are very significant challenges but ones that we are very mindful of in our work.

The Chairman: Can I ask a supplementary of my own? In your list, you put a lot of emphasis on ageing. Do you have a similar amount of emphasis on sole inhabitations: houses with solo people in them? The dynamics of the population are quite different than they were, say, 30 years ago, and we are looking at a timescale of 30 years hence. Many more people are living on their own or with two people, the fractured family syndrome. People are living much longer, which is the ageing issue.

How are the priorities, in your mind, between migration, making up the gap in the housing stock – we do not have enough houses for people – and what comes next? Is it dealing with the end of life issues or with the whole-lifetime issues of people starting off in maybe a flat,
then having a three-bedroomed house, then having another flat, a second home or something? Where do you think the big number one priority should be?

Ruth Stanier: That is an extremely good question. Clearly across the whole range of the population there are many different needs. As you say, that is changing over time. In planning policy terms we are quite careful not to skew priorities. The way that the Framework is set out it’s very much saying to local authorities that they are required to assess need right across their population and look at that in quite a variegated way to avoid a one-size-fits-all that just thinks about the overall numbers. Within that, the way we drafted the Framework was to be quite careful not to put particular emphasis anywhere. Having said that, ageing is such a big challenge, such a big change in the demographic, that Ministers naturally pay particular attention to it, and we have supplementary housing initiatives to support areas like that.

The Chairman: Yes. Of course, all the other points that you made about energy conservation, for example, are very important too in terms of people’s income and disposable income. Lord Lytton, you wanted to come in.

Earl of Lytton: Very quickly, my Lord Chairman. Are planning authorities possessed of the resources—and I mean that in the broadest terms—to do all this investigation and study within the sort of timescales that the Government are clearly looking at with regard to local plans and that sort of thing? Secondly, there is an awful lot of concentration on the new, what we are going to do now, which is all going to be compliant and singing and dancing and sustainable, but what is new is a relatively small proportion of what exists at present. I and many other members of this Committee are very interested in the 95% of the rest of the stuff that already exists and what happens there. Do you have any observations on that?

Ruth Stanier: I will take the first part of the question. One of my colleagues might want to come in on the second. Resourcing for local planning authorities is absolutely a matter that we keep under very careful review, conscious of the current constraints. In the last Parliament we uplifted planning fees, which was of some assistance.

Over the last few years, where local authorities have been keen to progress their local plan making sure they have put resources into that area and very good progress has been made, including going through all the evidence work to support that. We have now reached a point
where 82% of councils have at least a published Local Plan and 64% now have an adopted plan in place, which is good progress but is clearly, as set out in last week’s productivity plan, an area where we need to go further.

I do not know, Steve or Bob, whether you want to take up the second part of that question.

**Bob Ledsome:** With regard to the existing stock, as members of the Committee may know the building regulations are primarily focused on new buildings, but there are some requirements in the building regulations that will affect retrofit activity to existing stock. If renovation work is being undertaken and the energy measures in the building are being upgraded, there are standards that would need to be applied through the building regulations.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** I get the impression that quite a lot of this is about inviting local authorities to respond to the here and now. What is the balance between being predictive about future trends, population movement and so on, and responding to the here and now?

**Ruth Stanier:** The National Planning Policy Framework approaches this by asking local authorities to plan for the next 15 years, and it is quite explicit about that. It is asking them to take into account household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics and to think about both current and future needs. I think that forward-looking aspect is covered in the strategic framework, but you are absolutely right: we need to keep focused on making sure that that is how the work plays out in reality.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** Just a short question. I was listening to you and wondering what mechanisms there are for getting feedback from the users of new building projects, whatever they are, both at local authority level and at government level. There may be some very important and constructive comments that, unless you elicit feedback, you may never discover, particularly from specific groups such as the elderly, those with disability needs, those with young children, where features in buildings might be a problem that could be easily remedied.

**Ruth Stanier:** It is a very good question, and one that we should probably reflect more on. In the department we are on the receiving end of a great deal of feedback from a very broad range of people on things that have not worked well or design that is causing concern. I know that elsewhere in the department the team that looks specifically at housing for older people
has sought to ensure that it has the views of older people using different types of housing and that that is fed into policy development. I think it is a good question where we could do more.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** You may be missing out on good feedback.

**Ruth Stanier:** Yes, indeed.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Do you have any idea of how much retrofitting that from the point of view of sustainability ought to be done but has not been done?

**Bob Ledsome:** Energy efficiency in particular is primarily led by the Department of Energy & Climate Change. It has done a lot of work to assess what it would class as the technical potential for retrofit and improving energy efficiency, particularly with regard to the existing stock, and an assessment of the extent to which that technical potential will be realised through policy measures that are in place. That process underpins the work that the Government do, led by DECC, on carbon budgets, taking account of the advice of the Committee on Climate Change.

At the strategic level, at the policy level, the Government probably have a reasonably good idea about what needs to be done, for example in terms of further retrofit activity, to achieve the climate change targets that are set in the Climate Change Act.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Perhaps you could send us some trend information for the past few years.

**Bob Ledsome:** We can certainly provide some further information, yes.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Thank you.

**Q345 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Because I failed to do so at the last meeting, Lord Chairman, I will declare my interests. I am a vice-president of the RSPB, president of the Wildlife Trust for Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, the former chief executive of the Environment Agency, and chancellor of Cranfield University, which has strong interests in the built environment. I wanted to explore with Ruth Stanier the 15-year horizon. Scotland has taken a 20 to 30-year horizon. Do you think we are being too close to our noses?

**Ruth Stanier:** Again, that is a very interesting question. From memory, the Framework does not say that it must be 15 years; it does allow flexibility. Where councils are looking to plan for an even longer time horizon that is something we would very much support. I think there
is a trade-off between absolutely needing to be forward looking but not going so far into the future that it is practically not feasible to put a Local Plan in place that is going to be useful beyond a particular point. To some extent, we graduate that at the moment by seeking more detail in the first five years and less moving forward. But I think it is a point that we should keep under review.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Even though these built environments are going to last for 50, 60, 70, 150 years?

Ruth Stanier: Yes. I suppose the Local Plan primarily sets out where new development will be provided over that period, but I completely take your point that once it is built there is a much longer period of time thereafter.

The Chairman: This is just an observation. It is almost essential, is it not, for something as important as the environment, with so much finance tied up in it and every single person in the country worried about it and worried about where they are going to live and where they are not going to live, that you take a long timescale? Otherwise, if it was shifting every five years, as it always used to do in earlier exercises in strategic planning, it is just impossible. You have to have a bit of imagination. Also, it encourages people with imagination to think of other ways of doing it and with other material and things. It encourages that, I am sure. It is just an observation.

Ruth Stanier: Thank you.

Q346 Lord Freeman: My question relates to how government co-ordinates different departments dealing with what is almost a housing crisis, the need for a substantial increase in the rate of house building, and meeting the criteria of a quality built environment. We know that architecture and design policy has recently moved to the Department for Communities and Local Government from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. What benefits do the Government hope to achieve from this, and what changes should we expect to see? More broadly, how is built environment policy co-ordinated across government? I note that the implementation task force that has been set up now includes a number of different departments and Ministers. Could perhaps both departments in particular comment on the advantages of better co-ordination?
**Gill Graham:** There are strong synergies between architecture, design and sound planning and housing policy. DCMS will, of course, retain a close interest in this, given our responsibilities for conservation, the historic environment and creative industries. I think CLG now has a clear role in delivering design quality, including the oversight of the architecture profession, but we will be working very closely together to ensure that heritage is considered at all stages.

**Steve Quartermain:** I would like to add to that from the DCLG’s point of view. We welcome the opportunity to try to align good architectural practice and efficient, effective planning service, but also the outcomes, because planning is all about outcomes and getting things to happen. We see the decision to move it to DCLG as an answer to your question, which is recognising there needs to be co-ordination across the Government to implement good design and to look at the built environment and how it is being viewed in policy terms across government. I think that we stand well placed to lead on that. Indeed, Ministers have responded to the new brief by starting to talk to people who are involved in it. Only this week they met RIBA, they have agreed to meet the PLACE Alliance, they are talking with Farrells and have been to the Farrell reception. They are getting briefed on what more they can do to try to co-ordinate the delivery of good architectural practice in all the government policies. I think that things such as the housing taskforce, the design advisory group that was established before the election, which they are looking to revisit and reinvigorate, are signs that we recognise the task and we think the department is fit for it.

**Lord Freeman:** Could I press you on that? I appreciate that different Ministers might ask different civil servants within departments to co-ordinate activity, but could it be and should it be a taskforce set up by the Cabinet Office with various Ministers meeting regularly to co-ordinate activity?

**Steve Quartermain:** I am not entirely sure that I am best placed to answer that question. I think that the importance of the task is recognised. Quite how it is delivered and how Ministers align behind the policy to make sure that it works is obviously for Ministers. I do think that we should recognise that the importance of it is embedded in what Ministers want to achieve. They want to achieve a quality outcome, which links back to some of the
comments that Ruth made earlier. Our objectives and what we are trying to achieve are clearly set out: high-quality design and high-quality places. It is important to say that it is not just about what buildings look like; it is how places work. It is really important that that is recognised in all the stuff that we do. Whether we are delivering large-scale development on public sector land, trying to support garden cities or trying to support local planning authorities in producing their Local Plans, the bar is set high. Whether that should be a Cabinet Office thing to be honest is probably not for me to say, but I recognise its importance and I think that Ministers recognise the importance of it too.

**The Chairman:** Sorry, can I just interject? I can see a new Minister for silos, an abolition of silos, because that is really what we are talking about. Everybody out there who is not in the Civil Service and doing all this great work in the departments is saying, “Why can we not have somebody who will able to answer that question and do this?” It is really silo management, and it has crept into every activity in this country, every economic activity, in the last 10 years or so. I think you and I are starting from the same point and think, “Get rid of it, because it is a waste of time”.

**Steve Quartermain:** Get rid of—?

**The Chairman:** Of the silo mentality.

**Steve Quartermain:** Absolutely, Lord Chairman, I could not agree more. But in doing away with silo mentality there is also the question of recognising that with power goes responsibility. One of the things that we are trying to do is get people to recognise that the responsibility is not somebody else’s and that you cannot turn around and say, “Can you give me the answer to that?”

**The Chairman:** Good point.

**Steve Quartermain:** They have to have responsibility for themselves.

**The Chairman:** You finish. I rudely interrupted. Lord Inglewood wants to come in.

**Lord Inglewood:** We know that in this country we have some of the best architects in the world and some of the most interesting and exciting contemporary buildings in the world. But if you look across the nation’s record as a whole over the last 50, 70 years, you would, from the evidence of your eyes, be hard pressed to suppose that we had had a policy of promoting
good architecture and design. As far as I know, it has never been government policy to promote bad architecture and design. Against that background, I put it to you that it is not a matter of co-ordination; it is not a matter of shifting responsibility from one department to another. I have to declare an interest in that I was the Minister responsible in the old Department for National Heritage for design and architecture.

Lord Clement-Jones: So you are the guilty party.

Lord Inglewood: The thing you have to do is fire people up to positively want to build good buildings. That is something that, whatever department it is in, it is very difficult for government to do. I put it to you that we are never going to have a great increase in good, well-designed buildings, well-designed places, unless and until the people who are responsible for the individual sites are fired up and buy in to wanting to do that and know what they are trying to set about to achieve.

Steve Quartermain: My Lord Chairman, I tend to agree. It is not only government that does not promote poor design. If you talk to any of the architects, they do not want to do it either. Every architect will say that they are trying to produce good design. I do think that there is a difference between what I might refer to as iconic sites and iconic buildings and big schemes. What we are trying to achieve is the volume house building, the environment that people live in day by day. It is great to walk into an iconic building and appreciate it—

Lord Inglewood: But some of the iconic buildings did not start out self-consciously to be that.

Steve Quartermain: Possibly not, but I do think that the challenge is getting public acceptance of good design. One of the things I know our Ministers are particularly keen on is trying to change public perception and public views about good design. If people were more confident that the development that was going to take place in their vicinity was going to be of a high-quality design, they might be more accepting of the development in the first place. Our Ministers are very keen that we try to address that. One of the ways we have been doing that is though our neighbourhood plan process: trying to get people to get engaged with neighbourhood planning at a local level to direct and control what their neighbourhood looks like and have an opportunity to influence design at a local level—a bottom-up approach. We have seen that that has been working and that a lot of people have been involved with
neighbourhood plans. That public acceptance of “good design where I live” is really quite important.

**Lord Inglewood**: How do you get house builders and such like to positively want to deliver that, rather than pile them high and sell them cheap?

**Steve Quartermain**: My Lord Chairman, I am sure you will have the opportunity to ask a volume house builder that in due course. I do think that we have seen, particularly with neighbourhood plans, that where people are confident that they can have some say over the design quality of the houses that are built, they have been prepared to allocate sites for houses and, indeed, more houses than they might have been expected to have allocated through the Local Plan process from the local authority.

They must have confidence that they can have a say and, to answer your question, if house builders are going to see opportunities to develop they must engage with neighbourhood planning, because that is where the allocations are going to come forward. If they want to build, they need to engage with the communities that are going to live in the houses that they are going to sell.

**Lord Inglewood**: Just to be clear, are you suggesting that there should be a direct correlation between whether or not a particular site is used for housing and the particularity of the design details that are proposed for it?

**Steve Quartermain**: I am saying that there are opportunities for that to occur through the neighbourhood planning process.

**Lord Inglewood**: But not necessarily on brownfield sites, from last week onwards, is that right? I am not trying to be difficult. I am just trying to—

**Steve Quartermain**: On brownfield sites there is the opportunity to set out very clearly what the expectations are for the development that takes place. Within brownfield sites you can very clearly set out the scale, the size, the height, the numbers, the amount of public open space, the access, the transport. That can all be set out in advance: “If you are going to develop this brownfield site, this is what we expect to be on the site”. The powers are there to do that. It goes back to what I was saying earlier about giving people the power and the
responsibility to do it. We believe that there are lots of tools in the toolbox that people can use already, to answer your question.

The Chairman: We hope that by the end of this inquiry we might find even more.

Steve Quartermain: Indeed.

Q347 Baroness Whitaker: Still with co-ordination and firing up enthusiasm, I would like to move on to a broader picture and ask you how land use is planned for at national level. We have had a look at the Scottish national spatial plan and it has paragraphs called “Vision”, a really interesting thing that I am not aware we have. Do we need a national spatial plan for England, or indeed for the UK as a whole? In your answer or answers, could you also touch on how big infrastructure is woven into our national planning, not just housing and the local communities?

Steve Quartermain: I will perhaps start and others can help if I go astray. The Government is absolutely committed to a bottom-up approach to planning, so they have not seen a national spatial strategy as appropriate for England. We know that the Scottish have one and so does Wales. In fact, the Scottish one won an RTPI prize only last week, so we know that they exist. From our point of view, we think that a bottom-up approach is more appropriate, with the duty to co-operate that we introduced in the Localism Act about trying to get people to deal with cross-boundary issues through dialogues that can exist, either through local economic partnerships or through the combined-authorities approach. Authorities should talk to each other, and again I come back to my earlier point about giving people responsibility and they should know what to do. The wider infrastructure issues can be dealt with through the LEPs, through communication with other authorities, and again I draw from my experience in local government. When I was a director of planning in environmental services of course I talked to my neighbours and to my fellow chief planners. Who would not? It would be nonsense not to.

There is, of course, the national infrastructure plan, which deals with the big stuff, and the Government made it very clear that they do need to understand that development will need infrastructure. The other thing that they did in the manifesto was make it clear that communities need to understand when infrastructure is going to arrive so that they know that
they are going to get the infrastructure that is required for the development. That again is an issue that we are taking forward.

The answer to your question is, no, the Government does not think it needs a national spatial strategy. They think that the planning vision can be delivered through Local Plans and communities, either through neighbourhood communities or district unitary authorities, and that the duty to co-operate and their mechanism for people to engage in dialogue on these things will be effective.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Is there not then a weakness that the bottom-up approach will produce inconsistency nationally and perhaps prejudice against very small groups such as nomadic travellers, gypsies, and that the duty to co-operate is not very easy to enforce? I do not know how much it happens. There have been some comments that it is not very widespread, but perhaps you can give us better information.

**Steve Quartermain:** There will always be a view, and people say to me, that there should be a national spatial strategy, and that is a legitimate view to hold. It is not the view that the Government holds. They would certainly not accept that the current approach would be prejudicial to any particular group. Any decision-maker has to have regard to the public sector equality duty, and that applies to local authorities too. People need to have regard to the needs and lifestyle of minority groups—you mentioned travellers—in their decision-making. They cannot shirk that. The bottom-up approach does not exclude that. In fact, I would argue that that fine-grain approach ensures that they are looked after.

**The Chairman:** Can I just intervene there for a moment? In your opening statement, Ms Stanier, you mentioned agriculture en passant. I would have thought that would fit very nicely into Lady Whitaker’s question about a national spatial strategy. The more you think through the benefit of the British countryside to those who live in it, you realise that we are always concentrating on urban housing when we look at housing in the round but there is a huge other area of sub-urban—and I do not mean suburban—in between small market towns and smaller rural places that seems to get missed out. Is there an argument for national spatial planning where they could have a certain proportion of greenfield sites that are made over to allotments? You would then hit the food-for-our-own-resources type of thing, elderly
people getting exercise, growing things, being involved and improving the quality of life. If they live in good surroundings where you can see trees and fields, it makes a hell of a difference. That goes back to the national spatial plan. I would like a quick word from you on that, if possible.

Ruth Stanier: Very briefly, I can completely see the point you are making. The approach that the last Government and this Government is taking is very much, as we have been saying, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and in national polices on those really quite small number of matters that are genuinely of national significance where clear national protection is required, including agricultural land, areas of outstanding natural beauty, national parks and so on. But as Steve has been saying, it is very firmly the view of this Government that you get the best planning outcomes where the power is with local communities to decide how they use the land in their area.

The Chairman: Yes. I am sorry, I should not have hogged that, but it was just eating away at me when I was hearing about the national spatial plan.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I would like to ask for some information that may not be readily available, but it would be interesting to know how many countries of our approximate size and density, not Brazil and not Australia, do not have a national spatial plan.

Steve Quartermain: We can provide that.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: That would be extremely useful, thank you.

Steve Quartermain: Would a European comparison suffice?

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I would quite like to look at Japan as well if we could. We need to look at the densely packed countries, because that is where it is most germane. If you have acres of space like America you do not have to worry about plonking things down because you always have more space, but we do not.

Q348 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I wanted to ask you about the policy evidence, the evidence underpinning policymaking. Last week we heard from Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones about a serious absence now of research projects that are evaluating the impact of policy. Could you tell us about the research capacity that exists within government departments on
built environment policy issues, and, with that background, also whether there is indeed less capacity for research and evaluation of policy than there was previously?

**Ruth Stanier:** I will take this question. We do have, within the department, a very strong team of analysts who support us on the development, implementation and evaluation of policy relevant to the built environment. We also, as a department, have a research budget. Obviously we need to be extremely careful in how we allocate that to secure the best possible value for money. However, we are proceeding with a number of relevant research projects. One that I would particularly cite is the research that we fairly recently led looking into the community infrastructure levy and how that is working, very much to inform the review of the levy that we are committed to undertaking this year. That is just one example of how we use research and evaluation to inform our ongoing policymaking.

We also have dedicated research funding for building regulations that I am sure Bob would tell you more about if you are particularly interested in that, and we fund research work by external bodies.

We increasingly seek to link up very closely with relevant academic institutions to make sure that we are helping to influence the work that they undertake. In the interests of not falling into silo thinking, we do very much work with other government departments. One specific example of that would be the work that we do with Defra and the Environment Agency in their significant research programme looking at flooding, coastal erosion and risk management. They have a £2.5 million budget for that annually, just to give one example. Clearly we are currently working in a relatively constrained fiscal environment, but to my mind we still have adequate analytical and research capacity. It is extremely important to us.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** I was interested in the comment about the power being with local communities in decision-making and where that falls down. This year one of the Bevan Prize awards went to a group in Hackney, London, who are looking after people with TB and have found that the most important thing was to get them into proper housing, and that all efforts to get the TB under control failed until they were in proper housing, partly so they were not coughing up TB over other people and were in an environment where they could also have a more ordered lifestyle to take medication and so on. I was wondering how much
of that research is going on into both physical and mental well-being aspects of people in these different built environments, particularly in relation to Public Health England, or whether they are working quite separately.

*Ruth Stanier:* This is maybe an area where we could usefully provide some further information to the Committee. I would say that Public Health England is represented on the planning sounding board that I chair and make a very useful contribution. They have presented to us on health inequalities and we have discussed with partners how we can make the links between the health agenda and the planning agenda, which has been very helpful.

I am also very conscious of the specific issue that you raised. A few years back I led work on homelessness policy and I know that there has been an ongoing programme of evidence collection in that area. But we should see whether there is further information that we can provide to the Committee on this.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** That would be very helpful. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** If any of the rest of you have similar information that would expand our knowledge, that would be very useful to us.

**Bob Ledsome:** I thought I might just mention a piece of work on the building regulation side that we have been funding with colleagues in Defra and DECC, and indeed the Environment Agency, in relation to another potential health issue: overheating. That is a potential future risk that is rapidly emerging and is an area where we have undertaken work and are continuing to undertake work.

**The Chairman:** That would be fascinating.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** Is there one point where research evidence is collated and available—a literature body of research in the built environment? Is there a kind of definitive group of publications, or are the publications of research within the silos of the original disciplines from which people have come?

**Ruth Stanier:** That is a very interesting question, and again we could probably usefully reflect on whether we can point the Committee towards the most useful source. In terms of support that we receive on analysis and evidence within the department, the team of analysts I was describing provide regular digests for us of relevant research across the piece. But I am sure
that your Committee may well welcome further information on what is publicly available and how it is brigaded.

**Bob Ledsome:** Research reports that the department undertakes are published. That is part of the process, but I think there is a broader issue about how effectively that knowledge is disseminated as opposed to documents just being published.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** Yes, dissemination, because otherwise they just gather dust and people do not know about them. But where advances are happening, if they are not disseminated they will not get put into practice.

**Q349 Earl of Lytton:** I have a question for Mr Ledsome. Quality is obviously important in looking forward, yet many of the quality controls in new building are effectively self-certified schemes of one sort of another and they come under various types of construction warranty, of which probably NHBC is the best known. It has certainly come to my attention that there are increasing concerns about the quality that is produced under these schemes. Are you able to comment on that? In particular, how are you monitoring outturns in that respect?

**Bob Ledsome:** Perhaps if I could digress I will explain very briefly how the building control system operates. A building inspection can be undertaken either by local authorities or by what we call private sector approved inspectors, which would include the NHBC. When an organisation such as the NHBC, the National House Building Council, is undertaking that function it will be inspecting as a third party; it will not be self-certification. There are some types of building work where self-certification arrangements apply but the relevant installer firm undertaking that sort of work has to be a member of what we call a competent persons scheme and will have to have passed various tests to be eligible to join that scheme. We receive correspondence within the department with issues around quality, so no one would deny that there are not problems.

The way the system operates is that there are the building control arrangements that can range in the first instance from developers putting plans into the local authorities and local authorities having the opportunity to check that plans are compliant with the relevant requirements. Local authorities will inspect the work, as will the private sector approved inspectors. Alongside the work that is done on building regulations, which are obviously
constrained by the scope of the building regulations, there are other mechanisms in place such as the warranty arrangements. The NHBC issues warranties and covers about 80% of the market, which provides protection for homeowners if there are problems that they discover after they have moved in. There are a range of mechanisms in place. Clearly the Government look very carefully at issues that arise, and if we need to make changes to the building control arrangements and the building control system, that is something that Ministers would want to consider.

**Q350 Baroness Whitaker:** How does the building regulation regime fit into the idea of place making? The success of either new housing or commercial development is not just the building; it is how it relates to the whole place—to the transport, to the facilities, to all sorts of other things. How do the building regulations latch on to place making?

**Bob Ledsome:** The building regulations are very much focused on the building, so the first part of the process is what the Local Plan says about the development in that particular area. Then there is the planning application that goes into the local authority for determination of the configuration of the development and how it is going to fit into the location. The building regulations come in once planning permission has been granted and say, “These are the building standards to which that building needs to be built”.

I should say that the building regulations start from the basic premise that this is about the safety and health of people in buildings or who are affected by buildings. Over time the scope of the building regulations has extended into sustainability issues, for example, but the building regulations do not regulate the aesthetics. Some of the design considerations that are obviously very important in new development are not regulated by the building regulations per se, although they are matters that would be taken into account by the local authority when it considers the relevant planning application against the Local Plan.

**The Chairman:** And some of the heritage issues.

**Bob Ledsome:** Indeed, if it is a heritage building, a listed building or conservation area.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Do you then consider that the design aesthetics are an extra, an add-on, and not part of the function of a building?
Bob Ledsome: No, I did not want to give that impression. If I did, I apologise. I was trying to make the point that issues around design aesthetics are matters that are considered through the planning system, not through the building regulations. They are considered but through the planning system rather than the building regulation system.

Q351 Lord Clement-Jones: We have already touched on this to a degree in the questions on how the regulations and so on operate, but the Farrell review—we are still on quality here—raised some very interesting qualitative criteria. The question is whether there is a government view about some of the issues that Farrell raised. For instance, do they have a view about the quality of new housing and commercial developments in general? Going beyond the details of regulations, are they satisfied that they are sufficiently sustainable, resilient and lasting? Are we doing well enough, not just in terms of how the regulations operate but in terms of a government view about place making, which of course is very much the Farrell phrase?

Steve Quartermain: Perhaps I can assist a little further. This slightly links back to Lord Inglewood’s comment earlier that some people have built schemes that may not be seen to be high design but have met building regulations because they have been built. Building regulation is not going to be the thing that necessarily drives the high-quality design but it can do, and there is a relationship between the two. For example, the way in which drainage is dealt with and sustainable urban drainage schemes is an integral part of a design in the way a place works. Place making is not necessarily understood by everybody. As Ruth said at the very beginning, it is about creating places where people like to live, work and relax.

Lord Clement-Jones: So it is not a very useful concept in that case?

Steve Quartermain: No, I do think it is a useful concept, but I think that the challenge is trying to ensure that people recognise that there is no utopian place. What matters is the place where people live and it is very much an individual thing. It is about local issues. That is why, linking back to my earlier answer, the Government think that a bottom-up approach to planning will capture that feeling about place: “What does my place feel like? How should it grow?”. I would argue that the Government are very clear on what they expect to be delivered through place making. The National Planning Policy Framework says very clearly that we are
looking to secure high-quality design. There is a whole section, paragraphs 56 to 68, that talks about design. It is one of the core planning principles in the NPPF that local authorities should do and it is a plan-led system. That is the vision thing; that is where you get that vision about what a place should be like. We would argue that we have a very clear and coherent policy position on how people should be addressing the creation of place, the way in which places should grow and the quality that we expect to be delivered through the planning framework.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** That is the framework. Do you think you have kicked the tyres enough at other levels in terms of regulations and so on to ensure that that is implemented?

**Steve Quartermain:** I would never sit back and say that we can be complacent and that we have done everything that we need to do. We have set the bar high, and in order to drive the achievement of that we need to work across the place, which again links to why we are pleased that the architectural policy has come to us, because we think we can make those links into place-making delivery, the building regulations, how developers interact with the planning system. There is always more that we can do, and the challenge, having set the bar high and having asked local authorities and set a duty on them to deliver this through their plans, we are talking to the architects, the developers and the house builders, is to try to ensure that it is implemented. In fairness, in many areas it is, and it would give entirely the wrong impression to say that the new build is all poor, because it is not. There is a lot of really good building out there. We are in award season now, with a lot of awards—there was one earlier this week, there were the RTPI awards last week—and they are recognising that this can be delivered.

**Lord Inglewood:** To what extent do you think design and a sense of place are subjective, and how much do you think they are objective factors? For example, if you were going to build a new Parliament building and somebody put in an application for a building like this, how would it meet those criteria?

**The Chairman:** I am afraid that is off piste, really.

**Lord Inglewood:** No, but this is the objective/subjective thing.

**Steve Quartermain:** I think it is a combination of the two. Design is not just appearance; design is about functionality. A lot of architects will argue that you need to design a building
from the inside. How a building is going to work is absolutely crucial. But I would argue that you can look at other buildings that have been built for public service purposes that are functioning extremely well and look good from the outside too. You can combine the subjectivity, the aesthetics, the appearance, with good functionality. I do not believe that is an unattainable goal. I definitely think we can do it.

Lord Clement-Jones: But generally, just to underline this, you are satisfied that the criteria are laid out sufficiently, that people know what they are meant to be doing, that the Farrell criteria are laid down sufficiently clearly so that judgments can be made about new build?

Steve Quartermain: The evidence I would use to answer that question is the fact that we can point to places where this has happened. If it can be achieved through the planning system, and the viability and economics of it means that great places are being delivered, the answer is yes.

The Chairman: Would it be inappropriate of us to ask you to be able to give us a list of places that you consider manage to do that? I am a bit worried about this, because I do not think we would want to publish it unless you have given an endorsement to these places.

Steve Quartermain: I always avoid trying to endorse or indeed directly criticise any particular scheme, which is why I pointed to the award season. Other people are judging these things at the moment and there are a lot of awards—

The Chairman: Yes, but is there something that we could look at? We are probably going to go on a couple of visits, and it would be good if you could direct us into something that would match the criteria that Lord Clement-Jones mentioned. We will visit everything, even if it is a sweet shop.

Steve Quartermain: We can give you a list of people who have been considered for the awards and then you can choose which one you want.

The Chairman: It would encourage lateral thinking.

Q352 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: You have portrayed a view of having confidence that concepts of place are being put in and rolled out, but what levers do you have in areas where that is not happening, where planning committees are not giving due consideration to issues not only around the shorter parts of the acronym PLACE but around the broader concepts of
place and the effect on the people who live and work there? What levers do planning departments have if people constructing buildings then alter what they put up after they have their planning permission through?

**Steve Quartermain:** There are two elements to that question. Local planning authorities are empowered, and indeed the NPPF empowers them to refuse obviously poor design. They can do that. At an appeal, if the evidence is there that a decision can be defended, we can expect that decision to be upheld. In fact, the Secretary of State himself has refused a scheme entirely on design grounds. It was just a poor design and the Secretary of State refused it. So the powers are there but the evidence needs to be there to support why that decision has been taken.

On the ability to control schemes after they have been approved, clearly there are permitted development rights for particular housing schemes that go with new houses, and people are entitled to extend their house—it is a national right. If a local authority feels that the concept and the design of the whole place does not warrant that and that it would be a bad thing, they can remove those permitted development rights by condition.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** I just wonder what levers it has if permission has been given to construct one thing and then what is done is completely different.

**Steve Quartermain:** The permission is usually conditioned; they need to build what they got approved. If they want to vary it, they can go back and ask for variations to the condition. If they build something that is entirely different, they can enforce. There are breach-of-condition notices and a number of other tools in the toolbox with which they can take action. If someone has built something that is different from what they got approved, there are tools in the toolbox and action can be taken, broadly, in enforcement terms.

**Q353 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** You have touched, in answer to earlier questions, on some of the Farrell issues, but what are the Government doing in response to the recommendations of the Farrell review?

**Gill Graham:** Obviously this is now a CLG lead. However, the Committee will be aware that following the publication of Sir Terry’s report, Ed Vaizey challenged the sector to prioritise those recommendations as the ones that it wishes to take forward and to take a key
leadership role in the implementation. Subsequently, a number of industry leaders, panellists and experts have agreed to act as champions for certain themes and recommendations within the review. These champions have either developed or are in the process of developing papers and positions. We are looking forward to hearing how our colleagues in CLG will work with them when they report back, and to understanding from that how government can take forward actions from those.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** What is your preliminary assessment of the recommendations in the review? In other words, do you feel that some of the recommendations have some real merit in them and are worth exploring in more detail and taking forward, or have you simply said to other people, “Have a look at it.”? Have you formed a first sift of your view of the recommendations?

**Steve Quartermain:** We welcomed the Farrell report. It was a valuable contribution to the debate. We are working with the champions and, as Gill said, we are looking forward to seeing what they do. The sector has been challenged and they have risen to that challenge. We are talking to people such as the PLACE Alliance, which is taking forward quite a bit of the Farrell challenge, and our Ministers are talking to them. From our Minister’s point of view, as I said earlier we are in the place where we are gathering information and talking to these players to help inform what our next step is. As I said, the Minister went to the Farrell reception last week and I know that he has meetings lined up to talk to them. For us, we are at the beginning of a sort of new approach and we will be looking at the Farrell review as part of that approach.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Do you have a timeline that we could look forward to in order to know when we can expect to see clear outcomes?

**Steve Quartermain:** I was always told to try to keep my answer succinct, so no.

**The Chairman:** That speaks volumes.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Finally, do you anticipate the need for any further research into important issues that are raised, or are you leaving it to external parties to discuss and come up with further responses?
Steve Quartermain: I think that will come out of the dialogue that we are having. It will depend on what comes back. We are clearly open to that challenge, and if we need to do more work we will do so. The appetite for Ministers to engage positively in this is very clear.

The Chairman: It seems to be top of the pops at the moment. You cannot open a newspaper any day—or maybe it is just because I am involved in it—and not see something about housing, the environment, place making and things like that. That is good, because it means that the great British public are going to get energised eventually.

Q354 Baroness Young of Old Scone: This is quite a significant report and very thoughtful. Are the Government planning to give an account of which of the recommendations they do not agree with, or are we just going to see it massaged out of the script?

Steve Quartermain: I am not sure that we are going to see anything massaged out. The Government have given a response already and I do not think there is any anticipation that there will be a further response. Where we sit at the moment is taking forward the recommendations that are in it in a meaningful way. That is not necessarily us producing another paper telling people what we think of it; it is engaging with the sector and trying to take forward the things that are in the Farrell report that can be taken forward. We are action, not words.

Lord Clement-Jones: Is the proof of the pudding the buildings that will emerge in the next few years?

Steve Quartermain: Indeed.

Q355 Baroness Rawlings: We have in front of us a rather depressing graph of how house building has been declining quite badly since the 1960s. What is your view for this consistent failure for the targets in recent decades, and do you think current policy can buck the trend? I will, if I may, add my supplementary at this stage so that it can work with the main question. If you buck the trend, how will enough energy be provided for all these new houses that we desire when we had quite a big announcement this week that there is going to be a severe shortage of energy and possible cuts this winter? Cuts such as these are far more serious than in the past, because so much is now driven by electricity—you cannot even make a landline
telephone call without electricity, and there are lifts and all the other things—and this affects the elderly especially.

I return to what Ms Stanier was saying earlier on about energy efficiency: that it is now at 30%, and that there is great improvement and we are getting to carbon budgets and climate change targets. In view of all this use of renewables rather than what we had before with coal, nuclear and future shale, is the price of all these carbon budgets and climate change targets going to work when we have these severe cuts and if we are going to be building all these new houses?

Ruth Stanier: I will do my best to try to answer those points. I will start with the question about how we deliver enough homes to meet the country's needs. Clearly this is a very significant challenge, which as you say has clearly proved difficult over recent decades. We are very clear about the framework that needs to be in place to deliver the homes that the country needs. To achieve that we first need there to be enough permissioned land in the system. We then need there to be enough supporting infrastructure. We then need a diversity of developers, both large and small, who together have the capacity, skills and bricks to put the housing up. Finally, we need enough demand to ensure that the market operates effectively.

The Government’s approach is very much about seeking to get every part of that system operating in a way to get us to the housing ambitions that we have. There are a number of reasons why perhaps we can be at least somewhat optimistic. If we look at the trends in planning permissions, the latest published data showed that in 2014-15 261,000 new homes were granted planning permission. The trend has been very positive. That has in fact increased by over 60% since 2010 and we are now at a point that is higher than where we were before the economic issues some years back. So clearly permissions are at a level, even allowing for some kind of natural dropout, where we should be seeing new housing coming forward.

That is very positive indeed, and that is why in the productivity plan announcements last week we will now be looking to focus very much on ensuring, first, that up-to-date Local Plans are in place to support the continuation of that positive trend. We know that where Local Plans
are in place, those plans provide at a level much closer to the projected need than in other areas, and we also see more housing delivery in those areas. The second area that we are focusing on is very much the end-to-end planning process, right from thinking of schemes to enabling them to start on site. Even once you have permission, there is a problem in some areas about getting the condition sorted out quickly, and we are continuing to very much focus on addressing that.

In terms of ensuring that the right mix of developers are in place, the Government is continuing to pursue a number of initiatives, and indeed new initiatives, to promote home ownership and to support small builders in financing and in ensuring that unnecessary burdens are removed, as well as in supporting the private sector and building for rent.

In terms of the demand, the final part of the framework, Help to Buy, remains in place. We are absolutely seeking to tackle these issues head on.

The final point in relation to the first part of your question is to draw your attention to the really significant shift over recent years in local public attitudes to house building, which I think has been a really important constraint in the past. The latest research data shows that local support for house building has doubled in the last four years from 28% in 2010 to 56% now. We think that neighbourhood planning has contributed to that. I also think that we are all worried about where our children, and indeed grandchildren, will be living. So there is an important shift there that we think will be very helpful.

Clearly your point about energy is a very important one. We work closely with the Department of Energy & Climate Change on these issues. As I set out at the beginning, there are clear requirements in national planning policy that energy requirements of new housing must absolutely be considered as part of the local plan process. The recent announcements do raise concerns. My understanding is not that there will definitely be problems but that if we have a particularly cold winter and there are high energy requirements at particular times, there could be issues. But as I say, we work closely with DECC on these matters.

**Baroness Rawlings:** That is before all these houses are built, let alone other things.

**Bob Ledsome:** I would like to expand on that last point. When the Government set out the carbon budgets over the coming years, they clearly take account of the economic impacts of
setting carbon targets at particular levels, both at the macroeconomic level but also thinking about what it might mean for energy prices and therefore energy bills, and therefore obviously the impact on homeowners and their fuel bills. Those matters are taken into account.

**Steve Quartermain:** I would just add that we talked earlier about infrastructure and a national infrastructure plan. There is a national policy statement on energy that very clearly sets out, looking forward, the future energy needs for the country, which are linked to the major infrastructure regime. It identified the gap, which is taken into account in projections of the need, and that is why it sets out in that framework what energy requirements are expected to be delivered. There is recognition that as the growth takes place—particularly as some of the energy providers drop off, because not all of them are still going to be there—there will be a need for new investment in the future.

**Baroness Rawlings:** I am not an expert on that, but Lord Ezra, who is, was always asking questions in the House, inevitably about the fact that we do not have enough reserves and have enough only for a very short time if there is a heavy demand. That is why I wonder, with all this new demand, whether we will be able to cope. That is all.

**Q356 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Which government department is currently responsible for analysing the reasons for market failure in not building enough houses? Which government department is responsible for the research and producing evidence on which to take policy forward? Secondly, all the evidence that we have had to date shows that private building for private owner-occupiers has never reached the level that we are now saying we aim to achieve and that the level of house building that we want to achieve has always been achieved when it has by a significant contribution of social or local authority housing. I noted in your observations to us that you made little or no mention at all of that balance. My question is again: to what extent is housing policy going forward built on research and analysis? If so, what has that research and analysis shown to you about the need for contribution from social and local authority housing, for rent as well as for private occupation?

**Ruth Stanier:** The responsibility for housing policy research and analysis fits very squarely with our department, the Department for Communities and Local Government, and absolutely our
analytical teams, with our policy teams, undertake analysis of this issue. To address your point about the contribution of affordable housing, I think you are quite right to pull me up on that. I should have mentioned it as part of my response. Clearly affordable housing is a very important part of the mix. The last Parliament made a significant contribution to the overall levels of housing delivery, so absolutely that needs to be part of the mix.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** The department has undertaken research on this, has analysed it, and has drawn some conclusions about the next 15 years. It has taken a view based on research and evidence of the contribution that you must expect to come from social housing?

**Ruth Stanier:** The analysis that has been undertaken is very much in the context of the framework I described right at the beginning of my answer: how all the different parts of the system, from permissioned land through to diversity of developers through to demand, need to work together in order to get housing built. I would not say that we have set out any single prediction as to what the precise mix should or could be going forward. There could be a range of potential mixes going forward, and we do a lot of work looking at the potential scenarios, the potential amounts that different providers may be able to bring forward, and what drivers we have to encourage that.

**Lord Inglewood:** Could I follow that quickly and say that you have indicated that you anticipate that for the future, because not everybody has enough money, there is a requirement for social housing and let accommodation? Have you any kind of back-of-an-envelope sense of roughly what percentage of the whole that might be, taking the country as a whole?

**Ruth Stanier:** Do you mean now or going forward?

**Lord Inglewood:** Well, both. In the landscape.

**Ruth Stanier:** I do not feel that is a question I can give a clear answer to today, but it is one that we can certainly take away and come back to you on.

**Bob Ledsome:** It might be worth just recording that the Government had a manifesto commitment to build 275,000 affordable homes over this Parliament, so clearly that is an ambition that this Government have set for themselves that I think is relevant to the discussion that we have been having.
Lord Inglewood: The affordability comes in two forms: it is either afford to buy or afford not to buy and live in.

The Chairman: How would that be split? Would it be associated public authority, local authority buildings, private buildings or what?

Bob Ledsome: I am afraid that I cannot give you that split.

The Chairman: Good. Okay, thank you.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Could I ask for another piece of information, as we are getting some information, which is the percentage of planning approvals currently granted for housing that never get built, and whether that is increasing or reducing?

Ruth Stanier: I can briefly answer that. It is something that we have been looking at quite closely recently. Over recent years there has been quite a constant trend that shows that of all the permissions that are granted, roughly 20% of them will subsequently be re-permissioned when people decide that the scheme they originally applied for is not exactly the scheme they want to build. So there is some natural churn that is not necessarily problematic. In addition to that, our analysis suggests that some 10% to 20% of planning permissions seem to fall out and not reappear. We are doing some further internal work to try to understand more exactly why that happens.

The Chairman: Is there any one major reason why? Is it that people decide that they want to hang on to the land bank?

Ruth Stanier: We think that the possible reasons—although we do not yet have clear evidence for this—are, first, viability issues: a scheme where permission is sought and then subsequently it becomes clear that it is just not viable. Potentially some permissions are also sought primarily to secure book value, land value, uplift. We think there are a range of reasons.

Q357 Earl of Lytton: We have heard a lot about the Government’s wish to procure the delivery through the local plan system. My question is: are the Government satisfied with the design and delivery of local plans as they are coming out at the moment? Put another way, with the benefit of being able to see the ones that have come out, is the national planning policy framework a sufficiently good tool of analysis for the purposes of local plan preparation
as opposed to an undeniably beneficial list of aspirations, if I can put it that way? Would you care to comment on how things are happening with the local plan delivery at the moment?

**Steve Quartermain:** As Ruth Stanier said earlier, we know that there has been an improvement in the delivery of plans, so the system is working and over 80% are published and 64% adopted. But we recognise and people tell us that it can be a complex and lengthy process. It slightly links back to what I was saying earlier about communities: sometimes a plan can take so long to produce that by the time you have actually produced a plan and are making planning applications and decisions on it, the community has shifted and churned and you have different people living in the community when the plan and the decision were made, and they think, “What is all this about?”. It is about trying to get plans delivered more quickly, trying to look at where the complexities are and seeing whether we can make them simpler. Local planning authorities think that it is much more risky than perhaps it is in certain instances. They produce piles of evidence for things and we think, “Do you need all that evidence?” Sometimes you do, but perhaps sometimes you do not. We are going to try to look at the process and see whether we can streamline it and make that plan-making process quicker.

You are absolutely right in that the NPPF sets out very clearly what a Local Plan should do. It sets out the core principles, and indeed what should be in a Local Plan. You could argue that it is very clear what people should be doing, and there are times when you think, “Why is it taking people so long?”. Even with over 80% of local planning authorities with plans published, there are still nearly 20% who have not published a plan since 2004. We need to try to ask why that is and what we can do to drive them to deliver a plan. If that means looking at the ways in which we can streamline it, then what we have committed to is doing just that.

**Q358 Baroness Whitaker:** Mr Quartermain, you encouraged public participation earlier, which was very welcome. What do you think is the earliest stage at which the public can come in on the local plan? You talked about changing public perception and all that kind of thing.

**Steve Quartermain:** Day one.

**Baroness Whitaker:** How do you hope they would do it?
**Steve Quartermain:** People would normally engage the public with an issues and options paper that tried to explain the issues that we are trying to address and the options that we have to address them. Most local authorities will engage in a public engagement process, and I think there is evidence that they are getting more imaginative about how they do it. It is not just a public exhibition or a notice in the paper. Certainly on neighbourhood planning, we have heard evidence of people holding discos and getting the young people involved. That is one of the biggest challenges. A lot of the stuff that we are looking to develop is for an ageing population, but it is also the young people who are going to be living in these houses by the time they are built in five years' time. They are the ones who are in higher education or at school at the moment. Trying to capture their views is really important, and we have seen people be quite imaginative about how they do that.

**Baroness Whitaker:** If you know some good examples, could you let us have them?

**Steve Quartermain:** We will indeed.

**Q359 The Chairman:** Can I now have the last question? What would you like to see as the result of this inquiry that we are doing, a report into the future of the built environment? Are there glaring omissions that we have not mentioned today? If any one of you were in my position, what question would you be asking? I am asking each one of you to give me your question.

**Ruth Stanier:** I think you all asked some extremely pertinent questions. To my mind, one of the most useful outcomes of your work could be to give more prominence to, more of a push behind, this critical issue that you were rightly interrogating us about: how we get that really good quality design out there; what will it take. As I hope has come across, we are very passionate about it, but it is not something that government can do alone. Who are the key characters? How do we make it happen?

**The Chairman:** We are passionate too, by the way.

**Steve Quartermain:** From my point of view, I think it is the recognition of the importance of planning as a means of delivery, which you might expect from the chief planner. Planning is a delivery mechanism; it is the thing that makes things happen and changes people's lives. It is looking at the way in which we can embed that into the players, the people who use the
planning system, because ultimately it is about outcomes and where people live. That is the challenge: how we stop the planning system being seen as a regulatory thing that you engage in when you want either an extension or to stop an extension next door and to see it instead as a vision thing that says, “This is about shaping where we live”.

**Bob Ledsome**: My comment is also related to delivery but at a slightly different angle, which is the effectiveness and the ability of the industry to deliver what it wants to deliver, if I can put it like that. There will be good design, excellent designs, that we would all support, but for some reason or other that is not quite what happens in practice. I think there are some really interesting issues about why that is the case, not that people are wilfully ignoring good design but whether there are some constraints and factors in the system that sort of inhibit that. That would be quite an interesting area for study.

**Gill Graham**: From my perspective, from heritage and the historic environment, you have touched on some really important points. Today’s fine architecture is tomorrow’s heritage, and it is what we are going to be concerned about tomorrow. I would be interested in challenging us on how we consider the historic environment in terms of planning and how that planning can reuse historic buildings and regenerate them, particularly in city centres. That is a challenge and it is one that I would encourage you to challenge with us.

**The Chairman**: On behalf of all the Committee I am sure I can say thank you very much indeed. Thank you for giving your time and answering some probably very pleby sorts of questions. On some you have made us think, and that is the purpose of them, so thank you. You will be getting a transcript, of course.
Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Communities and Local Government - Oral Evidence (QQ13-28)

Transcript to be found under Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Culture, Media and Sport
**Design Council CABE – Written Evidence (BEN0177)**

**About this paper**

1. This paper is a written evidence contribution to the House of Lords Select Committee Inquiry on a National Policy for the Built Environment. In this paper we set out the role of the Design Council and how we work to support the delivery of high quality places where businesses want to locate and people thrive.

**About the Design Council**

2. Design Council is an independent enterprising charity that champions great design to improve lives. Our work places design at the heart of stimulating business growth; helps to transform our public services and enhances places and cities. We advance new design thinking, encourage debate and inform government policy.

3. In 2011, we merged with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and now offer direct support to help all those in the planning process to deliver better quality development.

4. As an advisor to government on design, Design Council Cabe offers policy advice and are commissioned to deliver direct support to help meet key government objectives. In particular, we work closely with DCLG sitting on its Housing and Planning Sounding Boards. We also sit on the Government’s Design Advisory Panel. Importantly, we work across government on a range of priorities to deliver better quality places. For example, we are currently working with BIS to identify how investment in the built environment can create the right conditions to stimulate innovation and local growth.

5. Advising, influencing and inspiring, we work to create well-designed, inclusive buildings, places and spaces.

**Policymaking, integration and coordination**

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policy makers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

6. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a clear policy framework for decision-making, supplemented by the Planning Practice...
Guidance (PPG). These, alongside up-to-date Local Plans should provide the policy and structures for coherent and consistent decision-making.

7. Further devolution and the advent of combined authorities will provide a further mechanism for joined up local decision-making across functional economic and housing market areas. City regional decision-making should include housing and planning powers to provide greater consistency with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) geographies and to accurately reflect travel to work areas.

8. Our Councilor’s guide to Urban Design set out the important role that councillors’ play in the delivery of high quality well designed places and buildings. In order to tackle the major housing challenge that we face there is a need to take difficult decisions, but this accountability has to be linked to a package of incentives to encourage politicians and ultimately their electorate to accept new housing.102

9. Comprehensive and compulsory training for councillors’ is crucial in order for planning committee members to take the bold and difficult decisions that will be needed to deliver housing, infrastructure and major regeneration projects at scale across the country.

How well is policy co-ordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and co-ordination be improved?

10. The role of a Chief Architect, in our view would not aid co-ordination. Bringing policy functions together whether there is synergy, such as the formation of the Cities Unit or Government Property Unit provides a flexible, agile means to address strategic “place” issues across all the aforementioned areas.

11. No one government department has the ability to, or should, influence decision-making in places across the country. This co-ordination has better results when done at city-region level and through cross Whitehall co-ordination and locational leads, as per BIS Local and the above mentioned units.

12. Organisations such as Design Council Cabe, Historic England and the new National Infrastructure Commission provide useful delivery support mechanisms to ensure integration and co-ordination occurs and is continually improving.

**National Policy for planning and the built environment**

Does the NPPF provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

13. Greater weight should not be given to certain elements of the NPPF over others. It is important that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) chapters and sections retain equal weight so as not to prejudice the determination of individual applications or the production of Local Plans which must rest with the Local Planning Authority.

14. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) online tool provides an effective means for ensuring that policy is kept up-to-date to reflect practice and to ensure that there is an annual update of the guidance. This mechanism should be allowed to bed down before further amends are made to the system. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element of national policy?

15. It should be for Local Planning Authorities and Combined Authorities to determine their priorities based on evidence at a city region level. It is unclear what weight a “National Spatial” plan would have alongside the existing NPPF and PPG. It is also unknown how a “National Spatial” plan would sit with the context of the existing LEP network, their Strategic Economic Plans and plans that Combined Authorities will be required to produce.

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

16. Local Plans need to have a clear spatial vision fifteen years, looking ahead to ensure that they plan robustly for future change in their area. Most Local Plans clearly set out this long term timeframe, although to assess housing supply, this is on a somewhat more limited time frame of five years. Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs) robustly produced with a sound evidence base must clearly set out costed and prioritised plans for the planning and delivery of strategically significant infrastructure in order to provide certainty to infrastructure providers and developers.

Buildings and Places: New and Old

What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinate at central Government level required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?
17. The Productivity Plan sets out clear measures to increase housing supply, including further reforms to the planning system. The Government should set out a clear housing supply strategy, building on recent announcements around “Planning in Principle” and “Starter Homes”. This new strategy should be clear in what numbers could be achieved over the course of this Parliament and how this clearly meets demographic need. Such a strategy should make a clear commitment to achieve high quality design in new housing and better quality places whilst setting out the various mechanisms that will be used to deliver such as Design Review, as set out in the NPPF.

To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place making? How can more be made of these national assets?

18. The historic environment adds commercial and economic value to places across the UK. People spend more in their local economy after investment in the historic environment. Historic England research has demonstrated for every £1 invested in the historic environment directly contributes an additional £1.60 to the local economy over a ten year period.

19. Historic England is critical to the success and enhancement of our historic assets. CABE and latterly Design Council Cabe have a long history working with Historic England. As separate organisations with separate remits, responsibilities and priorities we both deal with the built environment, we often touch on the same projects, for example when we assess planning applications, comment on planning or other policy, or through our training programmes and publications. We liaise frequently, have a good working relationship and look to work jointly wherever it is appropriate. For example, we collaborate through the Urban Panel and on joint guidance on tall buildings and building in context.

20. Within the context of the upcoming Spending Review it is critical that support remains for Historic England beyond its existing settlement to optimise the benefits derived from our historic assets.

Skills and Design

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills to adequately consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do Local Authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
21. As local authorities face increasing pressures and demands on their resources, it will be important for new models and more efficient ways of working to be developed. The Local Government Finance Settlement and outcomes of the CSR will have a major impact on local planning authorities over the next period.

22. Our City Design Programme has, for over two years, provided consistent and flexible design support and advice in various towns, cities and boroughs to provide cost effective support and resources to authorities. The efficient and effective manner in which this programme operates also helps to generate revenue for the authority and acts as CPD training for officers as well as comprehensive and integrated design and planning training for elected members. It de risks the development process and creates certainty for applicants and developers.

23. See Appendix for further information about our Cities Programme.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

24. Government must set the benchmark. In line with the NPPF, all publicly funded development projects should seek to achieve good design and be subject to proven mechanism such as Design Review to do so. CABE, and latterly Design Council Cabe, has been at the forefront of promoting well designed development for over fifteen years and has a long track record in advising on major schemes from the London 2012 to Crossrail to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

25. National leadership is important, but as set out previously, local authorities and city regions should have in place their own arrangements drawing on best practice as each city has different needs requirements and pressures.

26. Our Cities Programme, has been a step change in the tools and techniques on offer to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’, This new approach has been endorsed by Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and we are now working with officials to see how more towns and cities could benefit from the Programme. See Appendix for further information.

**Community involvement and impact**

Do those involved in delivering and managing our Built Environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve
consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

27. Neighbourhood Planning has provided a good platform by which to bring community groups and Parish Councils into the planning process, for them to shape and develop their own plans and to be positive about development that is well designed and in context of their area. Indeed, evidence has demonstrated that achieving good quality is important to communities and can speed up the delivery of new development - over 73% of people say they would support the building of homes if well-designed.  

28. Initiatives such as the NHS England Healthy New Towns programme provide an opportunity to understand and plan more cohesively for the future health needs and requirements of communities. This programme is a good example of the benefits of bringing together, healthcare and local authority partners to raise the ambition for new development.

29. Our work with Bournemouth Borough Council through our Active by Design programme is a good example of how communities can successfully influence and enhance their built environment to improve health and well-being. For further information see appendix.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

30. The Neighbourhood Planning process has been effective in democratising the planning process further. The main issue is around involvement and engagement in Local Plans which is a long and time consuming process. This is an area that could be examined to improve public participation and inclusion.

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103 National Housing and Planning Advisory Unit (NHPAU), 2010
Appendix

Design Council Cabe Cities Programme

Context
Cities across the country are not reaching their full potential constrained by insufficient infrastructure and a lack of affordable housing, amongst other key constraints.

To tackle this challenge the Design Council Cabe has developed an innovative new system of support for cities blending local knowledge and world-class expertise to help bring forward necessary development to stimulate local economic growth.

Piloted with Oxford City Council, our new Cities Programme not only offers a means to unlock stalled developments and deliver new homes and infrastructure; it offers the opportunity to create, at pace, good quality places where businesses want to locate and invest and where people want to live and visit.

Benefits
Design Council Cabe works with all parties engaged in delivering development to support growth: local and central government and the development and construction industry. The Cities Programme can:

- create confident, high-quality prosperous places
- help to deliver long-term sustainable economic growth
- provide certainty for investors and developers
- ensure necessary new homes and infrastructure are brought forward at the right time, in the right place and are of better quality
- build confidence in the local authority
- identify opportunities and challenges earlier in the process to enable stakeholders to create better results

How it works?
To meet the needs of every place, we provide:

- multi-disciplinary design panels selected to meet the specific needs of each city
- design support and review throughout the early stage design and planning process
- strategic specialist expertise to assist in the shaping of policy
- expert advice to maximise the impact of policy implementation
- training to build capacity, knowledge and expertise within the Local Planning Authority
Building a database of knowledge to inform continuous improvement of services for the benefit of the city

How is it funded?

Our pilot with Oxford City Council has demonstrated that our Cities Programme can be funded through planning fees. However, through our conversations with local leaders we know that where land values are lower and viability more challenging, they are less likely to participate in the programme.

Case Study – Oxford City Council

Oxford is home to one of the world’s leading universities\textsuperscript{104} and, as a centre for technology research, is a key part of the UK’s knowledge economy. There are 1,500 high-tech firms in Oxfordshire, employing 43,000 people.\textsuperscript{105} The city’s labour force has the highest proportion of graduates anywhere in the UK, other than Cambridge.\textsuperscript{106} The city is also famous for its rich heritage and built environment.

Managing a successful, growing city while maintaining its character and enhancing its reputation for world class design requires careful consideration. A city’s built environment can either facilitate or hinder local ambitions for growth. The quality of the built environment in Oxford is crucial to delivering economic growth, but many sites are very sensitive with myriad constraints and challenges. Development must be of a quality appropriate to an internationally renowned city to reinforce its reputation and sustainable growth.

The City Deal for Oxford and Oxfordshire has set out clear ambitions by unleashing a new wave of innovation-led growth to maximise the areas world-class assets. These include “big science” facilities such as Harwell Oxford Campus and the Oxford Innovation Campus. Public and private funding will combine to invest in a network of innovation and incubation centres in Science Vale Oxford (Oxfordshire’s Enterprise Zone), to develop major sites in Oxford, and to enable the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Through the City Deal, it has been recognised that the region has not reached its full potential and has been constrained by insufficient public transport, an at-capacity road network and a lack of affordable housing, pricing employees and businesses out of the market.\textsuperscript{107} The City Deal therefore identifies transport improvements and the

\textsuperscript{105} SQW (2013) The Oxfordshire Innovation Engine
\textsuperscript{106} Centre for Cities (2014) Cities Outlook
\textsuperscript{107} The Oxford Innovation Engine: Realising the Growth Potential (October 2013)
provision of high-quality housing as fundamental to the delivery of sustainable economic growth.\textsuperscript{108}

To help meet these challenges, Oxford City Council commissioned the Design Council to provide design support services across the city to blend world-class expertise and local knowledge to help bring forward necessary development faster to support local innovation and stimulate economic growth. The Design Council has worked with nearly every local authority in the country and has a track record of successful projects at every scale, from communities delivering their neighbourhood plans to Nationally Significant projects including London 2012, Crossrail and the new Thames Tideway Tunnel.

Oxford City Council and the Design Council are bringing together Councillors, officers, developers, investors and other key stakeholders to debate and set a benchmark for design in the city. This approach, building on the solid foundations of an adopted local plan, is enabling Oxford to set out a clear vision for the city and have a clear strategy to deliver their ambition. In turn, this helps to provide the climate for investors to be confident and secures a vibrant, prosperous future for the city.

Other towns and cities are also set to benefit from this approach in stimulating local innovation and growth. The Design Council is sharing knowledge and lessons learned across local authorities now delivering local growth to support other councils with limited resources in tackling the challenges of bringing forward the right type of high-quality development, in the right place at the right time.

Oxford’s case demonstrates how to secure quality development that supports local priorities. The city has a bright future, and is very well-placed to flourish and grow in an innovation-led economy. However, it also has major challenges to overcome in order to achieve its potential, many of which directly related to the built environment. With the highest average house prices of any city outside London\textsuperscript{109} and poor transport links between Oxford and Science Vale, the city needs to tackle major housing and infrastructure constraints to enable long-term growth. This requires a strategic view of the scale of potential development, looking beyond individual planning applications to take control of the city’s longer-term future. Design Council support will help the City Council develop the confidence it needs to demand high-quality solutions and to ensure they can be delivered.

Oxford is proving that investment in the built environment and a proactive approach to planning can stimulate local growth by providing certainty for investors as well as

\textsuperscript{108} Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal (February, 2014)
\textsuperscript{109} Centre for Cities (2014) Cities Outlook
helping to provide high-quality affordable homes and critical infrastructure investment across the city.

**N.B. This case study was originally prepared by the Design Council in 2014, at the request of the BIS Knowledge & Innovation Directorate for inclusion in the coalition government’s new Science & Innovation Strategy.**

**Testimonials**

“A proactive approach to planning and development is the key to unlocking the potential of all our cities and is at the heart of what this government is trying to achieve. Oxford has always been a city of innovation, with world class reputation and I am delighted the City Council is building on this tradition by working with the Design Council to develop a holistic new approach to deliver their ambitions for locally-led growth. I encourage other cities across the country to look at how they could use, and benefit from, the Design Council new cities programme to help deliver housing and infrastructure, at pace and as set out in their city deals.”

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government:

"Oxford was selected to bid for the City Deal because of its continuing growth potential, and its contribution to the national economy. Our focus is on creating employment and economic growth in the knowledge economy, supported by housing and infrastructure."

‘Oxford City Council is seeking to be a world class city for all its residents, and high quality design in every aspect of the built environment including its public spaces is a key component in creating an environment of which we can be proud of, and in which people are happy to live. The work of the Design Review Panel has already made a substantial contribution to the quality of some key regeneration schemes in the city, in the short period since it was established, and we are indebted to the Design Council for the excellent support work and professional skills that have been provided to the Panel and the City Council.’

Councillor Bob Price, Leader of Oxford City Council

**Case Study - West Howe, Bournemouth**

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<td>Issue</td>
<td>The West Howe estate, a low-density neighbourhood of 10,000 residents, is made up of social and owner-occupied homes and is peppered with neglected green spaces and hard surfaces. With high levels of deprivation, the community face social and economic challenges including high rates of obesity and mental health problems. Design Council led this project to use</td>
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community intelligence and professional expertise to create an achievable vision for regenerating the estate - with residents’ health at its core.

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<th>What tools we used to deliver the project</th>
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<td>• Design Council recruited 12 local volunteers as project ambassadors - to inform the project and secure wider resident involvement</td>
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<td>• Design Council trained the ambassadors on: what’s possible, via visits to successfully regenerated areas; communication skills; the principles of good design; built environment health audit techniques</td>
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<th>Establishing an achievable vision:</th>
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“I didn’t have a clue what it was about at the beginning, it sounded interesting and I just felt encouraged to participate and to help have a say on what happens in West Howe. I got more confidence being involved and I understand things more as a result. Our day trip to Southampton was a real eye opener on how different areas have different ideas on regeneration. It’s not always about the money – it’s about what the community can do too. I think the residents are encouraged that there is going to be improvement. Volunteering this last 5 months, and especially the ambassador role, I feel like I fit in this community now. I’ve never felt like I fit in somewhere before. It has given me a lot more confidence and I feel stronger – I can’t wait to see what each new day brings.”
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<th>Lynn Laird, Ambassador</th>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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*12 October 2015*
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Inglewood
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

David Tittle, Chair, Design Network, and Chief Executive, MADE West Midlands, and David Waterhouse, Head of Strategic Development, Design Council CABE

Q84 The Chairman: Good morning. I have already officially welcomed you outside, but here I hope it is warmer; it is jolly cold in those corridors. It is very good of you both to give up your time, and we are looking forward enormously to your evidence. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. In addition, a transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you, for the record, briefly to introduce yourself to the Committee? I am going to do it alphabetically, so Mr Tittle before Mr Waterhouse; I was going to call you David and Goliath, but I decided not to.

David Tittle: My name is David Tittle. Most of my early career was in business or business advice, but about 15 years ago I went to work for the Civic Trust. That projected me into the built environment. Since then I have been a trainer, an advocate, organiser and adviser on design issues, and I have a qualification in urban design. For the past eight years I have worked for MADE, a charity based in the West Midlands dedicated to improving the built environment, and I became its chief executive. I am chair of the Design Network, which pulls
together organisations like MADE across England. I am also a trustee of Civic Voice, the national organisation for civic societies.

David Waterhouse: I am David Waterhouse. I am a chartered town planner with over 10 years’ experience in urban planning and regeneration. My early career was spent in local government, followed by the Town and Country Planning Association, where I ran its policy function. I then spent a period in DCLG, where I was responsible for the housing market renewal programme and advice on eco-towns and the Growth Points programme, under both Labour and coalition Governments. For the past three and a half years I have been head of strategic development at CABE, merged with the Design Council, working with cities and authorities up and down the country to support them in identifying solutions to improve the quality of all major developments. We work with many authorities, providing a variety of review, policy, peer-to-peer support and training. In addition, I am on the board of the Town and Country Planning Association and an academian at the Academy of Urbanism.

The Chairman: I am sure that around this table you see many old friends, not old in age but of long standing.

David Waterhouse: Yes.

The Chairman: Is the emphasis always on cities, not smaller towns or, say, market towns, because they need to be better than they are at the moment?

David Waterhouse: Yes.

The Chairman: Also, a lot of them will have to expand if we are to fulfil anything like the targets for housing.

David Waterhouse: Absolutely. Our work is very broad brush across towns and cities. We have delivered major programmes of work for neighbourhood planning programmes up and down the country, working in towns and villages, market towns and, critically, in historic towns where there is also a real need to integrate new and old sensitively.

Q85 The Chairman: Indeed. I am sure our specialist adviser would make that point, too. The first question is: who should be responsible for providing national leadership on design in the built environment? To what extent have the changes to CABE since 2011 resulted in the loss of leadership at national level, or has it?
**David Tittle:** On the first question, government needs to set general objectives, direction and priorities for the built environment. That needs to come from the centre of government rather than any particular department, because it crosses the responsibilities of all departments. The industry needs to respond to that, and professional bodies, charities and think tanks need to act as that collective memory and provide a challenge. There has been a loss of leadership since the old CABE disappeared. In our view, out in the field, away from the architectural press and the sort of discussions that go on at high level, what is missed most about CABE is that leadership: the bringing together of knowledge, the publications, and the guidance and training that used to come out, rather than design review. To a certain extent, the Place Alliance and bodies like ours at Design Network are stepping into that role. We have run several national conferences, and the Place Alliance grew out of one of those. People are coming to fill the vacuum, but it is a little patchy and unco-ordinated.

**The Chairman:** Does that mean that in your situation you are reactive to people saying, “Well, it would have been so much better if we had x, y or z as we had before”, or do you actually go out and peddle for business, or for the opportunity to give advice to people?

**David Tittle:** We are certainly peddling for business and trying to be as proactive as we can, not only in reacting to what government are doing and to what is happening out there in the market in development, but also, as much as we can, in drawing knowledge together, learning lessons and talking about how things could be different.

**The Chairman:** Can I give you a case in point? Yesterday, we had a very good visit to Birmingham City Council, which was quite revelatory—from my point of view anyway. What would you do in circumstances where 10 years ago you saw what Birmingham City Council was about to do and the situation was as it is now for your organisation? Would you have rung the chairman of Birmingham City Council, or gone up there? What would you have done? Would you have asked for papers? Would you have asked, “What are you planning? Can we give you any help?”.

**David Tittle:** Yes, that is what we do all the time.

**The Chairman:** That is what you do now, so if, say, Sheffield wants to do it, that is what you do.
David Tittle: Yes. One aspect of the Farrell review that I like very much is the way it talked about the industry and the professions in a particular area needing to be more civic, needing to help out the public sector in these times of austerity. To take Birmingham as a point, traditionally it always argued that it had a very strong in-house team and did not necessarily need outside expertise.

The Chairman: Yes, I can understand that.

David Tittle: We always talked to them and said that a little bit of challenge was sometimes helpful, but they had a point; they had a very good team. Some of them were our friends and colleagues, so we knew how good they were, but that is no longer the case. A lot of those people have gone.

The Chairman: We know that.

David Tittle: They need help with capacity. What we have been doing in Birmingham is going round to talk to all the major firms of architects and principal developers, saying, “Let’s get together and put a proposal to the city. Let’s talk about how we can take that message from the Farrell review: we are here to help you”. We are doing that in Birmingham and also in Coventry.

The Chairman: Coventry needs it.

Lord Inglewood: You described Birmingham and its pomp in glowing terms. How representative is that of the wider picture?

David Tittle: I think it is very mixed around the country. A lot of it depends on happenstance: the politicians, the particular officers and the chemistry. A city that did very well 10 years ago at turning itself round is Sheffield. We took people to Sheffield to examine it and asked, “How have you managed to do this?”. I think it was the different principal agencies pulling in the same direction, all appreciating the importance of place. Yorkshire Forward was the one RDA that I think really got the importance of place and worked on transforming places, but that also needed a good local authority. In those days we also had urban regeneration companies. You need to have a good one of those working with the local authority. If all the agencies are pulling in the right direction and you get the right politicians and officers, magic can happen.

Lord Inglewood: But how often does it happen?

David Tittle: Not as often as it should.
Lord Inglewood: Is the general picture poor? I am not asking for names—no names, no pack drill, you will be glad to hear—but do you reckon the general picture is materially less good than it should be, or not?

David Tittle: It is less good in the sense that—I know others have said this to you in previous sessions—the attention to everyday places and to detail is not what it should be. Every city has prestige schemes—prestige developments and public realm schemes that they can take lovely photos of, put in their brochures and take to MIPIM and say, “Come and invest in us; we’re wonderful”. Of course, they should do that, but then you go round the corner and see a place that still has masses of surface car parks, is highway-dominated, has poor buildings, is difficult to find your way around and so on. A lot of our country is like that, but the good developments show what we are capable of and that we have the skills.

The Chairman: There is obviously a huge gap at the moment. That is the gap you could get yourselves into to fulfil your aspirations. Mr Waterhouse, you have been silent about this. What are your views on the question?

David Waterhouse: I agree entirely with David Tittle that national government and its delivery agencies—the Homes and Communities Agency and the Planning Inspectorate—have a clear role to play at national level. However, life has moved on since 2011. I have travelled to all core and key cities up and down the country, indeed to many small historic towns, and the picture is very mixed. But the advent of devolution, city deals, local growth deals, the pooling of funding from national government and focusing it in one location and the current wave of combined authorities that are coming forward provide a good opportunity for joined-up working at local level. Each place is incredibly different and varied. I was in Manchester earlier this week, where, under very strong civic leadership, the Manchester Place initiative, which is the housing regeneration company kick-started by the city council and now rolling out across Greater Manchester, provides the opportunity to bring together planning and housing and the funding associated with that, as well as health and well-being and all the aspects that make places.

There are a number of good initiatives happening up and down the country. Rather than seeing it as a loss of leadership at national level, we firmly believe it is about locally led bespoke solutions for each location. I take the example of Oxford, where we have been
working for over two years. It has a very constrained set of circumstances, given the policy environment, its green belt constraints and the fact that it is an internationally renowned city in many respects. None the less, it is not all dreaming spires; there are major inequality issues. The challenge we are seeing in places like Oxford is a depletion of in-house resource and competencies, allied with major pressure from developers and applicants wanting to invest in the city. There is a huge opportunity for Design Council CABE and the Design Network to support local ambition. That is what we have to focus on.

Q86 Baroness Andrews: You have answered most of my questions, so this is a bit reflective. In the days when you and I worked together, we had a very clear government policy about regeneration. That regeneration was driven by the revival of inner cities, so the place-making, although we did not call it that at the time, was essentially evident in what transformed the city centres, not just in Birmingham and Manchester but in Sheffield, Newcastle, Nottingham, Bristol and many different places. I entirely take the point that we are in a new situation and we have new vehicles, but we still do not have that overall clear instruction from government that regeneration is really important, that there are some better ways of doing it than others and that this is what is required to be done. First, do you think it is still something that government ought to be prioritising in the messages they send? Does it matter that government as a whole does not have that sort of clear strategic policy anymore? Secondly, the Manchester Place initiative writes itself, because of Manchester’s power and its ability in terms of resources and back story to bring everybody together. How do you get a place initiative articulated in less competent authorities like Stoke-on-Trent, for example, or in smaller ones? Oxford is a good example, because by definition it will have that sense of itself, but there are places that do not have a very strong sense: for example, Burnley—the old industrial towns that have so much less confidence and, frankly, fewer resources. That is the big challenge for us.

The Chairman: They were not at the conference in Birmingham yesterday.

Baroness Andrews: I am sure they were not.

David Waterhouse: To take Baroness Andrews’s first point on strategic regeneration capability and where that sits at national level, the national planning policy framework has a very strong role to play, but I think it is also down to local authorities having some direction
Design Council CABE and Made West Midlands – Oral Evidence (QQ84-93)

from central government, if I can put it in those terms, to enact what the NPPF says. Paragraph 62 very clearly sets out the need for, and the value of having in place, comprehensive design arrangements. Yes, the policy is strong, but it is about the enactment and delivery of it, and there is a role for the Planning Inspectorate as well.

The Chairman: But do you think the national planning framework could look at the overall strategy of planning for the whole country and then say as a guideline, for example, that in relation to our heritage 35% of the emphasis on planning should be regeneration? I am covering Lady Andrews’s point; if they are going to fall off the cliff in terms of not being appreciated, and they get all these sparkling new all-singing and all-dancing places in the middle of Birmingham, Oxford might find itself not being able to do so because people were not putting much emphasis on heritage and the regeneration of our existing stock.

David Waterhouse: The key point is to have in place a robust and up-to-date local plan based on robust evidence. That evidence base has to look at the pipeline of development; it has to comprehensively analyse housing market requirements, and it absolutely has to look at the investment community and understand what its ambitions are, because places happen as a result of multitudinous built environment professionals, but also as a result of investment. That is the critical thing.

Perhaps I could address the point about other locations that have more challenging circumstances: Hull, Stoke-on-Trent, Middlesbrough—places we worked in together. That is where the real challenge lies, because land values are lower and you get applicants and developers cherry-picking the most profitable and valuable sites. There is danger of a two-tier planning system emerging, with the first tier being the Oxfords, the more progressive authorities and the larger authorities with strong civic leadership, and a second tier of locations which, for a variety of reasons, have major challenges. It is a risk and it needs to be considered strongly at local level and drawn to the attention of government.

The Chairman: Government has a role to monitor it, and to nod or not nod.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Can I ask about new settlements? They ought to be the opportunity to get it right, but we see some where you would rather boil your head and eat it than live in them.
David Waterhouse: Indeed. One interesting location, where we are working very closely at the moment, is the new settlement of Cranbrook in East Devon. That is the result of Exeter city and its adjoining authorities agreeing very clearly through the planning system not simply to extend, expand and potentially damage a very historic settlement—Exeter—but to take the brave decision to plan for a new settlement on a railway line to the east of Exeter. There the challenge lies first in the scale of the development. It is a greenfield site of eventually 7,000 units, and all the facilities that go with that. I would argue that phase 1—900 units built, on the ground now—is very much worth visiting and understanding to see how that has happened. It is fair to say that the quality is variable, because of the finance system and the developer system that apportions bits of land to different developers and different housebuilders. That is where you do not get a sense of cohesion in terms of place, but you get a standard type of housebuilding.

Opportunities exist in Old Oak and Park Royal, a major development corporation that has just been established in west London, to think about this from the outset. Indeed, we are working very closely with the development corporation to embed design and design thinking from the outset across policy and across every major development that comes through in that key location in west London. When it is completed, the station there will be a third busier than Waterloo is currently.

Lord Inglewood: I want to ask David Waterhouse about something he said which struck me as interesting, and I want to clarify it. If I understood you right, you said that it is much easier to develop sites that are expensive than those that are cheap. I am inferring from your remarks that that is because the expensive ones probably have characteristics that mean they are likely to be commercially viable. Is that right? Paradoxically, the more expensive the land, the more likely it is to be developed.

David Waterhouse: Perhaps I would not characterise it in such black and white terms, but places that are successful and have inherently high land values will attract further development and investment. It is riskier in places that do not have a legacy of good quality development at scale, or indeed high land values, for example the Stoke-on-Trents—I do not wish to pick on Stoke-on-Trent all the time, but places that are somewhat divorced from the economic mainstream, if I can call it that.
The Chairman: Stoke-on-Trent is beautifully placed and something wonderful could be done with it.

David Waterhouse: Quite.

The Chairman: I quite like the place—Ann of the Five Towns.

Q87 Baroness Whitaker: My question is mainly for Mr Waterhouse. It is good to see you again. To depart from the local, CABE did some national work that was fairly important. I remember very interesting research on sustainability and something very pioneering on the importance of beauty to well-being. It also carried out education and training functions, most particularly advocacy. Is there still a need for those? How should they be delivered, and who should do that?

David Waterhouse: The education and advocacy role is something that Design Council CABE as one organisation very strongly believes in. We, as government’s adviser on design, have a very clear and strong role in producing research reports; indeed, next week on the terrace of this House, we are launching our economic value of design, and we would be delighted to see members of this Committee there.

Baroness Whitaker: What resource do you have for that research?

David Waterhouse: We have an in-house research and policy team who work collectively with government departments: BIS and DCLG.

Baroness Whitaker: Is that the Design Council as a whole, or is it specific to CABE?

David Waterhouse: It is one organisation; it is a shared function. Economic value of design in its broadest sense, but also economic value of design in the built environment, is very strong in making the arguments that we are perhaps all struggling with somewhat. CABE did a huge amount of good work on the economic cost of bad design in the built environment. That was quite a seminal report. That work and the ongoing research we undertake is very strong, but that is at national level. At local level, it is also critical to provide advocacy, CPD support and training for very challenged officers who have huge amounts of pressure and volumes of planning applications. I was astounded to hear recently that the city of St Albans is one of the busiest planning departments in the country, all temporary staff. In a historic city with such intrinsic value, that is quite shocking, given that it is in the economic mainstream. The support, training and CPD for officers, which we have been embedding in Oxford, with officers and
critically with elected members and the leader of the council, is vital to upskilling and providing confidence to authorities.

**Baroness Whitaker**: But CABE and the Design Council do not have the resource to cover the national need in that area. How could that be better done? We have come across a dearth of capacity in some planning operations.

**David Waterhouse**: Absolutely. In our conversations with cities and local authorities, it is really about setting up a clear model to enable development schemes to come to CABE for review and policy assessment, and for that mechanism to provide funding for other discretionary services, such as policy support and training, because we all know the local government finance situation in which we find ourselves. That will obviously change post-spending review in November, but I cannot imagine it will become any rosier. It is about providing support to local planning authorities, and the mechanism we have for doing that is a very comprehensive city or borough panel where we charge applicants, and that funding is retained by the authority to pay for those discretionary services.

**The Chairman**: Mr Tittle, do you have views on this one?

**David Tittle**: Yes. We provide similar services; we argue that they are best managed at local level, which is where we differ from CABE. For example, in the West Midlands we have subscriptions with a number of authorities with which we work closely to give them support around major sites. For example, Tamworth has three areas of urban extension, and we undertook workshops on each of those to give guidance to the officers. On Tuesday I was helping Great Malvern. We were talking to stakeholders about the public realm in Great Malvern town centre to improve the performance of Great Malvern.

On new settlements, if I had not been here today, we would have been reviewing a new settlement in Stratford-on-Avon district near the Jaguar Land Rover and Aston Martin plants in Gaydon. It has some very good designers working on it for the two landowners there. The challenge we face in a settlement like that is that a historic village or small town in Warwickshire has developed in a certain way that works, and we think of it as charming and so on, but you are not allowed to build that sort of place today, largely because of the way the highways authority operates, and the way you relate to main roads and so on. We are challenged all the time in that relationship to existing roads—connectivity and so on—which
means that it is quite difficult to create a new settlement that we can enjoy in the way we enjoy older places.  

Baroness Whitaker: To conclude this part of the argument, do neither of you think that anything more should be done in this area? For instance, would the appointment of a chief architect be useful?

David Tittle: It would have a marginal benefit. If government proposed it we would certainly support it. We had a discussion with the former chief construction adviser about the role he had played as a go-between—a conduit between government and industry. We could see that was a useful role. I do not think it is sufficient to make a huge difference; it would be useful. David pointed to the more important thing, which is to do with making sure that people are taking up design review services and so on, and strengthening the planning policy in that respect.

The Chairman: You raised a point about the Midlands where you are not allowed to build vernacular villages just because of the motorcar and the highways. What sort of influence do you have to bring to bear on the national planning framework about making the point very strongly that part of the place thing is that we could have more of these because it is so lovely to see in an area? We visited a mixed housing development yesterday in Birmingham. You could see social housing, rented housing and bought housing, but again there was the highway. That is inevitable, but it seemed to be a much happier space, even though there were very few trees, than having rows and rows of prefab-looking buildings. What influence should you or others have over the national planning policy framework to say, “Look, highways are not the No.1 objective”?

David Waterhouse: I was going to add that the capacity of local authorities is very constrained. One of the benefits that I hope we bring, alongside others, is that we have our in-house capacity, but we also have an unparalleled national network of 500 built environment experts, some CABE enablers, some CABE commissioners, design associates and experts in design across the field. They work with us in places, so it is about building capacity and strength in local authorities.

Returning to your point, Lord Chairman, about the weight of advice within the planning system, the NPPF sets that out very clearly; indeed, we are specifically written into the
national planning policy framework, as we are in national policy statements on infrastructure. In cities where we have a long-term strategic relationship, our report is a material consideration in the planning system and is appended to all committee reports that go to elected members for decision. That approach retains local accountability and local democracy, but places importance on an independent expert panel who are embedded within the cities. That is a useful way of bridging the potential gaps.

**Baroness Rawlings:** I have two points I would like to bring up—one about traffic and one about aesthetics. What you say about economic value, good quality in the new settlements and all the trouble that is taken with buildings and green space, which one respects, is very interesting, but I should like to hear your views on certain areas that worry me regarding design and aesthetics and, on the second part of the question, practicality. One involves the built environment. You have all these lovely houses, but suddenly you get monstrous bollards down the street to which nobody has given any thought at all. Tremendous trouble is taken with buildings, but street furniture can absolutely destroy lovely places. There are terrible waste bins. They can be beautiful without spending a huge amount of money. I understand the need for security, but they are put in rotten places. The other day I saw a street completely filled with bottle banks. You could not see any of the houses at all. These were huge, hideous things. You have taken all this trouble worrying about the aesthetics and doing it properly. That is one side. The other side is traffic, which the Chairman just mentioned. You make a lovely environment in a place, and it is clogged with cars, buses, bicycles and lorries and everything comes to gridlock, let alone the pollution. Pollution from static traffic is everywhere now; it is not just London. The aesthetic side is wonderful—taking trouble and everything else—but very often some of these little, and not so little, areas are overlooked. I would like to hear your views.

**David Tittle:** That sort of decluttering issue is incredibly important. With my Civic Voice hat on, we have been very keen on that. We have some civic societies out doing street audits. In Coventry, we have people sticking things on each bit of clutter to highlight it and so on. I look upon these things as a design challenge. There are things that we need in the public realm, but design is about making those things work together for everybody’s benefit. The public realm need not look so cluttered; things can be combined and some things are not necessary.
A lot of signage is unnecessary. There are some very good examples around the country where people have decluttered the public realm. Sometimes the difficulty in the public realm is that nobody is in overall charge. People have said that in places maybe we need a tsar who is in charge of the streets. It has been said there are about 20 agencies that can interfere in the public realm. This is nothing to do with the planning system; they are all things that do not need planning permission. Things just pop up. We had an instance in Coventry. When the Olympics were coming, we got some money and were able to do a fairly simple scheme to declutter our main public square, Broadgate, to make it a really nice public space. Then some people from the communications department in Coventry came along and put up white flagpoles, with messages about adoption and so on. As soon as you declutter, somebody comes along and clutters. It is terribly difficult. If you are doing things to the highways often people say, “We don’t need bollards or guard rails”, and suddenly they appear. Suddenly they are part of the specification and they appear. It is quite a battle to keep the public realm decluttered. It is always easy to talk about joined-up thinking, but it is very hard to do. Somebody needs to be in overall charge with the authority to make things happen.

**Baroness Rawlings:** It needs to be sympathetic with the environment and encourage people.

**David Tittle:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** Once more, we are getting into a time pressure problem. Why do you just look at Coventry and places like that? Why do you not just get on Eurostar and walk from Arc de Triomphe to Défense and see what they have and have not done there? How do the French manage it? Is it just because Pompidou said, “Knock it down. I’m going to have yet another grand project”, and they do not care? Do we have any sort of information about how they do it? It is probably very simple if you make a street furniture tsar.

**Q88 Baroness Parminter:** Can I invite you to say a bit more about the design review approach, specifically the effectiveness of the market, as it is now, in design review services? Is there a need for greater co-ordination, or indeed a case now for national guidance?

**David Waterhouse:** Design Council CABE has a very long and robust history in this field and with the built environment professional bodies: the Landscape Institute, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Royal Town Planning Institute. It continues to publish and update
design review principles and practice, which is the standard by which the Design Network and Design Council CABE carry out all their work. The concern with the change in the marketplace since 2011 must be around the quality and diversity of some of the panels, and the fact that that quality is not always necessarily delivering the public good, which both we and the Design Network very strongly believe in. We undertake in all our work to create and shape better places for all. It is a lofty ambition, but it is very much for the public good. That is perhaps some of the challenge that we see in other panels being set up for commercial gain or benefit in places around the country. There is variation in the quality. At the end of the day, it has to be about certainty and consistency for all in the planning process, providing high-quality schemes, with consistent, independent and objective advice. That must be the overriding ambition.

Setting the design review statement in the national planning policy framework was a strong move forward, and we are very supportive of that. The associated planning practice guidance is also perhaps not used as strongly as it should be. This emerged from Government following Lord Taylor’s review 18 months or two years ago. Indeed, as adviser to government we were involved very much in the drafting of the design section of the planning practice guidance. It is an online portal that provides supplementary guidance to the national planning policy framework and is updated on an annual basis, so it is constantly kept up to date, which I think is an important point. It is perhaps not used as often as it ought to be by local authorities in preparing their local plans, or indeed in establishing design arrangements.

David Tittle: I would perhaps disagree that quality is the biggest issue with design review. We have concerns with some local panels around the country, particularly in the south. There are two big issues for me. The first is take-up, as we have said before. Even in London, we think about 20% of major schemes are subject to design review. Outside London, it is a much lower figure, so there is not consistent treatment and application of design review in major developments.

The other issue is to do with whether people take notice of it. Does it really stick? One of the frustrations is that often schemes come into design review too late, and lot of work has been done on them. I can understand that people do not want to spend more on fees totally to
change their schemes. We are always urging people to come earlier, but it does not necessarily happen.

Getting people to design review on a regular basis and getting it built into the culture of developing a larger scheme would be really helpful. I commend the approach taken by Newcastle-under-Lyme council, which has put design review in its planning validation checklist. If you put in a major application—a reasonable-size application—in Newcastle-under-Lyme, you have to have a design review letter and a report saying how you have responded to it. It does not solve all problems. Some schemes still come in just before they go to planning, but it has certainly helped. If national policy was to recommend that approach, it would really transform things.

Baroness Andrews: Precisely on that point, if we can dig down into the market failure, what are the levers we could consider that would have the greatest impact? We used to have a planning aid system that was a huge benefit to weaker local authorities. I know it is about money and skills, but is there a case for restoring something like that? Alternatively, David Waterhouse mentioned elected officials and the work you do with them. Given the loss of permanent skilled planners, should you be spending more time on elected officials’ training? For example, you have lost your statutory consultee role and yet you are written into the NPPF. Would it be more effective if you still had a statutory consultee role so that you could push these things? Finally, what can you do about developers? What are the incentives? Are there financial incentives or planning incentives that can be built into the relationship with developers to pick up the inability to know about you, to find you and get you to help?

David Waterhouse: If I can use Oxford again as a case example, the long-term strategic relationship that we have built with the city council has proved beneficial to elected members, officials, developers and applicants wishing to invest in developing the city. There it has been about embedding in the system. We are written into PPAs—planning performance agreements—so that every major and medium-scale scheme at pre-pre-application stage comes through a CABE review panel. We have developed a pool of expertise with the city council so that its expertise is tailored to the types of developments coming through the pipeline—university student accommodation, extra care housing and specific types of
development. That has proved beneficial to applicants, because they want speed and certainty; that is all they care about. With that system in place, they know that is how business is done in Oxford. The leader and the cabinet member for planning will say to an applicant, “If you don’t go through this approach, you will get a very rough ride at planning committee”. That takes strong civic leadership, and buy-in politically and at senior officer level, but it has certainly proved highly beneficial in the case of Oxford. That all came about as a function of some poor decision-making in the city, so there is always a trigger that pushes people into thinking about this.

To take the statutory consultee point, that carries with it certain resource requirements and burdens. We would see it very much as working with cities to look at their individual needs and requirements, rather than something that is too top-down. I can quite clearly see pros and cons each way.

**Lord Inglewood:** Are the best schemes reviewed? Forget about the second-best schemes. Do the really good ones go through the review process, or are the people who are putting them together so expert and committed that they do not need it?

**David Waterhouse:** Are you talking nationally?

**Lord Inglewood:** As a generalisation.

**David Waterhouse:** As a generalisation, as I have cited for Oxford, all schemes come through. The important thing is not just the large schemes but the smaller-scale ones that, because of their location, are sensitive or will set a policy precedent. If you have perhaps lots of extra care housing coming down the pipeline, it is very important to get that right because there will be another 12 schemes of that type coming along. It is also important for the smaller and medium-size schemes to come through a review process.

**Lord Inglewood:** But are the best schemes that you see the product of the review process, or are they people who are sensible, because they are good guys?

**David Tittle:** Sometimes it is a bit of both.

**David Waterhouse:** I would agree.

**David Tittle:** The best people to come to design review—the people we really like—are those with good schemes but who listen and want to improve them. Those are the best developers. It is not just the big names. In the West Midlands we have Accord Housing, a social housing
developer, who produce some very good stuff in-house, strangely without architects. They come with these good schemes; they listen to us, and we end up with even better schemes. The difficulty is often the awkward schemes. Where local authorities do not have a consistent approach to design review, it is the difficult, awkward schemes that they eventually send to design review. They say, “Ah, this is difficult. We can’t get them to change. Let’s use design review”. That is how they end up coming to us too late. We see them when there has already been quite a difficult battle with the local authority. Sometimes we back up the local authority—more often than not—but it is still quite late.

The Chairman: It is a bit like the way we organise a Committee investigation or inquiry. We ask people to come and give us evidence. We do not think we know all the answers; we probably know none of the answers, but it is crazy that people do not try to look for the best advice, and encourage just by conversation.

Q89 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: I have three questions. You have commented already on a number of them, so only add anything new. Are the parts of the national planning policy framework that deal with design sufficient and appropriate? What impact in practice has the framework had upon design standards? How effectively have the policies set out in the policy framework translated into improved practice in local authorities? Only add rather than repeat.

David Waterhouse: We would advocate that now is not the time for a wholesale review of the national planning policy framework. The planning system has had so much change, tinkering and amendments, and applicants and local planning authorities want certainty. Let the system bed down, operate and work. That would be my key point: do not re-amend or re-alter the planning system yet again.

David Tittle: I have canvassed colleagues around the country. Our view is that practice has not improved as a result of the NPPF. The things that the NPPF has to say about design are good and, all other things being equal, they would have had a positive impact. The fact that they say them in fewer words is a good thing. The problem is that other aspects of the NPPF and of government policy have led to difficulty in producing local plans and undermined the confidence of planners, such that the feeling is that decisions about the built environment are
being made by the inspectorate or in the courts. So much is going to appeal and so many local plans are being challenged legally, and so on.

Baroness Andrews: That is a very important point. Are you saying there is more planning by appeal these days than there is by design? The Committee has not yet talked to the Planning Inspectorate. My sense is that, because of the huge pressures on development, local authorities find themselves in the courts more often than not, or under appeal, because developers know that in the NPPF there is such emphasis on development. Therefore, what you say is coming about is being driven by those sorts of imperatives. Am I right in that?

David Tittle: That is broadly true. I do not think it necessarily needs to be so. The NPPF explicitly says that you should refuse poor design. If people have the confidence and can make the arguments, they can not only do that but win appeals. The problem is that confidence has been undermined and people are very nervous about it.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: Specifically in what ways has confidence been undermined?

David Tittle: There is the feeling that developers will go to appeal. If you look across the range of volume housebuilders, who are doing a lot of development, particularly outside cities, some will take a more collaborative approach and try to do the right things; others simply say, “If we can’t get this through, we’ll get it through at appeal”.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: But has it not ever been thus? Is this something that has resulted from the national planning policy framework approach?

David Waterhouse: The important point is for local authorities to have an up-to-date evidence-based local plan. That is the problem we are seeing at the moment. Roughly half of local authorities across the country have a robust local plan in place that is capable of being defended at inquiry or through the judicial process. Unless you have a clear framework in place by which to make decisions on individual applications, you are planning in a vacuum.

Baroness Andrews: Why are local plans so slow? What are the extra factors that have slowed them down even more?

The Chairman: If you are just Joe Bloggs out in the street and people ask you, “How do you think all this is going in this country?”, you say, “The main thing is that we have to get 400,000 more houses. We need more houses”. They do not care; they do not realise just how important it is, particularly long term, to have this sense of place. Our specialist adviser did a
wonderful presentation on this at the beginning of our inquiry, which made me sit up and think, “Of course we need houses”, but with this headlong approach the developers are ruling the roost, because they are delivering the houses.

**David Waterhouse**: Yes.

**Baroness Whitaker**: In answer to your question, Lord Chairman, could we also explore why local authorities are so slow? I am very conscious of how it works in my own nearest town, Newhaven. It is lack of capacity, not lack of intention. It is simply that there are not enough bodies working on it with the right background.

**David Waterhouse**: Absolutely. Talking to and working with local authorities of varying scales up and down the country, there is a huge lack of capacity and skills; for example, certain grants from government for planning capacity that were delivered have stopped. There are real challenges to the competency and confidence of senior planning officers in taking decisions. That is a real problem. I go back to the example of St Albans, where all staff are temporary, so you have no consistency of decision-making and no understanding of the history of planning in that location. That is also a critical point.

I welcome the recent announcement by government to work with local authorities to put in place a local plan. None the less, that is by 2017. Development does not stop; development continues and will continue at pace.

**The Chairman**: This is a very important issue. Mr Tittle, do you have anything to add?

**David Tittle**: Capacity is obviously a huge issue, but there is a whole range of issues. The changes made by the previous Labour Government started to slow down the process, such as the bringing in of local policy frameworks. A lot of people were working on that process when there was a change of government, the NPPF came in and things changed. People were used to working with the regional spatial strategies; those were abolished and they had to find new ways of working. In some cases, that gave the politicians a bit more confidence to interfere more and that set plans back. Some authorities and other agencies thought they had it all done and dusted and then they were subject to legal challenge. In some ways, the whole culture of plan-making has become an interminable process. That is the problem. Over the past decade, or maybe 15 years, it has become systemic; it has become cultural that we take ages to produce plans. I was very concerned about this. In particular, before the election, at
Civic Voice we were trying to produce a manifesto. One of the very clear things we said was that every place should have a plan, so I started going round and asking planners I knew. I ended up sitting next to somebody from the inspectorate who was in charge of planning. I asked him how long realistically it should take to produce a local plan. He said two years. I think that is reasonable—two years maximum. You plan for 18 months and allow six months for eventualities. It also has a big impact on people’s ability to engage with the local plan. It is quite difficult to get citizens to engage with the local plan, but if they have been doing it for 12 or 15 years, it is really difficult to get them to engage. You think, “Oh, what’s going on now? Didn’t I talk about that 10 years ago?” I applaud the recent initiatives by the Government to try to speed up the process. It is unfortunate that they are doing that by saying, “We will intervene”. If they need to intervene they should, but we also need to deal with the systemic problems.

The Chairman: They also need a time limit, because they cannot carry on for 13 years or so.

David Tittle: Absolutely.

Q90 Baroness Andrews: I am beginning to wonder whether this question is redundant. What should the decision to move ministerial responsibility for architecture and design from DCMS to DCLG mean in practice? My sense is that it does not matter. Essentially, you have been saying that unless we have clear planning policy, delivered at local level, it does not really matter what the Government themselves are saying or doing if they cannot actually help that process—or am I now being very cynical?

David Waterhouse: I would agree. However, the move of responsibilities from DCMS across to DCLG where planning, housing and regeneration policy, such as it is, sits has to be helpful in bringing all of that together. We work strongly with DCLG and its agencies, so I hope it is a beneficial thing. Indeed, Greg Clark, the former Cities Minister and now Secretary of State, has been very supportive of design in its widest sense. Having him as Secretary of State is a beneficial approach, and having architecture within his wider portfolio must be a good thing.

Baroness Andrews: How many people in DCLG have responsibility for design?

David Waterhouse: Overarchingly, two officials and a director would have oversight.

Baroness Andrews: Essentially, we have three people in DCLG who are responsible for ensuring that good design feeds into housing, infrastructure, housing renewal and supply.
The Chairman: The whole thing.

Baroness Andrews: Everything. That is very helpful. My next question was what role should DCLG be playing in promoting high standards of design? I think you have answered that.

The Chairman: Mr Tittle, do you want to add to that?

David Tittle: I had heard that nobody had specific responsibility for design, but maybe David takes a different view.

The Chairman: You are encouraged that there are three.

David Tittle: That is encouraging. As I said before, joined-up thinking is easy to say but hard to do. Moving people into the same department may help, but it may not. People do not necessarily talk to each other more if they are in the same department. Sometimes people from different departments can talk to each other better. It has to be a good thing; it has to be potentially helpful, but the devil is in the implementation.

Q91 Baroness Parminter: The Government have announced that they are going to form an infrastructure commission. Its remit and composition have not been agreed as yet. Do you think it is important that on that new body there should be somebody with responsibility for design of the built and natural environment?

David Tittle: Absolutely. I would say so. Yes.

Lord Inglewood: I preface my question by saying that when I was a Minister in the then DNH I was responsible for architecture. My comment about your comments is that you have been telling us what a good thing design review is. I think there is a case for having a Minister outside DCLG doing just that. I remember looking at some PFI schemes and, my goodness, they were dire.

David Waterhouse: Yes.

Q92 Lord Inglewood: I would particularly like to look at another aspect, which is that responsibility for heritage remains in the DCMS. In the context of where we are now, what is your view about that?

David Waterhouse: We have a very long-standing relationship with Historic England, as it now is, working on many programmes, such as tall building guidance and the urban panel, which is a joint panel of Design Council CABE and Historic England, looking at cities and providing diagnostic advice and support to them. In the last year, we have worked on their flagship
annual Heritage Counts report. We have a very strong relationship with Historic England, and it has a clear role to play. Support for it must remain, certainly beyond the current settlement that has been agreed, because that potentially poses a risk to it going forward. In terms of its responsibilities lying within DCMS, from a civil servant perspective, cross-Whitehall working and regular joined-up thinking between DCLG and DCMS is absolutely critical and is something that I know happens. I do not know to what extent and over what period it happens, but there must be continual collaboration between the two.

**Lord Inglewood:** Is there not a risk that because it is a much bigger department the DCLG always rolls over the DCMS?

**David Waterhouse:** That is certainly not my experience. DCMS punches well above its weight in certain instances. In my experience, which may be a couple of years out of date, it is a very powerful and well respected department.

**David Tittle:** Not everything is solved by bringing people together. The very first question was about leadership. We talked about the need for leadership from national government and it needing to come from the centre. The danger with responsibility for place quality and design quality being seen to reside with DCLG is that it becomes too focused on the planning system. The planning system is very important, but it is not everything. The issues we talked about before about street clutter and so on are largely outside the planning system, so it is important that transport, the public procurement of buildings and so on are government policy, not just departmental policy.

**Baroness Andrews:** To pick up what Mr Waterhouse said about the fact that heritage remains in DCMS, it is slightly isolated, but it always has been. The key impact on what happens to our historic environment has been through the planning system. The fact that we now have Historic England as a separate statutory body with a very firm focus, particularly in relation to the issues raised by Mr Tittle about Civic Voice and historic towns, gives more power and focus. Although it has lost that immediate connection, Historic England itself is in a relatively strong position within DCMS to punch above its weight again. Do you agree with that?

**David Waterhouse:** I would agree. Going back to what all this is about—places and towns up and down the country growing and changing sensitively—our experience working with Historic England officials at regional and local level is that we have a very strong relationship
in the towns and cities where we are working. That has to be a beneficial approach. I welcome it. Historic England is in a strong position, but in the spending review and beyond it, there will be a very challenging picture for all government agencies and local authorities. We must be mindful of the fiscal envelope and the challenges within which we are working at central and local government level. That is critical.

**Lord Inglewood**: There is also a fiscal envelope around the people who are actually managing, owning and running the buildings. Surely, that is at least as important as some of the things you are talking about in the context of the policy framework and the administrative and legal context in which all this is carried on.

**David Waterhouse**: I would agree absolutely.

**Q93 Baroness Young of Old Scone**: In design terms, is public consultation and participation in the decision-making process happening? Is it a force for good, or is this stuff so complex that the public get it wrong?

**David Waterhouse**: The advent of the neighbourhood planning system—there are over 600 neighbourhood plans at varying stages in the system—has been very beneficial in bringing communities and parishes together to understand what they value about their area and place, and what that means for growth and change in their location. Our experience of working with neighbourhood planning groups up and down the country in rural and semi-urban areas, and indeed in urban areas, in north London, has been that they feel they have more control and understanding of what happens in their area.

In a recent good example, we are working with DCLG on a very important programme led by the tenant management and empowerment team at DCLG, which is called community-led design and development. That is about tenant areas and tenant management organisations intensifying their areas through a very clear process, to ensure that design is used right from the beginning in changing, intensifying and reusing assets and new-build development. There are very interesting new models of co-housing of various types, bringing new entrants into the housing market, which bring with them communities of interest. We should not see communities as just one thing; there are many different communities—business communities, residential communities and communities of age—which we should also think about.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: Remind us how many communities have gone for a neighbourhood plan out of the totality that could.

David Waterhouse: David may be closer to this than I am.

David Tittle: It may be in the 20s\(^\text{110}\) that have gone through the whole process.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Twenty.

David Tittle: Yes, but obviously there are a lot along the way. It takes a long time. Part of the problem is the complexity and difficulty of neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood planning has been a positive thing and it shows what can be done. One of the big issues I have with it is inequality. If you rank neighbourhood plans by the indices of deprivation and look at those in the bottom 25%, there is a handful. We have a notable one near us in Balsall Heath in Birmingham, which is just coming to referendum, but that is one of the few exceptions in a more deprived neighbourhood.

As regards community engagement, the position is rather like the one we talked about earlier as regards design generally. There are some exemplary cases of community engagement, people working with communities from scratch with a blank sheet of paper to design new places, new developments, urban extensions and so on. Aside from those good examples, the overall picture is very poor. It is often tokenistic and manipulative. We talked about the difficulty of engagement in local plans, but engagement around particular schemes is often very poor. People use PR consultants rather than people skilled in community engagement; they know what they want before they start, and so on. That definitely needs to change. There needs to be better encouragement. The key to it is independent expertise. Where we have been able to get involved with communities in engagement, we have been seen as someone who brings independent expertise. Because we are a charity, communities trust us. If there are issues, they do not feel they are being manipulated. If you bring together the expertise people have about their place—because they know their own place—but also expertise about places in general, it is a magic combination.

Q94 The Chairman: Very early in this inquiry, the Committee had evidence about the concept of the open room, where it was down to the level of streets and housing estates, and people

\(^\text{110}\) Note by witness: There are 57 adopted neighbourhood plans as of August 2015.
were made to feel they had something to offer. In both of your experience, is that general or is it spectacularly a one-off?

**David Waterhouse:** In the recent Farrell review, a recommendation set out the concept of urban rooms. There are good examples in Pennine Lancashire. I am aware of Newcastle and a number of other places developing this, which provides a forum for people to come in, to understand and explore what makes their place unique and special. I concur entirely with David about independence and the honest brokering role that the Design Network and Design Council CABE can play in bringing together different parties in the planning process. That independence and objectivity is critical.

**The Chairman:** It also gives local people much more confidence that they have had a say, no matter how big or small.

**David Waterhouse:** Yes.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Mr Waterhouse described a very good policy in the DCLG of how to empower tenants, but on the whole it is very common that they are consulted too late. As Mr Tittle said, they are consulted by PR companies when the local planning authority just wants to vindicate its prior conception. What is the mechanism for bringing in local people right at the beginning to work out what their local identity ought to be? Urban rooms are fine, but how are we to enable them to happen?

**David Waterhouse:** One of the key points about the tenant-led development programme is that there is already a groundswell of support within the existing community that they want to do something. They are not happy with whatever it is in their area.

**Baroness Whitaker:** It has to be fertile soil.

**David Waterhouse:** There is a real bottom-up approach. In the locations we are working with—Hull, interestingly, York and some inner-London examples—there is an understanding that they as tenants in an area are not satisfied with the quality and type of housing stock they are in, and they want to grow and change. There has to be something innate to make it happen, but it is then about objective independent workshops, advice, consistency and working with the local planning authority, because it cannot happen in isolation. It is certainly an interesting area, but something where there is huge opportunity.

**The Chairman:** It sounds very exciting.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: Could we impose upon you to scribble some notes and send us your views, if you have any, on how far the design review process has delivered on the green environment and green space issue and its wider benefits to health, climate change and resilience, as well as amenity and aesthetics?

The Chairman: We normally ask those questions, so thank you for asking that, Lady Young. Can I thank you both very much indeed? It has been fascinating. You can see how energised the Committee is. We could go on for ages, but we have a lot of other things to do. Thank you for coming and giving your time and expertise. We wish you all success in doing what you obviously share with us: the objective of improving things and making people happier where they live, work and play.

David Waterhouse: Thank you.

David Tittle: Thank you for inviting us.
This image shows the proportion of people buying or owning property between 1983 and 2012 (columns) by age (rows). The green band is the generation who were able to get a mortgage & buy, those older or younger than them mostly could not (BSA survey data). Prices have risen because the government has been trying to get them to rise. At the end of 2014 the campaigning organization ‘Priced Out’ calculated that the government-sponsored new-build Help to Buy programme had helped raise average prices by £46,000 in 18 months – or 27% – resulting in an additional 258,000 renters being priced-out of buying a home as
compared to the 31,000 buyers helped by the scheme. Some three and a half million people who would have normally been able to buy a home are now trapped in private renting.\textsuperscript{111} The unexpected Conservative majority win in the 2015 general election, secured with a unprecedentedly low 25\% of the electorate (possibly the lowest proportion ever to secure a majority) – has resulted in a further boost to housing prices which had been rising precariously, and faster and faster for two years already. The market is beginning to look like a run-away train...

During 2013 housing prices in London rose by around £40,000 for an average flat or house that was sold as compared to the previous year. This brought the cost of a typical London home sold on the market up to just above £475,000. This rate of increase continued through 2014, as times accelerating, except in the very centre. By 2015 average London prices were over £500,000 but Oxford house prices had risen to be an even more expensive if compared to local Oxford salaries and wages. By early 2015 the mean price of housing in Oxford was 16.1 times average Oxford wages and salaries.

Homelessness is rising. Fewer people are able to secure social housing and less and less money is being spent on the upkeep of that stock. Private landlords spend less doing up their properties while house prices rapidly rise out of the reach of most people in most areas. But it could become worse. In the US an extra million children became homeless between 2006 and 2013. The highest ever US rate of child homelessness was reported in the run up to Christmas 2014.\textsuperscript{112}

Fewer and fewer people are able to get a mortgage. In the UK stricter tests have been introduced to try to prevent banks and building societies lending as recklessly as they did before. There have been repeated warnings to borrowers that at some point interest rates will have to rise. Up is the only direction in which they can go. The US Federal Reserve is now hinting that they will raise interest rates soon.

At least a third of mortgagees would struggle if interest rates were to rise by just a couple of percentage points.\textsuperscript{113} The further house prices in the South of England climb the greater that proportion will grow as new entrants become more stretched. People who are a safe bet at one point in time can easily lose their jobs, split up or become ill. Add a slight rise in mortgage interest rates and anyone already struggling to pay the bills quickly gets into arrears.


\textsuperscript{113} The Daily Mail’s report of this mistakenly called mortgagees ‘homeowners’, as if they owned their home outright having paid a mortgage off: Boyce, L. (2014) A third of homeowners would struggle if interest rates rose by 2% - and only a handful have prepared for higher costs, Daily Mail, November 10\textsuperscript{th}, http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-2828375/A-homeowners-struggle-rates-rose-2.html
Private renting in the UK is generally appalling in comparison to private renting on the continent as there is so little regulation. We have become used to such low quality service that we consider poor quality as normal quality. In November 2014 the House of Commons Library reported that 213,000 private tenants had been evicted in the last year after asking for basic repairs to be carried out. A further half a million tenants did not dare to complain about any faults due to fear of eviction. A majority of landlords, some 56%, say they have evicted tenants.114

By July 2014 it had become clear that a third of all privately rented property was being rented out in poor condition; that tenure was both the most expensive and lowest-quality sector of housing in the UK. It was also growing rapidly, passing the 4 million households level in 2014, having overtaking social renting in 2013.

When the Financial Times (FT) confronted the landlords with the facts, the National Landlords Association said that ‘...the rented sector continues to mature into a functioning and positive market that is serving renters well [and] costs in the sector have remained static...’. The FT then pointed out that private sector rents take up 40 % of tenants’ gross income according to the annual English Housing Survey. For those who own their homes, the figure is 20 %, while social tenants paid 30 %.115 In 2014 most landlords were laughing all the way to the bank.116

In October 2014, just three months after the FT report, rents in the private sector were revealed to have risen to a new all-time-high of £770 a month for the average property in England, £1162 in London.117 A month earlier they had been £761 a month. A year of such rises would result in a 15% price hike in rents.118 Even without that, rents are rising faster than inflation, while tenants’ wages still lag behind it.

In November 2014 Citizens Advice published figures showing that there had been a 20% rise in households seeking help over eviction, even among those up to date with their rent payments. Two in five of these households had dependent children. They also revealed that London renters are three times as likely to report problems with vermin than are tenants

116 Rent doesn’t all go on the landlord’s mortgage and upkeep costs. £770 a month pays the interest only on a £200,000 mortgage at 4.6%, £1162 a month covers the costs of a £300,000 property. The longer ago the landlord bought the property, the smaller their mortgages will be and the greater their profit. However, many landlords have been relying on rising prices to make them bigger profits.
118 1-(770/761)12 = 15.2%, annual rises to August 2014 had been 2.4% but they accelerated in September 2014 (see above), Press Association (2014) Rents rise to all-time average high of £761 a month in August, The Guardian, September 19th, http://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/sep/19/rents-rise-all-time-average-high-august-uk
elsewhere in the UK.119

At some point landlords can’t or won’t be allowed to squeeze yet more out of their tenants in higher rents. The housing benefit bill will have to be cut. People won’t take jobs in London if the wages won’t pay the rent. It will most probably be social forces rather than market forces that bring about the end of escalation. The lobby in favour of a change in the law to extend tenancies to three or five years, rather than two months, is growing and represents millions of people. In contrast, private landlords are a small group who attract less and less sympathy during hard times.

Almost two hundred years ago, in his *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, the Economist David Ricardo argued that, in the long term, economic growth would disproportionately benefit landlords.120 That view fell out of favour but modern day economists are finding that the landlord advantage appears to be true again today; suggesting that without intervention we are looking at an enormous property bubble being driven by rapidly rising land prices forced up as landlords and investors speculate wildly.121

In the autumn of 2014 there was little sign of a slowdown in the UK housing market. There were plenty of warnings of a slowdown, but very little evidence of prices falling. By September prices fell slightly in most regions, but they usually do in that month. In London prices had risen by a remarkable 18.4% in just one year.122 That annual percentage increase had itself been rising all year; but no one can tell you what it will be in a few months from now. It could crash; it could grow even higher; it is unlikely to remain the same. As prices began to fall in central London in February and March of 2015 the latest budget is designed to try to hold them up through to May 7th.

On 23 October 2014 shares in the London-based estate agents, Foxtons, fell by 20% in just a matter of hours. They fell because Foxtons said that they did not expect to make as much money next year as they had in 2014. Many investors wondered whether this might be signaling the start of a wider property crash. Foxton’s fortunes have suffered again very recently and again there is chattering among the informed. Annual price rises of 21% were reported in London last year. Four years of such housing inflation and prices would more than double. Everyone in the business knows it has to come to an end, they just don’t know

120  Some 500 year ago, in 1516, Thomas Moore suggested the solution to ensuring good housing for all would be that “At every ten years’ end they shift their houses by lots. They cultivate their gardens with great care, so that they have both vines, fruits, herbs, and flowers in them; and all is so well ordered and so finely kept that I never saw gardens anywhere that were both so fruitful and so beautiful as theirs.”
when. Rumours abounded that the housing bubble in China had burst but, rather than learn from the experience, the Chinese and many other investors began looking even more earnestly for what they thought was a safe haven in London.

Journalists write about ‘luxury’ flats being built across the capital. By these they mean flats that might look great in brochures being sold at prices that could never be supported by rents, in areas where no infrastructure has been built to support the new local communities. Those building the flats are only concerned with selling them on to the next wealthy overseas investors who, in turn, are concerned only with doing the same again in a year or so, until someone is stuck holding the unsellable ‘asset’.

But what happens when the bubble bursts? UBS forecasted in October 2015 that it will ‘soon’, but forecasting bubbles is a precarious business. It is sensible to suggest that overstretched landlords with too many new mortgages will go to the wall, many investors will be burnt, but new private landlords entering the market may simply buy up more property cheaply, out-bidding potential first time buyers, since landlords are offered better mortgage terms. The world is awash with ‘investor money’ looking for a home.

Many national newspapers now regularly report on the woes of the young upper-middle classes unable to rent a property with a living room. In one report a public relations account manager shares a home with an accountant, a filmmaker, a barrister, a solicitor and an advertising executive. All six of these otherwise well-off people have to share with each other, and only have a kitchen as communal space. Even with promotions and pay rises these young adults should expect to be living in cramped accommodation for some time. London’s population is set to rise by a million in the next few years. At the very same time the leaders of the Labour and Conservative parties in the run up to the May 2015 general election tried to explain why they had two and three kitchens, respectively in their London homes.

The estate agent Savills predicts that between 2014 and 2019 across England and Wales the number of households privately renting will increase by 1.2 million, owner-occupiers will fall by 200,000 and social renters fall by 50,000. Half the fall in owner-occupiers is predicted to take place in London. Private landlords are predicted to buy the equivalent of all the new build flats and homes in London, and a further 100,000 currently mortgaged or owned homes, and some 10,000 currently social rented properties.

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125 Savills Annual Housing Seminar Slides, November 17th, party reported as ‘Private rental home numbers to rise 1.2 million in five years as home ownership among the under 35s falls to one in six households’ November 6th, http://www.savills.co.uk/_news/article/55328/183957-0/11/2014/private-rental-home-numbers-to-rise-1.2-million-in-five-years-as-home-ownership-among-the-under-35s-falls-to-one-in-six-households
Looking forward, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation extrapolates and suggests that by 2040 private rents will rise by more than twice as much as incomes, resulting in a majority of future private renters in England living in poverty. Social renting, currently the tenure of one in seven people, will house only 10% of the population by 2040. It will be even worse if 220,000 homes a year are not built by the 2030s and if another £20 billion a year is not spent on housing benefits as more poorly paid families come to rely on the state. All of this is just if current trends continue, not following a further downturn. In the last six years, two thirds of all new housing benefit claimants have been middle-income earners.

How do politicians react? The Conservatives keep inflating the bubble, most recently by measures such as changing inheritance tax rules in their last budget, but before then with their last coalition budget by announcing that upon reaching retirement age pensioners can purchase property with their pension pots rather than take an annuity. Only the most affluent pensioners will be able to do this but the policy was presented as if it would apply to all. The Tories need house prices to rise until at least the day before the general election of May 2015. They stated that if they won an outright majority, they would end the building of what little social housing is now constructed by abolishing the 20% levies local councils are allowed to charge on new developments for new roads, schools and affordable housing provision.

Nick Clegg did not mention housing in his speech at the 2014 Liberal party conference, although he did claim that his party would build ten garden cities by incentivizing local communities to ask for building around their homes by offering them an express train service.

Labour published the Lyons review, which suggested changing the law so that local councils should have real powers to ensure that if land has been allocated for development in a plan, it is actually delivered, including the ability to levy a charge where delivery has not occurred (and there is no good reason for the failure). The review also proposes the possibility of Compulsory Purchase Orders being applied to acquire land at close to existing use value – in other words at agricultural prices.

However, building 200,000 new homes a year will not lead to Utopia, unless they are in the right places, owned and rented out the right way. At some point someone has to acknowledge that the reason we have to build more homes is due to immigration.

127 An extra 350,000 households earning between £20,000 and £30,000 a year according to National Housing Federation research, Sherman, J. (2014) Families on £30,000 drive rise in house benefit claims, The Times, October 2nd, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article4223998.ece
Immigration we are lucky to benefit from. ‘Lucky’ because it is conditions out of the UK’s control, such as a favourable time zone, the spread of the internet and the spread of the English language which draws so many young, productive and daring people in.

With net immigration comes a necessity to build. Without building new homes people can be held to ransom. When held to ransom they strike out in all directions, including blaming immigrants. But it is not immigrants that are the problem – it is the ‘investors’. Economist Aditya Chakraborty found the appropriate analogy: “I can think of one other aspect of everyday life where this has happened recently: food. Over the past 10 years, wheat and other staples have become a financial asset class, to be speculated in by Goldman Sachs and Barclays. The result has been misery and even starvation for the poor of the Third World. For the poor of London, the financialisation of property spells homelessness.”

In London at the end of 2014 the New Era housing estate was fighting for its life. The New Era estate is in Hoxton where ‘investors’ have recently been making millions buying and selling homes. The Conservative MP Richard Benyon had been persuaded not to buy the flats in partnership with the US private equity company Westbrook partners and evict the tenants, despite the potential boost to his £110 million family fortune through charging ‘market rents’. This turnaround was achieved by public petition where 300,000 people registered their disapproval. The authors of the petition then turned to try to influence Westbrook partners not to raise the rents and in effect evict the tenants, when Westbrook took over as the new sole landlords.

Private landlords, of which Westbrook is just one among many, have in aggregate brought up so much formally owner-occupied and social-rented property that their wealth will have growth by £109.5bn in the year to April 2015. This is due to the rising value of their existing property and the increases in the rents they charge. The total value of all landlords’ property holdings in Britain will exceed £1 trillion by mid-year 2015, with 41% of those holdings being in London. Just a few years earlier their wealth had been many times lower.

Outside London there are still a few areas where house prices are lower than in 2008, where private rents have collapsed and homes may have to be demolished, and where living conditions are rapidly declining not due to overcrowding but under-use. By October 2014 it took 3.5 average homes in the North East of England to buy one modest home in London, four years earlier that divide had been 2.5 times. By late 2014 the estate agent Frank Knight

was predicting that the gap would only grow wider.\textsuperscript{133}

In his December 2014 autumn statement George Osborne announced an £800 million cut to stamp duty on the purchase of properties. All his previous budgets had concentrated on measures designed to raise housing prices and the cost of housing, committing more spending or guarantees in that area than any other. George was determined that prices should increase, at least up until election day 2015, and for far longer than that if more and more people are forced to rent.\textsuperscript{134} His 2015 budget was simply more of the same. And the reaction to it by many voters showed how many young people living outside of London do not realize that they too will soon be priced of of buying a home as the price rise wave ripples out of the capital cities. It is currently moving through the Home Counties. The election result of May 2015 and the budget that followed have caused the house price wave to grow in height.

Only the extremely well off will be able to buy a home in future in South East England. Most people will have to rent and enrich a landlord. Just under 80\% of people think it is harder to buy a home now than it was a generation ago, even in the hardest times of the recent past. \textit{Over 80\% of people think the main political parties won’t deal with the problem effectively.}\textsuperscript{135} This is what chaos and instability looks like. This is precarity in housing. For a majority of young adults they face the equivalent of zero hours contract at work – the 2 months notice to leave a property should you landlord wish you out. Just eight weeks to find a new home. You can’t just build – you have to regulate the rental market to common decency. Rent regulation works in Germany. It has recently been enhanced in Berlin. Before rent regulation we had slums – then some economists had some awful mistakes and assumed rent regulation created slums.

Just allow building on it’s own and you will get new slums. Look to where people in Europe and well housed and learn from them.

\textbf{Note – this submission is mainly a summary of the updated version of the book:} Dorling, D. (2015, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition) All That is Solid: How the Great Housing Disaster Defines Our Times, and What We Can Do About It, London: Allen Lane

\textit{03 November 2015}

\textsuperscript{133} White, A. (2014) House prices: the north-south divide is now wider than ever, \textit{The Telegraph}, October 14\textsuperscript{th}, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11161079/House-prices-the-north-south-divide-is-now-wider-than-ever.html

\textsuperscript{134} Dominick, O. (2014) Autumn Statement: stamp duty cut as George Osborne lays out grand designs for election, \textit{The Telegraph}, December 3\textsuperscript{rd}, Autumn Statement: stamp duty cut as George Osborne lays out grand designs for election

Professors Neil Dunse, Glen Bramley and Chris Leishman, Heriot-Watt University (BEN0104)

Submission to be found under Professor Glen Bramley
Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Mr Michael Cassidy, CBE, Chairman, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

Q95 The Chairman: Welcome, Mr Cassidy, to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity, of course, to make corrections where necessary. I begin by asking you to briefly introduce yourself to the Committee, Mr Cassidy, for the record.

Michael Cassidy: I am Michael Cassidy. I am Chairman of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation.

The Chairman: And a lot else besides! Thank you very much indeed.

Q96 Lord Freeman: Good morning. I declare a very modest conflict of interest in the sense that, as Minister of Transport in the early 1990s, I went to Ebbsfleet on the instructions of the Deputy Prime Minister, as he then became, to look at precisely what the opportunities were. What progress has been made at Ebbsfleet since the establishment of the Development Corporation? Let us not go any earlier than that.

Michael Cassidy: Thank you very much for this opportunity. I was appointed as the Chairman-Designate in August last year, although our powers did not begin until April of this year. I spent the first six months pretty much solo, meeting all the relevant parties, seeing the site
and liaising with the local authorities, who are a big part of our organisation. In the early part of this year I set about selecting and appointing a Board, which is now fully in place, and the key executives. I had quite a large team seconded from the Department for Communities and Local Government in the early stages to help me; that has now been replaced by our own team, who are based near Ebbsfleet, actually occupying Gravesend Police Station—not the best location, but that was available as a short-term let.

During the course of implementing this delivery period, we have set about instructing master planners to help us set out the site opportunities. We have appointed a global firm called AECOM, and it has already started its work programme. We have a set of consultation sessions next Tuesday, which is when the public will first hear from AECOM what its process will be. Obviously, on the business side, we have been putting together a business plan for the Department, which has been received and understood. Last week there was a very significant event for us: the Spending Review, which of course we all concentrated on very heavily. I am pleased to say that the Chancellor set aside £310 million for us—exactly the figure we asked for—so we enjoy good political support following a period when it clearly stalled. As part of the Spending Review Statement we also have Enterprise Zone status for part of our site, which will give obvious tax benefits. That is essentially the work programme to date.

**The Chairman:** Are you very optimistic about the future of Ebbsfleet—that it will all come right and there will not be any problems; will it be another example of what happened to housing and built environment in this country with the London Olympics?

**Michael Cassidy:** I suppose I have to be optimistic; otherwise, I should not be in the job. We certainly now have the resource to carry this programme forward.

**The Chairman:** You have no problems at all?

**Michael Cassidy:** Well, I will now list the obstacles, as that is clearly part of what you would like to hear about. The topography of this former quarry site is extremely demanding. It is 1,000 acres of very uneven ground, with level changes of 20 metres or more. When I first went round it, somebody said to me, “You know, Michael, all you have to do is push that hill into that lake and flatten it out,” but you are talking about a huge investment to do that. Although I am very grateful for the £300 million, I believe it will cost more over time. We must
prove that we can deliver very quickly, but obviously with quality in mind, and I will probably go back to the Government to ask for more. I am prepared to put that on the table right now: £300 million is great, but probably not enough.

Amongst the other challenges—and perhaps one of the main reasons why this has stalled since the great station was finished, with huge ambition, about eight years ago—is that, given the context at that time, which was pre-recession, the planning permissions were loaded with very significant Section 106 obligations. The two main landowners, Land Securities, our biggest quoted property company, and Lafarge Tarmac, a very big aggregates group, chose for commercial reasons not to set about large-scale housebuilding because at certain points it triggered these Section 106 payments. In themselves, those are not an obstacle in most developments, but if the size of the obligation is too much, developers just wait until house prices justify it. For example, £50 million was set aside for three schools, two junior and one secondary, and £50 million was set aside for highway improvements. And so it went on and, frankly, it was not economical for them to build. In the period since 2007-08, only 360 houses have been built. Obviously, that is a huge disappointment, which we are there to reverse.

Then, there is the design element. You will all be aware that garden city principles embrace the idea of town living in a country context, but the planning regime in this country is not terribly helpful in driving quality in the end product. It can drive volume by giving generous consents, but there is very little in planning law that enables anybody to say, “Those are just not good enough for this garden city; do better.” You cannot prevail on that, so you have to do it by encouragement and by assisting with the resources available.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** How are you overcoming those Section 106 problems now—with new planning consents?

**Michael Cassidy:** One of the benefits of being a development corporation is that we have become the planning authority for the area. Another is that we have compulsory purchase powers. Those are the two legs of our purpose in life. It is my belief that we can reopen all those Section 106 agreements but we are not going to do it without a quid pro quo; therefore, in the next weeks and months we are going to have to sit down with the owners and negotiate a change in the conditions. Let me give you an example: in return for us picking up the burden
of one of the schools or highway improvements, they will agree to build faster and to greater quality, so a trade-off has to go on with each of their sites.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Who do you mean by the owners?

**Michael Cassidy:** The original developers, Land Securities or LaFarge. Redrow Homes own one small patch, so it is technically a landowner as well, but they will each have to address where taxpayers’ money can be productively employed to achieve the Government’s aims.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** So you are quite optimistic that, with your additional money, bargaining counters and powers, you are going to be able to make far better progress?

**Michael Cassidy:** Yes. Without speeding up very considerably, we are simply not going to share the costs with the owners, and that would be a very poor outcome. An idea emerging now is that we need to encourage mortgage providers to give a longer commitment period. At the moment, they only give six months when they offer a mortgage, and therefore—guess what?—the housebuilders only build to a six-month programme. If we can persuade mortgage providers to double that to 12 months, the supply chain for the next period will open up.

**The Chairman:** What is the downside on that move from six to 12 months?

**Michael Cassidy:** The downside is only for the banks, et cetera, providing the loan. For us it is all a win, because the housebuilders will then open more marketing sites, so where that might mean two per chunk at the moment, it could become three or four, which is terrific in terms of driving volume. I do not know how successful that initiative will be but we will certainly have an attempt at it, because I do not believe it has been tried anywhere else before. It is a different approach to the problem, rather than just bashing them over the head and saying, “Build more”, to which they can say “No.”

**Lord Clement-Jones:** One final question: what are the challenges in the other forms of infrastructure—transport and so on—and can you meet them?

**Michel Cassidy:** There are very considerable challenges: for example, the Bluewater shopping centre is next door and, particularly in the run-up to Christmas, the road system is completely clogged. This is also complicated by the Dartford bridge, which, as you probably know, is not an easy obstacle to overcome. It is great to have it, but it does get chock-a-block. The A2, a magnificent highway going through north Kent, simply does not have the capacity at the Bean...
and Ebbsfleet junctions to take our traffic alongside that going to Bluewater. That is without even talking about the proposed Paramount theme park, which I can give you more detail on. That will put huge pressure on the highway system. Although the Highways Agency has committed to spending money in 2019-20, that may not be soon enough as the traffic builds up.

**Q97 Baroness Andrews:** It has been a very long and protracted development and a lot of things have changed while it is being thought through. What else in the planning system has changed since Ebbsfleet was first designed that has made it either easier or more difficult? The key factor, of course, is having your own planning powers as a development corporation, but are there external NPPF issues which bear down on that? Secondly, it is such a big and complicated site that the challenges of master planning must be enormous. How confident are you that you can sustain the balance of interests, for example, as we just heard, on the demography, building an environment which is friendly for an ageing population and not simply being driven by starter-home requirements?

**Michael Cassidy:** I suppose the major change in planning is the alteration in the approach to Strategic Plans. It has often been said that garden cities would get some boost from being included in policies as part of the strategic planning, which traditionally has not happened. That has changed to some extent, and co-operation is now called for between adjoining boroughs or areas.

**Baroness Andrews:** With whom do you co-operate?

**Michael Cassidy:** We start with a phenomenally useful relationship with Dartford and Gravesham, and the upper-tier authority is Kent, obviously. They are early supporters of the work of the Corporation and they sit on our Board, so I am quite confident that we will be able to develop that relationship. My main conclusion is that I do not feel the planning system is an obstacle at this point. At the present time there is 10 million square feet of unimplemented planning consents, so it is not as though there is a shortage of planning capability to deliver this.

In terms of the other difficulties and complexities, I agree this is an extremely challenging context, not only because of the topography but because of the marketplace and having to make these attractive homes for all-comers. I think that obstacle is melting away over time.
because of the strength of house prices in south-east England. It would be strange indeed if we were not able to sell houses on this plot, and the list for the current phase is fully accounted for, so I am not worried about demand. A basic house might cost £275,000; in London terms, that is modest, therefore Ebbsfleet is going to be very attractive for people wishing to move a short distance out because they find London too expensive. Ebbsfleet station is only 17 minutes from St Pancras, so for those who have to travel to work, it is an attractive location. I might mention fares in a minute because they are too expensive, but that is a side issue. I am confident that the basic demand for houses in Ebbsfleet is there, and that the layout and facilities will be sufficient to attract all types of occupiers. It is our purpose to make sure there is a considerable risk of missing that market—in other words, this may not go on for ever, so let us try and build the appeal of the site for the short term.

**Baroness Andrews**: How much control will you have over the quality and design of what is built—for example, in relation to people over 60 who want to downsize out of central London and move to Ebbsfleet?

**Michael Cassidy**: Dartford is the plan-making authority. We do not have plan-making powers, but we are content that under the Dartford Plan, it has design guidelines that developers have to meet under their planning consents. We are trying to build on that with our own set of design objectives, but we have to negotiate those into the arrangements. We are already doing that with, for example, Persimmon, the builders of the next phase; it is very happy to be talking to us, although it wants to be convinced that our changes make sense. My objective is that we should have a good mixed set of dwellings here so that there is appeal right across the market—not just starter homes, although the Government have a considerable priority for starter homes under their present policies. I would also like to encourage the private rental sector at Ebbsfleet, because in that 12 million square feet of consents there is nothing for private rented accommodation. To me, that is part of the modern marketplace—that people moving to a starter home in this sort of location might want to rent for a while.

**Q98 Earl of Lytton**: You answered the question I originally wanted to ask about the take-up rate of the new build, but I am particularly interested in this concept of where the Ebbsfleet model sits in the construct of the new towns of the past and the Poundburys of the future. How do you settle how you are going to deal with that? We have had information about the
criteria for a garden city, but how do you see that durable USP that is going to form the societal as well as the economic glue of Ebbsfleet?

**Michael Cassidy:** Let me first draw one important distinction. One of the advantages that the New Towns Act provided is that it put land ownership as well as planning in the corporation’s hands. It makes a phenomenal difference if you can drive it with planning permissions but also through covenants or other ways of enforcing community-style commitments. We do not have the land ownership and it is not proposed that we should obtain it. The Board at Ebbsfleet considered options during our early period that included obtaining the land ownership, but we put those to one side because of the cost and because it is our belief that the present Government would not favour spending hundreds of millions on the land as their first choice. So, we are going to adopt a partnership approach, as I described, whereby we have an agreement with the land owners as to how this will proceed.

That is a big contrast with all the early garden cities, because there is a so-called legacy of land ownership, which then helps to resource future growth because you hope to capture some of the land value increase as a result of having built a city there. We cannot do that, so we are going to have to deploy our resource within the constraints of being a planning authority, but I believe we can still achieve what is necessary based on that. I expect this location to meet all the yardsticks of a recognised garden city. There will obviously be generous open spaces; up to a third of the land will be set aside for open space, play areas, allotments and so on. It certainly meets the test of connectability because of the railway; it has its own fast-track bus service, which will enlarge further. So when it is finished, 10 or 15 years hence—that may be optimistic—it will be recognisably a garden city and not just another housing estate.

**Baroness Rawlings:** You mentioned earlier about the roads being absolutely blocked. I was looking on the map to see exactly where that was. The train service is very good—17 minutes from London—but is anything being done about access from the north, the other side of the river? With the A2, you have to go along and then back up.

**Michael Cassidy:** Indeed. It has been recognised for some time that the Dartford bridge has been a victim of its own success and is regularly hugely congested. The Government have proposed a third river crossing, and they have offered three alternative sites. This has been out for consultation for a year and a half. It is said they will make an announcement in the
next year. It has also been reported that there is a preference for the easternmost site, which would cross from Thurrock to Gravesend, who are not too happy about it. Otherwise, you would have to put it bang next to the existing Dartford bridge, which has obvious problems, or there is the middle option, going straight through our site, which I think has been abandoned now. So yes, there are plans and it has serious Government support.

**The Chairman**: No tunnels underneath?

**Michael Cassidy**: There is no sign of a tunnel proposal. Maybe that is cost-related. During the time I have been involved in this, there has been absolutely no discussion of that, so I assume it is off the agenda.

**Q99 Lord Inglewood**: Significantly, in your response to Lord Lytton you touched on a number of the things I was interested in. If we stand back form the Ebbsfleet site-specific project and think about development corporations as a more general phenomenon—which seem to me to be a form of benevolent dictatorship—what application do you think they have in more general terms? What are the particular pluses and minuses when looking at the question of the built environment overall?

**Michael Cassidy**: The biggest advantage is that development corporations operate across boundaries, so you can put them in place where there is more than one local authority involved, and they can prevail because planning powers pass to the corporation. Clearly, it is very satisfactory if there is wholehearted agreement on the part of the other authorities involved. It becomes hellish if one or more of them are against what you propose.

**Lord Inglewood**: The component local authorities sit on your Board.

**Michael Cassidy**: Three are ex officio members of the Board and they make a full contribution. There are some areas where there will have to be discussion and agreement; in other words, it is not always unanimous—I have just mentioned the case of the river crossing, where it clearly is not—but for the most part we are working together. The three involved see it as being consistent with their own objectives anyway, but if I were to be asked how I would apply that in other parts of the country, I would have to express a reservation. Each garden city needs to be considered in its own context and I am certainly not advocating that this is necessarily a solution for all possible cases. It has to be carefully chosen, holistic, and, as we are, one complete site rather than fragmented, and it has to be in co-operation with existing
authorities. You will know that the Thames Gateway initiatives have not been at all successful over the past couple of decades.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Was there adequate co-operation at the outset of Ebbsfleet?

**Michael Cassidy:** That is the story that I received. When Eric Pickles was Secretary of State, he was extremely keen under his localism agenda to have local authority support, so when I came in, that had already been achieved.

**Lord Inglewood:** Are there any disadvantages with development corporations—any particular problems that you would not have if they did not exist?

**Michael Cassidy:** I do not believe so. It is about competence and delivery. An individual development corporation can lose its way if it is wrongly led or if it simply has the wrong priorities.

**The Chairman:** It is back to leadership, is it not?

**Michael Cassidy:** Yes. There is nothing in the model that has deterred me from taking on this job. I see it as fitting with other situations I have been involved with in the City of London, where we have been able to make considerable change through the planning system and it has resulted in spectacular growth. I will try to apply those ways of thinking to this in a different context, but building on ideas I have developed over the years about partnership working across boundaries.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** You are touching on a question I wanted to ask at the end, about lessons for the future development of large sites, which, as we have heard during the course of this inquiry, prevent major problems. You obviously say you have to treat each site on its own merits and ensure you have co-operation with local authorities, and so on. Do you have any broad lessons in mind in terms of how you would proceed in future? In some respects, you would not have started from here with Ebbsfleet, but now you are moving forward because you are doing things differently from the way they started.

**Michael Cassidy:** If you kindly ask me back in two years, I will tell you.

**The Chairman:** Our inquiry closes in March.

**Michael Cassidy:** It would be premature for me to draw those sorts of conclusions. I am already aware of certain challenges in the delivery area but I am not overly depressed about that. One works within the context of government and co-operation across borders, as I
described. That may or may not work but at the moment, given the Chancellor’s announcement, I start with a positive stance and I believe we now have the resource to deliver on it.

The Chairman: That is very encouraging, and it does work, of course. We went on a site visit to Birmingham, around New Street, looking at what they are doing for HS2. The way in which people with enthusiasm and very bright leadership skills are getting on with it is very impressive.

Michael Cassidy: It can be done. Manchester has done it too. It takes political will and expert leadership. I am very confident in the quality of the Board I have been able to appoint. They represent very different sectors, but they are extremely relevant to what we are doing here. All of that is working well. I just need to make sure I can develop the delivery team in an extremely achievement-focused way.

Q100 Baroness Andrews: Are you concerned, Mr Cassidy, about other issues of capacity—for example, lack of aggregates, lack of construction skills, lack of project management skills, and lack of good planners in your local authorities? We have seen a loss of planning capacity.

Michael Cassidy: That is an extremely good point, and the next priority for me within the organisation is to recruit skilled project managers. This will be, first, a construction project—quite a complex one—and, secondly, a big master planning exercise. We have AECOM, as I said, but we do not yet have the project management skills we will need to deliver on this. The market is tight because construction is very strong at the moment and there is a skills shortage, which everyone is now very aware of. I am hoping to address that by having some of the housing units provided by more industrial means.

Baroness Andrews: Prefabricated?

Michael Cassidy: In other words, dealing off-site with construction and then delivering to site, perhaps even from far-flung factory locations, in order to speed up the house building. We do not have that at the moment; it is all being built with traditional house building, on-site work. There is no prefabrication.

Lord Inglewood: Are you having project management involvement from the development corporation’s perspective because of the partnerships? In the ordinary way, you would
probably find that the planners would plan and the developers would develop, but that is obviously not quite how you are going to do it.

**Michael Cassidy:** No, because we have to show that we can deploy our £300 million with value for money in mind and not be wasteful with it. Therefore, the project management skill is in organising the contracts, tendering—

**Lord Inglewood:** My point is that you are taking a step beyond what many conventional planning authorities would do because of the nature of what you are doing and why and how you are doing it.

**Michael Cassidy:** Yes, that is totally right. That is the main distinction. Planning authorities can only facilitate; they cannot actually drive and deliver. Therefore, the purpose of our constitution is to change that from being a permissive authority to an authority that is driving towards a given outcome.

**Lord Inglewood:** You are a kind of Joe Chamberlain figure in Ebbsfleet!

**Michael Cassidy:** I leave you to judge that.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** You will tell us in two years’ time whether that is a good model.

**Michael Cassidy:** Yes.

**Baroness Rawlings:** Is that a formula that could be followed elsewhere?

**Michael Cassidy:** I would certainly hope so, but I am not accepting invitations to speak advocating this until I know that it works.

**The Chairman:** Wise man.

**Q101 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** In the context of leadership, you talked about design standards and the fact that the local authorities had design plans, and you were developing your own but they would need negotiation with developers. How ambitious will you be? For example, will you be insisting on zero-carbon homes?

**Michael Cassidy:** As I said earlier, there are limitations on the prescriptive powers, not only of planning authorities but of development corporations. Therefore, I am approaching this as a negotiation, not as something we can deploy our statutory powers to achieve and insist on. That is the way the legislation was framed, and it is quite deliberate. We approach it with the confidence that with £300 million, we can obtain favourable results. For the next year, that trade-off is what we will primarily be engaged in, and it has to be subtle, commercial and
consensual. It is up to you to decide whether you think that is enough, but that is all I am given and that is what I start with.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: There is not a risk of a race to the bottom?

**Michael Cassidy**: We have already taken steps in discussion to make sure that does not happen. There has been some expression of disappointment locally about the quality of the first phase being inadequate. That is now recognised; even the landowners understand that criticism. There is quite a lot of moral pressure, and a convincing case is being built for the quality to improve.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: What is interesting is you had a figure for the resource devoted to the Corporation but then you decided you needed more, and you got your £300 million. What gives you the confidence to proceed now you have £300 million, and what is the difference between that and the original £200 million?

**Michael Cassidy**: The Chancellor’s original statement was made without actually knowing what it might be spent on. He said £200 million in his Budget the previous year, and we made a case to push that to £310 million over the last few months. There are various things that we have an ambition to achieve with the difference. The site has very poor basic services: there is no foul water drainage; it is all cesspit drainage, which is completely unsatisfactory. There are difficulties to do with the highway approach, as I described earlier; we can address some of that. There are the site difficulties of being a former quarry; there is a very large landfill hill, which is right opposite the station exit and therefore very much in the way. We seriously looked at moving that landfill. We had estimates ranging from £150 million to £500 million to do that, so we have unfortunately had to put that to one side. That landfill hill will be a green open space where you can fly your kite, but probably not much else. There is really basic provision that we think we can usefully deploy that difference to achieve, where the developer will not do it.

Q102 **Baroness Andrews**: I think you have answered my question, which was going to be about garden cities and principles, but I would like to ask one short question about community building. The fear with new developments is that one does not actually build in the character of the likely community—the community dimension. How are you addressing that?
Michael Cassidy: There are two thoughts that come to mind. One is that we have to recognise that there are existing communities just outside our boundary which need to be brought into our ambition; otherwise, resentment will build up. We will have a programme of community involvement across those borders, so that it is a community development which builds on existing communities: Swanscombe, Northfleet, Southfleet.

Baroness Andrews: They are separate communities, are they not?

Michael Cassidy: They are, and they are quite distinct, and there may be some areas of difference that become obstacles, but we are allowed to use some of our resource outside our boundary if it builds our consequence, and we will do that. We have already launched a community scheme between now and next March whereby local existing groups can bid for resource from us. We will probably do that on a matching basis, so that if they achieve some funding, we will match it. In that way we will have summer fairs, external retail opportunities—I do not want car boot sales, but something which the community wants which helps to build that. The second way we will address this is by drawing on one of the successes of other garden cities: establishing a trust process whereby the community owns the ongoing trust, so that even beyond the period of our development corporation, there will be an entity which keeps faith with the principles.

Baroness Andrews: How interesting.

Michael Cassidy: That is where Letchworth works extremely well.

Baroness Andrews: Such a trust would not have planning powers?

Michael Cassidy: No.

Baroness Andrews: So how would they maintain those principles?

Michael Cassidy: That would have to be discussed as we come to the end of our phase, say 15 years hence, but there is a possibility of resource coming out of the residue of whatever we have built up. Secondly, there will have to be a service charge levied that will provide the wherewithal for ongoing community ventures. That is essential to keep the character.

Baroness Andrews: What about community buildings? Do you prioritise in your master plan the building of places where people can get together from an early stage of the community house building programme?
Michael Cassidy: Yes. Fortunately, there is one already there, which is one of the products of this quiet period since 2007. That is where we have our board meetings. It is a community centre at Springhead. It has quite strong church backing, being a community church as well as being available for other activities. I have noticed a lot of the things you would expect to see in a village hall going on there alongside our board meetings, and I am encouraged by that. There are proposals to extend that type of facility throughout the area—the sort of things you would expect: an ambulance station, a police post, allotments. In the finished masterplan there will be a review of that type of provision because we believe it is essential to the garden city concept.

The Chairman: And a playground where elderly people can watch children play?

Michael Cassidy: That is already in place with the first phase. You will see, I think, a series of village greens—that is the best way I can describe it—each of which is their own cluster, but there will be a complete community feel alongside all that.

The Chairman: It sounds fine. I was thinking of the read-across from the various witnesses. In Birmingham the Corporation have an estate with social housing and rental housing. Also, they are selling houses and using the profits from that to plough back into other parts in that area. Have you thought about that?

Michael Cassidy: In the context that I referred to, where there is a split between the ownership and the planning, it is difficult to achieve that, because you cannot impose conditions that relate to ownership in a planning permission. It is part of our consensual approach to try to achieve that through other means. On affordable housing, which is very important in our planning, 30% of the housing has already been set aside, which is the Dartford experience, and we have happily adopted that. There is a 10% social provision, which is being put out to tender. Circle Housing is one of the interested parties. It is peppered throughout the landscape in the villages; in other words, it will not be ghetto-ised. I have seen that at Kings Hill, near Maidstone, which is a very good example of how you can mix the two without actually noticing the difference. I believe we can achieve that.

Q103 Lord Inglewood: One of the characteristics of the way the planning system in general works in this country now is that there is a great deal of public participation, not from elected councillors but from the wider public. Clearly, if you are building a new town it is slightly
different, in that the people are not living there, although there will be some. Have you run into criticism for not having enough public participation? I know you consult. Are you finding there is no difficulty?

_Michael Cassidy:_ We firmly intend to achieve that. We have full public access to our Board and our Planning Committee. We carefully choose the timing and the notice to ensure a very good public turnout. We regularly have up to 20 people at our board meetings.

_Lord Inglewood:_ That is members of the public?

_Michael Cassidy:_ Press and so on. I do not think there will be an issue with how we are organised because that is just good local government procedure. Where I think there is discussion and where we are trying to improve our contribution is the degree to which we actually ask the public questions and invite them with a serious intention to meet and influence a lot of them. That starts next Tuesday with an all-day set of sessions—some of them drop-in opportunities, some presentations—some which are deliberately directed at local authority and community groups. We fully intend to enlarge that area of activity, which, for example, will include a comprehensive mailing of 300,000 leaflets. We believe there will be a lively interest in helping us frame the policies. That is what we are there to do. Incidentally, there was an occasion in this quiet period when a proposal for a white horse was put forward for a hill alongside the A2; a competition was run at Bluewater shopping centre for the preferences of the public, and 75,000 people voted.

_The Chairman:_ Yes or no?

_Michael Cassidy:_ They chose from three or four options. I have reservations in taking on that project at the moment because the price is £20 million and I do not think I can justify that, but if somebody would like to come forward with a smaller horse—

_Lord Clement-Jones:_ Or a public donation.

_Michael Cassidy:_ On the model that was approved, the nose of the horse was as high as Nelson’s Column, so the scale is like the Angel of the North—a great thing—but I am pausing on that at the moment.

_The Chairman:_ Perhaps you could put that on top of your hill.

_Michael Cassidy:_ Yes, it would be nice to have a noticeable feature for all that traffic coming from the Tunnel. I would love to have that but not at that cost.
The Chairman: Perhaps Sir Antony Gormley will do it for nothing, just for the publicity!

Michael Cassidy: At the moment, coverage and understanding has improved. We have had a lot of interest from the press. There will be a detailed piece in the press in the near future. Radio 4’s “Today” programme were very generous to us last month.

Lord Clement-Jones: That is what prompted us.

Michael Cassidy: Thank you. You probably did not listen from 6.30 but they gave us four slots through their morning programme. That was quite well received and I have had good responses since that.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Going back to your 30% affordable, 5% social housing figures, we have heard from a number of other planning authorities where the viability test is ruled in and they drop dramatically to less than 15% affordable from quite high levels. How confident are you that you are going to be able to maintain those levels?

Michael Cassidy: It depends on the demand for that particular provision. The experience in Dartford is that they can fulfil 30% affordable; there is a sufficient waiting list to require that. We are learning from their pattern; we are not trying to re-invent that. I believe in order to develop a balanced community, it is important to keep in mind those targets and not to try to defeat them. In other words, we do not have a rigid vision that this will all be free market, owner-occupied semis or detached homes. We have to broaden our scope here and appeal to the entire marketplace.

Q104 The Chairman: Thank you. Finally, does there need to be a clearer expression of garden city principles in the national planning policy, and what should the Government’s role be in taking forward garden cities in other locations?

Michael Cassidy: I have thought about this in the run-up to today, and I have firmly come to the view that it would be wrong to have something too prescriptive in national legislation to apply across the board to all garden cities. Our situation is unique in its own context. I have seen proposals elsewhere in the country which do not directly resemble us and, personally speaking, I am more than happy to work within the existing framework and not suggest reforms or adjustments, certainly not in the early days of our existence. However, I am very keen that a design code approach should be encouraged wherever possible. That is quite hard with the present legislation, but if it is to be in any area, it would be that of garden cities—let
me not prescribe this across the board—which would certainly benefit from additional powers to require design quality.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Cassidy. It has been a riveting session. Thank you for coming here, and I hope you have got something from it.

Michael Cassidy: It has been a real pleasure. Thank you for being so patient and attentive. You will probably be aware that we are more than happy to arrange a site visit.

The Chairman: That would be lovely. Thank you very much indeed.

01 December 2015
1. The national policymakers should set the objectives for national development and a framework within which they can be implemented. This has been done through the NPPF. Implementation of those policies needs to be done at a local scale, as otherwise the volume of cases would be prohibitive and the ability to consider local conditions would be lost. Local authority scale is about right for implementation rather than parish council, since smaller scale involvement tends to result in less rigorous and knowledgeable decisions. Even local authority councillors tend to lack sufficient ability to understand more complex planning cases and often make deeply flawed decisions.

2. Badly. The dominance of the Treasury has recently resulted in some extremely damaging reversals of very sensible and popular policies, such as zero carbon homes. The established hierarchy of certain departments means that those with little relevant knowledge or interest can overrule lower-grade departments with specialist and pertinent skills. Giving those that know what they are talking about greater influence to interpret overarching policy could result in more sensible governance.

3. Not really, the NPPF is broad and often uncertain. Some factors – such as developers being allowed to create land banks that take supply allocation out of the Local Plan and so render it void – have resulted in unintended consequences that have been quite damaging, at least in some cases. Lack of expertise in local authority councillors leads to some undesirable outcomes. Aspects that should be strengthened include the consideration of ecosystem services that will be altered by the development and consideration of impacts to future users/occupiers over the development lifetime (such as flooding).

4. A spatial element is not essential to national policy such as the NPPF, but it should contain strong provision for such spatially explicit implementation plans at the local level. This has been done fairly well, although there have been some harmful unintended consequences, as noted above.

5. The main, national policy should be looking at least 50 years ahead. The implementation plans at local level should look mainly out to 15 years, but with some consideration out to 50 years.

6. Government should ensure both quantity and quality of housing supply to private owners and housing association. Right to buy policies are likely to be harmful to both. Deregulation will result in poor quality housing built in inappropriate locations (such as flood plains or areas providing valuable ecosystem services). The greatest benefit to housing supply with minimum impact to society-wide wellbeing would be to move economic activity into the north of England. Tinkering with quality standards of new developments and relaxing planning regulations will have comparatively little impact other than to degrade the overall quality of housing stock. Some permitted development rights of commercial and agricultural buildings are sensible, although ‘small beer’ for overall housing numbers and affordability.
7. There is a wealth of international experience. The government should use this to formulate policies that will promote best overall outcomes, rather than focus narrowly on specific regulations. The latter grabs headlines and may win votes, but does little to solve systemic problems. Sustainable and resilient development needs to consider how people want to live now and how people will need to live in 50 years. It must incorporate green infrastructure, energy generation and use, changing transport modes, future work patterns and zero carbon lifestyles. Existing housing stock and policies are entirely incapable of meeting this challenge. Failure to alter policies so that existing stock is made efficient and resilient will result in significantly higher costs in the future (including health costs and deprivation). There must be good incentives for retrofitting efficiency measures to existing stock (such as insulation), as well as policies or systems that make it easy to do so.

8. No comment.

9. Few professionals can think holistically and few are asked to do so. Large development should be able to coordinate discussion between professionals to create holistic thought, but in practice this appears to be the exception rather than the rule. The skills gap could be addressed by requiring a higher level of CPD that involves much from different but allied disciplines, such as architects having to learn about renewable energy, transport and wellbeing. Local authorities do not have the people or budget to access sufficient skills, but they are also bad at making the most of the creativity in their local population.

10. No. More research on theory and case studies is necessary to inform policy, which should be based on evidence rather than political posturing. Unfortunately, this has not as yet been tried.

11. No. Generally each development is considered individually and little attention is paid to wider effects. Developments should not be guided by the latest political agenda or fad, but rather from studying other areas around the country (and globe) that work both well and poorly. Looking at the wealth of environments that already exist will give a good insight into what we should create (and not create). It is especially useful to look at thriving communities that have grown over time with little regulatory guidance, as these demonstrate intuitive structures of human habitation that promote wellbeing.

12. There are many and huge barriers. Poor public knowledge is a problem, both of what is being planned and what such plans mean for them and their environment. The planning system has neither the time nor resource to consult widely and effectively. The lack of expertise of councillors results in poor and unpopular decisions that reduce confidence in the system and so discourage participation. It can be expensive, time consuming and difficult to challenge decisions. Fixes to these problems will be difficult, especially whilst budgets are so tight.

13. Land prices are a problem to housing numbers, quality and affordability. Allowing development on low-quality agricultural land only if locally popular, they improve
ecosystem service delivery in several ways and are sold at a profit proportional to build cost would address all these problems whilst improving biodiversity and wellbeing. I am currently researching such a project for community housing, should you wish to learn more.

13 August 2015
Memorandum from EDF Energy in response to the House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment’s Call for Written Evidence

About EDF Energy

EDF Energy is one of the UK’s largest energy companies with activities throughout the energy chain. Our interests include nuclear, coal and gas-fired electricity generation, renewables, and energy supply to end users. We have over five million electricity and gas customer accounts in the UK, including residential and business users.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Q1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1 EDF Energy believes that the decisions that shape England’s built environment are taken at the right administrative level. We believe that the current planning system has provided stability and investor confidence for large energy infrastructure developers, through the dedicated process for planning consents for nationally significant infrastructure projects (Planning Act 2008 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects). By frontloading the planning application process and enabling early stakeholder engagement, we believe that the risks of protracted planning inquiries and delays have been significantly reduced.

2 We believe that it is essential that Government policy on planning remains stable and clear. This is because the consenting process needs to be predictable, timely and transparent to allow the private sector to come forward with confidence to invest in very large infrastructure projects and reduce the risk of any projected capacity shortages, and the host communities to be able to engage effectively and have a say on developments in their local area.

3 We also believe that the interaction between national need and local policy needs to be clearly expressed in guidance and understood by local authorities and their partners. This is to ensure that technologies critical to decarbonisation, such as onshore wind, are given fair assessment. The reason for this is that the development of policies which devolve more decisions to the local level will have the effect of elevating local opinion over national need. This is also a concern as it may have the effect of recreating the system in operation before the Planning Act 2008, which often resulted in protracted planning inquiries and delays for essential nationally significant infrastructure projects.
4 We welcome the Chancellor’s announcement to establish an Infrastructure Commission, to be chaired by Lord Adonis, to plan infrastructure projects including transport, housing and energy. We believe that this will provide a strategic national steer and investor confidence for energy infrastructure developers.

Q2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

5 In the electricity sector, there is a clear recognition of the need to drive infrastructure investment to deliver the policy goal of a secure, affordable and low carbon electricity generation mix. To achieve this, EDF Energy believes that there are two areas of the policy framework where it is essential that integration and co-ordination are maintained.

6 The Coalition Government, with cross-party support, implemented fundamental reforms to the electricity market. Electricity Market Reform (EMR) provides a framework to deliver the policy objectives of decarbonisation and security of supply in an affordable way. This reform needs time to work by bringing forward new electricity generation infrastructure.

7 The Planning Act 2008 (as modified by the Localism Act 2011) introduced the National Policy Statement (NPS) framework to guide decision making on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). The Energy NPS framework provides a stable policy framework for planning which is an important factor to build investor confidence to invest in new projects.

8 It is important to maintain the current planning framework which provides the means to balance the national need for low carbon and sustainable energy infrastructure projects with the views of local people. If local opinion is elevated above national need, this will reintroduce the risk of protracted planning inquiries and delays.

Q3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

9 EDF Energy recognises the fundamental importance of a robust and predictable planning system in delivering sustainable development. We believe that the current planning policy framework is stable and provides adequate certainty and investor confidence. We also believe that large scale investment in electricity infrastructure is required to ensure security of supply and meet our climate change targets. It is important that the transition to a low carbon economy is progressed efficiently to ensure that the competitiveness of UK energy supplies is maintained, while also ensuring the stability and affordability of energy prices.
It is essential that the right decisions are made when developing and protecting the built and natural environment. However, decisions need to be taken at a nationally strategic level to secure investment in large-scale low-carbon electricity generation and promote the transition to a low carbon economy incorporating a diverse energy mix.

We believe that the Government’s statutory energy and climate change objectives can be met through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is because it defines the UK’s national economic, environmental and social infrastructure needs. It also clarifies the planning priorities for all development under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) regime. We support the overarching principle of having a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. However, we do believe that more emphasis should be given in the NPPF to the role of energy infrastructure within the TCPA regime, and as a crucial component of the Government’s growth agenda.

We believe that there were significant benefits to streamlining and rationalising the old suite of planning policy documents. However, we are concerned that there are some instances where useful detailed guidance for developers and local authorities, for example that in Planning Policy Statement 22 (“Renewable Energy”), have been omitted.

We feel that local planning authorities and community stakeholders already have opportunities to question and analyse major infrastructure projects through the nationally significant infrastructure planning process. This gives scope for the positive and negative impacts to be weighed as part of the decision making process undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). It is important that, in cases where developers may need to make applications for associated development as part of the same project under both national and local planning processes, the national need of the main project is a material consideration. We believe that the NPSs should be a material consideration under the TCPA regime, and that this should be stated explicitly in the NPPF, in line with the wording in the designated NPSs (e.g. paragraph 1.2.1 of the Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1)).

Q4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

EDF Energy believes that a number of aspects of planning policy already deliver a spatial perspective and we are not aware of a significant gap in policy in this respect. Before introducing a further spatial element to national policy, it is essential that any perceived policy gap is defined, with clear supporting evidence. The NPPF calls upon local planning authorities to produce Local Plans which, once all Plans are in place will deliver a cohesive picture of land use across the country, including identifying areas where renewable energy projects are particularly encouraged.

We believe that rather than introducing further changes to the NSIP and TCPA regimes Government should focus on assisting all local planning authorities to produce robust Local Plans in full consultation with their local communities, and within a specified timescale.
Q5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

16 EDF Energy believes that planning for energy infrastructure requires a longer-term view. It would be prudent for those developing planning and future built environment policy to consider the infrastructure necessary to deliver the UK growth plans. Investment in electricity infrastructure is urgently required to replace existing generation plants. This is required to ensure security of supply and meet our climate change targets. The UK will need to achieve very substantial progress in decarbonisation of electricity generation by 2030 if it is to achieve the legally binding target to deliver an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as established in the Climate Change Act 2008.

17 It is important that the transition to a low carbon economy is progressed efficiently to ensure that the competitiveness of UK energy supplies is maintained, while also ensuring the stability and affordability of energy prices. We believe that planning for the UK’s energy needs out to at least 2030 would deliver a stable long-term policy framework which would attract investors.

Skills and design

Q9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

18 EDF Energy believes that there is a strong need to reinforce and adequately fund planning resources. This is because a lack of resource has, on occasion, hampered some local planning authorities in responding in a timely way. Sufficient experienced and knowledgeable planning officers are needed to manage and deliver the planning authorities’ wide-ranging duties and responsibilities under both the local planning and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regimes.

Community involvement and community impact

Q11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?
19 EDF Energy believes that the front-ended NSIP regime allows for meaningful and early engagement with local communities and their representatives which can help developers enhance their designs to accommodate local suggestions / address local concerns.

06 October 2015
The Edge is a voluntary built-environment think tank and is multi-disciplinary in a landscape remarkable for the number of single-discipline institutions it contains. We stand for being:

- Interdisciplinary: bringing built environmental professionals together, inclusively along with others who share their concerns.
- Open and creative: working across all disciplines with competitors and collaborators.
- Strategic in approach: encouraging accessible and shared knowledge and seeking to connect place, practice, policy and research.
- Visionary: in identifying the issues and in promoting effective and urgent responses to both local and global challenges.
- Professional: developing a broad-based ethic of responsibility to social and environmental demands based on an equitable global framework.
- Business-like: furthering the skills and capacity of the UK construction industry to promote prosperity and deliver a better built environment.

These characteristics provide a successful working model for interaction, which we believe is more widely applicable. It is a framework that has directed our thoughts when addressing the timely and pertinent questions that the committee have posed.

The following responds to the Select Committee’s questions as posed.

Policy making, integration and coordination
Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Built environment decision-making needs to be made at a range of levels to address the national (long-term / visionary), regional (strategic) and local (local need / capacity) concerns. Policy leadership can be more influential at some levels than others in resolving conflicting drivers. So current concentration on scaling up housing output requires a clear national level steer on design quality and sustainability from DCLG, the Secretary of State and the Chancellor to mitigate potentially significant negative impacts on current and future generations from poorly designed housing. Similarly addressing national climate change or urban heat island challenges necessitates energy efficiency decisions beyond the level of individual buildings, with Local Authorities’ local decisions on master planning or provision of green spaces interacting with regional planning for say renewable energy infrastructure.

1.2 World class places in 2009 was the last policy attempt to identify cross departmental actions to improve the built environment. Many of the recommendations still hold true and new policy could helpfully reconsider:

- Ministerial Design Champions to embed quality across the whole of Government
Establishing consistent quality standards (this was achieved for housing in the 2014 housing standards reviews but would be equally helpful for green space and heritage)
Providing training for local leaders / local government helping them to understand and prioritise quality of place, and supporting local authorities in the long term process of delivery of high quality places

Empowering local people to have greater influence over the quality of local areas.
Recommendation 1: A long-term national policy vision should be developed through a process of public consultation that allows for regional and local interpretation and delivery. Politicians should compete with the means to deliver a shared vision and not with alternative visions.

How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 The urban environment is the location where all these concerns interact, and the success and financial sustainability of individual transport or energy infrastructure projects depends on consideration of all the other factors. Yet integration of these areas (and communication) across Government departments is still poor. The lack of clarity and direction about how the built environment is designed and managed becomes critical when addressing the combined challenges of climate change, demographic shifts and economic austerity and the broad impact of the UK’s ageing population.

2.2 Routinely monitoring policy impact, gathering and sharing information / data would improve coordination (particularly while new policy is being worked through, as in the case of the Neighbourhood Planning pilots), enabling policy makers to develop and deliver better policy in the future. While various research bodies and academic institutes exist, the lack of a single agency to gather evidence and learning on Built Environment delivery (similar to the independent ‘What Works’ networks centres for key areas of health, education, crime reduction, and local economic growth) is an ongoing weakness.

Recommendation 2: In place of the Chief Construction Advisor a stronger more influential position of Chief Advisor for the Built Environment should be created, responsible for coordinating and championing high quality, energy efficient design and placemaking.

Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

3.1 The current planning system is still readjusting from the upheaval of the NPPF with ongoing production of Local Plans being prioritised over implementation. There is insufficient guidance on establishing long-term visions or on balancing the pressures of
development against preservation of nature or heritage. Sustainable development is only given lip service in the NPPF and yet even the Governor of the Bank of England called for urgent engagement with sustainability when speaking at Lloyds on 29 September 2015.

3.2 Planning policy guidance is now far simpler but has become divorced from the complex realities of delivery. Many improvement mechanisms exist to facilitate a simpler, faster planning system at the same time as improving quality; but many policies are poorly understood or in a process of transition (for example Local Authorities running CIL and S106 in parallel) implying that greater skills and resources are required to motivate and facilitate policy application. Guidance is insufficient without powers and incentives for implementation.

Recommendation 3: The NPPF should be allowed to bed down and prove itself before any further radical overhaul, but the immediate priority should be the development and provision of the skills and resources to enable the current planning system to be efficient and effective.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 Spatial consideration of policy is extremely weak at both national and regional scale. A more informed spatial perspective would improve forward planning of large-scale cross-regional projects (such as transport connectivity), but also provide more considered delivery of smaller projects. Clear regional plans might ameliorate the current failure of the Duty to Cooperate, and the realistic spatial identification of locations where development is most suited facilitate local interventions in a less piecemeal and reactive way.

Recommendation 4: Clear regional plans should be put in place that fill out the next level of detail of the national vision and help inform local planning and decision-making.

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 Planning and delivering built environment projects is a slow complex process, with differing solutions needed to respond to the range of timescales. Monitoring and adjustment of policy is essential across timeframes. Many current problems are the result of historic policy decisions (say Right to buy and the shortfall in social housing), which have taken decades to play out. Infrastructure obviously needs long-term thinking. Yet a single road map over 30-40 years may be unrealistic, and fail to take advantage of rapid shifts in technology and other opportunities; we need swift actions (capitalising on progress in construction, energy efficiency and sustainability) that can build towards longer-term targets. So while Garden Cities / large scale settlements are long term projects taking 25-30 years to deliver greatly needed new homes, we also need 3-5 year programmes continuing to infill and build out sites to increase density in existing towns and cities. Both these shorter term or longer term housing investment programmes must be accompanied by
post-occupational evaluation on their social, economic and environmental impact and the results feed back into the planning system.

5.2 One point of consensus is the need for forward certainty and a shared plan that extends beyond short-term economic and political cycles. At the same time, however, embedding a culture of thinking ahead in a manner that accommodates the fact that we sometimes cannot be certain of the future is important if we are to be prepared for its arrival.

Recommendation 5: Long term planning combined with on-going monitoring and responsive policy stewardship needs to be instituted to allow 5, 10 and 25 year programmes to react to continuous feedback and be alive to changing circumstances

Buildings and places: New and old
What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 There has been substantial discussion of the challenges of housing supply and alternative solutions proposed; see Lyons, reports by KPMG / Shelter, HAPPI2 and others. All of these identify similar interventions needed; to hasten land delivery, increase skills, and encourage funding investment and community engagement to overcome resistance to planned expansions.

6.2 It is essential that the new homes built are not only cost efficient to construct but also energy efficient and sustainable, providing affordable, easily maintainable homes, which will need to work well for 100-200 years. To do this the construction industry must be supported by government to provide the training and employment practices needed to re-establish a skilled labour force amongst the major volume house builders and also smaller scale local developers.

6.3 Government must take proper regard to demographic changes underway (the increase by 250% of ‘over-60s’ between now and 2050), intervening where the current market won’t provide suitable homes for this group, but addressing a need which would outpace demand for Starter Homes.

Recommendation 6: New housing providers should be supported as they enter the market and the construction industry must be encouraged by government to provide the training and employment practices needed to re-establish a skilled labour force amongst both the major volume house builders and smaller scale local developers.

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be
able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1 The physical resilience and adaptability of the built environment is only a partial step in achieving sustainability. Too often Government takes a limited view of resilience as hazard/ risk management, with the aim of a place ‘bouncing back’ to a pre-shock equilibrium. This ignores the dynamic social-economic resilience derived from empowering communities – aiming for social and environmental adaptation not just mitigation. The inherited urban landscape often had a degree of redundancy, facilitating adjustments as needs and circumstances change. We don’t have the luxury of this, and so need to make better use of existing stock and built assets.

7.2 The evidence to inform decisions to refurbish or demolish buildings exists but is often overlooked (See UCL’s meta-review). We need a national plan, supported by legalisation and practical programmes, to urgently improve and upgrade existing buildings, which must perform better. The benefits are broad; every £1 spent on retrofit is worth £3.20 to the nation in terms of carbon reduction, jobs and improved comfort of occupants with less need for healthcare. Reinforcing this message would incentivise inward investment into the retrofit sector.

Recommendation 7: A renewed focus, supported by legalisation and practical programmes, must be put in place to improve and upgrade the performance of existing buildings over a period that matches the timetable of the 2008 Climate Change Act and successive carbon plans.

To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

8.1 The case for the current value and contribution of the historic environment to the UK economy via education, the heritage sector or the tourist industry, has been well made, but policies are needed to make more of their potential through renewal and reuse. The aim should be not preservation but re-invigoration to ensure that historical places and spaces retain an on-going significance and usefulness. Further research and development of techniques is required, ensuring that new technologies can be applied to old buildings improving their energy performance while conserving their quality and distinctiveness.

Recommendation 8: Local Planning Authorities should be required to set out clearly the assessment process for classifying elements and buildings against which interventions are judged as causing “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm”, in line with national guidance. At present differing interpretations cause confusion and act as a stop on low-key energy efficiency measures.

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could
we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

9.1 The Edge’s recent 2015 report Collaboration for Change identifies the potential benefits from professional collaboration on construction industry reform, on climate change and on building performance to achieve the transformational efficiencies that a holistic vision for an area can give.

9.2 The separate professions each work hard to develop their distinct skills bases. But more integration is needed, with training on working together in a collaborative and ethical way. Inter disciplinary training should start at university prior to professional membership and be a requirement throughout professional life. The Collaboration for Change report makes recommendations for the institutions’ members to develop their competence and enrich ‘professional guarantee with cross disciplinary insight’.

9.3 The Chairman of CIC has accepted the challenge of uniting these distinctive viewpoints with special reference to ethics, education and the performance gap. Among the other responses there is a group of ten Institutions, with the support of the Edge, who are working on disseminating the results of Built Environment research faster and more effectively.

9.4 For Local Authorities to manage their environment they need to demand accountability for what is actually delivered. This entails enforcement of policy standards, sanctioning failure to perform, and incentivising disclosure of actual performance in use. Economic austerity constrains Local Authorities’ ability to attract, retain and develop suitably skilled staff. Good examples of creative and ambitious Local Authorities exist – often working in partnership beyond the public sector (see Cambridge, Bicester or Lambeth) but lessons learnt from these front-runners must be disseminated, and adapted to the circumstances of the local areas where they can be reapplied.

9.5 As well as rolling out lessons on what works, new thinking is needed. But despite individual examples of innovative rethinking of construction processes (see for example Innovate UK’s programmes) these innovations fail to flow down through the whole industry, not achieving the impacts claimed.

Recommendation 9: The professions should be treated as essential partners in the move to create more successful, sustainable and resilient places that work socially, environmentally and economically. The professions should be encouraged to work closely together to help both develop and then deliver the national vision.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

10.1 The Farrell Review reiterated the message that the tools and techniques for high quality design and placemaking are familiar, accessible and achievable. Under the
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment an effective programme of design review was set up and spread around the country. Now Design Council Cabe provides an excellent design review process in London and is building a network of panels (eg Oxford, Old Oak Common, Birmingham, etc). Over the past five years the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel has overseen the masterplanning and detail design of all the major developments around Cambridge and in the surrounding market towns as a critical friend in support of the planning system to good effect. The PLACE Alliance, as a broad reaching consortium of delivery organisations, practically engaged with delivering better places should be supported.

Recommendation 10: National leadership and encouragement should be provided though policy frameworks as much as design quality standards. The National Infrastructure Body and should go on to consider not only traditional infrastructure and housing but the low carbon built environment as a whole.

Community involvement and community impact
Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 There is an increasing body of evidence on what is needed for user health and wellbeing in the built environment. Mechanisms for measuring the effect of physical interventions on residents’ wellbeing and the social value generated by community participation in regeneration projects exist but could be used more widely. Gathering this kind of evidence on community impact aids decision-making, and can be used to monitor changes in health over time.

Recommendation 11: Ensure that feedback on outcomes from previous projects and interventions is used to inform future ones and that there are effective ways of incorporating lessons learnt into developing practice.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

12.1 Local involvement is desirable from an early stage, if residents are presented with realistic options, but must be balanced against the risks of premature engagement before a commitment to act has been made. Community participation in regeneration projects is essential to understand priorities and to get under the skin of real local problems. The successes of the Neighbourhood Plan process show the positive outcomes that can be achieved by engaged and enthused local residents. However, even using mechanisms to increase user participation and representation (online consultations etc.) this is patchy. Many communities do not have the capacity to help shape their surroundings. Familiar
barriers are time, resources, lack of belief that a community’s voice will be heard and taken seriously, and the competing relevance of other barriers; the negative impact of welfare reforms are immediate, the possible benefits of a better built environment and distinct and uncertain. Communities need to be enabled over the short term (smoother acceptance of change, enriched schemes) and the long term (increased local commitment, sustainability health or wellbeing).

Recommendation 12: Ensure time and resources are provided on all projects to ensure effective public engagement and user participation.

Financial measures
Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

13.1 The key decisions about our built environment are currently being made by housing land being sold to the highest bidder. Some financial mechanisms that encourage good design and placemaking as well as delivery are already available, but need reinforcing, such as:

Clearer mechanisms for funding initial infrastructure though Local Authority borrowing (perhaps against future CIL)

Preventing housing viability assessments being distorted by negotiable and non-negotiable elements (that is S106 being played off against CIL)

Greater use of compulsorily purchase powers for land acquisition

Promotion of Community Land Trusts as ways of disconnecting land costs from the housing price, making them affordable to households on low incomes.

13.2 Other mechanisms or novel approaches to explore including:
New investment vehicles to bring new private sector finance for mixed tenure development
A social housing investment trust to attract small-time investors
Preferential permissions for schemes that perform well at Design Reviews.

13.3 This mix of new and familiar ideas illustrates that the policy challenge is less the search for novel fiscal measures than a clear sighted understanding of existing mechanisms might be adjusted to respond to current and future circumstances. Financial measures inevitably have shorter lifespans than the Built Environment they fund. A long term National Policy for the Built Environment could provide a clear and framework against which the success of funding programmes would be devised and judged.

Recommendation 12: Ensure time and resources are provided on all projects to ensure effective public engagement and user participation.
Robin Nicholson - Convenor of the Edge.

06 October 2015
1. Why do design standards in the built environment fall short of objectives? Should there be a stronger unified code for design standards at national level?

I interpret this as the ‘standard of design’ and there are a range of answers - one of the most cogent is Nikolaus Pevsner’s analysis that “The English will spare no expense to get something on the cheap” an approach that makes getting good design so hard that it often only smuggled into projects despite the funder’s wishes.

THE EDGE IS INTERESTED IN STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, both buildings and infrastructure. Design is too loaded a term to be useful in this context and tends to be portrayed only in Manichaean terms or, worse, solely as an output of creativity and invention.

- The construction industry’s task is to find solutions to multi-faceted problems, often by bringing together a team of specialists to develop a collective response. A key part of the challenge is in the definition of the problem, setting the objectives and the outcomes required.
- Design aims to deliver specific outcomes in relation to predefined intent sometimes with added unexpected extras (both good and bad). We have two problems - very poor definition of intent through BRIEFING AND CLIENTING AND A LACK OF FEEDBACK from previous projects.
- The standard of design is often judged in the abstract and in comparison to our relatively scant knowledge of other similar projects
- Quality thresholds are possible and useful but are often specific and measurable such as the space standards in the 2014 Housing standards review or the insulation standards in building regulations.
- Process standards have also been introduced in recent years and these include scrutiny under the planning system, design review etc. – which we may get back to.
- We already have a set of national standards, mainly in the building regulations but also embedded in a range of other regulations and guidance. What has largely stopped is the desire to incrementally step them up in the light of evidence and improvements in skills and technology. This is something we need to recover.
- Standards are there to define a base level of provision and to stop the race to the bottom. Unfortunately they can also encourage widespread adherence to lowest standards and do not encourage many to go above and beyond (CfSH?).
- Guidance is useful to enable a collective understanding and to speed the process

The Edge takes the view that construction professionals need to find ways to enhance and develop higher standards than the legal minimum in both their built
output and their working practices. But for this to happen it needs to support and encouragement of government.

2. Is the system of design review panels proving effective, and should more be done to promote them?

The system of design review and the value of ‘challenge’ in the system is a good one although quality is variable. We cited the example of the Cambridge Quality panel in our evidence. Lesson from the CQP include:

- Panels need to play the role of the independent (and fearless) critical friend to planners and developers etc. alike
- Importance of early reviews of proposals
- They need to focus on place more than on individual buildings
- Important role of masterplans
- Panels need to be cross disciplinary
- It is important to follow up, review and learn five years later
- Panels need to be paid to be valued

But DRPs should not be seen as a patch on a dysfunctional and under resourced planning system. Panels should aim to improve propositions, occasionally head them off at the pass but not act as the gateway to consent.

Where do we need DRPs most? Middlesborough?

DRPs should be accompanied and supported by project enabling.

3. What other measures can be taken to support cross-disciplinary working on design issues among built environment professionals? Is there a case for multi-disciplinary teams at local authority level?

Cross-disciplinary working within teams of professionals on individual projects works well and will be enhanced by the use of shared technical platforms such as BIM. The problems of inter-disciplinarity are at an organisational level, in siloed institutions and particularly in the education system.

If there is a problem it is one of a lack of continuity, as teams from one project will rarely work together on another – with the loss of their combined learning.

The Edge’s recent report on the future of the professions, COLLABORATION FOR CHANGE, authored by Paul Morrell, strongly recommends that the institutions learn to work together as the norm through focusing on 6 areas that can only be addressed through joint working:

- Develop a joint code of ethics – to enable clarity in a tough market both at home and overseas
• Educating for a future in the design/construction/property industry that will be more flexible and will accommodate many different roles, skills and responsibilities over a working life.
• Jointly developing an evidence and knowledge base for professional expertise in the industry – perhaps sharing a research base – something we call The King’s Fund for construction - and getting new research into practice far more quickly.
• Addressing reform of the industry to offer clients and society a much better deal from the industry.
• Closing the performance gap between what is promised and what gets delivered
• Formulating a detailed response to the challenge of climate change

PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS PROVIDE AN EXTRAORDINARY RESOURCE to society in a role that is outside both public and private sectors. But professional bodies need to reform and government needs to develop a new and robust relationship with them that expects and values a significant contribution to the public good.

At present Government’s default position is to seek (expensive) advice from one of the big four management consultants (Ernst & Young, KMPG, PWC, Deloitte). The Edge suggests that they would be better renewing the grand bargain with professional bodies.

On local authorities – they have a good track record of multi-disciplinary team working (Croydon) where an individuals skills and abilities are often rated more than their professional job title. Also in large firms. The problem here is far more of under resourcing to allow professional teams to work well and career progression.

SJ: Information from Liz Kessler, who led the EC1 New Deal for Communities: the fact that in her role she could work across the local authority’s departments meant that she achieved what she did...no single department could have done it and the NDC was the mechanism for co-operation. Unfortunately they did not do sufficient before and after analysis to confirm the multiple benefits achieved.

4. How can design aspirations be better coordinated nationally across service areas and departments? Should there be a stronger national duty to secure sustainability?

The need to learn from past experience is key in order to improve in future. That learning needs to be shared across not only the public sector but the private sector as well. We need to have the confidence to be transparent and open with information in the recognition that it will enhance our reputation and help both the commissioners and providers of the built environment to achieve far more.

There is ALREADY A VERY STRONG NATIONAL DUTY to achieve sustainability in the form of the Climate Change Act and various international treaties. It is the detailed regulation and incentive structure that is dysfunctional. So many schemes aimed at
achieving lower energy and carbon have recently been suspended or cut back that there is no longer any confidence in investing in the sector. A new long-term plan for the journey to zero carbon emission buildings that is an essential part of the Carbon Plan needs to be formulated jointly by government and the industry.

Performance contracting

There is a very Good Model For Achieving This In The Jointly Sponsored Zero Carbon Hub. Unfortunately another victim of government mind change.

5. How might the appointment of a chief built environment adviser improve design and sustainability? How else might the government improve leadership on design matters?

A Chief BE advisor would become the main point of contact and conduit between government and the industry. The track record of the Chief Construction adviser is good, as is the longer-term role of Chief Scientists. A CBEA would on one hand ensure that the message to and from the industry was co-ordinated and clear and on the other hand ensure that government’s multi-departmental thinking was coherent, long-term and doable. The role would need to be supported more than that of the CCA. MEMORY

Government leadership on good design became well formulated in CABE’s statutory years. But CABE’s shrinkage has left a vacuum behind it, both in government and in other bodies that provided advice. Part of this role might be taken by a CBEA but other bodies need to develop a knowledge and leadership role as well.

Government should consider re-instituting ministerial design champions

6. How can sustainability standards best be delivered and maintained in new and existing buildings? Should there be prescriptive minimum standards or regular reviews based on performance?

We need to see how buildings are performing and Display Energy Certificates are the most straightforward way of achieving this. They are supported by the property industry so why not?

Information on building and infrastructure performance needs to be available and transparent to researchers, practitioners and members of the public alike. Only then will we understand how to make improvements.

The current compliance-based system relies on computer modelling and relates little to the reality of energy use or carbon emissions from buildings.

There are already prescriptive standards but since regulatory upgraders have been effectively scrapped there is now no planned route to the zero carbon buildings the UK has signed up to in the EU and at Paris. There is not only a performance gap there is a gaping policy gap.
Regular reviews and revisits are essential to ensure and keep buildings working as they were designed

7. Is the education system for planning and the built environment in need of improvement, and what initiatives could be undertaken to enable this?

There is a need to educate for a career working across the industry and starting in with a good understanding of how the other parts contribute to it working. The silos need breaking down.

Several universities are working on this but are finding it hard going without institutional will.

As a result of C4C the CIC is pushing ahead with both industry and educational reform with the support of the RICS.

Numerous studies have shown that the current model of silo-ed education - for building trades through to built environment professionals - leads to poor quality outcomes. Building projects need a synthesis of skills and education must provide a common language and a greater empathy with others' contributions. For example, Zero Carbon Hub's analysis of the Performance Gap in housing identified industry's energy literacy as a key requirement for the delivery of good energy performance - this would require education to provide a high level understanding of climate change, of the role of building performance in reducing emissions, and of how the collaboration and interaction of the range of actors in the design, build, and user roles is needed to achieve successful outcomes. Education is the key, and could start in schools!

Educating for the industry will be the Edge’s next major cross-industry inquiry.

03 January 2016
The Edge and Urban Design Group – Oral Evidence (QQ308-329)

Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Simon Foxell, The Edge, built environment think-tank, and Barry Sellers, Urban Design Group

Q308 The Chairman: Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you, Mr Foxell and Mr Sellers, a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to the transcript, where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please? This is for the purpose of making sure that we allocate the right answers to the right people for our transcribers. Mr Foxell?
Simon Foxell: I am Simon Foxell, I am an architect and I am here to represent The Edge, which is a built environment voluntary think-tank of senior and relatively young members of the construction-industry professions and a range of others.
The Chairman: Not just architects?
Simon Foxell: Not just architects at all, but engineers, surveyors, builders and various other property professionals, and we have been in existence for about 20 years.
The Chairman: Thank you. Mr Sellers?
**Barry Sellers:** Good morning, Chairman. My name is Barry Sellers and I am here representing the Urban Design Group, which is a charitable organisation dealing with the built environment. I am an urban designer and a chartered town planner and my day job is working in a local authority for the London Borough of Wandsworth, primarily dealing with Nine Elms and Battersea power station, and the design review panels.

**The Chairman:** My goodness, Battersea power station. There is a book about it, is there not?

**Barry Sellers:** There is, yes.

**Q309 The Chairman:** I think you sent us one. Thank you. I will start straightaway with the first question. Why do design standards in the built environment fall short of objectives? Should there be a stronger unified code for design standards at a national level?

**Simon Foxell:** To preface this, it is important to understand what the design standards are, who is setting them and whether they exist. We may be talking instead about the quality of design and effectively how that can be raised, and there are a very wide range of answers to why that may be a problem to establish in this country. One of the most cogent answers to this question was Nicholas Pevsner, the architectural historian, who wrote that the English will spare no expense to get something on the cheap, and often, because of that tendency, good design has to be smuggled into projects, despite all the standards that exist.

The Edge is particularly concerned with partly moving away from issues of good/bad design, which are a very Manichean idea, to the performance of the built environment: how well it does what it is being asked to do, how well it achieves it and what is being claimed for it. The process of design really needs to start from the setting out of a good set of intentions for what is required of it, a good briefing process and a good client process in order to lead to a response to that, which is finding the right solutions to the challenge and then, at the other end, measuring whether we have achieved the objectives and the intentions, so it is a twofold thing. We are falling down very frequently on the good briefing for projects and being really clear about what we are trying to achieve out of them, and, on the back end of that, we are also falling down on the performance of meeting those objectives and particularly on actually finding out whether we have performed or not and feeding that back into the process, so learning the lessons from the process of design. There is a tendency in this country, once infrastructure is complete, to hand it over to the user and not to revisit it.
If there is an issue here that we need to emphasise, it is the need for stewardship of projects right through the process of design through to delivery and often revisiting those projects on a frequent basis thereafter, to make sure not only that they are still performing in the way they were asked to perform but that we are learning the lessons from them that can feed into future projects.

**Q310 The Chairman:** That is very interesting. You made the point that at every stage in the process you should get involved in it, but you also said that handing over the project to the user at the end is not the best idea and there should be a continuing relationship. Surely it should be a relationship, which I suppose there is, right from the beginning of the project so that, when it is handed over, there are no surprises?

**Simon Foxell:** There is now a process that has been instigated by the industry and has been taken up by the Government called Government Soft Landings, which encourages this process of making sure that the users are brought in early so that they understand what they are going to get, a process of commissioning and briefing them afterwards, and a series of revisits to those projects later on. Government Soft Landings are still a minority pursuit, but it is very encouraging that it exists, and the Government wish to make it mandatory on all their larger projects.

**Q311 The Chairman:** If you were in our position of making recommendations on the built environment, would you suggest that we should think very seriously about whether there should be not a statutory but a really strong recommendation that the user should be involved right from the beginning? You would then be able to regulate their attitude towards cost-cutting where it is essential.

**Simon Foxell:** It is very important for the full team of designers, contractors and, potentially, users to be involved all the way through in order to have a good consultation process, but also not to rush into design. Good design is often achieved through good preparation so that the issues are studied and the right questions are asked—whether this is a problem and the answer is that a building or a different response is being requested—in order that the right solutions can be arrived at. Frequently, at the moment, the preparation period for design, and even the design period itself, is being radically shrunk so that there is no time to be asking the
right questions of projects and to get the ground rules right. At the moment, for new schools projects, from inception to completion of the design process, there is a period of six weeks.

**Baroness Andrews:** Is that a change in the law or a change in the guidance?

**Simon Foxell:** In that particular case, it is a change in departmental policy, yes.

**The Chairman:** That is outrageous.

**Baroness Andrews:** How much time? Six weeks? It used to be 13 weeks.

**Simon Foxell:** It was a much longer period, which varied from project to project down to a departmental target.

**Baroness Andrews:** It is a target?

**Simon Foxell:** It is. The design team is obliged to meet that target. On the other side, the team that gives the permission for it to go forward often takes much longer.

**The Chairman:** Can we ask Mr Sellers to come in on that one?

**Barry Sellers:** Perhaps I can talk about housebuilding and design, and things like that. In recent years, the Building for Life approach was introduced, which set out a number of criteria to evaluate housebuilding projects and has moved towards more of a self-certification, traffic-light system of appraisal. A lot of that came about as a response to the Design Council/CABE analysis that a lot of the quality of the housing in our country that is being built was not really up to the standard they would be looking for. Certainly the Building for Life approach has been challenging; it gives us a checklist for builders to subscribe to in the way to move things forward.

The other area, of course, is in London where we have the Mayor’s housing design guidance, for example. That is always very useful for developers and architects to look at in preparation for putting together a framework for different developments on different sites. Whether that is something that you would look to nationally is another question, because obviously it is very particular to London in that sense, but questions are often raised in the UK that some of the sizes of some of the rooms in our houses are a bit smaller than some of those in Denmark, for example, so we need to look very carefully and we cannot keep making rooms smaller because we need to have certain standards for that sort of thing. Of course, we have building standards for safety, for example, in the way in which we procure the design and construction...
of houses, which is important for meeting certain critical standards, so the BS standards are very, very important to have.

Regarding urban design, we have national planning guidance on the website, and it is useful to issue guidance nationally to evaluate developments.

**Q312 Lord Inglewood:** Mr Foxell, a very quick point. Talking about the time you are “allowed” to design a school, in very general terms what would be the optimum period? You can go on looking at the design too often. What do you, as a professional architect, reckon that process should take in order to get the right answer?

**Simon Foxell:** It is necessary for it to be an iterative process, so that it goes from initial studies, through sketches, through to a more detailed design. In that process, it is important to be in consultation with the users, possibly with the community, and others. It is often the answers that come back that will change the speed. If the answer is, “Fantastic, move on”, then the speed accelerates. If it is, “We still have problems with this. Go back and think about it again”, it is going to take longer, but that time is well worth spending to actually get it right and to get it right to people’s satisfaction. I am not answering your question exactly, but a three-month period would be an adequate time generally to design a building with an adequate consultation process built into it.

**Lord Inglewood:** But what you are telling us seems to me to be a scandal, if it is correct: that, for the sake of a relatively few weeks, we are creating a lot of suboptimal buildings at very great public cost.

**Simon Foxell:** It is in part in order to drive through standard building types without too much objection from the people on the ground.

**The Chairman:** I agree with Lord Inglewood that that does seem crazy. If something is worth doing, it is worth doing well.

**Simon Foxell:** Indeed.

**Q313 Baroness Whitaker:** Mr Foxell mentioned “stewardship”. For the sake of clarity, who or what is the steward? Is it a committee? Does this need to be more clearly stated in guidance?

I have another question on the objectives for the built environment. You said that we should interrogate our projects: are they doing what they are asked to do? Are they usually asked to
do the right things uniformly—for instance, the implications of a more social nature, transport, accessibility to employment and amenities? Are those normally uniformly fair? So, two questions: on stewardship and the right things.

Simon Foxell: One of the things we have discovered is that this is very much a team effort and there is no single person who takes responsibility for everything. It is much better when it is a collaborative process and people from the outset from many different disciplines add their expertise into it. That includes not only the technical side, the professionals, but the money, the users and so on, and they all need to take on aspects of stewardship.

Baroness Whitaker: Should this be more clearly stated: that a group is necessary to safeguard it?

Simon Foxell: In some cases, it is important. The Edge has been doing a lot of work on the nature of professionalism in the industry, and from our point of view one of our critiques is that professionals need to take more responsibility for the long-term success of their projects, monitoring them afterwards and learning the lessons from them, but also that clients should expect them to do that and be prepared to let them, which is often a barrier.

Baroness Whitaker: So do you think this might be lodged in guidance?

Simon Foxell: I think it should be both lodged in guidance, particularly for buildings that the public sector purchases, but also the professional institutions should encourage their members, as part of their code of conduct, to take a much greater aspect of stewardship in the works they produce. There was a second bit to your question?

Baroness Whitaker: Are projects being asked to do the right thing? You said they should be asked whether they have done what they were asked to do. Are they asked to do the right things?

Simon Foxell: Again, it gets back to the question of preparation and the preparation of a brief. It is not something that an inexperienced client can do on their own; they need expertise to do that well, to ask the right questions, to develop an incisive brief that sets out a series of objectives and targets and so on. There are quite a lot of professional advice systems that exist to help that happen. We are notoriously bad in this country at developing full and well worked-out briefs, which are much more the norm in the process elsewhere in Europe. Various efforts have been made over the years, but we often fall back again into cutting out
that process at the beginning because it is seen as time-consuming and potentially an expense that can be spared.

Q314 Earl of Lytton: Good morning, gentlemen. Mr Foxell, you mentioned something about the lack of data coming out of our existing built environment, and that mirrored something that was raised a few days ago in the all-party group on the built environment, which I happen to be involved with, where what you might call “post-occupancy evaluation” on new homes, for instance, is extremely limited and is very often done between six and 12 months after somebody moves in. It looks basically at the consumer bits of the property. It does not look at the wider environment and there is nothing at all longer term—at five years, 10 years or 15 years, that sort of thing. Is there a gap here in our information? Should we be nudging our specialist adviser, who has access to all his very bright students at UCL, to look at that as a research project?

Simon Foxell: You pick up on UCL, and I sit on the steering group for the Centre for Energy Epidemiology there, which looks at buildings. Even though there is a relative shortage, UCL is a shining light in this area, and it is doing a lot of studies on buildings in use, particularly the energy aspect of them. There is a tremendous problem with actually getting that information out to practitioners; it tends to get published in specialist journals that exist behind pay walls. It is a very difficult conduit through to the practitioners on the ground. It is something again which The Edge has been working very fully on, trying to speed up the gap between research in the academic community and research all over the built environment and practitioners, which is currently assessed at being about nine years for specialist knowledge to get from one to the other. We are working with 10 different construction professional institutions on various projects to try to speed that up. One is a digest of recent research that will go out to all practitioners. There is also trying to get them to work together to have a research base that sits between the institutions that is really working very hard on trying to make sure that the world of research gets communicated well to practitioners who have an extreme shortage of time for picking up new knowledge.

Q315 Lord Inglewood: I would like to ask a very specific question, which really requires a pretty short, specific answer. Do you think the system of design review panels is working?
Simon Foxell: In general, where they work well, they work very well. They are a fairly luxurious process in that they are affordable for major projects in areas that have a good number of people who care about that environment, and they are very good at challenging projects to improve them, so there is a process of dialogue that happens with an expert group that can often draw out the issues where projects could be better or they are not performing as well as they might. It is difficult to see how you could implement them for all projects across the country. There are certainly areas of the country that would struggle to provide a good panel locally that knew the area, and they are probably the areas that need such panels the most. What they should not be seen as is a patch on a failing planning system, trying to make it better, which is often how they get used, and they are certainly not a gateway for planning permission itself. They may try to say that a project is simply not good enough to get permission, but that is only guidance within the system. The problem with the current planning system is that it is vastly under-resourced for producing good, well thought through and timely decisions.

Barry Sellers: I run a design review panel at Wandsworth. We have 60 built environment professionals covering a range of skills from architecture to landscape architecture, structural engineering, urban design and planning. They are called upon to review schemes at pre-application level, and over the three or four years we have been running the panel we have found it very effective. It operates primarily at the pre-application period, so it is helping to challenge the development in that early stage prior to the application being submitted. It also enables the developers and the architects to understand some of the issues, which perhaps they have not always covered in their entirety at that stage, and it is a very useful way to get a better quality out of development, because they are always trying to ensure that their issues are properly addressed as part of that application process.

The success of it really has to be the timing of the design review panel as well, because it needs to be fairly early on in the process to enable the actual feedback from the chair of the panel to the developers and the architects as a way forward. At the same time, it is very flexible and we respond very flexibly to the developer’s timetable of developments so that it does not hold up their development in any way. These are just for schemes of 50-plus units, generally speaking. Overall, when it comes to the planning application being submitted, we
find that the planning committee can refer back to the scheme that was done by the design review panel and see how the scheme has changed from pre-application to the actual application. They can measure the improvements that have been done from the pre-application level to the actual application submitted, so it is quite useful advice from that point of view.

**The Chairman:** Is it regarded as useful by the people who have used it?

**Barry Sellers:** The developers find the constructive feedback from fellow professionals very useful. We find that the politicians find it very useful, because they often sit as observers on some of the panels to understand some of the arguments, some of which are very complex when you are dealing with built environment issues across our range of areas, and it is very helpful for them to understand some of the issues, how those conclusions have been arrived at and how that development is being taken forward.

**The Chairman:** That seems the ideal forum to make sure that we get the best.

**Barry Sellers:** Yes, it is a way of ironing out a lot of the issues before the application. If you couple that with a planning performance agreement and you slot the design review panel within that, then the developers, as part of the PPA, are given a document whereby they can say, “Look, here’s the start of the process, here’s the decision time. We know we’ve got that length of time within which we can get a decision. We know that here’s a design review panel who have gone through that process, here’s the application and we know what is at the end of it”, so that they get a clear-cut decision on it.

**Simon Foxell:** It is really important that they happen early on in the process and that the guidance is given while the scheme is still fairly fluid, as it is difficult to change it much later. It is also very important that such panels look at the place where these projects happen and try to establish the better quality of place. Finally, such panels should be as multidisciplinary as possible not only to produce the architectural design but to influence the way they work from a service point of view, the landscape issues, the environmental qualities of the buildings and so on.

**The Chairman:** The happiness factor for the people who live in them.

**Simon Foxell:** That is what we are trying to aim for. The other aspect of them is that when they were first introduced, they often worked with a parallel service known as “enabling”,
which was getting in usually a single individual early in the project to take responsibility for upping the game and for raising the aspiration of projects, taking them through the process and really helping them to be given a push forwards that would ultimately create a better project and would sometimes aid them through the design review process.

Q316 Baroness Parminter: Just as a point of clarification, does the design panel process seriously address sustainability as well as the quality of the place so that those decisions can be looked at in the round, because clearly there can be tensions?

Simon Foxell: A good panel would absolutely do that with the right kind of people on it. It is challenging to look at a project in a very short period of time and make a firm judgment on issues such as sustainability, which are in part technical and in part really understanding the complexities of a project and how it works technically, but a good person who has seen a lot of buildings can aid that enormously.

Q317 Baroness Whitaker: You have both emphasised now and in your very helpful written evidence the importance of cross-disciplinary working. What other measures do you think can be taken to support this among built environment professionals? Is there a case for more multidisciplinary teams at the local authority level, and, if so, how should it be achieved?

Simon Foxell: For the past two years, The Edge has been leading a major study and a commission of inquiry into the professional world. Earlier this year we produced Collaboration for Change, a report written by the former chief construction adviser, Paul Morrell, which is very much about collaboration through the professions. It has to be said that collaboration on individual projects already tends to be very good; teams come together and tend to work well across those teams to produce complex design projects.

Baroness Whitaker: Is this at the instigation of the planning authority, or do the developers do it?

Simon Foxell: It is from the developer/client point of view. One of the challenges is that those teams rarely stay together and the next project will probably be a different team.

Baroness Whitaker: So you mean that after it is built, there is not that continuing group to look after it.

Simon Foxell: It is partly that, but it is often that a similar project will have a completely different team, or it may have one or two members from that one, so there is a lack of
continuity in the process of trying to learn the lessons from one project and taking them on
to the next, and the working relationships that can deliver effective projects are often broken
up and reinstituted at the next one.

Q318 Baroness Whitaker: What is the remedy for this?

Simon Foxell: It is very much about finding ways of building teams that can go through. I think
that is in part a problem with the current procurement process: that it encourages bidding on
an individual basis from project to project.

Baroness Whitaker: This would apply to the public sector, including national government
procurement very substantially?

Simon Foxell: The private sector is much, much better at doing this, yes.

Baroness Whitaker: They are already good at it?

Simon Foxell: The good ones are good at it.

Q319 Baroness Whitaker: How is it possible, and I hope Mr Sellers will answer too, to make
this a national pattern?

Barry Sellers: I work as part of a multiprofessional environment at Wandsworth. In Nine Elms,
for example, there are groups set up to deliver civic projects.

Baroness Whitaker: Who are they set up by?

Barry Sellers: They are set up by the council, Lambeth and the Mayor of London, so you have
developers on those panels as well. It looks at delivering developments across both boroughs.
We also have Transport for London involved, because we have the new extension of the
Underground line coming forward, and that collaborative approach is so essential. What is so
important about the whole process is the way in which the front-loading of infrastructure
investment has enabled the delivery of a strong vision of Nine Elms being a very pedestrian
site and a friendly place as opposed to being car-centred.

Q320 Baroness Whitaker: This infrastructure relates mainly to transport?

Barry Sellers: One of the groups I sit on is a public realm group, for example, and that group
will look at the delivery of the linear park, the open spaces, the highways, working with
Transport for London on creating a new urban boulevard, for example, for Nine Elms Lane.
We are also working with advisers there. Transport for London commissions advisers to look
at the way in which the highway can be reconfigured and remodelled to create a better place
for the people who are going to live there and the businesses that will be there as well. I think it is important that you have so many different people collaborating together in that particular environment.

**Baroness Whitaker:** I have to say that when I have wandered around the Nine Elms development, I have wondered whether it is going to become a neighbourhood or not. Do not take up too much time on this, but does that come into the calculation as well?

**Barry Sellers:** Among the guidance that is available is the public realm guidance on materials, for example. There is a materials palette across the public realm which each developer will have bought into, so if you are doing different developments on different sides of the road, rather than one doing one specification and the other doing something else, there is that coordination, which is very, very important.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Would you recommend that as a model?

**Barry Sellers:** I think you could look at that as a model for, say, city extensions elsewhere in the country, provided that you are going to front-load the public transport investment decision-making process, because rather than having multi-storey car parks on the ground, you get 10% of the car parking, so it becomes a very pedestrian-friendly environment and so sustainable.

**Baroness Whitaker:** This has perhaps also happened at the end of the Jubilee line at Stratford East and around there.

**Barry Sellers:** I think you can look at that and apply that process to other regeneration areas in London and elsewhere certainly.

**Simon Foxell:** Generally, our experience is that local authorities internally work very well together and they are good at seeking advice and there are some shining examples.

**Baroness Whitaker:** In the major conurbations, you mean.

**Simon Foxell:** Usually, where there is enough of a job to do. Croydon is moving forwards in a very inspirational way at the moment, with internal teams working in a multidisciplinary way for the overall betterment of the Croydon area, leaving behind the professional differentiation and playing to individual people’s strengths as an overall built environment professional rather than with the various labels on them which they may have been trained as. One of the challenges in the professional sector at the moment is the silos between the
professions, and the real challenge is in trying to break those down so that there is a career structure for professionals that allows them to move within the sector, much in the same way in which they are currently able to do within a local authority environment.

**Baroness Whitaker:** This is up to the professional institutions?

**Simon Foxell:** It is up to the professional institutions, but it really does require a degree of push from the Government to get them to perform better and to perform more collaboratively together. This is particularly so on difficult questions like designing for climate change, which are very multidisciplinary issues, like closing the performance gap, which we have already discussed, and trying to reform the overall industry so that it provides a far better and more effective offer to individual clients.

**Q321 Baroness Whitaker:** Would what you have just described make this collaboration more effective for smaller towns? The big cities seem to have got hold of the idea, but there are a lot of small towns that are not being well regenerated.

**Simon Foxell:** I think there is that capacity, so long as people’s strengths are played to. The professional sector and the organisations within it represent a very important source of advice and independent judgment that is often ignored within communities. It is not either the public sector on the one hand or the commercial sector on the other and it is capable, sometimes with encouragement, of providing very good, well-founded advice and experience, but it needs to do that as a collaborative piece of work and, to some extent, for the expectation on professionals to be upgraded again after several decades of demolition of the professional ethos.

**Barry Sellers:** It is important, taking smaller cities, for example, that there is a way in which they can collaborate together. For example, the Urban Design Group has been working on an initiative on urban places as healthy places. We have been working with Place Alliance on this particular initiative because healthy places is something which actually falls between the gaps, whereas actually it goes across departmental services, so it is working with national health, transport and urban design to deliver healthy places, so it is combatting things like obesity. It is so important that, as service providers, we can actually look at our fellow professionals and have a method of working together to deliver a better environment for people in the future.
Q322 Baroness Whitaker: What is that method? That is what we are seeking.

Barry Sellers: The methodology is a question of having the guidance in place, first of all, on how to deliver what a healthy place is and then to look at the mechanisms for working. Now that health has come within local authorities, there is an opportunity for that part of the local authority to work with the transport providers, working with the planning authority, and to deliver expectations for future generations in the way in which that environment can be put together, creating a healthy place. Hopefully, Nine Elms will be that place in the future because it will be a walkable place. There is evidence to suggest that the people who live in places where you can walk and cycle and get public transport are fitter and healthier than if they are living in a car-dependent suburb where you need to rely on a car to go back and forwards to work and do your shopping. We need to think nationally about how we encapsulate those ideas and put them into practice.

Q323 Baroness Parminter: You have just mentioned the word ‘nationally’ and I just wanted to ask you whether you felt that our design aspirations and our sustainability needs could be better co-ordinated across government and then cascaded down?

Barry Sellers: Certainly nationally. We have a National Planning Policy Framework, but we do not have national spatial planning, as they do in Scotland, for example, and some other countries. There may be a way through the National Infrastructure Commission, as an example, to set out not in heavy guidance but fairly lightweight guidance, such as, “Here’s an opportunity to focus on where developments should occur to link high-speed rail and where new developments should be co-ordinated”, and then developers will have clarity. If you are going via the high-speed rail from London to Birmingham and there are stops in between, those stops become the focus of new developments that can be very sustainable because you do not need a car to get about there and you can plug into it straightaway. It is the same with linking airports to rail transport and future developments. It is about co-ordinating that. It does not need a big document, just something that is thought about in the co-ordination of the different expertise involved.

Q324 The Chairman: This goes back to your point, Mr Foxell, that everybody needs to be regarded as worthwhile. Engineering was not regarded as a great profession for a long time;
everybody called them plumbers and so on. Everybody’s skills should be built on and held in greater respect.

Simon Foxell: And they are often essential to actually getting a good result. Picking up on the question about sustainability, we have some very strong, high-level targets that we need to achieve in this country through the Climate Change Act, the various carbon plans and so on. What is currently very difficult to see is the route map to getting there, partly because a lot of the things that have recently been put into place have also been taken away again. In the previous session, there was discussion about the Code for Sustainable Homes, which has now gone. Our ability to deliver to higher standards is very challenged if they do not exist. Equally, the progression of the building regulations to up the game incrementally seems to be in abeyance at the moment; there is no plan for improving it in a regular fashion. This makes some of our job very difficult and it is being left to individual offers from the construction industry to do better, but without a framework for doing that.

There was a buildings day in Paris at COP 21, and I know that our Government have promised that we will deliver some very stretching targets, which include making all our buildings in this country carbon-neutral by 2050, but we do not currently have a means to get there. It is not so much a question of a lack of joined-up thinking but of making sure that there is a plan for progress in this area. I do not think there is a lack of willingness in that from the construction industry; it is simply that no one is prepared to do this on their own. They need to do it together. We know that we can deliver better projects at the same cost that we deliver them now, but we can only do that if it becomes the norm to achieve that. A better project at the moment, if it is a stand-alone, is significantly more expensive.

Q325 The Chairman: In a lot of our sessions since we started work on this Committee, the issue of skills and apprenticeships has come up. They are relevant in this area where you are saying that they break up instead of staying together.

Simon Foxell: They are relevant completely across the piece really of training. The training of professionals needs to focus on this area to really make sure that they know what is going to work based on evidence of what is apparently working at the moment, which is a very big issue, and there is not very much evidence around this, as we discussed earlier. It is also about the skills of the people on site. It is difficult to build a sustainable building if you do not know
the basic principles: the need to make them airtight, the need to achieve good ventilation and so on. Skills on site are also lacking, and many of the mechanisms for improving them have been recently taken away.

Finally, all the aspirations of clients, developers, insurers, in the background of building projects, need to increase rapidly so that they insist on these things and have a framework for doing this, so they can point out a good standard and say, “That is what we want to achieve”, which might be a standard that is well over and above the current building regulations but something that is collectively understood by the industry as delivering what is required so that we can all move towards it.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. Mr Sellers?

**Barry Sellers:** Looking at the skills in the built environment, I studied architecture, urban design and planning, which covers quite a multitude of areas in the built environment, and often there is duplication when you are studying those areas. The Farrell review identified the possibility of a shared vision for professionals when they are coming in to study various disciplines. That is quite an important example of where you have a whole range of built environment professionals who can perhaps start off with a foundation course almost at the beginning, and then when they move up and increase in specialism they can go on and do other courses after that.

**Q326 Baroness Rawlings:** How might the appointment of a chief built environment adviser improve design, and should they be elected or appointed? Secondly, how might the Government improve leadership on design matters? I would like to hear your view of the old-fashioned way; do you think competitions work, like the one they had for the Palace of Westminster?

**Simon Foxell:** If we can start on the idea of a chief built environment adviser to the Government, our recent experience of such individuals has been very strong. The role of the chief construction adviser, which is now coming to an end, has been very effective; it has introduced new thinking into Government and raised the standard that Government is demanding. The chief construction adviser introduced mandatory building information modelling for all government projects over a certain size, which is pulling the industry together and has been a conduit for all sorts of discussions about better-performing buildings
from a carbon point of view and so on. The idea of a built environment adviser is that that gets broadened out to encompass the whole of the industry, because the industry works together, even though it has so many different aspects to it; construction was always only one part of it. It is really to act as a conduit between a large industry, which is a very substantial part of the economy of this country, and the Government in a way that enables a much more effective conversation to happen from both directions.

Also, one of the critical things of having someone who has been around the block is that they have some experience and a memory of whether this has been tried before and know the kind of lessons that need to be drawn to help the Government make effective policy, rather than it being done without that ability to reflect on whether a particular idea has been tried before and whether it is going to be successful. Probably all of us who work in the sector know that the Government comes up with the same idea roughly once every 12 or 15 years, and a good built environment adviser would be able to say, “Move on. Go for something that actually will work”.

**Baroness Rawlings**: Appointed or elected from within the sector?

**Simon Foxell**: I think it needs to be a collaborative appointment from both the Government side and the sector side. I am not sure how an election would work. I think it is the tricky thing of finding the right, very effective person who can work with both sides of the industry, commands their respect and is essentially known to them. We have had two chief construction advisers who have managed to achieve that and that was probably a fairly delicate system of finding the right person and then persuading them that this was not going to be too poisoned a chalice.

**The Chairman**: But, in fact, if it is a major job like that, it would almost certainly be advertised anyway.

**Simon Foxell**: Yes.

**The Chairman**: It would be in all the public journals, et cetera, and there would probably be a lot of competition for it.

**Simon Foxell**: Certainly the first time round, less so the second time.

**Baroness Rawlings**: And the competitions?
**Simon Foxell:** Competitions work well if there are enough of them so that they are a regular part of the system and they are not overloaded with expectation. In this country, we have relatively few, particularly compared with countries such as Germany, which use them as the standard form of procurement, which often means that for major competitions you get 100 or 200 entries. Each one of those costs somewhere between £10,000 to £30,000 to deliver, and the waste in the sector is considerable, so without it being a normal part of life it is almost impossible to say that it is a cost-effective idea. There are obviously ways around that: having local competitions, sometimes deliberately targeting competitions at younger professionals to bring them on and to invest in them rather than some of their older peers. I would probably recommend for nationally important projects going down that route just because you want to open up the field as much as possible. If you had almost all public sector works and a lot of the private sector going down that route, it would reduce the number of participants to a sensible number and then it would work, but, as it stands at the moment, it is a tricky one.

**Barry Sellers:** On the first point about a chief built environment adviser, certainly the UK is recognised as having some of the best architects and designers in the world, and to have someone in a leadership role within the Government would be very, very helpful, partly to help to drive a national spatial plan, for example, which I referred to earlier, and to look at the route map for sustainability over the next 20, 30 or 40 years. We have to think of our children and our children’s generations. The population in the UK has been increasing tremendously over the last 10 years, and in London it has gone up by a couple of million, and I think we need to look at how we are going to live in the future, which very much needs a sustainable approach.

On the second question of competitions, I certainly like competitions, but I hear from some of the smaller practices, for example, that there are barriers to some of the competitions in that you need to be a certain size, have certain insurance and things like that, which precludes the smaller practices from entering those competitions. I would like competitions to generate ideas, because that is what is important, and certainly we have people who can generate those ideas in this country.

**The Chairman:** And the involvement of the public as well, which is quite useful.

**Barry Sellers:** Absolutely.
Q327 Baroness Whitaker: I like the idea of the chief built environment adviser being also something of a futurologist, as we do not have capacity for very long-term thinking. Would his or her duties include promulgating good advice to all local authorities that cannot access the top-level stuff which the major conurbations can access?

Barry Sellers: With the spatial role, for example, you have the concept of the northern powerhouse, which is a whole area on which the local authorities can collaborate together. I think it is very useful to set out what that can mean over the next 10 to 15 years, because there are opportunities there, with HS2 and HS3 coming forward, to begin to think differently about the way in which we develop the development patterns, for example.

Q328 Baroness Whitaker: The person could also ensure that all planning authorities knew of those developments. Would that be a function?

Barry Sellers: It would be a function whereby there would be a spatial framework within which they would work and they could set up their own ways of working. My own local authority is working with Richmond at the moment, and we are coming together as two local authorities, but there are opportunities for other local authorities to come together to deliver particular projects, and they can point out particular people in those areas who have the expertise to deliver those particular projects.

Simon Foxell: On the guidance issue, they very much need to co-ordinate and then produce it. They need mainly to commission a certain amount of good guidance that aids the sector, and that does not necessarily mean that they have to do that work themselves, although they would probably need to have enough of a team to be effective and to do the work. During CABE’s most successful years, it produced the most amazing amount of very useful guidance for all parts of the sector which is still relied on.

Baroness Whitaker: Case histories of where it worked?

Simon Foxell: Partly case histories, partly “how to” guides for clients to achieve good design, and research projects that actually looked at where value was provided, or where it was not. We are lacking that being refreshed at the moment, so yes, there is definitely a gap there. They would not need to work much more collaboratively with the many others in the sector to make sure that this was not just government advice coming out but was good, widely accepted industry best thinking.
On the regional point, I think it would be very useful if the northern powerhouse, for example, had a built environment adviser with a degree of clout who could look at the bigger picture of how that developed and how to achieve high standards, and not necessarily rushing in to do things cheaply when they could be done so much better with a degree of forethought.

**Q329 Baroness Young of Old Scone**: We have talked a bit about the removal of the national sustainability standards, and things like zero-carbon homes and the Code for Sustainable Homes going, which really talks to the issue of new build, but we have a huge property stock that is not achieving sustainability. Advise us on what you think needs to be done to get a head of steam on retrofit.

**Simon Foxell**: The most important thing is that we have good information about what is happening at the moment. Display energy certificates, which were about to be used, were vital information on how sustainable almost every building of any scale was, and at the moment they are only being produced on very few major public sector buildings. Real information on our building stock is essential for understanding not only what is going on and learning lessons from it but how to improve it. Improvements can only happen from a basis of reasonably good knowledge. There are a lot of theoretical improvements out there based on modelling that may or may not be good, and until we get feedback from the housing stock or the rest of the building stock, we will not know whether measures are cost-effective and are actually doing what they are said to do. Restoring the idea of display energy certificates, which the property industry is very keen on, is essential.

Beyond that, we need new programmes of upgrading existing stock, but at scale rather than relying on probably individual housing owners to upgrade one property at a time. That may mean that taking a street, an estate or a town at a time would be a very effective way of achieving it, not only because you can do it at scale but because the community together can go on the journey of learning how to live in upgraded building stock, how to make it work effectively, how to share that experience and to do so as a community rather than picking off certain individuals who might be keen and others who are unable to do anything because they are too poor or whatever.

**The Chairman**: Have you any knowledge of any town in this country that has actually done that? I see a head nodding in the public gallery. There is one that comes to mind which I had
the joy of seeing last summer, and that was King’s Lynn, which is obviously a very old town, but the necessity to increase the flood barriers was such that it generated a whole lot of enthusiasm, as it was explained to me, for making the place really good.

**Simon Foxell:** The main movement towards this is the Transition Town movement, which is very much a bottom-up movement for improving the sustainability and liveability of whole towns or sometimes parts of towns at a time. Some of the best examples of whole-area improvement are happening on the continent rather than here, where there are very substantial programmes that move through similar building types at speed, learn very well how to do it and do it at huge cost-effectiveness.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Who drives them? Is it local authorities or the national Government?

**Simon Foxell:** Often local authorities. Sometimes there are major landowners who happen to own a large building stock who have been prepared to do that, and they are often done in combination with the energy companies on the basis that they need to be involved in the deal because the money that was going to them is going to go somewhere else.

**The Chairman:** Before I let you go, if there are any subjects you think we should have addressed or questions we should have asked or any information, and I am sure there is an awful lot, which we should further examine—bearing in mind we only have a few more weeks of work on this before we start drafting the report—we would be very grateful to you just for a scribbled note or even an idea or a few bullet points that you do not think we have covered adequately, although we could have covered it in other sessions, of course. You obviously have open minds, and you have been very generous with your time and your explanations, so thank you very much on behalf of the whole Committee.

10 December 2015
Edinburgh College of Art, University Of Edinburgh – Written Evidence (BEN0058)

Edinburgh College of Art, University Of Edinburgh – Written Evidence (BEN0058)

This submission is from Professor Catherine Ward Thompson, Director, OPENspace Research Centre and Research Professor of Landscape Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art and the University of Edinburgh.

This submission draws mainly on two recent and ongoing research projects undertaken by Professor Ward Thompson’s team:

Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (I’DGO) A longitudinal study into the effects of living in ‘shared space’ residential streets on older people’s activity patterns, wellbeing and quality of life.

Mobility, Mood and Place (MMP). A three-year, multi-disciplinary study, led by OPENspace, exploring how places can be designed collaboratively to make pedestrian mobility easy, enjoyable and meaningful for older people.

Questions

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

If an older person cannot get out and about locally, they are at risk of becoming ‘a prisoner in their own home’. Research by Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (I’DGO) has found that the design of Britain’s gardens, streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces affects older people’s ability to age well and live independently by supporting, or preventing, access for all.
People who don’t find it easy or enjoyable to get outdoors can spiral into poor physical health, less social contact with others and a reduced quality of life overall. With the cost of sedentary behaviour estimated at £8.3bn per year, (Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report, 2009. Department of Health, 2010.) this places a further financial burden on the NHS and Local Authorities through increased admissions to hospitals and residential care homes.

Key messages from Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors:

The desire to get out and about does not diminish in older age, nor does the variety of activities people like to do outdoors. If older people live in an environment that makes it easy and enjoyable for them to go outdoors, they are more likely to be physically active and satisfied with life and twice as likely to achieve the recommended levels of healthy walking. The same is true for those who live within ten minutes’ walk of a park.

The pedestrian experience is vitally important to older people, who are most often on foot when out and about. For the many who find it difficult to get around, it is often due to the poor design, provision, installation or upkeep of neighbourhood features, especially footways.

Lesser-quality environments are often considered by older people to pose an increased falls risk, especially by those with vision, mobility or other impairments. They can heighten fears about crime, nuisance and traffic and make going outdoors less enticing; reinforcing feelings of loneliness or entrenching the challenges of socio-economic deprivation.

Inconsistency, between types of road crossing and tactile paving, for example, can make older people uncertain about features that are designed to be enabling. Providers’ adherence to guidelines may improve this outcome, as might public awareness-raising as to what is supposed to be used where and for what purpose.

Measures to make streets less car-centric improve older people’s perception of supportiveness and safety but, neighbourhood-wide, it is good paths, accessible open space,
safe crossings and plentiful seats, toilets and greenery that really make the difference.

Design and materials need careful specification, with consideration given to UK weather patterns.

The more types of residential outdoor space an older person has, whether private or shared, the greater their satisfaction. In terms of wellbeing, the smallest things can bring the biggest benefits, such as having one’s own patio, space to socialise or simply a green view.

Supported by their environment, most people aged 80+ living in the community can expect to continue to go outdoors daily, engage in a range of activities and maintain quality of life into oldest age.

Research by Mobility, Mood and Place (MMP) has highlighted the importance of the home environment in supporting more active, less sedentary lifestyles amongst older adults.

Stairs, space within the home and the form and location of facilities, fixtures and fittings were found to be critical in informing opportunities for low to moderate intensity physical activity. Details proved key with, for example, a particular approach to the provision of handrails (double handrails) being particularly important for movement. We note, however, that building regulations are moving away from a focus on prescriptive detail to a focus on ‘performance’. The possible implications of this should be further investigated.

**Skills and design**

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

In our experience most of the professions in general and architects in particular do not have the right skills and training to consider the built environment in a holistic manner. Training for these professions is still based on the need for award winning innovative designs. Inclusive design remains as an ‘add on’ rather than a core element that would allow the professions to
design inclusive environments built for whole life use and incorporating the needs and desires of the local community.

To address this issue inclusive design should become a core element of the training of these professionals and should be the key fundamental underpinning all development. Local authority officials should also receive training in inclusive design with the concept embedded in all planning decisions.

We also note the frequent absence of training in community participation. The purpose, benefits and techniques for involving diverse groups in planning and design decisions should also become a core element of the training of these professionals.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced? High quality design and place making can only be considered high quality if it is accessible to all i.e. inclusively designed. Leaders in national and local government and within the built environment professions should promote this message. National awards should naturally have inclusive design embedded within them.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

All too often, the people who use environments day-to-day are left out of the design process. For older people, this can feel particularly alienating. The MMP project, led by the University of Edinburgh is developing co-design techniques that bring together researchers, designers-in-training and older participants to envision places, from homes to public spaces, which are
inclusive, enabling and inspirational. These co-design techniques will be captured in a toolkit that can be used by decision makers and developers to support creative and meaningful community involvement in planning and design decisions.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

It is routinely found that participation in planning decisions is concentrated amongst advantaged individuals and groups. Early findings on neighbourhood planning, including our own research, indicates that participation in this initiative is also concentrated amongst certain advantaged groups, namely affluent, rural, civil parishes. Access to resources (social, cultural and economic capital) and the design of the scheme itself seem to explain this situation. Neighbourhood planning arguably creates an easier pathway to participation for civil parishes. To facilitate wider involvement, a goal should be to minimise the potential for the design of any future community planning regime to advantage certain types of areas over others. Areas with plentiful resources seem better able to develop neighbourhood plans quickly and independently. Any future community planning regime should recognise this issue and set aside at the outset (and for the duration of the scheme) adequate resources to support less advantaged areas.

Creative engagement techniques might have a role to play in encouraging a wider variety of people to participate in planning and design decisions. Traditional engagement methods can appear rather staid and exclusionary with participants often requiring some knowledge of planning policy and understanding of planning terms to meaningfully engage. In our study MMP we are investigating the appeal to older adults of a range of creative and playful techniques including modelling, discussion, walking tours, mapping and presentations. Members of our research group have also explored the potential in mobile engagement hubs, specifically a repurposed bus, and arts-based methods including theatre and illustration. We believe such techniques and forums have significant potential and should be incorporated into more public engagement exercises.
Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

For further details about the background research that formed this response please refer to our website http://www.openspace.eca.ed.ac.uk

05 October 2015
Dr Laurence Carmichael, Co-ordinator, WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments, Dr Ann Marie Connolly, Director of Health Equity and Impact, Public Health England, and Dr Matt Egan, Senior Lecturer, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Q330 The Chairman: Good morning and thank you very much for giving up your time and travelling here to appear before us. You are very welcome indeed to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. We are coming to the end of our witnesses—we are fairly near the end, but it has been very intense. We have learned a huge amount, and I am sure we are going to learn even more today. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. There is an additional one for Baroness Young, who has just been appointed Chairman of the Woodland Trust. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee? This is for the purpose of the transcript, so we can know where people are coming from.
Dr Carmichael: I am Dr Laurence Carmichael. I am the Co-ordinator of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Dr Connolly: I am Ann Marie Connolly. I work with Public Health England, where I am the Deputy Director in the Health and Wellbeing Directorate. I lead on health equity, place and mental health.

Dr Egan: I am Matt Egan and I am a senior lecturer at the NIHR School for Public Health Research at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

The Chairman: You are all very welcome. I am sure we are going to get a lot from you.

Q331 Baroness Parminter: We are really keen to tease out the impacts of the built environment on health. As an overview, does national policy at the moment set a proper framework for health issues to be accounted for in decisions about the built environment?

Dr Egan: Impacts of the built environment on health are quite varied. It can influence health by shaping people’s behaviours, both in terms of physical activity and in terms of the things that they might consume. It can influence people’s health directly, let us say, if we are talking about housing and problems associated with it. It can also influence people’s health through what academics call psychosocial mechanisms: the way that people feel about the place that they live and how that then gives them as individuals a sense of self-esteem and well-being and influences the way the whole community works. From those mechanisms, there is a very wide range of health impacts that could possibly be determined.

Baroness Parminter: Could I ask a supplementary as you respond to that? Are there sufficient data to enable national policy to take those health impacts seriously?

Dr Connolly: I agree; they are all relevant elements of the built environment. They are mixed and quite complex, but there is strong enough evidence on issues such as making areas walkable and connected, particularly when you have mixed-use. That is about helping people to be able to walk or cycle from home to work or from home to shops, and connecting the impact on people’s mental well-being to walking through better sets of green space and access to green space, and through good-quality housing. We know what makes for good-quality housing. We know that certain things that can be designed into local areas, such as helping people access staircases rather than elevators, designing streets in grid patterns...
rather than culs-de-sac and making the right sort of pathways so people have incidental social contact with each other, will help make connected communities.

The National Planning Policy Framework is quite strong on some of these elements. It has a health chapter that focuses primarily on healthy communities. There are potentially also strengths from the supportive elements of the other sections of the planning framework, such as transport, housing and the design of local areas. They are all supportive, but the elements within there are implicit rather than explicit. There is some additional guidance in the national planning guidance on health that supplements it, but how that gets translated into local areas is another step.

**Dr Carmichael:** As far as the built environment and health are concerned—my colleagues have covered this—there is almost a direct impact, especially on environmental health. There is evidence that, if you are going to walk alongside a trunk road, there are pockets of air quality that are really bad for health. The advice is to avoid these pockets of really bad air quality on your commute. That is a more direct impact. Another impact of the built environment is on behaviour: trying to encourage people to walk, take active travel and benefit from a communal environment that is good for social capital and that kind of thing.

The other aspect is the impact of the built environment on deprived communities. The Marmot review used ONS statistics to show that, in deprived areas, people pile up the risk factors on their health. They may live in areas that are prone to flooding, that are quite polluted near trunk roads or that have no access to really well-maintained green infrastructure. They may live in toxic streets, where you have betting shops, hot food takeaways, alcohol establishments and sub-prime lenders. There are values there—it is freedom and entrepreneurship—but we need also to provide environments that are going to encourage healthy behaviour in deprived communities.

In terms of the planning process and whether it is there to take health into account, Section 8 of the NPPF is about healthy communities. It is all good sense, but it is really a small section, so it leaves it to local authorities to develop their local plan, to try to assess the local needs in terms of health outcomes, and to try to promote the neighbourhood planning system taking on board local health needs. It does not say much more than that, really. The problem is that
there is a sting in the tail, in that the NPPF mentions also this issue of viability. We know that local authorities have to deliver against housing targets. Paragraph 173 of the NPPF leaves it to local authorities to negotiate with developers; national policy does not really put too many constraints on the sustainability and health outcome principles. There is an issue. Local authorities rely on big developers to develop and to deliver their target housing.

We ran an ESRC seminar series and one of our colleagues, Margaret Douglas at Glasgow, mentioned that we have a mechanism to assess the impact of urban development on bats, newts, flora, fauna, areas of outstanding natural beauty and trees, but we do not have this for protecting the health of our children. We do not have this holistic approach to health outcomes. We might measure air quality, but we do not measure how our children have access to green infrastructure to play.

Another thing is the monitoring system for local authorities. Back in 2010, we did some research for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. There were indicators that local authorities were requested to use in their annual monitoring reports, which really clearly linked with health—access to half-hourly bus services; access to green infrastructure that would get Green Flag awards—but all this has been scrapped, so we do not have the mechanism to monitor how well local authorities are developing on health at the city or the local authority level.

Q332 Baroness Andrews: Thank you very much for a very comprehensive start. It seems to me that we have an awful lot of evidence about the combination of factors that make for a bad environment, and we are beginning to understand some of the policy choices that would be effective in responding to those, whether it is providing more green infrastructure or whatever. My question is a big one; in a sense, you have partly answered it. How difficult is it to start from the premise that we need to build healthy communities and not simply respond to what we have at the moment? In this respect, it is such good news that Public Health England is taking such a proactive approach to this, which is the first time we have ever seen this. What are your priorities and where can you have most influence in changing attitudes towards planning for health rather than mitigating bad health, chronic conditions and disease?
**Dr Connolly**: As a starting point, our role is also to protect and improve the health of the nation. We do that in partnership with lots of other people. It is to set out the big health issues, and then to say, “What do we need to do?” with lots of other people. A key part of that is what we do in our work with local government to help promote the integration of health with planning and to join up health and planning. When the responsibilities for public health moved to local government, it was a new opportunity. Lots of local authorities are doing very good stuff, but there are many others that need to develop. Our role is to identify all the key and pressing health issues—whether it be the rise in diabetes, the rise in obesity, the insufficient level of physical activity, or people living in poor housing—and how to join that up, but also to develop the abilities and skills of our public health professionals to join up with the planning professionals to provide the right sort of information and data through the health and well-being boards and the joint strategic needs assessments, and to start showing leadership on this with the other parts of local government and move up the importance of health within that wider planning process. It is about the planning priorities of that local area and whether they sufficiently support the health aims of the area. That is where the challenge lies.

**Baroness Andrews**: What do you do when the CCG does not speak to the housing department? I have found hardly any evidence that they do.

**Dr Connolly**: In the last year, we have worked at national level, to start with, to develop a memorandum of understanding on housing and health. We have done that with the National Health Service, the Department of Health and DCLG, and some of the leading bodies on housing, to get some shared agreement about the areas we all need to be working on together. Our next challenge is to try to replicate that at local level, and to support the local levels to have equivalence of that—it may not be called an MoU—and to have a joined-up partnership on housing and health. It is in everybody’s interests—the health service, local people, local government and the housing sector—to do so.

We have over the last few months also published, jointly with other organisations—for instance, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and some of the housing organisations—documents, advice, tools and guidance for local areas about how to take a
much more proactive stance. Those are tools that can be used whether you are an environmental health officer, a planner, a public health professional or an NHS professional. We see that as a starting point rather than the end game, but it has not historically happened in the past, joined up with the NHS. It is about how we help support a future where that can happen.

The Chairman: Have you found any reluctance to follow that?

Dr Connolly: We have further to go in helping the NHS staff and commissioners, some of our public health professionals, who are busy with other things, and our housing professionals to find the right shared understanding of what the co-benefits might be and the language in which to speak to each other. Different professional groups have different ways of thinking about the world and use different evidence, and we are trying to lift their heads above the day job and the norm so that they ask how they can think about this differently and work differently in partnership.

The Chairman: They are probably all working all the hours God sends anyway, and to try to make more room for something like this is difficult.

Q333 Baroness Young of Old Scone: The forum for this sort of discussion should be the health and well-being boards. Perhaps you could give us your perspective on how well they are working in this area. Also, there was consternation a while ago about the fact that the public health directors, when transferred to the local authorities, were often not on the top table, whereas the director of development and the director of planning almost certainly will be. Is that a real problem?

Dr Connolly: The picture is pretty mixed across the country, but the public health responsibilities and teams are much more bedded down now. Certainly, the director of public health will always be on the health and well-being board, so there is a great opportunity there. It will be mixed as to how many have taken up these considerations at the health and well-being board. There are some examples of where that has taken place, such as Medway and Kirklees. There are some local authorities that have been doing this sort of work for a long time, such as Bristol, Stockport and Newham. They have already been thinking about how to
join up the considerations of planning and local place, but it is not uniform. Again, it will come down to what the local priorities are.

One of the tools is about how we support local areas to incorporate some of the data and the knowledge into the joint strategic needs assessment, which informs the health and well-being board. Some areas are already doing that, or at least some elements of it—Barnet, Norfolk and so on. There are lots of good examples. We can support and facilitate that as Public Health England nationally and through our centres, but ultimately it will be down to those local areas to decide which things they wish to prioritise, and our job is to support, particularly for public health, good partnerships to enable that further.

**Baroness Rawlings:** Can I ask a quick question of Dr Carmichael on impact assessment and air quality? Where one comes into conflicting ideas, when for health reasons one wants to encourage walking and bicycling, for example, but the air is just so polluted because of stationary traffic that it is toxic, how does one deal with that? To give just one little example, right here on the embankment there is stationary traffic spewing out these toxic fumes and for the cyclists or pedestrians it is horrific. It must be in other places. How do you balance that?

**Dr Carmichael:** It is very difficult, because transport planners have different priorities to environmental health experts. It is really acting on different fronts at the same time. In a way, it may be easy to promote adaptation mechanisms while the air quality and transport issues are not dealt with. There is some research encouraging people not to use trunk roads for their commute but to use side roads to avoid heavy traffic. I know this is not a solution, but action has to be taken on different fronts. We still have to encourage people to walk and cycle, because there is an obesity epidemic.

**Baroness Rawlings:** But they will be killed by the fumes.

**Dr Carmichael:** Yes. That is why we have to make sure that there are enough green corridors and that local authorities are protecting and maintaining their green spaces and making them accessible in areas of deprivation. We know that there is far less availability of green space in areas of deprivation. There is no one solution; it has to be tackled on different fronts, at different levels.
**Dr Egan**: It seems to me that these can be framed as tensions, and they are in certain places, but in other cases we know that a way of encouraging people to be more active in their transport is to have a more pleasant environment in which to walk, including in an urban centre. In urban centres that are aesthetically poor quality or poor in other ways, you are less likely to get active travel. I agree there is a tension between these things, but they can also be framed in a way such that one aim supports the other.

**Lord Inglewood**: That all sounds to me entirely sensible, but we heard from the previous witnesses—I do not think you were here—that one of the problems in bringing brownfield sites forward for housing is the cost of all the remedial work to the polluted ground and the cost of infrastructure, set against, if the thing is to be sold, the price that is realised. How do you bring about the coming together of the resources and the aspirations to enable delivery?

**Dr Carmichael**: We need to engage with developers at an early stage. In this country, they have the master planning. It is talking to developers to make clear to them exactly what the objectives are—these aspirational solutions—and to make sure they understand, if they deliver really healthy environments with green infrastructure and walking and cycling, it probably adds value to the development itself.

**Lord Inglewood**: Certainly, if you can persuade them that what they are selling is going to be worth more if they do certain good things, that is a way to start. They are pretty cynical, hard-nosed people, these developers, are they not? They may not be persuaded.

**Dr Carmichael**: It may also be the inclusion of mechanisms such as health impact assessments, again at pre-application stage, to facilitate a discussion with the private sector. It needs to be local authorities that adopt these policies.

**Dr Connolly**: We regularly hear that sort of question, but there are, first of all, some examples of eco towns. The NHS has called for tender for people to apply to be NHS healthy towns, which is about health-promoting towns. They expected about 30 applicants and about 120 have applied for a small number of places. There is interest and enthusiasm. Secondly, we probably need to do more and better to be able to describe small changes that can be helpful. Not everything is additional expense. It may be about the layout of the area, which may just
be different; it may not necessarily be more expensive. We need perhaps to promote better examples of that.

On healthy transport, Transport for London has a public health expert advising it. It has produced a report on health and transport for London and is now producing a supplementary document on how to assess areas more carefully and find the most cost-effective ways of providing healthy public transport, which is active transport and physical public transport as well.

**Q334 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** You have answered quite a lot of the issues raised by that question, unless there is anything you want to add, which I would be very happy to hear. As a supplementary, all that we hear is that built environment professionals are under enormous pressure. There are fewer and fewer, public services are being squeezed, and they have less and less time, and yet people, including you, quite rightly want them to do more. Is there a conflict in practice between what you want to achieve and the professional resources available on the ground to make a difference? In the light of another big cut that is coming in local government, is that going to be even more difficult?

**Dr Carmichael:** Over the years, there has been a lot of regulation and legislation around sustainable development. Maybe planners and developers also see the health agenda as something on top of all this regulation around the sustainability agenda. We should try to do an audit of what in sustainable development is also good for health. Instead of putting the environment at the core of our development, it is putting people’s health at the core and finding out that a lot is already being done but maybe there are other adaptations that have to be delivered. It is not so much having more resource but the different use of the resources.

**Dr Connolly:** I do not doubt that there is pressure on resources, and we certainly hear from our colleagues that there is pressure on local planning departments. The only thing we can say is that, as our public health departments have funding for doing public health that will slowly get smaller as well, in a way that is an added incentive for the public health departments to talk more closely and to join up and be a little more efficient. We would like to have good models; if the NHS healthy towns can find some, that will be good. If you can
find more default options, that is quite helpful as well. You start to learn from good models that you can do it this way more easily.

**Dr Egan**: Yes, it is about finding where planning and health interests co-align. Certainly in disadvantaged areas, that is often very likely, because a lot of disadvantages are housing disadvantages. It is the same people. It is about looking for examples of successes—even in austere times, there are examples of successes—assessing them with a reasonable degree of rigour, and using them to inform other local authorities to do likewise.

**Baroness Andrews**: Yesterday we heard about the cut in public health that has come out of the Autumn Statement. I am just wondering, Dr Connolly, whether you have any notion of the priorities that you would want to save at all costs and not cut.

**Dr Connolly**: It would be difficult for me, because every local area has very specific health issues. I would certainly want to see every area being able to promote good physical place, because that will help on lots of different problems. Physical activity and green space would probably be two key areas one would want to promote, because there are opportunities for the whole of the council’s responsibilities to be able to support that.

**Q335 Lord Woolmer of Leeds**: Do you think elected representatives are equally enthused and motivated as I think you think, at least in good examples, the professionals are? In other words, do local politicians share your desire to implement these objectives?

**Dr Connolly**: As I mentioned before, it is probably variable across the country. There will be a mixture of local politicians. It may be the chair of the health and well-being board or the chair of the planning committee; they may be the two councillors. A public health person locally may wish to discuss, consider, engage and inform about the potentialities from this. As I say, we have had great examples of some councils where there are highly enthusiastic councillors who have really embraced their health responsibilities or who want the planning function to support a good place for their local communities, but it varies.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds**: The important thing is to enthuse the local politicians and get them engaged, rather than starting with the professionals.
Dr Connolly: I would say it is both. You cannot necessarily enthuse your politicians if your local chief planner or your local director of public health are not also enthused and should be given the sort of information they may require. I am not sure which would come first.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I just want to go back to something you said earlier. You mentioned grid systems and culs-de-sac. If I heard you correctly, you were advocating a grid system rather than developments with lots of culs-de-sac. Is that correct?

Dr Connolly: There seems to be some evidence pointing towards a grid system allowing people a greater degree of movement between home and other services, and making them more likely to do it by walking or cycling, as opposed to the divides that some layouts can create for where they live. If you are trying to promote active travel, some elements of it seem to help.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: In some ways it seems counterintuitive for the young family, where you do not have the through traffic, and for old people, where you almost create a natural little hub community. Loneliness, we know, literally shortens people’s lives.

Dr Connolly: It is a mix of elements that can come together. There are different models of it. In Salford, for some time, they have had “home safe” streets, where they prioritise families and people over cars. They allow children to run around in the streets, rather than cars having priority. You can redesign local areas so that there are pleasant ways to walk between areas and so it is a mixture of green but also safe areas for people of all ages to walk through. There is mixed evidence about what creates engaged and connected communities as well; it differs for different age groups.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: May I pick up on your comment about health impacts in planning applications? What would you see essentially included in those? I could see how an application could be made to sound great for one group in society and completely ignore another group. There is also some evidence that balanced living is better for people than “age communities” are. I do not want to use the word “ghetto” but I cannot think of another one at the minute.

Dr Carmichael: The health impact assessment is quite a democratic principle. It is not just experts or planners or healthy planners carrying out the assessment but also local residents.
There must be some local evidence put into the assessment. In the States, for example, in San Francisco they used health impact assessment to avoid displacement of the local population and they changed the master planning. The problem at the moment is that the environmental impact assessment we have only looks at environmental health on large applications; it does not necessarily look at the combined effects of all small developments. It is mainly expert-driven and it does not look into physical activity and mental well-being.

However, the health impact assessment does not have a methodology that is robust enough and can be integrated easily into the planning system. Developers might say, “Well, you have anecdotal evidence from the local population”. On appeal, how would that stand? It is a voluntary instrument at the moment. Some local authorities are using it to assess large developments, but it is really for large developments, maybe of 100 or 200 units.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: In that local population, would you be including people such as health visitors and district nurses—stakeholders who go across different bits of that community rather than only seeing the view from their own window?

Dr Carmichael: Exactly. It is like any democratic process; you need to give the voice to people who do not usually have a voice. There needs to be a really well-developed consultation mechanism. That is difficult, because people will see the health of their local area from their own perspective, as you say, so how do we validate this knowledge? More research needs to be done, but it is one area. This depends upon the European referendum, but a new European directive, the EIA directive, says we should look at human health in the environmental impact assessment. That is coming up in 2017 and could give local authorities the ability to look into a holistic approach to health outcomes, not just environmental impact.

Q336 Baroness Andrews: The Chairman has allowed me to pre-empt my question, which was to come later and links into Lady Finlay’s argument about how you plan for an age-friendly society, whether it is young, old or whatever. One of the things I am particularly concerned about is the failure to plan for the obvious demography of an ageing society, which comes with a lot more complex health conditions, so we have elements of prevention and then we have elements of responsiveness. That should be reflected, I would argue, in an attitude of planning that is about lifetime homes and lifetime neighbourhoods. To what extent do you
think we are more intelligent than we were, say, 10 years ago about the implications of an ageing society? How can the work done by your sorts of professionals with the planners reflect that? The healthy towns are a possibility, but what else do we have to do urgently and how do we prioritise that big set of priorities?

Dr Carmichael: It is thinking in terms of different scale as well. With lifetime homes and neighbourhoods, it is engaging with the young generation of planners and architects and trying to bring this mainstream into their education—into university courses, really. Then we have the issue of dementia-friendly environments. Unfortunately, one person in six over 80 has dementia, and at the moment there is no cure and it is terminal. The problem is that the legibility of the built environment for people with dementia does not favour younger generations, because you have to make sure that there is good signposting and that the colour scheme is appropriate. It does not help integration of different communities, but, when it comes to ageing, we have to encourage intergenerational environments.

I remember a place in Rotterdam where there was a big housing development but they brought the tram and the school before any housing was built, ironically, and put the old people’s home around the school so the various generations could keep cohabiting. That is really important, because the last thing we want is to create ghettos, which are not very good at all in helping us integrate.

Dr Connolly: You are right about the need to recognise the ageing population. People are living longer, which is a good thing, but they are living longer with various levels of disability and poor health. It is something around 15 years for men and 18 years for women in not good health, so we need to look at both prevention and the longer term. There are good examples. As you say, Holland has lots of great examples of better ways of thinking about designing. The Canadians have been looking at cities that are called “8-80”, which are designed for eight year-olds and for 80 year-olds. These are concepts we could help embed a bit more.

Our own CABE Design Council had a Building for Life set of criteria. There are multiple dimensions to that, but quite a lot of our existing developments do not reach those. Again, we have tools, but it is about promoting them and about how they are used in local areas so
that people can think through all those elements. I do not think it is that difficult; it just needs the next step of embracing it and thinking about it.

**Dr Egan:** I have one additional point about the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the country, where large numbers of people do not get to be old. In that sense, concern and targeting of an ageing population should be downscaled through the ages for those populations, where in effect late 40s, 50s and early 60s is old. Whatever targeting needs to happen, it should not be standardised across the country. Also, some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods have quite exceptional demographics, often with very high numbers of young people. We found this in the GoWell study on regeneration in Glasgow. We think one reason why social cohesion does not work in the way that it often does in other sorts of neighbourhoods is because there are such exceptionally high numbers of young people. There is a possibility, which is worth looking into, that an ageing population might start to redress that balance, providing there is active support for making sure that those exceptional demographics do not remain in place.

**Baroness Andrews:** Sure, but it also makes the case for saying that when you are planning for health and you are planning for housing, you have to plan for the local demography. What is not clear is whether local authorities are taking into account the nature of the local demography. The argument would be, if you had a national housing policy, you would not simply be building starter homes; you would be enabling older people to move out of extra-large family homes into safer, right-sized homes, which would then free up the large family homes for families. All that has a health impact, does it not?

**The Chairman:** You also have to consider the people themselves. The people who live in these big homes do not want to move, in a lot of cases. A lot of people want to downsize, but a lot do not.

**Q337 Lord Clement-Jones:** I am very interested in the practical examples, such as “8 80 Cities”. How widespread is knowledge of those sorts of practical schemes, projects or whatever you might call them? Does there need to be much more promulgation of that kind of best practice in this context?
Dr Connolly: I would suggest so, and to a wide range of different professionals—clearly, the health professionals, but also planning professionals; some will know about those, because that will be part of their training, and others will not. Some architects will be aware of those and building professionals—the engineers, the builders and so on—a lot less so. It is about joining up those who know how to build and know how to design, and finding some of the incentives—

Lord Clement-Jones: Who is in pole position? Are you in pole position on this in terms of spreading the gospel? These are very interesting schemes and yet, it appears, not that widely known.

Dr Carmichael: In working with local authorities or different stakeholders or organisations, it is interesting to see that there are lots of guidelines—BREEAM and Lifetime Homes, WHO—but they are not linked up. It is really trying to pool the resource that already exists. Within our remit, we need to support the WHO Healthy Cities Network at UK level. I have suggested to them that they need to talk to NHS England and this Healthy New Towns programme. We are discussing now how we can disseminate the information. This NHS Healthy New Towns is a great opportunity. As Ann Marie mentioned, they expected only 40 applications and they got 120, so there is a cry for help.

Lord Clement-Jones: Yes. We are looking for practical, effective outcomes.

Dr Carmichael: Exactly. Looking at these various sites that were brought forward, in some of them you can see that the local authorities have integrated the partnership in terms of commissioning groups, stakeholders, local authorities, planners, designers and developers, and they do not need the help of NHS England, to be honest, but some of them do not even know what help they need. There are very different environments and integration in the country.

Lord Inglewood: Does health sell houses?

Dr Connolly: The health system or the NHS?

Lord Inglewood: No, not the NHS. If you build a healthy home, do you get more money for it?

Dr Connolly: I do not think anybody has ever sold them on that basis, so I am not quite sure, but there will be other criteria.
Lord Inglewood: That may be the answer.

Q338 The Chairman: Yes, but, on the other hand, that probably is the answer. Some of us went to Birmingham and visited a housing site that was run by Birmingham City Council. At one stage they said that they had houses for elderly people, which had gables and two storeys. I said, “What about the two storeys?”. It was pointed out that they had designed into the ground floor either a cloakroom or else a lift up where you could get into a bathroom or a shower room upstairs. I thought that was great, and then I suddenly realised that for years people have been designing healthy interiors for elderly people, making sure that the plugs are in a place not down underneath the bed and so on.

This concept of clean air and green and walking and taking exercise for your health is really relatively new. It was 20 years ago, probably, that we all began to recognise it, whereas the housing people were there before us. I wonder just internally if we can get back to Birmingham and see what motivated that particular development. Within it, they had big blocks and social rooms and young people living in flats. It was completely multifunctional, and there were wide spaces too, which was great.

The question I was going to ask is: do local planning authorities take adequate account of health provision in their plan-making and development control functions? I suspect they do not take any, but do you think they are playing their part, or are they recognised as being a very important cornerstone to all this and that people would have to become more clued up about it?

Dr Connolly: As I say, the picture is very mixed across the country. There are some who have embraced this easily. It may have come from the health side, where the director of public health has engaged with the planning department for some time. There are good examples from across the country, but it is not uniform. This is also about when the opportunity arises for the right type of engagement. You can have different points of time: when the local plan is being developed, but that only gets done every five years or so and they are at different stages of cycle; when there is a major development, and, again, that sometimes happens; and when there are sometimes local Neighbourhood Plans, which brings things down very much more locally, which is an emerging theme. There are opportunities.
We worked last year and the year before with the Town and Country Planning Association, running a series of workshops across the country, bringing together different professionals, under the banner of “Reuniting Health with Planning”, and then specifically on healthy weight environments. A lot of learning came out of that about how we need to do more about joint learning, being clear about language and sharing understanding, and about the nature of evidence. We as health professionals tend to use and focus on a different type of evidence base than the planning professionals or the architecture professionals. It is trying to join those up, both in undergraduate training and in postgraduate professional development. We need better shared learning and shared skills development to be able to do that well.

The Chairman: That is very useful. Should there be a list of points that you have to tick before you get permission to build anything anywhere?

Dr Connolly: It could be helpful, but you would have to use it sensibly. In Newham, they used a checklist from the Healthy Urban Development Unit in the post-Olympics development. In Stockport, they also have a set of criteria for when they think the planners should bring in the public health people when there is a specific development—some triggers to start getting health advice.

The Chairman: You have mentioned two specific areas. How do we get the rest of the areas throughout the country doing that too? How would that become general knowledge, so to speak?

Dr Connolly: It is about, as I mentioned, training and development. It is also about publicising, honouring and giving prestige to those who are doing well so that others may want to emulate that.

Dr Carmichael: It is about joining up the resources that are already there, because there is a lot out there—TCPA, RTPI, Public Health England, NHS England, WHO—and making sure that people showcase good urban development.

Dr Egan: The academic sector can help with this as well. We have an opportunity, say, within public health to work with both planners and public health to understand the different cultures of evidence they both have and find some way to help them with common ground, which the School for Public Health Research do as well.
Q339 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I am not going to ask you to answer this now, because time is going on, but it would be really helpful if you could write in and provide us with what might be an outline of the metrics to use for a health impact assessment that would drive up some of the standards of decision-making. There are pockets of good practice and there are pockets of appalling practice. The good practices will be good almost whatever you do, but it is how you get the bad practice up. On the issue that a healthy environment sells somewhere to live within a private market system, I can see that, if you have young children and you are buying somewhere, you would prefer to not be on the highest atmospherically polluted road and you would want to know a bit about it. There are energy impacts on housing now. A framework of those metrics would be helpful, as would the metrics that are used for these healthy towns. How valid the decisions are depends on the metrics.

Linked to that, what are the shortages of knowledge and understanding over health issues among those who are working to build the built environment—the professionals involved? You have already alluded to different thought processes, different priorities, and so on. It may be that that is a question you would want to add into the metrics I am asking you for.

Dr Carmichael: There is already a joint statement—it was made in 2012 or 2013—between the Faculty of Public Health and RTPI urging providers of training to create a shared knowledge base. On the Masters in Public Health Part II, we gave some case studies around the built environment, but that is not enough; we really need to integrate this knowledge base. In a way, we also have to train the trainers. We have our architects, our planners and our public health people, and all are set in their methodologies and approaches to problems and problem solving, with their own knowledge bases. We are almost asking people to be outside their comfort zone.

That is where we come from. In a way, we are trying to juggle different concepts: public health, based on rigorous medical evidence, and then a social science perspective or lens of the world, which might be value-laden. We have to make public health practitioners understand how the planning system works, and the other way round as well. It has to be both ways. It is not just planners understanding public health evidence. There is a lot of, not
lobbying, but work to be done to translate the evidence from public health into user-friendly evidence for planning.

The Chairman: And having respect for each other’s skills, which is very important.

Dr Carmichael: Yes.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. It has been very useful. I shall be looking at more green trees in more places, and culs-de-sac versus grids. It has been really kind of you.

26 November 2015
NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT:

Response

Especially in relation to questions 11 (health), 3 (NPPF) and 9 (skills)

ELECTRO-MAGNETIC EXPOSURE

A. The significance of electro-magnetic exposure for the built environment
B. Key elements in the built environment to reduce electro-magnetic exposure
C. The built environment for the elderly and people functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure
D. Availability of information on the built environment and electro-magnetic exposure

Appendices:
(i) Table of biological built environment standards for electro-magnetic exposure
(ii) List of authorities requiring biological built environment standards for electro-magnetic exposure
(iii) Table of sources within the built environment of significant electro-magnetic exposure
A. The significance of electro-magnetic exposure for the built environment

Electro-magnetic exposure in the built environment is now an established factor for potential harm to the well-being of all people.

(i) Children, the sick, pregnant women, the elderly and people functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure are in special need of an appropriate the built environment. Professor Dominique Belpomme, of ARTAC, Paris, a leading expert on this environmental hazard, estimates that by 2035-2060 some 10-50% of the population will be functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure, depending on the growth of levels of electro-magnetic exposure. Current built environment standards relating to electro-magnetic exposure, therefore, will be of considerable significance for this element of the population. Lack of appropriate control now will increase the numbers who become functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure in the future and increase costs in rectifying the built environment in the future.

(ii) All people need appropriate limits on electro-magnetic exposure within the built environment, since this exposure is now a significant part of the total electro-magnetic exposure and the built environment exposure from static locations is some of the electro-magnetic exposure most easily controlled. Its location should be kept as far as possible from sleeping and resting areas.

(iii) Nearly all the built environment in the UK now has man-made electro-magnetic exposure. This is about a million billion times higher than the natural radiation at relevant frequencies and is assumed to lie behind increasing incidence of cancer and neurological illnesses. All this man-made radiation and field exposure is now classified as a 2B carcinogen and should therefore be treated as a controlled substance as regards the built environment.

The built environment especially needs levels of electro-magnetic exposures appropriate to the following two categories of vulnerable people.

Category 1.
Children, the sick, pregnant women, the elderly, people with compromised immune systems, people sensitive to electro-magnetic exposure, and people functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure.

Category 2.
Adults, who are young, healthy and lack genetic or immune system deficiencies.

At present UK limits for electro-magnetic exposures, and thus for the built environment, are set for Category 2 only, based on acute (6 minute average) heating-only effects on healthy young adult males.

The built environment should also be compliant with the international biological low-level exposure limits set by the BioInitiative Report of 2012 and other authorities, appropriate for Category 1 persons, who require protection from non-thermal low-level long-term electro-magnetic exposures (see Appendix, table (i), for appropriate levels).
B. **Key elements in the built environment to reduce ambient electro-magnetic exposure**

There is increasing evidence of serious health concerns from wireless transmitters and wiring using a 2B cancer and neurological agent.

Key requirements for future developments in the built environment in relation to ambient electro-magnetic exposure include the following.

1. **Built environment standards to eliminate or reduce electro-magnetic exposure from mobile phone masts**

   All mobile phone masts should now follow best practice and be located at least 500m from human habitation. This means the NPPF should be updated to follow recent advances in scientific and medical knowledge and in best practice.

2. **Built environment standards to eliminate or reduce electro-magnetic exposure from WiFi routers**

   All WiFi should be phased out and replaced with non-cancer and non-neurologically-damaging communication. This should include interior built environments such as schools, hospitals, shops, railway stations, airports, and exterior open spaces such as streets, shopping malls and parks, as well as dwellings, hotels, restaurants, work places, shops and entertainment venues.

3. **Built environment standards to eliminate or reduce electro-magnetic exposure from ‘smart’ meters**

   All ‘smart’ meters for utilities, such as electricity, gas and water, should have wired or cabled data communication, both for the WAN (Wide Area Network) and the HAN (Home Area Network).

   Although the UK government does not require the use of wireless radiation for utility smart meters (House of Commons statement, 29th November 2011), if a utility risks using wireless carcinogen communication for a ‘smart’ meter, then:
   (i) Locate all wireless ‘smart’ meters outside the property and not within a dwelling, such as a hallway, entrance, garage or cellar, where even higher levels of radiation are needed.
   (ii) Locate all wireless meters >5 metres away from the bedrooms or sleeping quarters or from sitting/living rooms.
   (iii) Locate banks of meters 20 to 100 metres (depending on the number of meters) from blocks of flats and apartments.
   (iv) Locate meters so that another dwelling is not in line between the meter and the nearest mast or WAN (Wide Area Network) access point.
4. **Built environment standards to eliminate or reduce electric and magnetic fields, especially in bedrooms, sleeping quarters, work areas and living areas**
   (i) Locate electricity meters away from sleeping areas.
   (ii) Locate wall sockets and wiring away from areas likely to have beds positioned close by.
   (iii) Locate automatic garage door radio systems so that they are not immediately under bedrooms.
   (iv) Design mains circuits to avoid ring mains encircling the bedroom.

5. **Built environment standards to eliminate or reduce radio frequency exposure in a dwelling by replacing wireless radiation with cables**
   Eliminate the need for wireless HAN (Home Area Network, proposed for use with ‘smart’ meters) or WiFi for internet distribution and inter-communication within dwellings, offices, schools, hospitals and public areas indoors and out, by requiring wired cabling for data communication to each room within the premises.

C. **Built environment standards for accommodation designed for (1) the elderly and (2) people functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure**

1. **Built environment standards for elderly and sick people**
   Because elderly people are more vulnerable to electro-magnetic exposure, frequently rest in one place, and often have compromised immune systems, it is especially important that very low levels of electro-magnetic exposure are achieved in the built environment near old people’s accommodation. This includes the appropriate standards for the design of the wiring layout and restrictions on monitoring systems, using passive systems only, and not those emitting constant radiation.

2. **Built environment standards for people functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposure**
   There are particular needs for appropriate built environment standards for those severely functionally disabled by electro-magnetic exposures. If these built environment standards are not implemented, then vulnerable persons can either be excluded from the built environment and have to live in caravans or tents in remote areas (as is the case at present in the UK) or become ill from the built environment. About 80% of people sensitive to electro-magnetic exposures are also sensitive to chemical exposures. Some countries, therefore, have built environmentally friendly or ‘green’ housing with regard to man-made environmental pollution from both electro-magnetic and chemical exposures. ‘White zones’, areas without man-made electro-magnetic exposure, are also a partial solution for those functionally disabled. The UK government was asked by the EU Parliament in 2009 and the Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2011 to provide such radiation-free areas for electrosensitive people, but it has yet to do so.
D. Availability of information on built environment standards and electro-magnetic exposure

Electro-magnetic exposure ratings (power density, electric fields, magnetic fields) in each built environment should be available to residents, workers and visitors. Some countries already undertake such monitoring and make the results publically available, as for chemical and particulate air pollution or water quality. This knowledge about radiation exposure levels would help people, especially those diagnosed by doctors as particularly susceptible to this radiation, to make an informed choice about the suitability of the housing, employment premises and public areas and facilities for their needs.
APPENDICES

(i) Table of biological built environment standards for electro-magnetic exposure

(ii) List of authorities requiring biological built environment standards for electro-magnetic exposure

(iii) Table of sources of significant electro-magnetic exposure within the built environment

Table (i)

Built environment standards for electro-magnetic exposure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Biological limit</th>
<th>Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a power density</td>
<td>microwatt/metre²</td>
<td>**3</td>
<td>BioInitiative 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>children, ill people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td></td>
<td>**6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a electric (radio</td>
<td>milliVolt/metre</td>
<td>**194</td>
<td>BioInitiative 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volt/metre</td>
<td>**0.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b electric (power</td>
<td>Volt/metre</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>‘severe concern’, Building Biology Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(7th edition), 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c electric (power</td>
<td>Volt/metre</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>‘severe concern’, Building Biology Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(7th edition), 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Magnetic</td>
<td>nanoTesla</td>
<td>**100</td>
<td>BioInitiative 2007, Seletun 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All these fields are class 2B possible cancer agents.

**Some people are adversely affected at levels below these biological limits.

(ii) List of authorities requiring biological built environment standards for electro-magnetic exposure or recognising adverse effects from non-thermal radiation

(a) The BioInitiative Report of 2012 summarises the current scientific majority view based on the weight of evidence; Seletun 2010 also gives international standards.

(b) The ICNIRP in 2002 warned governments to provide non-thermal limits at low levels of electro-magnetic exposures suited to subgroups of the population, such as
children, elderly, and vulnerable groups with compromised immune systems and functionally disabled (Category 1 above).

(c) The World Health Organisation in 2005-07 declared that symptoms of sensitivity to electro-magnetic exposures are real, an environmental intolerance, and not a known psychological disorder.


(e) The Supplement to the Standard of Building Biology Testing Methods SBM-2008 (7th edition, 2008) classifies electro-magnetic exposure levels for housing standards into Nil/Slight/Severe/Extreme levels of concern, all biologically based on current scientific evidence as reviewed by experts. ‘Slight’ is for sensitive and ill people. ‘Severe’ is unacceptable and requiring remediation. ‘Extreme’ is for immediate and rigorous action.

(f) The EU parliament in 2009 voted that the current levels of electro-magnetic exposure based on heating limits, as used by the UK government, were obsolete and should be replaced by biological ones and that sensitivity to electro-magnetic exposure should be recognised as a disabling condition.

(g) The Council of Europe in 2009 voted that individual governments should provide ‘white zones’ with housing free of man-made electro-magnetic exposures.

(h) The World Health Organisation’s IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer) in 2001 and 2011 classified extremely low (power-line) frequencies and radio frequencies as possible cancer agents (2B). Leading scientists now say there is sufficient evidence for both frequencies to be classified as class 1, certain, cancer agents, making them inappropriate for use in any housing at levels above biological limits.

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**Table (iii)**

*Sources of significant electro-magnetic exposure within the built environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power density</th>
<th>Electric Fields</th>
<th>Voltage Transients (‘Dirty electricity’)</th>
<th>Magnetic Fields</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a) STATIC/FIXED</strong></td>
<td>Mobile phone masts, Wireless WAN, Wireless HAN, Microwave oven, Cordless phone base station, WiFi router, Wireless ‘smart’ meters</td>
<td>Mobile phone masts, Wireless WAN including electricity, gas and water ‘smart’ meters, Wireless HAN, WiFi router,</td>
<td>Inverters for solar panels, Dimmer switches, Appliance transformers, Digital electricity meters, Fluorescent lights, CFL bulbs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Cordless phone base station, Microwave oven, Garage door wireless activation, Sensors (active), Wireless pest deterrent, CFL bulbs, Plasma TV monitors</td>
<td>Electric wiring carrying transients from other dwellings</td>
<td>Washing/drying machines with high-speed spin, Electric under-floor heating, Electric storage radiators, Electric fans, CRT monitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) MOVEABLE</td>
<td>Mobile phone, Tablets, Laptops</td>
<td>Mobile phones, Cordless phone handsets, Tablets, Laptops, Baby alarm, Wii, Xbox</td>
<td>Electric blanket, Clock radio, Hairdryers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All these fields are class 2B possible cancer agents.*

Michael Bevington,
Electrosensitivity UK

05 October 2015
Energy UK is the trade association for the energy industry. We represent over 80 members comprising generators and gas and electricity suppliers of all kinds and sizes as well as other businesses operating in the energy industry. Together our members generate more than 90 per cent of the UK’s total electricity output, supplying more than 26 million homes and investing more than £13 billion in the British economy in 2013.

Making efficient policy decisions in the energy sector requires a ‘whole systems’ approach. In practice this means assessing the interaction between different solutions, for example supply (generation) and demand (efficiency, demand management), as well as between the energy, heat and transport sectors. Under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime 26 energy projects have been consented, with a further 44 in the pipeline, and yet only a handful are being built. Despite the very significant cost of obtaining development consent, wider energy policy uncertainty is affecting investor confidence. Therefore planning policy and the built environment cannot be treated in isolation.

Our response below focuses on those questions which have direct relevance to the energy sector in respect of the built environment, but should be viewed against the need to ensure cohesive policy making across all sectors of Government.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. **Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?**

Energy UK believes that the decisions that shape England’s built environment are taken at the right administrative level, albeit as we note above in isolation of the wider policy framework. We believe that the current planning system has provided stability and investor confidence for large energy infrastructure developers, through the dedicated process for planning consents for nationally significant infrastructure projects (Planning Act 2008 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects). By frontloading the planning application process and enabling early stakeholder engagement with host community's developers are able to refine proposals to deliver the best outcome, and reduce the risk of protracted planning inquiries and delay.

We believe that it is essential that Government policy on planning remains stable and clear, as the consenting process needs to be predictable, timely and transparent to allow the private sector to come forward with confidence to invest in very large infrastructure projects.
We also believe that the interaction between national need and local policy must be clearly expressed in guidance and understood by local authorities and their partners. The reason for this is that the development of policies which devolve more decisions to the local level could have the effect of elevating local opinion over national need. This is a concern as it may have the effect of recreating the previous system, which often resulted in protracted planning inquiries and delays for essential nationally significant infrastructure projects, whereas the current regimes provide an appropriate balance.

Energy UK welcomes the establishment of a National Infrastructure Commission to take a long-term and cross-sector view on infrastructure. It will be important to ensure clarity on how the Commission’s role interacts with the national and local planning regimes, in order to avoid creating further uncertainty whilst investors wait to see the Commission’s first assessment.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved? National policy for planning and the built environment

We believe that the current planning policy framework is stable and generally provides adequate certainty, investor confidence and community input, yet it cannot be viewed in isolation, and must work cohesively with the wider energy policy framework. Additionally, a new national policy for planning and the built environment may undermine the current benefits brought about by the previous reforms, by elevating local opinion over national need, instead of the current approach which balances the national need for low carbon and sustainable energy infrastructure projects with the view of local people. A change in this balance could lead to a risk of protracted planning inquiries and delays.

In the electricity sector, the Government, with cross-party support, has implemented fundamental reforms to the electricity market, designed to provide a framework which will deliver decarbonisation policy objectives which the earlier electricity market arrangements were not designed to deliver. The Electricity Market Reforms (EMR) need time to work by bringing forward new electricity generation infrastructure. We believe that it is important that any new initiatives on infrastructure planning and built environment policies do not undermine those reforms.

Of particular relevance was introduction through the Planning Act 2008 (as modified by the Localism Act 2011) of the concept of National Policy Statements, to guide decision-making on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). The Energy NPSs provide a stable policy framework for planning for energy infrastructure projects, and is one of the important factors for building investor confidence in new projects.

Energy UK believes that the Energy National Policy Statement (NPS) framework is fit for purpose. It is widely recognised that in order to deliver the UK’s energy policy goals of secure, affordable and sustainable energy, significant investment is necessary. To deliver
this investment, the industry requires a stable policy framework. Therefore, it is essential to retain the overarching policy framework that the NPSs for energy infrastructure provide.

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

Energy UK recognises the fundamental importance of a robust and predictable planning system in delivering sustainable development. We believe that large scale investment in electricity infrastructure is urgently required to replace existing generation plants. This is required to ensure secure and affordable energy supplies, and meet our climate change targets, in particular the legally binding target to deliver an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as established in the Climate Change Act 2008. It is important that the transition to a low carbon economy is progressed efficiently to ensure that the competitiveness of UK energy supplies is maintained, while also ensuring the stability and affordability of energy prices.

We understand that it is essential that the right decisions are made when developing and protecting the built and natural environment. However, decisions need to be taken at a nationally strategic level to secure investment in large-scale low-carbon electricity generation and promote the transition to a low carbon economy incorporating a diverse energy mix. Equally, decisions on key gas infrastructure projects to ensure the ongoing security of UK gas supplies remains an important part of Government’s energy affordability and security of supply objectives, as the transition to a low carbon economy progresses.

Alongside the NSIP regime, we believe that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) enables the Government’s statutory energy and climate change objectives to be met. It defines the UK’s national economic, environmental and social infrastructure needs and clarifies the planning priorities for all development under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) regime. We actively support the overarching principle of having a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. We believe that more emphasis should be given in the NPPF to the role of energy infrastructure within the TCPA regime, and in particular, as an important component of the Government’s growth agenda.

There were significant benefits to streamlining and rationalising the old suite of planning policy documents, however we are concerned that there are some instances where useful detailed guidance for developers and local authorities has been omitted, for example that in Planning Policy Statement 22 (“Renewable Energy”).

Local planning authorities and community stakeholders have opportunities to question and analyse major infrastructure projects through the nationally significant infrastructure planning process. This gives scope for the positive and negative impacts to be weighed as part of the Examination Process undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). It is important that, in cases where developers may need to make applications for Associated Development as part of the same project under both national and local planning processes, the national need of the main project is a material consideration. We therefore believe that
the Energy NPSs should be a material consideration under the TCPA regime, and that this should be stated explicitly in the NPPF, in line with the wording in the designated NPSs (e.g. paragraph 1.2.1 of the Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1)).

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

A number of aspects of planning policy already deliver a spatial perspective, and we are not aware of a significant gap in policy in this respect. Before introducing a further spatial element to national policy, it is essential that any perceived policy gap is defined, with clear supporting evidence. The NPPF calls upon local planning authorities to produce Local Plans, which, once all Plans are in place, will deliver a cohesive picture of land use across the country, including identifying areas where renewable energy projects are particularly encouraged. In order to meet the UK’s future energy needs any low carbon and sustainable energy infrastructure projects must be considered on their merits with development not restricted to those areas identified in Local Plans.

Rather than introducing further changes to the NSIP and TCPA regimes Government should focus on assisting all local planning authorities to produce robust Local Plans in full consultation with their local communities, and within a specified timescale.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Planning for energy infrastructure requires a longer-term view. It would be prudent for those developing planning and future built environment policy to consider the infrastructure necessary to deliver the UK growth plans. For instance, the required massive expansion in new housing has a direct impact on energy capacity, and so policy makers need to consider not only the replacement of existing aged energy infrastructure, but new generation and other forms of energy, and the necessary connections to meet the nation’s current and future energy needs. Energy UK suggests planning for the UK’s energy needs should look to at least 2030 to deliver a stable long-term policy framework which would attract investors.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Energy UK’s response to Question 5 refers.

Skills and design
9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Energy UK believes that there is a strong need to reinforce planning resources, as lack of resource has, on occasion, hampered some local planning authorities in responding in a timely way to energy infrastructure applications. Sufficient experienced and knowledgeable planning officers are needed to manage and deliver the planning authorities’ wide-ranging duties and responsibilities under both the local planning and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regimes.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Energy UK believes that the front-ended NSIP regime allows for meaningful and early engagement with local communities and their representatives, which can help developers enhance their designs to accommodate local suggestions / address local concerns.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public

Energy UK’s response to Question 11 refers.

*06 October 2015*
The Environment Agency and Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management – Oral Evidence (QQ283-307)

Transcript to be found under Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management
Eythorne Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0068)

Question 11- National Policy makers should involve the local community as a matter of course. Parish Councils know the local environment, the issues that are unique to the area and hold consultations with the community but their expertise is often completely ignored.

Question 12 - Local communities are not necessarily consulted even when companies are planning large scale developments. (DOV 14/00477). It should be mandatory for a public consultation to be held if the proposed site is to be above a certain number of dwellings in a rural area or in a conservation area or an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The time scale for submitting evidence to an appeal lodged with the Planning Inspectorate is insufficient and does not allow local communities, particularly Parish Councils, to prepare their response adequately. Developers can take months to perfect their appeal paperwork but members of the public can have as little as 21 days. The imbalance needs to be addressed. (i.e Barville Wind Turbine APP/X2220/W/14/300041 and Monkton Court Lane APP/X2220/W/15/3103239).

10 October 2015
Farrells – Written Evidence (BEN0139)

Written Submission from Max Farrell, on behalf of the Farrell Review for Architecture & the Built Environment Policy

Max Farrell, on behalf of The Farrell Review of Architecture Policy, welcomes the opportunity to submit to the House of Lords Community on National Policy for the Built Environment.

In summary, our recommendations to the Committee are as follows:

1. The UK’s planning system needs to be proactive rather than reactive, anticipating rather than responding to the future needs of our towns and cities. By planning proactively like other countries do, we would anticipate issues like the national housing shortage or susceptibility to flooding and address them before they reach crisis levels.

2. Places would be greatly improved if the people who make decisions about our built environment, such as planning committee members and highway engineers, were empowered by training in design literacy. Local planning authorities should also set out a plan for attracting and retaining the best and most design-literate individuals for planning departments.

3. The Government’s Housing Design Panel to ensure more representation from a range of disciplines, including planning, landscaping, conservation and design.

About the Farrell Review of Architecture Policy

Sir Terry Farrell was asked by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to conduct an independent review of Architecture and the Built Environment in March 2013. The Review has engaged as widely as possible to help DCMS develop its thinking about the role for government in achieving high-quality design and to help the built environment sector address the important issues of our times. The Review published its findings in March 2014 and its final recommendations can be found here: http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/download

Sir Terry Farrell conducted the process independently and was supported by an expert advisory panel made up from members of the built environment industry.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

The built environment has seen enormous flux within government over the years, moving between many different departments. For this reason, policies should be developed which are enabled by government, but led independently by the industry. The Farrell Review recommended that the future lies in empowering cities and localities, with central government increasingly taking on an enabling role.
However, central government can do a lot to support the built environment and encourage quality placemaking. The Farrell Review of Architecture (FAR) welcomes the decision to move architecture from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport to the Department for Communities and Local Government so that planning and housing policymaking sit together. We also welcome the establishment of the Housing Design Panel. However, more can be done at a central level; for example:

- Build and expand on the Housing Design Panel to ensure more representation from a range of disciplines, including planning, landscaping, conservation and design
- Adopt a range of consistent policies within and for each department with built environment in their portfolios
- Ensure that all government decision-making panels for major infrastructure reviews have design and planning professionals represented
- Provide official endorsements for built environment professionals working on high-profile projects overseas and recognise the soft power it brings
- Recognise building design as closely connected to manufacturing in order to acknowledge the export value to UK plc

National policy for planning and the built environment

One of the central themes of the Farrell Review has been the recommendation to open up the planning system and embrace a new proactive approach to planning. Anticipating needs and opportunities, not simply responding to proposals for new development, and looking at places in their entirety, rather than just at individual buildings and their design, is essential to create healthy, sustainable places.

This requires a fundamental, philosophical rethink from everybody involved in the system – from architects and developers, to policy-makers and communities. Policies should be developed which are enabled by politicians, but need to be led independently by the industry and the very communities themselves, with the focus of these policies being the core “places” of villages, towns and cities. The stewardship, long-term planning and identity of real places should be a fundamental part of built environment policies. The future lies in empowering cities and localities and the people that live in them.

Our planning system has become too reactive and relies on development control, which forces local authority planners to spend their time fire fighting rather than thinking creatively about the future shape and form of villages, towns and cities.

Everything is open to negotiation for every planning application and, as a result, huge amounts of time and resources are spent on issues that could have been predetermined by a collective vision shaped in collaboration with local communities, neighbourhood forums
and “PLACE” (Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering) Review Panels.

Proactive planning would free up valuable time for local authority planners to develop masterplans and design codes which are supported by local communities, whilst reinvigorating the planning profession and its public perception.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

Proactive planning is essential in order to help us address issues of housing supply, as the only way of persuading those already housed of the benefits of more housing is by presenting a credible vision of the future.

We have already seen with neighbourhood planning that it can make an incredible difference to the way that people think about new development and new housing. The private sector is supportive of this approach, as it gives them certainty and a greater guarantee of success in terms of securing consent for a planning application.

In terms of sustainability, government and industry must show leadership. Sustainable design should be incentivised and the right kind of leadership at city level should be championed.

Our existing buildings are a valuable resource, and the Farrell Review recommended that retrofitting should lead the carbon emissions and climate change agenda. The government should legislate to address the disproportionate VAT on retrofit and redistribute it to new build if necessary. As research from the ‘Cut the VAT Campaign Coalition’ has demonstrated, while there might be a short-term impact in VAT terms, it would provide much greater fiscal stimulus overall by increasing demand and boosting the construction industry through supply chains and increasing the workforce.

Architecture schools should include refurbishment and low-carbon retrofitting of old buildings in their curriculum and conservation and heritage issues in course content. This is an emerging and high-value market, and these skills are increasingly sought after, so they should be developed early and then with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) whilst in practice.

**Skills and design**

There is an urgent need to ensure that local decision makers are adequately trained and skilled to make the significant decisions about the built environment that they make. Places would be greatly improved if the people who make decisions about our built environment, such as planning committee members and highway engineers, were empowered by training in design literacy.
The Farrell Review recommended that newly elected councillors (who already receive mandatory training on financial and legal duties) should receive placemaking and design training at the same time. Information and communications technology should be used to make the most of people’s time when volunteering to skill up decision makers, and CPD points should be offered by PLACE institutions to incentivise this.

There is also a need to attract the best students into local authority planning departments. We urge the government to support a proposal being developed by Finn Williams, former Regeneration Area Manager at the GLA and former Deputy Team Leader of Placemaking at Croydon. He is exploring options for a programme that, in the style of the ‘Teach First’ initiative, seeks to place newly qualified planners into local authority planning teams.

**Community involvement and community impact**

We have discussed elsewhere in this submission the impact a more proactive planning system would have on encouraging and generating greater and more positive engagement from communities in development, placemaking and design. Neighbourhood Planning has done much to galvanize and excite many communities by providing them with a real chance to engage early on in the future shape of their towns and villages. We strongly support Neighbourhood Planning and recommend the government looks at how it can “scale up” this approach.

The Farrell Review also recommended the creation of ‘Urban Rooms’ around the country to engage local communities in exploring the past, present and future of that place. These Urban Rooms would be an opportunity to communicate an area’s Local Plan – which can be very dense and technical documents – into a more engaging visions for the future. We are delighted that since the Farrell Review launched over a year ago, around 18 Urban Rooms have been opened across the country. We would urge both central and local government to support these centres of exploration – if not with direct financial support, then with words and resources.

*06 October 2015*
Farrells, Beam and The Place Alliance – Written Evidence (BEN0217)

Submission to be found under Beam, Farrells and The Place Alliance
Transcript to be found under Professor Peter Bishop
Supplementary evidence on Government policy and SME house builders access to finance

Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Ministers in the previous and current Government have sought to respond to the difficulties in accessing finance faced by small house builders. The Builders Finance Fund was put in place in 2014, and the lower threshold was reduced from 15 units to 5 units. This pot of funding was consolidated with other schemes and extended to 2020/21 as a £1 billion fund in the 2015 Spending Review. Though we do need to look at some of the barriers to take up, this funding pot is very welcome and is part of an improving environment for SME builders.

However, FMB survey evidence suggests that access to finance challenges remain severest for those developing the very smallest sites, and for small contractors and other new entrants seeking to access finance to bring forward their own developments – these firms invariably find themselves refused because of their lack of ‘track record’. Government could look to see what more they can do to reach these firms through current funding schemes like the Builders Finance Fund.

The Government has also co-invested through the Home and Communities Agency with Lloyds Banking Group in the Housing Growth Partnership, which is seeking to make equity investments in projects with a gross development value (GDV) of between £0.75m and £12m. If the terms of investment are right, this approach will allow small developers to expand and open up more sites by reducing the capital they need to invest in any one project. As such, if we are looking to expand the capacity of the SME sector, this approach should be a productive one to take.

However, ultimately, until the lending positions of major banks change, it seems unlikely that the sector will receive finance on the scale and on the terms it needs to drive a real transformation in the output of SME house builders. For this reason, we remain convinced that some form of guarantee system on loans to SME house builders would be the most effective means of ensuring an adequate supply of finance to this sector.

18 December 2015
Federation of Master Builders and Home Builders Federation – Oral Evidence (QQ94-108)

Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Chris Carr, Chair of the Home Builders Group, Federation of Master Builders, and John Slaughter, Director of External Affairs, Home Builders Federation

Q94 The Chairman: Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. Thank you very much for giving up your time. I know that everybody is busy nowadays and to give this slot of time is probably a bit of an irritant, but it is very valuable to us. We learn a huge amount from these sessions, so thank you for doing it. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee’s website. You will of course have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves, please, to the Committee. This is for the record.

John Slaughter: My name is John Slaughter. I am the director of external affairs for the Home Builders Federation and am responsible for quite a wide range of policy issues within the federation. I have been working in the housing field for more than 12 years now.

Chris Carr: I am Chris Carr, the managing director of Carr & Carr (Builders), based in Cleethorpes in north-east Lincolnshire. It is a family-run business and has been running for nearly 100 years. My son is now the fourth generation to join the company. By trade I am a
carpenter, although I sit behind a desk for most of my time now. Until the recession, probably 90% of our work was in building new homes but during the recession, we dropped off and went on to doing contracting and listed building work, purely because of the housing market. So from 10 to 15 buildings a year, we dropped back. In the last five years, we built one house, but we are now back on to the market and have started building again.

**The Chairman:** What do you see as the total for this 12 months, starting now?

**Chris Carr:** We have one site with four units, which we are in the middle of, and we have just got a site for 96 where the infrastructure is going in now. By the time we have the Section 106 agreed, the conditions lifted and the infrastructure in, we will probably start in the middle of next year. We will probably still build only 10 or 15 a year at the moment.

**The Chairman:** But are you feeling more hopeful?

**Chris Carr:** Oh yes.

**Q95 The Chairman:** Good, thank you. You have had a list of questions. The first question is from me. The Committee has previously been told that the private sector will only ever deliver around half of the new housing required in England. Why is this? How many new homes, in your view, is the private sector able to deliver over the forthcoming years, and how in broad terms might it deliver more? I suppose you will say that if the economy is booming, companies such as yours would be able to, but over to you.

**Chris Carr:** The crash in the housing industry was predominantly everywhere bar London. I spoke to a gentleman down at Canary Wharf who said that the recession was for 18 months. We need to get away from that. It has been five years where we are, and we are only just coming out of it now. There has to be an understanding that London and the south-east are almost their own market. We need to remember that, because I represent builders from all over the UK.

We are looking at a benchmark of 220,000 homes. Historically, we managed to build 150,000 in the private sector before the crash. I still see achieving that again as being a long way off. The key constraint at the moment, I suppose, is skills. It is brought up over and over again and is still a key factor, but my members say that the biggest problem is still finance. The SME sector is still struggling to access finance through the traditional banking system, and having to look at alternatives. We can bring the numbers up. I do not think we can achieve the
150,000 straight away. It will take a few years to get up to that sort of level. My biggest worry is the amount of developing companies that have gone out of business, or pulled out of it. We were building two-thirds of all new homes around 25 years ago; we are now down to a third. So we have lost a third of the capacity, and with the greatest respect to the national housebuilders they cannot take up that sort of slack. They are doing very well to deliver the numbers, but when you lose a third of your industry it is a big problem. Even though we are coming out of the recession, the NHBC announced at its AGM that it has lost 400 registered builders in the last year. Yes, we are on the up, but we are still managing to lose 400.

The Chairman: How many registered builders are there?

Chris Carr: I cannot give an answer for that. I am sorry that I do not know.

The Chairman: Perhaps we can follow it up by asking HSBC.

Chris Carr: It is the NHBC.

The Chairman: Oh, the NHBC—I thought you were talking about the bankers and finance. I will pursue one point. You mentioned skills. I have been getting a lot of questions saying, “What you mean by skills? Everybody’s got skills”. So what are the real deficits in the areas of skills? Is it in architecture, brickies or roofers, or whatever?

John Slaughter: From the data and from talking to our members, it is a range of roles. If you talk about sites, site management is a key function. Certainly it is in some of the professions, such as quantity surveying. We all know that nationally there are not enough planners to go around anyway. But it is also in key trades such as bricklaying and carpentry. There is a range of roles where we need to have more people with the right skills coming into the industry. It is about attracting people who are already in the workforce and may have previous or relevant experience, as well as people coming into the workforce for the first time.

The Chairman: In an ideal world, if there were no constraints, how would you overcome this lack of skills? Would it be through further education colleges, more apprentices, or what?

John Slaughter: Again, it will be a range of things. Certainly, it would be through having more apprenticeships, but personally I am very keen on the new generation of university technical colleges. As a bridge between technical, vocational and academic education, they offer a lot of opportunities to bring more people into the industry in a creative way. Five or six UTCs already have a construction or housebuilding affiliation, but we would like to see a lot more
of that kind of initiative. It could be in restructuring of the Construction Industry Training Board’s support mechanisms. The construction sector is almost unique; only one other part of the economy has an existing levy and grant system. From the housebuilding perspective, we are pressing hard for a reform of the CITB in a way that will make the support it provides far more attuned to the requirements of our industry, so that we can add much more value by bringing more people into the industry.

**Lord Inglewood**: This is a quick question. One of the big political questions of the day is the immigration of people, particularly from eastern Europe, to work in the building trade. Are they taking jobs from British people, or would you be unable to build even what you are now without them?

**John Slaughter**: I think it is the latter; we need these people to come in. You cannot switch on a new apprentice, as an apprenticeship is a two or three-year process to get someone up to speed, so if the need is now there is probably no alternative. I do not think they are actually taking British people’s jobs. We need both, in reality.

**The Chairman**: That is reassuring, actually—it hits other buttons.

**Q96 Baroness Andrews**: I have a couple of short questions. What you said about the UTCs is very interesting, because that model fills the gap between very high-spec engineering-type training and the sort of skills that you can really put to use quite quickly. You recommend them, but we obviously need more, as you say.

**John Slaughter**: A lot more, I would say.

**Baroness Andrews**: You mentioned finance. Can you explain a bit more about where the difficulty actually presents itself when you come to try to fund your developments?

**Chris Carr**: The finance is quite crucial to us. We have been with our bank for at least 80 years and we are now deemed as a risky project for no other reason than we are an SME housebuilder. Gaining finance from banks in the traditional way is quite harrowing at the moment. We are having to look at alternatives. I chair the FMB’s homebuilders group. When we spoke to a group of our members the other day, of the 12 ladies and gentlemen there who are based all over the UK, six or eight of them borrow off friends and private investors, normally people who know them and so know that their money is safe. That is what a bank used to do when your bank manager knew who you were. They trusted you, and you did not
want to let them down because they were almost a personal friend. It has got to the stage now where we are purely a number, and because our number comes under the category of an SME housebuilder we are refused point blank.

**Baroness Andrews**: Is that to do with the size of your firm or its function?

**Chris Carr**: That is the million-dollar question. We do not know why. It is just that we do not have bank managers any more; we have relationship managers.

**Baroness Andrews**: So you do not know why you are in that category?

**Chris Carr**: They take a report and send it off to the head office in Leeds or Birmingham. Then they send it back saying whether they will lend or not. They will not give you the criteria. We had a relationship with a bank for more than 80 years. We never defaulted on a payment, we always paid, and they made good money out of us over the years. It is just that it now goes from my relationship manager, since we do not have bank managers, who feeds it into a computer—and the computer says no.

**Baroness Andrews**: Do you have a date for when that changed?

**Chris Carr**: It was within a year or 18 months of the recession coming in. The banks were heavily into the national housebuilders, by the billions, and knew that they had to pull back as an industry. They had overstretched themselves in the construction industry, so the easiest people to hit were the ones in the middle. They could not pull the plug on the ones at the top, who owed so much, and the ones at the bottom they did not know a great deal and that were not the problem. It was the ones in the middle, the genuine SME entrepreneurial house developers, for whom they just stopped the finance.

**Baroness Andrews**: May I ask a question following on from that? Have you as a group, a trade association, gone to see any of the banking groups or authorities?

**Chris Carr**: We have. Emma Reynolds MP and Chris Leslie MP held a meeting with the FMB and some top people at the banks to see where the problems were. They did a great job. Emma Reynolds did a fantastic job in finding out what the problems were, but I think even she was shocked by the attitude of the banks. When they went around the room and asked them who would lend to the SME sector, they all sat on their hands. A couple—Lloyds and Nat West, possibly—said that they were interested. I thought the others might give the idea
that they would lend, just because they were in front of two MPs, but they did not. They just said, “We are not interested”.

**The Chairman:** Yes, but surely you could aim higher than that. You make press statements, do you not?

**Chris Carr:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** You could say that this is some of the evidence you gave to this Committee, or whatever, but Carney ought to know that this is going on.

**Chris Carr:** I think that people know it is going on.

**The Chairman:** They are a block on progress and on fulfilling the Government’s objective.

**John Slaughter:** I think that is right. Perhaps I could come in on this. I also want to come back to your initial question about whether there is a limit on what the private sector can deliver. The answer is no, not really. If you have favourable economic conditions and a sensible policy and regulatory framework, then in principle the private sector can grow as far as it needs to grow. We would not say that there is any particular limit on what the private sector can deliver, but a key part of that picture is the issues that Chris has touched on. We have seen a reduction of 75% in the number of SMEs in housebuilding over the last 25 or 30 years. We really need to remove the barriers to entry for small businesses, and to enable them to grow into big businesses. If we are to be successful over time in meeting the housing supply challenge, we need to do that.

Finance is part of it. Our perspective is that finance has been improving for smaller companies. It is not perfect, but another key point here is that smaller businesses often rely essentially on project finance, as opposed to wider financial facilities, so it is a different type of dialogue. From our members’ feedback, part of the reflection of the tightening of the banks’ attitude to project finance for small companies was in effect that they were expecting small companies to put more equity into project finance themselves. That would obviously challenge their ability to either stay in the market or grow their output. Some of the initiatives which the Government have taken recently are trying to address those types of issues and help with that side of things, but we need to do a lot more to help small companies.

**The Chairman:** Maybe when wearing your hat as a trade association, you ought to get together. I do not want to pursue this point, because we have a lot of questions, but it
coincides with a lot of complaints out there in the financial world about the loss of that relationship management. I know that the Treasury is trying to do even more to make it easier—there was even something in one of the papers yesterday. On the back of these questions, Lady Whitaker wanted to come in, and then Lord Inglewood.

**Baroness Whitaker:** I have a very quick question, returning to the issue of skills. Mr Slaughter mentioned an increase in CITB support. I know that it has gone down considerably and was very valuable. How should this be funded?

**John Slaughter:** It is about the use of the funding that the CITB already has. Through the levy from the construction sector, it generates annually about £160 million—

**Baroness Whitaker:** So it has enough.

**John Slaughter:** It has enough; it is just the way that funding is used. From our point of view, the funding has not been used in the best way.

**Baroness Whitaker:** But is not the industry represented on the CITB to say how the money should be used?

**John Slaughter:** It has been, but this is a very big subject. The CITB is in the midst of a process of significant change and governance restructuring. The old structures did not really work very effectively, so that from our point of view our voice was rather lost in the way that the CITB worked, even though we had representation. There is a genuine feeling in the industry that we could invest far more effectively for the future in the skills that the housebuilding part of construction needs, if the CITB were more responsive and working in a way that properly understood how the industry is structured and where the money could gain most benefit.

**Baroness Whitaker:** If you wanted to send us a note on your ideal CITB, that would be very helpful.

**John Slaughter:** I am very happy to do that.

**The Chairman:** You took the words out of my mouth, because we do not want to spend much time on this. But you obviously know all about it, and I certainly do not know anything about it. It would be most helpful if you could give us an aide-memoire on this.

**John Slaughter:** Yes, that is no problem.

**Lord Inglewood:** One quick question, if I may. You have spoken to us about the lending policies of banks. Is it your evidence to us that the banks’ lending policies have a direct and
material responsibility for at least some of the shortfall of housing that is needed in the country today?

The Chairman: Yes or no?

Lord Inglewood: It is a yes or no answer really.

Chris Carr: A very big yes.

John Slaughter: And it would be a yes from us as well.

The Chairman: Let us have the next question.

Q97 Baroness Rawlings: Thank you for your very clear answers. I wondered how the local plan-making process might be improved to allow the delivery of a greater number of new homes. As you know, we are preparing a report for the Government, which will be debated. There are ways that we might improve the process and develop ideas. What are your views?

I do not know whether you saw Clive Aslet’s idea in the Times this week about out-of-town shopping centres and large land areas. He said that shopping centres often occupy what were large farms and are “not strictly ... brownfield sites, because they’re still in use”. He went on: “Keep the ground-floor shops, put the cars below ground and raise four or five storeys of housing on top”. To help to do this, he said, “Changes to the tax system could be introduced to incentivise them”. Apart from having large areas of land, one of the most important parts is that they have the infrastructure there. Aslet said: “At present, the push-me, pull-you of planning delivers the worst of all worlds: unhappiness to nimbys, not enough houses for the chancellor and misery for those” who would like more houses. What are your views on that?

Chris Carr: The local plans play a very important role for all new housing. I know that you talked about building above out-of-town shopping centres, but that would work in very few places. In London, it would be great, but in Grimsby I could not see that doing that would make any difference whatever.

Baroness Rawlings: But what about putting the cars underneath so you can build the houses on top?

Chris Carr: I understand that we cannot have car parks underground in flood-risk areas. There would be no desirability or commercial viability in probably three-quarters of the UK. It would work in certain key areas—your Londons and your Bristols—but not even, I would think, in the northern powerhouse of Manchester. I do not think that would work except in a limited
amount of places. The trouble is that the local plans are based mainly on these big strategic sites, which will not give the numbers you are looking for. If you have a planning application that delivers 2,000 units on a site, it will still probably deliver you only 40 units a year—and if you had two developers on that site, it would deliver you only 60 units a year. So if you have two national builders on a 2,000 unit site, it will deliver a maximum of only 60 to 80 units a year.

Delivering more of the larger sites will not deliver the numbers we are looking for. We need more of the smaller sites. We need everything and everybody—all the local towns, hamlets and villages—to take their fair proportion. Percentage-wise, in a hamlet with six houses you might build two houses. In a village of 1,000, you might build only 20 houses at the side of it. That is more sustainable and deliverable, and you will get the numbers growing a lot quicker than you would on those big strategic sites.

**The Chairman:** Is there not also a feeling that we want people to be going not “up and up” but “out and out”? The big thing about that Clive Aslet article is that he is a man, obviously. Women do not like going into those underground or multi-storey car parks. None of my friends would want that, because they have a bad name and you never can find your car, and goodness knows what else. So there are problems with multi-storey car parks. I think the answer is what we saw in the Elephant: keeping cars underneath the houses and away from the general traffic-flow areas.

**John Slaughter:** Certainly that model can work, as Chris says, in particular market contexts. To broaden it out, we need to be inventive and look at all such opportunities. In the housing sector, one of the Government’s reforms that has helped to boost housing volumes over the last couple of years has been permitted development rights to convert vacant office premises into residential—

**The Chairman:** That is true.

**John Slaughter:** The Government recently confirmed that that flexibility is to be made permanent, so a range of things can be done on the supply side. None of them will solve the problem individually, but we could take enough measures across the board by looking at opportunities to be inventive, such as using out-of-town shopping facilities. I am aware that there are situations where out-of-town developments may not go ahead or get scaled back
because of changes of fashions in the way that we all shop and live. We have to be open to all these flexibilities and possibilities.

To go back to the big question of what we can do to make a difference through the local plans, first, we really have to stick with the system as it has been reformed under the NPPF—a helpful set of reforms. We are very pleased that the Government are saying in the Housing and Planning Bill that all local authorities should have a local plan in place by early 2017. Within that, from the housing perspective, it is a question of ensuring that the local plan properly assesses what housing requirements are and then makes the right land supply allocations for them. The points that Chris raises are very important in that respect. We totally agree that an overreliance on a few large strategic sites is not necessarily the right way to go. You need strategic sites, but you need a whole range of different sites. In fact, the way the market works, the more active sites you have across an area the more you can build up supply, because any individual site tends to have an absorption limit. Housing markets are very local in practice, so you need as many active sites as you can reasonably have across an area.

**Q98 Baroness Young of Old Scone**: I have a question for Mr Carr. You said that even on the strategic sites, the big builders will deliver only a very limited number of houses. Why is that?

**Chris Carr**: It is about physically delivering the houses when they take such a long time to build up now. It is probably three or four months before you can complete a property, with the infrastructure going in. It is not an easy process.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: You do not think that there is any dragging of feet to keep prices up.

**Chris Carr**: No, I would not like to say that about the national housebuilders. Can we change the subject?

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: Think it and we will read your mind.

**Chris Carr**: You are very good at mindreading. To a certain extent I think there is, but they want to deliver as many as they can. They have shareholders demanding that these houses are built, so, in defence of the national housebuilders, they cannot drag their heels too much. Building a new house is a slow and complicated process; there are so many things to go into it that it is no easy thing. We need to find easier ways to develop new homes, which might increase the numbers.
**John Slaughter:** There is a limit. You obviously have to sell at a price that is viable, so that is a factor, but there is also a market absorption level. Another way of looking at this is that every builder has their own market space. They are not all necessarily competing for exactly the same customer base, so in any given area there will be a limit on the number of sales you could reasonably make on a type of development. That brings you back to the question of having more active sites, because if you do you will have a bigger range of builders active—and they will be in different parts of the marketspace. You will have a more varied product offer overall, which is what the market needs to flourish.

**Baroness Andrews:** May I pursue this?

**The Chairman:** Yes, but we are running out of time on these questions, and Lady Parminter is before you on the lists that we take from your signals. We do that very fairly.

**Q99 Baroness Parminter:** Can I tease it out a bit more? You are suggesting that if more sites are available and there is a fully functioning local plan and sufficient finance, effectively the sky’s the limit for how many houses you can build. But the evidence we have had from some people in the public sector, and indeed others in the industry, is that there is a limit on the amount that the volume housebuilders will build to meet the Government’s targets, just because of the nature of your market. It is just the way a competitive market operates. Would you confirm whether there is a limit to the amount that the volume housebuilders could deliver in meeting the Government’s agenda? You seem otherwise to be suggesting to us that you could meet the whole need.

**John Slaughter:** I should be clear that I am not saying it would be just through the existing volume housebuilders. They can grow but the point that Chris and I are making is that ultimately we need more players on the pitch, because the more businesses that are out there, the more sites they are operating. That is how, touching on the answers I have just given, we could actually build up supply. The large builders have grown since the recession, and, if you read their trading statements, they are still planning to grow further. But it is fair to say that if we are to get to the levels of output we would all like to see in a relatively short time, that would be much assisted if we could bring more players into the market.

There is no physical limit as such, but there are investment decision points if you grow a business beyond a certain size. This is a very quick aside. The big builders effectively comprise
an agglomeration of regional business units. When they are growing they have to open new regional business units, each of which has infrastructure and set-up costs. You need to be confident that you can grow your business to that extent and sustain it. You do not want to open up that capacity and then, given that it has traditionally been a fairly cyclical market, have to think about closing it down again. There may be reasons to be quite judicious about how you grow your business, but there is no actual physical reason within the nature of the industry why it cannot happen, and it does.

**Baroness Andrews:** I want to drill down a bit more on the management of these strategic sites. Are you not essentially talking about market absorption in relation to private homeowners?

**John Slaughter:** Yes.

**Baroness Andrews:** The other players in the field are essentially local authorities and social landlords, so on a strategic site you would obviously get a lot more building than the current market has.

**John Slaughter:** Oh yes.

**Baroness Andrews:** I just want to make sure that we do not all run away with the impression that these sites are lingering half-empty for donkeys’ years.

**John Slaughter:** No, that is right.

**Baroness Andrews:** What do you see as the relationship these days between the private and public sectors in terms of building? First, are there opportunities for more partnership and co-operation? Secondly, we are moving from S106 over to CIL—the community infrastructure levy. Can you tell us something about how that is enabling or inhibiting development, from your perspective?

**The Chairman:** Can I interrupt for one moment? Could you send us that answer, as we are really running out of time? What Lady Andrews asks seems technical but I could be wrong and there might be something that we could get on that.

**John Slaughter:** Yes, we could send a note based on the work that we do on CIL around the country.

**The Chairman:** That would be very helpful, thank you.
Baroness Andrews: But on the first question, this relationship between the public and private sectors is quite important for innovation and prompting the market.

John Slaughter: I know that we are short of time, but it is probably worth saying on that first question that of course we are in a landscape that is changing quite significantly at the moment, with the Housing and Planning Bill as well as some of the other changes that the Government are introducing. The larger housing associations—what we tend to call the developing housing associations—are in many ways moving closer to a private sector model, so that necessarily opens up opportunities for collaboration perhaps in ways that did not happen in the past.

Baroness Whitaker: Very quickly, I want to return to the time that it takes to build a house, which Mr Carr talked about. I have seen very economical and well-designed prefabricated houses, both in the UK and abroad. Is this a useful technology that we should be encouraging or even incentivising?

Chris Carr: No.

Baroness Whitaker: Why? I asked for a quick answer, but I think that we need just a little background.

Chris Carr: We have looked at this. We are driven now by quality and design. With prefabricated, you probably get the quality but you do not get the design—they are premanufactured. You will get the same property over and over again.

Baroness Whitaker: You get the quality but not the design?

Chris Carr: For the design, you almost pick the design off the shelf. However, we are being told that we need more unique new homes—something that stands out and something that is going to last. The prefabricated homes are not brick and block, which is traditional in the UK because of our adverse weather; they are mostly timber-framed. There is a market for them. Some of the custom-build sites to deliver new homes, which we are potentially looking at, could work in that market, where you develop a site with infrastructure and you literally pick a home off the shelf. That could work, but not for mass-produced. I think the National House Building Council has looked at the idea and the SME sector has definitely looked at it—and it is fairly popular in Scotland—but it does not attract the type of clients who buy our homes.
The Chairman: Is rain the only problem?

Chris Carr: Driving rain is the problem.

The Chairman: In Scandinavia, they have lots of them.

John Slaughter: Our perspective on this is probably a bit different from Chris Carr’s. Among our members we have all the large-volume national builders as well as smaller companies. Some of the volume builders use off-site manufacture. From all the work that has been done on this during my time at HBF, the main reason why there is not greater use of off-site manufacture is essentially economic, in that unless you have assurance of a real volume of production from the offsite manufacturing, the upfront capital cost is not necessarily competitive with traditional methods.

Baroness Whitaker: So the return is lower?

John Slaughter: Yes. It has many other potential advantages. I accept Chris Carr’s point that it may not be the right thing for certain types of development, but if you are a volume builder using a range of house types, it could work quite well. However, if the economics are not attractive, obviously you will not go into it. The idea is being looked at again at the moment, and—to tie this back into skills—because of the skills issue, if we are going to grow output, the economics of offsite manufacture may become more attractive and there may be a bigger take-up of it in the next few years.

Baroness Whitaker: That is very interesting. Thank you very much.

Q100 Baroness Young of Old Scone: Can we talk about the green belt? The greenbelt policy has been long-standing and has done some good stuff on stopping urban sprawl and settlement sprawl, but is there a need now for a change of policy? If so, how would that deliver its traditional benefits and, in particular, promote the sustainability and environmental agenda? Would it need to be set alongside a policy of still having brownfield as a priority?

John Slaughter: I do not think there is a need for a change of policy as such. The current planning rules—the NPPF and associated guidance—allow for greenbelt use through local plans where that is reasonably justified. There are undoubtedly a number of parts of the country that are severely constrained by the existing green belt and are unable to grow within their existing area without potentially looking at some revision of greenbelt boundaries. The
ability to look at that is already available within the planning rules. I do not think that we would suggest that we need to change those rules, but it may be helpful for the Government to reiterate that that flexibility exists and, if a proper case can be made for some change to green-belt allocations, it can be looked at. Within a green belt, there are often areas either of what are in effect brownfield land that have been used previously or that are of relatively low environmental quality. So if there is a sensitive review of the options for redrawing the green-belt boundaries, we would not want that not to be looked at where, otherwise growth simply cannot be accommodated. It has to be a sensible way to go.

The Chairman: Do you agree, Mr Carr?

Chris Carr: Yes, I do agree. There needs to be a common-sense approach. To put a line through everything and just say, “Yes, we can build on green-belt land”, would be wrong. I think local authorities should think about whether there are areas that they need to develop that are in the green belt rather than just say that there is an open policy to develop. I am very keen on brownfield developments, and our members are very keen on brownfield developments. I do not like so much the out-of-town developments for shopping.

In many smaller northern towns, such as where I live in Grimsby, and Cleethorpes in North East Lincolnshire, our local authority is pushing heavily for regeneration of the centre of Grimsby to stop everyone moving out. That incorporates having a nightlife economy—so we need to make sure that there is an after five o’clock economy—and we need to make sure that the younger people and the elderly who want to live in the centre of town have the right facilities there. If you have a family, you traditionally move out to the outskirts, but you want to move in as you get older. We need to cater for that, so I think that there needs to be an overall package so that we do not destroy the town centres. I am doing some work with Central Bedfordshire Council on exactly the same thing for one of its towns, because the council is frightened that if everything is put outside the town, the inside will suffer from the doughnut effect, which we have all heard about. I think there needs to be a combination of the two, so we need to look at greenfield, but we certainly need to look at town centre regeneration rather than think that we can just add numbers to the outside of the town. That would be a short-term win, but in the long term it would absolutely destroy our towns and cities.
The Chairman: We saw quite a good example of that last week when we went to Birmingham—it was really amazing—where they are doing both.

Baroness Andrews: May I ask a short follow-on question? Mr Slaughter made the precise point that the change-of-use arrangements for permitted developments—from offices to housing—would make a big difference. This is clearly one of the things that will revive and sustain town centres. What about the use of shops? Clearly, the whole retail landscape, which we have not talked about in this Committee, is completely changing, and that is having a devastating effect on the normal patterns of shopping and therefore on town centres. That will also have an impact on planning. Do you see the town-centre challenge as also being about bringing a new sort of accommodation—literally accommodation, from shop fronts and everything else—into different sorts of uses? Small builders would have a particular role in that sort of development.

Chris Carr: New shopping is not a problem; converting existing shops is quite a logistical problem for sound, for fire and for everything else. It becomes not particularly commercially viable to take an existing unit and turn it into housing above. The cost is prohibitive, so we just cannot do it because of the regulations—rightly, for safety you need fire exits, but you might have sprinkler systems, so you need to rip out the whole interior and redo it. You also need sound-proofing from building to building and from room to room. All those things just put on additional cost, which means that it is not commercially viable at all. However, it would be viable with new build. If you were doing new-build shopping centres of shops, yes I could see that you could influence them to do that. But for existing shops, the issue is commercial viability. We looked at it for our local authority, and it just did not stack up.

John Slaughter: There are other things that can be looked at in terms of town-centre opportunities. Another issue that we are working on quite a lot at the moment is improving the supply of retirement housing for older people. Very often, the ideal location for that is in the town centre or very close to the town centre. That could help bring new life into town centres. I know that this is not on your list of questions, but it would probably be helpful to mention that as part of the picture as well.
Q101 Baroness Andrews: I think this question has been answered in some ways. It is about the disparity between the granting of planning permissions and the actual build out. Is there anything that you want to add on that to what you have said already?

John Slaughter: We have done quite a lot of work on this as the HBF, so yes I have some additional comments. It is quite a complex picture, but let me recap and clarify the implications of some of the things that we have already discussed. One reason would be the effect of altered local plans, where a lot of weight has been put into a relatively small number of large sites. When you look at the statistics, when a consent is given for a large strategic site for, say, 2,000 units, that is what will show up in the consents. However, as we have discussed, those 2,000 consents will not all be built out in one year, so that alone would partly explain the divergence between the number of consents and the number of starts.

There are other factors, such as the length of time that the full planning process takes to come through. The stats may tell you partly about outline consents rather than full consents, but even when you have a full consent, these days you regularly have a lot of pre-commencement planning conditions that have to be discharged before you can start on site. So the statistics probably do not tell you about those non-discharged planning conditions that are stopping you starting work on sites. You need to dig down into those kinds of issues to understand it.

Baroness Andrews: Is the shortage of planners an issue?

John Slaughter: The shortage of planners is a big issue. We are certainly concerned about that, because at the end of the day that slows down the process for the industry as well as causing issues for local authorities.

Baroness Andrews: Is there any way round that?

John Slaughter: Well, we have discussed all sorts of possibilities, including looking at whether an increase in fee income could be ring-fenced specifically for that resource, but I know that there are issues with ring-fencing in terms of local government finance arrangements. There is probably more scope for joint working between local authorities, and they could maybe even look at outsourcing. There is a range of possibilities. We are discussing those with the Government—with the DCLG.

Baroness Andrews: How interesting. How far have your discussions got?
John Slaughter: Not as far advanced as we would like. It is a tricky set of issues, but they are being discussed.

Baroness Andrews: But you would be prepared to pay higher fees for aspects of planning permission that would not compromise the outcome, shall we say?

John Slaughter: Yes, if it was set up in the right way. Our concern would be about paying higher fees if that did not result in a better service. That is why you would need to look at seriously ring-fencing the system if you went down that route.

The Chairman: Sorry, did Mr Carr want to respond to the question?

Chris Carr: Our local authority is privately running our planning system.

Baroness Andrews: Which local authority is that?

Chris Carr: North East Lincolnshire. We have a company called Cofely GDF SUEZ—it used to be Balfour Beatty—which runs our planning system, highways, trees and woodlands and building control. It runs a huge amount of services. Six to 10 years ago, we were ranked one of the worst planning authorities in the UK, but I would like to think that we are now one of the top for delivery. When I say delivery, that is not about approving planning; it is about the way that it is done. If the application is refused, it is refused quickly and we are told the reason why. It is very much run on a business model rather than a traditional public sector model. We have noticed a massive difference.

Lord Clement-Jones: Has that reduced the number of appeals and that sort of thing?

Chris Carr: The trouble with appeals, with the greatest respect, is usually down to the planning committee. You may have a great planning system, but you are reliant on the ladies and gentlemen sitting around the planning committee who can go against their officers’ recommendations. The planning appeals are probably still the same, but the winning of a planning appeal is reduced because they work so closely. We work together—we work together as a unit. That may sound a bit bizarre, but we have informal meetings and they are associate members of my association and there is a relationship side to this. We mix together, and if they have an issue, they come to us, and if we have an issue, we go to them. It is a working relationship rather than a “them and us”. Since doing that, that has made a huge difference.

Baroness Andrews: Does that happen anywhere else?
Chris Carr: I think that two other local authorities have done it. By the way, I am not being paid by this company for promoting it. It is just that I have worked so long and I have moaned about how bad things were to see this coming forward. It is just putting the matter on a professional basis. Just as we are professional as a construction company, they are as a planning company.

The Chairman: Is it the French influence?

Chris Carr: I do not think so. The name changes, but the people tend to stay the same. They are just more proactive. Our working relationship with the officers there has changed dramatically because they are respected by the developers—we respect them. We have an understanding of how it works, and it is a good place to work. The planning officers say that it is a far better place to work than it used to be when it was run by the local council.

Lord Inglewood: Are they the same people who were previously in the demoralised organisation? Is it the same personnel?

Chris Carr: Yes. Some of the traditional people who have been there for a long time, whom we might say were institutionalised, have a way of working that they will not change, but the new, younger planning officers coming through—usually, the best planning people get poached by developers—are willing to stay there because they enjoy being at work. Before, I do not think that the planners did enjoy being at work, if the truth be known.

Lord Clement-Jones: Were they TUPE-ed over in the first place?

Chris Carr: Yes.

Q102 Earl of Lytton: There is a perception out there that developers are accumulating large land banks that could be brought forward much more quickly to boost housing supply. How could such land be more quickly developed?

Let me also insert my supplementary at this point. It would be helpful if you could explain to the Committee—I come to this with a certain amount of professional knowledge, being in the employment of a firm of chartered quantity surveyors—what the processes are between the granting of planning permission and the groundwork, as it were, in actually getting on site? What are the issues and the time lags that might be involved in that?

Chris Carr: From planning approval to starting on site?

Earl of Lytton: Yes.
Chris Carr: As we said before, the conditions need to be lifted and the Section 106 agreements all need signing. That will take you, we would say, probably between 18 months and two years from getting the planning approval to actually physically starting on site—probably 18 months. When you have planning approval, for a highway for example, you then need to send it off to a consultant, who will tell you how to design it. You have to get that signed off and you then have to go out to contractors to get prices to tender to do the work. That comes back and then you have to find time within their schedule to deliver the work. All that sort of thing goes on all the time. For example with services, you cannot start without gas, water or electricity—especially water and electricity, because you may need them to build. Your infrastructure needs to go in—you have your health and safety management—and you are usually encouraged to start straightaway on the biodiversity, so you need to plant trees and hedgerows. By the time that you have done all that, you are 18 months to two years down the line before you physically sell the house—I am not saying build it. The building might take four to six months, depending on the size of the property. At the top end, a more bespoke property will take us at least six months to build. That is where the time lag is.

Earl of Lytton: What about the land-banking issue?

Chris Carr: I think that some people do land bank. I suppose that, technically, my company does so, but I like to call it reinvesting in my business. I am building on land that my grandfather and my father bought, but I am investing now for my son and grandchild—I have a grandson. We are looking to reinvest all the time. The land that we buy is not land with planning permission. If I buy agricultural land 20 to 30 years in advance, do you call that land banking, or does land banking refer only to land that has full planning permission?

Earl of Lytton: The thought is that people are hoarding things that have consent and not bringing them forward because there is some notion that it may go up in value.

Chris Carr: The SME sector cannot do that, because if we buy the land, the bank wants a return straightaway, so we cannot land bank. So the idea that a small developer will buy such land and sit on is just not going to happen. The national housebuilders are accused all the time of land banking, but in their defence from purchasing a piece of land to actually building the first property on site is probably three to five years. People do not realise that we are probably going for a year on pre-application before we actually put an application in. With the pre-
application talks, where we try to sort everything out, it is three to five years. These PLCs would be doing a disservice to their shareholders if they did not show that they have at least five to seven or eight years of land in front of them. As a PLC business, you need to deliver for your shareholders, and it is bad business if you do not have the materials in front of you to do the work.

John Slaughter: Thank you, Chris, for that very good explanation of the situation. Perhaps I could add a bit about the national builders. It is true that there is often a perception of “land-banking” out there but it is really important to understand the status of the land that we are talking about. It is precisely as Chris is saying: the larger companies need the visibility of a forward pipeline of land to develop to satisfy their shareholders, because they are a business at scale. You need a fair amount of land going through various stages of the planning system, from being an initial option to being in pre-application discussions and to outline consent—whatever it is, you have to keep that pipeline moving to maintain and grow the volume of your business over time.

When it comes to land that has full implementable planning consent, which is after a resolution to grant when you have discharged all the conditions and can physically start to work on site, the large companies have exactly the same interests as the small ones. They want to get going straight away as at that stage they have a lot of capital tied up in that site, if they own it. Until they build something and sell it, they are not getting any return on the capital they have laid out. It is a high-risk industry. The builders are judged on their rate of return on capital employed. It simply does not work that you get a better return by hanging on to land and not developing it, compared with building out and selling.

Baroness Whitaker: You mentioned what was the Highways Agency. Are it and the other road authorities easy to deal with? They will already have joined in the permission which has been given. Why do they hold things up?

Chris Carr: Would you believe that every area has a different way of building a road? We do not have a national policy on how to build an A4 road.

Baroness Whitaker: That is interesting.

Chris Carr: So my company could be building in three local authorities, and each will want their road constructed in different ways. It seems a bit of a crazy way to do it.
Baroness Whitaker: So we are not talking about the design of the roads and where they go but their construction.

Chris Carr: Yes, it is the design of the construction and the specification.

Baroness Whitaker: The construction and not the routes.

Q103 Baroness Young of Old Scone: Can I go back to land banking? There is a lot of loose talk and accusations against the larger housebuilders. Should we have a proposition in this country that would provide more transparency and some sort of compulsory registration of land acquired for housing development purposes, so that people could see what is held by various companies and what is being actively developed?

John Slaughter: We do not have a strong view about that. It was an idea looked at before the election in the Lyons review. There would be no problem with it in principle, as long as there were no unintended consequences. We would not want to see any steps taken that could in any way, however unintended, frustrate the land market and add to risk. I am not sure whether that would in itself. But I think it would generally be known in practice through local authorities, certainly for any site of any size. Because of the nature of the local plan process, it is not untransparent now.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Presumably the options process is not visible to the public.

John Slaughter: No, that process might not be but if it is a site of any size, you would probably try to promote it to be an allocated site through the local plan process. At that point, it becomes quite transparent that that site is in play. You are probably talking in practice about going further back in time and whether that would be helpful. But for most sizeable sites, at any rate, the local plan process gives relatively early visibility anyway.

Lord Inglewood: Are we not moving to a system of land registration of title anyway, which will enable anybody to find out who owns any piece of land when it is finished?

John Slaughter: Indeed, yes.

The Chairman: Is there any evidence that people who have large land banks soft pedal on releasing them?

John Slaughter: Probably the only study we are aware of that has looked at this—I do not know whether the Committee has already looked at this—was done by a company called Molior in London. It showed some indication of that in the London market, but it has to be
said that its analysis also showed that it is not housebuilders who are hanging onto it but other parties. The reason that housebuilders are not doing that is for the economic rationale that I explained a minute or two ago.

**The Chairman**: Perhaps you could drop us a link on that.

**Q104 Lord Inglewood**: We have covered a great deal of the points that might have arisen in response to the question I wanted to ask. Perhaps I may simply say, particularly to Mr Carr, that we have heard evidence that the reduction in the number of smaller builders has had an impact on the amount of housing coming forward. Are there any serious barriers to entry, for example to a building firm wanting to become a small housebuilder, which make that step more difficult than it need be? Obviously it costs money that, as we know, banks are not being very good about supplying. But are there other things such as regulation, or whatever?

**Chris Carr**: The predominant one is finance and the lack of a track record. A smaller jobbing builder who wants to become a developer and build one or two houses does not have a track record in doing that, so the banks would just wave them away straightaway. The availability of small sites is another issue. We do the SHLAAs, or strategic housing land availability assessments, but those do not cater for units that are five and below—or is it 10 and below?—so those sorts of mini-sites are not easily accessible. It can be an onerous task for a smaller company to navigate the planning system, which is very complicated. When you get into it, it becomes a lot easier. Viability and developer contributions can also be proportionally against the smaller sites compared to the larger sites.

**Lord Inglewood**: Could you explain that further?

**Chris Carr**: On smaller sites, in our area, we have only 20% social housing because we are a fairly low-cost area. There probably does not need to be any social housing on some of the brownfield sites we were talking about. We are still seen, although it sounds awful, as a kind of cash cow to the local authorities. Since the funding has been cut from national government, they see the developer as still being one to claim their money off. For example, we had a small site—96 units—and the highways officer wanted a contribution to the highways. I said, “Can you justify why?”. He said, “No”, so I said, “Then why are you asking for it?”. He said, “Because all the other departments ask for money”. So you pay to education and to other things, and that sort of mentality becomes the issue.
To go back to your original question about getting smaller companies and individuals to get together, we have a land company called Humberside Land Developers, which is based in north-east Lincolnshire. It is a consortium of probably 20 companies, which range from one-man bands to companies building 100 units a year. We get together and buy against the national housebuilders: when a piece of land comes up with, say, 1,000 or 500 units, we will get together as a consortium to buy it. The more money you put in, the more land you get out. An umbrella company funds the purchase of the land, the infrastructure and everything else, so you just pay proportionately into it. This has worked very well.

In fact—this is quite embarrassing—my plumber of 15 years ago is now building 80 units a year, which is far more than I have ever done, and my joiner is building 40 a year. They came in and said, “Can we have one plot?”, then the next time they bought two plots on a development site. It has worked so well. Of those 20 companies, probably only 12 want to go for a given site and then you do the proportions between you. The bigger companies take the bigger amount of land, just to subsidise the smaller ones, but we work together. It is not that I am proud to say this, but we have only one national housebuilder in north-east Lincolnshire, because we buy as a consortium together. There are two companies, Land Developers (Lincs) and Humberside Land Developers. People said that it would never work, but one has been going for 60 years and the other has been going for 40.

Lord Inglewood: Is that model being worked up on that basis?

Chris Carr: No—the DCLG wants me to do a paper on it because it is quite unique. I thought that everyone did it as we have two in our town, but if you talk to anybody else they say “No, we’ve never heard of it before”. That working together is what gets you the tradespeople. It goes from my plumber who, as I say, now delivers 80 to 100 units a year and my joiner, who is delivering 40 or 50, to all these other individuals who come in and carry on.

John Slaughter: I do not know of any other examples like that and I can see the logic of doing it. We would say that if the National Planning Policy Framework and the local plan assessment of housing, and the allocation of land for it, is got right we perhaps would not need to do that. For the small company, part of that is about making sure that local plans allocate a range of sites. I hope that some of the other measures that the Government have in mind at the
moment, such as the new brownfield land register and facilitating getting planning permission for land that is on it, would help smaller companies as part of the picture.

On what Chris has said about barriers, I would add that there are quite high upfront costs for someone to come into the market as a small housebuilder. Over the past 20 or 30 years, the planning system has certainly become a lot more complex. Getting initial planning consent is quite a costly business and you have to deal with a number of other regulatory and policy requirements, so that potentially costs you quite a bit of money. If you are working on a project finance basis, the situation probably arises that you have to lay that money out before you get anything back. That in itself is quite a big barrier to entry. It also constrains the ability of SME housebuilders to grow their businesses, because if they have that degree of capital locked up in an individual project, it partly frustrates them being able to take on another project.

Q105 Baroness Whitaker: There is quite a variation in standards of design quality over England and that is probably one of the reasons why local communities often resist new housing: they really have no confidence in the design, not having seen a good one. Why is the practice so varied? How are housebuilders working to improve design standards and, very much to our point, what could encourage more consistent attention to design quality across the industry?

Chris Carr: The reason that we are not delivering better quality design is pure laziness. There is no reason whatever; a house is a house and is built in the same way whether you design it in brick, block or timber frame. We believe that these homes will be there for 100 or 200 years. No other product you buy will ever last that long, except for jewellery, probably. So we take pride—and I think people do take pride—in delivering something different, especially in the SME sector. We cannot compete on price with the national housebuilders so we have to deliver a better quality product. I am not talking about quality in build, because the national housebuilders do good quality work, but quality in design. We have to be unique and build something that nobody else is, but we are up against constraints.

My architect has won awards all over the UK and he is fantastic. When we get together, he draws a design when I tell him what I am looking for. I do not want something that you cannot physically build but I know something of what my clients want. So we come together to get a
great design laid out for a house and the site, but then it comes to the process of building regulations, energy efficiency targets, design codes, planning officer approval—and sometimes conservation officer approval—public consultation reaction, parish councils and planning committees. By the time you have done all that, everything in the quality gets chipped away. I would love to show you a design that we do—

Baroness Whitaker: I am sorry. Are you saying that the design codes militate against good design being achieved?

Chris Carr: The design codes are okay; it is just how they are interpreted by the planning officer. The codes work okay if there is some flexibility in them, which in theory there should be, but it is about how they are interpreted by an officer. My frustration is: why pay an architect a huge amount of money to have his plans destroyed by everybody around him?

Baroness Whitaker: You are saying that planning officers do not, on the whole, facilitate good design.

Chris Carr: No, planning officers are trained and qualified, but probably not as trained and qualified as my architect.

Baroness Whitaker: Okay. You might put up very good designs, but that is not the national picture uniformly. Can you give any insight into that and what we ought to do about it?

The Chairman: Does this go back to the problem of the shortage of skills or training, or the FEs versus the universities?

Baroness Whitaker: For instance, do builders tend to think about place-making as opposed to making a building?

Chris Carr: We would look at communities. We try to build a community because we want these homes to sell.

Baroness Whitaker: Why does not everyone do that?

Chris Carr: I do not think that any company will go out to build a house that it cannot sell or is not in a good community. Sometimes the national housebuilders have a house design which they will use all over the UK. That is the way they deliver it. It is like Ford building huge amounts of the same car so that people know whatever car they buy, wherever it is in the UK, they are buying the same quality. But in the SME sector we have to differentiate and build something of higher quality, or what I think is a better design.
Baroness Whitaker: Would a chief architect be a good idea to try to get everybody at a government standard?

Chris Carr: As long as they knew what they were doing.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you. Mr Slaughter, what do you think?

John Slaughter: It is partly a skills issue, both in industry and in local authorities and other parties. One of the things that has been fed back to me recently about the lack of resource in local planning authorities is that it has no doubt affected the number of officers who have relevant understanding of good urban design principles. In answering your question, I would focus on urban design where, from the HBF perspective, we have promoted and supported over many years an initiative called Building for Life. It is now Building for Life 12, and sets out 12 principles of good urban design which could be applied in any context. We are still trying to promote that as a common currency that can be used by our members, and by local authorities and communities, to have sensible discussion about achieving good design outcomes.

It is not about not using standard house types but about how you lay the development out—the proper integration of car parking and the public realm and such things to create a good-quality place. We have deliberately tried to restructure Building for Life and make it more accessible, so that it could be used in community consultation as well as in discussion with local planning officers. We have very recently been talking about this internally. If we could see more consistent promotion by us, by local authorities and by national government of a set of principles such as Building for Life, we could demonstrate that they can facilitate the planning process by inspiring buy-in to them.

Baroness Whitaker: In other terms, you see a need for national leadership on this subject.

John Slaughter: Yes.

Q106 Baroness Andrews: On the Building for Life principles, you mentioned demographic factors previously and the fact that you were building residential homes. This is something that the Committee has yet to address: the impact that an ageing population is likely to have on the demand for different, high-quality sorts of homes. Mr Carr referred to the tension between having a good architect and having to conform to a lot of building standards and requirements, which sometimes pulls them away. The Lifetime Homes Standards ought to be
able to combine high quality of design and high spec in regulations, while meeting the needs of an aging population and your Building for Life principles. Is this something that you would like to see the Committee develop and recommend because it would meet a national need and your high-quality spec?

**John Slaughter:** I would certainly recommend it as good practice. I think that companies in the retirement sector are already building to Lifetime Homes standard.

**Baroness Andrews:** Individual builders such as McCarthy & Stone, yes, but it is not universal, is it?

**John Slaughter:** No, but then as HBF we would not necessarily support Lifetime Homes being a standard that was applied to every new home that was built because it is not necessarily what all consumers want. A revised version of Lifetime Homes is coming about through the housing standards review, but it still involves some additional construction cost. You also have to think about whether, if that is a cost that you are potentially asking all consumers to bear in the market but not all consumers actually want what you are providing, that is a reasonable thing to do. In purely practical terms, not necessarily everyone envisages sustaining the same home for life. It is a difficult one, but at present our view is that we support the appropriate use of Lifetime Homes through the housing standards process to meet the reasonable requirements for that type of accommodation, but not necessarily for all consumers.

**Q107 Lord Freeman:** I would like to follow that question on good design quality. What are the implications for good-quality design, bearing in mind the streamlining of zonal planning permissions? The same goes for zoning for brownfield sites.

**John Slaughter:** These ideas are fairly fresh in government thinking, so I have to say that I do not think we have a massively developed answer on this one. In principle, the way to tackle this would be to include the right encouragement of good design practice in the framework conditions for these new routes to bring them to the market. The Government’s objective is clearly to facilitate land supply, so we would not want to put in place anything that reversed that process and slowed things down unnecessarily, but it would not be unreasonable, in the framework conditions that will apply to the new brownfield registers in the new zonal system, to have some general conditions or encouragement for good design. From our point of view, we recommend Building for Life 12 as a possible approach that would enable that because it
is quite a pragmatic and flexible way of applying good design principles to a wide range of contexts.

Lord Freeman: Have you impressed upon the Government the need for that?

John Slaughter: Not yet, because we are at a very early stage of the process of developing these ideas. There is not yet a lot of detail generally about how this zonal system is going to work. The fact that you have asked this question as a Committee is quite helpful for us, as we are thinking about how we want to take that forward.

Baroness Whitaker: I have seen criticism of the way that zoning works in America because it induces towards social segregation, sometimes of income, sometimes of race. We do not have the same situation here, but do you see that as a possible risk?

John Slaughter: That is not how we had interpreted the Government’s objective. I am not sure that I see it as a risk. As I understand the proposition, it is simply that you would make more land available more easily where it reasonably could be made available for development, but it is in no way judgmental about what that development would be. I do not particularly see that risk.

Baroness Parminter: Do you have concerns about the process of viability assessments in delivering what local authorities need that will meet the social and environmental requirements of local people, and about developers themselves saying that the process is not transparent and that there are question marks over it? I would welcome your reflections on that. As a supplementary, the FT yesterday talked about a more transparent model being to go along the German route of a land tax, which captures some of the uplift in the value of a property from when it receives planning permission to when it is actually built. Do you think that the viability assessments are working best, and what would your view be on replacing them with a land tax, which works successfully in Germany, where the level of housebuilding is far higher than it is in the UK?

The Chairman: But that is a cultural thing.

Chris Carr: In our survey this year 68% of FMB members cited viability as a major constraint on supply. That is the first time ever that this has come up as the top answer; for the past four or five years it has been finance. Viability is being seen as the biggest barrier to increasing output. However, landowners still have a high perceived value of land. The landowners that
we speak to still have the values of six or seven years ago, and do not realise that the NPPF has released a lot more land on to the market. It is all about supply and demand and, now that a lot more land is available, land prices are tumbling. Probably not in London and the south-east, but in most of the UK, you will see that land prices are not increasing a great deal. They say that house prices are increasing slightly, but the rest of the time it is about the land price. This is a generational issue. If you are a farmer sitting on 2,000 acres, you might as well wait another 30 to 50 years, which restricts the land, especially greenfield land, coming to the market.

On brownfield, though, you need to understand that the planning authorities need to promote all this more. I still think that we need to have joint ventures with local authorities on this surplus land. If we are going to deliver the numbers, why can we not deliver joint ventures with the local authority and work it so that they get an uplift on the sale of the property. Instead of us paying, for example, £50,000 an acre—sorry, £50,000 unit; I wish it was £50,000 an acre—if we developed it and sold it on, we would give an uplift of probably £65,000 a unit, so there is an increase all the time. You can do that with a shared equity scheme where the council owns the land. It can still own it, get a rental income off it and sell it after a 10-year period. The council can still borrow against the land because it owns it. There is an uplift straight away because the council will get a rental income off it, and at the end there will be an uplift in the value of the land because in 10 years’ time the land that the house is sat on will increase in value. It is a win-win situation. For me, it seems to be a natural progression to get rid of surplus land at a good value for local authorities, which will help the SME sector to develop brownfield sites that otherwise would not be developed.

The Chairman: But is there not again a tension between councils and private building? Councils are very short-term in their planning, whereas I would have thought that a company like yours was fairly long-term. You can never say who is going to be running the council, what cuts are coming in or how budgeting is going to be.

Chris Carr: I agree, and that was the big stumbling block. If the land was worth £1 million, it will still be worth £1 million in 10 years’ time—hopefully, it will be worth £2 million. So they are not losing the asset.
The Chairman: But they could flog it if they were forced by cuts to make economies somewhere else.

Chris Carr: They could but that is just a commercial decision. That is what we all have to do. The biggest issue with us was not selling it at a loss. Our council changes political party nearly every election; we just revolve. The question to me was, “Who’s going to get the money in 10 years’ time?” It is not about looking for the greater good of the town. This is the only way forward that I can see for local authorities to deliver some of their surplus land. If they sell the land at the moment, they will be selling in a bad market at a time when the market is so low. It is a crazy situation. No other company—I know that local authorities are not companies—would sell when the market was so low that they were almost giving it away. You might as well sit on it, retain the ownership to borrow against for government funding, and get a rental income off it, and it will increase in value all the time.

The Chairman: But the point is if there were an incremental income.

Q108 Baroness Young of Old Scone: The LGA is very keen that MoD and NHS sites are brought into some sort of proposition like that. Is that a real opportunity, or are the sites all in the wrong places?

Chris Carr: We have done a great deal of work with the Homes and Communities Agency on this because it is basically in charge of releasing this land to the market. It is very proactive in helping us not only to purchase the land but to finance it. The HCA has a few schemes set up to help the financing of development as well. Hospital sites tend to be in the centre of town so they can be quite a valuable asset if they are in a reasonably good area. The airfields are miles away from anywhere so maybe you would struggle a bit, unless you went into the development of garden towns or the like. To be fair, the agency supports land coming forward and tries to package it in a way that is commercially viable for us, and offers funding to help development. It has done a good job on that.

The Chairman: Thank you. Mr Slaughter, you have the last word.

John Slaughter: On viability assessment, if I understood your question correctly, we broadly say that the current system is probably working as it needs to. The two key elements are what the landowner is looking for commercially as a return and what the housebuilder or developer is looking for as a return. Those two things are never going to be the same from case to case.
because their market contexts vary, as do landowners’ expectations and the alternative uses of sites. Different developers also have different requirements in terms of their investor returns, so there cannot be a standard answer with regard to the numbers. We are in favour of standardising the approach to viability assessment as far as possible, but you always have to recognise that the numbers are going to vary from case to case.

Regarding the German position and a land tax, in many ways we already have land taxes; we have Section 106 and CIL, which are both about extracting land value from the giving of planning permission. There are issues about whether Section 106 and CIL are the most effective way of doing that, and we understand that the Government are looking to have a review of that area in the coming period, which is possibly another important part of the policy picture in the next several months. So there is already a land tax, although it may not be structured in the right way. However, you have to recognise that there will always be a limit to how much you can take in the way of land value. The reason why we quite often get hung up on viability assessment is probably because councils are continually pushing to try to maximise the amount that they extract.

Lord Inglewood: Do they tend to be greedy?

John Slaughter: Yes, certainly from our point of view. In their defence, I have to say that that is partly because they may not have many other routes to go down. If we are looking at an inquiry that is analysing the global picture, it is only fair to say that councils are effectively focused on, or driven to look at, these opportunities, which probably encourages them overpitch their requirements. That then sometimes leads to quite difficult decisions about the level of contribution that a particular site can make. We have what you might call a more rational approach to this: if we set the general level of tariff, if you would call it a tariff, or a tax at a more sensible level, we could probably avoid a lot of that.

The Chairman: Thank you both very much indeed. I am sure that I speak for all the Committee in saying that it has been a very worthwhile session. I am sorry if we have dragged on a bit; we have probably messed up your timetable for the rest of the day. If there is anything that you think we should have asked and did not but would be helpful in putting your point of view, do you think that you could just drop us a line?
John Slaughter: Yes of course, and I promised to send you some notes on the discussion, which I will do.

22 October 2015
Background to the Urban FWAC Network

Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) are statutory committees constituted under Section 37 of the Forestry Act 1967. The RACs advise the Forestry Commission, through our Area Directors, on the implementation of forestry and related policies in each region.

On 1 December 2013 the working title of the RACs changed to Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees (FWAC) to better reflect their role and refreshed remit.

Each FWAC covers one of nine distinct areas. The Committees consists of an independent Chair and eleven members appointed by the Forestry Commissioners. The composition of each FWAC is designed to achieve a spread of interests in the region. Members may include representatives of the forestry industry, environmental interests, woodland owners, local communities and others who it is considered can contribute.

In 2014 the Urban FWAC Network was established to support the Area FWAC members who had an interest in, and expertise on, urban forestry. Their role is to champion urban forestry to the Forestry Commission, and their respective FWACs; and to share and disseminate good practice amongst each other, and more widely through the forestry sector. They meet twice a year, and membership is supplemented by other invited specialists in urban forestry.”

This paper was written by the members of the Urban FWAC Network.

Jane Carlsen, Urban FWAC Network Chair and Chair of London FWAC

John Meehan, Environment Team Manager, Essex County Council, Representing East of England FWAC

Bruce Collinson, Whitehill and Bordon Regeneration Project, East Hampshire District Council, Representing the South East FWAC

David Houghton, Arboriculture Officer, London Borough of Camden, Representing London FWAC

Peter Wilkinson, Director, The Next Field Ltd, Green Space Business Advisors, Representing South West FWAC

Nick Grayson, Climate Change and Sustainability Manager, Birmingham City Council, Representing West Midlands FWAC

Paul Nolan, Director, The Mersey Forest
Iain Taylor, Director of Business Development, The Land Trust, Representing the North West FWAC

The Network is coordinated by Helen Townsend, Principal Adviser - Social Forestry (People)

Evidence

Below are set out the underlined questions in the Call for Written Evidence followed by the response of the Urban FWAC Network

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

We would like to see Green Infrastructure (GI) planning as integral to the planning of new urban areas and retrospectively developed in existing areas. We believe this initiative has to come from National Government and be delivered by city region and local policy makers. Each local authority should have a Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan which will include urban trees and woodlands as one element. It will make all our urban areas more resilient to climate change, pollution, heat stress, physical and mental health issues and wellbeing.

Green infrastructure should be fully integrated into infrastructure planning alongside transport, water and other infrastructure needed to make urban areas successful. This planning needs to start from the national level and find translation in Local Plans. Government should define functions and benefits of GI and provide examples of how GI can provide these benefits. The Landscape Institute the Urban FWAC network and other have produced visions and strategies that can inform Government. These organisations at National level could also identify some tools that can help show the economic viability and other multiple benefits of GI, exemplifying, it is not only aesthetics.

Within the context of a national infrastructure scheme there will be local drivers, political, economic, community or otherwise which can take the initiative and implement it on the ground.

How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Clearly Government policy and implementation is not integrated. It needs to get its own house in order. Government needs to get co-ordinated, clearly identify a lead department and establish a co-ordination team that brings in all relevant government departments to oversee delivery of GI so it is integrated into infrastructure planning for urban areas. Policy
needs to be integrated once it is issued. Policy needs to have been consulted on internally before leaving government with all relevant Government Departments.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

There is need for better, integrated policy guidance on natural environment – at present it has many strands and no unifying language, nor plan.

What is required is high level Natural Capital policy and GI policy, delivered locally through GI Plans, community forest plans and ecological frameworks - all of which have shared objectives.

What is required is high level Natural Capital policy and GI policy set out in national guidance, delivered locally through GI Plans, community forest plans and ecological frameworks - all of which have shared objectives. These can then inform and provide the evidence base to support development plan policies on the built environment.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

As a minimum, consideration should be given to our urban areas as different to our rural areas. They are the most densely populated areas with the most social, economic and environmental problems. There are also critical interrelationships which should be recognised, for example, maintaining flood plains and wooded areas up stream of rivers leading into urban areas to reduce the risk of flooding.

There should be national Green Infrastructure planning policy and guidance to making our cities towns and villages more liveable and resilient.

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Need for long term, stable plan and policy for natural environment in the built environment. These plans can be adaptive. The Community Forest plans are 40 year plans. This has worked well; it is a good model to use as the basis for planning for the built environment. Green Infrastructure Plans will include many elements reflecting the multiple benefit and the partnership implementation. Delivery will be over many decades and will include projects relating to urban trees, green roofs, sustainable urban drainage, new green cycle ways, river and floodplain restorations etc. The long term integrated maintenance of this schemes also need to be considered as the project “grow” and multiply their benefits.
Buildings and places: New and old

What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The built environment should be adapting to Climate change and the development of Green Infrastructure Plans and SUDs proposals are integral to these. GI will promote resilience, sustainability and economic benefits to urban communities that can come from GI not only amenity. GI Plans can be retro fitted to existing built areas and planned as part of new urban areas.

To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Historic and Heritage environment create a sense of place pride. Understanding the history of where we live often leads to community involvement and community coherence. Trees and woodlands are part of the historic environment and can massively increase the value of an urban area. Historic trees and avenues in the urban areas are highly valued and add to the economic as well as aesthetic values of an area.

Skills and design

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

There has been a skills drain in the public sector, with the removal of the experienced planners, surveyors, architects, engineers, resulting in poor design being implemented by unskilled or poorly qualified. Local Enterprise Partnerships and other skills agencies may have a role to play to reskill our public players. Critically we require multi-disciplinary practitioners to plan urban areas who understand architecture, landscape, climate change, engineering, drainage, pollution etc.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The Landscape institute, the RTPI and other national bodies have a leading role to play in advising Government. These organisations have been an ardent supporter of GI and multi-
disciplinary planning and their energy and passion should be channelled into Government policy making.

Community involvement and community impact
Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

The reduction in public sector funding has led to the degrading of the public realm. Local Authorities cut non-statutory services of environment first leading to unsafe parks and city centres where perception of crime becomes a problem and wellbeing levels tumble, leading to increased welfare and health costs. An integrated approach that is community led often leads to the most sustainable solution socially, economically and environmentally. But it needs to recognised that public engagement whilst beneficial and positive does take time and skills to develop.

The design of our urban areas and green infrastructure must improve links to public health – eg councils have Directors of Public health that need to be given a stronger role in recognising, promoting, and enabling the opportunities of GI in achieving health benefits.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The reduction of the public sector workforce through declining budgets has placed more pressure on the planning system. Consulting communities on shaping their built environment requires a resource that currently is not there or is present at a reduced capacity. To facilitate effective public consultation resources will need to be provided to the public sector to engage in long term sustainable solutions. These need not be large amounts but could be used to draw in third sector partners to facilitate this process.

Financial measures
Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Government should investigate Green Bank investments into City or town Centres, which elevate the value of land and produce a return on that investment through increased land values.
Government should be looking at sustainable incomes rather than one-off capital payment. Incomes should be related to other incomes such as the Community Infrastructure Levy or the Landfill Communities Fund where a percentage of the payments help maintain the public realm into the future.

05 October 2015
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND RESPONSE TO THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Friends of the Earth England Wales and Northern Ireland exists to create a just world where people and nature thrive. For people to thrive it is essential that they have a good quality and affordable home. It is also essential that the services that nature provides to people are maintained – climate stability, food production, flood protection, etc. (so-called ecosystem services). Without these services people cannot thrive. It is therefore necessary to ensure that built environment policy not only focuses on providing quality, affordable homes but in doing so it does not damage the world on which we depend.

Policymaking, integration and co-ordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policy makers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 There has been an increasing centralisation of decisions (taken up into the nationally significant infrastructure project regime under the Planning Act 2008), together with a significant increase in permitted development rights. The recent announcement of the National Infrastructure Commission continues this trend. Changes under the Growth and Infrastructure Act and on permitted development rights have removed decision-making from the local planning authority level. We are concerned that this is directly contrary to the subsidiarity principle and to the principle of democratic accountability and public participation in land-use planning.

1.2 The principle of subsidiarity (as enshrined in the Rio Declaration, Principle 10) states that: “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided”. This is the principle detailed in the Aarhus Convention, to which the UK is a signatory.

1.3 Decentralising decisions to local government has been key to successful sustainable and innovative solutions which manage to deal with waste, pollution, transport, housing and energy on a local scale. At national, devolved and regional level there are strong reasons for action on ‘global’ issues (such as climate change or biodiversity loss or financial systems) to be set out clearly in both policy and legislation; but where local information is vital to securing the sustainability of the decision (for example in understanding the local economy,
local environmental risks and social impacts) then these decisions should be taken at a local level within this national context. For example, making a decision as a matter of course on a major housing development at nation state level fails to recognise the need to integrate into the spatial location that is vital to a successful and long term development (linked to education, health, work, utilities, leisure, culture and heritage, environment and travel).

1.4 While local planning authorities would benefit from some reorganisation (particularly in two-tier areas), there is also a regional level gap which is contrary to other European countries that benefit from strong regional identities.

1.5 In addition, England is not totally parished / represented by community councils. As the lowest level of government, closest to people, in our view it would be helpful to consider that all communities should have a local democratic tier that would bolster e.g. Neighbourhood planning. Policy-makers should support and understand the role of neighbourhood planning (which should be accessible to all, rather than only those who can afford it) and local planning in shaping places that people want to live and work in for the long term.

2. How well is policy co-ordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and co-ordination be improved?

2.1 We are concerned that England’s government departments are not working together to support local planning authorities. Local planning department budgets have been slashed, and Treasury, DECC, DCLG and DEFRA issue policies without public consultation and which impact on local planning authorities’ duties. For example, Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 amended by the Planning Act 2008 to “Development plan documents must (taken as a whole) include policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority’s area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.” In contrast to this duty to tackle climate change, DECC/DCLG issued a joint statement on onshore wind to create stringent community backing and site allocation in plan requirements for development to go ahead in June this year, while the joint shale gas announcement in August, made in a statement to the Commons in September set out a ‘national need’ for fossil fuel exploitation.

2.2 In another example, ‘Fixing the Foundations’ published by Treasury was used by an Inspector recently to suggest the removal of sustainability requirements for on-site energy efficiency standards, by preventing any reference to the adoption of a national zero carbon homes standard, and also suggesting as another option that the policy be deleted entirely and referred to only in development management policies (see http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/ID-27%20Letter%20to%20Council%20Aug%2015.pdf).

2.3 Air quality is an example of another issue that fails to be tackled through integrated policy. The UK has failed to meet EU legal limits for NO₂ in 38 of the UK’s 43 zones for air
quality purposes by the latest possible deadline of 2015. As the current national Air Quality Strategy (AQS) was ordered quashed by the recent Supreme Court ruling, a new national AQS is required by the end of 2015 to bring air pollution within limits in the shortest time possible. This obviously requires action from several departments to make it effective – e.g. in land use planning rules and transport investment.

2.4 We recommend that each department, government agency, and organisations counted as public authorities (e.g. Network Rail) should be subject to a duty to achieving sustainable development through the exercise of their functions. The executive office must have a responsibility to account for the full impact and benefits of decisions in terms of sustainability. Without a clear chain of command and performance measurement, sustainable development (including policies that affect the built environment) will remain at the margins or non-existent in key Government departments. A sustainable development duty will help co-ordinate and shape policy across departments, and ensure that similar principles are applied to policies rather than contrary ones. The National Assembly for Wales’s Future Generations Act 2015 could be looked at in terms of a possible model for policy integration.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

3.1 Our concern is that there are two key policies in the NPPF that trump the other policies when it comes to plan-making and decision-taking – the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’, and the viability test. The viability test is worded as follows: “Therefore, the sites and the scale of development identified in the plan should not be subject to such a scale of obligations and policy burdens that their ability to be developed viably is threatened. To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable.” Both of these policies tip the balance in favour of development approval and as a consequence lessen the impact of the other policies set out in the NPPF to deliver the environmental, economic and social ‘goods’ for the public.

3.2 On the face of it, the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the viability test have also been linked to the decrease in the provision of housing for those most in need. According to Shelter (using the DCLG figures) “The number of social dwellings completed in England in 2013/14 has decreased by 23% since 2011/12.” There are a number of examples of affordable housing provision being removed because of ‘viability’ as reported in The Guardian, (September 2013,
http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/sep/18/thousands-affordable-homes-axed-councils). Indeed the definitions of affordable housing have been questioned by organisations such as the London Tenants Federation (http://www.londontenants.org/publications/other/theaffordablehousingconf.pdf).

3.3 The profits of the main volume housebuilders have risen in ranges from 34% to 92% (March 2015, http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/markets/article-2978450/Taylor-Wimpey-latest-builder-benefit-housing-recovery-revenues-profits-soar.html). We remain concerned that the balance between a sustainable house building sector and the delivery of the built environment we need is out of kilter. The planning system was designed and developed over the years in recognition that housing delivery governed by a ‘market’ would fail to deliver what society more broadly needs. Housing must be set within a planning framework, so that affordability, quality, standards, connections and locations, and other ‘externalities’ are accounted for and valued.

3.4 In our view, national planning policy should be more nuanced and balanced, so that policy integration is a reality, and that social and environmental goods do not consistently lose out in the viability test. We would in fact recommend the removal of the viability test, and a legal definition of sustainable development in the forthcoming Housing Bill, to ensure that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is precisely that, rather than just a presumption in favour of development.

3.5 In addition there are several vague policy areas that give rise to appeals – for instance the new onshore wind policy. All planning practice guidance published without being tested through public consultation should be assessed and revised to provide stronger, clearer and more detailed policy.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 There are good arguments for using a map and spatial understanding of England to frame development decisions. For instance understanding the in-combination effects of large developments on what is existing and planned at other scales as well as the other land uses. Adaptation has to be understood in terms of place – coastal erosion, flooding and afforestation are all tied to specific places. There are 2.4 million homes in the UK at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea, 370,000 of which are classified as at ‘significant risk’. And there are an additional 3 million homes at risk from flash floods. The spatial element also guards against the concept of ‘white space’ on maps where ‘nothing’ is happening. However our concern is that a national map of England would be used to further centralise and control decision-making in a way that severely lessens democracy and is contrary to the subsidiarity principle of long term sustainable development.

4.2 In our view, the duty to co-operate should be replaced with devolution arrangements that allow for democracy and public participation in planning, but do not co-opt or control
national agencies set up for the national interest e.g. on flooding, water resources, natural environment and heritage, nor put private interests in the driving seat.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 The imperative of climate change, both mitigation and adaptation, and the latest scenarios provide timescales that need to influence built environment needs. Urban heat, coastal change, increased risk of flooding, biodiversity on the move are all environmental factors that have short, medium and long term timescales. If a decision is made to build something, then its lifetime impact should be assessed both in terms of where it is located, and what effect it will contribute to the environment. For example, Vancouver has a 100 year sustainability plan (http://www.cnv.org/Your%20Government/Sustainability%20in%20the%20City/City%20Initiatives/100%20Year%20Sustainability%20Vision).

5.2 Most of the homes that people will live in over the next 50-100 years have already been built. Many are poorly insulated, much worse than in countries such as Sweden, Denmark and the Czech Republic. Over 1.5 million private-rented sector homes do not even meet the basic ‘decent homes standard’ set by the Government. In our view, the government needs to put in place a programme to ensure that the UK is on track to achieving a target of bringing all low-income homes to EPC C by 2025, and all UK homes by 2035.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly co-ordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 Fixing the Foundations, as aforementioned, suggests the introduction of a ‘zonal system’ with the automatic grant of planning permission in the forthcoming Housing Bill. Only one report is referenced to provide evidence that the time taken to grant planning permission may be a significant factor on the housing market. We are concerned that the time taken for planning permission is necessary for a high quality built environment, given the lack of other levers to require this of volume housebuilders. We oppose this removal of democratic accountability and public participation over decisions that will have a major impact on the built environment.

6.2 The total number of new homes started in 2013/14 is around 133,000, and 112,000 were completed (DCLG figures, rounded). The current Government target for England is 200,000 new homes per year. According to the statistics (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/462195/Planning_Applications_April_to_June_2015.pdf), applications received by local planning...
authorities in England have and continue to hover around the 120,000 mark since 2008/9 and the highs in 2004/5 of just under 200,000 has yet to be achieved again. It seems on the face of it that the changes wrought have not yet had a significant impact on the number of applications being submitted, while there is evidence that both quality and affordability are being lost.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1 Freiburg’s developments are internationally renowned. To look at why this is, it is important to understand how its local government operates. For the Mayor or the Director of Development, public participation is top of the agenda. It is the people (the citizens) of Freiburg with whom the vision for the future is made through planning. The plan is then presented to the builders and developers, and the negotiation starts on delivery. In many cases the city contracts out work, but holds control of the plan and design. The results speak for themselves – it is one of the most popular places to live in Germany and one of the most successful (See here for Freiburg’s environmental policy http://www.freiburg.de/pb/LEN/372840.html).

7.2 Given the number of developments approved without, for example, SUDS, high water efficiency standards, on-site renewable energy generation or access to green space, in our view there will be resources required in the future to retrofit these into developments. It would be far more resource efficient (and cost effective) to simply build the best quality development now.

7.3 Local planning authorities and communities could be assisted in mapping their community and environmental assets, as part of identifying what they have, and then looking at what they need to improve their social, economic and natural environment. Community asset mapping could feed into local plans very effectively.

7.4 Our food culture and food systems are instrumental in contributing to poor nutrition and obesity, climate change, environmental degradation, poor animal welfare and unfair food systems globally. Government must develop integrated policies on food and agriculture to address this, including as to how the built environment contributes. The role that allotments and the concepts that informed garden cities are important in a sustainable built environment.

Skills and design

9. Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
9.1 For good quality places to be designed there are resource requirements and the need for regulation – to create a level playing field, and to place a value on quality. Planning departments that are well resourced can provide better services. DCLG could provide extra support through boosting local authority planning departments on an “as and when required” basis e.g. when a significant application is before the authority (similar to the way ATLAS functioned), and the plans to roll back zero carbon homes should be reversed. Government should return to publishing White Papers for broad consultation and public debate rather than entering directly into legislative proposals which exclude meaningful public participation, and indeed participation by affected local planning authorities and democratic representatives.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 The inquiry could consider the roles an ‘Aarhus Champion’ and a ‘Built Environment Champion’ could play in order to advocate for better public participation in built environment decisions, and for better standards in the built environment, taking into account how different policies and measures could impact on these issues, and to comment on policy integration.

11.2 Priorities for government, particularly for agencies and at local level are driven by resources and duties. In order to improve the consideration of the health of users, the Director of Public Health could be given a greater role in planning, improved planning guidance could be issued on health, and resources could be made available to deprived wards to focus planning and development management efforts on improving health.

11.3 In addition, the public sector duty in the Equality Act 2010 on socio-economic disadvantage could be brought into force ((1) An authority to which this section applies must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.).

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

12.1 Local plan-making is rather onerous for communities. It is long-winded and is dominated by the private sector – usually developers. However it also enshrines the right to be heard in law – directly related to the right to participate in environmental decision as set out in the Aarhus Convention. In our view, the plan-making process therefore needs to focus
on engaging communities – which requires local authority resource, and local authority willingness to engage. Effective public engagement is often worn down because their inputs are devalued and disregarded, national policy has recently been through rapid and ongoing change (which then trumps local participatory input), and there is very little resource to promote and support the engagement of communities in local plan making. This has to change to stop the democratic deficit and disengagement of communities continuing. The public interest is not served by a planning system that is merely about bricks and mortar rather than about good governance, place, society, economy and environment.

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issue of housing and land supply?

13.1 One option is to reduce inflationary pressures through introducing a Property and Land Tax – for more details see Friends of the Earth’s housing policy here (http://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/environmental-socially-just-agenda-housing-48776.pdf). We suggest the inquiry might wish to look at this issue in detail.

06 October 2015
The Gardens Trust welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment.

1.0 Introduction to evidence

1.1 The Gardens Trust was formed in July 2015 by the merger of The Garden History Society (GHS) and the Association of Gardens Trusts (AGT).136

1.2 The GHS has been a statutory consultee for all sites included by Historic England on the Register of Parks and Gardens since 1995; Government has recently (July 2015) confirmed that The Gardens Trust retains the status of statutory consultee previously held by the GHS. The GHS has advised Government on matters of national planning policy as they affect historic designed landscapes.

1.3 The AGT represents a large body of grass-roots voluntary expertise (with a combined membership of some 8,000) embodied in the 39 county gardens trusts. Many county trusts have been active in the fields of planning and conservation for many years, and have considerable experience of the effects of the implementation of national policy at the local level.

2.0 Evidence

We respond to the following questions set out by the Select Committee:

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. In theory the decisions that shape England’s built environment are taken at the appropriate administrative level, with Government providing over-arching policy, targets and objectives; and local government implementing these through local plan policies, determination of specific development proposals and implementation of local historic environment designations, including, most importantly, conservation areas. In practice, and in our experience, this bi-partite system is under great strain and does not work effectively for the historic environment principally due to a lack of necessary resources at local government level. In many places this has led to a lack of proper local plan provision to guide development to appropriate locations and to safeguard sites which are inappropriate for development or change; and a lack of the necessary professional advice and expertise within local government to enable properly informed and sensitive determinations to be reached.

We believe that a plan-led structure is best able to deliver consistent and effective policies for the built environment. However we are not convinced that central Government is prepared to play its part by ensuring that proper resources are available at local government

136 - See www.gardenhistorysociety.org and www.gardenstrust.org.uk for further information about both merged bodies.
level to ensure that the system works in a balanced way, taking into account local as well as national policy considerations and priorities.

2. Our experience suggests that policy co-ordination across Government is at best patchy, with Treasury-led initiatives such as housing targets cutting across other areas of interest with apparently little regard to the cumulative impact of such policies. The relatively lowly place of heritage in the Government hierarchy of ministries clearly does not help it secure due weight in inter-departmental policy discussions, and it is possible that conflicting interests within DCMS itself (the marriage of heritage and sport remains a curious and unconvincing alliance) contribute to the problem. We would like heritage to be given a stronger, more coherent voice than has often been the case in the past.

**National Policy for planning and the built environment**

3. We welcome NPPF and the holistic approach it takes to planning and the historic environment. We consider the definition of “sustainable development” set out in NPPF to be both appropriate and a sound foundation for the development of both national and local planning policy.

In theory NPPF provides sound policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment. We have concerns that, as set out above, inadequate resources and skills at local government level impede the proper implementation of the sound policy objectives contained in NPPF; and we are concerned that the inevitably emerging “caselaw” surrounding NPPF, and especially considerations of “substantial harm” to heritage assets are complex, and often beyond the ability of local government to interpret and implement properly.

We would in addition highlight the provisions of the European Landscape Convention, which also promotes an holistic view of the historic environment with landscape binding together the various elements of the built environment. We consider this to offer a good model to Government, and record our regret that despite both the UK and Scottish Governments having signed-up to the Convention, its provisions appear not to be embedded into planning for the built environment in the UK.

4. We would agree that national planning policy in England lacks a spatial perspective. Policy, and the implementation of policy, both demonstrate an undue concentration on buildings. There is a failure to recognise that the spaces which buildings occupy are often designed and constructed as carefully as any building, and that it is the interaction between these different elements of the built environment which is what makes a particular place successful or unappealing and unsuccessful.

While we welcome recent guidance from Historic England on understanding the setting of heritage assets, we argue that this guidance should be incorporated into national policy to ensure that due weight is given to spatial considerations in planning and determining developments.
With regard specifically to designed landscapes (which are often the consciously designed settings for significant structures and therefore a key component element of the built environment), we believe that national policy should require those planning for the built environment to understand and give due weight to matters such as designed views into and out from a landscape, and to show that consideration has been given to the impact of proposed change on the relationship between different elements of a designed landscape, especially where that landscape is the subject of national designation.

5. We do not consider that the timescale for planning our future built environment needs is the key issue, or even a significant issue. Much more fundamental and pressing is adequate resourcing, especially at local government level, to ensure that the plan-led system functions effectively and fairly for all parties.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. Housing supply and targets appear to have become a political football, with each major party trying to appear more committed to provision of more new build than the other. It is far from clear that the present planning system is adequate to the task of delivering the reforms set out by Government, without running the risk of collapse.

7. In relation to delivering increased housing supply, an approach of “as much” and “wherever possible” is guaranteed to produce poor results and slums for future generations. Considerations of sustainable development must imply a need to consider more than just numbers of housing, but also quality, spatial arrangement, conservation of existing places and character, and quality of life for those who will live in the new homes. Existing buildings and places, especially where there is a clear sense of character or community, will provide a durable, sustainable base from which to develop successful built environments. In terms of ensuring that existing housing stock and built environments function to optimum levels, broader issues such as provision of high speed internet connections to enable enterprise and home working, resourcing of community initiatives to bolster a sense of individuality of place, and encouraging local government to be proactive in conserving local distinctiveness through designations such as Conservation Areas could all be important factors in ensuring that existing buildings and places will be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances and to allow optimum, sustainable use to be made of the existing built environment.

8. The value of the historic environment in terms of regeneration, future planning and place-making is often under-estimated. Heritage designations continue to be seen in terms of constraints and a brake on development, rather than as opportunities. The economic benefits flowing from the conservation of the historic environment are often overlooked, while the social benefits of conserving the historic environment (and especially green space forming an integral part of a designed urban ensemble) in terms of well-being, mental health and enjoyment of residents is too often unrecognised. However, the many examples of successful conservation and regeneration, often effected in the face of proposed radical
redevelopment by local opposition, underlines the value of the historic environment as an integral element of the built environment time and again.

Skills and design

9. It is very clear that a skills gap exists within the professions dealing with the built environment. In particular, there is a wide spread lack of understanding of the relationship of the historic environment to the wider built environment; and the inter-relationship existing between the different elements of the historic environment (buildings, landscape, archaeology).

Lack of skills is particularly acute in the area of historic landscapes, their conservation, and their positive role in the creation of distinctive places and built environments. The loss in autumn 2015 of the only post-graduate course devoted to this expertise (University of Bath, M Sc) is very much to be deplored, and is symptomatic both of the absence of appropriate training for professionals working in the field, and a lack of understanding and commitment to the built environment on the part of institutions of higher education. The lack of appropriate skills is not confined to professionals working in the private sector, but is very evident in our dealings with local government. The number of conservation officers working in local government planning departments has shrunk alarmingly, and accordingly decision-making is not properly informed with regard to the sensitivities and needs of the historic environment. Similarly, the number of landscape architects employed by local government has declined significantly in recent years, with a consequent reduction in landscape and spatial advice being made available to case officers during the planning process, or to local authority departments when planning their own schemes. The management of conservation areas, so important for conserving local distinctiveness as well as aesthetically significant features (including buildings and designed urban space) is inadequately resourced.

Finally, we would highlight the decision taken by Historic England (for operational reasons as we understand), not to provide planning and conservation advice on proposals affecting designed landscapes through their Regional Landscape Architects, but through other professional channels. While we do not question staff expertise or integrity, we do find it a matter of great regret that in cases where a specialist landscape input is, in our view, essential to providing adequate advice to the local planning authority or the Planning Inspectorate, it is now often absent. Advice has, in some notable cases, been excessively orientated towards historic buildings, arguably leading to decisions which have been detrimental to the overall historic environment by reason of harm caused to designed landscapes which form the setting of those buildings.

10. “Place Making” (a term ironically derived from the eighteenth century landscape designer Lancelot “Capability” Brown rather than a contemporary management consultant),
carries the implication that in planning the built environment we are dealing with a “tabula rasa”. In reality, no site comes without a history, evolution and character. The key to good planning lies, we suggest, in achieving a detailed understanding of how a site has evolved over time and achieved its distinctive character. Since CABE was disbanded, is there is no national forum for promoting the aspirations of high quality design and “place-making” at a national level. We highlight with considerable concern the complete failure of the Design Council to recognise that CABE had within it a unit, CABE Space, devoted to landscape within the built environment; and through this omission has signally failed to carry forward any of the valuable work which was being undertaken in this area. There is therefore a significant gap in the provision of advice at a national level which requires to be addressed.

Community involvement and community impact

11. The perception exists that local government officers and other policy makers take decisions and determine planning proposals without adequate reference to the wishes and views of the local community; and that elected council members will often represent these views more faithfully. It is not clear that reality generally reflects this view; but some notable examples in our experience suggest that a disconnect can exist between local aspirations and the decisions of planning officers. An example would be a recent case at Warwick Castle where permanent “glamorous camping lodges” were proposed in the Grade I registered landscape forming the designed setting of the Grade I Listed Castle and Scheduled Ancient Monument: officers recommended approval on their interpretation of planning issues, but elected members voted against the proposals reflecting local opinion and the views of heritage and amenity groups including the GHS in its role as statutory consultee.

12. The greatest barriers to public participation in the planning system are: the perceived complexity of planning system; a lack of confidence to engage; and a lack of understanding of how to engage. The Historic Landscape Project, undertaken jointly over the past few years by the GHS and AGT with support from Historic England has amply demonstrated that even among those with an awareness of the planning system and a concern for the historic environment, these barriers prevent practical engagement.

However, the Historic Landscape Project has also shown that with training and appropriate resources (essentially very basic explanations of how the plan-led planning system works, pointers as to how to understand and articulate important issues for historic environment such as significance), the ability and willingness to engage with the planning system increases hugely.

137 - More details of the project, the training it delivers, and its outcomes can be found at www.gardenstrusts.org.uk/hlp.html
On a small scale, this project is a valuable example of the way in which voluntary bodies could prove to be an important means of securing greater public engagement in the planning system which shapes their environments.

**Financial matters**

13. While we do not wish to express a view on the first of these points relating to fiscal and financial measures which could help to address issues of land supply and housing, we do wish strongly to reiterate our belief that the most effective way in which to achieve better design and place-making is not through relying on, let alone offering subsidies to private developers to deliver better design, but through ensuring that we have a robust, balanced planning system properly resourced at local government and statutory advisor level with appropriately skilled professionals – conservation officers, landscape architects, and conservation architects.

Jonathan Lovie  
Principal Conservation Officer & Policy Advisor  
The Gardens Trust

04 October 2015
Introduction

1. The Gas Safety Trust, established in 2005 as a registered charitable body, has become the UK’s leading gas safety research charity with the key objectives of further improving gas/fossil fuel safety for the public and industry throughout the UK and reducing the incidents of death and serious injury from carbon monoxide (CO) exposure. The Trust does this through the funding of research and data collection relating to carbon monoxide poisoning.

2. We provide grant funding, advice and support to any organisation to carry out research and evidence gathering relating to gas safety. We would currently welcome applications for funding for projects looking at (but not limited to) the following areas:
   - Low level exposure
   - Built environment
   - Healthcare professionals’ understanding and awareness
   - Leisure activities

3. Since 2013 we have awarded nearly £800,000 to a variety of programmes and projects relating to gas/fossil fuel safety and carbon monoxide.

Background

4. People spend the majority of their time indoors most of which is spent in the home; typically 80 - 90% in developed countries. Particular groups such as the young, the elderly and those with ill health may spend even more of their time in the indoor environment. The quality of the indoor air is therefore a major determinant of the exposure people have to air pollutants.
5. The UK government has said that in order to cut carbon emissions by 80% in 2050 compared to that of 1990, all new homes built from 2016 will be carbon neutral.

6. The homes will have their sustainability and construction measured against nine categories, which include health and wellbeing. Airtightness is to be increased in order to lower thermal loss, which could lead to reduced ventilation. A lack of air for combustion could give rise to carbon monoxide being produced. The Gas Safety Trust has concerns about the effects this may have on indoor air quality and the potential health effects to occupants.

7. Combustion appliances, such as gas cookers, are a source of indoor air pollution and pose a health risk if there is inadequate ventilation; carbon monoxide (CO) can be produced which poses a significant health risk.

8. According to the World Health Organisation, CO is the leading cause of accidental and intentional deaths related to poisoning where intoxication can occur as a single or repeated exposure. Exposure to combustion generated pollutants such as CO, NO2, particles and environmental tobacco smoke can lead to a range of health effects including cardiovascular diseases, which are the leading cause of deaths in industrialised countries.

9. According to the Department of Health estimates, every year around 4,000 people are diagnosed by A&E departments as having been poisoned by carbon monoxide. But it is thought that the number of people who have been, and continue to be, affected by carbon monoxide poisoning is far greater because cases are being woefully under-reported. This is due to a lack of awareness and because of the difficulties in diagnosing carbon monoxide poisoning. Many people may be living with low-level poisoning, not knowing it is happening, and with their lives therefore at constant risk.

10. Combustion gases in homes can be emitted from space heaters (including un-flued appliances) using solid, liquid and gas fuels, as well as water heaters, cooking activities,
tobacco smoking and vehicle emissions, particularly if the vehicle is kept in an adjoining garages.

11. The main products of combustion are CO\(_2\) and water vapour but other products occur depending upon the fuels used, air content and the efficiency of the combustion process.

12. A study carried out by Cranfield University in 2011 and funded by the Gas Safety Trust considered the possible increased risk to occupant health due to exposure to incomplete products of combustion in energy efficient homes.

13. The study carried out the following work:
   - A literature review on indoor air, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, volatile organic compounds, sulphur dioxide, particles, energy efficient homes and the use of models to predict indoor air pollution.
   - A field study that used various instruments to take measurements of carbon monoxide and other combustion products.

14. The Gas Safety Trust would be delighted to share the report from this work with the Committee, if appropriate.

15. More recently, in 2014 the Gas Safety Trust has commissioned a piece of work together with the Institute of Gas Engineers and Managers (IGEM), which is currently being carried out by the Health and Safety Laboratory, which is looking into low levels of CO exposure specifically from flue-less gas appliances that may be caused by the application of increased insulation values to existing buildings.

16. The perceived problem being that by reducing the air changes to a property this may lead to the incorrect operation of the appliance/s leading to incomplete combustion and the possible discharge of CO. As stated above, the Gas Safety Trust would be happy to share the results of this work with the committee, if appropriate.
17. Given the Trust’s specific interest in the built environment in relation to gas safety, our submission confines our brief comments to Questions 2, 9 and 11.
Questions

(2) How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

18. The Gas Safety Trust believes that a coordinated approach is essential to deliver policy in the built environment that not only addresses the critical challenges present in improving the built environment but also to place consideration of gas safety at its heart.

19. Carbon monoxide poisoning is a topic that spans a number of government departments which have complementary, but sometimes contradictory, overlaps of responsibility. Regarding carbon monoxide, within the built environment particularly, responsibility for energy efficiency, the Building Regulations and health and safety are split between the Department for Energy and Climate Change, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions respectively, whilst the regulations for combustion appliances and detection devices sits with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

20. A cross government group on carbon monoxide has been established which seeks to brings these Departments together, but it is the view of the Gas Safety Trust that this group needs to be better linked into, and higher profile within the relevant departments, to ensure that carbon monoxide is considered within various areas of policy.

(9) Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

21. One of the key issues facing the gas industry, and one that has implications for the built environment, is an aging workforce, and insufficient recruitment to ensure future demand is met and that the skills and knowledge are passed on.
22. The Gas Safety Trust believes that it is essential that the Government urgently reviews the demographics of key industries and future demand to ensure that we have sufficient, competent and experienced engineers to meet the 21st century challenges within the built environment.

23. This is critical to be able to make sure that appliances present within the built environment are correctly installed and appropriately maintained, in line with current regulation and to manufacturer’s instructions.

(11) Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

24. As mentioned in our previous comments, the Gas Safety Trust believes that it is essential that regard to carbon monoxide poisoning is firmly embedded in the built environment policy process.

25. The impact of 21st century built environment innovations and the underestimated interplay between energy efficiency and safety concerns means that there is a potential for seemingly innocuous environmental measures to have an unintended and potentially fatal consequence.

23 September 2015
Professor Jay Ginn and Professor Anthea Tinker – Written Evidence (BEN0046)

HOUSE OF LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Call for Written Evidence

This response is from Professor Anthea Tinker and Professor Jay Ginn, Institute of Gerontology, Department of Social Science Health and Medicine, King’s College London.

They draw mainly on recent research on Long Term Care (focussing especially on housing, Tinker, Ginn et al, 2014a and b) and Age Friendly Cities (Tinker and Ginn, 2015). We only answer the questions where we feel we have specific recent research experience. These mainly relate to older people, but as we argue in both publications, good design and attention to the environment for older people helps people of all ages.

Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Q1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1. The recent changes in policy with the requirement for every local authority (LA) to set up a new Public Health department has the potential for less chance of national policies being implemented. LAs must be adequately funded if they are to fulfil their new responsibilities for public health. We welcome the development of devolution but it depends on LAs both being well informed about, for example, research on the built environment and being responsive to local views. We would urge the need for joint research and the sharing of information and/or secondment of staff.

Q 2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

National policy for planning and the built environment

2. Research shows that many policies, especially for older people, are health led. While this is clearly of great importance there is need to bring in the other services, especially
social care services, to bring about an integrated policy. Recent research on the integration of services also shows the neglect of housing, design etc. in policies for older people (Tinker and Ginn, 2014a and b). Integration can be between policies, services, organisations and people

Buildings and places: New and old

Q 6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

3. With a housing crisis and lack of housing for all groups of people we would argue that housing is a key to healthy lives and should be given priority in times of economic austerity. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) say ‘Good housing conditions are also essential for people and affect childhood development’ (OECD, 2011, p. 81). They also found that in OECD countries subjective satisfaction is strongly correlated with all the objective indicators of housing’ (ibid, p. 85)

4. The emphasis should be on enabling people to stay in homes of their own. The value and cost effectiveness of home adaptations should equally be a high priority for older and for disabled people. For a minority of people specialist housing will be needed. For some types of specialist housing such as extra care housing for older people there is evidence that they can prevent or delay the need for institutional care. There is therefore a saving to the public purse.

5. It is also crucial that any new build housing is to ‘Lifetime Home’ standards so that they remain suitable, without modifications, for people at all life stages. A swift assessment of need followed by equally swift provision can reduce the risk of an older person falling; and if they have been in hospital, they can be more safely discharged to their home, releasing a hospital bed.

6. In addition we would draw attention to some newer forms of housing that can be provided or encouraged in the public, private or voluntary sector or a combination. In particular, we recommend co-housing for older people and expansion of Home Share schemes. Co-housing is when a group decide to join together to live together in a purpose built or refurbished building living independently in their accommodation but sharing some communal facilities. These schemes started for younger age groups in Scandinavia and the Netherlands but are now becoming more popular for older people. Two schemes have recently opened in London – both for older women. We suggest that encouragement in the form of help with planning applications, architectural and legal advice and possibly release of land would help such potential self-help communities.
7. Home Share is where someone, usually an older person, offers accommodation at a low or no rent in exchange for some help (not personal care). Some of these schemes are particularly useful for younger Interns. Publicity for such schemes with details of tax and other implications would be helpful.

Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

8. The built environment is crucial for the wellbeing of people. This was stated clearly in the well evidenced lecture by the late Professor Libby Burton in her Legacy Lecture ‘The Pursuit of Happiness’ given on 1.3.14 before her death (Burton, 2014).

9. The importance of health and wellbeing, especially the role of exercise and the need to encourage people of all ages to take exercise and to get out and about was underlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health for England in her Annual report (Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report, 2009. Department of Health, 2010.). She estimates the cost of a sedentary lifestyle at £8.3bn per year. This may mean more people suffering increased ill health and being admitted to hospitals and residential care homes.

10. There are many features that influence the well-being and social inclusion of people. Good neighbourhood design enables people of all ages to feel safe when going out for basic necessities such as shops and health services and for social and leisure reasons. Feeling safe to go out allows pursuit of interests and maintenance of relationships and enhances social capital, social inclusion and wellbeing.

11. We recommend that local authorities ensure that pavements are safe, in terms of an even surface and freedom from clutter, to improve local walkability, that they also provide sufficient all-day free accessible public toilets and signage to where they are available.

12. Barriers to going out include the speed of traffic, lack of safe crossings, fear of crime and fear of falling.

13. In our report ‘An Age-Friendly City – how far has London come’ we say ‘Green routes and small parks make walking outside more inviting and can lift mood: older people living close to an open green space are more likely to be satisfied with life’ (Tinker and Ginn, 2015, p. 15).

14. A current research project ‘Mobility, Mood and Place’ (MMP) is showing that older people are able and willing to engage with local authorities to help design environments that are pleasant, practical and safe (Brookfield, 2015). We cannot emphasise too much the value of asking people of all ages for their views which may sometimes be counterintuitive. For example in the MMP research older people in Hackney liked the graffiti around the canal.
and Olympic site as they felt that it showed that the area was vibrant and that younger artists were coming into the area. But they did not want the graffiti in the roads where they lived. They also commented very unfavourably on the design of seats which only held one person (to stop rough sleepers) when they needed to go out in pairs. There were lots of other sensible suggestions about the lack of public toilets and handrails. Some of these modifications would not cost very much money.

15. It would also be helpful if residents could be involved in creating more public gardens and small parks.

Skills and design

Q9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

16. Most professions are facing the issues of an ageing population. For example doctors, unless they work in paediatrics, will be treating older people in most hospital specialties as well as in General Practice. This is increasingly being recognised by the medical profession who are taking degrees in Social Gerontology as well as Geriatrics. There does not seem to be the same urgency or interest in those who train architects and surveyors.

17. In our experience most of the professions in general, and architects in particular, do not have the right skills and training to consider the built environment in a holistic manner. Training for these professions is still based on the need for award winning innovative designs. Inclusive design remains as an ‘add on’ rather than a core element that would allow the professions to design inclusive environments built for whole life use and incorporating the needs and desires of the local community.

18. To address this issue inclusive design should become a core element of the training of these professionals and should be the key fundamental underpinning all development. Local authority officials should also receive training in inclusive design with the concept embedded in all planning decisions.

Community involvement and community impact

Q 11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?
19. Please see answer to 7 and also the submission by Professor Catharine Ward Thompson, University of Edinburgh (Anthea Tinker is a co-investigator on this project)

Q 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

20. Too often the planning process is a top down one with plans being produced and then reactions sought (but often ignored). This is of course an important part of planning but we would like to see a bottom up approach as well. For example in a piece of research on assistive technology older people identified their major problems and then possible solutions (McCreadie et al, 2002, Seale et al, 2002, Tinker, 2001). These were then translated into real products (in this case a stair climbing aid) by engineering students. The latter gained a great deal about the perceptions, needs and solutions from the potential users.

21. Others have also identified the evidence that ‘bottom up’ planning capitalises on the experience of residents in a neighbourhood (Bevan and Croucher, 2011).

Financial measures

Q 13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

22. We would hesitate to give what is often the answer to this type of question – a short term incentive. This, like pilot schemes may produce a short term benefit but may not be able to be sustained. We consider that this is an area ripe for research.

References


HL Tinker and Ginn evidence response

03 October 2015
Glass and Glazing Federation – Written Evidence (BEN0174)

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

The GGF believe that clear, national guidance on building regulations is fundamental to ensure the implementation of effective policy. Given the economic climate and wider fiscal context, national policy makers play a key role in ensuring the quality of the built environment is not compromised. The GGF has approximately 500 members who can be found in over 1,500 business locations throughout the UK, the majority of which are Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). The GGF therefore believe that engagement on a local level with trade associations and business is similarly important in ensuring national priorities align with local needs.

The GGF would therefore like to underline the importance of regular and meaningful engagement between national policy makers and trade associations representing the broader macro-concerns of the sector but also the need to engage smaller business affected by policy set at a national level.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

The GGF’s key focus is on improving the energy efficiency of households and commercial premises. We are passionate about promoting the uptake of energy efficient measures, which prove cost effective for consumers and beneficial for business. The GGF have therefore engaged extensively with the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) on their energy efficiency policies and continue to do so. Consequently, we believe that any successful policy on the built environment must be considered alongside policies from other Government departments which aim to increase household energy efficiency.

In addition to this, the GGF would also underline the important of engagement with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). A simple yet proper regulatory framework especially in relation to building should propagate the successful improvement of energy efficiency within the built environment. The GGF believe however that the weakness lies in enforcement, particularly on new build. This is why the GGF set up FENSA - a government authorised Competent Persons Scheme for the replacement of windows, doors and roof lights in England and Wales which works with thousands of double glazing contractors to enforce regulations in existing properties. The GGF’s concern relates to new build properties as they deviate from approved regulations and also build to old regulation
standards. The GGF would therefore highlight the importance of both a simple yet extensive regulatory environment and the means to ensure regulations can be properly enforced. Therefore, as the Select Committee on Energy and Climate Change, and indeed DECC, consider the future of energy efficient schemes, we would urge the Select Committee’s inquiry on National Policy for the Built Environment to encourage an integrated, cross-department approach to policies on the built environment which is then properly enforced.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The GGF have previously welcomed the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for its role in making the planning system less complex and more accessible. The GGF similarly welcomed the policies set out within the NPPF under, “Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change” of “actively support[ing] energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings.” However, since the introduction of the NPPF in 2012, the GGF has been extremely concerned with how energy efficiency has been prioritized both in the planning system and further Government schemes to promote the uptake of energy efficiency measures. The GGF believe that improving the energy efficiency of our buildings is a key measure that will improve the health and economic prosperity of families across the country by creating warmer, more comfortable homes and offices. Indeed, research by Age UK has found that cold homes cost the NHS £1.36 billion every year due to hospital and primary care costs. The GGF would therefore like to underline the importance of prioritizing energy efficiency in any future building and planning regulations so that the significant benefits they bring can be realised.

The GGF would also urge the Select Committee to draw attention to existing barriers to building new homes. The GGF was highly supportive of the Coalition Government’s decision to extend permitted development rights for example. This has allowed for a simpler, faster and more appropriate planning system. However, there remain barriers to the uptake of this. Of key concern to our Members is the imposition of Article 4 directions by multiple local authorities. Whilst the GGF recognizes the need to ensure that any external changes to the appearance of buildings is in keeping with the local environment, our Members are telling us that Article 4 Directions are being applied in many instances where they are not necessary. This is stifling the retrofit sector and is in many cases based on unfounded assumptions about the types of goods available to consumers. An example the GGF would point to is where the aesthetic of a certain product can often directly mimic the aesthetic Article 4 purports to protect, yet the uptake of these measures is still restricted. Whilst we recognise the trend towards local devolution, we would urge the Committee to ensure that there is a proper understanding of the types of innovations occurring in the sector so as to ensure that businesses and consumers are not held back by outdated assumptions by some local authorities.
4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

The GGF is not in a position to comment on this question.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

The GGF would advocate that a planning system which incorporates clear short and long term objectives and regulations would make for a much more stable planning environment conducive to investment and growth. Therefore, the GGF would suggest that policies affecting the built environment be clearly categorized to give assurance to stakeholders and promote confidence within the sector. The GGF propose that policy be categorized in the following brackets:

- Short term – next 5 years
- Medium term – 5-15 years
- Longer term – 15-30 years

This would provide a longer term sustainability and vision to policy, rather than attaching it to specific Parliamentary or political cycles.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The GGF is wholly supportive of Government initiatives to build more houses and so welcomed the Conservative manifesto pledge to build more affordable homes, including 200,000 new Starter Homes. We also support the Minster for Housing, Brandon Lewis MP’s recent commitment to reach 1m homes by 2020. However, as previously mentioned, the GGF strongly believe that when realizing such targets, the Government should ensure that these houses are built to a high, energy efficient standard, benefitting consumers and businesses alike. Policy supporting the standard of new homes coordinated at a central level is integral in achieving this and so on behalf of the GGF, I would like to underline how eager we are to work alongside Government on future policy to ensure energy efficiency is prioritized.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places
be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The GGF are passionate about ensuring that consumers and businesses realise the significant and wide ranging benefits increased energy efficiency can have. Therefore, the GGF believe that a supportive and centrally-led policy ensuring the high standard of energy efficiency in our homes is vital. Existing housing stock is similarly important when considering the implications for energy efficiency. As promoted by the Energy Savings Trust (EST), it is imperative that locally and nationally we have a road map for homes to make the best use of existing housing stock and to capitalise on data to inform energy efficiency drives. In planning policy and in energy efficiency policy, it is also important to ensure that older houses are not left out of schemes. This is particularly a problem for people who live in energy inefficient homes in rural communities. The GGF is keen to underline that if we are to realise the health, social and economic benefits increased energy efficiency brings, then a clear and simple policy for future housing and retrofitting existing housing stock is key. Again, this is something that on behalf of the GGF, I look forward to working on this with you and the Government.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

The GGF is not in a position to comment on this question.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

The GGF believes it is crucial that those wishing to start and those already working within the sector have professional training to maintain standards and safeguard skills. This benefits both businesses and consumers. This is why the GGF run GGF Training Ltd, in partnership with the awarding body GQA Ltd (GQA), which offers a range of courses to teach new skills and maintain the skillset of those already in the glazing industry. The promotion of such courses is not only advantageous to those seeking employment, but safeguards the practice of businesses in the sector. The GGF would therefore like to underline the importance of such training and are keen to work with you and other stakeholders to promote this.

The GGF would further underline the absence of a joined-up approach when it comes to policy making on the built environment. Policy making on construction does not have one voice and simultaneously concerns varying stakeholders e.g. architects, material suppliers, contractors. This results in a lack of joined up thinking on both sides of the engagement process and results in stagnation in building strategy. The GGF would therefore advocate the importance of Government’s role in bringing together, facilitating and pushing forward planning policy.
10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The GGF is not in a position to comment on this question.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

As outlined, the GGF are particularly passionate about ensuring that individuals and businesses benefit from the wide ranging implications of improved household energy efficiency. Better energy efficiency within our regulatory planning policy would improve the lives of those affected by such a policy, not only by helping to reduce the cost of bills, but by creating warmer, healthier homes. The impact on health and the subsequent economic saving to the NHS is therefore substantial. Good glazing provides natural light, warmer homes, reduction in drafts and consequently better well-being for the occupants or users of the building. The GGF would like to highlight the importance of considering such effects when policy makers are formulating future policy and would be happy to provide further evidence to the Inquiry.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The GGF believe that engagement on both a local and national level is central to the success of future policy. Proper and considered public engagement ensures that those affected by these policies can voice their concerns and future policy provides the best end result for our communities. The GGF would therefore like to emphasize how important trade associations are when formulating policy to represent the views of consumers and business. The GGF have always been keen to engage with central and local Government throughout the policy process and further engagement with trade bodies would not only help inform policy but would overcome the logistical challenges facing a national policy of local engagement.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?
The GGF is not in a position to comment on this question.

On behalf of the GGF, I would be more than happy to provide any further evidence that may be useful throughout the consultation process and we look forward to engaging with the Select Committee on this important policy area.

Yours sincerely,

Giles Willson  
Managing Director  
Glass and Glazing Federation

09 October 2015
The Glass-house Community Led Design – Written Evidence (BEN0074)

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. There is a disconnect between national policy and what happens in practice at a local authority level. In part, this results from a lack of proper planning on how policy can be applied at a local level, and the variety of contexts that exist within the local sphere (e.g. scale, infrastructure, demographics).

1.1 Where is the thread from policy instruments to their practical application and impact in real contexts? The mechanisms which are designed to support effective placeshaping are often inflexible and unable to facilitate new collaborative approaches which are emerging between public, private and voluntary organisations and initiatives.

1.2 Intervention by national government to local place decision-making is often misguided. National government needs to respect local decision-making, knowledge, as well as the needs and desires of their communities.

1.3 Local authorities are under huge pressures and increasing responsibility yet their resources are being depleted. They need skilled teams and funding to be fit to implement policies that have been put in place related to how we shape our built environment. We need to ensure that government is enabling local authorities with adequate resources to successfully deliver their responsibilities.

2. Policy across Government departments is not based on learning. Through our engagement with them, we have been aware many times of the fact that those at the top are not engaging with evaluation, nor are they drawing knowledge and learning from the experience and evidence of the diversity of efforts to shape our places.

2.1 There are immense challenges in making visible the diversity of voices, stories, experiences and knowledge of those working to improve and shape our places, raising the quality of design and quality of life for communities.

2.2 Government should be championing good design and place quality to support the work of different levels of placemaking, whether by local authorities, developers or local grassroots action groups.

2.3 Policy is poorly coordinated across different departments. It is not uncommon for decision-making at a policy level in one department to undermine another policy sitting in a different department. We have also seen, over successive governments, that when policy changes are made there is rarely a good transition mechanism in place. As a result, a lot of knowledge and progress that has been made is lost and our places suffer from that neglect.
National Policy for planning and the built environment

3. The NPPF responds to market forces rather than to places.

3.1 What is sustainable development? While the NPPF embeds the principle of sustainable development there is no leadership on what it is so what value does it have as a policy recommendation in that case?

5. As the United Nations states, “Climate change is not a far-off problem. It is happening now and is having very real consequences on people’s lives.”

We need to address climate change with a wide-ranging, holistic approach. We need to look ahead 100 years into the future to help us to mitigate and build resilience to the effects of climate change and other man-made and natural disasters that will challenge us over this century, and beyond.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. Everyone agrees that more housing is necessary to tackle the housing shortage. At present, national government is prioritising getting housing built, but not getting people into homes. With such a severe shortage in housing, why is it that, for example, 80% of housing in London can be sold to overseas investors, resulting in under occupancy and unaffordable properties in places where people need to live and work? Leadership from national government that reforms financing models, land management and quality of place would better support the development of housing in England over the next decades.

6.1 By introducing Right to Buy to Housing Association sector the government is also disrupting the income streams of Housing Associations and their role in supporting people in vulnerable positions to have a safe and stable place to call home.

6.2 Design quality standards could support the development of new housing stock which is sustainable and adaptable in the future.

7. Most policy and investment focuses on new housing, yet the biggest challenge is how we maximise existing housing stock (e.g. bring empty properties back into use, drive people and employment to areas with a housing surplus) and adapt this stock to make it more fit for purpose and environmentally friendly.

7.1 It is also unfortunate and unhelpful that there is still a VAT exemption on new build but not on refurbishment.

8. In some places, our heritage assets are becoming important community resources that support wellbeing, while respecting the historic value they imbue. We are currently one of
the partners in a five-year collaborative action research project ‘Empowering Design Practices: historic places of worship as catalysts for connecting communities’. The project is exploring how community-led design can help empower those who look after historic places of worship to create more open, vibrant and sustainable places that respect and enhance their heritage. Through the project we will capture the value of these heritage assets and the role of community involvement in order to show how one of the ways in which our historic environment can be optimised and protected for long into the future. The aim is to support groups to realise the potential of historic places of worship as a resource for the whole community, whilst still serving those who wish to worship in them.

**Skills and design**

9. In higher education the teaching of architecture still concentrates largely on the design of beautiful objects rather than places for people. Students are taught in silos and in turn when they enter the professional world, they tend to work in silos.

9.1 There is also still a stark lack of diversity in those working in the built environment sector and disciplines. We must ensure fairer representation starts with education, bringing built environment education into primary and secondary levels. We need to link people and place in education and in what we represent and celebrate about the built environment.

10. There is currently no national leadership on place quality. Movements like the Place Alliance ([www.placealliance.org.uk](http://www.placealliance.org.uk)) of which we are a core supporter, are bringing organisations, networks and individuals together to build awareness of place quality in enhancing quality of life. Through initiative likes TalkPlace we are trying to support a national dialogue about these issues. These efforts are also helping to increase diversity in representation, seeking to overcome the dominance of powerful lobbies from the built environment industry in influencing and shaping government’s policy directions on place.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. The government need to be champions and enablers of place quality and equality. They should be supporting and creating spaces for collaborative placemaking to happen.

11.1 As a national charity that promotes good design through collaborative and participatory processes, we believe in the power of community led, participatory and co-design to transform places and bring positive and lasting change to local people. A commitment and an investment from policy to support this kind of work would widen the scope and increase the impact of work like ours with communities and other place stakeholders across the country.
11.2 National government has largely been unreceptive. They don’t engage with people on
the ground, rather they engage with the large organisations and bodies, often focussing on
the ‘profession’, and ignoring some of the most experienced and innovative placemakers.
There is a need to create spaces for specialist organisations to feed into policy no matter
what their size. Policy lacks knowledge from those with experiential knowledge and from
those people that use and engage with spaces and places, such as Rev. Christopher Rowe
from Milton in Glasgow.

Involving and enabling the needs and desires of local people, their knowledge and their
ideas are essential to the success of great places that enhance lives. Current policies such as
neighbourhood planning are but one mechanism.

11.3 There is an expectation by government that communities should be able to resolve
problems as volunteers. By treating communities as collaborators instead, government
could help facilitate processes that make great placemaking possible, respectful and
rewarding for those involved.

11.4 It is also important that national government and local government invite and
accommodate the rich diversity of ideas and approaches for solving the complex issues
relating to how our places are shaped, can thrive and be adapted over time. Government
should actively support experimentation and innovation in placeshaping. Evidence is
emerging of the value of collaborative economies and how new solutions start to emerge
when local authorities, businesses and communities work together to transform places,
which decision-makers can enable and support. We suggest that Government include a
more diverse representation in policy development and implementation, and engage with
and value more a cross-sector, interdisciplinary approach to place.

11.5 Working for over a decade to support communities to participate and lead placemaking
processes has shown us that these processes can be a catalyst for other things. In our
publication ‘Looking Back, Looking Forward’ (2009) we collect the sometimes forgotten
human impact of great participatory design processes. The stories in the booklet
demonstrate that a commitment to working collaboratively with local authorities, housing
associations, developers, businesses, schools, local organisations and local people, focuses
not on what is wrong, but what is possible, with real value and benefit for all.

12. The mechanism of neighbourhood planning introduced in 2011 allows communities to
inform the future development of their place, but it is not a fully formed policy. As a
mechanism, it enables some but not others, failing to enable the diversity of voices. It also
requires those who undertake one, to prepare a vast legal document which is impractical
and inaccessible. Take the experience of an Oxfordshire village neighbourhood plan group,
as shared by Sir Tom Shebbeare on our blog in March 2015:

“Planning legislation and the way it is applied in practice makes it almost incomprehensible
to outsiders. We have a community that has thrown up professional people of all disciplines
and we have an outstanding Parish Clerk. Without them we would have been lost. Things can certainly be made more transparent and user-friendly and some of the interminable jargon eliminated; planning is not something best left to university trained professionals.

The next phase of Neighbourhood Planning methodology must find ways in which less than 600 pages of NDP Report and Appendices are required for examination by the independent examiner. These were written by us, amateurs, on the insistence of professionals. They were read in their entirety by less than a dozen individuals.”


12.1 After four years of neighbourhood planning, public awareness of this new ‘power’ is still not widespread, and there are clear gaps in the quality of those that have been prepared.

12.2 While neighbourhood planning is a useful enabling power for communities to inform how their place is shaped, it is only one of the ways in which the public can be engaged in the process of decision-making that shapes their built environment.

In our work alone, since 2001, we have supported hundreds of projects led by local community groups and organisations to transform community buildings, housing, open spaces and neighbourhoods. Our support has always focused on empowering communities to engage in and lead design and development processes. By building capacity and confidence through hands-on learning and training in design, visioning and engagement skills, communities can play an active and effective role in shaping their environments. Placemaking professionals also need to be supported to develop the skills and knowledge to facilitate and engage in an inclusive and independent way. Ensuring communities are engaged in shaping their places is crucial to the economic success of our built environment. We can empower people to become contributors to growth, unlocking potential in people and in places

12.3 It is really important to get people thinking at an early age about their built environment. There remains still a huge proportion of the population who don’t think of the public realm as something which is theirs, that they own and can shape. We need to help people to be more demanding of quality and education has an essential role in this. Using place as a way of teaching STEM is one great tool.

We can also use place/the built environment as a teaching tool to tackle other issues such as social problems. We strongly believe that young people are important enablers of place, and through programmes such as our Young Spacemakers and Make it our Neighbourhood we can unlock their potential and lead them to great success in their future lives, both personally and professionally. More information on both programmes available directly from The Glass-House.
Prepared by: Louise Dredge

On behalf of: The Glass-House Community Led Design – an independent national charity supporting and promoting community-led, participatory and collaborative design of place for over a decade.

05 October 2015
Policy recommendations

Following the discussion at the evidence session on 11 November 2015, The Glass-House Community Led Design would like to make the following policy recommendations:

- Maintain a firm requirement for investment in community engagement and benefit in planned development. This investment should engage local residents, community networks and businesses in an informed and open conversation about the parameters of the development in question, and should identify clear parameters for influence in decision-making. Above all, this engagement should provide some element of investment in empowerment of local people and organisations, creating routes to skills development, building local networks and employability.

This is about using engagement to empower local people and at the same time build a resource of informed local collaborators and champions, both to move a given project forward and to contribute to the ongoing success of the area. There is also a real opportunity to introduce a new generation of talent and workforce to the development and construction industries, which are struggling to recruit the workforce they need, while supporting the skills development, employability and life chances for local people.

- All policy and government funding invested in housing and development, and indeed in neighbourhood planning, requires more rigorous evaluation of social and economic impact of its application on the ground in the short and long term. Government should then be prepared to learn from this evaluation and to respond with appropriate adjustments to policy and associated funding.

We currently measure the success of policy and government funding programmes against numerical and financial targets, with insufficient analysis of the real impact on the ground. For example, do we really have a clear picture of how many new homes have been built, how many of these have been bought or are lived in by British residents, whether the typology of new homes being built matches need, how the balance of investment in new homes sits alongside bringing empty homes back into use.

- Remove the VAT on refurbishment, as has been done for new build.

The biggest environmental challenge for Britain is not how we build new homes, but how we make the existing building stock fit for purpose, and how we reduce carbon emissions through refurbishment and retrofit. It makes no sense that new build should benefit from VAT exemption when refurbishment and retrofit does not.
• Policy should recognise and support collaborative economies and cross-sector partnerships. This requires a more flexible and less risk-averse approach to procurement and to the development of collaborative partnerships that test new models of working.

With every sector facing challenges and limited resources, we need to mobilise existing assets differently. This will only work if the small players in places are seen as equal contributors and if we reconfigure rigid procurement and commissioning practices so that they support, rather than eliminate the possibility for innovation and new models for collaboration, delivery and evaluating impact.

Case studies for consideration
The Glass-House works across sectors and disciplines on collaborative research and innovation in placemaking. The following two case studies represent examples of new models for working that mobilise existing assets more efficiently and that build in significant levels of community engagement and empowerment. The Glass-House would be happy to provide more detailed information on these case studies and others.

The Glass-House would like to showcase the sort of collaborative placemaking that we’ve been supporting over the past 15 years. These case studies demonstrate that relatively small investments can make both a concrete difference to the quality of place and life in a local area and can empower people and a community. At the same time, they can produce new flexible models that can both empower the communities supported to carry forward new work on their own, and provide valuable inspiration, learning and resources for others to take up.

The White City Green Placemaking Programme
Working with developer St James, of the Berkeley Group, and Phoenix High School in White City, West London, we delivered a four-month training programme for thirty year 10 students. The programme combined empowering young people in local decision-making and placemaking, with using place as a vehicle to support skills development and employability. We used a live regeneration scheme as the frame and context for training in design, development, regeneration and broader topics such as citizenship and communications.

The project empowered young people to play an active role in the design of an emerging local regeneration scheme, introduced them to career paths in the development sector and provided routes into work placements at St James. Above all, it gave the young people who took part a new sense of opportunity and of purpose for their futures. They grew enormously in confidence and particularly enjoyed the opportunity to work alongside adult professionals who were not their teachers, and to present their ideas and reflections to the St James Board of Directors.
The project also marked a significant culture change for the developers, now investing not merely in consultation or engagement, but in the empowerment and skills development of local young people and in supporting local networks.

**Tidworth Mums – a case for soft play**

As an active provider and supporter of creative activities for local families in their neighbourhood, Tidworth Mums have a vision for a soft play centre in Tidworth and wanted to explore how this could be achieved. The group was already working closely with Wiltshire Council and the Army Welfare Service when The Glass-House Community Led Design and the Open University joined this working group to form the co-design project.

The *Tidworth Mums: a case for soft play* project used asset mapping, play engagement and other creative activities to help Tidworth Mums to identify and unlock their assets and build a network of soft play supporters in their local area.

In this project, co-design and co-production were used as a way to uncover hidden assets in communities and unlock their potential. The project showed how hands-on, creative and playful activities can be useful in attracting and engaging people, unearthing and unlocking assets, and in initiating and driving positive changes within communities.

Key achievements of the project included:

- mobilising resources from the community, district council and Army Welfare Service to achieve what none could have alone, including play provision for 275 local children and 158 parents playing with them, during the Easter half term.
- using the delivery of play services to investigate community needs and desires and to explore and assess potential uptake of new services.

This work was delivered as part of *Unearth Hidden Assets through Community Co-Design and Co-Production*, a one-year collaborative research project (June 2013-June 2014) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) under their Connected Communities programme, which aims to help communities become stronger, more resilient and self-reliant so that they can adapt and thrive. This element of the wider project was a collaboration between Wiltshire-based, not-for-profit group Tidworth Mums, national charity The Glass-House Community Led Design, the Open University, Wiltshire Council and the Army Welfare Service.

The *Tidworth Mums: a case for soft play* resource pack tells the story of the project, and demonstrates how the project was used to produce a resource that can help others.


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24 November 2015
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
The Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses


Q171 The Chairman: Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by Members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary, but I will begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please.

Carole Reilly: Hello. Thank you very much for inviting me to give evidence today. My name is Carole Reilly and I am the head of neighbourhood planning and community housing in Locality. Locality is a national charity and we are a membership body. We represent 600 community organisations that are actively working around the country, developing enterprises, developing assets and delivering services in their local communities. In addition to being a member body, we also run a number of contracts for Government, so I run the neighbourhood planning contract; we run the community rights, the right to build and the community management of assets programme. We used to run the asset transfer unit and,
until very recently, we ran the community organising contract for OCS, so we have a really grounded root in the community, as well as running national programmes.

**Sophia de Sousa:** Good morning. My name is Sophia de Sousa and I am the Chief Executive at the Glass-House Community Led Design. We are a national charity; we work around the UK, working with communities and the professionals with whom they work on shaping places. Our starting point is that the quality of our places affects our quality of life. The quality of places can be improved vastly by engaging local knowledge, networks, infrastructure and skills, so we work to help embed new processes, learn from existing processes and innovate as to how participatory, community-led and collaborative design processes can be embedded into practice, can be innovated and can be learned from by others and picked up.

**Q172 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** What are the main opportunities and challenges associated with neighbourhood planning? In practice, how is the neighbourhood planning process working?

**Carole Reilly:** Shall I start with that? To start with the opportunities, we have to look at mass. We look at numbers. Neighbourhood planning is complicated; it is time consuming but, despite that, it has really captured the hearts and minds of communities, so we have almost 1,700 communities around the country taking up this challenge, in a relatively short period of time. That reflects 8 million people who live in areas that are covered either by a neighbourhood plan or a local plan that is beginning to be worked on. We have only 100 that have gone through a referendum—110 exactly.

It is really complicated and it takes a long time, and yet it is appealing to communities. You have thousands of people working on it. We have to think about why that has worked so well. In the Localism Act, a lot of new powers were given to communities, and this is the one that has had the most appeal. That is because it has struck a really good balance between the effort you put in and the outcome you get out, and that has to be based on the statutory weight of the neighbourhood plan. All the work that communities do is worth it and has to be listened to.

It is underpinned by genuine engagement and it very much enhances the planning system. Those people who we see are involved in neighbourhood plans are not really the usual suspects in terms of volunteering. They are often highly skilled professionals. Sometimes they
are quite time poor, but it has brought to the planning system a much wider group of people who would not normally be involved, and that can only enhance the system.

Planning can be—no offence—a bit boring, so why are all these people involved in it? It is not necessarily because they are really passionate about the built environment; it is because they are passionate about where they live. This maybe helps them to compute that the built environment is terribly important around health, well-being, crime, safety and building neighbourliness. Those are the opportunities for neighbourhood planning. If we had 100 people doing it four years on, we would say that it has not really worked but, despite the difficulties involved in it, it has really worked from the numbers that we have. There are 8 million people in the areas covered by growing neighbourhood plans.

To touch a little on the challenges, I have mentioned time. It takes a long time, which is why we see that only 110 have gone through a referendum now, but we will see, within the next 12 to 18 months, hundreds of neighbourhood plans coming through examination and referendum, being made and taken into law. We are going to see that 2015-16 will be the year of the neighbourhood plan. That would be really good.

Groups are doing it, embracing it and dedicating hundreds and thousands of hours to it, but they also need support. As was talked about by the previous evidence panel, they need technical support and guidance. Grants still exist; groups can get up to £18,000 or £14,000, depending on their need, and they can also get technical support around very specific areas that they need help with. Without that, groups would not really be able to take it any further. Not all my answers will be this long, but another challenge is that it is much harder for forums to start it off. Parish councils exist; they have a telephone; they have an infrastructure; they have a legal personality; they know about it; they have a network that is informed about it. They kicked off with it, and we saw in the very early days that this was just being led by town and parish councils. Increasingly we see forums. In our last review of expressions of interest to the programme, about 30% came from urban areas, which by virtue are forums. It is much more difficult for them. Ask yourselves, if you are involved in local plans around the country, where you would be without a vehicle to do it. It is more difficult for forums. More support has been given from Government, but it would not be achievable without that.
Sophia de Sousa: The first thing I would like to say is that a very useful outcome of neighbourhood plans and this whole initiative of Government has been to raise the profile of community engagement and empowerment in the built environment. That has been useful. We have seen as an organisation, in speaking to developers and housebuilders, that they have started to think about it a little more and a little differently.

We do have some concerns with neighbourhood planning. It is not an area that we focus on particularly, because we find it quite prescriptive. I would like to share a quote from Sir Tom Shebbeare, who was involved in a neighbourhood plan and recently wrote a think piece for us on neighbourhood planning. He said, “It took four years and we were asked by professionals to produce a document of 600 pages that 12 people read”. That shows the challenges of the magnitude of the task that is being asked. While neighbourhood planning is a tool in the box, it is one tool. It is important that we look at, and a bit later I can talk about, more of the other ways of engaging communities in the built environment.

There is a problem of awareness generally. The general public is not necessarily aware that they can go and do a neighbourhood plan, and they are not necessarily aware of the power of a neighbourhood plan. It is a tool that can be extremely powerful. It is a tool that can really help shape the quality and equality of places, but there is such a focus on getting groups across the line and getting the document produced that I fear we could be doing more to really open up the conversation about what the absolute purpose of this is. The purpose of this is to create places that work for people, great places of great quality and equality.

**Q173 Lord Inglewood:** Clearly neighbourhood plans, if they are put together by an intelligent community and then those who are responsible for implementing planning, be it developers or other bits of the public sector involved in regulatory activities, can work well, if the relationship exists properly. Every community has its fair share of local busybodies, so how do you stop these things becoming the vehicles for local busybodies to stick their noses into other people’s affairs and bully their neighbours?

Sophia de Sousa: May I object immediately to the term “local busybody”? I believe anybody who is a so-called “local busybody” is passionate about their place. The question is how we can turn this from a starting point of threat to opportunity.

**Lord Inglewood:** Passion is insufficient by itself.
Sophia de Sousa: There are vehicles to engage people in the conversation that get beyond a knee-jerk reaction. That is true of any kind of community engagement. The knee-jerk reaction is to protect our interests. We see it everywhere we go, so there needs to be investment. I talk about the investment of time and of commitment—it requires funding from somewhere as well—to support an honest conversation about the opportunities from any changes to the area and the compromises that will need to be made. Openness from the start will help that conversation along.

Lord Inglewood: That is what I was wanting to find out about, the conversation and openness, but are we sure that this is always how it happens on the ground?

Sophia de Sousa: No, it is not.

Carole Reilly: We also have to think that we have just come from a period where neighbourhood plans did not exist and now they do, so there will always be teething problems. That is going to be an issue. One of the things about avoiding the hard-to-avoid groups of people who sometimes want to dominate is that neighbourhood plans have a referendum, so there has to be a point when the community at large has a certain say—the most formal say that has been given to communities, other than in general elections and local elections, about whether the plan should exist or not. There is quite a spread in terms of turnout for the referendum, but in some areas it is in excess of 60%, which are general election levels.

With a neighbourhood plan, whilst you might have a few people who are annoying, at the front and want to dominate, they risk this being rejected at referendum if it is not really covering the will of the local people. Community empowerment and community engagement have to happen from the very beginning, and part of that is about setting up terms of reference for groups, making sure they know how to operate, doing a community engagement process that is not the same old boring standing in the library for four hours with 15,000 pages, saying, “Do you want to read this?” but looking at ways that are very different. We have seen some fascinating models of community engagement.

Lord Inglewood: You think that the referendum at the end of the process is a good counterbalance to excessive enthusiasm.

Carole Reilly: I think it can be.
**Lord Inglewood**: Have many of them been chucked out by referenda?

**Carole Reilly**: Two plans have failed so far by the examiner.

**Lord Inglewood**: They were failed by the examiner.

**Carole Reilly**: None of them has been turned down by the referenda. On the whole, the average vote in favour at a referendum is 88%, I believe.

**The Chairman**: Could you give us those sorts of details?

**Carole Reilly**: Yes.

**The Chairman**: I do not think they are in your evidence.

**Carole Reilly**: No, our evidence is broader.

**The Chairman**: They would be very useful because, as a Committee and individually, we all come up against this sort of nimbyism or BANANA, as they call it now. It is an interesting sideline on it.

**Q174 Earl of Lytton**: Good morning to you both and, Sophia, a particular good morning to you. Our paths have crossed before in a similar type of situation. One particular question is to do with the fact that planning is inevitably a longish-term process, particularly the bit that we are interested in, which is the longevity of the built environment. How we create and foster that is important. When some years ago the RICS, my professional body, had a land and community commission on which I sat, one of the people who gave evidence to us said that “I can get a lot of people to volunteer for a project, a sort of task and finish, but if you are talking about the ongoing future management and maintenance of the process, once you have got it started, I get very few buyers”. Is that a problem still, or are there ways in which either of you think that we can break out of that and somehow make Huck Finn’s painting of the fence, or whoever it was, something attractive and desirable for the long term?

**Sophia de Sousa**: As I said earlier, it is a tool in the box. Planning and that long-term vision is a tool in the box. There is a huge amount of activity going on, on the ground, as there always has been, of small, incremental, organic elements of change that make a huge difference to the community. Again, it is about giving people a sense of an understanding of what getting engaged in this long arduous process can produce. What really are the outcomes? We would all like to hear more about four years on and what we know now. It is important to share that with the general public and make it appetising.
If what we know is that it is really hard and not enough people can get it to the end of the
line, we need to ask ourselves why and whether it needs changing. If we understand that it
works—it is making a real difference and changing the way people engage—we need to shout
about it a bit more. That is one of the things. We also need to recognise that the spectrum of
community engagement is vast, it is one way and it is not a way that is appropriate for
everybody. That is fine, and it is best left to those who passionately want to do it, because it
is a big ask.

**Carole Reilly:** I speak with two hats on, in many ways. I speak with my Locality hat, where we
see hundreds of representatives from community organisations across the country painting
that fence and pushing Huck Finn out of the way, because they want to paint it. You see
community activists who want to do those really complicated things, like take over the
difficult heritage building, because they want to save it. As Locality, we have done an
enormous amount of work about encouraging social investment, negotiating with funders
and making sure that those organisations are business ready, robust and able to stand on
their own two feet into the future to deliver community services. We see that.

As we speak today, we have a conference with 600 community activists in Liverpool, our
national convention, which is one of the most inspiring places you can go to to see people
who really are the stickers—who continue there, year on year, in small communities, really
trying to plough a furrow.

Secondly, just going back to the neighbourhood planning programme, whilst I said earlier to
Lord Woolmer that it is more difficult for forums, with neighbourhood planning you have the
challenge of evidence. All neighbourhood plans have to be evidence based. That has been a
bit of a challenge for people, because when people say, “We need this here and we need that
there”, you have to say, “Let us have a look at some evidence, shall we, and then we will see
what your housing needs are, what your problems with immigrant communities are or what
your transport needs are?” That has been an incredibly useful discipline for communities.
Communities that have been through this process, and lots of them are reaching the end now,
have galvanised, have done an enormous amount of work and are there as a strong body to
take actions forward in the future.
We have run programmes under contract to DCLG for about four years. In the last programme, two groups dropped out. We gave grants to 1,000 groups and two of them went bad. That is really incredible. Grant-making bodies do not see that and, in terms of technical support, it was the same. You can see groups like Fortune Green & West Hampstead. They designated 15 areas of green space and are really interested in employment. They are a forum that did not exist prior to neighbourhood planning and now are a group of people who know what they see in their area; they know what they like and they love, but they also know the figures and statistics underneath it, what is true and what is not. That evidence and passion will create something that will give people a launch pad into the future to work on it.

**Lord Freeman:** Just specifically on this point, what was the main lesson that you learned from the Great Yarmouth initiative that you were responsible for? I think I know the building in question.

**Carole Reilly:** In my old life, in the Priory Centre in Great Yarmouth, for those of you who are not aware, I used to run a development trust. It was one of the largest in the area. It was based in a Grade I listed building. I spent half my time going, “This is an amazing building”, and half my time going, “Oh my God, the toilets have backed up and it is going to cost us £15,000 to repair them”. I was trying to navigate my way between community meetings in incredibly deprived areas and meeting the needs of a heritage building, having that funny thing where people would object to stuff just for the sake of it, when you are trying to encourage and bring the local community on board.

I learned a hard lesson on heritage in that one. For the first couple of years, I thought, “Why do we not have a nice new build?” I could have done all my work around mental health, well-being and teenage pregnancies, and we ran two Sure Starts—all of that business—without worrying, but that gave an incredible sense of place to people. Great Yarmouth ranks so highly in terms of indicators of deprivation. The Priory Centre is one of the very few buildings that are Grade I listed in daily use and in secular use. You have ordinary people going to a job club, with their mental health issues or trying to take their special needs kids to our special groups there, in a place of incredible beauty. As we were very lucky with Sure Start funding to develop that stage in those very early days, the renovation of the building was beautiful and people had an incredible sense of pride in it. My lessons are to take a deep breath, make sure you
understand that you are on a marathon and not on a sprint, keep the long-term goal and use those buildings to create a sense of pride. Subsequent to that, I sit now on the Heritage Lottery Fund, because of my passion for making heritage work for people, challenging this “We cannot change anything” view and making it work. Those buildings have lasted because they have adapted.

**The Chairman:** You have certainly enthused me to go to Great Yarmouth. It is great to see that and I do not think you are a busybody either, just one with real passion. There is a similar sort of thing in King’s Lynn. I was very impressed by what they have done there.

**Carole Reilly:** King’s Lynn is amazing.

**Q175 Baroness Rawlings:** It sounds really good, very important and everything that one believes in, with the neighbourhood planning, the commitment, the community engagement, the good intentions and looking four years on. I wonder what happens when things become major difficulties and things perhaps go slightly wrong, like recently around Stratford and around the Olympic Park, where there had been some bits where there was neighbourhood planning and, because of outside competition that has been very successful—that is, Westfield—everything is now boarded up and people have left whole big chunks. Some of them are nice buildings; some of them are not. The neighbourhood there has collapsed. The leader who started it all with the Olympics is not there anymore. I wonder how you would deal with that.

**Carole Reilly:** That is surely a lesson for neighbourhood planning, which is for engaging people and bringing people along. All of the developments in Stratford started prior to neighbourhood planning and a lot of them were imposed. In a lot of the work that happened around Stratford, people were taken out of local authority housing and moved to where they did not want to go. It looked very post-war, in terms of those approaches.

**The Chairman:** It was a special case.

**Carole Reilly:** Yes, it really is a very specific case. It is not an example for neighbourhood planning. The converse of that is that, if you want to make a change, if you bring people on, the power of neighbourhood planning is that it takes objection out of the planning system. Mostly, and as an unintended consequence of planning, the principle is, “I do not agree with you; I do not want that here”. That has been recurrent through the planning system and
planning officers are tired of it. Neighbourhood planning tries to bring a consensus and have an understanding that we have to jointly solve this problem. Stratford is not an example of neighbourhood planning. There are also lots of areas where planning permission predates neighbourhood plans and communities are having to work around that. Those are very difficult areas to work to.

**Sophia de Sousa:** Just briefly, it is a question around, as Carole alluded to, the confrontational nature of planning. Many see it as a vehicle for objection. There is something about setting up processes, whether neighbourhood planning or other processes, for a collaborative starting point. One of the things that we have been very excited about, in the work that we are doing, is bringing communities, developers, housing associations and academics—a mix of people—together at the starting point, so there is a joint conversation for a vision for change and a vision for the place. Everyone will not always agree, but it is that honesty at the outset that makes a difference. Allow people to say “This is my position, this is what I need to get done and these are my fears”, working through it from a starting point of honesty and collaboration. If we can use neighbourhood planning as a step towards a more collaborative approach to place making, and this is one of the tools in the box, that would be very helpful.

**Q176 Lord Inglewood:** I would like to explore what you have been saying a bit further. As an aside, it struck me that your experience of Great Yarmouth had certain application perhaps to the building we are sitting in now.

You have talked about promoting community engagement and, first of all, what are the policy changes that you think might be introduced to make community engagement work more effectively, bearing in mind that, when it works, it clearly works well, because you achieve the consensus that you are talking about? It is quite easy to envisage circumstances where you are going to get great tension between communities and national policy, for example, or perhaps communities and design considerations, both of which, in different ways, are discrete skills and expertise that necessarily stand outside the community’s comprehension. How do you square the circle?

**Sophia de Sousa:** First of all, there is a big difference between engagement as a consultation tool and engagement as an empowerment tool. We are talking about ensuring that everyone in the process has the skills to engage in that conversation. In some cases, and the
Glass-House has been working for 15 years around this, it is embedding design skills within communities, but also within local authority departments, which do not necessarily have a design and place-making background. Some of the skills gap is around how to engage a conversation or how to start a conversation: how to put forward a process that is open and transparent, and which harnesses what everyone can bring to the process. We tend to talk about communities as just people who live there, but communities are hugely rich with skills and experiences that we have harnessed effectively, but also local organisations and networks, which can be collaborators and allies, not opposition. If we create policy that first of all supports investment in a collaborative rather than an oppositional approach, and an investment in experimentation and risk taking—certainly within parameters, not just wildly trying anything—there is something about an expectation of engagement not just asking whether you like something or not but starting a process of empowerment and collaboration. There are some fantastic examples of the built environment and engagement being a process to embed employability skills in communities, but also, as shown by Great Yarmouth and other fantastic organisations around the country, they become a hub, a resource, a network to bring people into the conversation.

**Lord Inglewood**: Do you find in these conversations that the participants speak the same language? I do not mean English, as it were, but the comprehension whereby each understands what the other is really getting at and trying to achieve.

**Sophia de Sousa**: There is an investment required of time and resource to create a shared starting point. As I said, sometimes that requires embedding design skills over there, engagement skills over there and understanding of the planning system over here, getting everyone to a starting point where they can have a sensible conversation. That requires political will; it requires the will of developers, housing associations and local authorities to invest staff time in that conversation and to have the resources to engage people. They are struggling with that at the moment.

**Lord Inglewood**: If I granted you one wish for something that would happen to bring this about that does not happen now, what would it be?

**Sophia de Sousa**: I would say that the requirement for new development should go beyond simply consultation and require any new development or regeneration to have an element of
community empowerment, along with the standard consultation, so that you can create a really good working group.

**Lord Inglewood**: Forgive me for just pressing further, but when you use the word “empowerment”, what precisely do you mean?

**Sophia de Sousa**: I mean giving people an understanding of the process that lies ahead and giving people the information and skills they need to participate constructively. As I said earlier, there is a knee-jerk reaction. If someone is going to come and clear your street and demolish your homes, you are certainly going to fight against it. That is a knee-jerk reaction.

There could be a way to say, “This is the situation; these houses are crumbling down. Let us have a conversation about what is best. Do we refurbish them? Do we redevelop?” To have those conversations really intelligently, people need to have the facts, and there is a real fear in the development and the regeneration world to give those facts and put them on the table.

There is a real fear that, if people are told there is a budget of £50 million, they will say, “We want the moon”. When you start to go through the process of what that can really buy and what is essential, and again that conversation that neighbourhood planning is trying to have about what is important to our area, people can have an intelligent conversation. But there needs to be a starting point of honesty and openness, and there needs to be investment in everyone coming to the conversation with some shared information and tools, I believe.

**Carole Reilly**: I would just add briefly that the important point is to know the parameters of what you are engaging on and to manage expectation. Quite often when you see areas that are really suffering from engagement fatigue, because they have been asked 50 times seemingly very similar things, and nothing has changed, it feels like “I am not answering because you are not listening”. One of the things is about being absolutely realistic. We know what neighbourhood planning can and cannot do. If you want to say, “No houses here”, and you are in a growth area, neighbourhood planning is not for you. We have to manage expectations very clearly and help people to understand the direction of travel they are taking.

For example, I have worked with a number of communities on neighbourhood planning that have started with quite a nimby anti-growth approach but, on the basis of really thinking through where they want to go to, understanding what the needs of their community are,
talking and looking at the evidence, they say, “Actually, we do not want five-bedroom executive homes. We want starter homes for our kids. We want retirement and downsizing opportunities for those who stay in this village”. You find a 180-degree shift from going, “Absolutely no”, to “Yes, we will, but we want to shape and influence it, and we do not want it to be done to us”. Any engagement has to understand what the parameters are and what you can and cannot do because, if the engagement started with that group to say, “No homes, that will be absolutely fine, no problem”, but you knew that there was housing target in that area for 200 homes, it is pointless.

**Lord Inglewood**: You have to start from the wider planning framework. It is no good, if HS2 is going to your village, saying, “We should send it somewhere else”.

**Carole Reilly**: Absolutely, if that is what you are engaging on. It is about really managing expectations. A much wider programme that we have been involved with, which was funded by OCS, is the Community Organisers programme that you will be aware of. It started off with this very non-prescriptive approach: what do you love about where you live and what would you like to change? The agenda was stripped bare, and so residents thought, “Oh, what do I love? I love this little walkway there. What would I like to change? I would like to change a bit of lighting here”. Community projects developed from that and they were absolutely bottom-up, engaged in small or sometimes slightly larger areas. Community engagement works if you make the balance right, if you are clear about outcomes and if you are absolutely clear about what can be achieved by the process. There cannot be one model for what community engagement works.

Going back to neighbourhood planning and repeating myself, 88% yes votes and sometimes 60% at a referendum are significant figures. Who went to the police commissioners referendum? It was 15% on average. People do really care and they are really engaged, but you have to make sure you ask the right question. I said I would be short and I was not.

**The Chairman**: We have to rush on a bit. We are running out of time for questions. There was something you wanted to say.

**Sophia de Sousa**: I wanted to reiterate that it is about creating a resource in the community, rather than an obstacle, in a nutshell.

**The Chairman**: And a measure of trust, I should think, which has not been mentioned.
**Sophia de Sousa:** Absolutely.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** I was interested in your experience to know how much the communities understand the health needs of other groups, so for spaces, safe routes, cycle routes and so on, but also how much they understand the problems sometimes of refitted buildings, particularly when there is asbestos in them, and managing that. What has the view been towards boarded-up buildings being put to a different use, possibly a use for people who perhaps may not be viewed as the most socially desirable in their area, so temporary housing, transit housing or accommodation that is used for homeless to use as temporary transit accommodation?

**Carole Reilly:** In terms of boarded-up buildings, as Locality as a whole, we have been really concerned with the high street and the demise of the high street, in many ways. We are concerned about changes to permitted development. It is quite shocking what you can do now without planning permission, and small changes have massive impacts and unintended consequences. We can look at what does happen in our high streets. We have worked with an organisation called Meanwhile Space, which has really supported this pop-up initiative, which at least removes the boarded-up-window approach—the feeling that everything is going downhill a bit and that you have to get in your car to drive to Tesco.

**The Chairman:** Can I just intervene on that one? Pop-ups are fine in theory but, in practice, they make the people who are existing on the high street, at least where I live, think, “Oh, three more pop-up shops this month. That means we are really on the way out”. They are adjusting their buying patterns, their travel patterns and their demand for public transport. It is a very difficult one. It was an extremely good idea, but I also think about long-term security in a place. When the elderly people there see these shops popping up, they think, “Where is it all going to end?” because they go.

**Carole Reilly:** We need a delineation, though. Ironically, at the end of my street—and I live in a conservation area in a row of listed buildings, all Grade II—we have just had a pop-up and they are selling tinsel and tat. I feel exactly the same way, but we have examples of a number of other pop-up shops where young entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs are looking at very interesting concepts that they want to try out. It is not a one-size-fits-all model.
The Chairman: They are saying that is why they are doing it, but they are not doing it that way. That is the point.

Sophia de Sousa: There is a point about leadership in the local area, about which pop-up shops are going in. There is looking at what is there already on the street and not creating competition that will hurt others but complementary activities.

The Chairman: Can I just point out that we are in a very small community of 3,500 people, and we have had three pop-up fudge shops? When I go home tomorrow, there will probably be one, if that. It is horses for courses, but it is a dangerous concept.

Carole Reilly: The market is difficult in terms of the high street because, if we do not look at pop-ups, we look at what has developed in any high street recently, where you have much more ubiquitous chain stores and out-of-town shopping centres, then you have hairdressers, cafés and now knitting shops. We are looking at very different high streets from what we saw 10 or 15 years ago.

Sophia de Sousa: Can I just come back to boarded-up homes, because there are some fantastic examples of communities delivering change and growth. Liverpool is one of them where streets were cleared for housing pathways and streets died for many years. Thirty-four out of 200 homes were occupied. There are fantastic examples. Cairns Street was just celebrated—I know you have worked with them as well—at the Academy of Urbanism awards. It was a group of people who stood up and said, “Our streets should not look like this and we are going to do something about it”.

When we talk about growth and fulfilling housing need, that community got together. They repainted. They refurbished. They revitalised their street, and homes that were empty and being compulsorily purchased for £8,000 are now being sold for £100,000 each, so there is also that organic change. There are some very effective homesteading policies, the £1 homes initiative and those sorts of things, if they are done with a sense of shared commitment and a sense of real regulation in place, so that they cannot fall prey to just development but are a vehicle for community building and revitalising places.

I just wanted to make one point on people’s understanding of each other’s needs. One of the things that communities have most often told us, and particularly young people, is that engagement processes very often speak to groups in their little boxes. They will go and speak
to the young people and they will go and speak to older people and they will go and speak to young single parents, but very rarely do they create an environment in which those people can have a conversation together.

**Q178 Baroness Rawlings:** You did touch very briefly on leadership. With all that you have been talking about, I have been listening very carefully to lots of dialogue and discussion; people are going to be talking forever. I was wondering about your Great Yarmouth success. There must have been a strong leader there driving it, who is there getting everything together, because otherwise everyone consulted talks for hours and hours and hours, and it goes on forever, unless you have somebody driving it who is a strong leader. You hardly mentioned that at all. Like your Great Yarmouth project, was there one visionary there who really drove it? It is all very well everybody talking about it. What is your view?

**Carole Reilly:** Briefly, I was the Chief Executive in Great Yarmouth and I took it forward. What we see at Locality, in terms of community development trusts that make things work—and everybody knows Coin Street in London, and Goodwin in Hull—we look at amazing development trusts that have brought local people on board. Leadership is incredibly important: making sure people on the ground have managed expectations, are brought in and understand what can be done, but there also has to be money to match it. One of the things that we absolutely can evidence in Locality and in development trusts before us is that these community organisations deliver on the ground. They deliver on the ground because they are rooted, they are not going anywhere and they are going to be there for the next 10, 20 or whatever years. We need to match regeneration funding to community organisations, because you get incredible value for that. For state-based regen programmes, if we look at the empty homes that you spoke about, Baroness Finlay, if they are delivered not necessarily by the local council alone but co-produced by residents’ associations and by local development trusts, things will work, especially where people know and love an area, and want to stay there. Was that brief enough?

**The Chairman:** Yes, that was fine.

**Sophia de Sousa:** I am going to be brief. The point is around collaboration, but it is also around leadership coming from a number of groups and organisations working together. It requires leadership in the council, leadership with a community organisation and leadership within
community groups. One leader is not enough. It requires, when that leadership is there, all of those leaders to mobilise their various assets, and I mean “assets” in the very broadest of terms. When that happens, you can do a lot with not very much.

**Lord Inglewood:** How do you achieve leadership?

**Sophia de Sousa:** It is important that leadership is not one person. You need that person who has inspiration and a driving force but, to be very brutal, if that person goes under a bus, it all falls apart if it is one leader. You need a group with leaders coming from different areas who are working together.

**Carole Reilly:** There is also a thing about small amounts of money that kick-start groups and give the confidence that allows leaders to come forward. In our community-led housing programmes, it is around a bit of cash that can help a community organisation either sort out its governance or buy an option for land, so they that they can take something forward. Those bits of money are not huge; they are reasonably insignificant, but they can build confidence—and confidence builds the foundations for good leadership.

**Sophia de Sousa:** That investment should have a collaboration caveat attached, I believe.

**Q179 Lord Freeman:** My question is about the balance of responsibility between national government and local authorities. Do you think that balance should be shifted more towards greater responsibilities at the local level, not just northern powerhouses, but communities all over the country?

**Carole Reilly:** I will be brief on that. Clearly in terms of planning policy anyway, we see a massive vacuum. You have national planning policy and then you have local/neighbourhood here, with this kind of gap in between, apart from in London where we have the London plan. You can see a vacuum and there is a real confusion about what you do about infrastructure, what you do about transport and how those things work. They impact enormously on the local thing—the neighbourhood plan in planning terms—but they are decided at a national level.

In Locality, we really are welcoming the discussions happening around devolution. We think that our community members could really be great vehicles for making sure that devolution onwards, double devolution, is worked out on the ground, but we have to make sure that you do not get another layer of bureaucracy and politicking that stops power and money going
down to neighbourhood areas. We are having discussions with a number of areas that are interested in doing devolution deals to see how we can keep it going down. We have to look at devolution onwards, and we have to make sure that the power rests at the neighbourhood level, because that is where you get the most worthwhile outcomes, as long as they are managed properly.

**The Chairman:** You mentioned the London plan, but we went to Birmingham on a site visit and that was very obviously part of a plan to remove the concrete collar around the centre of Birmingham. It was very successful. Any more on that one, Lord Freeman?

**Lord Freeman:** No.

**Sophia de Sousa:** I think there is a balance between leadership and policy. When we are talking about national and local government, and the balance of power, there is a responsibility for national government to have a very strong leadership role in being demanding about place quality and equality. There is certainly a challenged environment for local government, which has had its resources depleted significantly, and a lot of the skills have been drained from place-making departments of local government. There is a question there; there is a tension, if you like, but there is also an opportunity. This tension of lack of resource can help push the collaborative economy approach—developers, housing associations and community organisations together. If they pool their resources they can achieve more than they could alone. Creating vehicles to make that easier and encourage that will be really important.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Such as?

**Sophia de Sousa:** There is a real problem around stepping into a proposition. Let us take the example of a community park. Many local authorities are simply handing them over for community management or ownership, because they do not have the funds to look after them. That is a big ask for a community and there are some very good resources within local authority networks; there are good resources within community networks.

It is important when you are looking at all of these—asset transfer has been a really interesting journey, and we have worked together on that in the past—that you make sure that any new process, like asset transfer, like handing over management to any organisation, has checks and balances attached in terms of accountability, but also creates opportunities
and helps support that networking. One of the most important roles a local authority has and one of the most important tools is the networking opportunity. They know everyone. Who they do not know, the community organisations know. Who they do not know, the local authority does. How can you put those mechanisms in place for structures that support that networking collaboration approach?

Q180 Baroness Parminter: The question I was going to ask you has already been answered, because it is about how we get communities to engage in taking on new housing. You are saying that, as long as you use neighbourhood planning so that people feel it is being done with them, rather than being told to them, that is the way forward, so I am not going to ask about that. I am going to ask a supplementary question. You keep talking about education, education, education. Is there anything concrete? Do you mean formal changes to Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3, or are you talking about education in a community setting?

Carole Reilly: Clearly, education is really important. There have been such enormous changes. I have been talking about training people to upskill and to support them for specific bits of skills, so I do not really have anything to add on education.

Sophia de Sousa: We have recently been involved in some really fantastic projects working with developers in schools, in areas where there is large-scale development happening. We are using a local development process as a means of talking about place and talking about citizenship, taking young people through a training programme, which is a big-picture programme, using a place as a vehicle for skills development and empowerment. That is interesting as a mechanism because not only does it start to bring young people, their families and local networks into the development conversation but also introduces them to a sector of employment opportunity they knew nothing about. For instance, this particular project we did in White City led to work placements for the young people with the developers involved. There are vehicles like that that take great will on the part of local schools and developers, and they are not easy to set up, but hold great value. They should be shared and celebrated, because it is a very effective model. When a young person engaged in such a programme says to you, “Now I understand why I have to go to school”, that is a place, and development, doing some good.
Q181 Baroness Whitaker: I absolutely support that communities must have a predominant role in the shaping of their own local environment. They have a range of skills, but there is a body of expertise in design and high quality place making that some communities may be unaware of. What policy measures do you think should be taken to bring communities into the knowledge that they really need to have to make sure that it is a high-quality place that they are going to shape? How can community engagement support good design in place making?

Sophia de Sousa: I believe it comes down to a starting point of not asking, “Do you like this?” or “Do you not like this?” but “What is special about your place?” and “What fills you with delight?”

Baroness Whitaker: On the process, if I could just pick you up on something that happened in Manchester’s New Islington, the architect, I cannot remember who it was—maybe it was Terry Farrell—had a large group of local people to whom he put alternatives. “Which do you like? Do you like this? Would you rather have that?” They were very participative, but he was a very skilled place maker who was showing them the options. Do you not think that something like that works?

Sophia de Sousa: People require training to engage, if you are really getting into a detailed conversation about assessing plans and development options. It is unreasonable to expect a person to just step in front of a set of plans and understand them. We have been delivering training for 15 years for community organisations, and they are most effective when community groups and organisations are trained alongside project officers and members of the development team, so they are developing a common design language. The architects that we have then worked with have said what a difference it makes when we have a starting point of a shared language and vocabulary. It is a whole lot easier then.

Baroness Whitaker: How could this be inculcated on a national scale? Do you have any thoughts?

Sophia de Sousa: It requires an investment, both of will and of financing. There are assets out there that can be mobilised. The development community is one. They have said that they will happily support engagement if the vehicles are there to do that. There are procurement issues and competitive advantage issues that get in the way of that early work. We do work
in schools. There is a lot you can do to talk about place and get people thinking about it. We are involved in the Place Alliance with Matthew over there, and the objective of that is to start a national conversation. We do not talk about place nearly enough in this country, and that is really the starting point, but then ministers need to engage with the diversity of voices that come back.

Baroness Whitaker: National leadership?

Sophia de Sousa: You need the national ear as well, willing to engage with the diversity of voices. It is too easy to route all of the opinions and views on place through organisations like Carole’s or mine. We can be fantastic spokespeople, because we work with hundreds and thousands of communities, but there will always be voices out there that need a route into the ear of government. Hopefully the Place Alliance is starting to tackle that.

Carole Reilly: If I take this back to neighbourhood planning, we have to say it is one of the vehicles that has the biggest number of people working on it in the country. Increasingly, we see neighbourhood plans having urban design policies in them. People care about it. We would encourage them not to be on a minute level around the detail of design of particular buildings, because the NPPF takes us away from that. It says it should be broad. We can see in neighbourhood planning groups that there are a number of really creative groups out there that are keen to embrace new development and to understand that we should be looking at a heritage for the 21st century, instead of just replicating old things or making a pastiche.

We have a vehicle that works. We have a vehicle that is being embraced. Through DCLG, we run a support programme, where we have just started to do a big piece of work in east Shoreditch around design and design codes. As long as neighbourhood areas are engaged in the process of what is going to happen to the area, they can say, “This works” and “That does not work”, in terms of permeability, or “How do I get my bike across?” or “If you build that estate there and it faces outwards, no one will use our shop and it will close, because everyone will get in their car”. These are the things around making a place that really make it work and build into it health, well-being and neighbourliness principles.

We can look at a couple of examples, like the Wing neighbourhood plan, which passed its referendum in March or July. I cannot quite remember. The shovels are in the ground now. They have worked with developers all the way along. Importantly, that has allowed them to
influence design. It has allowed them to influence place making. It has taken conflict out and sped up the process of getting growth. We really need to see that, when you do that and have a collaborative approach, things will kick off, but again the health warning is managing expectations. You can only do what you can do under this legislation.

**Q182 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** I have a brief question following on from that. Given that data can speak volumes, have you got any data from an area, such as the ones you have just been referring to, that show a drop in consultations for depression or mental health, a drop in disturbances in the community through disturbed teenagers or whatever, so that there is a number there—a before and after comparator?

**Carole Reilly:** No. I am afraid at this point I have to sit back and say neighbourhood planning is still relatively new. We only have 110 that have gone through referendum and 87 that are made. It is still too early. The impact on health and well-being measurements would lag where the neighbourhood plan was, although we are about to work with the OCSI, which is developing the data on deprivation, to look at this evidence planning for neighbourhoods. They could do something looking backwards on it, but we do not have it at this point.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** I am not sure about the lag, because there is something about a sense of belonging to a community that brings about very rapid health benefits, quite apart from the longer term ones later.

**Sophia de Sousa:** If I may, a really useful resource on that sort of information is the fantastic work being done within the Connected Communities programme funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. That supports action research, which is a collaboration between academia and practice on the ground, and communities. There are some fantastic projects. We have been involved in many and have a strategic partnership with Open University around that. What can we learn while we are doing? There is a huge resource there, both in gathering learning from experience and testing new methodologies, but also a resource in creating new opportunities to test models and support communities with free support. It is worth looking into. There is a vast spectrum and a large programme around communities and design.

**The Chairman:** It has already been slotted in by my policy analyst.
**Carole Reilly:** Can I just briefly add to this? Neighbourhoods are not defined in the NPPF. Neighbourhoods are as defined as the people who live in them, in terms of neighbourhood planning. Whilst that is great, one of the problems is that data collection might not fit in with your health authority area or data collected by police for your safety measures and so on. We have been working with a number of organisations that are rapidly developing a reporting system that can make a bespoke area and will do a best fit around numbers of data sets, so that data will come online. There is open data and it fits to the local authority boundary, the ward boundary and the education boundary, and they are really complex to understand, but there are massive developments to be made on that and we are working closely on it. I would really hope to say that, in a year, we can give you all this.

**The Chairman:** That sounds very promising.

**Sophia de Sousa:** May I just add one point, which is the value of stories and voices? We can talk about data but people’s stories about engaging with placemaking are equally important. A young man said one of the most powerful things that has ever been said to me, which was: “Before I got involved in a local garden project, I sat in my house all day long, on my own, watching television, and now I am a trained youth worker and I am out there with people”.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** Those stories need to be collected and collated, and then used, otherwise they get lost.

**Q183 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** We have been hearing quite a lot about a diminution in the level of skills in local planning departments. Are there some particular skills that you think local planning departments should have and do they have them?

**Sophia de Sousa:** Planning departments are being asked to be enablers now. There has been a real shift in their role from being reviewers and deciders on plans and policy. They are now being asked to help communities engage in neighbourhood planning, so there is a whole skills set required there. I know from going around the country, and I also sit on the Urban Panel, which goes into a lot of former market towns and former industrial cities, simply that local authorities do not have many personnel with a place perspective or with place expertise. That is a real problem, be it in heritage, planning or any of the architectural built environment professions. They are being chipped away at, so it is a problem.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** What is the solution?
The Chairman: Our report would recommend it.

Sophia de Sousa: I do not think it is necessarily about expanding government out again. It is about recognising there is a critical mass of skills sets required within a team to carry out certain duties. Particularly if devolution is happening and more duties are being handed over to local government, they need the mechanisms and support structures to do that. We can do some creative sharing of expertise across areas, and there are some nice examples of different local authorities pooling their resources to create a collective bank of knowledge that they can share and a personnel resource that they can share, and we will need to look at that more and more. Caseload is going to be an issue with something like that and local knowledge will be an issue with that.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Does basic training for planners, architects, surveyors and builders need altering?

Sophia de Sousa: The education system should inject that. The built environment education works in silos, so they do not know enough about each other’s professions. A shift is starting to creep into higher education courses now. We are asked to go and do lectures and workshops, and embed what we have learned within university courses. The role of the designer and the planner is changing, and the higher education degrees need to reflect that. There is something we can do to help send them in the right direction. That investment is needed.

Carole Reilly: In terms of skills and capacity shortages for local authorities, there is no doubt that local authorities are incredibly stretched. Three or four years ago, they were far more suspicious of neighbourhood planning and the demands it would put upon them. Planning departments feel like a game of musical chairs where no one is removing the chair; they are removing the people. You go in and there are loads of empty chairs in the department, and so it feels like more work for us and we cannot do it. There is also a level of suspicion towards communities in terms of: “What do you know about this anyway?”

We have seen a significant change in that way. Local authorities are much more confident, and I could name a couple of local authorities that encourage neighbourhood plans to be developed in their areas. Bassetlaw, for example, is one of those that regularly encourages their groups. Leeds is another one. They feel like they are more confident about the skills of
communities to take this forward, and it feels more collaborative. If they can state clearly, “We are the local authority; under our duty to support, we will give you this, but we expect this back”, and if there is a really clear give-get or ask-offer between the local authority and the community body—some kind of contract—it makes it work. It means that skills shortages can be overcome.

One of the things we see, in terms of the reducing planning departments for neighbourhood planning, is one of the solutions is to produce loads of resources, and then people can take them and know how to write a plan. Remember, four years ago, there was no plan. Three years ago, there was no neighbourhood plan. It is like writing a thesis and no one had ever done one before. You do not know what it is. Now we see that there is much more, but we have to be really careful about just producing tool kits and resources, because otherwise neighbourhood plans will be defeated. They reflect the uniqueness, the individuality and the character of that area, as made by those local people. If you just build it from loads of different tool kits, it becomes a cut and paste job and it will mean nothing to local people. The power is in the people who wrote it and own it.

One last thing to say is that the community engagement and the skills needed have been reflected, as I said before, in referenda. It has inspired local authorities. I would really like to watch this space to think, “Will they do that then? Will they work with the community, as widely and as deeply, in terms of developing their local plans, when they have big changes for the area?” You have to look at non-traditional ways of engaging, getting different people around the table and getting their voice heard. It is not that costly if you know how to do it right.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed. It has been a most interesting session. Thank you for all the preparation you have done and for your written submissions. You will get the transcript and you can correct it where it is necessary. Thank you. It has been most useful.

*11 November 2015*
1. This submission deals with one of the greatest but least acknowledged barriers to effective community engagement: the extremely low level of recognition of the value of lay knowledge for policy making and spatial / urban planning. Lay knowledge is the knowledge that people have about their local areas and how those places work from personal experience, and is expressed in a qualitative and descriptive way.

2. The main focus of this submission is Question 12 of this Select Committee’s call for evidence, which asks about effective engagement of the public and communities with the processes of decision making for the built environment in which they “live and work”. It also centres on Question 11, which is about taking impacts on local people into account and improving considerations of impacts on health/mental health. We note that control over one’s own life is fundamental good mental health. These issues also relate to Question 1 on the ‘right level’ for decisions.

3. Recently completed research into community engagement in spatial planning, has shown the uses of lay knowledge. That work was conducted at UCL and the results are published in a peer-reviewed journal. There are enormous practical implications for Built Environment policy from that study. The relevant points are:

   a. Communities / the public are experts about how their own places work in a ‘spatial’ way, with multiple interlocking connections.

   b. Well-conducted participatory practice allows planners to draw on lay knowledge from communities / the public for decision-making.

   c. Lay knowledge provides causal explanations to spatial planning decisions, which is of particular value in:

      i. dealing with socially complex issues

      ii. shaping policy that affect multiple policy areas (health, transport, and education for instance)

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138 Introduced with the 2011 Localism Act, as the committee is no doubt aware.

139 For instance where sensors are embedded in infrastructure or buildings to provide live streaming data on energy use or human activity.
The value of lay knowledge comes from daily life and community activities, so it is experiential and highly personal.

e. This non-technical form of knowledge is not recognized as planning evidence and is lost to written records, which perpetuates low trust in participatory processes.

4. While current policy developments have made progress in empowering ‘community scale’ actors and establishing legal rights to access decision-making, further work is needed to bring the public into decision-making. Ratification of the Aarhus in the UK is intended to secure legal rights to participation in decision-making, and greater community control over their localities through Neighbourhood Planning gives new statutory powers to produce a small-scale policy. These are progressive steps but such powers and rights are only ‘tokens’ unless communities can bring lay knowledge(s) to the table. In practical terms this has implications for what is understood as ‘material considerations’ within planning.

5. The current technocratic definition of ‘material considerations’ precludes matters that are of genuine concern to individuals and communities from being considered. This is often not understood particularly in neighbourhood planning, which creates confusion, and it discourages people from engaging with decisions on their local built environment.

6. Recognizing communities’ lay knowledge is particularly important in the context of increasing expectations of big data and the ‘internet of things’ in the built environment. Just like in older, smaller, offline data, the patterns and trends found through new sources of data only tell part of the story. They show ‘what is’ but not ‘why it is so’ and ‘how it matters’. Built environment impacts are social, complex, and explained by lay knowledge.

7. Part of the solution is giving greater support to planners and other built environment professionals, to enable them to spend time in engaging communities. Transfer of decision-making powers to lower scales of planning must come with the resources needed to invest time in face-to-face contact between local people and those responsible for planning, design and delivery of development and management of places.

8. We encourage this Select Committee to support the removal of this barrier for communities to engage in shaping their own environments with their valuable lay knowledge. Recognition of the value of lay knowledge for ‘material considerations’

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141 Savills, 2015, “Beyond the election: what next for planning?”
needs a dedicated investigation and we suggest research is commissioned to ask: “How can communities’ lay knowledge become a material consideration for planning?”

06 October 2015
Dear Baroness O’Cathain,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Committee’s inquiry into National Policy for the Built Environment on behalf of the Mayor of London. With London’s population at its highest ever level, and growing by 100,000 every year, the issues around housing and infrastructure being considered by the Committee could not be more timely, and I thought it would be helpful to set out some of the work being done, and the reforms needed, to ensure that all those living, working in and visiting London benefit from the best possible built environment as befitting the greatest big city in the world. The evidence covers the Mayor’s devolution campaign, the London Plan and the NPPF, suggested improvements to the planning system, and background on the new London Land Commission.

I have also included a short note on the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), the Mayor’s new Development Corporation launched on 1st April. The OPDC is charged with maximising the benefits of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of investment in HS2 and Crossrail to develop an exemplar community and new centre in north-west London, creating opportunities for local people and driving innovation and growth in London and the UK. Its ground-breaking place-shaping work to transform and integrate one of the most inaccessible areas in London into a well-connected, world-class transport interchange, while delivering deliver 25,500 homes, significant new commercial space, and 65,000 new jobs supported by new sustainable and thriving neighbourhoods, may present an interesting case study opportunity as the Committee continues its inquiry.

Devolution

London’s ongoing success is predicated on the capital’s government being able to plan for, and deliver, the infrastructure necessary to underpin its welcome growth. To this end the Mayor, alongside London Councils and the Core Cities Group, has been campaigning for the devolution of property taxes to London’s government so that the capital is no longer reliant on hand-outs from Whitehall to forge forward with innovative and exciting housing and infrastructure schemes.

The devolution of the five taxes – business rates, stamp duty land tax, council tax, annual tax on enveloped dwellings and capital gains property disposal tax - is fundamental to cementing London’s long-term success. This was one of the key recommendations of the independent London Finance Commission (LFC), chaired by Professor Tony Travers which reported in May 2013 having looked in detail at how London’s funding arrangements could be improved to cater for current growth and plan for future growth. The report noted: “London government should have the freedom to make appropriate investments in its own infrastructure both to cater for the growth already forecast for its population and economy, and to promote economic growth... devolving revenue streams, including from
the full suite of property taxes, will afford London government the autonomy to invest in the capital and increase its accountability to London’s residents and businesses, without affecting the financial settlements of other parts of the country” (p38).

The devolution England’s cities have called for is relatively small. London’s local authorities and the Mayor currently keep about 5% of the taxes raised in the capital and are restricted in the amount of leverage this enables. The vast majority of London’s tax revenue goes directly to the Treasury. With the devolution of the combined suite of property taxes this would go up to about 11.5 per cent, meaning that the Treasury would still keep 88.5% for redistribution across the country. As an international comparator, New York keeps over 50% of taxes generated in the city, while Tokyo keeps 70 per cent (national treasury disbursements make up only 6% of Tokyo’s total spend), allowing these cities not only to invest securely for the future, but also to use local measures, such as varying local taxation levels, to deal with local issues and boost the economy.

The Chancellor’s announcement on 5 October 2015 that all business rates will be kept by local authorities for reinvestment has the potential to be transformative, and we look forward to working closely with the Treasury and DCLG on the details of the reform.

In addition to this, the Mayor believes there is a strong case for moving forward quickly with the proposal for stamp duty uplifts to be retained in the capital to help fund infrastructure improvements. Such uplifts would be an important enabler of many of London’s priority schemes, such as Crossrail 2, the Bakerloo line extension and road tunnels, because they support housing. Government could either ring-fence additional stamp duty revenue or create zones where London could retain additional revenue locally.

A corridor / zonal approach would see additional stamp duty from property sales close to new transport projects could be kept to fund those projects (similar to the zone for business rates uplift from the Northern Line Extension). Potential funding models for schemes such as Crossrail 2 and the Bakerloo line extension shows how important stamp revenues look likely to be as a way of capturing a proportion of residential value increases. Development of new housing is a key part of many transport schemes, with Crossrail 2 having the potential to enable up to 200,000 additional homes. Schemes also have an effect on the value of existing property in surrounding areas (20-25 per cent for Crossrail 1).

The planning system, the NPPF and the London Plan

Compared with its predecessors, the NPPF provides an invaluable and succinct national policy context and is well-tailored to the needs of its main audience, local planning authorities. However, despite paragraph 10 - which provides scope to tailor its application to local circumstances -experience shows that it can be applied in a mechanistic, ‘one size fits all’ way. This has particular implications for London, not just because of the distinct scale and nature of development in the capital, but also because of its unique planning arrangements. London alone has a two tier planning system, with borough Local Plans
having to be in ‘general conformity’ with the Mayor’s London Plan - together they constitute the Development Plan for an area. The NPPF provides national planning policy principles and explicit flexibility for addressing them in local circumstances. In London the London Plan provides the strategic dimension to this and the boroughs add their local dimensions. This reflects government’s localism objectives as well as its planning policy principles, and the Mayor feels it would be inappropriate for Government to add a further, top down, geographical dimension.

The London Plan sets out a statutory, integrated economic, social, transport and environmental framework for the development of London over the next 20-25 years, and borough Local Plans’ provide a more immediate and detailed perspective, typically over a decade. The London Plan follows an on-going process of ‘plan, monitor and manage’ and is regularly updated to address changing issues and national policy through formal Alterations. This process is expedited by the London Plan having a relatively streamlined preparation process. In view of the lead time involved in some infrastructure provision the Mayor has introduced a new, non-statutory, long term Infrastructure Plan, currently looking ahead to 2050. Cumulatively, these timescales and arrangements are considered appropriate and effective in addressing London’s planning requirements.

The London Plan has its own legislative base to provide a sound and appropriate strategic interpretation of national policy to address London’s unique circumstances. To ensure this it is subject to public consultation, an IIA and EIP, Assembly scrutiny and government sign-off. Despite these distinct arrangements, national policy also remains in force in London once government has ‘signed off’ the Plan, effectively meaning that planning decisions and appeals here can be considered through the prism of three layers of policy rather than the two which apply elsewhere in the country, and that Local Plans are prepared in the context of both national policy and the London dimension to it provided by the London Plan.

It would simplify the planning process for users and expedite local plan production by boroughs if government recognised that, having been through its statutory preparation procedures, the London Plan represents the London expression of the NPPF. Of course, should there be elements of national policy not covered by the London Plan, such as advertisement control, or if government introduced new policy after the Plan was prepared, then the NPPF would take precedence until the Plan was altered to address these issues.

It should also be recognised by the Government that the Mayor is best placed to provide guidance and strategic policy on the implementing and prioritising national planning policy principles in the unique circumstances of London through his Plan, subject to its preparation procedures (which includes Government ‘sign-off’).

The housing supply and the planning system

It must be accepted that the needs-driven approach of the NPPF to addressing housing supply is challenging, not least in reconciling provision for competing activities and
environmental priorities with a fixed stock of land. However, the Mayor and boroughs have demonstrated that it can be made to work – London needs 49,000 more homes a year and over 50,000 a year are being approved, backed by a pipeline of over 260,000 approvals. Clearly this requires a strong commitment to partnership working between all parties - the Mayor, boroughs, developers and other stakeholders. It also requires recognition that while the contribution of the planning process to increasing housing capacity can undoubtedly be improved, there is a complex series of other factors which are also constraining housing delivery and which must be addressed.

Improvements which could be made to the planning process include lowering the thresholds for referral of strategic planning proposals to the Mayor; a more streamlined approach to local plan making and decision making in areas with particular housing potential; devolution to the Mayor of historic central government powers over wharves, tall buildings, Thames policy areas and the extent of central London; recognition that there are distinct London dimensions to national policy initiatives such as liberalisation of Permitted Development Rights; and support for bottom-up arrangements to more effectively coordinate strategic policy and infrastructure across the wider South East. The Mayor is engaged with government on taking forward these and other measures through its ‘devolution’ agenda – they are issues which are most effectively addressed at the London rather than the central government level.

The London Land Commission

The London Land Commission was launched in July with the key objective of identifying land in public ownership, with a focus primarily on where clusters of land in the public sector could be better co-ordinated, reconfigured and maximised to ensure land is used more efficiently. From its initial analysis, the Commission has identified opportunities for where a strengthened public sector, working in collaboration, could assemble land for development to increase housing supply and contribute to place shaping. The scale of the opportunities is partly dependent on planning policy and feasibility assessments but highlights a significant role for the Greater London Authority (GLA) to work with public bodies to understand land use and enable the development of comprehensive masterplans.

To enable a strong interventionist role on land in public and private ownership and increase housing supply, London will require a substantial capital investment. Additionally, London’s government requires the appropriate legislative and mandatory powers to effect change in how land is acquired and ensure the procurement of housing delivery. Where advantageous to unlocking new supply, acquisitions of non-public land will be necessary to ensure the Mayor has ability to control developable land and procure the build out of those sites. To achieve optimum schemes, the Commission will prioritise acquisitions around transport infrastructure which is catalyst for future growth. The GLA and TfL are considering land assembly opportunities adjacent or near current and future infrastructure, including joint venture delivery models.
The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation

The Mayor launched the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) on 1 April with the ambition of delivering his vision for the delivery of homes and jobs on one of London's largest remaining brownfield sites. The HS1 Crossrail super-hub station is due to open in 2026 against a backdrop of existing rail connections that will provide a catalyst opportunity for major regeneration on a scale that we haven’t seen since the Olympic Games. As a Mayoral Development Corporation, the OPDC brings together local decision making into one coordinated authority, with borough leaders serving alongside transport agencies, business leaders, local representation and education, planning and regeneration experts on a publicly accountable Board to work cohesively together with the shared ambition to capitalise the opportunity for homes and jobs from the significant Government investment in the Old Oak Common station.

Not only will the OPDC provide a coordinated approach to major regeneration, it will work to seek to secure funding to enable the full regeneration potential to be achieved. The OPDC has been successful to date in coordinating not only the local interests but the national interests, and it has done this via securing Board representation from DfT, Network Rail, HS2 and TfL. The OPDC works across numerous Government departments via a cross-Whitehall HS2 Growth Delivery Team to ensure that matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage and all integrated and coordinated across the programme.

The enormous potential around Old Oak Common to shape a unique vision for the built environment and deliver new homes, jobs and neighbourhoods, may be of particular interest to the Committee going forward and we would be delighted to provide further information.

Yours sincerely

Sir Edward Lister
Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor, Policy and Planning

15 October 2015
Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. At the House of Lords National Policy for the Built Environment Select Committee meeting Stephen Quartermain made much of the government’s ‘bottom up’ policy on the development of residential and commercial property. There was also a question about the quality of structures and the need for ‘iconic’ design. With regard to who shapes what is in England’s built environment surely the responsibility should be split. For example big infrastructure projects such as a new bridge across the Thames or Crossrail should be co-ordinated and managed at the national policy maker level whereas new housing, retail and commercial building at street level needs to be the responsibility of local authorities. At each level there needs to be adequate design and heritage representation on the decision making team. This is emphasised in the Farrell Review. Each urban area, for example Chiswick in London, needs a master plan which establishes development guidelines and takes a long term view. It is important to combat the ‘we are where we are’ attitude and to correct building mistakes of the past when the opportunity arises.

2. In our opinion this varies greatly. The aspirations of some local authorities to develop master plans are ahead of the necessary infrastructure development that is controlled at government level. In business today the driving mantra is collaboration. No one company can operate without the support and input of its customers, supply chain and even competitors. Innovation is extremely difficult to achieve in isolation. Local authorities with grand ideas must be humble enough to, not only invite comment but, be prepared to reshape their plans to accommodate recommendations from neighbouring authorities and the local community to ensure that they can be aligned with other planned developments and are acceptable to the resident population.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. No. The NPPF is insufficiently assertive when it comes to citizen engagement and input. Local Plans are aspirational and woolly and intentionally leave room for authority planning departments to disregard concerns over inappropriate developments and damage to heritage and traditional environments. The NPPF assumes that ‘local people’ have the same objectives as the NPPF i.e. to forge ahead at all cost with new development to achieve the government’s goals on housing etc. Surely the whole point of community engagement is to listen and adapt to input from the people who live and work in the areas where development is taking place. The NPPF glibly uses the concept of Sustainability being applied to economic growth and not to the long term affect on the character and context of neighbouring environments. For example much government effort has been focussed on
revitalising the high street while at the same time planning permissions have been granted for change of use from commercial to residential property. This creates conflict between, often noisy and bustling, commercial activity and the need for quiet family living. This same change of use actually discourages economic growth by reducing the quantum of commercial property and places of employment in town centres.

4. Absolutely it needs a spatial perspective. Imagine a Cupertino, Apple like high tech campus based in Cornwall. The west coast beach/surfing lifestyle would appeal to many young professionals. Staff would be both local and relocated from the South East. It was a travesty that Dyson was prevented from building a factory in the UK. Government subsidy should be offered to British companies wishing to expand in the UK. Land needs to be graded with regard to its suitability for development e.g. 0 = prime rural agricultural land, 1 = low grade agricultural land on urban perimeters, 2 = rural brown field sites, 3 = derelict, empty or low grade property, 4 = urban brown field sites, etc..

5. As with any forward planning there should be progressive time horizons with decreasing granularity the further forward the projection, say 5, 35 and 100 year intervals. In the medium term the attraction of London for immigrants needs to be diluted by encouraging economic development in the West, Midlands and the North. The UK has a temporary advantage coming out of the recession that needs to be maintained through the encouragement of new technology and medium to high volume manufacturing. In future we need to be finding our human resource needs from within the population rather than encouraging ever increasing numbers of immigrants. Education and increased productivity should be the resources to provide the export revenue needed to fund infrastructure and housing. Holding the population total steady will relieve pressure on schools, housing, utilities power etc. with the added benefit that our town centres, heritage and natural assets can remain uncompromised as attractions for overseas visitors.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. The government cannot rely on the private sector alone to solve the housing crisis. Corporate self-interest will always trump any sense of social responsibility. In our borough affordable housing guidelines have been disregarded under pressure from developers unwilling to share their viability justification on confidentiality grounds. One site in particular is being developed between two conservation areas – a desirable place to live! This council owned land is ‘too valuable’ to be used for social housing but this is exactly what the borough residents need. We are a borough with high immigrant influx, illegal garden development, overcrowding and unscrupulous private landlords. Instead the developer is set to build high value apartments which will encourage owners from outside the borough (further increasing its population) or overseas investors who will leave them empty. Needless to say this development is high rise, massively exceeds the GLA guidelines on density and infuriating the local residents who foresee pollution, congestion and overstretched infrastructure.
problems resulting. For the price of an HS2 railway line the government could solve the housing supply deficit nationally. Funding would be split between social housing and incentives to refurbish void council and empty private houses. Up until the mid-1980s our borough provided grants for housing renovation. These were largely taken up by small builders and owner occupiers. An empty property tax would also help return it to the market.

7. As said before much has been made of the need for quality of buildings. But design and aesthetics are vital ingredients for sustainability and resilience. We do not want a repeat of the post war rash of cheap ugly high rise blocks which are now having to be demolished. There is a very impressive development on the west side of Dorchester, Dorset. It comprises a mixture of 2, 3 and 4 storey buildings mixed together in a wide variety of architectural styles and materials ranging from cottages to apartment blocks. Although modern it is in keeping with the historical town centre and will stand the test of time in a way that serried ranks of identical chicken hutch houses would not. Yes there is an element of pastiche here but one feels that these are places where people would prefer to live rather than some architectural iconic statement which will look out of date in a 20 years.

8. Britain is known for its global influence on culture, law and politics. This is understood and appreciated internationally. Continued marketing of our unique historical heritage overseas is essential. However it is recognition and appreciation of this heritage by those who live in Britain where the priority lies in this context. Our historical, art, architecture and engineering heritage must be taught to all ages. Through understanding of and sensitivity to our cultural and social history, good decisions will then be made by planning authorities and local communities when integrating new and old buildings and landscapes.

Skills and design

9. In our case our local authority does have some skilled, professional people but they are overstretched and under resourced. The glaring omission is officers with the knowledge and power to curate the integration of new development into the existing built environment in a way that respects the context and character of the area. The pressure to meet housing targets leads to their granting planning permissions for over dense and inappropriate developments. They understandably rely on private building development companies to provide the construction but are often pressured by these companies to exceed the limits and guidelines set out in their Local Plan. Any objectors to council projects are treated as ‘the enemy’ which does little to encourage a climate of trust by local resident and business groups. Objections are managed away or just ignored leading to a sense of disillusionment and scepticism in the concept of Localism. Our elected councillors on the planning committee are ill informed and lack the skills necessary to argue their case with the highly paid professional lawyers, surveyors and architects fielded by the developers. The bottom up aspiration of the government is a myth.

10. ‘Place-making’ is a fine idea when planning totally new developments such as the regeneration of, say, the Docklands, Old Oak Common or new towns. However many
urban, town and village environments already have a strong sense of place. The NPPF does not provide sufficient guidance to safeguard these environments from inappropriate development and skewing of the socio/economic diversity. Building style and scale must respect the surrounding architecture. Modern building materials and techniques allow for very tall structures which can be totally out of place in areas of low rise buildings 50 or more years old. Recently there has been a trend back to using bricks rather than cladding, even for high rise buildings. London in particular has many heritage brick buildings and use of similar red or yellow London stock would better harmonise with existing buildings, particularly when combined with stone detailing. Council planning departments must

Community involvement and community impact

11. No doubt there are cases of developers being sympathetic to local people and environments. This is not our experience. Historically developers are not based in the area and in some cases not even in the UK. To them the projects are a profit making exercise where powerful legal teams are fielded to overcome objections and obstacles. Their legacy will be buildings inappropriate to the area which may stand for 100 years.

12. As expressed previously we are increasingly sanguine with regard to community engagement. In one particular case our well argued concerns by an educated and professionally qualified group of objectors comprising planners, surveyors, designers and ex company CEOs and longstanding residents associations (one representing a world heritage site) have been completely ignored. Powerful developers backed by the council have emphasised those elements of the project that align with the NPPF whilst effectively wishing away the negative impacts the project will have. Despite a sustained and well reasoned campaign there has been no mitigation or concessions made by the developers to address those aspects that will impact the local residents, businesses and infrastructure. The scheme has the implicit backing of the government. In an attempt to strengthen their position, over 15 resident associations in the borough have joined to form a single group with which to engage the council on a variety of issues where decisions detrimental to the local community have been made. This group though has no legal standing. The council hold regular fora meetings with the group but effectively ignore their complaints. Is this a way to build good relations with local communities? Even if the group had the time and the resources to form a Neighbourhood Plan there is no indication that the council would take any more notice of their recommendations. To brand local community groups as Nimbys and the enemy is both disrespectful and inaccurate. Almost without exception the group’s position has been to support the council’s projects. However we want to have a say in the detail implementation, to not only ‘shape’ the changes to their environment, such that they have a positive impact on the mental and physical health of its occupants, but to ensure that the type, design and quality of construction is in keeping with the character of the area and will add to, rather detract from, its long term heritage.
Financial measures

13. As mentioned above we believe government funding on a large scale needs to be made available to local authorities to undertake social housing schemes. Some of this money needs to be used to incentivise small builders and individuals to renovate and improve poor condition and void dwellings. Empty property purchased for investment purposes needs to be taxed. Town centre parking charges need to be revised to provide free parking periods to help restaurants and shops (our successful local first-30-mins-free scheme has neither compromised safety nor increased congestion). Developers need to be incentivised to be transparent with their business and project viability cases. This could be financial or via a national excellence award scheme where developers are rated by a third party panel. Currently across London, for example, there are a number of huge schemes being undertaken by some of the largest building development companies capable of purchasing the land and managing the projects. This makes life easy for the local authorities. We would like to see more smaller building companies encouraged to work alongside or even collaborate to develop housing schemes. These would more likely to be British or, better still, local to the area. Without the need to satisfy shareholders or generate massive profits these companies could afford to build smaller scale developments that fit better with crowded urban environments. This would require more regulation, conditions and council management but would result in healthier local economies.

05 October 2015
GUIDE DOGS RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Summary

0.1 Guide Dogs provides mobility services to increase the independence of people with sight loss in the UK. Alongside our mobility work we campaign to break down physical and legal barriers to help people with sight loss to get around on their own. Current estimates suggest two million people with sight loss in the UK of which around 360,000 are registered as blind or partially sighted.142

0.2 Our work includes campaigning so the built environment is inclusive for people with sight loss. We seek to ensure:
- The inclusion of necessary accessibility markers such as kerbs, tactile paving and pedestrian crossings. We are particularly concerned by shared surface schemes
- New developments have sufficient parking spaces. The alternative means vehicles park on pavements, blocking the way for pedestrians

0.3 In our response to this inquiry we address only the questions which relate to the impact of the built environment upon our user group: people with sight loss.

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 Currently local authorities take decisions about the development of streetscapes and the built environment, but with an obligation to have regard to guidance issued by central government. Whilst the principle behind this model is good, in practice much guidance is out of date and not properly heeded by all local authorities.

1.2 The guidance of most relevance to people with sight loss is a document called “Inclusive Mobility” which was produced by the Department for Transport in 2002 and updated in 2005. The content of the guidance is now, therefore, 10 years old. Inclusive Mobility is not legally enforceable, but a High Court ruling in 2012 emphasised, in a ruling on Newham Council’s decision to depart from national guidance on the use of tactile paving, that it should be properly considered by local authorities and used unless an alternative solution performs as well or better.143

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143 Department for Transport, Door to Door Strategy, March 2013
1.3 As a result of the 2012 ruling, Local Authorities do use the guidance if it is considered relevant but, because it is so out of date it is often ignored, leaving a vacuum for local authorities looking for guidance to ensure that their built environments are accessible for people with disabilities. The Government committed to review and update Inclusive Mobility by the end of 2012 in its Accessibility Action Plan. However, this has not yet happened.  

1.4 The lack of clear and current guidance from central government can result in unnecessary variance between local authority areas. People don’t live their lives within local authority boundaries: for example many people live in one local authority area and work in another. People with disabilities need some degree of consistency and uniformity between local authority areas, and people with sight loss particularly need to be able to rely on consistent cues in the environment such as tactile paving and pedestrian crossings. When local authorities adopt different approaches to the built environment in each area it creates an environment which is extremely difficult and confusing for people with sight loss.

1.5 We agree that local authorities are best placed to take decisions on the built environment in order to ensure that it fits the needs of the local environment and population. However, this must be within the context and scope of clear, current and efficacious guidance from central government. We therefore recommended that the Department for Transport update the Inclusive Mobility guidance as soon as possible.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 Our evidence suggests that there is not enough coordination between designers of the street environment and transport planners. The ability of people to use public transport depends on them being able to access embarkation and disembarkation points. The Department for Transport has recognised this in its Door to Door Strategy, stating “we need to focus on improving the entire door-to-door journey.”

2.2 Safe access to bus stops and stations can be adversely affected by cars parked inappropriately, poor lighting, poor infrastructure design, poor maintenance of hedges and verges, isolated stops, and a lack of safe places to cross roads. The ability of people with sight loss to walk to and from stops and stations depends also upon pavement quality. Kerbed footways clearly delineate between pedestrian and traffic areas, indicate a safe place to walk, and denote the positioning of bus stops and shelters.

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145 TNS-BMRB Report, The impact of shared surface streets and shared use pedestrian/cycle paths on the mobility and independence of blind and partially sighted people, telephone interviews with blind and partially sighted respondents, 2010
2.3 A lack of a clearly delineated and obstruction-free pavement can be a particular problem in rural areas where some roads do not have formal kerbed footways, making it difficult for blind and partially sighted people to reach public transport embarkation points.

2.3.1 “[the bus service is] just not suitable for people with sight loss living in rural areas. Need taxis to and from bus depots/stops.” Guide Dog Owner, Northern Ireland.

2.3.2 “There is one bus an hour into Chepstow, but the road I have to walk to get to the bus stop has no pavements. At one point there are high walls on both sides and the Lorries that go by frighten me. My guide dog and I have to push ourselves back against the wall if we get caught there, I really dread it” Mrs G, Guide Dog Owner, Caerwent.

2.4 We recommend that urban designers and public transport planners work more closely together to ensure that public transport embarkation points can be safely and easily reached by accessible routes.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment be looking?

5.1 Built environment planning must be future-proofed to avoid the need for costly redesigns and redevelopments further down the line. With an ageing demographic in the UK, and the numbers of people with sight loss due to increase to almost 4 million by 2050, it is particularly important that the built environment is designed with accessibility at its forefront.

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 The fact that inaccessible shared surface schemes are allowed to be built in town centres illustrates that the decision-makers and developers involved do not always have an adequate understanding of the accessibility needs of people with disabilities.

11.2 Shared surface schemes are areas where road and pavements are built at the same level, removing the kerb so that cars, buses, cyclists and pedestrians share the same surface. Controlled crossings (such as pelican crossings) and road markings are also often removed in order to reduce clutter and create ambiguity. The scheme relies on eye contact to negotiate priority, which automatically puts people with sight loss at a disadvantage.

146 Coventry Telegraph, 2013
11.3 These streetscapes are inaccessible and dangerous for people with sight loss. Research published in 2010 found that 91% of people with sight loss interviewed had concerns about using shared surface streets. 42% of respondents reported a near miss with a car on a shared surface. In many cases people’s experiences of, or feelings toward, shared surface streets had a direct practical impact on independence and mobility, as people said they would seek alternative routes and actively avoid shared surface streets (44%) or were very reluctant to use them (18%).

11.4 In January 2013 a partially sighted pensioner was killed in Coventry after being hit by a bus on a shared surface scheme in an area that previously had a pedestrian controlled crossing. The court ruled that the bus driver was not responsible for the death after hearing a statement that the shared surface was so confusing as to make an accident inevitable. In January this year, in two separate incidents, two 90 year old men were hit by vehicles on shared surfaces in south west London.

11.5 In spite of the dangers posed to people with sight loss and others, councils continue to commission shared surfaces schemes. In 2014 Guide Dogs was made aware of 18 councils who were commissioning new schemes. The continued commissioning of these schemes indicates that decision-makers are not sufficiently considering the mental and physical health needs of users of the built environment.

11.6 In a further indication of a lack of consideration of accessibility, we see new housing developments built without sufficient car parking spaces, resulting in a situation where drivers park their cars on the pavement. Cars parked on pavements are dangerous to pedestrians, especially those with sight loss who may be forced into the road where they can’t see oncoming traffic. In addition, pavements are not designed to take the weight of cars and so pavement parking causes pavements to crack, creating trip hazards which are, again, particularly hazardous to people without sight.

11.7 To improve the consideration of the impact of the built environment upon the physical and mental wellbeing of users we recommend:

- A formal process of engagement with disabled people and their representatives at the beginning of the planning process.
- Clear and up-to-date guidance on accessibility issued by central government to local authorities.
- Specifically, a moratorium on new shared surface schemes until new guidance is issued.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

147 Your Local Guardian, 2015
148 Get Reading, Broad Street traffic lights stay off apart from one new crossing, September 2015
149 Minutes of Guide Dogs focus group, Nottingham, August 2015
12.1 We frequently hear complaints from our regional teams and from local sight loss groups, that local decision-makers have failed to engage with them around design and development issues. In the interests of brevity, we provide just one example and one comment below, but we would be happy to provide the Committee with more examples if required.

12.2 To ease traffic management, Reading Borough Council turned off the pedestrian traffic lights at a key junction in Reading town centre. People with sight loss and other disability groups complained to the council, arguing that the removal of the lights put their safety in danger. As a result, Reading Council agreed to carry out a consultation. However, despite a number of responses to the consultation from disability groups, a petition with 2,000 signatures, and significant local media coverage, the council continues to refuse to turn the pedestrian lights back on.\(^{150}\)

12.3 A comment from a respondent to a recent Guide Dogs focus group further illustrates the frustration felt by some people with disabilities over their perceived inability to communicate with, and influence, local decision-makers.

12.3.4 “(My council) can be great in some ways, but then they want to bring in a shared surface, we responded to a consultation with some other disability groups and they just ignored it” Person with sight loss.\(^{151}\)

12.4 We believe that local authorities can and should do more to engage with minority groups who are affected by changes to the built environment. This should be through proper consultation at the beginning of projects and joint working with disability groups in the development of new schemes.

06 October 2015

\(^{150}\) These are: level access; a flush threshold; door width and circulation space compliant with Part M of Building Regulations and a toilet on the entrance level. English Housing Survey 2012, DCLG.

\(^{151}\) See for instance: Key facts, housing and disabled people, Habinteg, 2015 (enclosed).
Habinteg welcomes the work being undertaken by the Select Committee to consider ‘the development and implementation of national policy for the Built Environment’ and welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Call for Evidence.

2. About Habinteg

Habinteg is a housing association with more than 40 years’ experience providing homes and services to disabled and non-disabled tenants.

Habinteg champions inclusion by working to:

- influence policy and promote good practice in relation to inclusive, accessible housing and independent living for disabled people;
- provide and strengthen research expertise and guidance on all aspects of housing and disability;
- inform the development of new ventures in areas such as: housing options and advice; supply of accessible homes; inclusive design in housing and neighbourhoods; effective home adaptations; support to individuals and families.

The social model of disability is crucial to every aspect of Habinteg’s work. We believe that people are disabled by barriers in society rather than by their own impairments.

Habinteg operates across more than 80 local authorities in England and Wales and manages over 3,300 homes. Of these more than 1,200 are designed for wheelchair users with the rest being designed to Lifetime Homes standard or similar. Over 59 per cent of our tenants (April 2012) tell us that they define themselves as disabled people. More Information at: http://www.habinteg.org.uk

3. Habinteg’s response

The Select Committee has set out a range of questions. Habinteg is responding on only some of these, to reflect our experience and area of expertise.

3.1 Overview

In responding to questions set out by the Select Committee Habinteg overall seeks to draw attention to the issue of accessibility. We believe that accessibility must be at the heart of policy development and delivery on housing and the built environment if these are to be
sustainable and fit to meet future demographic, social and economic challenges. Accessibility is not a secondary or niche issue. Whether or not good standards on accessibility are applied to the built environment will have a determining impact on who can access workplaces, homes, public buildings and streets. Permitting new housing to be built to design standards that are not inclusive will mean spending money – including public money – on housing where many people will not be able to get through the front door, access all the rooms in the house, use the bathroom, where they have to stay in hospital for much longer because their home is inaccessible, or where they can’t live independently or safely. For many people lack of accessible housing or workplaces means they cannot take up employment. For others it means they have to live in unsuitable accommodation for many years. For yet others it means spending very significant sums of money to retrospectively adapt properties.

Accessible design standards such as the Lifetime Homes Standard – similar to the new M4 (2) standard – produce housing that is better designed for all. It also matches the right and choice of disabled people of all ages to live independently and in areas of their choosing and the needs of an ageing society.

We believe these considerations must be at the heart of future policy on the built environment.

3.2 Questions

Q1 Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

The government’s Housing Standards Review (HSR) led to changes to the Building Regulations (Part M, Access) in 2015 by introducing new housing design access standards. Added to the pre-existing Part M (which emerged from the review without any significant improvement) are two new standards. Of the three standards only the first – M4 (1) – is mandatory. This is categorised as producing buildings that are ‘visitable’. In actual fact, the English Housing Survey shows that 95 per cent of existing housing is not even visitable by many disabled people. ‘Visitability’ in the EHS is defined as housing that has four very basic design features and these are much narrower than would permit many disabled people to reside in a property. As a significant proportion of this existing housing would have been built under Part M (1) standards, analysis of the EHS indicates that Part M (1) does not result in sufficiently accessible housing. However, the two new additional standards introduced in 2015 are purely optional for local authorities. Not only that, but central government having decided that more adequate accessible design standards should not be mandatory also decided to require local authorities to apply a particular form of viability test that is not

transparent and takes into account upfront building costs while ignoring socio-economic and longer term costs and benefits. Additionally, local authorities will be required to provide detailed analysis of local population needs as supportive evidence for any application of M4 (2) and M4 (3). Meeting such requirements will be resource intensive for local authorities and we fear that many will feel pressurised to err on the side of caution, with the result being insufficient delivery of accessible dwellings. Central government has made clear that if they believe local authorities are not sticking to the policy as set out further legislation will be enacted to force compliance.

In the Housing Standards Review central government presented no compelling case against the need for a significant growth in accessible housing. Hence the introduction of standards into the Building Regulations. The requirement for local authorities to produce evidence at a local level is therefore not rational: no evidence against the need nationally was presented. To pass a viability test weighted in favour of developer interests requires local authorities to place these needs on a higher level than the social and economic benefits and savings that would follow from having more or all new housing built to good access standards. The HSR was introduced as part of the 2010 government’s ‘red tape challenge’, yet central government has not reduced ‘red tape’ but is set to increase ‘red tape challenges’ for local authorities.

Habinteg therefore proposes that the two new accessible standards be mandatory, requiring all new housing to be built to accessible design standards (as has been the case in London since 2004). This will meet projections of need and will reduce burdens on local authorities.

Q3 Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

In relation to planning accessible, sustainable housing – no. The NPPF refers to the need to plan for a mix of housing appropriate to current and future demography (paragraphs 50 and 159) and that local authorities should prepare strategic housing market assessments accordingly. Guidance on how to conduct such assessments is weak. Habinteg has made its view clear to government on the need to improve this but this has not been addressed. On the other hand, the NPPF sets out in precise detail the viability test to be applied to development. This is designed only to take into account development costs and profits. Paragraph 173 of the NPPF states: ‘To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development, such as requirements for affordable housing, standards, infrastructure contributions or other requirements should, when taking account of the


154 Later life in the United Kingdom, Age UK, April 2013.
normal cost of development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable’.

More priority should be given to accessible, sustainable future housing in the NPPF. This can be done by amending the viability test so it gives similar weight to the socio-economic benefits of accessible housing, and by providing guidance, data resource and easy to use tools to local authorities to develop their evidence base.

Q6 What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Habinteg is concerned that changes in 2015 to the planning system via the new standards as introduced through Building Regulations, and resulting from the Housing Standards Review, may actually lead to a fall in the delivery of accessible homes. As the delivery of accessible homes is already poor and inconsistent across England depending on local policy, and need for accessible homes is high and rising, this would be to go in entirely the wrong direction. We have this view because accessible standards are optional and are surrounded by viability testing weighted in favour of developer costs. The new planning system means that local authorities that want to plan for accessible housing will need to expend significantly greater resources in developing proposals and these will be at the mercy of challenge by developers who have the resources to expend on a complicated and opaque ‘viability’ process. Habinteg is concerned that this will lead to a decline in ambition when it comes to accessible homes and communities as local authorities may err on the side of caution or feel pressure to withdraw in face of well-resourced developer challenges. Government should be developing policy that meets evidenced need. All recent research shows a high level of unmet need for accessible housing and that this will rise in coming years unless action is taken. Instead of responding to this, the Housing Standards Review introduced only optional standards and then effectively limited the freedom of local authorities to choose these ‘options’. Habinteg argues that the case is clearly in favour of mandatory standards: effectively for an improved part M – by making Part M4 (2) the default standard applied to all new housing.

In addition, government plans to introduce ‘Right to Buy’ for housing association (HAs) properties poses the potential for a decline in accessible housing. This would be the case even if there is a hypothetical ‘one for one’ replacement policy as, under the new ‘optional’ standards, HAs may find it difficult to secure local authority agreement to build such replacement properties to Lifetime Homes equivalent standards – broadly speaking, M4(2).

Q7 How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?
Built environments that are sustainable are ones that are built to take account of demographic diversity and future trends. Diversity is in the nature of the human species and the challenge is whether built environments will accommodate growing diversity or will they continue to meet only the needs of a narrow section of the population?

Government statistics show that there are currently more than 11 million disabled people in Britain. Our society is ageing: there are now more people aged over 60 in the UK than under 18 and by 2031 there are expected to be more than 20 million people over 60.

Despite the reality of population diversity government policy has permitted the built environment to fail the needs of many people: many disabled people, older people and families with young children find negotiating housing and the built environment difficult or impossible. Research shows that one in five disabled people who require adaptations to their home say their accommodation is not suitable, while 145,000 disabled people aged 65 and over report living in homes that do not meet their needs. If we just talk about wheelchair users – only one section of disabled people – research shows that more than four out of five homes in England do not allow a wheelchair user to get through the front door and that at least 78,300 wheelchair user households in England have unmet housing needs, amounting to at least 240 households in an average local authority.

Lifetime Homes standards – now approximated to be optional standard M4(2) of building regulations – deliver homes built to design standards that are accessible to a wide range of people and can be adapted to changing needs over the years. Such standards are neither aesthetically unpleasant (quite the reverse) nor burdensome on developers: since 2004 all new housing in London has, at a minimum, had to be built to Lifetime Homes principles; the results have been good quality, sustainable properties and a building industry that has incorporated these standards.

The focus for Lifetime Homes has been on design and building standards, rather than adaptation of current stock, with the point being that it is much cheaper to build in good access standards at the outset than to make changes later. Sometimes later adaptations will be impossible or very expensive: e.g. adding a through-floor lift may be impossible to achieve depending on the structure, materials, layout or other features of a property and if so the occupant may no longer be able to access bathroom facilities if they can’t go upstairs. The occupant will then face unpalatable choices – such as a costly move, possibly uprooting an entire family and uprooting away from workplaces, schools, support networks and friends – if an alternative, more accessible property can be found. Or they could accept their exclusion from certain facilities in their home, and the assault to one’s independence, dignity and possibly health represented in that. Adaptations such as changes to kitchen

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158 Assessing the Health Benefits of Lifetime Homes, Mike Roys, Building Research Establishment Ltd., DCLG 2012.
facilities may be difficult and expensive if dimensions, placing of electrical power sockets and so on have not been accessibly designed at the building stage.

Building homes to accessible standards such as the Lifetime Home Standard has the potential to produce large savings. Research commissioned and published by the DCLG showed that homes built to the Lifetime Homes Standard could save money above that for homes built to current Building Regulations\textsuperscript{160}. At present, potential demand for Disabled Facilities Grants, which exist to fund adaptations to render homes more accessible, is ten times higher than current funding provided for such grants\textsuperscript{161}. Badly designed, inaccessible housing also contributes to avoidable accidents and higher health care costs: the Ready for Ageing report in 2013 noted that general costs to the NHS of poor housing are estimated at more than £600 million a year\textsuperscript{162}, while research found that falls leading to hip fractures alone in the UK amounted to a cost of £276 million.

To ensure that built environments are sustainable, long-lasting and good value for money government should require all housing to be built to be accessible. This means that current optional housing standards should be mandatory: M4 (2) should be the default standard for all new housing and a proportion (e.g. 10 per cent) should be built to M4 (3) or wheelchair accessible standard.

Q9 Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

No, although there are some highly skilled professionals and pockets of good practice, many of the professions involved do not have adequate knowledge and skills to understand, develop and defend plans for accessible, sustainable built environments. This will become a bigger problem with the introduction of new planning regulations that require local authorities that seek to develop M4 (2) and M4 (3) properties to evidence need in detail and to pass a viability test that is weighted in favour of immediate developer profit. Planners need to be able to access good resources. Furthermore training in accessible design needs to become universal for planners and other relevant local authority professionals.

Q11 Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the

\textsuperscript{160} Ready for Ageing? Report of the Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change, 5 March 2013.
impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Habinteg does not believe that those in government involved in the Housing Standards Review have taken sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects people. If they had done, they would have embraced the clear case for change – by rolling out the accessible standards (particularly in housing) that have been enforced in London for more than a decade (and in other areas to some extent) across England instead of leaving existing mandatory standards unchanged. Even on the level of small (but important) legal detail that would resource disabled people to make their living environment more accessible, government chose not to bring forward into law a duty in the Equality Act 2010 that would require landlords to allow reasonable adjustments to ‘common parts’. This part of the Act would have meant that if a disabled tenant asked a landlord to alter a feature of a communal area – such as installing a ramp to a communal entrance door or installing grab rails – the landlord would be under a duty to do so, although the tenant could be asked to cover the cost.

Integrating equality and human rights obligations into planning and housing strategy at the earliest stage can help ensure investment is used effectively and can deliver homes and communities that are more inclusive, more equal and better places to live.

This review is also an opportunity to promote the concept of Lifetime Neighbourhoods\textsuperscript{163} which was researched and established in policy but has not been taken forward by recent governments – indeed the approach embedded in the new Housing Standards is contrary to the spirit and potential of Lifetime Neighbourhoods. This inquiry has the opportunity revive work already done in this area and recommend its integration into legislation, planning policy and practice.

\textit{06 October 2015}

\textsuperscript{163} Growth Through BIM, 2013, Richard Saxon CBE \url{http://cic.org.uk/publications/}
Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Decision making needs to be at a local level. Neighbourhood Plans need to be included in all considerations, even in their “emerging” state provided they are appropriately supported.

2. There is a disconnect between local needs and government policy making. In Headcorn this has been amply demonstrated in the disconnect between the need for a complete overhaul of the drainage system in the village, as the current system cannot support the villages as it currently stands vs the deployment of the 5 year housing plan by MBC.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. No. The housing policy drives a coach and horses through it..... The 5 year housing plan is supply at any cost. In Headcorn we are facing the threat of over development and a collapse of sustainability as the infrastructure simply cannot support the large number of builds proposed in the short term.

4. The current national planning policy has no spatial perspective.

5. There is no optimum time frame, planning and housing needs change all the time and we need to create a plan that is flexible with short, medium and long term needs factored in.

Buildings and places: New and Old

6. Housing should be reviewed at a national level and growth should be spread nationally, rather than focused in areas such as South East and those areas with reasonable access to London. Regional industrial/business development areas should be supported.

7. The key here is sustainable development, build where developments can be supported by local infrastructure. Don’t make decisions at national level and allow planners to ride rough shod over local communities. Town planners need a greater awareness of rural communities and the affect that planning decision have on those communities. Invest in quality and reasoned rationale behind development. Don’t buy buildings and leave them empty - use these sites for development as opposed to building on green field sites.

8. Make funding available to protect them, don’t rely on these properties finding their way into the hands of organisation such as the National Trust or English Heritage.
Skills and design

9. Headcorn Parish Council have cause to say that in our experience the individuals at the local authority do not have the experience to consider the built environment in an holistic way. We see a regular turnover of staff and anyone who “shines” quickly leaves the council for better jobs.

10. No in our experience it is a question of quantity vs quality. The current policy planning framework forces the local authority to focus on numbers.

Community involvement and community impact

11. No. More attention needs to be paid to local representatives, listen to what they have to say. Give Parish Councils more say.

12. Currently elected representatives are currently granted 3 minutes to speak at planning committee meetings. A revision of this time would be one way to address the barriers.

Caroline Carmichael

Clerk

Headcorn Parish Council

05 October 2015
The Heritage Alliance, Historic England and Prince’s Regeneration Trust – Oral Evidence (QQ159-170)

Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
The Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive, Historic England, Henry Russell, Chairman of Spatial Planning Advocacy Group, The Heritage Alliance, and Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive, Prince’s Regeneration Trust

Q159 The Chairman: First of all, welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by Members of the Committee. In our few minutes that we had together before you arrived, we realised that there are three people in the room who have listed buildings.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Four.

Baroness Rawlings: Five.

The Chairman: I just said that I have not. Thank you for giving up your time for this, and we are very much looking forward to your evidence. As we have three witnesses, a number of questions and a short amount of time, could you keep your answers brief and avoid any duplication of answers given by other members of the panel? This ad hoc committee is up against it, which is a real problem, because we have to report by 23 March, so we have very few evidence sessions and, as a result, we are trying to make the most of them. We are
unlikely to require three sets of answers to each question put by the Committee, so please do not feel that all three of you have to answer every question, but I do not want to stop you in any way.

I would also like to point out that it is my intention to suspend the meeting briefly at 10.59 am, so that we can observe the two minutes’ silence for Remembrance Day, as they do throughout the House at this time. I am told that the division bell will ring briefly at the beginning and at the end of the silence. You do not have an annunciator, but they are up there; there is a monitor. Could I begin the session, please, by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, for the purposes of the record?

**Ros Kerslake:** Good morning. My name is Ros Kerslake. I am Chief Executive of the Prince’s Regeneration Trust, which is an organisation that works across the UK, rescuing and reusing buildings at risk. It has been in operation for about 20 years. My own background is that I have been largely in the private sector for much of my career, working in property, the oil industry and a range of other industries, but I have more recently worked in regeneration, and most recently at the Heritage Alliance.

**Henry Russell:** I am Henry Russell and I am representing the Heritage Alliance. I chair the spatial planning advocacy group. We have a number of advocacy groups through which we focus a lot of our work, and this is the one that deals with this particular area. The Heritage Alliance now has 100 members and they range from organisations like the National Trust to much smaller organisations, and my own background is that I am an academic and I work at the University of Reading.

**Duncan Wilson:** I am Duncan Wilson. I am the Chief Executive of Historic England, which is the newly set up body from the old English Heritage, as of the beginning of April, which discharges the Government’s responsibility for statutory advice and research in respect of the historic environment. I have come from a background in large project management, I suppose you could say, at Alexandra Palace, Greenwich and Somerset House.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much. I am sure we are in for a very interesting session. I am going to ask the first question, and it is: does the NPPF have adequate regard for the importance of the historic environment? How can the historic environment be better incorporated in built environment policy?
Duncan Wilson: Maybe I could take this first. Our view is that the National Planning Policy Framework does work quite well, in respect of the historic environment. It allows us and the historic environment to have an effective voice in making the case for retention or moderate alteration, but of course the decisions are made by local planning authorities and occasionally by the Secretary of State or a planning inspector. The reservations we have are about the application of the National Planning Policy Framework, rather than its design.

Henry Russell: I would echo the thoughts there. We did lose in the National Planning Policy Framework the presumption in favour of conservation, on the basis that the NPPF was only going to have one presumption and that was in favour of sustainability. The problem really is implementation and resources, particularly in skills at the moment. There may be an opportunity to discuss skills later on, I suspect.

The Chairman: Did you actually make representation that this should still remain included in the National Planning Policy Framework? Did you make any suggestions to Government that we should actually have the historic in mind as well as sustainability in the National Planning Policy Framework?

Henry Russell: The presumption in favour of conservation?

The Chairman: Yes.

Henry Russell: We did at the time, yes.

The Chairman: What was their reason for it?

Henry Russell: The reason at the time was that they only wanted to have one presumption in the NPPF, and that was to be the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The Chairman: I will just ask around the table. Does anybody know if this happens in any other Government department—allowing just one presumption?

Baroness Andrews: Could I answer, Lord Chairman? I have declared my interests, and the NPPF was being worked through at the time when I was chairing English Heritage, so we had very close engagement, as I think our witnesses remember, with the making of the NPPF and the then Minister, Greg Clark. We had quite robust discussions about where and in what sort of language the protections for heritage would sit. The argument that Government made was essentially, because the country depends so heavily now on development and especially housing development, that had to take priority. However, the language around historic
protections about significant harm was thought and agreed by us all, at that point—and it was a consultation process that went across the heritage industry—to be sufficient providing, as Mr Wilson has said, it was observed not only in terms of the letter of the NPPF but also with the capacity and with the spirit of everyone responsible for the planning system being able to use it properly.

**Duncan Wilson:** If I may summarise, we would have had some trouble with, in effect, having a veto over development on historic environment conservation grounds, because that would have put us in the position of making a judgment that is more properly made democratically by the local planning authority. We need to make sure that the case for conservation is put within that framework as effectively as possible, and there are some issues with that.

**The Chairman:** Do you think it is possible for that to be put within the framework?

**Duncan Wilson:** Yes, I absolutely do.

**The Chairman:** That is some consolation.

**Q160 Lord Inglewood:** I would just reiterate my declaration about listed buildings. My understanding from some of the other evidence we have heard is that many people consider that sustainability includes conservation. Is that in fact a correct definition?

**Ros Kerslake:** I think it does—it absolutely does. The issue is in the implementation, which is the point that has already been made. The emphasis as it has been implemented has very much been about economic sustainability and the ability to contribute to economic growth. What has been insufficient is the recognition of social, environmental and cultural aspects of sustainability. It is the cultural aspect in particular. What you do not see within the implementation is heritage sitting there as a positive driver of sustainability. It is very much seen as: “By the way, while we are at it, we need to think about heritage”.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** In that context, could I ask Mr Wilson? English Heritage used to provide very useful guidance to supplement the formal planning framework. For a whole variety of reasons, a lot of useful guidance across subject areas is now not even on the main Government website but is archived. Is that proving to be a problem?

**Duncan Wilson:** It is still our intention to continue to provide that generic guidance. There is certainly no intention that we withdraw from that area of guidance, and local planning authorities do find it useful.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: Can they actually get at it?

Duncan Wilson: Yes, all our current guidance is available electronically. I am not exactly sure which document you might be referring to that had been archived and was not available, but I can certainly follow that up with you.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: This seems to be a pattern across a variety of fields at the moment. A lot of the environmental guidance, for example, that supported the planning framework has gone.

The Chairman: If you could give us some evidence on it that would be very useful, just to clear it up.

Baroness Andrews: Briefly, I want to pick up on what Ros Kerslake has said about sustainability. We have quite a lot of evidence about the need for proactive planning, and clearly spatial planning. Would it be your opinion, therefore, that a genuine proactive planning policy would be bound to do what Ros has described: building in the historic environment as a driver for sustainable and very high quality design, and so on? Bearing in mind that Duncan has just said that the NPPF is all right, why is it that we are still seeing significant harm done to buildings? What is going wrong? There are two parallel short questions.

The Chairman: You said that was a short question, but it could carry us for the whole day.

Duncan Wilson: In terms of the instances where we believe something does go wrong, they are normally down to the judgment of the local planning authority, a planning inspector or occasionally maybe the Secretary of State, where we have recommended one course of action and it has been overruled. The problem is that this is of course a matter of judgment and that is what the NPPF is based on. It attempts to circumscribe the judgment as reasonably and objectively as can be done, but ultimately it is a judgment. We would not claim that there have not been decisions we were unhappy with, but they are relatively small in number. It is down to the operation of the system, rather than the system.

Henry Russell: History shows that, over the last few years, the NPPF has generally worked well. I made the comment about the loss of the presumption, but that has been covered by substantial harm in most cases and the requirements around that. Much of the problem lies in the lack of resources, particularly in local authorities, because of the loss of conservation.
officers and the loss of archaeological officers in local authorities. That has meant that they have not had the specialist advice that would really help them see heritage as a benefit rather than as a barrier to development.

**Q161 The Chairman:** This is not the first time we have heard about resources being scarce at county councils and local councils. You have obviously discussed it endlessly, I suspect. Can you come up with any positive recommendations for how to overcome this? You are not going to say, “Just hire more planners”. I am a bit concerned people are saying that we do not have the resources, so therefore we cannot do it. These problems are sent to us to try to solve and we want to make sure that, whatever we report on, we have these sorts of positive suggestions.

**Henry Russell:** As you say, it is a situation that is not going to resolve itself in the short term or even the longer term.

**The Chairman:** It is going to get worse.

**Henry Russell:** Therefore, we need to think inventively about how we can deal with the problem and how we can provide advice to people when they need it, and that comes back to the issue of providing good guidance. There is a lot of good advice available on the Historic England website, but it is a matter of people being able to find it when they need to have it. It would be a matter of perhaps trying to reduce the burden on local authorities from enquiries about listed building consent. That may be by providing some guidance that does not exist at the moment on what requires listed building consent and what does not.

**The Chairman:** Actually, Mr Russell, I am just wondering; I have thrown this one at you. In the interests of time, do you think you can go away and give us a brief résumé of what you think it might be—open sky so to speak? Thank you.

**Henry Russell:** Yes.

**Duncan Wilson:** Maybe I could just add something very briefly to that. A focus on the quality of local plans, against which planners can test their decision-making, would be something of a shortcut to improving decision-making. As you have suggested, the problem of resourcing conservation officers is not immediately soluble, but encouraging local authorities to complete their local plans within the deadline, to a satisfactory standard, would at least mean there was some way of making sure that decisions were made against a suitable benchmark.
Q162 Baroness Rawlings: Mr Wilson, what have been the main consequences of the creation of Historic England as a separate body? What do you think might be the benefits or not of the responsibility for heritage being transferred from DCMS to DCLG? Very quickly, what is being done from your side regarding VAT on refurbishment of existing properties?

The Chairman: Lady Rawlings, that is the next question, so the only one they have not had notice of is responsibility for the heritage transfer.

Duncan Wilson: On the creation of Historic England, I would have to say that it is a bit early to say, because we are only six months in, but I can give you what I believe are the advantages and possible risks associated with the split of English Heritage. The advantage for Historic England is that we are able to focus on precisely these difficult issues for us as a nation, frankly, in terms of development and the importance of balancing the interests of heritage and conservation against those of development. As a single organisation that was inevitably focused on the day-to-day management of 400 properties with all these other things attached, that was going to be more difficult, so it has simplified the situation and allowed us to focus, both in terms of our day-to-day activities and our communications, on the preservation of the historic environment generally, which is a challenge. It has allowed us to get out some more difficult messages and, as an organisation, it has meant that we can come together and think about these issues more single-mindedly. I genuinely believe, although that sounds slightly soft, that is a really important change of emphasis and benefit.

In terms of risks, obviously we have a smaller budget. If we had a good year for properties, we could sometimes move money into grants that needed it. That flexibility is no longer available to us. The settlement for English Heritage is pretty clearly circumscribed.

The Chairman: I am afraid that is in every area of our activity now.

Baroness Rawlings: Do you think that is a good format for other similar bodies to follow?

Duncan Wilson: Yes, I do. It is born of a clarification of the commercial against the statutory and advisory in policy work. There are plenty of other departments of government where the two are mixed up. It is a good example; it will be a good example, particularly if the Government stick to their commitment to stand behind the new arrangement because, if they did not, that would set a rather bad example for others to follow.

The Chairman: We shall remember that when we are writing our report.
Ros Kerslake: If I could just add to that, as an organisation we welcome the clarity that is brought by the separation of what was English Heritage into two separate bodies. Having a focused organisation like Historic England looking at the key policy and implementation issues is wholly welcomed.

The challenge in relation to the built environment—and our focus is very much on buildings at risk and how you address those issues—is a mix of the resources issues that Duncan has just mentioned, coupled with the issues that we have just touched on in relation to reductions in local authorities. Added to that, there is a growth of buildings coming on to what I would call the at-risk market, as a result of public sector cutbacks. It is hard to look at any one of those in isolation. All of these factors coming together are putting severe pressure on those organisations that are attempting to address it. I know funding is an issue for everybody, but the level of funding available is increasingly challenging.

As has already been said, simply saying we need more money and we need more resources is the answer to every problem that comes in front of you, I am sure. One of the answers must be to simplify some of the processes that we are all trying to implement. I would quote as an example things like compulsory purchase. At the moment, there is far too much risk for any local authority to take it on, unless there is a really strong reason to do so. Historic England has historically provided a lot of support. I wonder whether they are going to be in a position to provide the same level of support for that. Although there are changes coming through in the CPO legislation, I am not sure they go far enough to simplify it.

The issue for me is that you cannot pick out the different elements and say, “Is this the one?” The problem is that the number of buildings at risk across the country is very significant and growing in some sectors. Our estimation across the UK is that there are about 20,000. That includes Grade II listed buildings, which are not properly captured around the country at the moment. It does not include any of the locally important but unlisted buildings. There would be a far greater number than that, particularly in deprived areas, where the level of investment going in from the private sector is very low, if anything.

The Chairman: I am sure you are absolutely right on this. Again, I am going to throw this one back at you and wonder if you could prioritise your wish list—it is a horrible term—on that one and let us have the most important. In the mean time, several Members have queries.
Baroness Andrews: I want to pick up this issue of risk. It takes a long time to save a building at risk, and it might be interesting just to have a very short explanation as to why. Both Historic England and PRT are involved in that. You have mentioned CPO and we are going to have some other suggestions. My anxiety is that we have a perfect storm. At the time when the number of buildings at risk sounds as if it is increasing, if I have heard you correctly, English Heritage potentially has fewer resources to address that problem. Am I overstating that, or is that a possibility? At the same time, we are losing capacity in local authorities. To what extent can English Heritage compensate for the loss of capacity? Will it have to reorganise its advisory system for local authorities, for example? Will it have to have a different mechanism for deciding what it must save at all costs, as opposed to the things that are desirable to save? For example, how do you decide on one piece of industrial archaeology rather than another, which may have an equal economic and social claim?

Duncan Wilson: There are two separate elements to this question. One is the provision of advice, support and training to local authorities. We are now addressing the issue directly with planning departments, which previously we would probably have addressed only through conservation officers, because plenty of local authorities do not have conservation officers. I am not being Panglossian about this, but sometimes that is more effective because, if planners are more directly informed about the provisions around heritage and heritage value, sometimes that can be a more effective way of dealing with things. I would not pretend that we would not rather that every local authority had conservation expertise in house, but we are trying to address the situation as we find it. There are risks to that, frankly, because the more helpful we are, the more there is a perverse encouragement to local authorities to withdraw from costly expertise, so it is a delicate balance, but we have to address the situation as we find it, ultimately, because our main aim is to protect the historic environment as best we can.

Linked to that is the second point about buildings at risk. As Ros has indicated, our monitoring of the situation outside London is currently confined to Grade I and II* buildings, because we have to prioritise those ahead of the much larger risk areas relating to Grade II. That gives us a picture of what is happening at one level. There are a lot of sites joining the heritage at risk register and quite a few sites leaving the register. The commonest category of site on the
register is round barrows, which of course we do not really think about when we think of buildings. Very often, the risks to a round barrow are relatively easy to solve with a decent partnership arrangement with the landowner. That is not to say that there is more joy in heaven over one difficult site saved than a large number of easy ones. Of course, in taking sites off the register, we now focus very much on sustainable solutions, rather than just patching up the place, saying it is no longer at risk and it being back in five years because nobody is using it, nobody is cleaning the gutters and nobody is actually generating any money to pay for regular maintenance. It is difficult, but we as an organisation have to prioritise those types of places. You are right that resources are increasingly squeezed. Last year, we had commitments of £19 million for heritage at risk grants, which is about half of what they used to be seven or eight years ago.

**Baroness Andrews**: How does that compare to the Heritage Lottery Fund?

**Duncan Wilson**: That is the other side of the coin. Overall, the HLF has introduced a massive amount of capital to saving and creating sustainable futures for heritage at risk. I would have to say that I do not think we and the HLF cover any of the same ground. Historic England can intervene much earlier on a more discretionary basis, and it is really important that that flexibility exists within the system or, in the time it takes for an organisation to develop itself and develop an HLF bid, the asset may be lost.

**Q164 Baroness Young of Old Scone**: I have two questions, totally unrelated. I cannot remember whether your sponsoring department has been one of the ones that is already settled in the Spending Review. If it has, do you know what the impact is going to be on you?

**Duncan Wilson**: The answer is that I believe a settlement may be imminent, but I do not know whether one has been reached. Even if it had been reached, I probably would not know what level it had been reached at. As and when it is announced, it may not be representative of the settlement that is reached with us, because obviously DCMS has a very large number of NDPBs, and it is unlikely that “one size fits all”. We probably will not know until 25 November.

**The Chairman**: To be completely fair actually, every single Government department is at that stage at the moment, and we hope that the Autumn Statement will do something to clarify the situation.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: It would be useful to know, if you are prepared to tell us, what the planning parameters were that you were asked to plan for, in terms of reduction, and what your thoughts have been about where you could make a squeeze.

Duncan Wilson: I think they were the same as for every other department, which was up to 40%, which was well known—but up to, rather than at.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Do you have a feel for what percentage of local authorities do not have conservation officers now?

Duncan Wilson: In the last six years, there has been a 35% attrition rate. I can certainly write to the Committee with the exact numbers.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: It would be useful to know which local authorities just do not have conservation skills on board at all.

Q165 Lord Inglewood: In your earlier comments, Ros Kerslake, you talked about compulsory purchase. I assumed you are talking about compulsory purchase in the context of historic buildings.

Ros Kerslake: Yes, generally.

Lord Inglewood: Generally in the historic building context, rather than the wider context.

Ros Kerslake: Rather than regeneration CPOs, if I can put it like that.

Lord Inglewood: The point I want to put to you is that the compulsory purchase mechanism is a rather strange one, in that compulsory purchase is normally used to acquire assets that will then do something and generate an income, while in this case the compulsory purchase mechanism is intended to enable the acquiring authority to expend a great deal more money than it otherwise would have. On the whole, particularly in the current climate, local authorities are not likely to look for extra ways of spending money. Therefore, is it not actually a busted flush? Is not the real solution to this to make sure that buildings never get into the mess that they find themselves in?

Ros Kerslake: If I could answer that, because I have a lot of experience in this area, absolutely—I could not agree more. The first and foremost focus must be to stop buildings getting into that situation in the first place. That must be possible within the context of public sector buildings being disposed of. Actually, the very clear guidelines that Historic England
gives on the subject of disposal of public buildings would prevent many of the cases that are happening.

Some of them that exist, though, are historic, and they are historic because they relate back to a period of time when the market was much stronger and when people bought things believing, “It’s big; I must be able to make money out of it”. People’s thinking was not any more sophisticated than that. I am fresh back from Brussels, where I was on the panel for Europe’s seven most endangered historic sites, and a number of UK nominations were received. The vast majority of those related to what I would call difficult owners, which is, unfortunately, probably the biggest challenge for the ones we are dealing with. People had bought buildings historically, maybe before the 2006 crash. They have held them. They have very unrealistic ideas about the value of the site and what can be done with it. In the mean time, it continues to deteriorate. It is really quite interesting that, in the UK, that is one of the biggest causes.

Lord Inglewood: Is that the same issue in other countries in Europe?

Ros Kerslake: No, it is not. Interestingly, it is not. What you find in other countries is a whole range of things: natural environment hazards and quite a lot of political hazards actually, from countries that have been through very difficult times and still have big barriers in movement between different areas of the country, and things like that. This is very much a UK issue, driven I suspect by the overegged property market that we had and the size of the crash that we had.

Your point about whether the legislation is unworkable because of the fact that these are sites that have been acquired not for economic reuse, in the way that a normal regeneration CPO is, is not right. No local authority, in the current circumstances, unless they are incredibly brave, is going to take on a difficult site, which is the point that you are making. What they do is work to make sure that they have a back-to-back arrangement with another organisation, us or some other form of trust. In some instances, we have helped to set up specific trusts to take on these buildings. Part of the CPO process is demonstrating that you have a better plan for the building than the owner. You are not going to get a CPO unless you can demonstrate that you have a deliverable plan that can be taken forward.
Obviously that can be challenging on some sites, because it can heavily rely on the availability of grant funding or enabling development. Baroness Andrews commented about the length of time that it takes. It does take a very long time. The longest part of that, I have to say, is persuading a local authority that they can or should implement CPO proceedings, because of the different aspects of risk.

Lord Inglewood: Given the scale of the problem that you yourself described, it does suggest that, while in particular cases this could work, there are many cases where it has not worked and we have not got to grips with the real difficulty, as it were.

Ros Kerslake: I would completely agree with that. It cannot be the general solution. It has to be the solution of last resort, for a number of different reasons.

The Chairman: Can I just interject again? You are saying that the way we do it is quite different from the other people in the European Union. Is there anything that we could actually access to support that comment? Is there anything we could highlight that would benefit either our report or at least the general public and the Government?

Ros Kerslake: I would be very happy to see if there is further evidence I could submit that would support that. There has been work done in a number of areas, through Europa Nostra and other organisations, to look at some of the European issues. I would also be very happy, if it would be helpful, to give you more information about what the areas of risk are that are barriers to local authorities, because there is more than one.

The Chairman: That would be very helpful indeed, because that is the sort of evidence we need. We do not want to be constantly criticising. We want to be suggesting. Thank you very much. Now, Lord Freeman. Sorry, Mr Wilson.

Duncan Wilson: Can I make a very brief comment? Of course local authorities have a range of statutory powers, of which compulsory purchase is one, but they can serve repairs notices and other types of statutory enforcement, which would pose a lower level of risk to the local authority. There are similar problems, but not quite as extreme.

The Chairman: Thank you for suggesting that. That is useful.

Q166 Lord Freeman: How can reforms to the tax system, in particular VAT, where we know VAT is 20% on repairs and 5% on new build, incentivise the preservation of the historic environment and of heritage assets?
Henry Russell: Can I lead on that one? The Heritage Alliance has had a strong campaign on VAT for the last few years. The situation used to be that VAT was recoverable for extensions and additions to listed buildings, and then the Chancellor removed that a few years ago. In one sense, that was always wrongly targeted and we do need some help on VAT. A 5% rate would be very useful to the bodies that we represent at the Alliance, which are mostly charities. Something along those lines would be very helpful and it would also, on a wider perspective, support the small householder, because they are the people who also work in, live in and have to repair buildings that are often fairly expensive to repair. It would encourage them to do it if the Government, the state, would recognise that these people are looking after and repairing buildings that are in the national interest.

Ros Kerslake: I could make a further point over and above the VAT point, which I completely support and for which the case has been made well over a number of years. The other area that would be much cheaper for the Government to implement and that would potentially have an impact on the issue that I mentioned earlier of public buildings is an improvement or a slight relaxation to the Building Premises Renovation Allowance scheme. It presently is focused on regeneration areas and enables former business premises to be renovated as business premises, and provides 100% tax relief against some of the costs involved in doing that. It is an excellent scheme. It has not been hugely used. There have been some issues in implementation. I completely understand why the ultimate use should be economic, which we would wholly support. Our organisation focuses very much on bringing economic growth and using historic assets to do that.

At the moment, though, the initial use requirement that it has to be business premises means that you cannot use the allowance for civic premises. Former town halls, former prisons and all sorts of civic buildings, which are flexible buildings that could be adapted for business premises in the future, are excluded from this allowance. It is a very simple change that could be made, and we think the cost is very small—probably under £5 million. It is a very small issue that we think could have quite a significant impact. The most recent statistics that I was able to find were that 1,250 public buildings have been vacated since 2010. I suspect that the number is higher than that, because it is an extremely hard one to track.
The Chairman: I am just wondering if you could make a case, as you have made it powerfully here. Which is your Government sponsoring department?

Ros Kerslake: We do not have one as such, but I guess we would submit information to DCMS.

The Chairman: Say that you have made this impact. You could actually produce an impact statement. They are the buzzwords at the moment. You never know; you might be knocking at an open door.

Ros Kerslake: The Heritage Alliance has in fact submitted some information, as part of its submission to the current review. We are very much hoping that this is something that will be looked at.

Baroness Andrews: That was my question actually, Lord Chair, because I was just wondering when you last had that conversation with the Chancellor.

Ros Kerslake: We have had it once or twice and we have certainly had it recently.

Baroness Andrews: You have had it before the Autumn Statement.

Ros Kerslake: Yes.

The Chairman: Keep your fingers crossed.

Lord Inglewood: Can we see a copy of the submission?

The Chairman: Would that be feasible? Am I allowed to ask for a copy of the submission?

Ros Kerslake: I am very happy to do that. It is a public document.

Henry Russell: It will also appear in our submission as well, so we can provide a copy of that too.

The Chairman: Thank you. You have been very co-operative. All our witnesses are.

Q167 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Can I just pursue this a little further, in terms of trying to create an incentive with slightly lower rates of VAT? I have been concerned about the number of boarded-up buildings that are around, which are often residential. You have spoken about wonderful looking properties that people have bought that have fallen into disrepair, effectively becoming uninhabitable. Secondly, because of the housing problem and the housing shortage that we have for accommodation for people, has anyone done any work on looking at whether incentivising refurbishment of those for residential use and making them fit for purpose might happen, if there was a slightly lower rate of VAT, rather than people just
sitting on this large building, hoping that one day the price of it will go up and knowing at the moment that they cannot get anything for it?

**Ros Kerslake**: We have not done. We have done work on the general impact of reducing VAT and the positive impact it could have on the economy, because more would probably be declared and there would be a higher level of activity. We have submitted information on that. We have looked at the issue of conversion of buildings for residential and we think there is a real opportunity there. We have not looked at putting the two together. I have a vague recollection that there is a VAT incentive in relation to residential premises but, to be quite honest, I cannot recollect how it applies. It may well be worth exploring.

**Duncan Wilson**: If I may offer a generic comment, my experience of the Treasury, such as it is or was—I actually used to work for it at one stage, but that does not give me any special knowledge of tax, I must say—is that it does not like blanket tax incentives. It might be more persuaded by very closely targeted ones, and I think that is what happened in relation to VAT. We have to work out models whereby we can demonstrate that, for a relatively small loss of tax revenue, we can get a relatively large economic gain. I know that in Ireland, for example, they have geographically designated tax incentive zones in relation to historic town centres—just a few—and I believe the Republic of Ireland’s Treasury is no more or less difficult than ours.

**Lord Inglewood**: That is more like an enterprise zone.

**Duncan Wilson**: Yes, but it relates to VAT, as I understand it. There is probably some more work to be done there, rather than fighting yesterday’s battle.

**The Chairman**: It is always better to do that. You have to close the door on the past and then start afresh, I am afraid.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: I would just make a comment on that, because we have not yet taken evidence from anybody from the sustainable buildings sector, and I know that they are extremely interested in having that reduction for retrofitting and refurbishment of existing stock, in order to increase resilience, carbon reduction and various other environmental issues. I absolutely accept that targeting would be more attractive to the Treasury, but there may well be some other bidders for that reduction as well.

**The Chairman**: We could actually ask the Minister, when the Minister comes to the session.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: We are going to have some witnesses on the whole environmental sustainability and resilience front.

The Chairman: We will have another look after this meeting and see who we are next seeing.

Q168 Baroness Whitaker: There is a presumed tension between conservation and growth and, if this really is inherent, how can the need for conservation and preservation of the historic environment be reconciled with the demand for growth and new development? I wonder if you would answer not in terms of national treasures, which usually have their defenders, but more about the ordinary historic fabric of an area, which is often liked by residents and very much adds to their sense of place and identity, even if it is not a building of any great significance. I am interested in your views.

Duncan Wilson: I think your use of the word “presumed” is significant because, yes, indeed in some minds there is a presumed tension between conservation and development but, actually, very often the two go hand in hand. One very good example of that is the King’s Cross development, where the developer has taken an enlightened view, born of a very long-term approach.

Baroness Whitaker: Would you say that the preservation of various things like gas holders and all the things there enhances the asset value—that is, adds to growth?

Duncan Wilson: Absolutely, and the developer is very clear about that. The developer would not have attracted creative companies like Google to a standard city centre high-rise development. There is some fairly good evidence that creative industries and historic buildings are very good bedfellows, but it is born not just of an enlightened view of heritage but of a very long-term view. A developer that wants to maximise the realisable value of a site and sell it may not take that kind of long-term view. The two go hand in hand. I certainly believe that, in many instances, retaining listed buildings and developing them as part of a wider development, also involving new build, is as economically sustainable as a more simplistic approach involving clearing the site. Obviously that is one of the arguments we have to keep pressing.

Henry Russell: I have in mind a development a few years ago in Oxford Castle, which reused the prison in that area and had a lot of well-designed new building in it too. There are plenty of examples where development and heritage can go hand in hand, but it does need a
developer that understands what they are dealing with and is willing to take the right advice on doing it as well. Some years ago, there was also some research done by the British Property Federation and the RICS on the value of listed office buildings. I think English Heritage was involved with that research at the time. It has not been updated recently but, in central London, which they were looking at, it consistently showed that listed office buildings achieved higher rents than non-listed ones. It would be interesting to have that research updated. I do not know when it was last carried out; it was some years ago.

The Chairman: Our policy analyst is already on the case.

Ros Kerslake: On that particular point, the note that I have is that, in 2013, there was 4.4% higher rental for listed buildings than non-listed buildings. Very much picking up on the point that was made about the value that the heritage and historical environment brings to development, there are some very enlightened developers, like Argent, that completely understand that, get it, use it and get huge value from it. There are a number of others that, sadly, do not get it and feel that historic buildings are a bit of a problem within whatever site they have. I would argue very strongly that, actually, it is much easier to create a sense of place and to create value using historic buildings, and I come from a commercial property background. I come from working on large sites. There is, sadly, not the same recognition that there should be about how you drive that forward. I certainly do not think that the two are in conflict. Within our own work, we have been able to show that saving historic buildings can have a strong impact immediately within the site. We have saved a working pottery in Stoke-on-Trent, which immediately saved and created 116 jobs, but the impact within the area has been much stronger. We have been focusing a lot on how you see and measure the social impact, as well as the economic and environmental impact within an area.

One of the things that is important to help drive some of this forward is how you create investment mechanisms for these sorts of projects. Often much of our heritage sits in areas that do not automatically attract commercial development. A lot of it is in the north of England, in parts of the world where we had formerly thriving industrial towns, which are now being much restricted.

The Chairman: My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, can we stand, please?

The Committee paused for two minutes’ silence.
The Heritage Alliance, Historic England and Prince’s Regeneration Trust – Oral Evidence (QQ159-170)

The Chairman: I am sorry we interrupted you, Ms Kerslake.

Baroness Whitaker: I think we were very interested in the incentives to encourage a developer to enhance the sense of place by a good use of the historic fabric. My own sense is that this is very much an answer about design and it is a matter of how the design of the place can be properly stimulated. Have you got any ideas?

Ros Kerslake: I do have a couple of thoughts on it. One is I wanted to make mention, particularly on the whole design issue, of some work that has been done by my sister charity, the Prince’s Foundation for Building Community, on a project called Beauty-In-My-Back-Yard, which has been released very recently. It has focused exactly on how local communities can identify new development within their area that fits within the character of the area in which they live, rather than being antagonistic to it, so there is some work out there and some very useful tools that enable people to do that. The broader issue of how you persuade people to invest in these areas is a mix of stick and carrot. Partly it is about a more robust use of the existing mechanisms, including Section 106.

Baroness Whitaker: Is that on the part of the planning departments?

Ros Kerslake: Within planning departments, sometimes it is actually a more robust response to some of the proposals that come forward, robust use of the existing planning structures around Section 106 contributions to the historical environment, making it at the centre of what is coming forward more, rather than allowing developers to do the new bit first within their plans and then say they will sort out the old bit at the end. It forces them at least to do it in parallel or to have a phased approach. There are approaches that have been successful in doing that.

The other thing is about how you bring in new investment. We have just heard about the issue in terms of grant funding and the potential for Historic England’s grant to be cut. I very much hope it will not, because it is hugely useful. The Heritage Lottery Fund is fantastic and one of the few resilient sources of funding that is around, but the demand on it is massive, relative to the availability. The demand keeps growing and growing. The success of communities, and I think we are coming on to that, has a big impact.

One of the things we have to find a mechanism for is bringing in commercial investment, but in a way that works for those investors. Straight investment into these sorts of sites does not
work. One of the things that we have been working on is what we have called an Old Buildings, New Lives fund, which is about how you create a social investment fund that balances the risk across a range of projects, so that investors into it can access projects in areas that they would not normally invest in directly, get a modest return, but none the less a return for it, and a strong social impact. The reason we are very keen to do it is to create a model that could hopefully attract more investment, particularly in the more deprived areas, when there is market failure. We need those mechanisms because public sector funding or grant funding generally, whether it is from the public sector, foundations or Heritage Lottery Fund, cannot meet the level of need and demand. That is self-evident with the thousands of buildings we have that need to be addressed.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Perhaps we could get hold of the details of that.

**Duncan Wilson:** If I may just amplify that, one of the issues is early engagement and understanding on the part of the developer.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Is this on the part of the planning department or the local community?

**Duncan Wilson:** It is on the part of the developer with one of these particular problem sites. We are doing our best to address that. We now have negotiated with DCMS, via Treasury, a scheme where we are allowed to charge the cost of early engagement, and additional resources to make that possible, to clarify listing descriptions and to provide pre-application planning advice. Very often that process of clarification will say which part of the asset is special and which is not, which will enable the developer to work up a scheme that leaves the most important parts of the place or the building intact within the scheme, but allows him or her the flexibility to develop around that. Sometimes old listings can have rather blanket descriptions, which is often a bar to such a scheme being developed. It is a scheme we have called Enhanced Advisory Services, but we have had some success with that with major projects, including not just building but infrastructure projects, and we anticipate that it will work a lot better. We have worked quite well with developers.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Is that in ordinary little places too, not just King’s Cross and so on?

**Duncan Wilson:** Yes. It is available to anyone who wants to engage that way. We still provide 15 hours of advice free, but this applies across the board, whether it is a church, a listed
building or a big scheme. Either way, we encourage people to engage with us early, so that we can provide that better targeted advice, which helps sustainable development.

Q169 Lord Inglewood: I would just like to ask Ros Kerslake, since you were talking about this vehicle for investment, what type of investor you anticipate would invest in this vehicle for development.

Ros Kerslake: A range of different investors, we hope.

Lord Inglewood: If you are a property developer, you are going for the maximum amount of money. If you are a private person who wanted an old house, you would buy the old house for yourself. I cannot quite see, other than possibly some publicly spirited charities, who would invest in this fund.

Ros Kerslake: So far the sort of support we are getting is from people like Big Society Capital, which is tasked specifically with investing in these sorts of vehicles. They have a strong interest in doing that. Some of the trusts and foundations also have a track record in investing.

Lord Inglewood: I have got the picture.

Ros Kerslake: Other than that, there are also high-net-worth individuals who we believe are willing to put a proportion of their investments into something like this, if it achieves social good. It is about corporate social responsibility of individuals.

Lord Inglewood: It is a kind of quasi-philanthropic target audience.

Ros Kerslake: That is absolutely right.

Lord Inglewood: Thank you. I now see where you are coming from.

Earl of Lytton: I just wanted to do a supplementary on this particular one. Ros Kerslake, you referred to the question of trying to get developers, where there was a listed building element, to invest in the building upfront. Now I am a chartered surveyor, so I know something about the development process. Cash as ever is king and, Mr Wilson, you referred to the question of getting some upfront cash to do certain other things that might be called for—more public sector input. At the end of the day, nobody has a magic wand, so how does one get upfront cash when you have a development that is within its special purpose vehicle, its company structure or whatever, and try to extract money upfront, when you have all the infrastructure, possibly the land purchase and all the other things that have to go in? I know this debate has been going on regarding the point at which the Community Infrastructure
Levy would actually be paid or indeed be payable out of the development. Could you enlarge on how you think spending money on the listed building as an upfront operation actually works in practice? I am not talking about where it is conversion, but where there is obviously a separate listed building element that sits alongside a wider project.

**Ros Kerslake:** It depends on exactly that. If it sits on its own, it can be quite challenging and then you probably are looking at issues like grant funding or possibly the sort of funding I have just talked about, if there is the ability to pay money back at some point in the future. Some community-type projects will not have an exit. The building is perhaps quite small and it will always be a community asset. It is not possible to do that. For larger sites, former hospital sites, former schools and ones that have land as well as buildings that need to be rescued, it is possible to do it. I am working on one right now, where the proposal is to dispose of a proportion of the enabling development at the start, in order to have enough money to kick off the development, and then the thing just rolls and recycles through, maybe with a bit of grant funding in there to make the whole thing work as a package.

**Earl of Lytton:** This is about the question of the role that community engagement can play in supporting the historical environment. I go back to something you said, Mr. Russell, about skills. We have covered part of this already and I did think that Ros Kerslake’s reference to Beauty-In-My-Back-Yard and how that might impact the community partially answered this question, but there still remains the question of the skills shortfall at community level, as I see it. Given that, what can improve community engagement, first and foremost, and what changes would we need? What should we as a Committee be suggesting should be changed in order to reinvigorate that and make it more likely?

**Henry Russell:** A key one is bringing local communities into the assessment of conservation areas more. For example, what do they see in the value of their own area? How can that be integrated into the assessment of conservation areas? In terms of their actual protection, there are limited powers for conservation areas, but they are very much a vehicle for policy for the future and are sometimes underused. Again, it comes back to the resources for the local authority to develop its conservation area assessments and policies. That comes back to that issue but, if it works well, it could be a vehicle for local communities to get involved.
The other one is probably neighbourhood planning, which is becoming more and more successful in engaging communities as well. Those are two key ones at ground level for bringing local communities into protecting, enhancing and enjoying their own local historical environment.

**Duncan Wilson**: Neighbourhood planning is a really important part of the process, where success has been patchy, to be honest. As Historic England, we are trying to support the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan to make sure that it is implementable and compliant, and therefore useful, but there is quite a deficit in the number of neighbourhood plans prepared and the degree to which they are sufficiently comprehensive and well informed. It is potentially a very useful part of the process.

The other thing I would mention is volunteering. Of course, Britain has an extraordinarily well recognised and admired system overall for heritage volunteering, certainly if you include the National Trust and lots of local amenity groups. We should recognise that and build on it, not just assume that everything is not working as it should. A very large number of people profess a passion for their heritage—over 90% in a survey we did. We just need to make sure that that is effectively harnessed and used.

**Ros Kerslake**: If I could build on that point, it is manifestly obvious that, for the size of the issue that we are dealing with and the number of buildings at risk, you need a range of solutions to it. The commercial property solution, for the reasons we have just discussed, would only apply in certain types of properties, either because of the area, the size or the adaptability, so in many instances you need another solution and it has to be an economically viable solution. Often it will be about communities taking ownership, in the broadest possible sense, of the future of that building or site. The experiences completely endorse what Duncan has said about the level of interest. There is huge energy and enthusiasm out there, in many areas, interestingly even sometimes in areas where people may have moved into that particular location but still value the heritage there.

What there is not is the understanding and skills about how you move forward. We have been operating, as indeed have a number of other organisations, an education programme under the auspices of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Ours is called BRICK, and it is focused specifically on going all round the country and helping people on a range of things: how do I identify the
right building? How do I get people to agree? How do I get ownership? How do I fundraise for it? There are some solutions that are starting to be developed that are harnessing some of that enthusiasm but, again, like all these things, it needs to be invested in. Those programmes need to continue. We need to build the level of strength and capacity. We have an online community that we are growing as part of that, so we are very much trying to get peer-to-peer nurturing happening, one community group telling another community group what needs to be done, rather than it always having to be a top-down process. There are some tools, but they need to be nurtured and developed.

The Chairman: That is very interesting and very helpful. Are there any more comments?

Duncan Wilson: I might just say that we should not leave the subject without mentioning mainstream education—secondary and primary education. We have what I consider to be an extremely good value project running, mainly funded by the Department for Education, which we hope to extend beyond the present planning horizon, but we do not know yet. It gives teachers the tools to engage children in their local environment and understand their local environment. Very often, buildings can be the physical key to unlocking quite difficult subjects like justice, health and prisons, and all the buildings in towns around people that embody those civic values and civic obligations. Teaching civics can actually be made that much easier by showing children how the town hall evolved.

The Chairman: What is the name of that programme?

Duncan Wilson: It is education in schools. I can write to you with some more details about the historic environment education.

The Chairman: We should be having written evidence from a group called Pupils 2 Parliament. We have to agree it first, but it is exactly along those lines: asking the future generations what they like about—

Duncan Wilson: The Heritage Schools programme, I should have said.

Baroness Parminter: You all made the point about the value of neighbourhood planning. It is quite a new initiative under the last coalition Government, but none of you mentioned the grants that were available from DCLG, which ran out quite quickly, because they were so popular. Given you have talked about investment and the need to get those communities engaged on a long-term basis, would you agree that continuing those grants and, if it were
possible, extending them, but nevertheless continuing them, would be an important step in delivering some of the goals that you have talked about?

_Duncan Wilson_: I certainly think it would help, because preparing a neighbourhood plan is not a cost-free process. Often some professional advice is required to put it together. The frustrating thing is there is a lot of potential in that initiative, but it will not be delivered unless these plans are properly prepared.

_Ros Kerslake_: I would endorse that. The leverage is huge. For a fairly small investment upfront, you get a huge impact and a cost saving for local and national government out of it, but you do have to put in the investment upfront to achieve it.

_The Chairman_: Are you equally enthusiastic, Mr Russell?

_Henry Russell_: Yes. I was just pondering the fact that, for local communities working on and preparing their own neighbourhood development plan, it is quite a large exercise to do. They are going to need professional advice and that is going to need to be paid for, so any money, wherever it comes from, is going to be of benefit.

_Q170 Baroness Young of Old Scone_: Do you have any concern about the new propositions about brownfield registers and a more zonal approach to planning, in terms of heritage?

_Duncan Wilson_: Yes, we have concerns. At the moment—how can I put it?—our concerns could best be summarised as the law of unintended consequences. We have had plenty of reassurance from DCLG that no emasculation of the heritage protection provisions in the NPPF is intended, and I take that at face value, but we are concerned that we are not sure precisely how the role of heritage assessment within the brownfield land register will work to make sure that it is not treated as a bypass of all other planning legislation.

_The Chairman_: Thank you very much. I have been asked by Lady Andrews, who unfortunately had to go, to ask Mr Wilson and Ms Kerslake to give examples of heritage-led regeneration and its impact and sustainability. I am not asking you to do it now, because we are up against time, but if you can think of it. I know we have really bombarded you with requests for information, but it has been an extremely helpful session. Thank you all very much indeed.

11 November 2015
Historic England Response to the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Historic England is the Government’s statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England’s historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

Historic England’s responsibilities in respect of the historic environment have direct relevance to the wider built environment, and our activities and expertise span all the built environment fields, at a range of scales. In our championing of historic places we are trusted to act impartially and to take a long term view, providing clarity on which parts of our heritage are nationally important (e.g. through the National Heritage List for England). We work all over the country, offering constructive advice to support growth and development, supporting emergency works to heritage at risk through grants, and helping local authorities be more efficient through guidance, training and specialist advice.

Historic England welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence on the following issues:

### Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

- National-level policy regarding the shaping of the built environment is essential, to provide clear strategic direction; that policy should itself be subject to consultation and wholly integrated with the remainder of national policy.
- Local decision-making on planning policy and applications – by local authorities with the full engagement of their communities (including through neighbourhood planning) – is then essential if local character and distinctiveness are to be understood and maintained or enhanced. Adequate resourcing is necessary in support of this (in relation to both the information needed to provide an evidence base, and staff capacity/expertise).
- Decisions on significance are taken at both the national and local levels, with the majority of designated heritage assets being identified nationally, and local authorities able to designate conservation areas and to identify locally important heritage assets, through the preparation of local lists.
• Beyond planning policy, we also need to improve the care and upkeep of our built environment and its historic assets to ensure that construction investment is realised, and that benefits last many generations.
• Historic England plays an important role in all of the above, providing impartial, expert advice with a national perspective, largely delivered at the local level.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?
• Recent efforts to recognise the importance of design in road construction are welcome, but the importance of high-quality design and maintenance needs to be further embedded across all departments with an impact on the environment.
• Heritage and design policy are already well aligned, although heritage policy is not always given appropriate weight in policy implementation.
• There remains considerable scope for improvement in relation to the delivery of infrastructure, and in the resolution of potentially competing legislative requirements (e.g. reconciling the requirements of the 1975 Reservoirs Act and 2010 Flood and Water Management Act with conservation duties when dealing with listed or scheduled structures in and around ornamental lakes).

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?
• Drawing on its own experience, appeal decisions, and discussions with practitioners, Historic England believes that NPPF policy properly highlights how the protection of the historic environment, character, and local distinctiveness is integral to the delivery of sustainable development, and maintains an appropriate degree of protection for the historic environment (itself including buildings, monuments, areas and green spaces).
• In its current form, the NPPF successfully balances a range of core planning principles within the overall presumption in favour of sustainable development. Further prioritisation of any one element would undermine this balance, and thus jeopardise the delivery of sustainable development.
• Although NPPF policy is itself clear, there remain problems in interpreting and applying the policy in a few instances, with some Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) failing to give proper weight to historic environment considerations within wider planning judgements, or to appropriately integrate heritage issues into plan-making, and thereby straying from the sustainable development objectives of the NPPF. This issue is likely to be exacerbated when local authorities do not have access to the necessary expertise (see response to Question 9, below).
5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

- The optimum timescale depends on the level of detail being considered, but longer timescales allow for greater certainty for both developers and communities, and also reinforce an understanding of the longevity of planning decisions, which have an impact on the built environment lasting hundreds of years in some cases.
- This longer perspective is also important in considering the lifetime of new buildings: an assumption of demolition and replacement every few decades is not particularly sustainable.
6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

- Historic England recognises the need to address current issues of housing supply, and believes that any interventions at central Government level should indeed be properly coordinated. These interventions should however recognise that planning is neither the whole problem nor the whole solution, and look to the wider context, including issues around development financing, landowner expectations, supply chain constraints, land assembly, and land remediation. Further effort to address these is needed to support housing delivery.

- There is not yet sufficient detail about the nature of the reforms currently being proposed to be clear about the impacts on either housing delivery or the planning system, but there are very real concerns that the focus on housing alone will not support the delivery of balanced, sustainable and productive communities, and that ‘streamlining’ the planning system will result in reduced overall protection for the historic environment (and lost opportunities for it to support distinctive changes to places in keeping with local character), as well as a reduction in community influence over the form and quality of local environments.

- With regard to the streamlining of the planning system (and mindful of the potential for confusion rather than clarification if additional routes to consent are introduced), it would be useful to explore the impact of current permitted development rights, and the extent to which they support the delivery of sustainable housing provision. The importance of carefully designed proposals in making development more palatable to local communities should also be considered.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

- Within a planning context, the proper and confident application of existing NPPF policy supports the development of sustainable and resilient environments, and actively promotes the conversion of existing buildings (incorporated within one of the core planning principles and within housing and rural policy, as well as being a mainstay of conservation policy and practice, not least in Historic England’s own work).

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

- Promoting the optimum use of the historic environment is at the core of Historic England’s role, and is reflected throughout our corporate plan.
The historic environment is an important asset in regeneration and place-making, physically, socially and economically (as shown in *Heritage and the Economy*):

- Across all age groups, older buildings are favoured over new.
- 91% of the public believe that parks and public spaces improves peoples’ quality of life.
- Investment in the local historic environment makes areas a better place in which to live, work, visit or operate a business.
- Businesses in historic buildings provide 1.4 million UK jobs and contribute over £47 billion in gross value added.
- Between 1980 and 2011, listed retail, office, and industrial properties generated total returns equal to or higher than their non-listed counterparts for 3, 5, 10 and 30 year periods.
- The historic environment is an important factor in deciding where businesses locate, the presence of heritage being as important as road access.
- Repair and maintenance on historic building stock supported approximately 14% of total construction industry employment in 2010.
- Heritage is a key driver of international tourism to the UK.

The NPPF requires that LPAs should have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, which recognises the importance of their use, and the wider benefits which their conservation can bring. Historic England supports LPAs in preparing local plans and policies that reflect this, and in making constructive decisions on applications thereafter.

Historic England firmly believes that heritage assets should contribute to job creation, business growth and economic prosperity, in ways that maximise what they have to offer whilst minimising the loss of the qualities that make them special in the first place. This is the basis for Historic England’s ‘constructive conservation’ approach, which is a positive, well-informed and collaborative approach to conservation, in which people are helped to understand their historic environment and use that understanding to manage change. We support innovative schemes that protect and enhance the significance of buildings and historic places, and make optimum use of the historic environment, stimulating sustainable growth (at the large scale, an example is the regeneration of the King’s Cross area, and at the small scale the conversion and reuse of the Old Bishop’s Palace in Ely). Wider adoption of this approach is one way in which more be made of heritage assets.

Making optimum use of the historic environment may also be supported by the exploration of alternative ownership models, such as community ownership.

Historic parks, green spaces, trees, and water features form a significant part of our green infrastructure and have an increasingly important role in helping us adapt to climate change. This network of green spaces offers multiple health, well-being, social, environmental, wildlife and economic values and benefits, but this is not currently reflected in their governance, management and funding.

Historic England is proposing the creation of a number of Heritage Action Zones, in agreement with partners such as local authorities and local enterprise partnerships, to unlock the potential of the local historic environment to contribute positively to economic growth.
Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

- It is important that all relevant professionals have the ability to consider the built environment holistically, in both the public and private sectors, particularly in relation to design skills, and the ability to design well within existing historic contexts: as noted in the answer to Question 10, below, many professionals are not trained and/or confident in this area. Historic England offers some training, but a greater element of cross-discipline training is needed in built environment education.

- Planning is most effective when it is proactive and not just reactive, and it is best able to be proactive when its importance is recognised and it is adequately funded.

- On-going budgetary pressures have resulted in a considerable decline in the number of staff with heritage skills within local planning authorities since 2006. The number of conservation specialists advising local authorities in England has fallen by 35%, and the number of archaeoological specialists has fallen by 23%. Since 2010, the level of historic environment advice accessible to local authorities has fallen by 22%; over the same period (if numbers of planning application decisions are used as an indicator of workload), the number of planning application decisions per full time equivalent historic environment specialist has gone up by 26%. The development sector (e.g. British Property Federation, July 2015) wishes to see appropriately skilled and staffed local planning authority teams, in support of timely and effective decision-making, and the delivery of high-quality outcomes.

- Issues around specialist resources do not just relate to numbers, however, but also to quality: the loss of experienced officers and their replacement (if indeed they are replaced) with junior or temporary staff all weakens the authority’s expertise and ability to deliver a high quality of service; outsourcing of elements of the planning service may also lead to weakened connections between informed management and place. In addition, 81% of council parks departments have lost skilled management staff since 2010, and 77% have lost front-line staff. Making decisions which are not informed by appropriately skilled advice places both heritage assets and local character at risk.

- Inevitably, this will have had an impact on the quality of service and decision-making, with historic environment considerations not being addressed within the planning process as required by the NPPF, and opportunities for proactive planning missed through a lack of confident planners and clear local authority leadership.

- The planning system works most effectively when specialist advice (from conservation, urban design and other specialists) is available, and is weighed against other relevant matters by planning officers (themselves with a reasonable degree of professional knowledge and experience in these areas). This cross-disciplinary awareness and
understanding is fundamental to enhancing place-making, as noted in the Farrell Review.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

- The promotion of high quality design is a core planning principle within the NPPF, and the importance of place-making implicit throughout the document: design is correctly at the heart of the planning process.
- Many existing tools are of value in promoting high quality design and place-making, including historic characterisation (which aids in the understanding of heritage’s contribution to ‘place’), and heritage partnership agreements (which streamline the consent process in relation to listed buildings).
- Useful improvements in national leadership could relate to the promotion of training: 65% of building professionals do not feel that their formal education prepared them adequately for working on pre-1919 buildings, and 68% believe that much of the skills and knowledge they have acquired is self-taught.
- National leadership is enhanced in part by the Government leading by example, e.g. in the commissioning and delivery of infrastructure schemes and the disposal/development of its own assets.
- With effect from October 2015, and alongside our existing free planning and designation services, Historic England is introducing four new enhanced advisory services (fast-track listing, listing enhancement, extended pre-application advice, and a screening service), to give greater certainty to complex or time-sensitive development projects. These will offer greater speed, clarity and engagement in return for recovering the cost of providing these services.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

- The evidence in support of the positive impact of the built (and specifically historic) environment on communities is clear:
  - The historic environment has a positive and significant relationship to sense of place.
  - 87% agree that better quality buildings and public spaces can improve quality of life and seven in ten that heritage sites are important to their local community.
  - Visiting different types of historic places has a positive impact on life satisfaction, or general wellbeing: the good effect on wellbeing was found to be the same or more than doing other activities, including sports, and visiting historic towns and buildings has the greatest impact. The monetary value of this positive impact on general wellbeing is calculated as £1,646 per person per year for the average heritage-goer.
Volunteers who actively participated in heritage projects report levels of mental health and wellbeing far higher than the general population, with one in three describing a notable increase in self-esteem; volunteers also gain new and improved skills through projects and use them beyond the workplace to engage with their community, with 75% of volunteers reporting a strong sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood.

Living near parks, woodland or other open spaces helps to reduce health inequalities, regardless of social class.

- These wider impacts are not all explicitly reflected in current policy and practice (although the NPPF does emphasise the importance of making places better for people [paragraph 56], establishing a strong sense of place [paragraph 58], not undermining quality of life [paragraph 58], and going beyond aesthetic considerations alone [paragraph 61]), but do suggest that a higher priority to design matters in wider decision-making (e.g. in the delivery of infrastructure schemes) is both desirable and beneficial. An increased awareness of these benefits might also give LPAs greater confidence in applying design policy within the planning system, something that Historic England seeks to support with the production of its own advice.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

- Whilst mechanisms exist for encouraging active community engagement in planning processes (e.g. ‘planning for real’ exercises; ‘urban rooms’), current resource pressures on staffing inevitably affect the capacity of LPAs to go beyond the statutory minimum consultation requirements, and encourage the wider community to participate. Research suggests that participation in planning as a whole is often limited to particular sectors of the community.

- Volunteers are however increasingly important in raising awareness of local heritage, and in contributing to plan-making, e.g. through undertaking the necessary research to support the formation of local lists.

- Neighbourhood planning provides a valuable opportunity for communities to engage with local decision-making on heritage and other topics, if properly resourced and not undermined by measures introduced to streamline planning and reduce opportunities for community involvement.

**Financial measures**

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

- Given the importance of the historic environment to the wider built environment, the costs of maintaining historic structures, and the large number of listed buildings in residential use, a reduction in VAT from 20% to 5% on the repair, maintenance and
improvement of dwellings in private ownership would promote both conservation and the economy.

- Housing supply in sustainable town and district centre locations could be increased by further encouraging the full use of upper floors of retail and commercial buildings.
- Existing systems (such as s. 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy) could be used more imaginatively to address place-making and heritage issues.

Victoria Thomson
02 October 2015
Further Comments

The points which Historic England would most like to draw to the Committee’s attention are as follows:

- The historic environment is an asset (rather than an obstacle) in place-making; it is certainly not the case that decision-makers have to make a choice between ‘old’ and ‘new’.
- The planning tools we have for managing the built environment (notably the National Planning Policy Framework) do broadly work, and maintain an appropriate degree of protection for the historic environment, if properly applied.
- In this regard, local authority resourcing is a very important issue, if there are to be adequate numbers of qualified and experienced staff applying the tools we have to manage the built environment, and delivering high-quality development.
- Cross-profession awareness/training in the relevant skills (including heritage) is needed.
- The historic environment is not just ‘built’, but includes green spaces (e.g. within conservation areas; parks and gardens; battlefields; below-ground archaeology) and also the marine element (largely wrecks).

Further Information

The Committee requested further information on a number of areas, as follows:

Page 4: Online Availability of Guidance (Baroness Young of Old Scone)

Historic England makes advice on a wide range of topics available on its website. Planning advice, for instance, is to be found here:

https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/

All guidance has been recently reviewed to ensure that it is concise, up-to-date, and correctly badged as produced by ‘Historic England’.

Page 10: Local Authority Conservation Officer Staffing (Baroness Young of Old Scone)

Since 2006, the number of conservation specialists advising local authorities in England has fallen by 35%.

Historic England will be publishing authority-by-authority data on local capacity for the first time on 3 December, within the ‘Heritage Counts’ local authority profiles. This information will be available here:

http://hc.historicengland.org.uk/local-authority-profiles/
Page 22: Heritage Schools Programme (Baroness O’Cathain)
The Heritage Schools programme was developed in response to the government report on cultural education in England, and is intended to help school children develop an understanding of their local heritage and its significance. The programme includes clusters of schools in eight regions across England and runs from September 2012 to March 2016.

The aims of the Heritage Schools programme are to make sure that:
- Children develop a sense of pride in where they live
- Children understand their local heritage and how it relates to the national story
- Teachers are more confident in making effective use of local heritage resources in delivering the curriculum
- Local historic context is embedded in the school’s curriculum
- Heritage providers are more connected to the needs of local schools
- Parents are engaged in their children’s learning
- Communities are more deeply involved in the life of the school

More information on the programme is available here:
https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/heritage-schools/

Page 23: Heritage-Led Regeneration (Baroness Andrews)

Historic England firmly believes that heritage assets should contribute to job creation, business growth and economic prosperity, in ways that maximise what they have to offer whilst minimising the loss of the qualities that make them special in the first place. This is the basis for Historic England’s ‘constructive conservation’ approach, which is a positive, well-informed and collaborative approach to conservation, in which people are helped to understand their historic environment and use that understanding to manage change. We support innovative schemes that protect and enhance the significance of buildings and historic places, and make optimum use of the historic environment, stimulating sustainable growth.

At the large scale, an example is the regeneration of the King’s Cross area; at a smaller scale, an example is the conversion and reuse of the Old Bishop’s Palace in Ely. Many more examples may be found in our ‘Constructive Conservation’ publication:

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/constructive-conservation/sustainable-growth-for-historic-places/

Related to this is the ‘Heritage Works’ publication, which specifically addresses the use of historic buildings in regeneration. It combines the expertise of the property and conservation sectors, and provides a step-by-step guide for developers, owners, practitioners or community groups to create successful heritage-led regeneration projects:
http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/heritage-works/.

25 November 2015

Historic England, The Heritage Alliance and Prince’s Regeneration Trust – Oral Evidence (QQ159-170)

Transcript to be found under The Heritage Alliance
### Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. **Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?**

   Not necessarily. There needs to be a better balance between central government and local with parish councils and communities having a greater say. Planning at present is determined by district / borough councils who do not make decisions for the good of the region but only look at their actual district. There needs to be more consideration and coordination between districts for housing and employment.

2. **How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

   Could be better and as said above, I would like to see more consultation at local level and strategic decisions across district boundaries.

### National policy for planning and the built environment

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

4. **Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment?**

   There obviously needs to be a 20-30 year plan but final decisions in terms of number of houses.
environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?  

to be built must be delayed until there is certainty on needs. At present too much is based upon projections and not actual needs.

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to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Greater leadership and guidance must be given to provide affordable housing that is not only space efficient but provide sufficient space for families to create a home which is also environmentally sound and efficient in its use of resources.

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<tr>
<td>There is distinct lack of coordination with regards to the built environment. Housing is built but there is no planning for employment, shops, medical facilities, schools, etc. all within walking or cycling distance. We need to reduce the amount of travelling people do to access these facilities.</td>
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<td>12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?</td>
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<td>The district council appears to make decisions regardless of comments made by the local parish council and residents and it is these who have to live with the decisions. More importance must be given to the views of the local people and not solely to the developers.</td>
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<td>13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address</td>
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<td>To produce affordable housing, whatever that actually means, the biggest single cost appears to be the rising cost of land. Maybe some</td>
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Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

   Not necessarily. More local input might be useful.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and Long term planning is desirable although there must be a facility to adapt to major changes in the economy and political environment.
### Buildings and places: New and old

**6.** What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

**7.** How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

**8.** To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

### Skills and design

**9.** Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do the construction industry is short of skilled people. More effort should be put into enhancing the status of engineers and others.
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| 10. | Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?  
   | The free market has produced a lot of poor housing since the 1980’s. Why not return to Parker Morris Standards which were abolished by Mrs Thatcher? |
|   |   |
|   |   |
| **Community involvement and community impact** |   |
| 11. | Do those involved in delivering the managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within the communities?  
   | Not necessarily. See above about a return to Parker Morris Standards regarding room sizes and build quality. |
| 12. | How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?  
   | Communities need to be consulted so that they can engage with changes if necessary. |
|   |   |
| **Financial Measures** |   |
| 13. | Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and  
   | The free market has not solved the housing crisis. The state should build more affordable homes for rent. |
| place-making by private sector developers? |  |
### Michael Bedwell

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<td>Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? Answer: NO  What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment? Answer: VERY LITTLE  How does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners? Answer: LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD HAVE MORE SAY.</td>
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<td>2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?</td>
<td>Not very well at all. All of the departments concerned need to talk.</td>
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<td>Planning too far ahead leads to guess work and incorrect plans.</td>
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### Buildings and places: New and old

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<td>Governments come and go, and so should not have a big input.</td>
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<td>Existing buildings and places should always be used first.</td>
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### Skills and design

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<td>Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to</td>
<td>To many of these people have a vested interest.</td>
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the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas? | Better controls on planning applications so that we do not have horrible buildings like the Travel Lodge in Maidstone, Kent.

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<th>10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community involvement and community impact</td>
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| 11. Do those involved in delivering the managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within the communities? | No – they do not ask the local people.

| 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed? | Not very well – too often plans are late arriving at the Parish Council, so there is little time to discuss them properly.

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<th>Financial Measures</th>
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<td>13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and</td>
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Page 1012 of 1964
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<th>place-making by private sector developers?</th>
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<td>Policymaking, integration and coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?</td>
<td>Things are clearly not working. There is clash between Parish, Borough/District and County elected authorities. Parishes often voice clear and well-argued proposals which are ignored at District level. Districts adopt a parochial philosophy which looks inwards. What is lacking is a larger body that can take a strategic role. Probably Counties are best placed to provide this.</td>
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<td><strong>2.</strong> How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?</td>
<td>Too many policies are politically motivated and over simplified for electoral purposes. Government departments should be in broad outline only for implementation decisions at County, District and Parish level.</td>
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<th>National policy for planning and the built environment</th>
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<td><strong>3.</strong> Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?</td>
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<td><strong>4.</strong> Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?</td>
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<td><strong>5.</strong> Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and...</td>
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**6.** What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

It seems there is a total lack of intervention by Government where no thought is given to need to relate house need to job opportunities. It seems that demands for housing in the S.East are accepted without challenge. This is while housing in other parts of the country is laying derelict due to lack of jobs.

**7.** How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

See 6 above.

**8.** To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

A piecemeal attitude prevails. Look at London – large prestigious buildings of suspect design are erected without out regard to the overall characteristics of the city.

**Skills and design**

**9.** Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do

Clearly they do not have the skills. Question 8 above covers this point.
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<td>place-making by private sector developers?</td>
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*09 October 2015*
Home Builders Federation and Federation of Master Builders (QQ94-108)

Transcript to be found under Federation of Master Builders
Written Evidence from The Housing Forum Home Performance Label Consortium to the House of Lords Select Committee for the Built Environment.

We are responding to the call for written evidence from the House of Lords Select Committee, with a particular focus on the critical requirement to enable consumers to make an informed choice about the home they purchase by providing them with comparable and meaningful information at the point of sale or about the performance of their new home. We believe that the provision of such information to the consumer will ultimately transform both the quality of and value in the construction of new homes, and create demand for the improvement of existing homes.

The Home Performance Label (HPL) Consortium is a partnership of:

- The Housing Forum (http://www.housingforum.org.uk/), a cross sector membership network of more than 120 housing developers, providers and suppliers,
- BLP Insurance (Building LifePlans Ltd) (http://www.blpinsurance.com/), part of the Thomas Miller Group, providing building defects insurance since 1999 and
- HTA Design LLP (http://www.hta.co.uk/) a leading multidisciplinary design consultancy in the housing and regeneration sector.

The purpose of the HPL Consortium is to bring forward a meaningful, consumer-facing labelling system for the housing market, capable of generating consumer pull that will ultimately transform quality and value. At the time of writing, the three HPL partners are in discussion with a wide ranging group of housing developers and providers about joining the consortium. These include Wates Living Space, Barratt Developments, L&Q, Pocket Living, Essential Living, Grainger, Notting Hill Housing Group, Grosvenor, Climate Energy Homes, Home Group, Hurford Salvi Carr, Laing O'Rourke, Lend Lease, First Base Ltd. and others.

Our response to the questions in the call for written evidence is as follows:

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

The Housing Forum is a cross sector membership network that collaborates to support the delivery of more homes and better homes. It has campaigned for many years to enable a voice for the consumer in the Housing Industry. It has published a series of influential reports over the years that have built up the argument and support for improved labelling of the housing product. The following can be downloaded from the Housing Forum website:
"Rationalising Regulations for Growth and Innovation" Report Published: 26 April 2012 available to download from: http://www.housingforum.org.uk/influencing/housing-forum-reports-

"Housing for the Information Age" Published: October 2013 available to download from: http://www.housingforum.org.uk/influencing/housing-forum-reports-

"The Case for Home Performance Labelling" Final Report Published: January 2015 available to download from: http://www.housingforum.org.uk/influencing/housing-forum-reports-

These reports are evidence that, the Housing Forum has consistently campaigned for the creation of a policy framework which enables informed choice in the housing market by equipping consumers with the comparable and meaningful information at the point of sale of renting new and second hand homes.

Our response to this question is that consumer decision making needs to be supported by a policy framework enabling informed choice until this is established, we will struggle to deliver consistent quality performance in our housing stock.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

We believe that by providing a clear set of independently verified performance measurements of homes on which purchasers and renters could base their purchasing decisions on, a more customer focused market could be created which would respond more directly to their needs. New housing would become more popular, old housing would be upgraded to higher standards of energy efficiency, and a virtuous cycle of supply and demand would emerge in time.

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF is commendable in its brevity and in the priority given in this abbreviated form of planning policy to the importance of design quality. However, we in The Housing Forum HPL Consortium does not believe there is an adequate framework for defining what good looks like and we continue to be dismayed by the poor quality of design of many housing schemes that are approved by LPAs and which comply with Building Regulations.

We believe that in addition to the process of design review which many LPAs are adopting, there is a need for widely understood proxies of quality that can be applied in order to help
the industry and regulatory authorities differentiate good from bad and thereby raise standards generally.

The Building for Life 12 agenda has, for example, achieved the status of a helpful lingua franca that enables developers, local communities and LPAs to identify quality design in 12 areas that are, however, confined to design and the scale of the neighbourhood or housing layout. BFL12 does not concern itself with the design quality of the home itself. Nevertheless we believe that BFL12 should be identified in guidance to planning policy as an acceptable benchmark of design quality.

Our report, "The Case for Home Performance Labelling," amply illustrates that there are certain measures of housing performance which are meaningful proxies of quality and value of the home itself and that is why we have gone on to create a benchmarking club of leading home builders and housing providers to develop this principle into a labelling scheme ready to launch onto the market. In particular, apart from accrediting that homes on offer meet expected standards, we believe that the inclusion of robust and accredited calculation of monthly and annual energy costs, maintenance costs, and costs of ownership are capable of providing consumers with meaningful indicators of quality and value.

Our Consortium aims to create an industry based voluntary labelling scheme, recognising that the present political establishment is bent on reducing the burden of regulation upon commerce. We hope, at the very least, we may receive an endorsement of our effort from Government. But ideally we may in due course, and when our scheme is more tried and tested, similarly seek the identification of the Home Performance Label as a benchmark of quality in Government guidance.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

We should anticipate a time when energy costs are very much higher than they are today and prepare consumers to become much more aware of the potential impacts of costs in use on their ability to afford to house themselves. Only when we begin as a society to trade off capital and borrowing costs against costs in use will be begin to create real consumer influence on a more sustainable housing market. The Home Performance Label is therefore a first step in a long term project to bring the influence of quality, value and performance to bear on the value we place on homes as an asset.

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

We believe that by providing support for Home Performance Labelling, the Government would inform the market that low quality homes are not welcome and that high quality
homes are needed. For homebuilders, the message that they should provide independently verified performance measurements of homes for purchasers and renters to base their purchasing decisions on, would create a more customer focussed market which responds more directly to the customers’ needs. New housing would become more popular, old housing would be upgraded to higher standards of energy efficiency, and a virtuous cycle of supply and demand would emerge in time.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

We believe that by providing a clear set of independently verified performance measurements of homes for purchasers and renters to base their purchasing decisions on, a more customer focussed market could be created which responds more directly to their needs. Being clear about the improved energy performance of new homes compared to older homes will make new housing more valuable to the purchaser. Lenders will be encouraged to lend more money for a home that will cost less to run over its lifetime, and this in turn will make it more advantageous for home builders to build more energy efficient homes. The current market sees energy efficiency as a cost rather than a value as mortgage lenders do not include the savings arising from energy efficiency in their valuation models. In this way, new homes would become greener and cheaper to run, and thus more popular, and older housing would be upgraded to higher standards of energy efficiency to compete, and a virtuous cycle of supply and demand would emerge in time.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The quality and value of new homes would be greatly improved by the availability of clear and accredited information about the quality and performance of new homes. Consumers have instant access to information on every other aspect of life on their smart phones and computers, so why not give them the same level of information about their homes, the most expensive purchase most of them will ever make?

The questions are: how best to introduce information to the marketplace? What information would be most useful? How are we to overcome the various obstacles involved?

The Housing Forum has brought together a wide range of contributors from across the industry seeking answers to these questions.

This work has culminated in the Home Performance Label Consortium, which has engaged designers, homebuilders and suppliers in an exercise to explore the idea of providing comprehensive data to potential purchasers of homes.
The Housing Forum tested the viability and potential reaction to this proposition by creating a prototype housing comparison website (www.homeperformancelabelling.co.uk) anticipating a time when customers will make choices about their next home fully informed about the standards it will achieve. This will include the running costs they will expect to incur as well as other important information, in addition to the price and the location.

The pilot illustrates how a website based on a Home Performance Label could be used by purchasers or renters to search for a home that met their needs using metrics such as price range, bedroom size, location, running costs, available space, lifecycle costs, daylight and broadband speed. The best performing homes are highlighted using a Red-Amber-Green scheme, and the selected homes can be sorted from lowest-to-highest or highest-to-lowest in each area of performance.

The home performance labelling pilot demonstration website comprised multiple data views for each featured house type.

**LIST VIEW**
The List View presents an image of each home, the estate agents’ description and a calculation of the price per square foot, generated from the data available as perhaps the most obviously straightforward measure of value.
GRID VIEW
The Grid View provides a more condensed and therefore rapidly scan-able array for browsers to be able to draw comparisons between homes on offer.
MAP VIEW
We valued the designs on the hypothetical basis that they were all located on the Isle of Dogs in London’s East End. We chose this location on the basis that there is a great deal of development activity and already a very diverse range of housing typologies available to prospective purchasers in the area.

THE DATA VIEW
The Data View provides the opportunity to compare homes in terms of the parameters we have selected for the pilot. As well as indicating whether each home performs in accordance with (amber), better than (green) or below (red) benchmark standards, the user can rank the selection under each performance parameter by clicking at the head of each column. No attempt is made at an overall ranking in recognition that consumers have widely different priorities for making their choice.

The outcome of this pilot exercise justifies the idea that more information should be provided to home seekers than is currently the case. In the pilot the range of running costs amongst new homes built to contemporary standards is almost £3,000 per annum. The amount of space available in a 3 bed home varies by 47 square metres. Many homes in the pilot failed to provide adequate storage, and levels of daylighting provided vary widely. Crucially, none of these differences are recognised in the pricing of new homes.

Purchasers of two three-bedroom houses in the same post code will most likely be offered the same mortgage, irrespective of any differences between the two homes, and of the
purchasers’ ability to pay more for a bigger or better performing home. Price does not reflect performance.

Now that the housing market, particularly in London, is moving away from home ownership, it is important that renters in the affordable and private markets understand the full costs of their bills so that they can manage their budgets effectively. Providing an assessment of their likely bills in a new home will help them to make the appropriate choice for their pocket, and also enable them to get the best value for money. The system will also benefit landlords, as they can use a Label to differentiate their rental offer by including the amenities available in their homes as well as the running costs.

In the medium term we anticipate extending this approach to the existing home market. Labelling existing homes will counterbalance some of the more emotionally driven aspects of choice (e.g. a 17th Century cottage in a flood risk zone), and highlight where a new home offers better value and more affordable lifecycle costs for purchasers. By demonstrating that the running costs of new homes are generally lower than for existing homes, we would expect to encourage the sellers of existing homes to bring them up to equal energy performance with the new homes market, and by enabling purchasers to compare the space standards of new homes with existing homes we would expect house builders to build to the best space standards that they can afford to deliver. The better elements of both sides of the market would spur the other to improve.

On the basis of the understanding obtained through the pilot, we have developed a recommendation for the first move to introduce Home Performance Labelling to the housing market. This is based on the assumption that Government will not legislate any time soon for the introduction of mandatory labelling. Instead, we intend to offer a product for use, initially by homebuilders, housing associations, mortgage lenders, estate agents and local authorities, that will demonstrate the compliance (or otherwise) of homes with parameters such as the space standards set out in the National Standards, energy performance (including appliance running costs, lifecycle costs and levels of daylight), storage space and broadband speed.

To develop the product and bring it to market, we have formed a Consortium of interested parties to fund and promote the initiative.

This group will meet regularly to oversee the development of the Label from an idea to a market-ready proposition. By involving a cross-sector group of companies, we intend to capture the needs of a wide selection of home providers, manufacturers and landlords, both private and affordable.

We believe this initiative will lay the foundations of a framework for more and more consumer information about housing of all sorts. To achieve this outcome, we recognise that we will need more partners, and we hope that bodies such as the Home Builders Federation, the Homes and Communities Agency, the Council of Mortgage Lenders and New London Architecture, among others, will encourage potential collaborators to make contact and begin the necessary dialogue.
The use of the label will indicate to the consumer that:

- The home on offer meets all the locally applicable standards as indicated on the Label.
- The homebuilder or housing provider is committed to full disclosure of consumer information.
- The predicted performance of the home shown on the Label has been calculated using the best available information and techniques.
- The predicted performances, including costs in use, are recognised by Government, the RICS and Building Societies Association as legitimate predictions.
- The homebuilder or housing provider is committed to long term examination of performance feedback to improve the HPL methodology continuously.
- If you follow the recommended guidelines your home should perform as predicted.

The organisations who have pledged support to date include Wates Ltd, Barratt Developments PLC, Pocket Living Ltd, and L&Q. The first Consortium meeting was also attended by Notting Hill Housing Group, Osborne, Grainger PLC, Essential Living, Hurford Salvi Carr Ltd, Lend Lease, First Base Ltd, and Home Group.

We propose that the Government should endorse Home Performance Labelling as a cost effective way of fostering new high performance housing in the capital. By encouraging developers to display the performance of their properties to the market, consumers will be moved to push for higher quality in areas that matter to them, asking for more space, more light, more storage and lower bills. This will act to improve the quality of housing on offer, making homes more liveable and reducing harmful emissions. In the long term, this approach can be extended to the existing stock to encourage its improvement.

**The HPL brand**

The project brand has evolved as the project has developed, with the latest iteration being the registered kitemark and logotype shown above. A more informative website is in development, with the focus on project updates, primarily for members of the HPL consortium.

*01 October 2015*
Call for evidence House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy and the Built Environment

Who am I

My name is Roger Hutton. I am familiar with all aspects of the planning and housing development process.

I have identified land for development, approached owners, assembled individual ownerships into larger areas of land; dealt with all of the technical issues surrounding development e.g. highways, drainage, ecology etc; submitted planning applications and secured planning permission; handled planning appeals; negotiated s106 agreements; built houses and sold and let them.

I have also set up and run my own town planning consultancy and written on planning matters in a national magazine. I have helped write a Neighbourhood Development Plan for our village.

I have seen the planning system evolve over the last 25 years and get forever more and more complicated.

I am now retired so can look at the system dispassionately without having my own agenda or self interest to pursue.

EVER RISING HOUSE PRICES

The planning system places much of its focus on deciding where you cannot build housing. By and large it has been successful in that objective. Planning how many, and where to build, new homes has been somewhat less successful.

The inadvertent rationing of housing through the planning system to a level which is below need or demand produces inevitable upward pressure on prices. The beneficiaries are the already housed and it is no coincidence that they are typically amongst the most vociferous objectors to new housing proposals.

Governments are understandably wary of policies that would reduce the value of the electorate’s housing and which would see them rapidly removed from office. House price inflation is not without some societal benefit. It creates an asset that can be used to support those in retirement, either by trading down or through equity release. In that case rising house prices benefit the public purse by securing the financial future of many of the retired so that they do not have to rely on the state.
It is accepted that it would be politically and probably, in practice, impossible to produce a very large increase in housing supply such that it reduces existing house prices. The key is to get a better balance.

A better balance is to be seen in the commercial sector. In many areas there is a reasonable match between the supply and demand of commercial property and that leads to stable prices. It is interesting to note, for example, that the value of our office premises in Guildford is little different from what it was when it was built in the late 1980s. That is in stark contrast to the tripling of house prices over the same period.

So why have successive Government failed to significantly increase the supply of housing to the level needed which, at c. 250,000 dwellings a year, is a level we were producing and exceeding in the 1960s.

**SO - WHY SO FEW HOUSES?**

There is the same tension at local level as there is at Government level between those charged with taking the decisions about housing numbers and their electorate.

At the local level planning decisions are taken by elected members which inevitably makes them political. Elected councillors are encouraged to seek the lowest housing numbers possible in their locality to appease a vocal minority who want to ‘protect’ what they have and are anti change. There is also an anti development bias in the media which needs to be challenged;

That is the over arching reason behind the country’s repeated failure to deliver enough housing. In a sentence... persistent, unchallenged anti development bias and the need for local councillors who are charged with deciding housing numbers and planning applications to be re elected by a ‘conservative’ and, often numerically small, electorate.

Even with growth supporting councillors the local plan system is too complex and long winded and repeated changes to the local plan system, by successive Governments and which require Councils to significantly revise or start their local plans all over again provides a useful excuse for councillors to kick the difficult decisions on the numbers of houses into the long grass.

Viable development opportunities are also harder to find as the associated financial demands attached to a consent for infrastructure contributions, affordable housing, ecology improvements, higher flood risk standards, higher building regulation standards, renewable energy requirements and meeting the latest sustainable building codes etc all add significantly to costs. These costs are easier to bear on undeveloped (‘greenfield’) sites but not on previously developed commercial land which often has its own significant value.

Favouring the politically more acceptable redevelopment of brownfield land before developing new greenfield land is an understandable and potentially suitable policy response but we need both and, in some areas, eg my own at Mole Valley, there are limited
and insufficient brownfield opportunities. It is finite resource which has, in many areas, now been exhausted. In any event this policy approach has to be used wisely so that areas do not become dormitories with sufficient housing but little or no employment leading to significant out commuting with its own traffic implications.

Even when land is identified for housing the planning application system itself is far too complicated and needs radical overhaul.

The information required to support planning applications is now complicated, expensive to produce and beyond the resources of the smaller builder; some surveys that need to be undertaken e.g. ecological can only take place at certain times of the year and so can seriously delay the submission of an application; the pre application meeting system is flawed; the process for validating planning applications is excessive; the 8/13 week target determination time has been counterproductive; objectors are better organised and encouraged by an anti development tone in the media; planning policies are often too subjective reducing the predictability of outcome of applications; committee members do not understand their role in determining applications; planning decisions are over influenced by local politics and members not sanctioned for refusing a controversial application, against officers advice, in the knowledge that an inspector is likely to overturn their decision but leave them with ‘clean hands’; legal agreements take far too long to negotiate;

With that introductory summary I do not wish to produce a paper long on analysis and short on solutions. I have sought to reverse that process. I would invite the reader to assume that the problem identified does exist and suggest here some possible ideas to pursue.

**Deciding housing numbers – the ‘political’ element**

The Government’s push towards localism – ‘let local people decide’ only works if coupled with the mandatory requirement to assess, and then meet, its objectively assessed housing need unless there are overriding reasons why the need should not be met. However the approach is itself flawed. An objective assessment of housing need of a village is not possible so many Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) are being prepared in a vacuum. Councils with overall housing targets should be required to divide these out.

The duty to cooperate between local authorities and NDP areas and the need to carry our Strategic Housing Market Area Assessments (known as ‘SHMAAs’) which don’t recognise LPA boundaries is an explicit acknowledgement that it is difficult to plan areas even at the LPA level. The duty to cooperate is a fig leaf to cover the contradiction at the heart of localism – planning is very difficult at the local level because people nowadays are so mobile. This issue needs to be addressed not ignored and better guidance given on how housing numbers should be decided for small areas if localism is to succeed.
In some authorities and NDP areas the only undeveloped land is in the green belt. Should it be used? Cynically we note that the need to protect the green belt becomes more politically significant as an election approaches.

Politically the Government should encourage councils to review green belt boundaries that are over 30 years old but advise them to look at adding compensatory land to the green belt, where possible, if some is to be removed. N.B. in the Mole Valley district some GB land (under 5%) would be needed to meet all of its objectively assessed housing need.

Tying Government grant to the delivery of housing has helped and might be expanded. Maybe the Government should set overall housing targets and councils bid for their share with a timeline for delivery which produces timed release of grant. This approach will disadvantage those areas environmentally constrained e.g. predominantly green belt but perhaps there is an argument to say that these areas of limited change should merge into larger councils or, at the very least, be forced to share facilities.

Finally the Government needs to repeatedly make the point that single issue organisations e.g. the National Trust, Natural England, CPRE etc do not have its wider responsibility to meet the housing, employment, infrastructure, social and other needs of the nation. The Government should make the point that single issue organisations have it easy. The CPRE for instance love threats to the green belt as it is a wonderful recruitment tool which enables it to expand its membership. Government guidance should be given to make it clear that a single issue will rarely trump the nation’s obligation need to plan to meet the future needs of its people.

Anti-development bias

Government should take the lead and repeatedly make the point that the most of us live in a property built on what was originally a greenfield site, and often it was a developer that had the foresight and took the risk to bring their property into existence. It should make the case that those of us who have benefitted from previous planning decisions and the initiative of developers should be slow to resist proposals that would similarly benefit others. That could be alluded to in guidance to councils advising them on how much weight should be given to local objections and how they should be assessed.

Many of the fears anticipated by residents are exaggerated, a cover for a desire to prevent unwanted change and so do not turn out to happen in practice. The Government should encourage Councils to undertake resident’s surveys (or commission such surveys itself), sometime after development has taken place and been assimilated to see, if the objections raised by local people at the time of the application were borne out. Few are and that information should be made available to councillors. Many residents, after the fact, will say they can’t remember what all the fuss was about. Sometimes they have only objected because a local determined individual has organised the opposition. Some are encouraged to sign petitions but, in a hurry and on the doorstep, have no way of knowing whether the
objector’s claims about the impact of the or even the content are correct. A further reason for Government to issue guidance to councils advising them on how much weight should be given to give local objections.

Finally the media should be encouraged to publicise successful developments and the positive aspects of development including interviews with the (often delighted) new residents. This might be achieved through a new Public Relations arm of the Housing and Communities Agency.

Local plans

The plan led system is fine in principle and was devised to make planning assessments and planning decisions objective and thus more predictable. However that objectivity has been undermined by planning policies which increasingly include subjective tests e.g. ‘proposals that are out of character with the area or detrimental to neighbouring amenity will be refused’.

Often little guidance is given on how these factors will be assessed. Unguided requirements readily became a matter of opinion and create an opportunity for residents to object and councillors to support the objectors. ‘Character’ and ‘neighbour’s amenity’ are the reasons most often cited as justification for locally led refusals. Government should issue guidance on how these factors are to be assessed and when they become material (I can provide an outline).

Local plans are far too complex with an excessive consultation regime that builds in delay and so take too long to produce. Plans used to be simple and relate primarily to land use.

The whole local plan system should be simplified, easier and quicker to review and update and easier for the public to use and understand. The LDF system of allowing significant numbers of different documents to form part of the plan has not worked well and meets none of the objectives.

I have developed an alternative model but am mindful that a change now would add further unwanted delay to plan preparation. The solution would be to require councils once they have plans in place to change the format of the existing plan to meet the new model which then allows more regular and quicker partial reviews and is more comprehensible.

The Government’s threat to take over planning in LPA areas unless there is a plan in place by 2017 means many will miss the date. A number of council’s suspended their plans and will be going back to the beginning because of the Government’s (election influenced) ‘clarification’ that housing need does not trump green belt. Up to then councils in areas of green belt and high housing demand were carrying out green belt reviews and proposing
green belt changes. The late clarification has stalled a number of local plans and has itself made the 2017 very missable.

Taking over local planning will not sit well with the localism agenda.

Government should require the housing part of the plan to be produced quickly, examined and in place by 2017. That target is more likely to be achievable. Note early guidance will need to be given on amending green belt boundaries (see earlier comment perhaps relating to creating new compensatory green belt).

The other major inhibitor of development potential is the ‘area wide’ designation which goes beyond LPA boundaries. The recently approved South Downs National Park is a prime example. It covers a huge area from Winchester to Eastbourne. There was a natural desire when surveying to include as large an area as possible yet within the designated area there is a huge mix of towns, cities, villages and landscapes.

The South Downs National Park Authority has now taken over the planning functions from the local councils and, we are advised, are proposing to meet only half the park’s objectively assessed need for housing and make no significant additional employment allocations, all this in an area of the south of England that covers 1600km2.

All the large, area wide, designations suffer from the same problem. This include green belts, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, European Special Protections Areas and a host of other landscape designations. The tendency is include as much as possible, create a restrictive policy over all of the land included and don’t recognise that there are inevitably wide variations in the land included within the designated areas.

A better and objective system of taking account of the characteristics of the land and comparing it with the purposes of the designation needs to be found if such designation is not going to continue to strangle growth.

THE PLANNING APPLICATION REGIME

Planning applications are now very complicated, expensive to prepare and are typically beyond the ability and resources of smaller housebuilders. Two examples of planning officer’s reports on an affordable housing development 11 units and a larger development of 108 houses are added by way of illustration at appendices 1a and 1b. It is also informative to examine the number of conditions attached to the consent.

At present all of the work has to be done prior to the submission of an application and paid for ‘on risk’ with no guarantee of a permission. Consideration should be given to encouraging the grant of a a genuine outline planning permission which establishes only that the principle of say residential development and would list the issues that need to be addressed by a later application. Such applications would quickly and simply identify an acceptable land use.
Ecology

Some ecological surveys can only take place at certain times of the year and so can seriously delay applications. Bat surveys for example have been asked for extensions to houses where the roof is involved and even the demolition of a garage. Worse than that sometime surveys are asked for covering different times of the year e.g. to cover hibernation, foraging, and with young.

Greater crested newts are subject to survey timing issues as are many other species. Surveys of birds in Special Protection Areas can only be undertaken at certain times of year so if you have missed the survey window you have to wait. These time sensitive surveys can, if the timing works against the application, delay an application for up to a year. Many applicants don’t know of the ecological requirements until the after the application has been submitted.

The problem arises because some ecological consultees over interpret legislation to mean that permission cannot be granted unless there is certainty of no adverse effect. Yet in most cases ecological interests, if the legislation is not over interpreted, can be addressed, solutions found and so are not (or should not be) fatal to an application on their own.

Common sense needs to return and if surveys are not available then the application is approved consent should be conditioned so that development cannot proceed until survey have been done and a solution agreed. Note this is conditional consent, subject to further information, is currently done with site contamination or archaeological interest.

Pre application meetings

The present pre application meeting system is flawed. It is anti democratic. The applicant ask for them to see if the application is likely be approved before residents and statutory consultees have been approached. That can subvert the democratic process. Everything is agreed before the application has been submitted! More often officers are aware of the dilemma so the advice is of little value. Officers are wary about saying ‘yes’ but confident to say ‘no’. Even a ‘yes’ is often so qualified as to be almost valueless. They are of even less value where (as often happens) the officer has not undertaken a site visit.

A different pre application regime is required. Government should make clear that the objective should not be to elicit pre application support for the proposals but should be used to identify all of the relevant issues and policies that the applicant will need to address. Advice should never be given without site visit. The council should be required to identify similar relevant applications and appeals (allowed and refused). The meeting should be referred to as a ‘pre application information’ meeting.

Application validation.

The process for validating planning applications remains excessive. In one case the council require a completed s106 agreement signed by the landowners and all the mortgagees
before the application is registered. Others have a long list of requirements and are judge and jury of what is needed for an application to be registered.

A quick system where an applicant can ask a third party whether validation requirements are justified would be helpful. At present an aggrieved applicant can only lodge an appeal.

The 8/13 week deadlines to determine applications

These targets have, in many cases, been counterproductive. The reader is invited to look at the application for 108 houses at appendix 1 and ask whether it could realistically be done in the statutory 13 weeks.

The targets have not speeded up applications but shifted much of the work to the pre application stage where there is no requirement to respond to queries in a timely fashion.

Also council are in the habit of not looking at planning applications until after the consultation results are in and that leaves no time to respond by making changes to the application. Often the changes are minor and could have been dealt with if identified earlier in the processing of the application. Without time to make changes the typical option we were offered so that the application can be determined within the time limits was ‘you can either withdraw the application and submit a new one or we will refuse it under delegated authority’.

Councils are becoming better at asking for time extensions but in our experience that is often because officers are behind rather than to allow the applicant time to make changes which would necessitate the officer starting a reconsultation.

The targets become even more of a problem where the application comes in at an inconvenient point in the committee cycle. Most council hold monthly planning meetings. If the application arrives between committee dates there may be only 6 weeks before the only committee meeting that is within the time limit and, with 2 weeks to write and prepare reports, that may only leave 4 weeks to process the application, far too short to deal with the application properly and process queries and amendments.

Government should advise councils that it is good practice to have an initial look at applications and do a site visit within 10 days of receipt to seek to indentify, early on, any missing information or obvious changes that need to be made. This might even allow changes to be made before the application goes out to consultation.

The planning application form could be changed to allow applicants to specify the time within which they wish to have a decision subject to the statutory minimum of 8 or 13 weeks. (We would have always asked for 13 weeks rather than 8 for even the smallest application to allow for any plan revisions). Council’s can then be performance tested against the time the applicant chose. In calculating time taken the clock should stop running on the date the council resolve to grant or refuse an application. (NB The Government is
looking at having targets for the completion of legal agreements – if these are to be subject to separate time limits time would start on the date the resolution is made).

In the case of insubstantial amendments being required more councils could make use of a resolution to grant permission subject to the receipt of plans showing the required change.
Statutory and other Consultees and greater transparency

Sometimes applicants find out too late in the process (often because the officer is too busy to pass on the information) that a statutory consultee, or another council department, has raised a query or an objection.

Some councils have deliberately withheld information they have received on the spurious grounds that they are entitled to do so until such time as the report has been written and been sent to members. Some don’t put responses on their website at all or in a timely fashion which requires you to visit the council officers. Some make excessive charges for copying.

Government should require all consultees to copy their responses directly to the applicant or agent who submitted the application. That will give the applicant the maximum amount of time to address any concerns.

Planning files should be open for inspection at any time and with notional copy charges.

Planning committee - members role

Planning decisions are over influenced by local politics and members are not sanctioned for refusing a controversial application, against officers advice, in the knowledge that an inspector is likely to overturn their decision but leave them with ‘clean hands’

This is possible in part because few committee members understand their role in planning.

A councillor may be approached by a constituent with a housing or some other problem. In that case it is right and proper that they take up the issue and represent their constituent’s interests to the Council. Here they perform a ‘representative’ role. However in planning matters, theirs is not a representative role, indeed if it were who would one represent? The applicant who is also a constituent or the neighbour?

The councillor’s role in planning is not to represent neighbours who object to development. It is this confusion of roles that is at the heart of decisions by members that are taken contrary to officer’s advice and which are often subsequently overturned by Inspectors.

It is the duty of members, in deciding planning matters, to take decisions in the wider public interest and this will include the interests of those who need to be housed within the area and whose voices are never heard at the time applications are considered.

Government needs to issue guidance on the role of members in determining applications to make this difference between the two roles much clearer.

Most councils allow residents to address the committee to represent their interests and so, if it accepted that the members role in planning is not a representative one, Government could advise that members are not be entitled to speak and represent residents where residents have the opportunity to address the committee themselves. Councillors would
only be allowed to speak in respect of the application as a whole and its effect on the district.

If public speaking by residents is not allowed by a particular council members could speak on behalf of the residents but in that instance not take part in the vote.

**Post refusal**

We suggest that, just as pre application meetings have been encouraged, so should post application meetings where an application has been refused. These could be required before an appeal is submitted (or considered by the Inspectorate). The meeting could be paid for and the council required to give constructive written advice on the way forward.

**INCREASING THE RATE OF DEVELOPMENT**

It is a common complaint that developers hoard land and do not produce much needed housing as fast as they could.

It is not surprising that large housebuilders, who need a certain level of production to sustain their company, need to forward plan so that they can guarantee they have for example the next 3 years production in hand.

The scarcity of consented resident land (for all of the reasons we have identified) means that a company would be foolish to try and acquire land that is needed at the last moment. That would be commercial suicide for a large housebuilder. This practice is no different from the manufacturer who, if his raw materials are scarce, will need to ensure they are acquired early enough to ensure continuity of production.

Publicly quoted housebuilders often give the number of ‘plots’ they have under their control in their annual report. These can be misinterpreted as land hoarding. Often the plots do not have planning permission. Some ‘plots’ are not identified for housing at all but are to be promoted in the future as suitable ‘potential’ sites for housing when the local plan is next reviewed.

What is true is that developers do not produce the housing at the fastest possible rate once planning permission has been granted. This is for commercial reasons which could be overridden in the public interest.

Developers typically, and not unnaturally, want to achieve the maximum sales price possible and they seek to match the rate at which they build to the rate they anticipate sales.

Releasing completed houses in phases is typical which can of course means that development takes much longer which has a knock on effect for the first residents who must anticipate living on a building site.
New housing typically commands a premium and the housebuilder can help himself achieve such a premium by limiting the rate of release of units. He would have to price them much more keenly if he built them all and completed the development without phasing.

Planning permissions are typically subject to a 5 year time limit during which the development must be started. At present a start on site preserves the consent for all time. There is no time limit to complete the development once it has started.

One LPA has suggested it should be able to charge council tax on unbuilt units to encourage earlier completions. This will not have the desired effect of accelerating delivery as house prices, in normal circumstances, usually rise faster than any annual council tax charge.

The Government should look at limiting the right to renew planning permissions other than in exceptional circumstances so that they have to be started within 5 years and set time limits for completion.

R H Hutton

Howard Hutton & Associates

26 October 2015
House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Call for Written Evidence

John Worthington, responding on behalf the Independent Transport Commission (ITC) as Chairman of the Spatial Effects of HSR project

1.0 Introduction

The United Kingdom is currently undertaking a major programme of investment in infrastructure which will have a major impact on the form, character and quality of our built environment. The Independent Transport Commission (ITC) has dedicated one of its major research streams to investigating the spatial effects of High Speed Rail (http://www.theitic.org.uk/our-research/current-projects/high-speed-rail/). The review of existing experience of High Speed Trains in the UK and Europe identified the need to understand HSR as the cornerstone of an integrated infrastructure network, which could not only increase the long-term capacity of the UK’s transport infrastructure, but also shape the form of our cities and act as a catalyst for regional economic growth.

2.0 Policy making, integration and co-ordination

2.1 [Question 2] How well is policy coordinated across departments related to housing, design, transport infrastructure, sustainability and heritage?

At one of the ITC workshops on Governance and delivery, the UK’s central government was typecast as being deeply fractured both within and between departments. An observation was that HM Treasury’s principal concern was retaining revenue rather than offering a long-term perspective and central administrators were more concerned with defining policy than understanding the characteristics and needs of places. HS2 is acting as a welcome catalyst for raising awareness of the value of integrated thinking and the importance of place. The close working relationship between DfT (HS2 Directorate), BIS and the DCLG Cities and Local Growth Unit, is a welcome sign.

2.2 [Question 2] How could integration and coordination be improved?

The United Kingdom has one of Europe’s most centralized government systems. In mainland Europe we found a widespread recognition of the need for collaboration and trust between cities to form city regions and also between cities and central government. The recent growth deals originally brokered by the Minister of Cities are an encouraging sign of a greater inter-departmental thinking and a step towards a greater level of trust and collaboration between national and city government.
3.0 Buildings and Places: New and Old

[Question 7] How do we develop built environments that are resilient? The ITC review of major rail infrastructure projects identified that planning should provide for certainty whilst being able to adapt. Due to the long-term nature of major projects, it is likely that initial assumptions will have to be revised due to external changes. Case studies showed that those developments that were successful recognised change as continuous and incremental. They championed a culture of continuous evaluation and questioning and allowed sufficient slack in the plan to allow for adaptation over time.

4.0 Community Involvement and Community Impact

[Question 12] How effectively are communities engaged with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment? The ITC review and subsequent dissemination of the insights to city regions which will be impacted by major infrastructure investment has identified in addition to public private partnerships a third sector of civil society composed of trusts, community interest companies and academic institutions. These organisations are positive, pro-active and responsible, motivated by a desire to make a better city. In Bordeaux, the city acted as the initiator inducing active engagement of the community through establishing a consultative charter consisting of public meetings, “dialogue”, urban walks, training for residents and a “project house”. The process of building trust between public, private and civil society was begun 10 years before the planned arrival of HSR, and established an ongoing process of co-creation and co-production. At King’s Cross Central, Argent took a long term view working with the local council, businesses and community to set the basic principles for development. These have been maintained as the strategy for funding has adapted to economic cycles. The anchor development of the University of the Arts and transitional uses such as the Skip Gardens, a community interest company, have brought vitality to the area. Argent has repositioned King’s Cross from being a derelict backland to a thriving commercial, learning and residential community.

06 October 2015
Q. 1&6: What are the challenges associated with integrating transport and other infrastructure into the built environment?

- Infrastructure has a long timespan of planning and construction, an impact across local, regional and possibly national boundaries (ie. High Speed Rail, or Energy) and may need to adjust to economic, political and technological changes by adaptations in specification during the period of construction (see: Prof Harry Dimitriou, Omega Centre Bartlett School Of Planning UCL, Mega Projects: Lessons for Decision Makers, December 2012). Strategic plans need to be set nationally with clear measurable goals and mechanisms to assess impact as the project proceeds allowing feedback and adjustments to be made locally as the implementation of the plan progresses.

- The planning and construction of infrastructure if integrated with other services and sharing resources can result in significant savings, reduce disruption and foster long term collaboration in the governance and maintenance of the completed project (see ITC, Ambitions and Opportunities, Case study 4.1: HS1 as a Catalyst for Change).

Does planning policy in England need a more strategic, long-term approach to take account of future needs?

- Planning in the UK is currently focused on 5-year political cycles. The implementation of essential infrastructure may be spread over several political cycles. At a national level, the National Infrastructure Commission has the opportunity to take a 30-year perspective, and at a regional level the integrated transport authorities (TfL and TfGM as part of the greater Manchester Combined Authority) are a model of long term integrated thinking to then influence the statutory planning process.

- To capture the full value from a long-term, integrated approach will require a change of mentality so that ministers, civil servants and organizations operate between current silos and across boundaries. Connectivity is crucial to the UK’s future prosperity However, many of the benefits will be indirect and difficult to measure. Crossrail has created potentially highly beneficial impacts in each area served, but these were deliberately omitted from their brief and are now being retrofitted with difficulty. The lessons have been learnt for Crossrail 2 where one of its significant
benefits is in unlocking large under-developed areas of Greater London for much needed housing (information provided by Alan Baxter, ITC Commissioner).

**Q.3: How can local infrastructure contribute to better place making and design in the built environment?**

- Capturing the full value of infrastructure investment is dependent on ensuring the places where investment is planned are places people wish to come to and stay. The benefits for transport infrastructure projects are primarily assessed from the perspective of capturing the value of direct economic returns, rather than how to create the value through the social, cultural and perceptual impact of place. Places we enjoy and feel invigorated by are formed by the characteristics of the space and the way that people and institutions are stimulated to act within it. St Pancras International and Antwerp Centraal station are more than a place for boarding a train but are now destinations in their own right and contributing to the quality of the neighbourhood surrounding them. At Antwerp over 30% of the users of the station were not travelling and of those 8% were using the statin as a through way between different neighbourhoods (ITC, Ambitions and Opportunities, 4.10).

- Recognise that the statutory planning process is more than the granting of approval. With large scale projects, quality of place is achieved through continuous involvement with the project as a process of both “Co-creation “and Co-production” through to the completion of the project. In Northern Europe the Quality Team acts as an independent critical friend (Cambridgeshire Sustainable Growth Quality Panel is a UK example of such an approach).

**Q.4: Do local authorities and devolved bodies have the right skills, guidance and capacity to properly integrate infrastructure into the built environment?**

- If the full value of infrastructure investment is to be captured, planning will need to shift from being primarily a controller to an enabler (see: Urban Design Journal Summer 2015, Ed. John Worthington, Topic section: The City as Master Developer). The skills required within city hall are those of problem framer, strategic briefer and catalyst in order to assemble the resources from the public private and third sector to initiate action. Collaboration and co-operation between interest groups – not competition and distrusts – is being recognised (see www.futureoflondon.org, or the cities of Malmo and Rotterdam who have redefined their role as enablers of community revival).

**Q.5: To what extent can we predict changing trends in transport use and demand and how can such forecasts help policy makers to plan for future impacts on the built environment?**

- Predicting the future by extrapolating trends from past and current usage is a valuable benchmark to question what might happen in the future and provides
comforting precise numbers. Experience shows that future demand will emerge on completion of a project which is for different users, uses and journeys than the past.

Q.7: How can education help to play a role in the development and maintenance of resilient built environments?

- The challenge for higher education focused on the interests of the different professions will be to break down the barriers. Urbanism is the domain of many disciplines and transport is seen not as an end in itself but a means to improve livelihoods and wellbeing. EPSRC Teaching and Learning project Better Together led by Sheffield Hallam University explored the barriers and opportunities of collaborative cross disciplinary courses for the Built Environment. The University of the West of England (UWE) Faculty of the Built Environment has focused its courses on learning together by sharing Educational Resources for the Built Environment (ERBE). See Nicol and Pilling Changing Architectural Education; Towards a new professionalism (Spon 2000).

05 January 2016
Members present

Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Professor John Worthington, Independent Transport Commission, and Esther Kurland, Director, Urban Design London

Q197 The Chairman: Welcome, Ms Kurland and Professor Worthington, to this evidence session of the Select Committee on the National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you, for the benefit of the transcribers, to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please?

Esther Kurland: My name is Esther Kurland. I am a planner by background, but I have been involved in urban design, street design and suchlike probably for the last 15 to 20 years. For the last 10 years, I have been running a small organisation that supports all the London boroughs, TfL and the GLA on built environment issues—planning in housing, streets, stations and things like that.

Professor Worthington: Good morning. I am John Worthington. For the last 40 years, I have been both a practitioner and an academic. As a practitioner, I was a founding partner of DEGW, a global business that advises firms and organisations, including universities, on what
to build and, more importantly, how to use it and manage the process of change. In the last 10 years, I have acted as a collaborative urbanist, working both as a director of the Academy of Urbanism responsible for learning through place, and as a Commissioner of the Independent Transport Commission, where I have been leading the Commissions review of High-Speed Rail, although not necessarily High Speed 2, because it is a way of talking about High Speed 2 as a project.

**Q198 The Chairman:** The first question is mine. What are the challenges associated with integrating transport and other infrastructure into the built environment? Is there scope for better national policy in this regard?

**Professor Worthington:** Should I start on that and then Esther can come in? First, the challenge is the time taken over providing the planning and the impact over this long period. If you are going to do something like high-speed rail, the time taken is at least 30 years when you take it from inception to the end. That is a huge change. How do we deal with that change? You are faced with two major issues: first, the disruption to the community as you are conducting that process—and that is just the physical disruption; and, secondly, blight, because false hopes and uncertainty are created. I would start with those as the critical issues.

**Esther Kurland:** As well as those practical issues, funding is obviously often an issue, as well as who is responsible for doing what and when. How can people justify their actions? That is a big lesson that we have learnt from Crossrail 1, which is going into Crossrail 2, and from the Thames Tideway Tunnel. The Thames Tideway Tunnel is the big sewer thing, so it is not transport infrastructure, but it is infrastructure. They both started with a very focused, “We deliver this infrastructure. It moves whatever it is around”.

The Crossrail one was very interesting. Once they started looking at the numbers coming out of these massive stations in central London, people started asking, “How do people move once they get out of the station? You are chucking another however many thousand people an hour on to this bit of London. How does that work”. There was a realisation that they have a responsibility to integrate their infrastructure into the built environment that it is serving. Crossrail at that point decided that it would undertake urban integration studies for all its stations. We were involved in design-reviewing all those, which was absolutely fascinating. For the outer London stations, it said to the boroughs, “Here you go. We have done a study
on how your station and your service should integrate with Romford town centre”, or wherever else it happens to be, “and it’s up to you to take that forward”. It is very interesting that TfL then found some money to help those to go forward. Abbey Wood in Bexley, for example, now has a £4 million programme to integrate the station into Abbey Wood and to create all the benefits that could come about for the local community, the economy and transport interchanges. That is being funded by Network Rail, Transport for London and Bexley Council.

Crossrail took it upon itself to take responsibility for those integration studies and start the ball rolling. It is not going to deliver all that work, but it recognised that it was important for it to do so. There is nothing that requires it to do that. You need political will to push the boundary and say, “Hang on a minute. We have a responsibility to go beyond what we are being asked to do”. There has been a suggestion that it might be useful, in national policy or whatever, to require infrastructure providers to have a duty to consider their influence on the surrounding area. That could free them up a bit more. Internally, the argument is actually, “We have a responsibility for this. We are allowed to do it, and national policy or whatever tells us that it is our role”. Otherwise you get the auditor, the lawyer or whoever saying, “No, that is not for us to do”.

Similarly, the Tideway Tunnel looked at where it is building out over the foreshore to create ventilation equipment. It is actually creating some new bits of public realm, which could have been dire but in the end, as far as I know—I have not seen the schemes for quite some time—it is coming up with some lovely ideas for new pocket parks and things that again integrate that infrastructure into the surrounding area.

The Chairman: That is absolutely fascinating, particularly the bit about more people getting to their destination and then being dumped on the pavement. That is happening at Victoria Station now, in effect. Should there be a demand by government that this is always taken into account, not just that some bright spark in Crossrail said, “This is not going to work unless we do something else”, and then it evolved? There is a great merit in allowing the contractors to do that, but there is also great merit in making sure that it happens.

Esther Kurland: It may not be the responsibility of infrastructure providers to actually do it but to consider and work with those who will. In the same way, if we were building a massive
housing development somewhere, we would be looking at the impact that will have on the surrounding area, using Section 106 or whatever else it happens to be, not to mitigate but to manage those impacts.

**Professor Worthington:** You are absolutely right that we have to understand that we need to look outside the boundaries that we are given. We still have a very siloed way of working. I don’t think we are talking about more regulation or even more guidance; we are talking about changing our attitude of mind, the way we do things. It is very important. What we are going to see, first of all, is that you can no longer just look at your station; you have to say what is around the station and, even more important, what the secondary modes of transport would be. You cannot just think of one mode of transport; you have to think of the integrated forms and then ask, “What are the values that are going to be coming out of that?”.

We have a rather limited way of assessing value when we are building a railway line. With Crossrail 1 they looked at the wider area but then reduced the scope of what they could look at under the Bill, and afterwards they had to build back in the ability to get the real value, which is from all the other things happening around it. If you do not make a good place to come to and where people want to stay, you are not going to capture the full value of infrastructure investment. That is a critical point: you have to think beyond just the infrastructure.

**Q199 Baroness Whitaker:** Thank you very much, both of you. What are the current objectives of national transport policy? Should they be changed, and, if so, what to? What do the Government intend? What do they say the objectives are?

**Professor Worthington:** It is in flux in a way, which is good. We now have a National Infrastructure Commission, which I believe will be very important. The question then is: how far does that go back to change some of our policies?

**Baroness Whitaker:** Now, before the infrastructure has got going, what are the objectives of national transport policy at the moment?

**Professor Worthington:** They are not terribly well laid out. There are broad aspirations, but the detail of what we are trying to achieve is less well thought through.

**Baroness Whitaker:** That is what should be changed, you think.
Professor Worthington: I believe we need to look at it in more detail. In changing, you have to get the dialogue going about what you really want. There is change everywhere. We are talking about change in terms of devolution. There is huge change in which decisions need to be made centrally, which regionally and which locally. That will then change where you actually place the different policies.

Baroness Whitaker: Are the objectives of transport policy set out anywhere—road, rail, all of them?

Esther Kurland: The planning system is the only place where I know it has been set out. It is in the NPPF. There is a bit about integrated transport, sustainable transport, et cetera. It says a lot of what most people would consider are sensible things. The planning practice guidance that supports that focuses very much on the process of doing travel plans, et cetera. There is nothing wrong with that.

Baroness Whitaker: I would say that those are aims rather than objectives.

Esther Kurland: I think I agree with you. There is also very little on what “good” or “acceptable” looks like.

Baroness Whitaker: What is it for? That is what I want to know. Does it say what it is for anywhere?

Esther Kurland: Is it about moving more people, moving the same number of people quicker, moving people in a different mode, or all these things? I do not think it is particularly clear. It is more about the process of what to think through when producing a plan.

Baroness Whitaker: I will not hold up the Committee now. If you happen to have a blueprint of what you think the objectives ought to be, that would be very useful to us.

Q200 Lord Inglewood: In many ways, we have already covered most of the question I was going to put to you. You were talking about Crossrail. The issue, after everybody arrives, is: what happens next? Who should have responsibility for resolving these difficulties? Secondly, who should pay for the resulting changes that would be desirable?

Professor Worthington: The work that we are doing with the ITC now involves going to each city region and talking about what we have learnt from Europe and where we saw what happened. Of course, there is much greater devolution: something like 50% to 55% of the money gained is kept by those city regions, so they have a greater control over development.
The big question is how we are going to make decisions about how the money is distributed, at a very broad level. Obviously Crossrail 2 is competing for resources against the Northern Powerhouse and HS3.

These very big decisions have to be taken centrally, and have to be very clear. At the moment, most local authorities have been used to putting in proposals to the Government with a five-year time horizon. That is short term. They are now being asked, thank heavens, to think longer-term and to write about their aspirations as a city over a 20 or 30-year period and what they want from that. That is a very important change. It means that rather than seeing that you are competing against other people, the very first thing you have to do is say, “We all have to collaborate to understand how to divvy up the money to make a better country, make whatever it is and then compete”. The notion of collaborating to then compete is important. There are some good things that we are seeing ahead. The first is infrastructure. Originally TfL and now the Greater Manchester Combined Authority is taking that 20 or 30-year view on infrastructure, and strategic planning, to a certain extent, is happening outside the statutory planning process. It is happening through the big transport authorities. This is really important and will be the driver. You have London, for instance, and the GLA with its 2050 infrastructure plan. That is more than just a plan; it identifies what we want, how much it is going to cost and where the money is going to come from. It does not just say that it is coming from government; it is going to come from us having to raise more money in different sorts of ways.

The huge difference is that we are now beginning to think about how we create the wealth to plan in a way we want. If you have not created the wealth first, you cannot necessarily fulfil all your ambitions. Secondly, you have to create that wealth and distribute it equitably, which is where we come right back to the question about how we do it for London versus the others, and whether there is a grand plan for how to do it. It is a combination of all those things.

**Lord Inglewood:** It is always grand when the plan works out as hoped and anticipated, but every now and then plans do not.

**Professor Worthington:** I can say one thing here. We can be almost assured that the plan will not be what we thought it would be. We went around Europe. In Lille, for instance, we asked, “What did you want to achieve?”. They said, “We wanted to have international firms. Nobody was going to commute to Paris”, et cetera. We thought, “Oh my God”. I said, “What has
actually happened?” They said, “People commute to Paris. We do not have international firms, but we have two national universities. We are now confident in our role as part of a major urban conurbation of 20 million people, which is northern France and Belgium through to the Ruhrgebiet and Randstad. We are a different sort of place”. That is what will happen if you think that you can set 20 or 30 years ahead and that it is going to happen exactly like that and that you will measure it like that. Do not do that. You need a way of adapting as you go along, which is the critical thing that we have here.

**The Chairman:** Then you could be accused of chopping and changing your mind the whole time.

**Professor Worthington:** You have to understand the layering of this decision-making. You need aspirations that are always there. We might talk later about design quality panels. You are testing that you are not changing the big aspiration but adapting expectations. In other words, this is about the detailed brief. You have to be brave enough to say, “We need to change”. We have to build in the idea that you need to change as you go along. We are talking about behaviour change.

**Q201 Baroness Whitaker:** How important do you think infrastructure is in a national policy for the built environment? You have given us some very nice examples of how infrastructure has contributed to better place-making and some examples of good practice. What if you extended this outside the urban area—because infrastructure goes all over the country into the landscape—and what are your views on the training of highway engineers to accomplish this kind of aim?

**Professor Worthington:** Infrastructure is the driver in a sense, but it is also the supporter of what you want to do. Two things happen. Infrastructure starts to direct what is going to happen. When you put infrastructure down, it changes the relationships between places.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Between urban and rural?

**Professor Worthington:** Urban and rural is an interesting concept. The boundaries between urban and rural are increasingly blurred. Our cities are now urban conurbations, what we call polycentric cities. There is not just one place but lots of high-density points within a region that work as a city region. I would argue that Greater London, as an economic entity, is about
20 million people, from Brighton up to Cambridge, out towards Bristol and eastwards to the Dartford Bridge.

Baroness Whitaker: You are saying that infrastructure has pushed this change.

Professor Worthington: It is driving it. Actually, it is infrastructure that crosses political boundaries, which is why it is such a very strong planning mechanism. TfL is now responsible for some of the overground and the Abellio services out to the east. It is going outside its political boundaries. What is happening is very important. In that sense, infrastructure is driving the way we think about planning and some of the political issues.

Baroness Whitaker: You are speaking mainly of transport, but there is other huge infrastructure. Can you add that in?

Professor Worthington: Yes, I believe that you have to do that. The other huge ones are health, living and education.

Baroness Whitaker: There is nuclear energy.

Professor Worthington: There is energy and the hidden one: the stuff in the air, the virtual—communications, in other words. Just take some of the big ones that we can see, which make a big impact on our built environment directly: roads, rail, et cetera. But there are also the indirect ones that service and are in the public realm: health, education and housing. We have to take those into account as well when thinking about the infrastructure of our environment in the broadest terms. Those are the big things that impact it.

Baroness Whitaker: What about the training of those who do transport?

Professor Worthington: I cannot really talk specifically about transport. My background as an academic involved designing environments for work and learning. Professional education in particular interests me. It is about cross-disciplinary education.

Baroness Whitaker: Is it? Should it be?

Professor Worthington: It should be and it is coming. It is still not there, but it is getting much better.

Esther Kurland: Can I come in on this one? I have been doing this for the last 10 years. It is fascinating with highway engineers. When we started doing training on built environment issues and design quality, to start with they used to come in in high-vis jackets, sit there and be like, “When can I go?” Now we find built environment professionals who take pride in their
impact on the built environment, so you get planners going to technical highway training sessions and you get highway engineers going to quite technical planning sessions. Everyone goes to the landscape sessions. That empowers people to feel that they are doing something worthwhile, which is always useful when people are working to get them going. There is a big difference between what people may be learning more in silos, in universities, and what they may be learning in practice, where they find that a place is influenced by lots of different professionals and different groups. They need to understand at least something of where they are all coming from to be able to do the best job.

There are obviously lots of problems with training and people who do not understand things. I sent the Committee a couple of pictures of where people seriously do not understand tactile paving guidance, and it goes very wrong, which I can explain if you wish me to.

**The Chairman**: They are fascinating. I have already taken a look at those.

**Esther Kurland**: Do you want to know what is going on?

**The Chairman**: Yes, please.

**Esther Kurland**: I will not tell you where they are, because that is embarrassing for the places. The one where the two older people are walking down the tactile paving is a shared-space town centre scheme, where all the intentions were right to create somewhere that was going to provide the infrastructure for social town centre activities. They decided not to have a kerb and to have pavement cafes and things like that. However, when you do not have a kerb, you have to support people who are visually impaired. One thing you can do is this type of tactile paving. It should be on the kerb line so that it warns people who are visually impaired that they would be walking into a carriageway, but they have put it in the wrong place. The kerb line on this picture is on the other side of the post, so they have ended up with horrible tactile to walk on down the middle of the pavement, where everyone is walking. That was just a total misunderstanding of the guidance. That is where training is really struggling.

The other one is a very large new housing development. Master planning causes all sorts of problems with infrastructure. The architects who are dealing with the master plans early on may not have the same understanding of street infrastructure as the highway engineer, who later comes along and looks at the detailing of that street to see whether or not they will adopt it. The adoption issue is really difficult for street design.
Baroness Whitaker: They should have got together much earlier on there.

Esther Kurland: They should. That is actually a cycle lane that is meant to be green. All that tactile paving is telling people that you are going on and off shared spaces, where there may or may not be cycles. It is all total gobbledegook. It does not help anyone, and you can see on this picture further up that a car has just parked in it anyway. That is what is going to happen. Following guidance without understanding it, and following rules and processes without thinking about the place that you are creating, causes problems.

Baroness Whitaker: You are talking about the need for early liaison, I take it.

Esther Kurland: Yes, early liaison, but there is also a need to empower the professional to think beyond tick-boxing and to get a real understanding of the actual purpose of things like tactile paving.

The Chairman: Surely it should be the number one item when they first enrol for a course in this. I am looking at the university.

Esther Kurland: It is not.

Professor Worthington: What is increasing now is learning by going out and looking, and not just with one group of people but with different interests. In this example of looking at this master-planned area, we now see a group of people going out together—the architects, engineers and people from the maintenance department—walking around and sharing experience of what they are learning. Learning by doing, by looking and then feeding it back is some of the most important learning that we can get, and we are increasingly seeing that happening. It is often happening because organisations such as the Academy of Urbanism and Esther Kurland’s organisation are doing this sort of thing as one-day courses, et cetera. That is where the learning is happening.

The Chairman: I do not want to introduce levity into this, but in the first street example of what has gone wrong with this tactile thing, did you ever try it out with women in high heels, seriously?

Professor Worthington: It is very serious.

Esther Kurland: Changes to the tactile paving guidance are actually out for consultation at this moment, with the aim of trying to make it easier for people who have walking difficulties. Not only is it very uncomfortable in high heels, but if you have mobility problems this stuff is a
real barrier. It is about trying to balance the needs of different users. That is just one example, but it is always nice in a picture.

**The Chairman:** My heart sinks when I see these tactile pavements for blind people, but blind people wear high heels as well. You could break your leg on those things. Lord Inglewood, you want to come in, but not about high heels.

**Lord Inglewood:** No, that is right. Professor Worthington, you said, I am sure rightly, that the infrastructure networks are crossing political boundaries. Does it follow from that that we should change the political boundaries to accommodate them?

**Professor Worthington:** No. It is much better that we recognise that there is never a perfect fit between all the different systems, because things will change over time. It is much better to start to get an attitude of mind that recognises that we live in a fuzzy world, a world of contrasts, a paradoxical world. In the old days, it was either this or that. We sat as a political organisation as if we were two sides of something. Now, it is both this and that. This really comes back to the fundamentals of the built environment. The built environment is a continually changing and adapting place. How do we create that ability to have both things? That is why you need allow for these overlaps, rather than try to control it all.

**The Chairman:** It is all about accessibility, is it not?

**Professor Worthington:** Yes, but accessibility is not just physical; there is accessibility in the mind.

**The Chairman:** It is about being open to new ideas but not throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

**Professor Worthington:** That is right.

**The Chairman:** You see it so many times.

**Q202 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Turning now to local authorities and devolved bodies, do you think they have right skills, guidance and capacity to integrate infrastructure in the built environment? Does the national planning practice guidance adequately support decision-making, and is any further guidance needed?

**Professor Worthington:** Can I say something and then Esther? It has been a fascinating experience for the ITC to be allowed to go to all the city regions, work with them for a day and see what is happening. First, there is real commitment there to want to change and do
things, but there is a big difference in relation to what will happen when we have real devolved power. By “power” I do not mean that they just have the responsibility; they actually have to have the power of money to do things and to think in the longer term, “What do I want?”, rather than, “What do I think central government wants?”. I believe there is a gap in how we develop things. The red-line idea is very much because people feel risk. They are always up against risk, because they do not have control. You draw a red line around something, and that is what I am going to look at, yet we have just said that we need to look outside the red line to do things. I believe there has to be a beginning to work on, which is happening quite fast, to change attitudes about things and how we look at them.

Esther Kurland: The question is whether we have the right skills to deliver good infrastructure. It is incredibly patchy. Some places definitely deliver it. Other places do not. One of the challenges is to balance that out, because the need does not necessarily follow the resource. Interestingly, the GLA did some research recently on the number of people working in certain built environment areas, such as housing regeneration, and the number of houses that they were meant to be working on. They just did not match: the places with the most housing need did not have the staff, and the places without very much housing need had the staff. It is absolutely fascinating. That happens a lot with streets and highways as well.

A huge amount of luck is involved in local infrastructure, which may be the new local school, a doctor’s surgery, street improvement or something like that. It comes down to individuals, political leadership and how that political leadership will empower one or two people within an authority. A lot of the best schemes that I am aware of have had one person behind them who drives them. They allow others to develop the skills, or ensure or push others to develop the skills, and make sure it happens. Without that leadership, all the skills in the world in that authority are just not used and they dissipate.

As well as skills, motivation and support are needed. There is a scheme, which I did not show a picture of, in Leonard Circus in Hackney. There is a video of it on our website, if you are interested. It is an absolutely fascinating transformation of an incredibly boring crossroads into a local park, with everything going through it. There are new lunchtime cafés with loads of people in them. There are still cyclists going through it, people walking their dogs, big lorries going through it and everything. That cost £600,000. It was really cheap and it was done
almost entirely by one officer working in that local authority. They had really good political leadership. They have gone now. They found it too much hassle working or did not want to continue with that type of work, and they have gone to do something different in another part of the country. That skill, experience and ability have gone. Those jewels, those individual people who know how to do it and can pass on that information to others are really important.

We are talking about a massive country, with thousands of people working on different schemes, but it just takes a few as a catalyst. Things bubble up from there, and people can get skills and develop. Just this week, we gave certificates to the first 20 people who finished a new course in cycling infrastructure so that they do not make the sorts of cycle lanes that were on that picture. They are all working for local authorities and they have committed to spending time coming to training and then doing an exercise that was checked by a university. They have passed, and now they are much more skilled at designing junctions for cycling. It can happen, but it needs the push and the will and empowering people to just get out and do it.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: There are two kinds of infrastructure levels. You have touched on what I would almost call the micro level, which is very important. The professor talked about high-speed rail, highways, new hospitals, major schools and so on. They are big infrastructure considerations. Do you think that local authorities are able in practice to take account of the need to integrate those kinds of significant infrastructure projects into the place of the communities where they are located and serve?

Professor Worthington: The will is there and the ability is potentially there at the top. There is very good leadership and mostly really interesting young people coming through. What is going to be critical, though, is how you transmit down through that leadership, the message that you are allowed to be pro-active. As mentioned, a lot of this is about giving people the sense that they can go out and do something. This is not just within your local authority; it is also recognising that an important thing is to work with what I call civil society. That is not exactly the same as localism, which was the neighbourhood, but it is those people who have civic pride in their city and city region, of whom there are a great number, often in organisations and the universities themselves. That is a big area that we can use in this. That
is going to be important. There is a feeling that we do not have to control what they are doing; we just have to go and work with those people and give people permission to do things. The head of the architects department of Copenhagen City Council told all her department that when somebody rings up you do not say, “No, you can’t do it”. You have to say yes to start with and then find out why it cannot be done. That is a simple idea, but that is what I believe this is about. It is not that the people are not willing; we have to change the mind-set.

Esther Kurland: Also, do not forget that not all the work has to be done by people in local authorities. They work very well in partnership with architects, planning consultants or developers. Where those partnership work, a whole range of skills which the authority might not need to use that often so would not necessarily want in-house all the time can be developed.

On the skills and capacity side, there is another interesting thing coming out of the GLA and the Farrell review of the built environment about planning first or having a cohort of built environment experts who can be seconded into different bodies for six months. The GLA is trialling that now with a few local authorities in London. If you need somebody who knows a lot more about schools, town centres or something, and you do not think that you want to or you cannot employ someone, even on a fixed-term contract, there is a list of people who do want to do this who may not be from the public sector. You can second one of those into your authority for six months to help you do that. Every time that fleet-of-foot movement of skills happens, lots of learning is going on within that organisation. That sort of thing is a good way of getting things moving.

Q203 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: Professor, you have been to the new combined authorities. There is an issue with the scope and reach of the combined authorities and of the underlying local authorities. Outside Greater Manchester, do you feel that the balance of where the approach to infrastructure is taking place and the resources are is at the appropriate level? In other words, are the combined authorities covering these large areas going to have the skills and resources to develop and follow through the aspirations?

Professor Worthington: The two that are way ahead of the game are Greater London and Greater Manchester. Birmingham is a slightly different issue, because of course it had the West Midlands, but it needs to include the Black Country as well, which it is doing now. The
thing that made the breakthrough in a way was Midlands Connect, which was not yet a transport authority. That is now putting it together. The latest growth thing last week, in which they have 20 or 30-year money that has been put forward for what they can do, is very important. They are going to learn from what London and Manchester did, and Europe, which is very important to look at. They will learn why we need to collaborate to do things.

It would be difficult to answer in relation to each phase, but I would say that not every place is exactly the same. This is the old thinking from the top that one policy fits all. We start from places now and work backwards. The question you just asked me is very difficult to answer, but I am hopeful, and I have looked at what is happening.

The Chairman: Can I ask a question that we do not have on the list about leadership? “Leadership” is a word that is bandied around, but nobody really analyses what they mean by leadership. It is the ability to be risk-taking and the ability to communicate, particularly with those on the same level as you, overseas, or even with the bosses or the Ministers. It also means—this sounds awfully cuddly and lovely—trying to encourage awareness of the fact that each person working for you or working in that area has a brain that has been underused.

What is your idea on this? Do we need this in this area?

Professor Worthington: The Academy of Urbanism looks at great European cities. The biggest thing that comes out there is leadership. Leadership there is very interesting. You become Prime Minister of France, and then you go to your city, which is an even more important job, to be mayor. Alain Juppé is the mayor of Bordeaux. That is a big change. In the Netherlands, leadership is very interesting. The equivalent of what we call a lord mayor is positioned by the state, and the chief alderman is what we would call a mayor. It is about bringing the two things together, but in all cases these people have become the real leaders because they are looking at more than their little piece. When I look at the best people here, they are prepared to look across even their new regional boundaries to see what is going to happen between the regions.

Esther Kurland: I agree with your list of what a good leader could do, but this also relates to your first question about what we are trying to achieve and whether we know what “good” or “acceptable” looks like. A leader can set those objectives, and that is what we have seen in London. I am talking about London because I work in London, so I know it much better than
anywhere else. We are trying to declutter streets and to improve bus networks, journey times or whatever it happens to be. Decisions about what your job is come down from the leadership and filter through whole organisations, which allows those organisations to work together and not to fracture. It is much more efficient. That is one of the less exciting bits of leadership, but it is absolutely vital. You have to make sure that it is clearly understood by everybody, is consistent and is in place long enough to actually matter.

The Chairman: That is very interesting.

Q204 Lord Freeman: My Lord Chairman, may I declare a rather modest interest as joint patron, with Lord Adonis, of the Independent Transport Commission? Professor Worthington will confirm that I have played no part in his distinguished work for the commission, for which we are all extremely grateful. My question is to what extent we can predict changing trends in transport, principally demand but also use. How can such forecasts help policymakers to plan for future impacts on the built environment?

Professor Worthington: First, I would just say that your role as a patron of the ITC is wonderful because you are looking across all modes of transport, which is what we are trying to do. I am one little piece of that.

On this issue of how we look ahead, we cannot predict exactly what lies ahead. What we can do, though, is look ahead and suggest scenarios to help us understand better what we should do now to move forward. If we think—and this is what frightens me—that we are going to build for something in 30 years’ time and will have 25,000 jobs and X million of turnover, that is still aspirational. It is nice to have an aspiration. That is what we would like, but we are not necessarily going to get there.

What can we do? First, we can be very prepared to look backwards. In everything that we are doing, the city is just a continuous process. What I have learnt in the work that I am doing on cities for the Independent Transport Commission is that each city has a legacy over the last 30 years of things that they started doing but is still unfinished business. We suddenly get a new thing coming in such as high-speed trains, as if it is a whole new thing. You have to build on what you have already, work through it and see how that supports you. You need to understand where the big changes are going to happen that might change what will happen, and then start to model them. The work that BIS and the Government Office for Science are
doing through Foresight on the future of cities with Sir Alan Wilson is absolutely excellent. That is something that we should continue and that should come back into our infrastructure thinking.

**The Chairman:** It is continuing outside the big cities, because the smaller cities are very often left behind in these things, and then become despairing and depressed. You see lots of pop-up shops and things like that.

**Professor Worthington:** It is the whole integrated system.

**Esther Kurland:** There could be an answer to your question about the prosaic and the local as well, if you are interested in that. It is about the way we model predicted outcomes from changes to infrastructure at quite a detailed level. I am never convinced of how good that industry actually is, and I challenge it to recalibrate itself at times. We do not really understand cycling, for example. All the models for future transport use, either with a change or without a change, involve assumptions, and we do not necessarily always go back and test those assumptions to make sure that they are up to date. There is an industry involved in this and it may be worth looking into in more detail, because the outcomes from those models are very persuasive, numerical and influential. We should take them with a pinch of salt sometimes.

**Lord Freeman:** I wonder if I could ask one brief supplementary. Clearly there has been an improvement in central and indeed local government in looking at the impact of the built transport infrastructure, for example, roads and rail in particular, upon the local environment—towns and cities—and on daily life and commerce. Do we have further progress to make in analysing the impact of the built transport environment in particular?

**Professor Worthington:** First, we are saying look backwards to look forwards. Secondly, do not just look backwards. Try to understand what we said we wanted, what has actually happened and, more importantly, understand all the things that have come out of it that might not have been things we could have dreamt of.

**Esther Kurland:** The other side of that potentially is not to set things in stone, assume what the outcome of something is going to be and build for it without giving some wiggle-room. We have seen quite a growth in trialling stuff, such as straw bales and the wonderful parklets, which are basically like B&Q decks. They get put on a couple of parking spaces for a couple of
weeks, with some seating and stuff on it, to see what happens. If it causes a problem, you take it away again. Doing that kind of assessment and learning from those activities is obviously hard to do with a huge station, new train line or whatever, but it helps us to understand impacts, because people behave in ways that we do not expect and they adapt. Assumptions of what is going to happen, economically and physically, do not always work, so building temporary testing time into these schemes is potentially very useful.

Q205 Earl of Lytton: As you may know, I am a chartered surveyor, so I have an interest in some of this. My question relates to the planning policy in England and the need for what you have described as a strategic longer-term approach, particularly in transport. You have talked about leadership and that sort of thing, but leaders come and go, elected members come and go, and bodies change their political colouration. Over the 30-year period that you, Professor Worthington, were talking about, how do we harness that? We obviously need something like this, but how do we get it, or are we looking at the wrong bit of the equation?

Esther Kurland: Is it planning policy that you really want to drill down into? Planning policy as it is at the moment is slightly different from infrastructure investment plans.

Earl of Lytton: You explained earlier that infrastructure almost sits alongside planning, yet the infrastructure must take account of people actually wanting to use that, so there is a planning dimension there. How do we bolt these together so that they actually work, if not seamlessly, then rather less disjointedly than they sometimes seem to?

Esther Kurland: PTALs, public transport accessibility levels, are one element of the way planning looks at infrastructure. We have a feeling that we build more densely where PTALs are higher. They have been a key planning policy for the last 15 or more years, which is great, and are about the efficient use of land and the transport resources, but they are simplistic. They do not consider the capacity of that public transport infrastructure, its cost or the range of places that you can get to when doing that from that spot. It is just about getting on to the public transport system. There is that relationship between that form of investment in infrastructure and planning policies on what we build, but it is simplistic, and there is quite a lot of work going on to change that at this point. When it is changed and minds have been put to it, it needs time to bed down and to be accepted across the industry in the way the PTAL density concept has been accepted over the last 10 or so years.
The other element is the ingredients that make up a good neighbourhood, the things people need to go alongside housing in particular. I do not think we are particularly sophisticated in how we do that, not only in our understanding of what is needed where. The spatial dimension is often left out. Are those facilities somewhere where people can easily get to or not, compared to where the homes are being built? There is also the timing. It is a chicken-and-egg thing: we tend not to be hugely good at getting the infrastructure in before the people who need it. We wait until the people who need it have a problem before we do something about it, which gives planning a really bad name and probably leads to people not wanting anything to happen in their areas because they have seen this happen before. This is a well-known issue. The front-loading of infrastructure provision is incredibly difficult to do in financial terms, but it is very important in order to get planning working.

Another element is incremental change. Where you have areas with lots of incremental change, the overall impact on infrastructure needs is not considered well enough. We have these master plans—I prefer the term “master path” rather than “master plan”, because they never end up as they should—for huge areas, where everything is planned together, we get a new school, new sewers and whatever else. On the back of that, the area next door sees massive change on individual sites. The cumulative impact on infrastructure need is not necessarily taken into account well enough. There are a lot of ways in which planning could be improved, but they probably all have resource implications and reasons why people have not done them and have not taken them forward. I hope that answers your question.

**Professor Worthington:** The question at the central level is the big infrastructure planning that you are talking about. We are seeing some interesting things happening. Essentially for five years the Cabinet Office, with Greg Clark, in the last Government was doing a lot of this on cities, and it is now shifting to DCLG. We are seeing the beginnings of bringing these two together. If one wants to see more than an experiment, you have to look to the Netherlands, which disbanded its department of the environment and communities, a quite extraordinary thing to do. It has gone into the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment. They have a tradition there. The common thing that brought them all together was water, and the municipal water boards. Infrastructure is playing an equally important role in the UK now and over the next 30 years. It is the big integrator between everything. That was a very interesting
move. We do not know exactly what is happening on that, but they were the leaders on physical space and planning. Their five-year spatial plans were absolutely tremendous and they are still carrying on with that.

**Baroness Whitaker**: That is interesting. Very quickly, are you arguing for the concept of place-making to go much broader than the place that the authorities are actually thinking about? It should look at the impact on the neighbouring places, and national infrastructure and big infrastructure in particular must be integrated even into local place-making.

**Esther Kurland**: Of course.

**Professor Worthington**: That is it, all the time.

**Baroness Whitaker**: We do not have that.

**Professor Worthington**: No. Each time you do something, you must think outside your red line. Even someone who is just given a house to do has to think outside their red line. Each time you are given a red line, almost the first thing you think is, “What is happening outside it, because I am part of that, as well as what I do?”

**Baroness Whitaker**: Our planning structure does not reflect that.

**Esther Kurland**: Look at schemes like King’s Cross, where it does.

**Baroness Whitaker**: There is no counsel of perfection?

**Esther Kurland**: It may not be perfection, but there is also the question of how the area inside the red line pays for the infrastructure, whereas the areas just outside it do not. It is about capturing the value from those, which may very well benefit from the investment. CIL helps with that. Vauxhall and the Northern Line extension, for example, are big areas, but a lot of investment needs to be funded from one red-line area.

**Q206 Baroness Young of Old Scone**: You have probably almost answered this question. It is about the educational needs to get development and maintenance of resilience into the system. You have talked a lot about multi-disciplinary education, but is there anything further, particularly in terms of this issue of resilience?

**Professor Worthington**: Education on the way you think and the way you work together is critical. That is the starting point. Resilience comes, of course, from a state of mind as well. I try all the time to think how I can adapt in the future. How do I ensure that value is based not
just on looking at the cheapest thing now but on having built in enough slack in the system to allow me to change?

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: How much do you reckon that happens at the moment? Is it hardly at all?

**Professor Worthington**: It is not happening sufficiently, because we assess projects much more in terms of value engineering and what we can cut out rather than value management. What do we need to do to ensure long-term success?

**The Chairman**: Do they ever do a post-audit four years after a new development?

**Professor Worthington**: What we call a post-operative evaluation is critical. It has to be done not as an audit but as a learning process.

**The Chairman**: That is what I mean—using it as a learning process.

**Professor Worthington**: You are allowed to make mistakes. If we never made mistakes, we would not move forward.

**Esther Kurland**: The other side of education is that we need content to be able to educate people. That is about learning from what we have done, but we also need very clear policies and some research. When you talk about resilience, I guess you are talking more about flooding and such.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: I am talking about resilience in terms of demographic change and future technological change.

**Esther Kurland**: It is the ability of places to flex to respond to the demands that are being put on them at a time. We do not have fabulous content. It is not that we do not have the experience, but we do not have much policy on that.

**The Chairman**: It is interesting, because we are in the lead for scientific research and medical research, but in things like this, which have just as much impact on every man and woman in the country, we are not.

**Esther Kurland**: It is actually quite frightening how poorly we assess the impact of tall buildings on microclimate, for example. It is not that the science is not there; it is just that the requirement to do so, the processes and therefore the understanding are not there.
Baroness Young of Old Scone: Could I just ask you one other thing that you talked about? You talked about resilience in terms of water, floods, climate change and stuff like that. How well do you think those elements of resilience are taken account of?

Esther Kurland: Again, it is very patchy.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Do we need more guidance there?

Esther Kurland: We definitely do. The issue with floodwater and SUDS—sustainable urban drainage systems—which are a form of infrastructure, I am guessing, is that the local authority only really got the responsibility to manage this last April following a new Act. I cannot remember the name of the Act. There has been very little good practice in how they do that. It is about the attenuation of surface floodwater and the quality of that surface water. We desperately need some research or work to understand what best practice looks like here and how it can be delivered and paid for.

Q207 The Chairman: You were not present at the beginning of the last session, when they all seemed to have lists of 10 points, seven points, four points or three points. It was very helpful. I would love to ask you, if you have a spare half hour in your busy lives, to put down the things that you think are fundamental to the inquiry that we are doing on policies for the built environment. That would be very useful.

Professor Worthington: Is that in terms of change?

The Chairman: Yes, exactly. If somebody said to you, “Draw up a plan”, what do you need most to get it right? While I am on that, thank you very much for these pictures. We do not have time to go over them, unfortunately, but do you think you could give us a commentary, just a few one-liners, on what we should be looking for in these pictures?

Esther Kurland: I certainly can, yes. There is also a book. I have brought a couple of copies. It has lots of before-and-after pictures of different street schemes, so this is the street element. It is not big infrastructure, but you might find them useful.

The Chairman: We would probably have to mention the copyright.

Esther Kurland: It is a TfL document.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. Thank you for giving up your time and for being so engaging in your answers.

19 November 2015
The Innovate UK response to the House of Lords Select Committee inquiry into how we create a better built environment.

1. Innovate UK is the UK’s innovation agency, a non-departmental public body sponsored by BIS. It is the prime channel through which the Government incentivises innovation in business. Innovate UK is business-led. Our governing board and executive team is comprised of experienced business innovators and experts. We work with people, companies and partner organisations to find and drive the science and technology innovations that will increase productivity and exports and grow the UK economy.

2. We are working to:
   - accelerate UK economic growth by nurturing small high-growth potential firms in key market sectors, helping them to become high-growth mid-sized companies with strong productivity and export success;
   - build on innovation excellence throughout the UK, investing locally in areas of strength;
   - develop Catapult centres within a national innovation network, to provide access to cutting edge technologies, encourage inward investment and enable technical advances in existing businesses;
   - turn scientific excellence into economic impact and deliver results through innovation, in collaboration with the Research Community and Government; and,
   - evolve our funding models to explore ways to help public funding go further and work harder, while continuing to deliver impact from innovation.

3. In line with our strategy\(^{164}\) we operate across Government and advise on polices which relate to technology, innovation and knowledge transfer. We also support government departments to become more efficient by supporting them in developing innovative solutions through harnessing the creativity that businesses can offer.

4. Innovate UK was established in July 2007 (as the Technology Strategy Board). We have committed more than £1.5 billion to date and independent evaluations have established that overall Innovate UK has created over £6 of GVA for every £1 it has invested, and 7 jobs for every business it has invested in. Over the last 8 years, this has added up to delivering a total of £7.5Bn and 35,000 jobs. The private sector more than matches that investment, doubling the power of public sector money, and we have directly supported over 6,500 companies. We work with nearly every university in the UK to stimulate the commercialisation of leading-edge academic research and innovation.

5. At Innovate UK, we think about the future and what a future economy will look like. Since 2008, Innovate UK’s Built Environment team has funded and supported over 800

\(^{164}\) The Farrell Review, 2014, Sir Terry Farrell CBE [http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/download](http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/download)
organisations across 580 projects and 20 major innovation challenge programs. Over the last five years, we have funded £118m of cutting-edge built environment projects and enabled multiple SME’s to successfully establish and grow their businesses. We have developed a significant, publicly available portfolio of reports, case studies and data sets for our sector. We welcome the Committee’s inquiry into the Government’s approach to sustainable development. Set out below is our response to the questions raised by the Committee.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

6. The built environment represents 15% of UK GDP through construction, facilities management and property. The sector employs over 3 million people and Government procures 40% of all construction output. Given the scale of the sector and the challenges it faces to modernise, Government should take a key role in a clear and consistent strategy.

7. The decisions and regulations that shape the built environment are split through multiple levels of government, EU, local authorities and private sector organisations. As such, the ability to deliver consistent solutions to national needs such as housing, infrastructure or transport is extremely challenging. The Farrell Review drew attention to the continual division of the built environment between government departments and concluded an increase in coordination of policymakers would enable delivery of high quality integrated built environment.

8. Such disconnected policies and regulation affects the ability of the private sector to provide innovative solutions to the needs of the market. The result is an unproductive built environment that fails to deliver quality, whole-life solutions for its users as noted in numerous reviews. National policy makers should ensure UK industry is prepared for the impact of directives coming out of Brussels. In particular the recast European Performance of Buildings Directive, which includes an initiative on Smart Finance for Smart Buildings.

165 Taylor Review, 2012, Lord Taylor of Goss Moor
170 http://digital-built-britain.com/
9. The built environment is a major consumer of energy and is vulnerable to climate change. National policy makers should ensure the costs to citizens associated with improving the UK building stock (i.e. retrofit) is proportionate to the costs of investing in new power stations (e.g. contracts for difference for new nuclear), the costs of responding to the impacts of climate change (e.g. flood protection schemes), and costs of the economic impact of business operations being affected by fuel shortages (e.g. industrial energy demand offsetting).

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

10. Productivity and coordination can be improved through the greater adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM) that has been championed by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills. BIM encourages all stakeholders to engage with a single process-driven digital model of the project instead of the traditional, uncoordinated project files and paper drawings. The adoption of BIM in the built environment is analogous to the design technologies that transformed the automotive and aerospace industries. This method reduces uncertainty and design mistakes, shortens delivery time and results in a higher quality product. The Government has supported the adoption of BIM in the UK and mandated its use on all centrally procured Government construction projects. This has placed the UK in a world leading position in joining up the design, construction and management of the built environment. Use of BIM saved the public purse £840m in 13/14 and an estimated £1bn in 14/15.¹⁷²

11. Improved infrastructure and higher levels of housebuilding will underpin future productivity improvements.¹⁷¹ Adoption of innovative technology such as BIM and other approaches proposed in Digital Built Britain¹⁷² can deliver substantial cost savings and improved outcomes to the sector, but require consistent policy to allow certainty of investment into the research and innovation required.

National policy for planning and the built environment.

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

12. The NPPF sets out broad guidance for planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment. This guidance is input based, e.g. it assumes that if the NPPF is

¹⁷¹ AECB “We Must Change our Disgraceful Approach to Build Quality – or Wave Goodbye to Energy Savings” http://www.aecb.net/publications/we-must-change-our-disgraceful-approach-to-build-quality-or-wave-goodbye-to-energy-savings/
followed, a good building or development will be created. There is evidence to suggest that this is not the case, and the end product does not perform as intended. As a potential solution, the NPPF could encourage the concept of whole life performance of buildings based on a continual learning and feedback cycle. This concept of whole life performance is taken from the aerospace and automotive industries who continually monitor the quality of the final product. In the built environment this would encourage planners to consider building’s lifetime energy consumption and its lifetime impact on the natural environment, health, community and wellbeing.

13. National planning could substantially benefit from the adoption of innovative technologies such as geo-spatial and satellite mapping, 3D visualisation, augmented reality and data management. These technologies can provide critical information relating to economic, social and environmental factors to assist decision makers. Innovate UK has supported projects to use publically funded environmental data to solve business challenges such as the impact on the natural environment of construction. An example of this is a project between the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission to develop a joint tool to quantify the impacts of land use change in developments and manage the biodiversity offsets. Such innovations could be extended across the planning system.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

14. A national policy for spatial planning would be beneficial as it would afford a central place to access data relating to local plans, economic growth regions, utility capacity maps, transport plans and historic land usage information. Such data can enable key decisions to be made and risks of developments to be easily mitigated.

15. The Future Cities Catapult is working with an exciting group of partners in Manchester on establishing a city-wide open data synchronisation network for the benefit of citizens. The Greater Manchester Data Synchronisation Project (GMDSP) aims to stimulate growth in areas such as education, environment and planning.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

16. The Climate Change Act of 2008 calls for 25% Carbon reduction by 2020 and 80% Carbon reduction by 2050 compared to the 1990 baseline. The UK’s built environment energy

173 https://futurecities.catapult.org.uk/news-template/-/asset_publisher/Qw0bKmomFN4q/content/open-data-sharing-for-manchester


175 Reducing Urban Heat Risk, July 2014, ARUP
usage contributes approximately 38% of the UK’s total emissions\textsuperscript{176}. Achieving or exceeding the 2050 deadline should be seen as a minimum timescale. In this respect we would encourage the Committee to review the work of the Green Construction Board who are dedicated to this subject.

17. The summer heatwave of 2003 killed 15,000 people across Europe. This type of heatwave statistically occurs 1 year in every 7. By 2050 this type of heatwave could occur every 1 in 3 years and by 2080 become a once in every 2 year event\textsuperscript{177}. The effects of climate change should be considered at each stage of the requirements process when planning the built environment and we would encourage the Committee to consider the reports generated from our 2010 Design for Future Climate program which funded the climate adaptation programs for 50 buildings\textsuperscript{178}.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

18. Housing supply is a complicated issue. Historical analysis of the housing supply profile demonstrates a near continuous decline in completion rates since 1965. Since 1972 to the present day, Private Sector housebuilding has remained virtually flat at approximately 140,000 units per annum. Housing Association housebuilding has also remained flat during this period at about 20% of total volume. The major decline in housebuilding occurred between 1965 and 1985 and was due to Local Authorities, who ceased construction of new housing. At their peak, Local Authorities were delivering 120,000 homes per annum.

19. The market incentivises private sector house builders to bring a slow and steady number of homes onto the market. Enough to sell to buyers who can gain financing. Not enough to reduce the sale price of each new home, or to significantly increase the rate of completions. Selling more homes may increase private house builders’ turnover; conversely, selling fewer homes may increase their profit margins. Making it easier and cheaper to secure planning permission enables house builders to further increase profits. This does not incentivise house builders to build more homes. It may instead incentivise them to buy and sell land rather than houses.

20. The economics of supply and demand have often been cited as a cause for the limited delivery of housing. However significant productivity constraints exist through labour and skills shortages and materials shortages. Given the challenging nature of market conditions, innovative businesses within the sector are seeking a step change in

\textsuperscript{176} Design for Future Climate project pages https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/design-for-future-climate
\textsuperscript{177} For more information, see https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/rethinking-the-build-process/
\textsuperscript{178} https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/design-for-future-climate
approach to increase housing supply productivity by the development of mass-manufactured, industrialised housing. Mass-manufacturing of housing is known as offsite manufacturing and seeks to construct mass-produced housing solutions in a controlled factory environment. The mass-manufacturing methods of a factory ensures a higher quality product. The factory environment does not require the same skills or materials as traditional construction so can be free from these limitations. Innovate UK has supported some early examples of this methodology in our Rethinking the Build Process program\(^{179}\) and we are seeking to further assist innovation in this area.

21. Modern offsite manufacturing allows innovative materials and technologies to be adopted at the source of the product – the factory. The UK’s excellence in manufacturing provides a strong expertise in quality of delivery that in turn assists to close the performance gap by producing quality, energy efficient homes that don’t require highly skilled labour to construct on site.

22. The now obsolete *Code for Sustainable Homes* was seen by the built environment sector to be a driver for offsite manufacturing as the energy efficiency targets were difficult to meet using traditional on-site construction methods.

7. **How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**

23. There is evidence to suggest that our existing built environment will not fare well in our predicted future climate. Innovate UK’s *Design for Future Climate* program demonstrated the sector’s poor understanding of the future climate weather patterns such as Urban Heat Islands, excess wind forces and flooding\(^{180}\). We would draw the Committee’s attention our 2010 *Design for Future Climate* programme where we funded the climate adaptation projects for 50 buildings and in turn created a substantial body of evidence. *Design for Future Climate* demonstrated the potential for “stranded assets” caused by climate change and some developers are already taking steps to mitigate this risk\(^{181}\).

24. Our current regulations form a front-loaded process that assumes that once all minimum criteria are met, a good quality building will result. This often not the case and our built environment is blighted by poor quality and inefficiency. One commonly cited result of this is the widely known “performance gap”. Innovate UK has undertaken substantial investigative work into the performance gap through our *Building Performance Evaluation* program\(^{182}\). Our program found that in many cases, homes and offices were found to be consuming up to four times their designed energy usage. The

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\(^{182}\) [https://retrofit.innovateuk.org/](https://retrofit.innovateuk.org/)
scale of this challenge requires a refocus of regulatory objectives to be outcome-led and concentrated on the performance of the building, not the construction.

25. Overheating and urban heat islands present a key problem for our cities. Some buildings will become uninhabitable without extensive retrofitting. The increased demand placed onto the electricity grid by cooling presents a potentially big problem for the National Grid. The *Overheating in Buildings* report\(^ {183}\) that was commissioned by the Zero Carbon Hub drew upon evidence from *Design for Future Climate*. It concluded that good planning was required to ensure that the design of homes for energy efficiency needs to be balanced with the need to avoid factors that lead to overheating.

8. *To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?*

26. 90% of the buildings which exist now will still be standing in 2050. To maintain these buildings and to keep them in use will require substantial retrofitting. Innovate UK has completed several significant projects related to the historic built environment including 2009 *Retrofit for the Future*\(^ {184}\), 2010 *Energy efficient Whitehall*\(^ {185}\) and 2013 *Scaling up Retrofit*\(^ {186}\). These have revealed the challenges of economics, materials technologies and communication when undertaking improvement work on our existing building stock.

27. We would encourage the Committee to familiarise themselves with the joint DECC and DCLG review currently being undertaken by Peter Bonfield *Review of Consumer Protection, Advice, Standards and Enforcement for UK Housing Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy*\(^ {187}\).

**Skills and design**

9. *Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?*

28. There has been a substantial fall in apprenticeship completions in construction related sectors relative to other sectors. Low levels of training amongst the self-employed, and skills shortages amongst trade and professional occupations, are inhibiting technology deployment and innovation. The poor image of construction is seen as a key reason for

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\(^{183}\) [https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/3336014/energy-efficient-whitehall](https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/3336014/energy-efficient-whitehall)

\(^{184}\) [https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/retrofit](https://connect.innovateuk.org/web/retrofit)

\(^{185}\) Review currently underway – [http://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=1732](http://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=1732)


\(^{187}\) [www.aechackathon.com](http://www.aechackathon.com)
its failure to attract skilled workers and the Government has undertaken steps to improve this.\(^{188}\)

29. There is a particularly acute skills shortage within Local Authority planning, where design, engineering and scientific skills should be applied when making decisions on projects, especially when the technologies applied and embedded in buildings are increasing in complexity.

30. Innovate UK believes that research, innovation and technology are the best ways to attract individuals to gain skills which can be applied to the built environment by showing how dynamic and vibrant the sector can be. This can be achieved in the same way that the digital industry has transformed to attract a diverse workforce.

31. The built environment already has the seeds of this transformation with BIM, Future Cities, Smart Home and Internet of Things offering huge opportunities for transformation. Innovate UK has run a number of competitions addressing these challenges that have attracted considerable interest from start-ups and micro-SME’s, many of which were founded by graduates. Our recent “AEC Hackathon”\(^{189}\) (bringing built environment experts together with digital experts) also attracted school children, students, graduates and professionals over a weekend of technology-inspired competition.

10. **Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?**

32. Innovate UK is supporting excellence in design and place-making of urban environments through the Future Cities Catapult. The Catapult is developing spatial mapping and data tools together with drawing Internet of Things organisations such as HyperCAT\(^{190}\) into the place-making world. The Catapult is enabling urban designers and planners to access the critical expertise required to bring user-centred design into cities and is attracting considerable interest from overseas.

33. The Future Cities Catapult is also beginning work on a new project designed to assist policy makers, planners, designers and developers in UK cities to make better, evidence-based decisions, tailored to the cities they work in. The 3-year Tombolo\(^{191}\) project, in partnership with Space Syntax and partly funded by Innovate UK, is working with cities across the UK, including Manchester, Leeds, Greenwich and Milton Keynes, to develop a new tool for interconnecting urban models.

**Community involvement and community impact**

\(^{188}\) HyperCAT consortium, Interoperable Smart City Innovation [http://www.hypercatcity.com/](http://www.hypercatcity.com/)

\(^{189}\) Tombolo project for Integrated Urban Modelling [http://tombolo.org.uk/](http://tombolo.org.uk/)

\(^{190}\) BRE Health impact assessments [http://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=2369](http://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=2369)

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

34. A growing body of evidence links productivity, health and wellbeing to the built environment. This concept of ‘wellbeing’ is an emergent trend across Innovate UK programmes and projects. For example we are working to support NHS England’s Healthy New Towns programme which will seek to design in health and care into new housing developments from the outset. We will carefully consider the progress of these trends for potential areas to stimulate innovation within our built environment.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

35. Engaging local communities in planning decisions could be enhanced using the technology offered through BIM. Software packages can provide near photo-realistic 3D walkthroughs of major building projects or via augmented and virtual reality mobile phone apps.

36. Innovate UK’s 2014 Digitising the Construction Sector and 2012 Rethinking the Build Process competitions have both funded innovative projects of engaging visual and social technologies for the built environment which can enhance public understanding of what is planned.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

37. We look to others more expert in the field to answer this particular question on potential financial, or other methods, which may affect housing, place and design issues.

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192 https://interact.innovateuk.org/ca_ES/competition-display-page/-/asset_publisher/RqEtZAKmEBhi/content/digitising-the-construction-sector
193 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise-pollution-economic-analysis
194 http://woodnewton.schools.uk.com/SchoolWebsite.aspx?id=4404
Evidence submitted on behalf of the Innovate UK by:

Dr Ruth McKernan, CBE

Chief Executive, Innovate UK

06 October 2015
Institute of Acoustics response to House of Lords Call for Written Evidence for the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Summary

0.0 The Institute of Acoustics (IoA) is the UK’s professional body for the acoustics industry, with around 3000 members. The IoA wishes to draw the Committee’s attention to the important role of the acoustic environment in facilitating positive health and quality of life outcomes, within the broader context of the built and natural environment. The economic value of the protection and enhancement of our aural environment is woefully underestimated. The Government has estimated that the annual social cost of road traffic noise alone is around £7 – 10 billion (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise-pollution-economic-analysis). The World Health Organisation in March 2011 found that in Western Europe alone one million healthy years are lost per year, due to traffic noise, making it the second biggest environmental health risk. Estimates are not yet available for the annual social cost of aircraft or railway noise, nor for the cost of poor acoustic design of new and existing housing. The emerging evidence of the social, environmental and economic costs of environmental noise, poor acoustics in buildings, and a failure to use sound positively, highlights the need to prioritise the proper consideration of the acoustic environment as a key component of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and of the future built and natural environment.

0.1 The summarised responses below relate to each question number in turn. The full responses then follow:

Policy making, integration and co-ordination

1. The IoA is concerned at the shift to decentralise policymaking (for all but the most sensitive and high-profile built environment schemes). To ensure a sustainable built environment in a more decentralised policy world, robust policies capable of delivering the outcomes needed, and competent authorities to scrutinise applications and enforce those outcomes, are required. There is a need to for practitioners in Planning, Environmental Protection and Building Control Departments within local authorities to retain and develop the skills needed to enable them to form good judgements on technical matters. Acoustics is an important part of ensuring that developments are fit for the intended use now and in the future, providing users with improved conditions to maintain or achieve well-being. The IoA would be pleased to partner with national policy

makers to get this right, and help to build and maintain a robust local authority capability in planning, licensing and environmental protection, in conjunction with other bodies.

2. The IoA is concerned that there is a significant disconnect between Government departments that implement policy covering the built environment. This will impair the UK’s ability to meet Government aims for sustainable development. We ask for better integration of policy between departments to encourage integrated design. Attention must be given to unifying and developing a consistent approach to inter-disciplinary influences on the planning, design, permitting and construction process for all built environment schemes. Acoustics should be at its core to ensure that comfort, health and well-being are achieved.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. The IoA considers that the NPPF does not provide sufficient guidance for practitioners seeking to manage and protect the acoustic aspects of the built and natural environment. Whilst new noise policy objectives have been introduced in the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) and the guidance to the NPPF (NPPG), supporting technical advice and guidance is largely missing. This omission means that the opportunity to build-in quality in an area often poorly understood by many participants is missed. Uncertainty resulting from lack of guidance may slow the operation of the planning system at a time when the rapid provision of new housing is high on the political agenda. Speed of applications through the planning system and quality are both important. With policies backed up by clear guidance, good design and rapid delivery can both be achieved.

The IoA is currently responding to a strong demand from practitioners for additional technical guidance on the management of noise within the planning system. The IoA is collaborating with the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC) and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) to produce guidance for developers and professional advisers (ProPG: Planning and Noise) centred on the land-use planning process to encourage good acoustic design. Initially, this is focused on new noise-sensitive development, in particular housing.

4. The use of a spatial policy seems positive. The IoA suggests that acoustic policy is developed, going well beyond noise zoning and noise control, but including challenge to improve the overall aural environment with more extensive use of positive soundscapes. There is opportunity for the quality of our aural environment to improve immeasurably.

5. The IoA agrees with Government policy on noise (in the NPSE) which states that “The Government recognises that the effective management of noise requires a co-ordinated and long term approach that encompasses many aspects of modern society.” For
buildings, we would encourage short and medium term plans. In the short term, for new and refurbished building stock, implement a rescue plan (over four years) which would embed design to withstand standardised extremes, to maintain sufficient comfort for occupants. A medium term plan (to 20 years) is suggested to advance the quality and delivery of holistic design for all new buildings. Acoustics plays a key role in creating good design of built and natural environments. Policy should expect positive use of sound, as well as providing protection from noise pollution.

Buildings and places: New and old
6. The IoA encourages the Government to consider forming a policy to encourage re-use of existing buildings, making this the starting point for sustainable development. Removing the worst of the stock, and upgrading and revitalising the remaining, including decarbonizing their operation, can be an effective way to help tackle the existing housing shortfall. It is the IoA’s opinion that the recent reforms will do little. We need a more radical focus on stimulation to encourage refurbishment programmes that achieve high eco standards. Emphasis can be placed on creating higher density dwellings in urban centres, creating communities in which people can thrive, which have both vibrancy and access to peace and quiet, including use of our positive connection with natural sounds.

7. It is recommended that the Government undertakes detailed consultations with leading UK institutions to enhance the form and content of new planning legislation for the sustainable built environment. Planning for an uncertain future, and engineering resilience into our solutions is essential. Clear parameters to be met by adaptive designs must be agreed and put into legislation – the Government’s role. A cross-party task force could be formed to create an integrated approach to define how adaption should be included. The IoA would be pleased to be a part of such a group. There is widespread experience within the Institute of upgrading existing buildings to meet current enhanced schemes.

8. The IoA considers that we do not make optimum use of our historic environments to regenerate and place-make. We know that acoustic design is crucial in many uses of these assets e.g. in broadcasting, performing arts, historical pageantry etc. We can make more of this. The balance needs to be struck between overly onerous planning and conservation restrictions, which may hamper and discourage the regeneration and integration of heritage buildings into our communities. More could be made of these assets as built environments which anchor people and communities to the past, giving them identity and integrating them in such a way as they are preserved, but brought to life as part of the community. They can be of assistance in regenerating society’s connection to our historic environments and preserving them for future generations rather than seeing them lost. Suggestions are made as part of the full answer on how more could be made of our national assets like Stonehenge, which is an example of our heritage built environment.
Skills and Design

9. There are currently poor standards of knowledge and experience across many disciplines central to the built environment in relation to the impact of design on behavioural outcomes. There is a high level of acoustic design skill available from IoA members, many of whom have powerful environmental and economic experience. The Institute is encouraging a more holistic approach to the built environment and the realisation of the central role of acoustics in establishing social sustainability. There is therefore a training task to do internally within the IoA, which is under way. Opportunities to bring together professional institutions to encourage cross-discipline cooperation to seek holistic solutions to achieving sustainable design could be encouraged. Effort is needed to reduce the leak of skills from local authorities which is currently occurring. In schools STEM initiatives are encouraged, which the IoA contributes to and supports.

10. An improved sustainability assessment method is required, which takes all three pillars of sustainability (eco, people, fiscal) equally into account. The IoA would suggest that acoustics can play a significant part in evidencing the benefits of good acoustic design in all three pillars, and would be pleased to contribute to developing this. The requirement for BIM (Building Information Modelling) within design also requires further thought so that it readily enables an improved sustainability assessment method to be realised. Affordable access to BIM to enable the inclusion of design advice from acousticians, many of whom will not currently have access to licensed software due to cost, would be helpful. A centrally accessible tool/ on-line portal for designers is suggested to accelerate take up by all disciplines.

Community involvement and community impact

11. The IoA considers the answer to the first question to likely be that “they try to”. However, there is a shortfall of experience of social science relevant to this field. There may be doubt currently as to the correct planning or design approaches or tools to adopt, in any given built environment scenario, to achieve the balanced outcome on benefits that are required to deliver sustainable development. The correct tools to assess this across all disciplines are therefore needed – tools that leave no room for ambiguity or doubt as to the appropriateness of the design and planning methodology being adopted. It is encouraging to see schemes such as BSRIA’s “Soft Landings” initiative, which aims to provide a detailed Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) methodology for a wide range of built environment assets. However, such schemes do not properly consider acoustics at this time. This is despite the evidence which indicates that poor acoustics is an obstacle to everything from optimal function at work, learning and performance at school, quality of life at home, and our speed of recovery in hospital. The IoA recommends that the Government may consider it useful to form and structure a national design and policy task force, which focuses on achieving overarching policy across disciplines. Public Health England could have a greater role to play in this area contributing to society, the environment and the economic success of the UK, within a global context. We will then
be able to use this knowledge to assist others to do the same, and strengthen our offering through professional services and build on our global reputation.

There was no response to questions 12 and 13.

This written response was prepared for the Institute of Acoustics, by Peter Rogers of the Sustainable Design Task Force and Parliamentary Liaison Group with contributions from Colin Grimwood of the Environmental Noise Group and Alex Krasnic of the Building Acoustics Group

Full responses to questions are set out below.
Preamble

1.0 The importance of the acoustic environment to health and quality of life has been recognised by Government – the long term vision of the Government’s policy on noise (i.e. unwanted sound) is to “promote good health and a good quality of life through the effective management of noise within the context of Government policy on sustainable development” (Noise Policy Statement for England, March 2010).

1.1 The National Policy for the Built Environment Committee clearly recognises the important role of the built environment in delivering good health and good quality of life, with substantial associated economic advantage. The IoA wishes in particular to highlight the importance of the proper consideration of both sound (and its positive effects) and noise as an inherent part of the good design of buildings, places and spaces.

1.2 Defra has estimated that the annual social cost of urban road noise in England is £7 to 10 billion. This places it at a similar magnitude to road accidents (£9 billion) and significantly greater than the impact of climate change (£1 to 4 billion). Road traffic noise is only one of many sources of noise in the built environment. A report published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in March 2011 identified environmental noise, from traffic, as the second largest environmental health risk in Western Europe, costing one million healthy days per year.

1.3 The IoA considers that beneficial impacts of sound, as well as the adverse impacts of noise must be fully considered as an integrated part of the decision making and policy approach on the built environment and its interaction with the natural environment.

1.4 Each of the questions raised in the call for written evidence are dealt with in turn. If further information is required on any aspect please do place a request for further information, and the IoA Parliamentary Liaison Group will be pleased to prepare a briefing note on that issue.

Responses to questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England's built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Answer 1

1.5 The IoA is concerned by the gradual shift to decentralise policymaking (for all but the most sensitive and high-profile built environment schemes). Policymakers should be vigilant that all planning and construction policies, which have a material impact on the delivery of new built environment schemes for the next 20 years, are being implemented with clear delivery
of sustainable development. Currently local authorities drive the enforcement of such policies, but their dwindling resources affect practitioners and their ability to form good judgements in areas such as local authority Planning, Environmental Protection and Building Control Departments. The IoA considers that the policy decisions may need to be taken at a more national and strategic level to maintain a coherent strategic direction.

1.6 It is the IoA’s view that acoustics is an important part of ensuring the resulting built environment is not just fit for its intended use, but also provides users with improved conditions to maintain or achieve well-being. Unless this is achieved built environments cannot be truly sustainable. The pursuit of this goal by policy makers, with support being offered to the professionals at a local level, in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), would maintain a credible service into the future with a clear strategic direction.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Answer 2

2.0 The IoA is concerned that there currently appears to be a significant disconnect between Government departments which implement policy affecting all built environment disciplines (from housing through to heritage). This is in danger of hampering the optimal progression of future built environment schemes across the UK that meet government aims for sustainable development. Through better integration of policy between departments it is considered that encouragement of good integrated design will assist that end goal. The IoA suggests that particular attention could be given to unifying and developing a consistent approach to all design matters which influence the planning, design and construction process for all built environment schemes. This approach should include acoustics at its core to ensure that comfort, health and well-being are achieved. This is so that each type of environment is designed to achieve its full potential both for its current intended use and with regard for possible future uses (such as the conversion of a factory unit to a school, as has just occurred in Corby, Northants with Education Funding Agency involvement). Intelligent reuse of our existing buildings is important as a policy driver to be sustainable.

2.1 The IoA suggests that built environments should now strive to include the use of materials with top eco credentials as standard, with a disincentive to use less eco-friendly materials. Acousticians can assist to accommodate this in their specifications, with design advice to remove obstacles to sustainable design. Re-using and re-purposing of old buildings through refurbishment is considered a sensible way to maximize what we achieve with as little impact as possible, and strengthening Policy to encourage refurbishments without dropping

standards is considered necessary to achieve truly sustainable developments for either new or refurbished built environments. Broadly this must, in turn, not just work for those using the resulting buildings, but also enhance their ability to achieve good health, wellbeing throughout the buildings life, which requires a lifetime strategic plan for the building, in which the acoustics is a core consideration. For this approach to be possible better co-ordination is essential to provide encouragement, stimulation and joining up of the thinking from each Government department, but good design must be kept at its heart.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

Answer 3

3.0 The IoA considers that the NPPF does not provide sufficient guidance for practitioners seeking to manage and protect the acoustic aspects of the built and natural environment. Whilst new noise policy objectives have been introduced in both the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) and the guidance to the NPPF (NPPG), supporting technical advice and guidance is largely missing. Government has advised that it does not intend to provide such technical guidance – an omission that misses the opportunity to build-in quality to an area often poorly understood by many participants. This is leading to uncertainty for developers, regulators and their advisers alike regarding the approach to take. In the absence of clear guidance there is an increased risk that development may be mistakenly refused, constrained or approved thus adding to the number of disputes and appeals that can slow down the operation of the planning system at a time when the provision of new housing is high on the political agenda. Recent case law linked to the licensed premises (Ministry of Sound, London\(^{197}\)) emphasises the need for careful consideration before allowing residential development to encroach on established business, as this may result in their forced closure or displacement and cause economic harm. This demonstrates the need for balance between noise-sensitive and noise-making businesses at a time when the global trend (see KPMG Mega Trends report 2014\(^{198}\)) is for people to be moving into cities, which themselves are often vibrant in character and therefore noisy. Acoustic solutions can provide technical ways to achieve this balance, and avoid damage to the economy and enable social cohesion.

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\(^{197}\) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeoacoustics

\(^{198}\) ttp://www.salford.ac.uk/computing-science-engineering/research/acoustics/architectural-and-building-acoustics/acoustics-of-stonehenge
to thrive, but clear technical guidance is needed to steer and drive input from acoustics professionals.

3.1 The IoA is currently responding to a strong demand from practitioners for additional technical guidance on the management of noise within the planning system by jointly working with a number of other professional bodies to produce Professional Practice Guidance on Planning and Noise (ProPG: Planning & Noise). This initiative is being overseen by a steering group consisting of representatives of the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC), Institute of Acoustics (IoA) and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH).

3.2 The aims of the ProPG: Planning & Noise are to give good practice advice to local planning authorities in England and to developers’ professional advisers on the application of the land-use planning process to encourage good acoustic design. The working group has determined that the initial focus of the ProPG should be on new noise-sensitive development, but in particular focusing on housing because of the social need. However similar advice on noise-generating development may follow in due course in other areas of priority delivery for the UK.

3.3 The Government has estimated that the annual social cost of road traffic noise alone is around £7 – 10 billion (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise-pollution-economic-analysis). Estimates are not yet available for the annual social cost of aircraft or railway noise, nor for the cost of poor acoustic design of new and existing housing. However, the emerging evidence of the social cost of environmental noise is likely to increase the pressure to prioritise the proper consideration of the acoustic environment as a key component of the NPPF and of the future built environment.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Answer 4

4.0 The use of a spatial policy seems positive. This prompts the suggestion that a broad policy centered on our aural environment (beyond noise zoning and mapping), to include evaluation of the opportunities to use sound positively, can raise standards from the current poor position.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Answer 5
5.0 The IoA agrees with Government policy on noise (in the NPSE) which states that “The Government recognises that the effective management of noise requires a co-ordinated and long term approach that encompasses many aspects of modern society.”

5.1 The IoA also recognises that climate change places urgency on a short (four years) to medium (up to 20 years) term plan for action, as buildings that are being commissioned now will be locking in carbon that will make it difficult for the UK to achieve the internationally agreed targets. The optimum timescale to be able to focus on a short term rescue plan is not more than a parliamentary term, with the focus on delivery of low to zero carbon new buildings with input from all disciplines (including acoustics) to maintain sufficient comfort for occupants. This means a soundscape that people feel acoustically secure and safe in. In this first phase it is suggested that improvements to the existing built stock needs addressing urgently, and a start could be made to upgrade in that timeframe. Not to do this urgently could result in the need for more drastic adaption action later, with a greater risk of public dissatisfaction, as the IoA has recently noted around issues such as airport expansion and resistance to wind farm applications.

5.2 The medium term plan spanning parliamentary terms, but with longer (20 years) delivery to targets in mind, could then focus on how we can advance and refine the quality of our delivery so that good integrated design is fully embraced for all new buildings. This should support the goals of sustainable development and deliver on good quality of life, health and well-being in low to zero, or even negative carbon buildings that work to enhance the environment. Acoustics can be of assistance in creating built and natural environments that use technology and scientific knowledge to improve our quality of lives, using positive sound to create solutions that enhance health and well-being for all by improving soundscape quality.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Answer 6

6.0 The clearest indicator for addressing the issue of housing supply is to streamline the planning process and to address the issue of existing energy inefficient housing stock. The Government has already facilitated the way in which Compulsory Purchase Orders and the automatic granting of planning permission for brownfield sites is conducted by local authorities. More can be done to fast track development which achieves exemplar standards (such as Code 6 homes). This assumes that it can be demonstrated that the impacts (including noise) on other people and residents, business and nature are very low and there are wider benefits to
people, the environment and financial wealth, as set out in a strengthened national strategic plan for sustainable development.

6.1 The IoA encourages the Government to recognise the role that acoustics plays in that, and how the IoA ProPG could achieve clear and consistent engagement of members and local authority practitioners to conduct noise impact assessments. This enables local authorities to manage more consistently the introduction of refurbished and new build housing supply whilst protecting against harm to amenity, quality of life, and health.

6.2 The IoA encourages the Government to re-use existing buildings as a starting point by removing the worst of the stock, and upgrading and revitalising the remaining existing stock with the aim of decarbonizing their operation through good refurbishment design. It is the IoA’s opinion that the recent reforms will do little. We need a more radical stimulation to encourage refurbishment programmes to tackle existing stock. Emphasis can be placed on creating higher density dwellings in urban centres, and creating communities with vibrant hearts that are supported with good design. In this way we can achieve the balance that people want between vibrancy, peace and quiet including use of our positive connection with natural sounds.

6.3 It is anticipated that the effect of introducing these incentives and drivers for swift change at the planning level, should allow developers the opportunity to change positively the built environment in both the private and social housing sectors.

6.4 There is widespread experience within the IoA of upgrading existing buildings to meet current improved standards.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Answer 7

7.0 It is recommended that the Government undertakes detailed consultations with leading UK institutions with experience of assisting policymakers to enhance the form and content of new planning legislation for the built environment. It is the IoA’s view that the Government’s focus should be on delivering the maximal tangible benefits to society, economically and environmentally, whilst protecting and creating environments in which people and our ecosystems can thrive. The added element is including resilience and planning for an uncertain future and engineering resilience into our design solutions. Adaptation design would benefit from clear parameters from experts which can be embedded into legislation that will provide the required drive. Building Regulations would be the natural place to start integrating this.
It is crucial that the Government gleans sufficient knowledge from institutions, such as the IoA, to assist with understanding the planning and design implications, inherent with a multi-disciplinary approach to the delivery of built environment schemes that will withstand the environmental threats that we face over their design life. One suggestion for this would be to form a cross party task force to formulate an integrated response to define how adaptation should be accounted for. The IoA would be pleased to be a part of such a group, which could also be cross-professional discipline.

7.1 If this can be successfully achieved within a short timeframe then it should be possible to allow both adapted existing, new and future built environment assets to meet the needs of people in a changing world, with clear tangible social, economic and environmental benefits.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Answer 8

8.0 It is the IoA’s view that the UK does not make enough use of our historic built and natural environments. We know that acoustic design is crucial in many uses of these assets e.g. in broadcasting, performing arts, historical pageantry etc. We can make more of this.

A branch of acoustics has emerged called Archaeoacoustics\(^{199}\), which already has revealed in one example the particular opportunities for regeneration and place-making. Visitors to Stonehenge currently experience road traffic noise from the A303 that passes close to the site. This is detrimental to the quality of the soundscape and experience of visitors. The recently revealed acoustic features of the site, which may have been a potentially important part of the monument’s purpose, cannot be enjoyed without protection from the noise pollution (see article on acoustics of Stonehenge, Wiltshire\(^{200}\)). Action to put the road in a tunnel or divert it would be worth considering as part of a restoration project, given the site’s World Heritage status and value to our economy and identity as the UK.


\(^{200}\) These provided regional level planning frameworks in England, they were revoked in 2010.
Stonehenge is a single example. More broadly, there is merit in planning for the sensitive integration and connection of society with historical assets. This can assist to bring character and help build a focal point and strong local cultural identity. This is a vital part of place-making. Acoustic soundscapes have historically been one way in which local identity is defined. Soundmarks like Big Ben and the churches of London help to define a community’s local identity. Soundscapes can be more optimally used to assist in place-making with connection to heritage relevant to the area.

8.1 However, a balance needs to be struck between overly onerous planning and conservation restrictions, which may hamper and discourage the sustainable regeneration and integration of heritage buildings, and insufficiently robust policies which put our heritage at risk. More could be made of these assets as built environments which anchor people and communities to the past, giving them identity and integrating them in such a way as they are preserved, but brought to life as part of the community. The IoA would encourage using our emerging knowledge in this area to use sound to bring these assets to life, using hygienic soundmarks (like clocks and bells) to create a focal point for the surrounding communities. High quality public spaces could be created that have such assets within them to provide an escape from the bustle of life, where they are owned by the nation.

8.2 A not uncommon acoustic example is for local authority Planning Directorates to place onerous facade and other architectural and mechanical limitations on heritage building developments (i.e. no double-glazing, for instance). This can result in acoustic, thermal and ventilation performances becoming very complex to achieve for the comfort of future occupants of such buildings, thereby rendering such development unattractive to would-be developers and potentially stifling the economic and societal benefits that could be achieved. It could, therefore, be a helpful compromise to relax these conservation restrictions in favour of utilising the asset, where a sensitive design solution can be proposed.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Answer 9

9.0 Knowledge and experience of the impact of design on behavioural outcomes of is poor across many disciplines central to the built environment. Insufficient social science is in place to strengthen the social sustainability of most designs. Where regulation is sparse, there is little
to encourage the expansion in that field, and hence little impetus to provide education for it. There are high levels of acoustic design skills available from IoA members, many of whom are architects and engineers with powerful environmental and economic experience. The Institute is encouraging a more holistic approach to the built environment and the realisation of the central role of acoustics in establishing social sustainability. IoA members can assist by being part of a holistic approach to the built environment. However, wider knowledge of how good acoustic design can create wider benefits at economic, environmental and societal levels need to be disseminated further through our own and other disciplines to make sure that acoustic design is a consideration at the earliest stage of design. Often it is not seen as a key driving factor in development of designs, opportunities are lost, with the result that conflicts and reactive interventions can then create obstacles to sustainable design solutions.

9.1 The IoA has commenced an internal programme of education on sustainable design with its members, to widen their awareness of how acoustics can add value to sustainable design where acoustic input is provided at an early design stage. BREEAM has been of assistance in achieving this in more recent years, but that does not cover all buildings, and seems to be waning.

9.2 The IoA is concerned that local authorities are in serious danger of losing their technical skill base, which will result in them being unable to adequately or competently scrutinise applications for development of built environment schemes that contain noise or vibration impact assessments. This is due to an ongoing reduction of resourcing and funding at the local level. Outsourcing to other IoA members may be a temporary solution, but the risk is that there will not be proper consideration of noise impact and good design of schemes, which will in turn result in undermining the quality of delivery against the needs of society. The IoA is concerned that this squeeze on local government funding will mean that investment in better training for planners and practitioners will not happen despite an evident need. An emphasis on how the improved integration of acoustics creates benefits, should not be overlooked in any aspect of the built environment. This could be also introduced into the training of planners, architects, environmental health officers etc. as part of their basic training and, as a campaign drive by the IoA, in conjunction with Government to share and accelerate the skills development necessary to protect the good governance of the built environment at this critical point in history.

9.3 The IOA ProPG: Planning and Noise group is considering ways to promote the better sharing of good practice case studies to give examples for training and reference to all parties involved. The IoA would be happy to discuss involvement in providing other guidance which may be needed by other professions to assist in maintaining skills to avoid a skills void occurring.

9.4 The IoA agrees with the widely accepted view that there is a national skills shortage with regard to professionals engaged in the Built Environment sector. There are various possible reasons for the skills shortage, one of which is the underlying stereotype of it being a male-
dominated industry in the engineering field (see Scientific America article on Engineering is a Man’s field, 2013\textsuperscript{201}). However, the potential to encourage a greater proportion of women professionals into a career in this sector is an area with promise, which the IoA is exploring with restart support for mothers returning to the profession. The message from the IoA to Government is to facilitate and support schemes such as the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) by making these subjects more accessible to all gender, social and educational backgrounds at the earliest opportunity. Work by the IoA in this area is ongoing, from involvement at schools level to the Parliamentary Scientific Committee, of which we are a member.

9.5 It is therefore suggested by the IoA that a longer term training plan is put into place for local authorities, in particular, which has cross-party support from Parliament. The IoA can assist with providing accredited training in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), with the purpose of developing understanding of the often conflicting issues that acoustics brings to planning, licensing, design and construction of built environment projects. This could support the implementation of existing national policy and legislation such as NPPF, NPSE, The Licensing Act and The Building Regulations.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Answer 10

10.0 The Government requirement mandating BIM Level 2 to be used on all state-funded projects by 2016 should act as a catalyst to improve co-ordination within the sector. It is the IoA’s suggestion that the Government should also follow this up with a national skills programme, specifically aimed at assisting professionals in the sector to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to implement these requirements across disciplines. This would include educating designers on how best to interface with the software without having to maintain it (there is currently limited choice in software, and it is costly). If this is not done then it is likely that our members who work within small or medium sized firms will not be able to justify funding the software, and will provide design advice through other disciplines rather than as an acoustic layer (for instance). This will not achieve the integrated design approach needed and a rethink is necessary to enable accessibility of all members of the design team. Perhaps an on-line version held centrally as a resource might be a way to accelerate engagement with BIM.

10.1 Clearer guidance is also needed on what is objectively meant by “place-making”, and how best to quantify the societal, economic and environmental benefits. An assessment method which takes all three equally into account (rather than just one predominantly, as in BREEAM)

\textsuperscript{201} Locality report on understanding the potential of small scale community-led housing: http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Locality_Small-Scale-Community-led-Housing.pdf
would be a way forward. The IoA would suggest that acoustics can play a significant part in evidencing the benefits in all three sectors.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

*Answer 11*

11.0 The IoA considers the answer to the first question to likely be that they try to, but are often insufficiently trained or experienced to understand behavioural outcomes. There is also concern that this may be a luxury that local government can no longer afford to support. Intrinsically there is doubt and lack of consistency as to the correct planning or design approaches or tools to adopt, in any given built environment scenario, to achieve the balanced outcome or benefits that are required to deliver sustainable development. The correct tools to assess this across all disciplines are therefore needed, that leave little room for ambiguity or doubt as to the appropriateness of the design and planning methodology being adopted. Whilst it is encouraging to see schemes such as BSRIA’s “Soft Landings” initiative, which aims to provide a detailed Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) methodology for a wide range of built environment assets, these do not properly consider acoustics at this time. This is despite the evidence showing that poor acoustics is an obstacle to everything from optimal function at work, learning at school, quality of life at home, and our speed of recovery in hospital. The IoA recommends that the Government may consider it useful to form and structure a national design and policy task force, which focuses on achieving overarching policy across disciplines, delivering a measurable effect on the desired outcomes for the built environment sector against the three pillars of sustainability. The IoA would be keen to support this.

11.1 In answer to the second part of the question the IoA points out that it is widely accepted and known that auditory stimulation from music can change our mood and how we feel. There is also growing evidence that people’s state of mind and behaviour can be influenced by sound, and quantifiable changes in behaviour can be caused. Marketing techniques now use such knowledge for making products more desirable (e.g. automotive industry). This has potential, if further research can be funded, to develop a robust body of evidence on which to adopt strategies for designing for safety and health. The IoA has recently issued its members with guidance on this area to raise their awareness. These are called Sustainable Practice Notes for acousticians (SPN2 relates to Personal Security). The Noise Abatement Society has been doing work in this area in Brighton, with soundscapes that caused a quantifiable drop in crime in one example. As humans we are hard wired to constantly assess our state of safety through our aural sense. Our acoustic safety is fundamental to our well-being. The IoA suggests that a
robust evidence base should be developed around the positive effects that sound can have, as the industry has developed mainly around the management of noise. The potential to design the built environment with the acoustic environment in mind (both inside and outside) for positive benefits on behaviour, health and well-being, may play an important part in making our built environment fit for our future needs and also on cultural cohesion and safety, redefining what is good design for new or restored, safer and cohesive communities.

11.2 Public Health England could have a greater role to play in this area, including gathering a strong body of research, raising greater awareness of the negative impacts of poor acoustic environments (e.g. schools, offices, hospitals, restaurants and homes). It could also have a leading role in creating greater recognition of the positive benefits of good acoustic environments that can be brought to society, the environment and the economic success of the UK, within a global context. We will then be able to use this knowledge to assist others to do the same, and strengthen our offering through professional services and build on our global reputation.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Answer 12

12.0 No response.

Answer 13

13.0 No response.

05 October 2015
The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) is the professional body for building conservation practitioners and historic environment experts working in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with connections to the Republic of Ireland. The Institute exists to establish, develop and maintain the highest standards of conservation practice, to support the effective protection and enhancement of the historic environment, and to promote heritage-led regeneration and access to the historic environment for all.

Thank you for inviting us to submit evidence. Our submission exceeds your request for a maximum of 6 pages, so we commence with a summary of points referenced to our answers to the Questions.

Our recommended policy areas for attention are:

- An over-arching national development policy that applies to all Government departments and has clear and generally applicable principles. (Q1)
- Positive endorsement of the role of strategic planning. (Q1)
- Adoption of strategic planning at the city-region level. (Q1)
- Recognition of infrastructure as an investment that is often needed in advance of development. (Q1)
- Recognition of heritage as an asset rather than a burden. (Q1)
- A thorough review and simplification of planning regulations including re-regulation where simplicity is not possible. (Q1)
- Recognition of the cost-effectiveness of good and easily accessible guidance. (Q1)
- Consolidation of the planning legislation. (Q1)
- A statutory purpose for planning. (Q1)
- Moving responsibility for heritage to DCLG. (Q2)
- Bring NPPF heritage policy into line with statutory requirements. (Q3)
- Introduce a national, one-stop, on-line, seamless and tiered policy and guidance resource for all planning legislation, policy and guidance to a detailed level. (Q3)
- Not to prioritize policy in the NPPF. The weight to be given to the various policies must be a matter for circumstances on the ground. (Q3)
- Introduce a tiered national spatial strategy to rebalance the national economy. (Q4)
- Refine the local plan process with greater timescales for mainstream policy and shorter ones (perhaps annual) for development proposals (Q5)
- Plan for housing in terms of need not, as at present, in terms of what happens to be offered. (Q6)
- Revitalize the concept of place-making. (Q7)
- Capitalize on existing places of quality, heritage and character. (Q7)
- Expand the use of urban design as a technique. (Q7)
- Reinstate carefully measured carbon reduction programmes including the 0-carbon target. (Q7 and 13)
- Promote heritage as a tool of economic regeneration and sustainability. (Q8)
- Reinforce the place-making value of conservation areas. (Q8)
- Protect historic environments from casual damage by public authorities and utilities. (Q8)
- Improve skills in heritage, heritage craft trades and urban design. (Q9)
- Recognize that skills have to be applied and that the time needed to undertake design work of quality needs to be resourced. (Q9)
- Address low staffing in LPAs and give them resources to apply their skills properly. (Q9)
- Place-making is crucial but needs urban design skills. (Q10)
- A new body to replace CABE is urgently needed. (Q10)
- Urban design techniques to reduce adverse impacts and optimize results is a well-grounded area but needs resources for its application. (Q11)
- Communities need help to participate effectively and this needs resourcing. (Q12)
- Communities broad aspirations should be capable of simple formulation into SPD. (Q12)
- Set high standards for new development and require this to be funded at the expense of land value. (Q13)
- Pre-application advice should be free. It should be funded by raising planning application fees to cover the service. This would promote more use of pre-application advice and less abortive work by developers and planning authorities alike. (Q13)

**Answers to the questions**

*Policymaking, integration and coordination*
1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

a) The fragmentation of the various aspects of economic, social and physical planning and infrastructure provisions between Government departments tends to result in each regarding one or more of the others as a problem rather than as a contributor to the public good, e.g.:

- The Treasury seems to regard planning as a brake on development.
- The DCLG seems to regard heritage as an inhibitor of good development rather than a contributor to it.
- The Government abolished the strategic processes for development planning without putting anything coherent in its place.
- The constant pressure for de-regulation generally leads to confusing regulation and outcomes of dubious value, especially for affected third parties. Supposed de-regulation which is hedged with necessary environmental and amenity provisos and conditions that need to be interpreted on a case-by-case basis does nothing to reduce workloads and instil confidence. De-regulation that gives freedom for individual developments can reduce the value of neighbouring property. Such is the makings of a downward spiral of environmental quality.
- The Government's withdrawal from policy Guidance has been very detrimental. It has resulted in increasing numbers of poorly informed planning decisions.

What is needed is over-arching national development policy that applies to all Government departments and has clear and generally applicable principles:

- Strategic planning an essential tool: it gives confidence, cuts waste and adds value. It should set out what is required to be delivered and not just be a method of selecting the least bad of any options that might currently be on offer. It should co-ordinate planning and non-planning issues such as transport and infrastructure.
- Strategic planning needs to be carried out at city-region level and involve all relevant arms of Government with appropriately delegated budgets.
- Infrastructure is public investment which is often needed in advance of development. The City Fathers of the C19 understood this and this is what made our cities great. We need to shift the concept of infrastructure planning away from being a cost and towards being an investment.
- Heritage is an asset. People like and enjoy it. It adds value to property and economies. Places with heritage are, by and large, more successful than places without.
• A review of regulations. Regulations like “permitted development” need to be simplified to what can be permitted in very clear circumstances with very few conditions. Where they cannot be there should be simplified requirements for consent.

• Policy guidance and best practice are useful and cost-effective. They stop practitioners constantly having to “reinvent the wheel” in what they do. The case for a structured framework of approved planning, environmental and heritage guidance (right down to very specialist levels) as a centrally maintained on-line national resource with page-to-page links is overwhelming. The current Planning Practice Guidance provides the framework but is not detailed enough to do this.

b) The planning legislation is a mess.

• It has been repeatedly modified in a piecemeal fashion such that it scarcely understood by practitioners let alone the public.

• The 1990 separation of the Listed Building legislation was a mistake. It made heritage considerations into an adjunct rather than a mainstream contributor to planning outcomes that it should be.

• This separation has given rise to widespread duplication of secondary legislation which is similar but different enough to be confusing.

• The Planning Acts still have no stated purpose. Clarity on this point would be of benefit to the whole process.

What is needed is a consolidation of the Planning Acts into a single Act with a stated purpose to:

• Unify the processes.

• Remove confusing Welsh measures.

• Emancipate heritage to be a contributor to planning processes.

• Allow a root-and-branch review of secondary legislation (Q1a).

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

In parallel with the reintegration of the planning and heritage legislation we think that responsibility for heritage should move back to the DCLG. In the DCMS it is detached from mainstream planning processes but does not benefit from the special attention one might suppose as the DCMS is so strongly focussed on media and sport. In the DCLG heritage would become a mainstream function, which it deserves to be.
We do not advocate any detailed changed to Historic England which, it seems to us, could function more effectively within DCLG than in DCMS.

A wider understanding in the positive economic role heritage can play might be fostered with an inter-departmental committee.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

The NPPF has been shown to be largely fit for purpose. It is succinct and covers the full range of planning policy pretty well, with the exception of heritage policy which needs addressing (see below). It does however, compared to previous national policy, leave considerable gaps of detail. Many of these are dealt with in the wide range of detailed guidance and best practice that is available from many different sources. The problem is that these are not well signposted at least in part because of the slightly obsessive requirements for the separation of policy and guidance. The need for a one-stop on-line seamless and tiered policy and guidance resource is obvious (Q1a, final bullet). The Planning Portal does not function adequately in this respect because there is no connectivity between documents.

NPPF policy should emphatically not be prioritized. The relative weight to be given to various aspects of NPPF policy varies with the circumstances of each case. Prioritization within the NPPF would distort the policy balance and lead to poor decision-making on the ground.

NPPF heritage policy does need some attention. The intentions of the heritage section are clear. But its terminology does not properly fit the requirements of the legislation.

- The assessment tool in the NPPF is “significance” while the statutory requirement is to have regard to “special architectural or historic interest”. This difference is confusing and needs to be remedied.

- Similarly, the other various heritage types covered by the NPPF have differing legislative protection and are not all well served by the policy.

- The statutory requirement to protect the setting of listed buildings is not directly covered by the NPPF but should be.

- There is inadequate policy on conservation areas which make a substantial contribution to the character of places (Q8).

4. **Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**
Yes. A structured and tiered national spatial policy is urgently needed. At present there is little attention given to the relationship between the supply and demand for development opportunity and the impact of this on travel demand. In the south-east particularly each ring of settlements is forced to accept displaced demand from the next ring nearer the centre of London and exports its own demand to the next successive ring. The result is unsustainable travel demand and, we fear, increasing imbalances in the necessary make-up of local workforces.

What is needed is a national spatial strategy that actively promotes and resources measures to re-balance the national economy throughout England. The “Northern Powerhouse” is an example but it does need to be properly backed and resourced. In particular it needs to address how both development and travel demands are met in such a way that optimises the former and reduces the latter.

Also needed are similar strategies at city-region (Government regions and LEP areas are not a good proxy for city-regions) and local plan levels; although many local plans have a spatial dimension to some degree. Strategies for city-regions could be prepared collaboratively but would need to be binding.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Planning timescales depend on the nature of what is being planned. National level strategic plans need to have timescales reaching far beyond the period of a single parliament, in fact to many. This is achieved in many areas of Government planning – defence, for example – but seems to be illusive in the built environment. This requires cross-party agreement on the broad strategy to be followed.

At the local level planning policy needs to be looking forward about 10 years. But this is not helped by the complexity of local plan making. This takes so long that there are such infrequent chances for proposed development to be put forward and the public to be involved that it is necessary to consider proposals that are far from any prospect of development. With the introduction of a strategic element, with a timescale of say 20 years, the proposals aspect could be the subject of an annual review with only additions and subtractions being considered. Practising planners might say this was unachievable but annual plans are not only achievable but required in many area of public life. There doesn’t seem to be any real reason why this shouldn’t apply to planning.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level,
required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

This is a very complex problem which needs special attention. At its basis there is a fundamental economic problem which is that housing and development land have become tradable commodities predicated on rising values. This upward circle of value locks up increasing proportions of the economy in real estate. Accommodation needs are thus not being met or are subject to increasing affordability gaps.

Housing needs to be planned on a fundamental examination where houses are required, what type or range of housing is needed and how it is best funded and delivered. With the exception of the lamentably inadequate social housing programme housing is currently planned on the basis of what developers want to provide.

More effort needs to be given to the existing housing stock:

- There is far too much empty and underused property. Renewed efforts are needed to bring this into better use. Existing mechanisms are often not being used because of lack of resources.
- We have said this many times in the past, but the imposition of VAT on building maintenance but not on new-build makes timely maintenance more costly and thus less likely to be undertaken and favours new build over retention with all the release of embodied carbon that redevelopment imposes.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The nub of this is place-making. There is no doubt that the most sustainable and resilient places tend to be those that are attractive to live and work in. The policy key should be:

- Protecting successful places from development that would undermine them, such as out-of-town retail developments.
- Prioritizing the retention and creation of local character, including heritage-led place-making.
- Making use of urban design techniques to rebuild local character where it has been lost or destroyed.

The Government's track-record on carbon use is not good. There is enormous potential for improvements given the right long-term strategy.

- The withdrawal from the 0-carbon target for new dwellings was a huge mistake. The short-sightedness of this lies in the near-universal separation of carbon use as an “in
“use” issue alone rather than a part of from the whole life-cycle analysis of development proposals. The advantages of 0-carbon housing to occupiers should be both obvious and highly marketable.

- The underlying objectives of the “Green Deal” were good and should be retained. The one-size-fits-all design and implementation of the Green Deal was not. Its failure leaves a gap for a sensible case-by-case process for improving the thermal performance of buildings that takes into account life-cycle analysis and deals with issues of repair and maintenance at the same time.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

The obvious public appeal of heritage places makes this aspect an essential one to address:

- Improve the positive role of heritage by moving responsibility for it to the DCLG.
- Promote heritage as a tool for economic regeneration.
- Promote heritage as a facet of sustainability. The avoidance of new-build through building restoration is often the low-carbon solution.
- Emancipate the status of conservation areas. These contribute greatly to the character of places but are sadly short of adequate planning controls.
- Protect existing historic environments from damage caused by uncontrolled works including those undertaken by Highway Authorities and statutory undertakers.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Skills of the built environment industry are generally good but improvement is always desirable. The problem is that skills are not employed appropriately, often enough or resourced to the extent that will produce good results. Conservation architecture is a specific area of practice with high standards of accreditation. There may be a case for more general coverage of conservation issues in schools of architecture particularly as 40% of architectural work involves work to existing buildings. If urban design techniques were more widely used (as they should be) there would be a requirement for more training in urban design.

There is in some parts of the development industry an unfortunate blindness to the connexion between quality and value and this is worsened at present by the housing shortage in which just about anything will sell no matter how poorly designed. There is rather too much Government credence given to complaints by developers about their difficulties with planning
authorities and rather too little given to the fact that many developers are not doing the built environment any favours. Planners do not design development. They can only require good design to be provided. Developers need to recognize that high quality design adds value and is more than worth the investment. Good design takes time and that has to be resourced.

The skills levels in planning authorities have been declining in recent years with declining resources. This needs to be addressed urgently; and could be helped by the introduction of an easily accessible on-line tiered planning policy and guidance resource (Q3).

Planning authority resources have also been in decline. Since 2006 over a third of Conservation Officer posts in LPAs have been lost according to figures monitored and published by the IHBC and English Heritage/Historic England for many years. Some LPAs have no conservation resource at all. This lack of resource results in little or no advice to the owners of listed buildings:

- On their responsibilities as custodians of the nation's heritage.
- How to achieve profitable and beneficial use from listed buildings.
- How to make alterations to listed buildings to improve (for example) their thermal performance without harm to their significance or damage to their fabric.

There is grave concern that our national heritage, so important to our culture, and that supports our economy, and tourism, and that can underpin economic development is being abandoned by government and Local Authorities in order to meet short-term fiscal objectives and other LA statutory priorities.

A reformed system for Planning and Heritage Services that recognises their need for a sound and independent business and financial platform designed to meet local demand is urgently needed if we are not to miss the boat and starve developers and owners of heritage assets the support they need now to make the economy prosper.

There is a chronic shortage of building industry tradesmen skilled in the particular techniques required to maintain and restore historic and other traditionally constructed buildings. Work by the unskilled in this area often leads to further damage to the building through the use of inappropriate materials and techniques leading to further cost, loss of value and, sometimes, ill-health.

Skills could also be widely and rapidly enhanced by the formation of a new body to replace CABE (Q10)

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?
Place-making is a crucial aspect of good planning. Successive Governments have had good track records in recognizing this but, apart from commissioning reports, have taken little effective action. The Farrell Report was the latest example. The cut of funding to CABE was an enormous mistake. The enormous back-catalogue of good work and advice produced by CABE needs to be capitalized upon.

What is required is:

- A body to replace CABE's general sphere of interest and competence.
- A national commitment to design quality (and particularly urban design quality) and support for local authorities and communities that insist on it.
- Place-making requires vision – not the “vision” of truisms routinely required by mission statements and the like – but a visual plan for what a place might or ought to be like. This requires skills in urban design, which are highly developed and widely available (although insufficiently) but employed at the wider built environment level all too rarely.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. **Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?**

This question would be a good starting point for a statutory definition of the purpose of Planning (Q1b). Its answer lies in the achievement of a structured methodology for achieving strategy, spatial distribution and quality in the built environment. There has, over the years, been much urban design research and guidance on the built environment from the user perspective. This should be brought up to date and built upon.

12. **How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?**

Community involvement can be a very effective tool, but it does rely on communities having the resources of time and skills to engage at the required level. Many communities have poor experiences of planning limited to campaigns against what they see as predatory development. Improvements might be:

- Continuing to build of the increasing success of neighbourhood planning.
• Bearing in mind that many communities do not have the capacity for neighbourhood planning, introduce a template for the expression of community aspirations to be adopted as SPD and given weight in planning decisions.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

This is not an area of expertise to us. However, it does appear that there is a disconnect between the value of development land and the viability of the development that the community needs. Too often open-market land values are so high that no development is possible other than that which meets demand far beyond the means of community needs. There have been various attempts at regulating development land value in the past all of which have failed because they were not given long enough to succeed and/or did not meet political strictures.

It needs to be remembered that development land has its high value mainly because of the limited supply of development land created by the planning system. It is reasonable that the public policy that gives rise to the value is able to recoup some of it.

Land value is the main financial variable in the development equation. It is a major failing of the development process that land values are set early in the development process, often before any planning requirements or site constraints are known let alone allowed for. This means that other considerations are starved of resources. Design quality, affordable housing, 0-carbon have all suffered as a result. The only real way out of this is to give planning real teeth: the ability to set high standards and, if the developer will not meet them, compulsory purchase powers at land values that allow the development of the required standard to proceed.

Another way forward might be to give more power to development plans to set the land use at a finer scale than “housing”. Local plans with proper teeth to prescribe the nature of housing development that will be permitted. In time (and it will take time for land-owners with over-optimistic aspirations) the rates at which development land changes hand might become realistic.

CIL is a good tool in the right places. However it does not deliver adequate resources in areas where project viability is fragile. Infrastructure provision in less well off areas needs proper resources.

Pre-application advice should be free. To fund it and promote its use the cost of providing the service should be built into planning application fees. It should be publicised as being part of the planning process designed to add value and reduce abortive costs on unsatisfactory proposals.
The Institution of Structural Engineers – Written Evidence (BEN0033)

Comments from the Institution of Structural Engineers

The Institution of Structural Engineers represents a body of professionally qualified engineers that works to assure safety, efficiency, quality and value for money in the buildings that constitute our built environment. Structural Engineers work very closely with many other professionals in the creation and assurance of a vibrant and sustainable environment for business, education, health and culture in people’s lives. As with all professions working in this field, a national policy will help us ensure that our talent and value to society is best focussed on achieving the high value that our skills make possible. This will be a significant step forward for the planning of the country’s future.

We welcome the consultation that the House of Lord’s Select Committee is undertaking and wish to advise that in our view a National Policy for the Built Environment is essential, to bring together all the factors needed for a thriving nation: transport, energy, waste and water infrastructure, housing, public buildings, towns and cities. Policy should set out a clear vision for our national built infrastructure; how it will contribute to our prosperity and well-being. It should also set out a support structure (national and regional governance) and economic model (public/private partnering) that will be able to underpin private and public enterprise to deliver the vision. There is scope for the government to make a big impact through target-setting and standard-setting, to ensure a better-performing built environment.

Our response has been shaped through collaborative dialogue with other professional bodies both singly and through the umbrella groupings of the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Construction Industry Council.

Questions

Policymaking, Integration and coordination

Question 1: Decisions that shape England’s built environment should be made at levels where they are made by people with the understanding of local need and capacity. Local authorities continue to have their place, but as a nation the biggest decisions that set a long-term vision and set standards for performance, priorities for decision-making, socio-economic priorities across the country need to be established nationally by Policy.

Question 2: Policy across Government departments is poorly coordinated. This is unsurprising as there is no national policy for the built environment. This would give the essential integrating guidance to departments. This would be further strengthened by the appointment of a Chief Advisor for the Built Environment who would represent the policy and ensure development of sound guidelines towards improved performance.
National Policy for planning and the built environment

**Question 3:** We believe that the NPPF does not set a sufficiently clear vision or set of policy priorities. Therefore it does not help resolve the priorities, for instance judging between well-being of people and preservation of nature or conservation against renewal.

**Question 4:** National policy in England does lack a spatial perspective. Introducing such a perspective to national policy would enable our government to set clearer geographic priorities based on clear socio-economic data. Decisions would be based on assessments of socio-economic impact of projects and performance improvements could be predicted. Increased collection of strategic data would allow spatial modelling across cities and regions leading to more evidence-based decision-making.

**Question 5:** The lead time for development can be measured in decades rather than years. New transport infrastructure and major urban development needs to be planned 25 years ahead. More local developments for our towns and villages can still take 5 to 10 years to delivery. There needs to be a proper integration of economic policy with built environment policy that looks at least 25 years ahead within which shorter term planning decisions can be set out with greater assurance of obtaining the desired outcomes.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

**Question 6:** The government needs to act more effectively to require approved plans to be developed in their entirety within five years of approval to commence. More local community engagement in setting local planning guidelines will be helpful to create a nation-wide active population taking close interest in their local community. Local and regional plans need to sit within a National Policy framework to ensure that they are coherent and synergetic.

A National Policy should also address the failure for developers to develop land that has been agreed as suitable for development in the local plan but is being “land-banked” whilst recognising the commercial imperatives in a free market economy. There never-the-less must be incentives or penalties for failure to deliver development that is needed and agreed as appropriate.

**Question 7:** Communities become more resilient when they come together, take an active interest in their community and have the structure that permits action/reaction to events. Creating plans for action during extreme events is an essential part of raising reliance to unexpected events. A policy for the Built Environment should include plans to increase awareness and planning for extreme events through local community connectivity.

All this needs a masterplan for the built environment. The national infrastructure needs to be mapped in a comprehensive way and data on its operation needs to be pooled. In the longer term there needs to be a national model (a real time responsive model for its infrastructure and people) that allows scenarios to be tested and responses agreed.

Existing buildings need to be made to work better and harder. There needs to be a programme for upgrading our building stock. We need to make demolition less attractive a proposition
and make renovation refurbishment more acceptable. We need legislation that demands high quality construction that achieves agreed energy and carbon targets. We need a national standard measure of sustainable construction that applies to refurbished buildings as well as new construction and that revisits performance every five years as part of a national building performance data bank.

**Question 8:** The historic environment, both man-made and natural, has recognised value to the well-being of people and the success of the UK tourist industry. National assets such as these need to be planned as an integral part of our total built environment. They need not be preserved in aspic but be preserved within their complete context. To be valued they need to be valuable. This means old buildings have to have valid reasons for being, not just as museums or visitor attractions but as places of work, education or entertainment that bring life to historic parts of our built environment. A policy would need to address this integrated approach that accepts preservation alongside alteration, extension and renewal in important inner-city areas to maintain vibrancy.

In addition we would recommend further funding to research into the refurbishment of old building stock to reduce energy consumption and prolong useful life. New technological developments are beginning to make this more affordable but this needs to become a more concerted campaign for action. There is a great deal of value in terms of money and environmental benefits.

**Skills and Design**

**Question 9:** Our professions within the Built Environment are well-skilled and diverse but they do not integrate well enough. Better integrated professionals will help achieve a more efficient and effective industry. The CIC represents these professions to government. The skills that are missing are those that can see the bigger picture and understand the holistic nature of problems and solutions. Cross-disciplinary working is essential. Cross-disciplinary training at University would be a great step forwards. We need more awareness and skill in the creation of a better, more integrated and productive built environment.

A national policy will give local authorities a framework for local policy responses. But they will need to have the capability to drive this response in partnership with industry. Training as professionals responsible for the coordinated response to the design of the built environment will be essential – we must aim for something that will be a leap forward in its ambition and ability to deliver.

The government’s national leadership and mandating the use of BIM has been effective. Having a Chief Construction Advisor was regarded by the sector as a big asset but perhaps one that failed to engage strongly enough with government policy. A policy for the Built Environment will change everything and will give a Chief Adviser for the Built Environment a stronger platform and purpose; to advise government on delivery of a built environment sector that reforms around the agreed policy. Government Policy should continue to raise expectations from the digital revolution – from better coordinated data gathering, data sharing and ease of access, intelligent use of the data to improve our understanding and
ability to model outcomes. Government should set high standards for city governance and management – and seek to devolve authority and financial resources where they can.

**Question 10:** High quality design and place-making is crucial to enhance health and well-being, productivity and competitive economic growth. It is essential to have infrastructure that is well planned to serve predicted needs, buildings that are well designed with the human needs at the centre of the design and efficient use of resources being an integral part of their construction. Building and Infrastructure Information Modelling (BIIM) can raise the game in all these areas but there needs to be a shift of emphasis to include social impact. We have tools now that allow us to measure and predict human responses to their environment. National leadership can enhance the development of these capabilities and make the UK take the lead in human-centred design. They can ensure that a policy for the Built Environment is driven by standards of human-centred performance – not just lowest capital cost or even lowest carbon cost but also balanced with highest human benefit. This is true sustainability.

A national policy could review procurement routes and try to generate standards that are adhered to rather than made bespoke. Engaging with the manufacturers and contractors from the outset on projects can reduce costs, home in to the optimum solutions for all involved early in the process and achieve better end results through the simple process of teamwork. The goal needs to be value for money which includes quality of the outcome.

**Community involvement and community impact**

**Question 11:** We are not yet taking full advantages of the skills available to measure and model the impact that the built environment has on people. We are now in a position to measure the performance of our buildings in an holistic sense. Such data, turned into information and then into knowledge and understanding, would be an enormously valuable resource for the education of all professions in the built environment at all stages of their career. The opportunities in front of us are immense. We need to gather more data around the impact of buildings on people and their performance. The government should invest in a data gathering programme in public buildings such as hospitals and schools and build up a critically needed data bank on building performance and human impact. This will be of enormous value in providing base data for better designs based on performance and social impact. Those currently involved in delivering and managing the built environment do not have the information that they need to make informed decisions. Designers need this so that they can advise those procuring or managing existing facilities. Universities need to work with industry, through centres of learning and teaching. This is an opportunity that “big data” provides – but the government can help initiate the collection of more data to allow designers to move into the next phase of human centred design.

We need the data as the starting point and this should be a big part of the new Policy – mandating the collection and sharing of data and the use of it in better understanding of how we can improve performance and use policy to drive these improvements.

**Question 12:** People are becoming increasingly aware of the built environment around them and whether it is “good or bad”. They have less time when they are likely to volunteer to
engage in decision making processes such as public meetings and votes. But virtual meetings and secure on-line voting can make a big difference. By introducing more enabling and accessible on line information. Communities need access to good facilities with which to present their ideas and be confident people have understood them.

**Financial Measures**

**Question 13:** National Policy should address the challenge of un-developed land banks where “market-forces” preclude development that would be in the best interests of the community and national economy. In addition Policy should consider a levy on demolition to ensure that retention and renewal is given proper consideration ahead of whole-sale demolition. There needs to be an infrastructure and buildings policy that sets standards for all government development projects and includes consideration of long term social well-being and impact of developments as well as short term economic drivers.

*01 October 2015*
Dr Isaac Jamieson, Dr Erica Mallery-Blythe – Written Evidence (BEN0216)

There many planning issues that need to be addressed in order to create the maximum benefits for the country and its inhabitants.

1. ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION AND THE DESIGN OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
Mains frequency magnetic fields and radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (RF EMFs) are classified as group 2B carcinogens (WHO/IARC 2011, 2002). Recently there have been calls to upgrade RF EMFs to a group 2A, or even a group 1 carcinogen (Morgan et al. 2015, Hardell & Carlberg 2013). There is also evidence excess electrostatic charge and mains frequency electric fields can negatively impact health at levels that can be encountered in the built environment (Jamieson 2014, Jamieson et al. 2010). Appropriate design of the built environment can greatly reduce such risks.

THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE
Many insurance companies (including those providing cover for architectural and engineering firms) are now refusing to cover claims linked with electromagnetic radiation (EMR) (AVIVA 2015, HCC 2015, Hiscox PLC 2015). This development will greatly influence how the built environment is designed. Appropriate guidance, including best practice measures, are required within planning policies to reflect this change.

Already legal actions are being won for individuals who have had their health damaged by electromagnetic pollution (BBC 2015, GSMA 2013, WEEP News 2011). [Electrohypersensitivity [EHS] can be identified using disease biomarkers (Belpomme et al. 2015)].

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

![Number of studies on EMF impacts collected & collated based on study subjects & results (Rahmani et al. 2011)](chart.png)

Figure 1: The majority of peer-reviewed EMF papers indicate biological effects.

The review undertaken of 919 studies by Rahmani et al. (2011) revealed that the majority of studies on electromagnetic fields (EMFs) report biological effects as a result of exposure (Figure 1).
Similar findings were made in the review of 113 RF EMF studies by Cucurachi et al. (2013) [where around two thirds documented effects], and the review by Yakymenko et al. (2015), related to low intensity RF radiation (RFR), which found that: “... among 100 currently available peer-reviewed studies dealing with oxidative effects of low-intensity RFR, in general, 93 confirmed that RFR induces oxidative effects in biological systems.” [There are both direct and indirect connections between oxidative stress and around 200 human diseases. Oxidative stress is also recognised as a contributing factor to aging (Hybertson et al. 2011)]. The provision of healthier EMF environments should be part of National Planning policy to better protect both humans and the environment.

OPINIONS GIVEN ON ENVIRONMENTAL EMR EXPOSURES

PROFESSOR PAOLO VECCHIA AND ICNIRP

“... the ICNIRP guidelines are neither mandatory prescriptions for safety, the “last word” on the issue nor are they defensive walls for Industry or others,” Professor Paolo Vecchia [ICNIRP Chairman from 2004-2012] (Vecchia 2008). “... children, the elderly, and some chronically ill people might have a lower tolerance for one or more forms of [non-ionising radiation] exposure than the rest of the population,” (ICNIRP 2002). [Note: The UK presently adheres to ICNIRP (1998) guidelines].

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Members of the telecommunications industry too appear to have concerns over EMFs: "I want to be very clear. Industry has not said once - once - that ... [RF / microwave radiation is] safe. The federal government and various interagency working groups have said it is safe," K. Dane Snowden [when Vice President, External & State Affairs of CTIA-The Wireless Association. The CTIA is the International Association for the Wireless Telecommunications Industry] (Safeschool 2010).

Additionally, a major telecommunications provider is on record as stating: “The influence of electrosmog on the human body is a known problem. ... The risk of damage to health through electrosmog has also become better understood ... When, for example, human blood cells are irradiated with electromagnetic fields, clear damage to hereditary material has been demonstrated and there have been indications of an increased cancer risk,” Swisscom AG (2003).

SCIENTISTS

The above health-related concerns are shared by a growing number of scientists:

In 2015 an international appeal that has now been signed by over 200 scientists was submitted to the United Nations, UN member states and the WHO requesting that more protective EMF exposure guidelines be adopted (EMFscientist.org 2015).

ADVERSE HEALTH CONDITIONS LINKED WITH EMR

An increasing number of studies indicate adverse health effects as a result of environmental exposure to electromagnetic pollution. There is substantial evidence
indicating that even low intensity EMF exposures can cause ill health. Conditions linked with environmental EMF exposures include:

- **Cancer** (Coureau et al. 2014, Moon et al. 2014, Hardell & Carlberg 2013); **Alzheimer’s disease** (Davanipour & Sobel 2009, Huss et al. 2009); **Childhood & adult leukaemia** (Dolk et al. 1997, Hocking 1996); **Autism** (Herbert & Sage 2012, Kane 2004); **Immune system effects** (Boscolo et al. 2001, Novoselova et al. 1999); **Miscarriage** (Li et al. 2002); **Infertility** (Avendaño et al. 2010, Otitoloju et al. 2010, Aitken & De Iuliis 2007); **Asthma** (Jamieson et al. 2010, Bach 1967); **DNA damage** (De Iuliis et al. 2009, REFLEX 2004); **Oxidative stress** (Kumar et al. 2012, Agarwal et al. 2009, Ilhan et al. 2004).

We suggest the cost to the National Economy of “electromagnetic pollution” runs into many billions of pounds in terms of reduced health, wellbeing and productivity. This situation can be reversed.

**SLEEP QUALITY:** The annual cost to the UK of chronic sleep deprivation has been estimated at £1.6 billion (Bupa 2010). Many studies indicate that individuals sleep better in environments with very low EMF levels compared to those with even slightly raised EMF levels. As examples: **Improved sleep has been noted in low-field environments** with exposures of 0.05-0.22 V/m (0.0006-0.0128 µW/cm²) compared to 0.25-1.29 V/m (0.0165-0.4400 µW/cm²) (Oberfeld et al. 2004) and for 0.7 V/m exposures compared to 1.17 V/m exposures (Eger & Jahn 2010).

Sleep problems have been reported after wireless smart meter roll-outs which increase individuals EMF exposures 24/7 (Lamech 2014, Conrad & Friedman 2013, Halteman 2011). [Contrary to popular belief, smart meters are not compulsory (StopSmartMeters!UK 2014, Hansard 2011)].

Additionally, a dose-response relationship has been shown between sleep-related fatigue and injuries (Swaen et al. 2003), and almost 20% of all serious car crash injuries are associated with driver sleepiness (Connor et al. 2002).

Promoting the creation of low EMF building layouts and environments, and the specification of low EMF technologies, as a matter of best practice would help significantly reduce sleep deprivation, thereby improving health, wellbeing and productivity.

**DEPRESSION:** Suicide is the leading cause of death in England and Wales for men between 20-49 years old, and one of the main causes of death among 5-19 year olds (ONS Digital 2015). Depression is a gigantic public health burden that exceeds other common sources of morbidity and mortality. [In England in 2000, the annual cost of depression was estimated to be £9 billion (Thomas & Morris 2003)]. **Individuals with depression are at heightened risk of: Alzheimer’s disease; Cancer; Diabetes (type 2); Epilepsy; Obesity; and Stroke** (BC’s Physicians 2009).
Oberfeld et al. (2004) noted depressive tendency with 900/1800 MHz exposures of 0.25-1.29 V/m (0.0165-0.4400 μW/cm²) compared to 0.05-0.22 V/m (0.0006-0.0128 μW/cm²) \( (p = 0.0016) \). Others have made similar findings (Eger & Jahn 2010, Bortkiewicz et al. 2004, Santini et al. 2002). [Many wireless smart meters create RF EMF exposure levels above those associated with increased depressive tendency].

EFFECTS OF EMR ON BIODIVERSITY: Creating more natural built environments can be cost effective, increase biodiversity and be highly beneficial on many levels. Unfortunately, Nature too can be adversely affected by electromagnetic pollution. As examples:

**Ants:** Ants perform many vital services including: pollination, predation and seed removal and dispersion. Exposures of 0.0795 μW/cm² significantly inhibited memories and association between food sites and visual and olfactory cues. The overall state in exposed colonies appeared similar to bee colony collapse disorder (CCD) (Cammaerts et al. 2012). [Effects of on pollinators, such as bees, have also been reported (Rahmani et al. 2011)].

**Birds:** “... migratory birds are unable to use their magnetic compass in the presence of urban electromagnetic noise,” Engels et al. (2014). The RF levels assessed [0.001 μT, approximately equal to 0.3 V/m or 0.0236 μW/cm²] are similar to the levels found in the 2 kHz to 5 MHz frequency range in urban environments as a result of electromagnetic pollution.

**Mice:** Mice and rats can act as pollinators and form an important part in Nature’s food chain (Pattemore & Wilcove 2012). Exposure to 80-900 MHz radiation at 1.053 μW/cm² could cause irreversible infertility in mice after 3 generations, and levels of 0.168 μW/cm² caused total infertility after 5 generations (Magras & Zenos 1997). As mentioned earlier, research has additionally shown that EMFs can reduce human fertility (Avendaño et al. 2012, Falzone et al. 2011, Santini et al. 2002).

Revised planning and building guidelines that feature low EMF initiatives, and promote the use of the most biologically friendly types of technology and exposures, are urgently required to help protect the environment and help create the most viable long-term sustainability initiatives.

EMF EXPOSURE GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICE
The UK presently adheres to the ICNIRP (1998) exposure guidelines, which are amongst the most lax in the World, i.e. maximum permitted RF EMF exposures to the general public of 1000 μW/cm² at 2.1 GHz, compared to: 10 μW/cm² in Italy for sensitive areas [dwellings; playgrounds; school premises; areas where people spend ≥4 hours daily]; 10 μW/cm² in China as 1st class exposure limits [>0.3-300 GHz]; and a maximum power density level per carrier of 0.1 μW/cm² in Castilla-La Mancha, Spain for sensitive areas (President of the Council of Ministers 2013, Chiang 2009, Presidencia de la Junta 2001, ICNIRP 1998).
In China, out of 109 epidemiological studies, 108 noted biological effects as a result of EMF exposure. “No matter what the exposure level may be, lower or higher than [the Chinese] EMF exposure limits for public, health effects had been reported in these papers…” Cao (2007).

Over 44% of the World’s population live in countries or regions that have substantially more rigorous EMF exposure limits and non-binding EMF exposure recommendations than ICNIRP’s guidelines (Jamieson 2014). It would be prudent and wise to introduce proactive best practice measures to reduce electromagnetic pollution in the built environment wherever practical. Such initiatives are already being undertaken elsewhere. As an example, Italy aims “… to progressively minimise exposure to electromagnetic fields,” President of the Council of Ministers (2013). The latest country to promote low field environments is France, which in 2015 passed a proposed law prohibiting the use of Wi-Fi in nursery and daycare settings and restricting its use in primary schools (Assemblée Nationale 2015). In Russia there is already planning guidance in place showing how the layout of rooms and items within them can be improved to reduce occupants EMF exposures (Jamieson 2014). Ideally, EMF field templates should be developed for distinct items of electrical equipment to allow appropriate separation distances to be planned & their locations optimised.

The Council of Europe’s Resolution 1815 (PACE 2011) suggests that all reasonable measures should be taken to reduce exposure to electromagnetic pollution. In the design of the built environment, such measures include the creation and development of low EMF environments and technologies and improved low EMF layouts for rooms.

PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN MEASURES
INCLUSIVE DESIGN – ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
“For people who are electromagnetically sensitive, the presence of cell phones and towers, portable telephones, computers, fluorescent lighting, unshielded transformers and wiring, battery re-chargers, wireless devices, security and scanning equipment, microwave ovens, electric ranges and numerous other electrical appliances can make a building inaccessible. … the Committee recommends that measures be taken to reduce EMF whenever possible in order to increase access for these individuals as well as taking a precautionary approach to protecting the health of all,” US National Institute of Building Sciences, (NIBS 2005).

The Parliamentary Report prepared by Lobb et al. (2015) for the Parliament of Canada states: “That the Government of Canada continue to provide reasonable accommodations for environmental sensitivities, including electromagnetic hypersensitivity, as required under the Canadian Human Rights Act.” It is proposed that the need to comply with such basic Human Rights should be stipulated in the National Policy for the Built Environment. [For further discussion refer to the supplementary information provided].
Between 3-6% of the general public may presently be affected by EHS, a number well in excess of the 1-2% of the population using wheelchairs (Jamieson 2014, Wheelchair 2015). It is predicted that such numbers will substantially grow in the future (Hallberg & Oberfeld 2006). Measures to address EHS could easily be added to inclusive design protocols. Many measures to create low EMF environments are no cost / low cost.

“Electromagnetic hypersensitivity sufferers experience a serious deterioration in their quality of life, not only because of the physical symptoms it usually entails, but also because their lives are totally disrupted by the need to avoid exposure. In practice, it means that they not only have to avoid almost all public facilities such as transport, hospitals and libraries, but even their own homes, in order to escape adverse health effects, which is a breach of rights that are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights,” (EESC 2014). Such matters have to be addressed through the creation of low EMF environments and biologically safe technologies.

We proposed that planning policy guidelines should stipulate the requirement for creating low EMF environments and ‘White Zones’. The creation of ‘White Zones’, particularly when run in conjunction with biophilic initiatives, would create the further benefit through encouraging biodiversity.

2. ADDRESSING TIER 1 THREATS IN NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Severe Weather Events, Manmade EMP Events and Cyber-Attack Events

The creation of low EMF environments and ‘White Zones’ could additionally form a starting point in helping protect buildings (and the built environment in general) against potential events that the UK Government already recognise as Tier 1 threats.

A. TERRESTRIAL SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS

It appears highly probable that terrestrial severe weather events will at some point compromise unprotected modern electronic technologies. As an example, smart meters have far lower resilience to severe weather events than the meters they were intended to replace (Jamieson 2012). Their widespread use could cause severe disruption and loss of life [due to sudden loss of power for heating or cooling during such events] due to their being designed to automatically disconnect when they fail. As mentioned earlier, contrary to popular belief, smart meters are not compulsory (StopSmartMetersUK 2014, Hansard 2011).

B. NATURAL AND MANMADE ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE [EMP] EVENTS

Space weather electromagnetic pulse [EMP] events present a very real threat to the built environment as they can knock out power supplies and electronic devices. It has been suggested by the Royal Academy of Engineering (2013) that any component with a design lifetime of greater than 8.25 years needs to consider the threat of severe space weather. Manmade EMP events can also be created that would bring the country, or selected areas of the country, to a standstill and potentially result in high financial loss and high loss of life. Both are recognised as Tier 1 threats (House of Commons Defence Committee 2012). Proper protective
measures against such threats need to be included in national and local planning policies.

**Proposed EMP protection plan**

**Tier 1:** EMP protection for new build homes, offices, major shops and hospitals, with EMP-protected solar panels for on-site power generation. EMP protection of critical infrastructures.

**Tier 2:** Refurbishment of existing building stock to provide EMP protection. **At least one room per building to be shielded.** Also external EMP-protected solar panels, or other protected means of sustainable on-site energy production encouraged.

**Tier 3:** Lower income dwellings to have one room EMP shielded and external EMP-protected solar panels to provide on-site power.

**EMP-protected solar energy generation to become the design norm.** Refer also to: White (2015).

[Note: As it is indicated that long-term occupation of Faraday cage like enclosures can be harmful to immune system function (Jamieson et al. 2010), special design measures are required for EMP protected buildings].

**C. CYBER THREATS**

Cyber threats, which could cause whole areas to be without power and basic services for prolonged periods of time, urgently need to be addressed within the National Policy for the Built Environment. They present a Tier 1 threat (Gov.UK 2015).

"**The current attack surface for [smart] cities is huge and wide open to attack. This is a real and immediate danger. The more technology a city uses, the more vulnerable to cyber attacks it is, so the smartest cities have the highest risks**" (Cerrudo 2015). Most cities are poorly protected against cyber attacks, and are at risk of high financial loss through lack of adequate contingency planning.

"**In the near future, smart power or water meters could become targets, to black out an area of a city and demand a ransom ...**" (Flanagan 2015).

The intelligent provision of energy efficient low-tech systems and independent off-line smart systems in the design of the built environment can provide highly cost effective alternatives and help address many cyber threats.

**IMPROVING THE RESILIENCE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

We propose that 20% of all developments should be created as EMP-shielded, low EMF environments with hard-wired connectivity and manual overrides to help address EMP events and cyber threats. Such provision will also enable low EMF zones for those who are EHS to be easily established.
We also suggest that in order to properly increase community resilience to natural and manmade threats, the creation of urban farms (including vertical farms and rooftop farms) and power provisions should be encouraged to allow the provision of locally sourced food, water and energy (at least at emergency ration level) in times of emergency.

Additionally, the extended promotion of biophilic design initiatives could help substantially reduce storm water runoff, heat island effects and levels of airborne pollutants. [The greening of street canyons with building integrated vegetation (BIV) can reduce street-level NO2 levels by as much as 40% and airborne particulate matter (PM) levels by ≥60% (Pugh et al. 2012)].

Resilient design policies and best practice measures should encourage the standard adoption of measures to enable basic energy, food and water provision to be maintained in areas should power and electronics fail for prolonged periods of time, and the creation of more sustainable environments and technologies to aid health, wellbeing and productivity.

3. ETHICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Properly addressing ethical, environmental and sustainability issues delivers considerably better long-term financial returns on equity and returns of assets than failing to address such issues. High sustainability companies significantly outperform their low sustainability rivals. The same should hold true for countries (Juniper 2013, Eccles et al. 2011).

The ethical creation of safer, more biosustainable built environments and technologies that respect the rights of the individual can create substantial long-term benefits for all. A ‘Win/Win’ situation.

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For detailed background information on the matters discussed please refer to the
document specifically prepared to accompany this submission.

02 December 2015
Response by the Joint Parishes Group, Maidstone, Kent.

1. The JPG is a consortium of some sixteen Parish Councils representing over 25,000 people within the District of Maidstone Borough Council. We extend from Detling, Thurnham and Stockbury in the North Downs AONB to Headcorn in the Low Weald SLA. We have been a Rule 6 party to the Public Inquiry into the KIG development and more recently to the Waterside Park Inquiry at Junction 8/M.20 adjacent to Leeds Castle.

2. We are grateful for the opportunity to offer a summary of our evidence to the Select Committee. We would be pleased to assist the Committee further, if requested.

Preamble and overall Legislative comment;

3. The Local Government Act 1972 provided for the creation of new Districts, which subsumed the old Rural District Councils. In the instant case, the two larger (geographical and population) RDCs were merged into the smaller town borough. This caused an immutable fracture between town and country, which leads to the current “urban centric” perspective for the District.

4. Effective governance at all levels requires balances and checks. The King ruled, “sub Deo, sub lege”. Such constraints are absent from current Policy.

5. As a rural based community in Kent *(The Garden of England, where fruit growing is an important occupation)* we are acutely conscious of the need to husband natural resources; land use, scarce water resources, land drainage and waste water disposal and the need for the optimum long term use of agricultural land and the increase of UK food production. All these factors do not seem to be appreciated by urban centric planners.

Policymaking, integration and coordination; questions 1 & 2:
6. There is a fundamental flaw in the system. Put simply; it is not working.

7. At the heart of this is the dichotomy between Central Government and two tiers of Local Government [County and District]. This is the wrong emphasis and ignores the overall aspirations, well being and holistic survival of the local community.

8. Policies are often over simplified and rely upon local delegation for implementation. Where this fails to happen, there is no solution.

9. For example, the Parish Councils sought co-operation with the DC in developing Neighbourhood Plans and evolving the Local Plan. Despite specific grants from the DCLG this did not proceed satisfactorily.

10. One resiles from yet further QUANGOS and the Regional Authorities, yet there is a failure of strategic implementation. DC’s do not look outside their own boundary. As an interim measure the County Council could provide a coordinated approach.

National policy for planning and the built environment; questions 3, 4 & 5:

11. The NPPF is a document with a noble and laudable aim. However, it is all too frequently ignored by the DC or selectively quoted. It has done nothing to improve or simplify planning decisions. All pretence of Localism has been abandoned. The natural environment is suffering as a consequence. This will lead to long term issues.

12. National Planning in England does lack a spatial perspective. On this aspect there is an institutional inertia and lack of engagement at DC level. A recent international exhibition at the RA [ROYAL ACADEMY, April 2015] demonstrated the unique possibilities for innovative modelling in spatial perspectives for new house building. In England, this is absent and we have the common form modelling by mass production house builders. All this ignores the holistic approach for creating “communities” and the vain rush to meet “housing targets” ignores the considerable accumulation of future problems.
13. The built environment cannot be divorced from the natural environment. From our land use policies the countryman looks to a fifty or seventy-five year timescale. Clearly, building needs will fluctuate, but there must be an ecological synergy between the two requirements.

Buildings and places: New and Old; Questions 6, 7 & 8;

14. A facile and sound bite reply would be to suggest that Government should actively be involved in building vast new estates, particularly in the South East. This would be mistaken.

15. There needs to be attention to fiscal mattes; CGT and Stamp Duty. This inhibits persons who wish to downsize or to realise assets upon retirement.

16. Again, there should be a correlation of jobs // housing. We need more rural based housing; analogous to the “Workman’s Cottage” for indigenous needs. There is too ready an acceptance for unlimited house building in the South East; pace, the London Dormitory. There should be a parallel development of infrastructure. Within the last five years, The growth in Kent exceeded London. While Maidstone housing growth far exceeds the individual entirety of the Kent Districts or the Unitary Authority of Medway; which is treble the size.

17. There is considerable housing stock in the Northern cities, which could be renovated and restored.

18. We need to champion tourism. At present lip-service is paid to it. However, the rural economy depends upon attractiveness of rural villages, the easy and cost effective availability of B&B and ranges of hotel; together with convenient access.

19. There is a key role here for Parish Councils.

We had a recent example of the DC wanting to enlager the national treasure of Leeds Castle with a “campus type industrial park”.
20. Equally, some historic sites while in private hands, could be encouraged into the wider historic family. Somehow these treasures need to be unlocked and more readily accessible.

Skills and design; Questions 9 & 10;

21. The immediate answer is; NO, the professional do not have the individual skills to adequately consider the built environment in a holistic manner.

22. Consider for a moment why one journeys to Greece, Italy, and Turkey etc. It is to see and admire the holistic skills of ancient town planners in constructing the “polis”. Would one journey to England to view a modern urban extension?

23. Upon evidence, it would appear that Local Authorities do not have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas. Every planning applications is always prefaced by the weasel words—High quality design--.

24. The results for the built environment are appalling and a national disgrace.

In reality, the planning section of the large House Builders/Developers appear to set the tone. These are bland, mass produced, and indifferent to their surroundings and are dictated by optimum financial return.

More expressions, such as the work of HRH the Prince of Wales at Poundbury are to be welcomed.

25. Exhibitions at the RA bring home the excellence and high quality design of world leading British architects, designers and engineers. Unfortunately, this seems to be for “Export Only”.

Community involvement and community impact: Questions 11 & 12;
26. There is a lack of consideration of the rural environment, but like plastic bags & other detritus in the oceans this is going to catch up following the onward and unbridled urban expansion.

The old adage too often applies—it is cheaper to build on a Greenfield site, literally – yet you cannot just go on leaving scarred brownfield sites.

27. It is quite clear that DCs or other the planning authority give short shrift to the reasoned views of Parish Councils, or other local groups, CPRE, Residents and Community Associations.

28. Perhaps, Parish Councils should be afforded a right of appeal to PINS against bad planning decisions by the DC. This must be on a “no costs permitted” rule.

Financial measures: Question 13;

29. There should be a fiscal easing in Stamp Duty and CGT. Most Affordable Housing should be concentrated in Towns for that is where public transport connections and jobs are more available. There should be financial concessions to enable young people from villages to afford a first step towards a village based home.

30. Again, the Joint Parishes Group wish to thank the Select Committee for the opportunity to present this Memorial.

JN Horne

For & on Behalf of the Joint Parishes Group.

15 October 2015
Transcript to be found under British Land
Principle concerns of this submission: Housing, sustainability and Heritage

Green spaces and interactive spaces when houses are being built should become mandatory such as green roofs and communal growing spaces when gardens do not exist. Flood mitigation can also be integrated in the design of ground maintenance.

Currently installing green roofs on buildings is an opportunity being missed on many new builds where installing from initial building phase is far more financially feasible then retrofitting the roofs. Green roofs will lengthen the lifespan of a roof and reduce energy bills for the tenants and therefore be advantageous.

Installing Community Gardens when designing grounds are simple and can be an opportunity for community interaction particularly for older residents.

- Proposal: make bio diverse green roofs mandatory on all low lying roofs and sedum roofs mandatory on all high rise roofs which have no access.
- Where access is feasible for residents on roofs there should be roof gardens or bio diverse roofs.
- Planners and Builders can learn the skills realistically in 5 years and this should be looked into as policy for 2020.
- Trade networks can be developed in the space of 5-7 years reducing costs.
- Advantages are that the urban heat island effect is reduced significantly as evidenced in Soho, London.
- Residents become more aware of urban nature and can benefit from the health benefits.
- Communal gardening can benefit health bringing residents outdoors at times of good weather where they can meet one another.
- When installing trees consideration of those with respiratory problems need addressing. Plain trees are causing many problems for Londoners who didn’t previously have any respiratory issues and revision of the policy for keeping these trees should be looked at. I suggest removing them where there is reasonable request from residents.
- Local people should be involved with the planning and design phase where possible. Either one apprentice, one advisor and a group of concerned resident involved from the beginning.
- Visible depictions of local history and heritage should be open for all to see in old and new builds where opportunities for learning and increasing local honour can be achieved.

03 August 2015
2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

(a) The Kew Society is aware of difficulties in acquiring suitable locations for the siting of new schools needed as the population of London grows and land prices rise. We are looking at a current proposal for siting a new Free School, the Deer Park School, in a poor location on the busy A316. The Education Funding Agency, responsible for site acquisition, was not able to find any sites that were affordable and close to the areas most affected by rising demand for school places. This was due in part to high land value in the borough, which made the cost of acquiring many appropriate sites prohibitively high. Our local MP and Council officials agree that the location proposed is sub-optimal because of likely levels of air pollution and traffic congestion in an adjacent residential street likely to be the dropping off point for children. We have yet to see a planning application for this site but have been told in a public consultation meeting that the play area is likely to be on the roof of the new building. The EFA funding for site acquisition in London needs to be reviewed so that facilities can be built in appropriate locations suitable for children and taking account of public health policies on the health consequences of poor air quality, a particularly acute problem in Greater London.

(b) The Kew Society supported Richmond Council’s policy on affordable housing and commented on the draft policy to say our main concern was whether the policy could be implemented in practice. The policy projected that 50% of new units would represent affordable housing. In 2013-14, only 14% of completed housing units in the borough were classed as affordable. Richmond Council was nearest to approaching its affordable housing target in 2011-12, when 36% of new housing units were affordable. The high value of land in the area is clearly affecting the ability of the Council to meet its targets. Developers of large sites have successfully argued that schemes are not financially viable if affordable housing is included. The largest recent scheme, at the Old Inland Revenue site (Richmond Council ref 14/1488/FUL) was approved with only 16% affordable units. Laudable polices on housing are clearly not being delivered. Nor is the community allowed to see the financial viability assessments which justify this lack of community provision. Polices on housing and on the release of information, said to be commercially sensitive, need to be reviewed so that sustainable mixed communities, as set out in the National Policy Planning Framework, can be created and the claims of developers fully tested in public view.
4. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

(a) The Kew Society approached Richmond Council for a clearer picture of the skills and expertise of its planning team. The planning service at Richmond Council has approximately 45 full-time members of staff, supplemented by temporary staff to address high workloads and to cover vacancies. We have not reviewed the % of planning applications that the Council deal with within their target turn-around times but we are concerned that Richmond Council may not have sufficient resources to fund a permanent body of staff with the capacity to cope with fluctuating workloads. This is a particular concern as Richmond merges its functions with Wandsworth Council, potentially creating a greater distance of officers from knowledge of local communities.

(b) Richmond Council commissions external consultants to deliver specialist advice, such as on legal matters and complex areas of the planning system. One of the main reasons for Richmond Council commissioning external consultants is to provide expert advice on viability assessments. The Council uses an in-house viability consultant for one day a week and commissions external reviews as required. Most schemes that do not offer to provide affordable housing in line with current policy and present a viability case are reviewed externally. The representative of Richmond Council we spoke to noted that it is not practicable for planning officers to engage in complex negotiations on planning cases. Whilst it seems that the majority of viability cases are reviewed by external consultants on behalf of the Council, we question whether it would not be more cost effective in the long term for the Council’s planning officers to have the opportunity to develop skills in this area. Due to the local knowledge and expertise of the planning officers, their advice on viability cases may take into consideration the broader local context, in all of its complexity.

(c) In an area of significant historic assets, planning enforcement can require specialist skills and knowledge. In a time of financial cutbacks, it is important that local authorities are able to maintain adequate resources to monitor properly developers’ activities. Short term cutbacks in this area have important long term consequences.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

The Kew Society aims to work constructively with the Council to encourage developments that benefit the community as a whole and maintain Kew’s special character and historic
environment. In a recent case, we supported the change of use of a former estate agent’s premises, which had been vacant for a considerable period of time, to residential flats. Whilst we are generally opposed to loss of employment space and concerned, like Richmond Council, that central Government policy on change of use is resulting in a significant loss of local employment opportunities, we supported this particular case because of our local knowledge of the building location and history of use. The applicant received planning permission for conversion but has not, in the 18 months since permission was granted, started the work. We would like to see a shorter time limit than the normal 3 years set for work to be started in commercial cases like this so that properties cannot be left empty – an eyesore in the community and a loss of much needed residential space. The Kew Society is concerned that planning decisions that encourage the regeneration of built assets in the area are sometimes not acted upon, to the detriment of the quality and vitality of Kew’s built environment.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

(a) The ability of the Kew Society to comment constructively on the extent to which a development site benefits community needs has been adversely affected by the withholding of financial viability assessments deemed to be commercially sensitive. The current plans for Brentford Community Football Stadium make no provision for affordable housing on the basis that the development would not be financially viable without the funds generated by “enabling developments”, which include 910 flats in high-rise blocks and a hotel. The height of the buildings, adjacent to listed buildings and the World Heritage Site of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is also justified as needed, contrary to the normal building height limits for the area, on financial grounds. As the financial viability assessment is being withheld as commercially sensitive, the Kew Society is unable to assess whether all alternative routes to funding have been exhausted.

(b) Hounslow Council has also claimed that the Kew Society’s independent professional assessment of traffic congestion and air pollution consequences of the enabling developments at this site, submitted in its case against approval, was flawed. When we asked to see the evidence on which this assertion was based, we were refused access to the information. The Kew Society’s ability to engage with the decisions that shape the long-term local built environment would be improved by greater transparency and the public release of reports.

Caroline Brock, Chair, Kew Society
Kwes Kent Woodland Employment Scheme — Written Evidence (BEN0150)

1) I am chairman of a small training charity, KWES Kent Woodland Employment Scheme. KWES is a registered charity No 1146114 and provides three-year, paid apprenticeships primarily for ex-Service personnel and ex-offenders, many of which often have difficulties moving from an institutionalised life into normal jobs, and young people having similar difficulties finding work.

2) The apprentices study for two professional forestry qualifications designed by the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) and awarded through the Awarding Bodies Consortium (ABC). The Level 2 Certificate in Forestry takes a year and the Level 3 Certificate in Silviculture (the sustainable management of woodlands) takes two. These qualifications enable them to obtain worthwhile jobs anywhere in the forestry industry. Our training helps meet the huge skills shortage that now exists in the UK’s broadleaf woodlands. Broadleaf woods in the south east have been in decline for over a century, as demand for log wood as fuel and other products such as wood for paper making decreased. Many ancient woods are now unmanaged and large amounts of wood un-harvested and the numbers of people with the skills and experience to work in them has also declined. The Forestry Commission estimate only 600 fully trained woodland workers still work in the UK and Greenwood products have been replaced by cheap imported products or plastics. But demand and prices have increased and the shortage of woodland workers is a void that KWES’s trainees will help fill.

3) Our apprentices train mainly in ancient woodlands in the Kent North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for three reasons. Firstly many of these woodlands are “difficult” with damp and often sloping terrain which means the training experience they get in them is first class. Secondly many of our apprentices, (a greater proportion than we had suspected when we started), have been “damaged” by their experiences, mentally rather than physically. We see all the time the improvement in their well-being engendered by working in small, disciplined teams and out in all weathers in this natural environment. And lastly working in ancient woodlands to bring them back into sustainability means that our apprentices are also helping regenerate a unique and valuable part of our country’s heritage that is largely ignored by all levels of government.

4) The main reason for this is ignorance and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) itself provides an excellent example. Neither the Planning Practice Guidance of the NPPF or the Technical Guidance makes any reference to ancient woodlands.

5) Much reference is made in the Planning Guidance to the importance of conserving the historic environment but these are all built environments such as scheduled
monuments, wreck sites, battlefields, listed buildings and parks and gardens. Ancient woodslands that date back to before 1600 and even earlier get not a single mention even though they often form a large part of AONB’s and National Parks.

6) Ancient woodland is defined as land that has been continually wooded since at least 1600AD. They were never ploughed and planted, never treated with fertilisers or pesticides and the biodiversity in these woodland soils is unique. After 1600 planting of woodland became more common, so woodland that pre-dates this is more than likely to have grown up naturally. Some ancient woods may even link back to the original wildwood that covered the UK around 10,000 years ago, after the last Ice Age. Their unique value stems from the long period of time over which they have been wooded, resulting in a complex ecosystem.

7) The traditional method of woodland management on which these woods depended was coppicing. Trees were harvested as a crop, cut down to a stump or stool which then re-grew to be coppiced again after several years. Because of this system ancient woodlands are unique in that they constantly regenerate and will continue to produce timber indefinitely if managed. If they are not coppiced and managed they will die. Coppicing enables trees to re-grow on a regular basis and lets light and air into the woodland floor. This allows the stools to re-generate and also helps the growth of other saplings and flora which in turn encourages fauna such as butterflies, birds and small animals (including the dormouse).

8) There are two broad types of ancient woodland - Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Ancient semi-natural woodland has developed naturally on undisturbed soils. The long continuity of ancient semi-natural woods and their undisturbed soils makes it the most valuable natural habitat. Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites would have started life as ASNW but many of the native broadleaved trees were felled and non-native trees - usually conifers - planted in their place mainly in the period after the World War II, when timber stocks were low. As they grow more quickly than broadleaf natives they were considered ideal for timber as sawlogs.

9) Woods planted or growing up today will not become ancient woods in 400 years’ time because the soils on which they have developed have been modified by modern agriculture or industry, and the fragmentation of natural habitats in today’s landscape hampers species’ natural movements and interactions. Our remaining semi-natural ancient woodland is therefore irreplaceable. If we lose what little we have left then it will be gone forever.

10) Although today conifers are not often planted in ancient woods, there are many existing PAWS plantations which need restoration. These woods are damaged but not lost. Because remnants of ancient woodland plant and animal communities have usually survived, together with undisturbed ancient soils, gradual removal of the conifers enables these species to recover. Opening up the canopy slowly and with care encourages the unique flora and fauna of ancient woodland to recover and go on to thrive once more.
11) Kent is among the most heavily wooded of counties. Its woodlands, both ancient and modern, have contributed greatly to the county’s economy in the past and they along with woodlands elsewhere could do so again. The forges of the Weald, the tanneries of Canterbury, the coalmines of Betteshanger all depended on their wood. More recently the Bowater’s paper mill in Sittingbourne took about 140,000 tonnes of wood each year until it closed in the early 1990s. Much of this came from ancient woods.

12) One significant recent event to try and bring wood from these woodlands back into production along with more modern woodlands in the county was the establishment of the Kent Downs Woodfuel Pathfinder, established in 2011 as a partnership between Kent County Council (as part of the EU ERDF-funded MULTIFOR project) and the 3 Forestry Commission (as part of Defra’s Woodland Carbon Task Force) to support both producers and consumers of woodfuel to help secure a self-supporting industry.

13) The Woodfuel Pathfinder aimed to explore and deliver a range of interventions to help the woodheat sector evolve to a fully self-supporting industry delivering among other things: Support in the substitution of woodfuel for fossil fuels; Market driven management of Kent’s wood; Enhanced biodiversity via the re-establishment of traditional woodland practices such as coppicing; Job creation and security in the forestry; Woodfuel and biomass heating sectors; Maintenance of Kent’s landscape character; Establishment of local networks of production and usage allowing financial and environmental costs of transport to be minimized and The use of biomass fuel to provide an economic incentive to manage woodland and improve biodiversity.

14) But the development of woodfuel supply chains requires a skilled work force as well as a market. In May 2010 Forestry Commission England convened a small group including LANTRA to consider the skills issues faced by the forestry sector. Despite the positive outlook for forestry, businesses were and still are having recruitment difficulties. Existing data at the time revealed a worrying picture: 53% of the workforce is over 40 years old, indicating worse skills shortages in future if the number of new entrants does not increase and 43% of these vacancies are considered hard to fill, with the majority of these attributed to skills shortages.

15) KWES is trying to create some of that skilled work force and is now the largest woodland apprenticeship in the country. The most worrying statistic however is that KWES will have at the start of November this year only 20 apprentices so there is a very long way to go.

16) The NPPF guidance makes much mention of Local Plans taking into account “the wider social cultural and economic benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring”. There is no doubt that ancient woods brought back to sustainability have the ability to bring such benefits but this will never happen unless those involved in planning and developing the built and natural environment are given guidance on the National Policy
that ancient woods are an integral part of the historic environment as well as scheduled monuments, wreck sites, battlefields, listed buildings and parks and garden.

17) Many local authorities in Kent own ancient woodlands but no longer have the means to maintain them. They would be only too delighted to pass on this responsibility given half a chance. From anecdotal information KWES receives I suspect this is the case elsewhere.

18) Unless these ancient woods are managed and brought back into sustainability they will continue to decline and the UK’s area of ancient woodland - currently less than 2% of its land cover - will disappear completely.

06 October 2015
LABC – Written Evidence (BEN0064)

1. LABC is the representative body for building control teams in local authorities in England and Wales. We have some 3000 staff working in more than 300 local authorities.

2. This inquiry into the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment is clearly wide-ranging. We note, however, that there is no specific mention of the Building Regulations in the call for evidence. This submission focusses on a few key points of real concern to us.

3. These Regulations are an essential tool in ensuring quality when building work is carried out. The Government emphasis on deregulation, with the introduction of its “one in, two out” rule, should not be allowed to undermine a system that has been developed over many years.

4. LABC believes that the building control system has a vital role to play in improving the quality of the built environment. It is therefore important that it is robust.

5. Building control is the one local government regulatory service which is in direct competition with the private sector, where any developer can choose to use an “approved inspector” rather than the local authority. While when it was introduced 30 years ago this competition undoubtedly improved customer service, the driving down of fees as a result can lead to insufficient site inspections being made by building control bodies. Performance standards for all building control bodies do exist, and it is important that adherence is made to these.

6. The financial pressures on local authorities in recent years, which are set to continue, has made it increasingly difficult for some councils to deliver a high quality building control service. To alleviate this, LABC has been helping many of its members to consider working together in a shared service between councils.

7. Local authorities also have to bear certain administrative costs, which are not imposed on the competition in connection with statutory notices from approved inspectors and competent person schemes. The Government should review whether these burdens can be reduced or eliminated.

8. Building control is an ageing profession, with many surveyors close to retirement and not enough young people being recruited. LABC has introduced a bursary scheme to
encourage new entrant training, but that of course can only make a small impact on the overall problem.

9. The increasing complexity of the Building Regulations over the years has meant that training of both new and existing staff is very important. LABC devotes a considerable proportion of its income from member subscriptions and commercial activities to running courses for local authority staff. We also train clients when changes to the Regulations occur.

10. The role of local authorities in protecting the public from dangerous buildings and other potential safety risks should not be overlooked, and needs to be properly financed.

05 October 2015
The Landscape Institute (LI) is the royal chartered body for the landscape profession. As a professional organisation and educational charity, we work to protect, conserve and enhance the built and natural environment for the public benefit. The LI represents 5000 landscape architects, planners, designers, managers and scientists. We champion multifunctional and sustainable landscapes in both town and country. We believe that through careful and appropriate planning, design and management, it is possible to deliver a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. We therefore welcome this inquiry and the opportunity it presents to submit evidence on such an important matter. We recognise that its creation stems from the work of Sir Terry Farrell and his Review of Architecture and the Built Environment and a subsequent debate in the House of Lords in July 2014. It is therefore appropriate at the outset to quote Sir Terry Farrell’s review report which stated that:

“Landscape should be seen as the primary infrastructure which creates value directly and indirectly. Government and built environment professionals need to reprioritise the importance of its role and perception in placemaking. This applies at all scales, from streets to parks to regional planning.”

We fully support this statement, but would go further and add that on a small and heavily populated island there is a symbiotic relationship between the built and natural environment. We believe that decisions about shaping the built environment can no longer be separated from rural land use and its management. Significant challenges – climate change resilience, renewable energy, supplies of clean water, the sustainability of food production, carbon sequestration, improved biodiversity and public health and wellbeing – demand an integrated approach to the way we plan, design and management the built environment; one that considers the relationship between town and country and the essential services provided by natural systems.

The responses provided here are numbered in accordance with the questions posed in the call for evidence.

Questions 1 and 2: Policymaking, integration and coordination

1.1 There is a gulf between policy objectives at the national level, such as those enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and local planning. Neighbourhood
planning has provided a tier which, in theory, enables local people to have a greater role in shaping where they live. This should help ensure the built environment is responsive to the needs and aspirations of local communities. However this is clearly not suited to address the gap between national and local policy which resulted from both the abolition of regional spatial planning and county level structure plans. We consider these steps a mistake as they were a critical connection between national priorities and needs, many relating to the built environment, with local decision making. National policy can only provide the context within which strategic decisions can be made. Unless the Government is prepared to develop a national spatial plan, it has to delegate strategic decision making to an effective sub-national level which no longer exists. The 2011 Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry report into the abolition of regional spatial strategies stated that:

“The Government must ensure that the beneficial and positive aspects of Regional Spatial Strategies, in particular for integrating infrastructure, economic development, housing, data collection and environment protection, are not swept away, but are retained in any new planning framework.”

1.2 Mechanisms designed to fill this void, such as the Duty to Cooperate, have in our view failed to deliver a similar level of integration on matters relating to the built environment and the relationship between town and country. Political differences and strategic priorities between neighbouring authorities can make effective cooperation, in terms of planning policies, difficult to achieve.

1.3 Adding to this, Government has reduced available guidance and archived many documents published by statutory consultees who employ the professionals with the skills and experience to ensure better quality placemaking in the built environment. The resultant loss of status of these documents at planning inquiries, together with the loss of funding for staff, advice and research, undermines the importance of these organisations in protecting and enhancing our built and natural environment.

2.1 There is insufficient policy coordination between Government departments. The challenges facing our built environment are the responsibility of different Government departments and agencies, each with their own priorities. The NPPF, and its accompanying NPPG does appear to acknowledge the varying considerations that need to be taken into account in planning, designing and managing the built environment. However, it is insufficient in its acknowledgement of the interrelationships between matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainable and heritage.

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2.2 Green infrastructure (GI) is a concept we have been championing since 2009. An underling principle of the concept is the way in which natural systems, when planned and designed properly, deal with many pressures facing our built environment. All too often these are approached as separate issues. GI evolved in response to a growing recognition that those planning and designing urban areas often ignored the interactions between issues such as public health, flood management, housing delivery, biodiversity, climate change adaptation and recreation. GI is an integrated approach which provides the ecological services that are needed to ensure towns and cities are more sustainable.

2.3 The potential benefits of greater policy support for GI are enormous; however it is not within the remit of any one department or agency and messages from Government are mixed. Steps have recently been taken by DCLG to improve National Planning Practice Guidance on GI, and this is to be commended. But the Government’s recent refusal to accept the Natural Capital Committee’s recommendation that the National Infrastructure Plan should incorporate natural capital (which itself is enhanced through GI approaches to land use) into each of the main infrastructure sectors is unhelpful to say the least and will undermine efforts to deliver the liveable towns and cities we need.

2.4 Housing supply is one of the most pressing issues facing our built environment. This cannot be delivered sustainably in isolation from other policy objectives, such as health and wellbeing, design quality, water management, transport and GI. There has been progress in recent months, for example the transfer of responsibility for architecture from DCMS to DCLG. However this represents a relatively insignificant improvement. It appears that, for housing, piecemeal investment decisions made by the Treasury without a national strategy, promote and subsidise development in locations that are justified only by economic imperatives rather than a balance of social, environmental and economic benefits as required by NPPF. GI, which has the ability to deliver substantial economic, social and environmental benefits and are promoted in both NPPF and NPPG, are not mentioned in any Treasury statements.

2.5 We therefore suggest three potential ways in which policy coordination across Government could be improved:

- Clarity on departmental responsibility for green infrastructure, given its role in working with nature to deliver a range of policy objectives; and

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- Require all Government departments abide by a Duty to Cooperate, similar to that expected by the NPPF of local authorities to ensure better alignment of national strategies and policies for housing, infrastructure, the natural environment, water management and sustainability.

**Questions 3, 4 and 5: National policy for planning and the built environment**

3.1 It is not the purpose of the NPPF alone to provide guidance. The NPPF provides the context and aims to be met, but the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is essential in supplementing the NPPF with detail to assist the planning, development and protection of the built and natural environment.

3.2 We believe that the NPPF still favours short-term economic objectives that override longer-term social and environmental goals. This could result in a greater future economic burden on the public purse and constrains the ability to provide the necessary development process that will deliver a built environment to support resilient places that can meet a variety of future challenges.

3.3 The wording of the opening text of the NPPF regarding sustainable development is weak and needs improving. While the concept of sustainable development is a complex one, the NPPF unravels the term and complicates matters unnecessarily. Ultimately sustainable development is about ensuring that decisions made now on meeting current needs do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is unfortunate that this fundamental idea does not appear to be given any consideration in the current wording of the NPPF. We believe that more emphasis should be given to high quality and distinctive place making in the built environment with a greater appreciation of the ways in which multifunctional GI can help address additional planning objectives, such as climate change adaptation, resilience, health and wellbeing, water management, biodiversity and energy production.

3.4 The NPPF also fails to establish the need to consider the relationship between the built and natural environment, and town and country. Insufficient emphasis is given to multifunctional use of rural land and its potential services to urban living.

4.1 National planning policy is failing because it has no spatial context. A spatial planning approach is necessary to properly align all sectoral policies that have a territorial impact to achieve the ambitions set out in the NPPF. The effects of sub-national spatial plans would include the coordinated delivery of housing need, availability and effective
targeting of investment, appropriate planning of linear infrastructure such as rail, road and energy transmission and environmental protection/improvement.

4.2 The most effective scale of spatial planning is a combination of the national character mapping work, undertaken by Natural England, with the pattern of existing urban areas. Greater use should be made of the National Character Areas\(^{207}\) to inform the planning, design and delivery of housing, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage. NCAs divide England into 159 distinct areas, each defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, history, culture and economic activity. Their boundaries follow natural lines in the landscape, rather than artificial administrative boundaries. If these were used as the spatial framework within which national policy was translated into local decision making it would help ensure that future design and planning of the built environment was more responsive to its unique location and wider rural hinterland.

5.1 This is a complex matter with different forms of infrastructure, and a need to consider the capacity for renewal and retrofitting alongside improvements in technology. Matters such as climate change forecasts, ageing populations, housing demand as well as energy and food security all need to be considered. We suggest that optimum timescales for planning our future built environment could benefit from consideration of two excellent pieces of research, published by the Government Office for Science / Foresight. Land Use Futures (2010) and Future of Cities (2015) both explore challenges facing our built environment over longer timescales and the policy interventions required to meet them.

Questions 6, 7 and 8: Buildings and places – New and old

6.1 The current housing shortage presents a complex challenge and the location and development of new housing is always a contentious issue. The scale of housebuilding required to meet the current shortage will result in a significant degree of change to our landscape. This change is an opportunity to enhance our environment, not a threat which should be resisted.

6.2 Housing quantity cannot be divorced from housing quality. England features many low-quality, poorly-designed, housing estates which are out of keeping with their local landscape. This is a significant barrier in increasing the supply of housing. Local communities often expect that new housing will be of poor quality and will impact negatively upon their local environment. This can lead to objections causing delays in the planning process or failure to receive planning permission. This is supported by

research from the Local Government Association. Its New Housing Developments Survey\(^{208}\) (2010) found that 61 per cent of local councillors considered public opposition to be a significant barrier to housing development. When asked what would make housing development more acceptable to local communities, the following responses were given:

- Ensuring housing came with improved services and facilities (including green space) – 82 per cent;
- Involving local communities in early discussions about design – 56 per cent;
- Ensuring a commitment to excellent design – 65 per cent

6.3 It is clear from this research that improved design, provision of green space and involvement of local communities are key to overcoming local opposition to new housing. All three can be tackled by a landscape-led approach to housing development. By this we mean an approach to the planning and design of development that considers and responds to landscape character. By working with landscape from the very outset of development, it is possible to achieve distinctive local character in housing developments and a public realm where communities can interact and thrive. At present, landscape is often an afterthought in the house building process and in order to improve quality, and at the same time increase support for new housing, it needs to take centre stage.

6.4 Building for Life 12 (BfL12) has the potential to achieve a real change in the quality of new housing. BfL12 is a traffic-light system which assesses the quality of development. The system asks 12 questions of development proposals, 11 of which are reliant upon landscape planning and design. Greater use of BfL12 by local authorities during pre-application discussions could play a considerable role in improving design, thereby reducing opposition to new development. It would also have the benefit of tackling poor design issues that may arise at a later stage which can result in greater costs and delays to delivery of housing.

7.1 In his report on the Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, Sir Terry Farrell stated that:

“Landscape architecture and urban design are often the most valued by the public yet contradictorily the least valued in terms of fees and are frequently where the first savings are made on any given project. Something has to be done about this, and we as an industry must make landscape and urban design much bigger priorities.”

However little appears to have changed since the publication of the report. It is vital for the Government to step in to address evident market failure. The market is unable to deliver built environments that are sustainable and resilient. The financial model for the volume developers is, in their current mode of operation, risk adverse an unable to capture the external disbenefits of their product that put a cost on the public purse. Sir Terry Farrell goes on to state that:

“Governments certainly don’t have all the answers...But the private sector does not act at the large strategic scale either, as it tends to be driven by short-term profits and the bottom line. We need leadership from private and public sectors that is not subject to the short-term political cycles and changes of government or driven by short-term profits and share values.”

We would also point the Committee to recommendation 52 of the report, which suggests that:

“Government could explore policies to incentivise private-sector contributions to public-realm and infrastructure improvements and address the perceived “market failure” whereby landowners who benefit financially from improvements are not always the ones to pay for them.”

7.2 Green infrastructure (GI) is just one aspect of the landscape and despite increasing interest in the concept, understanding of its potential to contribute to sustainable, resilient and adaptable built environments is still lacking. As stated previously, the integration of natural systems and processes within and between our settlements enables the delivery of a wide range of benefits for the economy, society and the environment. We believe there are a number of barriers which Government might help overcome:

- a number of local authorities do not have GI strategies in place and many appear not to be working strategically with neighbouring authorities;
- there no statutory duty to protect or maintain green infrastructure assets;
- reduced public spending has had a number of negative impacts, including a lack of funding for maintaining existing assets, let alone the delivery of new GI close to where people live. It has also reduced the number of individuals within local authorities with the skills necessary to plan, design and manage GI;
- the natural environment is still seen as a ‘nice to have’ and as a result GI is afforded a lower priority; and
- a failure to plan in the long-term and the lack of interest in strategic planning. This is particularly pertinent to GI as the benefits it delivers accrue over time.

7.3 Making best use of the existing house stock and making places more liveable was achieved in the 1970s and 1980s by funding for local authorities to implement Housing Action Areas (HAAs) and General Improvement Areas (GIAs). These enabled residents to engage in improvements to their external environments. Local people influenced change and made their neighbourhoods better places to live. If the Government could see the value of such a proactive approach they might provide funding for improvements in deprived urban areas where market values fail to attract private investment.

8.1 The historic environment is important because it helps to define the cultural identity of our nation, and also because it attracts visitors and generates income. However, the present relentless drive for growth encourages landowners and investors to develop and manage land intensively for a variety of purposes that often result in damage to the character and appearance of the landscape. Regeneration often involves new land uses and whole site clearance so the developer can start with a clean slate. But this may mean that historic character is destroyed and that what replaces it resembles any place, anywhere.

8.2 We, as a nation, certainly maximise the potential of the most famous sites; Heritage is “the main motivation of 30 per cent of all international visits to the UK” (Chairman of the Art Fund, Art Quarterly Autumn 2015). Organisations such as English Heritage and the National Trust take great care of their heritage assets because they have to answer to their members and local communities. However most individual private owners struggle to maintain less well-known historic properties and landscapes.

8.3 Historic assets covered by formal designations such as listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens, are protected from damage by the need to apply for listed building, or scheduled monument, consent. Unfortunately local authorities subjected to severe budget cuts often have insufficient resource to take action when neglect/damage result in the loss of heritage assets, and have few suitably qualified staff available to deal with proposals for their development. Historic properties are being sold off as too costly to maintain, and new owners and developers then put forward ambitious plans for the modernisation of heritage assets, to local authorities that have insufficient resources to advise and inform and to require the owner to adopt a sensitive approach. In order to make more of these national assets, we suggest the following ought to be considered:
- Government should be willing to pay to protect the heritage we value. Public sector cuts mean that English Heritage can only get involved with projects impacting on the most important Grade I, Grade II* listed buildings and scheduled monuments (the majority of designated assets, both buildings and landscapes in England and Wales, are Grade II). Heritage assets that are lost can never be replaced;

- Local authorities responsible for protecting historic landscapes designated as National Parks and AONBS have a statutory obligation to adopt and implement management plans for their future planning and conservation. This should be imposed on all local authorities for designated Conservation Areas; and

- Historic England published useful guidance to support the historic environment policies in NPPF. Unfortunately the government appear to be intent on archiving documents such as these. Therefore their ‘informal’ status can be undermined at planning inquiries. This approach should be revoked.

Questions 9 and 10: Skills and design

9.1 The landscape profession is holistic. It is trained to understand the action and interaction of natural and human systems in a particular locality, and respond to these with plans and designs to secure the optimum outcome for society, the environment and the economy. However there is now a worrying lack of landscape expertise in both local authorities and Government departments and agencies, exacerbated by recent public sector cuts. This cannot have anything other than a negative impact on standards in the built environment as there are fewer officers with the necessary experience and knowledge.

9.2 Cuts and the non-statutory status of landscape are resulting in a loss of skills and capacity in local authorities, mainly through non-replacement of staff. How to address this deficiency is a challenge given the current focus on reducing public spending, coupled with the removal of ‘red tape’. While unlikely to gain Government support, addressing this might require landscape to be put on a similar statutory footing as ecology and trees, requiring job descriptions that demand professional accreditation for holistic approaches. Failing that, local authorities and the developer community need to act as ‘intelligent clients’ and demand more from interventions in the built environment through a landscape-led approach.

9.3 To support this it would be desirable if elected members received training on matters relating to the built environment in order to make informed judgement and offer objective opinion. While we accept that the squeeze on the public purse continues to pressurise local authority spending, we would like to propose that a Head of Landscape
Profession, located in the corporate centre of each local authority, to provide such
guidance and to support the commissioning of private sector input in delivering
landscape services.

10.1 The regional design review panels provide essential multidisciplinary input to project
proposals. More commitment to the use of these panels by, for example, including the
need for schemes to be brought to panels written into local plan design policies, could
ensure this mechanism was more widespread. Often landscape, the setting of the
building(s) and placemaking is a large part of the discussion at design review panels.
They give an opportunity to take an overall design approach and provide design input
from a range of experts. It is fundamental to have strong design policies in local plans.
Support for local authorities which do not have these in place yet would be beneficial.

Questions 11 and 12: Community involvement and community impact

11.1 Decision makers and developers rarely consider adequately the way in which the
built environment affects those who live and work within it. In our view, all parties
(including residents and future occupiers) are generally unaware of the potential
impacts of the built environment on health and wellbeing.

11.2 We have been working hard to promote to local authorities, elected members,
developers and public health professionals the ways in which landscape and the built
environment can be planned, designed and managed to improve public health and
wellbeing. Our position statement, Public health and landscape: Creating healthy places
(2013) outlined our ‘principles of a healthy place’, informed by an evidence review,
and designed to encourage greater consideration of landscape as a mechanism for
improving public health. We were also commissioned by the Government Office for
Science’s Foresight team to write an essay exploring this theme in greater detail. More
information can be found at the relevant endnote

12.1 Neighbourhood plans have enabled greater participation of local communities. Many
include policies related to building character, scale, design details and materials. They
allow the local community to impose additional, locally distinctive, layer of control over
development proposals at the planning stage. However uptake to date has not been

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209 http://wwwlandscapeinstituteorg/policyhealthphp

Page 1151 of 1964
widespread\textsuperscript{211} meaning some local communities are not as engaged in shaping their built environment as they could be.

12.2 In areas not covered by neighbourhood plans, the local plans system and the planning applications process both include requirements for formal periods of public consultation. Local authorities undertake to consult; the quality of the response depends on the capacity of the residents to understand what is being asked of them. However the imposition by the Government of strict target periods within which planning decisions must be made (with sanctions imposed on ‘failing’ authorities) means that there is little time for negotiations to achieve quality planning decisions. Resources in local authorities so stretched that effective engagement over a period of time, leading to decisions that are supported by the community, is often curtailed.

12.3 If the main barriers to effective engagement are lack of time and resources within local authorities, leading to more officer stress, less willingness to listen and few opportunities to adapt and improve initial proposals, these barriers could be addressed by adequate funding for community engagement within local authorities.

\textit{06 October 2015}

\textsuperscript{211} http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1212813/map-neighbourhood-plan-applications
Background
The Landscape Institute submitted written evidence to the Committee on the 6 October 2015, and was subsequently invited to give oral evidence on 29 October at which Noel Farrer, president of the Landscape Institute, appeared as a witness. This supplementary written evidence is designed to add further detail in response to questions asked by the Committee, particularly those questions which were not circulated in advance of the evidence session.

1. **Q122 The Chairman:** Thank you for coming and giving up your time. I know it is quite a lump out of your day, but we try to motor fairly rapidly through it. You have had the questions, of course. I will take the first one. What role should green infrastructure have in the planning process? How can it be effectively prioritised? What policy changes are needed to facilitate this?

1.1 Expanding on paragraph 4.2 of our written submission, which relates to the response given by Noel Farrer to Question 122 during the oral evidence session, we suggest that a new sub-national spatial planning framework for England should be developed that articulates corporate Government policy. That framework should be based on the National Character Map of England as published by Natural England. The framework would focus on the distinctive variations in the landscape and not on administrative boundaries. These spatial plans might cover more than one Character Area – an example of this is the draft Local Plan for the South Downs National Park which absorbs 11 local plans and covers two distinctive character areas. They would for the first time cover town and country by integrating economic, social and environmental imperatives. They could be administered by Joint Committees (including central government agencies) under the Local Government Act and approved by the Secretary of State. They would refocus all relevant levels of the public sector intervention on sustainable place-making to meet today’s challenges and the needs of future generations. This new spatial planning framework would help good quality place-making and encourage multifunctional green infrastructure by:

- Providing a clear corporate government policy for new development and the management of town and country, mapped spatially;
- Setting out the baseline character of all places that are valued by the population as the starting point of any new development;
Identifying the utilitarian aspects of urban spaces and land for public good;
- Providing clarity in government policy for regulators as they apply to specific places;
- Redirecting democratic intervention to concentrate on places rather than on administrations – either geographic or topic; and
- Establishing a programme of delivering sub-national spatial plans (priorities for the production of these new spatial plans based on need).

2. **Baroness Andrews**: *This is a really crude question, but in order for us to make that argument, can you quantify the benefits? Can you monetise them? Can you show that there are key developments in this country where people have bought houses that have been above the market rate because they want the green access, the green environment and all the things you are talking about?*

2.1 While this is an extremely complex matter, where it is difficult to isolate green infrastructure as the variable that made a difference in terms of commercial gains, some evidence is available. Firstly, the Committee should note the excellent report developed by Natural England, the Microeconomic Evidence for the Benefits of Investment in the Environment 2. This covers a huge range of economic benefits that can arise from green infrastructure investment. In particular section 3b explores the relationship between investment in the environment and house prices.

2.2 The often-cited research undertaken by CABE Space, *Does Money Grow on Trees?* is also worth bringing to the attention of the Committee. It includes a number of case studies exploring the ways in which green infrastructure can lead to increased property values.

2.3 Furthermore, research undertaken by Savills has shown that the features homeowners value most about their homes are not necessarily associated with the building itself, but more with the environment in which it is located. Factors such as neighbourhood safety, greenery and access to amenities are cited as more important than simply building attractive buildings. These must be created by focussing on the relationship between individual developments and the wider area or in other words, ‘placemaking’.

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214 [http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/186866/181237-0](http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/186866/181237-0)
2.4 In 2011, the Landscape Institute published a short collection of case studies to demonstrate the value of investing in landscape from a commercial perspective. *Why invest in landscape?* features the new settlement of Cambourne, nine miles west of Cambridge on a site covering over 400 hectares. There are two aspects to this project which demonstrate the importance of landscape planning and design.

2.5 The first relates to the management of spoil from the site. From the outset, the landscape and open spaces were designed and phased to accommodate all spoil from the site. This required careful design to ensure that existing features were not buried or harmed and the resulting new landform looked natural. Upon completion, the project will have generated over 700,000m$^3$ of spoil. Rates at the time of the publication of the document for disposal off-site were in the order of £28/m$^3$. However, because of the careful landscape design at Cambourne, the cost of organising and administrating the on-site disposal was approximately £8/m$^3$, resulting in a cost saving of about £20/m$^3$ or £12million.

2.6 In addition to this, an explanation of the value of landscape from the Director for Cambourne, who was also the Major Projects Director for Taylor Wimpey, is featured in the publication:

“The real benefit to the community and added value that is reflected in a premium prices for good property in a nice environment is only realised when the masterplan is supported by first class landscape design and implementation. The combined effect of good initial planning, implementation and long term maintenance all adds to the reputation that Cambourne enjoys as a desirable place to live and this is reflected by consistent sales and ongoing delivery of homes with obvious benefits to major developers Taylor Wimpey and Bovis.”

2.7 There is wider evidence from other organisations too, such as The Mersey Forest which we expect will have been brought to the attention of the Committee already.

3. *The Chairman:* Can I just ask a question? You have triggered something in my mind. What about having a trade association for landscaping or for place makers? Well-run trade associations, such as the civil engineers’ or the mechanical engineers’, have impact, which means a lot when dealing with Government. Engineering itself has something like 50 institutions, which is what they call them but they are actually

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trade associations. They probably would not like to be told that, but they get things done. Think of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. This is so important.

3.1 The Landscape Institute was puzzled, and slightly concerned, by this question. The Chairman’s mention of “well-run trade associations, such as the civil engineers’ or the mechanical engineers’” seems to be referring to the Institution for Civil Engineers (ICE) and the Institution for Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) because she then goes onto assert that “…they are actually trade associations. They probably would not like to be told that…” Both of these organisations are in fact professional bodies and registered charities and are governed by Royal Charter, as is the Landscape Institute. The line of questioning therefore indicates that the Chairman did not understand in advance of (or even become aware during) the oral evidence session that the Landscape Institute is in fact the Royal Chartered body for landscape architecture and the landscape architecture profession. It is not a trade body, nor are either of the aforementioned institutions.

3.2 Regardless, it is important to note that the Landscape Institute is significantly smaller in terms of membership numbers, 5,000, compared to ICE (80,000) and IMechE (111,000). Despite this, the Landscape Institute works hard, both alone and in partnership with a number of organisations, to help shape public policy, most recently on green infrastructure within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) in collaboration with the TCPA, working with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

4. Q127 Baroness Parminter: I was surprised in your evidence that you did not mention the work done by the Natural Capital Committee and its initiative to try to bring natural capital into the accounts of the nation and to have them in the Green Book by 2020. If that was achieved, to my mind that could be a very important way to encourage businesses to get green infrastructure and other natural capital on their business accounts...I wondered if you would share the view that that initiative is important. It was set up under the last Government. Should this Committee be ensuring that necessary financial resources and political support are retained for that initiative, which could have far reaching benefits?

4.1 Noel Farrer offered qualified support for the work of the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) and the idea that the concept of natural capital, if properly supported, could be useful for the green infrastructure. The NCC has achieved a great deal and should continue to receive political support. But it is disappointing (and short-sighted) that
the Government, in its response\(^\text{216}\) to the Third Report from the NCC, does not agree with the NCC’s recommendation that “The National Infrastructure Plan should incorporate natural capital in to each of the main infrastructure sectors”. This recommendation, if adopted, would have been extremely valuable in properly integrating green infrastructure alongside traditional ‘grey’ infrastructure and breaking down the frequently cited, and in our opinion valid, concerns about the ‘silo’ approach to planning and development. In its response, Government does not even offer much in the way of an explanation as to why it disagrees with the recommendation.

4.2 We understand the Government, via Defra, is in the process of developing a 25 year Environment Plan. Again, it is not clear how this will relate to natural capital, nor the National Infrastructure Plan. These strategies provide an opportunity to overcome the ‘silo’ mentality that is undermining the need for a strategic and coherent approach to land use.

5. **Q129 Baroness Whitaker:** Both of you commented in your evidence on a skills and expertise shortage in various areas. What are your ideas about how you would remedy this, including for local government?

5.1 In addition to the response given by Noel Farrer, it would be useful for the Committee to be aware that there remains a high proportion of development in this country where neither the developer or the regulatory body / local planning authority has the right expertise to deliver high quality, multifunctional landscape and green infrastructure. Furthermore, local planning authorities, increasingly constrained financially, do not have the resources to adequately enforce landscape conditions. We would like to emphasise the point made in our written evidence submission that we would like to propose that a Head of Landscape Profession, located in the corporate centre of each local authority. Such a role would provide guidance and support the commissioning of private sector input in delivering landscape services and securing the wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits that are possible from adequate, intelligent approaches to landscape planning, design and management.

Members present
Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Inglewood
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Noel Farrer, President, Landscape Institute, and Iain Taylor, Director of Business Development, Land Trust

Q121 The Chairman: A very big welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website, and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to introduce yourself briefly to the Committee, please? This is for the record, and everything we say or do is going to be on the record.

Noel Farrer: I am Noel Farrer. I am president of the Landscape Institute. The Landscape Institute represents landscape planners, landscape architects and landscape managers. Approximately two-thirds of our members work in the private sector. The remaining one-third work in the public sector. Our members are of a vast range; they are from master planners for both town and country, and the development and management of both. Our members are place-makers who pursue high-quality design and economic benefit, and multifunctional landscapes, in support of health and well-being. We are really a very broad church indeed.
The profession makes major contributions to the new challenge of resilience to the impact of climate change, and strongly supports the imperatives surrounding sustainability, in both development and management of irreplaceable natural resources. The profession sits at the interface between people and natural systems.

Key policy themes that we are addressing at the moment at the Landscape Institute are obviously green infrastructure, which is a huge ongoing topic for us, the awareness of that and enriching the awareness of that. Being able to be here to do that and to talk very much on that topic today is a fantastic opportunity, and actually our first. For the Landscape Institute as a professional chartered body, this is the very first time that we have been asked to provide oral information to a Select Committee. We are grateful for that, but it also shows the emerging importance of green infrastructure, which has been identified by you, which has brought us here. I hope that this will not be the last time and that we may be seeing much more of each other, as this is a particularly important issue.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that, and thank you for your compliments.

Iain Taylor: Good morning. My name is Iain Taylor. I am the Director of Business Development for the Land Trust. We are a national open space and land management charity with about 50 sites under management in 2,000 hectares of land across the country. Like Noel, we are very interested in this agenda. This is our bread and butter. This is what we get out of bed for in the morning and what we believe in passionately, so I am very pleased to be part of this session today. Thank you for inviting us.

Q122 The Chairman: Thank you for coming and giving up your time. I know it is quite a lump out of your day, but we try to motor fairly rapidly through it. You have had the questions, of course. I will take the first one. What role should green infrastructure have in the planning process? How can it be effectively prioritised? What policy changes are needed to facilitate this? In alphabetical order, Mr Farrer first.

Noel Farrer: I always get to go first. Thank you for that. First, green infrastructure, as I just alluded to, is a fundamental piece of the jigsaw. Green infrastructure is not just green as in environmental green. Yes, it is about water; yes, it is about soil. It is about all the landscape spaces and all our public realm. Green infrastructure is not just our parks and our open spaces. It is very much also our streets and the little areas on the housing estates where we live. We
cannot conveniently just see green infrastructure as the pieces that we can lock between
dawn and dusk, somewhere down the road in the park where the children can play. The whole
of the green infrastructure agenda is where people live. It is around the houses, in the streets,
in every part of our towns and cities, and in our rural communities.
We cannot be complacent about green infrastructure in our rural communities. We are
probably going to be discussing the fact that we need to build on a significant amount of our
rural communities, which are perhaps going to become urban communities. I find in the rural
environment that walking to school is just as difficult, and perhaps even more so in a rural
village, as it is walking on a pavement in a town. Green infrastructure is absolutely
everywhere.
Answering the second part of the question about how it can be prioritised effectively and
what changes need to happen, we see that green infrastructure has perhaps lost traction in
its policy support through the emergence of NPPF from previous planning policy and stripping
out a lot of planning policy, and the party concerns with regard to top-down, bottom-up and
the sort of thinking that has happened over the last number of decades. We now have a huge
void that exists between national policy and the next layer, which is local plans and
neighbourhood plans.
We have lost a large chunk of the middle ground. We have a void there, which we believe
could be filled with some sort of national spatial strategy, perhaps based on the Natural
England landscape character areas work that has already been done. It is a piece of work
about enabling, about recognising that our landscapes are about change, seeing that as an
absolutely necessary and positive process that has to take place. We feel that guidance in that
area and work in that area are going to deliver more clarity. Where we now perhaps have this
absolute urgent necessity for larger-scale development, developers are blundering around
and do not have clarity about public/private partnership and about what it is that towns and
cities want to see delivered to give them certainty about their business planning. To give them
more clarity is going to support and enable more houses more quickly, if that is our immediate
agenda, but quality of development generally.
Iain Taylor: We see a lot of mention across the country of the value of green infrastructure.
It has had its moments over the last few years, but it has really become a second-tier aspect
of the development process. For us, green infrastructure can deliver good development. If we are in the business of sustainable development, good development and high value multi-functional development, then green infrastructure has to have a valuable part in that process.

We are very good at planning for grey infrastructure. We are very good at thinking about services, data, communications, roads, highways, streetlights, et cetera. We know how to plan, model and think about that strategically and, indeed, assess developments on their impact at local and regional level, in terms of grey infrastructure. We are very good at that.

What we do not do particularly well is think about how the green infrastructure components of development are connected into those much broader landscapes. When you are thinking about development, when you are going through a process to get approval for that development, we think it would add significant value to the end product if green infrastructure was afforded the comparable degree of importance that grey infrastructure gets currently.

**Q123 Baroness Andrews:** We heard from the TCPA and CPRE that there is only one reference to green infrastructure in the whole NPPF. In fact, Dr Ellis said that that was being heavily compromised by the pressure on development and the planning by appeal process. Is that your experience? My second question is: how often are you called in to help with master planning of major developments?

**Noel Farrer:** There is only the one reference and I alluded to that. There is a distinct weakness about that, which is clearly why we are here. It needs strengthening in that area. Perhaps it is about the clarity of what green infrastructure is. It is misunderstood. Developers see green infrastructure sitting on the wrong side of the balance sheet. At the end of the day, they sell houses and they sell floor space, whether that is commercial or whatever that is.

I am a practising landscape architect and I do a lot of work. Alluding to the other part of your question, we are not asked in early enough. It is not seamlessly integrated because it is something that developers want and wish to be able to do. That is a generalisation. As you know, there is a range of developers, as there is everywhere else, and there are some developers who are far better at this than others. Certainly it is fair to say that they do not necessarily see this just as something that is nice to have but: can we afford it, or is this
something else that we are shoving on the bottom line of a development that is going to cause us a problem in our viability?

This is why I want to see some teeth that are going to put significant pressure and raise awareness of these key component issues, so that developers see the value. There is no question that the value is more for the long-term benefit of the communities that are going to carry on, but there are genuine benefits. There is no question that green open space and the consideration of quality places where people can meet and feel safe, all these things, have a significant value. They have a significant value at the point of sale, because it just gets better and better in landscape terms.

Baroness Andrews: This is a really crude question, but in order for us to make that argument, can you quantify the benefits? Can you monetise them? Can you show that there are key developments in this country where people have bought houses that have been above the market rate because they want the green access, the green environment and all the things you are talking about?

Iain Taylor: There are so many studies that point to the quality of the environment adjacent to property. Properties, both commercial and residential, affronting high-value green spaces, parks, canals and rivers are 20%, 30% or 40% more valuable than adjacent counterparts that share the amenity but lack that kind of connection to it. We know through studies over the years the land value, the development value and ultimately the end value.

One thing that planning can do is look across the benefits of a site at the contribution that development can make to the broader community. It can take a more holistic view. Yes, a developer is looking for his exit, your landowner is looking for an exit, and even the person buying a house one day might want to find an exit, but it is our role, partly through the planning system and partly through the way we look after our affairs, to think about the wider suite of benefits in health and well-being that accrue from sites, and the whole agenda on the value of green infrastructure, which is well written and well evidenced, and bring that value to bear on the development.

One thing the Land Trust brings to this conversation is, when we think about open space, we think about it in perpetuity. We are not interested in the value of green space during the development process or while the units are being let. We think about what that value is for
ever for that community. When you ask yourself how that green infrastructure delivers its value and benefits for ever, you open a box on all the opportunities that are available, the rationale and the justification for why it should be delivered to value in the first place.

Noel Farrer: You know that it is a complicated question. You have asked it because you know it is very difficult to prove, but it has been. There is a whole range of studies. But landscape by its nature is very complex. What is the value of walking down a street that allows you to feel safe? What is the value of a view? What is the value of these key components? You know that you want to live in the house that is overlooking the park, not the one that is overlooking the Westway or a road. It is a fact that if you are living overlooking a huge piece of infrastructure, you are likely not to live as long as if you are overlooking a park. A park is not only a beautiful thing and something that gives you recreation; it is a much healthier place to be as well, so there is a lot of common sense about this.

The other point to make is that legislation was passed through DCMS in 2005, when we did Design for Play—I was involved with the urban fabric. What was very interesting about that was that the Government put together a £235 million package to upgrade our playgrounds across the country. That piece of work was based upon the fact that they were asked a very similar question: can you prove that by investing in children’s play you are going to see improvement? The reality is that, again, that is incredibly difficult to do. It is incredibly difficult to prove that it is the act of playing in a playground, in pure academic terms, that delivers an improvement in quality of life and those children’s development, but you know that it is true, and it is true.

Landscape is like that in a way. It is its complexity that is its richness and its real compelling value. You are right: we live in a neoliberal world and we have to convince the Treasury of pounds and pence when it comes to improvement. I think we can do it now. The Policy Exchange has done a number of studies on being able to really help us with this, all the way through to other studies as well.

The Chairman: Do you think the builders are convinced that this is right? They seem to squeeze new houses into plots and then do not even give decent gardens. Everybody who goes to a new house spends the first two years in their gardens getting rid of builders’ rubble.
They have no conception of the holistic approach to life. We are talking about living in a space. How can we change that?

**Iain Taylor:** The key is to recognise that landowners and developers working through these schemes all have a very different approach.

**The Chairman:** They are all working in silos, are they?

**Iain Taylor:** They all have their own approach to their business model. Some will be into a community with several sites and be looking to bring forward phased developments over 10, 20 or 30 years. They will want to build a reputation of value. They will want to build on a reputation of quality. They will want their developments to be heralded as successful, even award-winning, but developers that are small and medium, or more opportunistic, will see a development as a single development site in a single local authority area. Frankly, it is whatever they can get away with sometimes.

We therefore need a conversation that applies to all development and that is about value and quality, and at the planning stage affords the opportunity for those appraising the scheme and involved in their design to fully understand the contribution that scheme can make. Then we do not get into distinguishing between the volume housebuilders, which are building reputation, learning lessons and taking these ideas forward because they have a stake in those sites’ future, and those at the smaller end, the single-site developers.

**Noel Farrer:** I will add to that. There is no point in pretending; there is just more money down here in the south-east. Land values are higher. What people are prepared to pay and can pay for houses is higher. There is no question that there is more and better opportunity to see money being spent on landscape in the south-east. If you head up to the towns and the cities in the north, where the values are not as high, it is perfectly reasonable that at the end of the day private companies and large PLC companies acting as developers, whether they are volume housebuilders or small housebuilders, are in it for profit. There is nothing wrong with that. Legally, the number one thing that they have to do is provide a return for shareholders. When it comes to GI, the easiest point for them is, first, the private space. A private garden sits slightly on the right side of the balance sheet. They do not necessarily do it very well, and you alluded to that, Lord Chairman, by suggesting that they might just park the building rubble underneath the turf, and they do. I do not think all developers do that, of course, but it is true:
we find a lot of that and soil is not respected or looked after at all. The key point is that the private garden has some value, and sometimes they will carve whole sites into the private garden.

What is really sitting on the wrong side of the balance sheet for them, and perhaps gives local authorities problems that then have to deal with, is the public space in relation to housing. It is those areas where the real pressure comes. The reality is that it is in our streets and in those public spaces where children can play, where the elderly can meet and not be lonely, and all the rest of it, where real life happens, needs to happen safely and needs to happen healthily and well. Those areas are becoming particularly starved, and it seems to me that that is the public/private agenda. The public part of this contract, through the local authority and the strategic planning and visioning, must have absolute clarity about what they want for their places, what they want for their towns, the distinctiveness and the character of the places they want to see made. That is when the developer can at least have clarity about what they are going to have to do, so that they can get on with it, knowing what is going to need to be provided there.

Q124 Baroness Whitaker: Mr Taylor referred to a national conversation with developers. Are you talking about a role for national leadership—leadership from the centre in this case? Do you have any ideas about how?

Iain Taylor: Precisely. The issue is one of leadership. Who is our national champion for sustainable places of quality? Who is that spokesperson for this agenda? Who is arguing the corner with colleagues in education, health, environment, business and communities? We have, over time, had organisations and partnerships that were established to show leadership and show the community at large what good looked like. A lot of the advice that came through those organisations found its way into policy and into the mainstream, but in recent times we have moved away from that approach. One thing that we would call for within this opportunity and this conversation would be to extend it and to find those natural leaders, not to create new organisations, overhead or hurdles but some momentum and positivity in this conversation. That will flush out not only national leaders but leaders within housebuilders, leaders within planners and leaders within local authorities, who will step up and say, “We are doing this. We know what good looks like”, but you need somebody at the heart of
Government to give the confidence that this is time well spent and that moving forward on this agenda is worth while. It is difficult at the moment. There are a number of competing objectives and this needs to be prioritised higher.

**The Chairman:** Can I just ask a question? You have triggered something in my mind. What about having a trade association for landscaping or for place-makers? Well-run trade associations, such as the civil engineers’ or the mechanical engineers’, have impact, which means a lot when dealing with Government. Engineering itself has something like 50 institutions, which is what they call them but they are actually trade associations. They probably would not like to be told that, but they get things done. Think of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. This is so important.

We are not talking about builders; we are talking about the impact of space on our lives and the health implications, the future of our children and grandchildren, and trees on which they can have swings and things like this. It sounds idyllic, but it is doable. If it is all so fragmented and you are being played off against other competing tasks, it is not going to happen.

**Iain Taylor:** Noel will pick up on the association side at the professional level, but it is really about the agenda. We know we have 100,000 members of the Institution of Civil Engineers and 5,000 members in the green infrastructure sector. We are massively outgunned, if you like, in terms of representation. There is an issue of numbers. Over recent years, we have seen, with public local authorities’ resources being constrained and focused on statutory services, these discretionary areas of work, planning and strategic thinking about green infrastructure and open space, having to—it is not through choice but necessity—be lost from the local authority contribution to the development space. We have seen, frankly, a bit of a vacuum emerging, where we are not able to engage with those people who were in post five or 10 years ago to create some momentum. It is really about slightly nudging the agenda to imagine that green and grey infrastructure—and blue infrastructure, for that matter—being a fundamental, and I hesitate to say statutory, part of what makes our cities, towns and rural areas work.

**The Chairman:** Even if it is only a small number, you can still make a big impact.

**Iain Taylor:** Correct. I agree with that.
Lord Inglewood: I would like to put to you that perhaps the biggest problem of all is the fault of accountancy. We live in a world where natural capital and ecosystem services simply are not permitted to enter into the profit and loss and the balance sheets that are used to judge a lot of these things. That, perhaps more than anything else, may be the beginning of the problem. Following on from that, do each of you have any particular ideas about what might be done in simple terms to improve matters?

Noel Farrer: It is about accountancy, and you are absolutely right to pick that up. In a way, that is a key problem. We have alluded to it already. The private sector is where we are going to see the changes and where development is going to take place, and the private sector is therefore going to evolve around profit. Landscape is vulnerable in that world, even though we are a country of gardeners. Going back to the allusion to the different trade organisations, we have 250,000 members in the Royal Horticultural Society. We are absolutely passionate about landscape. We all recognise the value of what landscape is going to bring. It is interesting that while that is a passion it does not find its way to any statutory point.

Iain was hesitant to use the word “statutory”. Let me be a little less hesitant about it. The reality is that our park services in our local authorities are not statutory. There is no statutory obligation to maintain parks. There is no statutory obligation for local authorities to look after the green infrastructure that we are talking about. But the reality, as we now recognise—frankly, it has always been like this—is that it does not have the teeth. It is vulnerable to the accountants. It sits on the wrong side of the balance sheet, and it requires more of a commitment. The commitment has been lost in the middle ground in planning and in the national strategy. A commitment on the public side of that equation, which is where the change needs to take place, because we are talking mainly about the public benefit, needs to be re-established in a way that cannot be forgotten. It is just about accountancy. That is where the problem lies.

Baroness Andrews: Do you think it would have more impact if we could get across the fact that we are losing the battle on sustainability? You are talking about one element of sustainable development, yet sustainable development has lost purchase. It is in the NPPF. It is not in recent legislation. We had big battles over the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, because
we lost the definition of sustainability. If we could recover that in a statutory form, do you think that would help you to position what you see as so important?

**Noel Farrer:** It would help. It is interesting that in the agonies of what sustainability is, and we have all juggled with that and what it means, there is something about the complexity of that that has become the problem. It is not like, “I am an architect. I design a building”. In my profession, I am a landscape architect. If I go and speak to someone and say, “I am a landscape architect”, they say, “Why do you not come out and have a look at my garden?”. That is it. It is great to come here, talk about green infrastructure and grapple with this absolutely compelling subject, but it is a misunderstood concept. Our issue and our first and foremost piece of work as a profession is to do with awareness and the importance of this piece, which is everything from the edge of the building to our rivers, our streets, our towns and our countries, and joining all those things up, but it does not have primacy.

**Iain Taylor:** Picking up your point about the accountants’ approach and the balance-sheet narrative, one interesting component of this is that green infrastructure sits on the right side of the balance sheet, but there are five different balance sheets. It helps with school attainment. It helps with obesity and mental health. It helps with a number of balance sheets for various aspects of the Government’s work in our communities, but we do not fully aggregate that value and think about how we deliver it upfront. We try to focus on where the value is generated within the development process, because that is where the cash is.

One thing that we are thinking about is how you fund the in-perpetuity management, maintenance and capital replacement of these open spaces so that we do not get into a serial regeneration of our open spaces in towns and cities. This is a national issue. We work in parks and open spaces in the south-east, the south-west, the north and Yorkshire, so we have a broad understanding of the factors at play. Indeed, the Land Trust came out of a coalfields programme by Government, recognising that these spaces had a contribution to make for ever. There is a very nuanced view of value and how we appraise it, but I absolutely agree that it is time for sustainable development to come back and be at the heart of our processes.

**Lord Inglewood:** Is it not the same issue that Church Commissioners have identified? They have a lot of buildings that are going to be very expensive in perpetuity. In their case, their solution is to offload them on to other people.
Iain Taylor: What you do then in that process of offloading is attribute who benefits in a much more specific and direct way. We could get on to this; a later question talks about models for sustainability, but essentially if you could connect very directly those who benefit from that infrastructure and those who pay, you would create a naturally sustainable virtuous circle. We have done this for years; they are called service charges and estate charges. You would make a direct transaction between those who benefit and those who pay.

One thing that we are really getting switched on about at the Land Trust, working with the volume housebuilders in particular, is to create more of a membership or a community focus on service charges, so that we can lose this negative “It is just another bill” approach. “Actually, I pay my £100 or £150, and look at what I get. I am part of this fantastic community. They throw great events. The place looks great. I am proud to walk people around my open spaces”. Site by site, if we can restore that link between value and who benefits, there is real future in this.

Now the question is: where do you go when they exist already? One thing that we are wrestling with is whether our parks and open spaces are the right proportion, the right size, for the communities they serve. They do not all come from beautifully well-executed master plans. Some of them were flukes, accidents, by-products of clearance, et cetera. One thing we need to look at in a lot more detail is whether we can associate the value of public development with the in-perpetuity management of those open spaces so that we realise the value of some of these spaces for the benefit of the whole community. This is where it gets involved, quite technical and very local, but if we could have a national perspective on this it would create the space for those conversations to happen all over the country.

Q126 Baroness Rawlings: I fully support all the green space, the environment and everything that you have said. I am aware that costs always play a role in that. What is your view? You have just touched on parks and things. I get really upset when these wonderful parks, which are there for everybody, get used for markets and pop concerts. They then get negated for what they were meant to be used for: the peace, health and everything for everybody. What is your answer to that? You create a green space and then, before you know it, you have people planning to have a pop concert on it.
Noel Farrer: Why are they planning to have a pop concert on it? We are on the framework contract for the Royal Parks here in London. Hyde Park is regularly used as a venue. The best part of half of their income needs to be derived from their own capital receipts. Their contract was with central government, which paid for the Royal Parks. It is now with the mayor. The reality is that that sum of money is not going up any time soon. That sum of money is going down. However passionately we link those Royal Parks and the quality of those landscapes to our great city, the reality is that that goes down. How are the Royal Parks crossing that? They are doing this. Coffee is pretty expensive if you go to a franchise in the Royal Parks. You can go to pop concerts. They are allocating areas of park. The Frieze contemporary arts show is a brilliant event. Do not get me wrong; I think it is incredibly positive how the Royal Parks reconcile the types of activities that they are putting in place with what they have to do, but fundamentally they are doing it. They totally understand that. They know that there is a compromise between the maintenance of a beautiful green space, the acid grassland that is in that area, the biodiversity and the nature of the landscape that you are referring to, which we should all be able to enjoy, and then allowing 80,000 people in there for three days to enjoy a pop concert. I am perhaps less aerated about that concern, because I think it is a great use of public open space for 80,000 people to enjoy it who perhaps would not otherwise.

Baroness Rawlings: They could not go to the Albert Hall or all the other places where you can have pop concerts, like the O2 Arena?

Noel Farrer: I understand that, but the key point here is that they have to do it because they need the money and they need to be able to maintain it. In a way, that alludes to exactly the same point: how important is that, and how much money should we give to them?

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: I have been fascinated listening to you talk about the benefits to health and to the individual, and wonder whether anyone has done any work on using the concept of QALYs, such as are used in healthcare by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, to show the benefit of exposure and access to green spaces, so that you begin to talk the same language on the balance sheet that is used for things like health interventions and see whether you can do the same for social cohesion, dysfunctional behaviour, costs of crime, and educational attainment. You could begin to use Lord Inglewood’s balance sheet to be much more complex but much more informative than a simple kind of in/out accounting.
Iain Taylor: We have surveyed people who visit our sites and asked them whether these spaces are of value to them, have helped with their personal circumstances and have moved things on. Unreservedly, we get positive outcomes from that.

Interestingly you can point to specific examples such as the work of Community Forests, which is a sector across this country. It has a project that it has called the Natural Health Service, which works with GP practices to provide opportunities to engage in local parks and open spaces as an alternative to medication or more invasive practices. It is using the environment in a way that is positive for its outcomes and personal circumstances. It is not simply about going for a walk. Often there are personal issues to do with perceptions of safety or insecurity that prevent people from engaging with these open spaces, so they have to be supported through it, but the outcomes are so much better.

We know that when we link aspects of the health service at a local level with the value to health and well-being that the parks and open spaces provide, we get tremendous outcomes. Of course, these are often publicly-funded two to three-year projects. They always have a start, they have a fantastic middle phase, and then they have to end at some point. That is one thing that we really fall over. We do not plan and we do not fund over the timescales that can really allow these structures to bed in.

One thing that we have talked about in relation to vision is where the long plan is for this agenda. Where is the 25-year rolling, reviewable plan that actually says what kind of place we want this country to be? As sure as eggs are eggs, you determine your value of a place and your experience of it by the natural components. Yes, the buildings are beautiful or are an issue, but you certainly get a sense of what a place is like from the blue and green infrastructure, yet there is simply no plan.

Noel Farrer: There is some interesting research that helps to start to join these things together. It is a simple, known fact that if you have a ward in a hospital that overlooks green space rather than an urban area, less morphine is used on that ward. If you have a closed ward and there are landscape paintings on the wall rather than paintings of other subjects, that is also true. That is how compelling that is.
We know this from looking at mental health issues. A number of experiments have been done with people who are suffering from depression. If you walk them through a busy shopping centre and then ask them how they feel at the other end of that, having done a 15-minute walk, or you walk them through the adjacent park in the opposite direction, they feel a damn site better when they have walked through the park. These are common-sense issues.

How compelling are they in terms of what they are going to say? I know that we can go to Abbey Orchard Estate, which is a Peabody estate on the orchard site of Westminster Abbey and is five minutes from here. We had a scheme there where we turned an empty space with 46 car parking spaces into a green courtyard with trees, and a small park space within that courtyard, with places to sit and places to play. I can introduce you to Norman, who lives in flat 8, block A. He will tell you that he was a very lonely man who did not feel comfortable about going out. He did not feel safe in the streets and was leading a particular type of life that I believe was also perhaps a very expensive type of life, with home help, meals on wheels, support and all the other aspects and support services in our society.

I can go round and have a cup of tea with Norman now, nearly eight years after we have finished our work there. He is one of the people who goes out. He does planting work and has now re-engaged his relationship with the children on the estate. He plants the plants, he works with them. He won second prize in a Westminster in Bloom competition, and in my office that is the award that we cherish most. It is that simple. We can take that stroll any time you like and I think you will find that the GI message is compelling. You are right: getting it into a condition so that we can put it on to an accountant’s sheet in an intelligent way aerates us and needs to be worked upon.

Q127 Baroness Parminter: I was surprised in your evidence that you did not mention the work done by the Natural Capital Committee and its initiative to try to bring natural capital into the accounts of the nation and to have them in the GreenBook by 2020. If that was achieved, to my mind that could be a very important way to encourage businesses to get green infrastructure and other natural capital on their business accounts.

Noel Farrer: In their assets, yes.

Baroness Parminter: Indeed. I wondered if you would share the view that that initiative is important. It was set up under the last Government. Should this Committee be ensuring that
necessary financial resources and political support are retained for that initiative, which could have far-reaching benefits?

Noel Farrer: It is very interesting. Thinking about my membership, there are slightly mixed views about this. For me personally, the notion that we have a natural capital that we absolutely value involves trying to put a financial construct on it, which is helpful. I am aware that that committee answers directly to the Treasury, which would seem to give us a route one track into the right place and being able to gain traction. There is no question that if companies can recognise the value of their asset as natural capital and it sits on their balance sheet as an asset, that means they are more likely to invest in it. I would say that in the most basic terms I am fundamentally supportive of it, and I think we are. We would absolutely encourage that.

I have a slight nervousness about putting those values together and saying, “How valuable is it?”. I have a site down the road from here where there is an oak tree on the corner of a street. This is slightly theoretical, but it is true; I have done this many times before. I do not want someone to turn around and say, “That oak tree is worth £25,000”, because I know in London that a developer is going to turn around and say, “Here is your £25,000. I am now going to chop it down”. I have a slight concern about that, because I want to say to that developer, “It is absolutely priceless and you cannot chop it down”. There is always that issue for me slightly, but the fundamental principle of the leverage of being able to value something so that we can have a conversation about it in that way is very useful.

Iain Taylor: I would build on that. There was real momentum prior to the Committee’s recommendations to understand the value of the natural environment and the functions that it provides. That has led to conversations about payments for ecosystem services and trying to articulate the transaction between those who benefit, those who provide and those who sustain. We understand that while those recommendations were positive and at the time created a huge sense that things were going to improve, there was not a great deal of recognition across Government for what those recommendations meant. They were good but not fully endorsed by Government across all departments, so that we can get on with the process of interpreting them and getting on with the job. For us, from a green infrastructure
perspective, if more actors within Government could adopt those recommendations, we think that work really would have some value in support of this sector specifically.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Is there not more to be done if we are going to scale up these considerations? The issue is that green infrastructure has benefits all round. The trouble is that a government department, if it is going to sponsor legislation or guidance, will perhaps be, say, Defra, but the benefits will accrue to the Department of Health, so they will not necessarily have the same force of argument when it is all worked out in Cabinet. Do you see any way round this?

**Noel Farrer:** Yes, I do. The problem you raise is absolutely right, and the point that we are making first is that whether you are in the Home Office and you want to make places safer and more secure through design of public realm space, whether you are in Education because school grounds and all that estate is absolutely fantastically valuable to the development of our children, whether you are in Health, about which you are very clear, across all the departments of government landscape has a key role to play, and this goes back to the silos point that we alluded to earlier, if you will excuse me. This is a fundamental area whereby GI can fall between the tracks, but its potency is about coming up with a voice that allows each and every department to recognise that their push, in a co-ordinated way, is fundamental. One piece of traction which the Farrell review proposed was the idea that we should have a built environment chief adviser in the Government somewhere. The reality is that some format of that is needed, including how education sees the value of landscape, how health sees the promotions of landscape in their piece of work, how Defra is perhaps closer to being the vehicle to be able to administer that, however that might work, and then obviously planning and planning legislation. There needs to be some way of co-ordinating that. The fact that it is not co-ordinated is a really sad loss to the potency of GI.

**Iain Taylor:** A key way to articulate the relevance and importance of any agenda is to hop on to the big one. For the last five years or so, economic growth has been the big one. Everything, frankly, has been about its contribution to economic growth. How can we accelerate economic growth? How can we support economic growth? What can we do across the land to support government’s objectives in relation to economic growth?
There are strategies that we have been a part of, such as the “Atlantic Gateway Parklands: The Landscape for Prosperity”, which make a very direct link between a long-term, long-ranging environmental master plan in support of the economy, not running against development aspirations, not taking a principled view on the economy itself, just showing, case by case, aspect by aspect, how GI and a broader natural environment can accelerate economic growth.

When you get into that space, as the Land Trust is doing, of facilitating development, understanding how to capitalise on its value, supporting the growth of towns and cities, once you get into a much more positive space about economic growth and development, you find that people want to engage in a positive non-whingeing debate. There are too many reasons to be glum, to whinge, to moan, but who has the time for it? We want to engage in a positive conversation about development. We want to make the economy stronger. The environment and GI have a role in that space, and we just do not play that card strongly enough nationally. There is some good leadership in the regions, but nationally it is not quite there.

**Noel Farrer:** It is no coincidence that Barcelona is always held up as an urban town and a very desirable place to live. On a happiness index that I have seen, the people in Barcelona seem very happy people. They are 1.4 million people there. They buy their food in their local markets; over 90% of all food in Barcelona is bought in local markets. There are 96 markets. It works on a human scale, and GI is a living, vibrant thing in that city. Catalonia represents over 75% of the entire GDP of Spain, which is why it will never become an independent nation, because Spain will never be rid of it. The reality, in simple economic terms, is that the desirability and the quality of the place are fundamentally driven by its green infrastructure and landscape considerations. It creates a place where people want to be; it creates a place that is desirable for them to wish to come to, to live in, to work in, to be innovative in, to be creative in and to generate money and economic growth. Barcelona is a classic example of that. There are many others. Beautiful cities make more money.

**Q128 Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** The way that you speak, Mr Farrer, indicates your view of green infrastructure as not necessarily green but something rather wider. A public understanding of that debate could be helpful. Do you think there is a conflict between the pressure for increased housebuilding and higher-density development in urban areas? Do you
think that is creating a conflict with providing environmental infrastructure, green infrastructure and sustainable open spaces? In practice, do you think that a conflict has emerged in recent years between the two?

Noel Farrer: I do not necessarily think there is a conflict. I sit on quite a number of design review panels. I am on the national design panel, and the reality is that we are seeing a lot of schemes coming forward that are very dense. In my personal work, I am working on a large housing extension to Bicester, which the Government called a garden city. One requirement of the eco-town principles is that 40% of the land will be designated as public open space. That is actually a huge challenge to the local authority in the future. Another requirement is that densities will sit between 20 and 50 homes per hectare, which is not enough. Actually, what seems like a good idea in planning and thinking in terms of crude rules is very constraining in terms of being able to create quality urban spaces.

The notion of density for me is that landscape is not to be viewed just in terms of its quantum area. It is not about the area; it is about the quality of that space. Just imagine that you have 100 houses on a plot of land and a developer is thinking, “That is great. I have my 100 houses at quite low density”, and then someone comes along and says, “Hang on a minute, you have to give a quarter of that away to a public open space. You have to get rid of 25% of the area for the open space”. That could be seen as crudely chopping a piece out, so I will only build 75 homes. Clearly not, but the post-war reaction, which you alluded to in the debate that I listened to when we came in, is that you could build a large tower block in the middle of a large green field. Actually, we know that that is not quality. It is not about quantity. It is all about what it is. What is the quality of that environment and the quality of the place that you are trying to make? You are then into the complexities.

We have worked on high-density schemes, which have spaces for children to play and which provide opportunities for people to be able to come out and be able to enjoy a certain amount of green space. We can absolutely employ places where people can meet, talk and do all the activities that they need to be able to do safely and in a high-quality way. I do not instinctively see a problem between density and providing high-quality GI. We also technically know about aspects of GI to do with the water, microclimate, heat sink effect in cities and increased
biodiversity. We can do this vertically, we can do this horizontally, we can do this on roofs. There is also a whole range of technology that is growing hugely as a sector.

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Mr Farrer, I did not ask you whether you thought it could work together. I am asking you if, in practice in recent years, the pressure for more housing and higher density, in your judgment, has led to a deficiency in sustainable open spaces and green infrastructure.

**Noel Farrer:** In practice, the answer is yes. I suppose I was alluding to the fact that in practice it does not have to. I am very grateful to you, Lord Woolmer, for pulling me up on that, because you are teasing the answer that I want to give, which is great. I apologise for not getting there quicker. That is absolutely the reality. GI in schemes is often considered too late. It only happens because it needs to happen, perhaps to get certain developers over certain planning hurdles. We do not see enough quality investment in our present housing developments.

Moreover, a lot of the development that I am seeing in the country is building formulaic houses. They could be Windsors and Marlboroughs and whatever else you like. I can see those formulaic houses being built in the Lake District, which is where I live, or they may be being built in Derbyshire or in the south-east. That is nothing to do with GI, distinctive places or a whole range of things. The reality is that at the moment the answer is no. The conversation about raising awareness and trying to understand that public-private relationship so that we can instigate more need around GI is essential.

**Iain Taylor:** I would say that high-density and high-quality GI are not incompatible. Actually, volume and density are your friends when it comes to safeguarding these infrastructures for the long term. We have seen sites promoted of four or five dwellings, with a 40-acre country park. You think that those four or five dwellings have to have quite broad shoulders to support that 40-acre country park. When you have 2,000 dwellings supporting a 40-acre country park, if it is planned well, if it is well delivered, if it is of high quality, it will last for ever. The collective burden is unchanged, but each unit can afford it. It is an affordability issue. There is a viability issue in all of this. The purpose of having the ability to plan and think strategically, across all the sectors, is what enables you to come up with the right answer.
Q129 Baroness Whitaker: Both of you commented in your evidence on a skills and expertise shortage in various areas. What are your ideas about how you would remedy this, including for local government?

Iain Taylor: The skills shortage is an interesting general point about capacity, but actually there is a jobs shortage. There is a role shortage. We have seen that it is not about whether or not the people in post have the skills to undertake a GI conversation. It is just that those posts do not exist at all. One thing we could usefully do is to recalibrate the resource of the process, so that there is a role in which they can share skills and knowledge.

Baroness Whitaker: There should be larger cadres in local government.

Noel Farrer: There could well be. We have a specific subgroup in the Landscape Institute that is looking at the fact that the loss of people working in the public sector and the loss of landscape architects working in local authorities is a significant problem. The landscape architectural role is not a statutory role for local authorities, and local authorities are continuously pared back.

Baroness Whitaker: Do you know how many local authorities employ landscape architects? What proportion is it—a third, a half or about three-quarters?

Noel Farrer: I think it is at most a third. It is very interesting. They range enormously from local authorities that have none to local authorities that have 30. Some local authorities work in that way and get it. I am talking about Hampshire there. That is hugely variable, but it is the loss of knowledge in the role that is absolutely critical. Having someone who really understands the GI position in a local authority and can inform on the local authority side what is happening in development control, what is happening strategically across the departments of a local authority, in the same way we were discussing the silos in central government, is fundamental. We would ask that you consider the idea of recognising that the local authority needs to have some representation of GI at a senior enough level within their local authority organisation to be able to make sure that this representation exists, because they are a fundamental client role to us. They feed the quality that private sector consultants can then work to.

Iain Taylor: We work closely with universities all over the country. One in particular, the University of Liverpool, has a department of civic design to train planners. They have a
self-contained GI unit, which has become really popular with the postgraduates. About half of the people on the planning course take the GI module. That gives me a lot of hope that the next wave of professional planners, whether in private practice or local authorities, have had this kind of education in green infrastructure and elected to have that education in green infrastructure, so they are self-selecting an interest in this agenda that they can take through their professional lives. From no course to 50% is a fantastic achievement.

Baroness Whitaker: Are there any landscape architects in national government? How many are in DCLG?

Noel Farrer: There are not many. One of them was here, but there are very few. Another area where we could make a real difference here is building the knowledge. We are aware that the RTPI provides training to all members who sit in DC and on their planning committees. It would be a good idea to consider that there should be some awareness around GI for members, when considering planning applications. Again, that is further grist on the public side, as well as on the officer side, to add support to that.

The Chairman: That is a very useful point.

Q130 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: That leads into the next question, which relates to how the positive impact of green infrastructure can be better understood by professions generally in the sector. You have put some ideas on the table. I wonder if, very briefly, you can put some others, possibly almost as a quick wish list, so that the changes needed at national policy level can come through. I say “quickly”, because we are in our last minutes of the session.

Noel Farrer: First, I would acknowledge the problem. It is true that it is not just developers who are perhaps a little ignorant about these things. That can include the consultant teams within development as well, because we want the GI or the landscape consideration to happen. It is a fundamental component of the project; we want that to happen at its earliest possible stage. I absolutely recognise that. We have identified RIBA and other organisations such as that as places where we are trying to raise awareness all of the time. I do not have a specific answer to that problem. Iain, do you?

Iain Taylor: Only that, for example, if LEPs were tasked with fully articulating the role of the natural environment or green infrastructure within their economic growth plans, it would create the space for the conversation whereby the professional community would step
forward and deliver that. One wonderful thing about the GI community, as we see from recent experiences, is it is incredibly efficient at delivering cost-effective positive outcomes for places. We are not talking about suspension bridges and motorway junctions; we are talking about relatively modest investments that yield massive impacts on local places. If we brought in GI, it would blossom.

Some parts of the country have their own GI strategies. Manchester, for example, has done its own GI strategy. Certain parts of the east of England have very clear articulations of the value of the natural environment within their local economic partnerships. It is a mixed bag across the country and they all look for guidance. All the LEPs and local areas look to government for guidance, and we need to have that confidence to provide that leadership that this is an important part of economic growth and an important part of sustainable development. Then there would be a response. I am sure of it.

The Chairman: That was a lovely positive note on which to end, but it is not quite ending yet. Lady Finlay, is there something else you wanted to ask?

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: No, it is just that I have had a request to go and deal with a problem urgently, so you will have to excuse me for leaving. I am sorry.

Q131 Baroness Parminter: It is difficult because it is about money, so it is not often quick. Can you summarise briefly what financial models are out there at the moment to encourage investment in GI? What suggestions do you have for other financial instruments?

Iain Taylor: On the existing framework, we have a range of endowments, commuted sums, service charges, estate charges and interim charges. We have a full menu of mechanisms with which to align the costs and the value. The Land Trust was created under a programme of endowments from HCA to take on legacy sites, so we have an experience of managing funds invested that can be re-invested year on year, for management capital replacement. We have aspects within the planning system that allow for commuted sums to be paid for the transfer of grey, blue and green infrastructure, so that is a well-trodden path. We know that.

The emerging growth is in relation to the service charge/estates charge component, so increasingly developers are looking to pass on those long-term obligations for open space management to the residents, so that they can participate in that. I see that as a very positive
space. Typically you get a mix of endowments or commuted sums with service charges coming forward in the appraisal, which means that the scheme can work.

One interesting thing about the natural environment and GI accelerating development is that in order for it to accelerate development, it has to come first. The GI has to come up front and then there is usually a lag between when you have invested in the GI and when your lovely development happens. The European Investment Bank has this thing called the Natural Capital Financing Facility, whereby it provides cheap money to deliver GI and allow the developments to come forward over time, and in the normal way—commuted sums, section 106, sale or whatever—repay for those investments in green infrastructure.

One thing that really floats my boat is if we could nationally come up with a kind of forward-funding GI approach, which says that we buy into that approach that GI creates good development and it brings it forward. If you bring development forward, you are accelerating economic growth, which is the whole point of this approach to begin with. If, in accelerating economic growth, you have helped children in the local area achieve better grades, fewer GP return visits, et cetera, you are making a much fuller contribution for what is effectively a very low-cost solution. You get the money back.

**The Chairman:** That is amazing. We have a real time pressure now. I am sorry, do you think you could actually write to us on the point you were going to say? Okay, two minutes then.

**Noel Farrer:** The last point I was going to make is that the HCA is grappling with this at Ebbsfleet. Ebbsfleet has really ground to a halt, because the landowners who are there are struggling to get viability in relation to a business plan to move it forward. The Government here are putting £200 million into that scheme on GI. It will be spent on putting infrastructure together. In a way, therefore, there is an absolute recognition already that the way to pump prime development and get things going is to invest in GI. The key component is creating this longer-term vehicle to be able to get that value back for the developer. GI is fundamentally a vehicle to be able to accelerate and make change happen, and therefore deliver the quality that we need.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed. I am sorry for cutting you short, but I know that I have a few more bits of business and I will not have a quorum if we do not stop now. Thank
you both. We have been at it since before 10 o’clock this morning, but it is has been terrific, and thank you so much for engaging so enthusiastically.

29 October 2015
### Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. **Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?**

   **Response:**
   We believe that central Government should ensure that key policies are in place to recognise the importance of well-maintained green infrastructure within the built environment, with these guidelines being disseminated at a local level, for decisions to be made locally, through the planning process.

2. **How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

   **Response:**
   It is not well coordinated. Many of the issues are dealt with in silos. There needs to be more connection made across teams. Planning should be a cross-sector resource.

### National policy for planning and the built environment

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

   **Response:**
   We feel that the NPPF does not provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved. Having archived the guidance to Green Infrastructure at the beginning of 2015, which we responded to (see here), we feel that this will have a detrimental impact on communities within the built environment going forward. We believe that green infrastructure plays a vital role within the built environment, on the health and wellbeing of communities, providing climate resilience to combat extreme weather as well as supporting economic regeneration and growth. There is a significant amount of research to support these views and investment in GI at a developmental level can reduce wider costs to society, such as access to well-maintained open space contributing to a reduction in NHS spending on mental and physical health.

   By archiving the guidelines, this will make it harder for the sector to understand what is involved, the importance of GI and how to embed it into the built environment. It therefore portrays GI as a lower priority, when it should be high up on the agenda of any development or built environment project. It is not simply about creating green spaces at the expense of...
valuable development but creating vibrant, cohesive communities (commercial, industrial or residential).

In this context, we appreciate that the Government’s Localism agenda seeks to place more emphasis on local decision making. Whilst we support this move in principle, we do however have concerns about whether local planning authorities, in all circumstances, are sufficiently resourced to consider such issues sufficiently in the absence of wider policy guidance in view of ongoing pressures on public spending. We run the risk of a postcode lottery around acceptable quality and access to green space around our existing and developing communities with potential pressure on existing green spaces.

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td>4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?</td>
<td>Response: Yes it is. Please refer to our answer to Question 3.</td>
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<td>5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?</td>
<td>Response: The Land Trust’s primary role is to secure sustainable long term investments in order to manage public open spaces for and on behalf of local communities and the environment. Our model ensures that the investments are in place to safeguard these public open spaces and the multi-functional benefits that they can deliver in perpetuity. Therefore, we believe that taking a long term view is a pre-requisite of sustainable development. Our own timescales for managing green spaces for example are around the 100 years minimum mark and we believe that in order to have positive impacts, planning timescales need to look this far ahead. It is vital to consider the longer term view for planning our future built environment, by using the evidence and forecasts that are already available on a changing climate, increased populations and energy needs in order to successfully build resilient environments. If the incorporation and the long-term sustainability of green space is factored in at the beginning of the planning process for a development, then an appropriate amount of green space can be allocated with the appropriate funding identified to maintain it. Early planning can prevent green space becoming an afterthought or poorly maintained and neglected in years to come. There have been countless examples where a cycle of investment of public open space has been inadequately maintained, leading to a cycle of dereliction to blight and further investment required at a later stage, making it more costly in the long term. The Land Trust was created to be the body that secures the long term sustainability of green public open space. We</td>
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have proven that our approach works and works best when we are involved at an early stage in the planning and development of both the green space and the funding streams.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

**Response:**
Central Government should be taking a lead role in guiding and coordinating sustainable development and embedding green infrastructure into the built environment. Government should also ensure that the different policies relating to land are coordinated — for example — the brownfield first policy needs to tie in with the planning policy, to ensure that there is a clear understanding around the most appropriate use of land and that Government needs to recognise that although there are pressures to build houses, it should not necessarily always be on brownfield, as this may have greater value as open space delivering greater benefits to society. Therefore, the planning policy for the built environment needs to ensure that it has measures in place to identify the right type of activity to be used on the right type of land. Our views on this can be found [here](#).

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

**Response:**
A key factor in developing built environments which are sustainable and resilient is to ensure that buildings are developed within a robust and resilient ‘natural’ environment. Green infrastructure provides the resilience, and is more adaptive than built infrastructure, has lower maintenance and management costs and provides key services to tackle climate change, including soakaways for flood prevention, heat absorption to reduce urban heat islands and pollution prevention. Securing the long-term investments of these spaces is vital, so that they can be managed in perpetuity and therefore have sufficient funding to be maintained and adapted over time.

The Land Trust’s model for investing in public spaces is to secure the investment, ensure it is protected, invest this and use the interest as the annual budget to maintain the space. By having the right funds in place, buildings and spaces will be able to change and adapt as and when required.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?
Response:
Historic environments can teach us much about place-making. These historic environments (particularly build) have clearly survived. We need to understand why. Buildings made with materials, such as sandstone have lasted over 100 years, whereas modern constructions last 30-40 years. Therefore, we need to take a longer term view, using historic examples to learn from, and identify what is best environmentally.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Response:
The professions in this area do have the right skills, but the Land Trust feels that there is still a need for more skills in the area of long term sustainable management of the built environment. Many professionals operate in silos. More cross-professional training and experience is needed. However, as we say above (response to Q3), we believe that there are currently significant issues with regards to whether local authorities have enough capacity / skills to fully interpret the NPPF in the local context and therefore cannot be as fully involved in planning, shaping and managing the built environment as much as we believe is required. This means that uninformed decisions may be made, which can be detrimental to local communities and society as a whole.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Response:
The Land Trust does not believe that nationally the right tools and techniques are being used and coordinated. Since the guidance on Green Infrastructure has been archived and not yet replaced or reinstated, this has left a major gap in the planning process for ensuring the natural environment is embedded into place-making.

Central Government needs to take a leading role in ensuring that green infrastructure is taken seriously and that this is then disseminated at a local level. Equally, on a national level, leadership should incorporate working with the private sector in understanding how to overcome the barriers that developers and other place-makers see in incorporating green infrastructure into the built environment. An important factor in this is to identify how these spaces will be funded long term to ensure they are maintained in perpetuity. The Land Trust’s model of securing investments in green infrastructure is well established and we would be pleased to provide guidance and examples of where this has been successful.

There is enormous pressure in certain parts of the country to build new houses, to reduce housing pressure. However, we believe that we should be building sustainable communities and
Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Response:
We don’t believe that on the whole, those involved in delivering and managing our built environment do take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it.

We work with a number of decision-makers and developers who do recognise the importance of Green Infrastructure, but they are in the minority. In these cases, they are working with the Land Trust to incorporate green spaces into their developments and add value to their developments. These businesses / organisations recognise that there is an economic case for embedding green infrastructure into developments and are aware of GI’s vital role in creating places where people want to live and work as well as providing valuable ecosystem services. These are the forward thinking developers and decision-makers who want to create sustainable developments and are the ones who recognise the economic benefits of green infrastructure within the built environment in comparison to the economic value of adding additional units.

We can provide examples of these sites, where green infrastructure has been successfully incorporated, and where this is now adding value to communities, improving health and wellbeing and creating social cohesion.

We would welcome the opportunity to give you a tour of our sites which demonstrate this.

One way that Government could add value to encourage consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users is to include planning conditions whereby developments within the built environment must show how their development will help towards this. For example, by providing good quality green spaces within and adjacent to new developments, these areas are providing communities with access to open space, for recreation and relaxation, supporting physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as providing for climate change adaptation.

Furthermore, there could be an increased minimum requirement of how much green infrastructure needs to be embedded into new built environment developments, with guidance on what type of green infrastructure is most appropriate and where, in order to benefit communities and wildlife.

Again, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss our model with you. As a national land management charity, our remit is to manage public open spaces within the built environment.
12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Response:
In relation to the first part of this question, from our own experience of working closely with communities, we know that they value giving their own views on places that directly affect them. When they are consulted and involved in the process, with their views are taken on board and incorporated into designs, we know that they will then care about the space and take emotional ownership of it. This has a positive impact in the community, can reduce anti-social behaviour and contribute to improved community cohesion, leading to many other positive outcomes.

We feel that there are barriers to effective public engagement, often due to a lack of skills and resources and lack of local leadership. With our own model, where we have been involved in built environment projects, we have engaged successfully with local communities, playing the intermediary role between the developer and community. As a charity with a strong reputation, we are trusted by the community and the developer, which leads to positive results for all stakeholders involved.

We would be pleased to discuss this further and provide examples of successful community engagement in relation to built environment developments.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Response:
We operate in the sphere of long term investment in green public open spaces. Our financial model, which includes a variety of streams such as endowments, service charges and licenses, provide the initial investment to secure the management of these spaces in perpetuity. We believe that investments need to be long term, in order to achieve successful place-making and our model is a proven mechanism for this. We would be pleased to discuss this with you further and show you different examples of how we have secured the investments.
Transcript to be found under Landscape Institute
Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association – Written Evidence (BEN0021)

Written responses from the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association to questions of the House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment.

About the Association: The Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association was founded in 1986 with the aim of providing affordable rented housing on a non-profit making basis. Working mainly in Lincolnshire’s smaller rural communities, it now has just over 400 properties housing around 1200 people. Most of the properties are in Lincolnshire. A small number are located in West Norfolk and Rutland. In terms of national key performance indicators, the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association is among the top performing housing associations. The Association has incorporated environmentally friendly energy-generating facilities into a significant proportion of its properties. Responses submitted on behalf of the Association by:

Professor David Head
Chairman, Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association

Select Committee’s Questions and Answers from the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association

Policymaking, integration and coordination
1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Major conurbations are currently the conspicuous focus of plans aimed at shaping the built environment. It is probably an exaggeration to claim that there is any strategic discussion of the built environment in rural areas either at national or local level. Small wonder, therefore, that we frequently hear of the “Northern Powerhouse”, but not the “Lincolnshire Powerhouse”, even though a largely rural area such as this possesses massive potential for national food and energy security. Consequently, the nature and role of the built environment in such an area, i.e. as a factor in helping realize the area’s strategic potential, is never seriously discussed.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

The Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association would welcome greater evidence of active interest in housing policy by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. Even
though there is considerable concern among rural housing associations regarding the proposed extension of Right to Buy, combined with the introduction of Pay to Stay, which are perceived as a threat to the ability of low-income families to remain in rural communities, there is no evidence on the DEFRA website that it has any interest in ensuring that the forthcoming Housing Bill is rural-proofed. Essentially, housing policy is urban-centric in its basic principles and in its aspirations. DEFRA should be in a position to do something about this, but doesn’t appear to be showing any interest at all. Housing is such a major national issue that there is a strong case for a housing forum, chaired by the Department of Communities and Local Government, at which all relevant government departments are represented.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF devotes about half a page to the rural dimension of planning policy, and it has to be said that this is superficial and perfunctory, suggesting that no serious thought has gone into it. Furthermore, the NPPF’s vision of rural communities is rather limited and dated. We accept that agriculture and tourism are key characteristics of the rural economy, but – as Lincolnshire has demonstrated – it is also important to take into account industries that have an obvious raison d’être in rural areas such as Lincolnshire, e.g. food manufacturing, processing and distribution (the latter always a challenge on the distribution-unfriendly roads of Lincolnshire), and also green energy production through wind farms, solar farms and power stations using biomass. The NPPF also fails to recognize the role of affordable housing in sustaining rural communities and the rural economy, i.e. in a context generally characterized by lower-than-average pay and above-average property prices.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Yes. Introducing a spatial element to national policy would not only involve a more co-ordinated approach, taking into account economic growth (real and/or planned and/or potential), natural resources and infrastructure, but also seek to (i) anticipate the character and location of key features of any region or sub-region and (ii) design the most efficient means of achieving strategic objectives.
5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

There is clearly an urgent need to address future built environment needs in so far as these serve to address the housing crisis. Conventional planning timelines such as five-year and ten-year plans are meaningless in this context. Furthermore, UK governments have been traditionally poor at looking too far ahead owing to the political cycle. We know what is causing the housing crisis: a dearth of activity in building new homes, particularly affordable ones (including rented ones). There is therefore a case for national and local government to get cracking and address the issues with practical, ideology-free solutions and in partnership with those who understand how to develop and, where appropriate, administer housing, e.g. from housing associations and local councils to high-calibre private property developers.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The government would stand a greater chance of effectively addressing current issues of housing supply if it were less ideological and more pragmatic, engaging all main players in the housing sector, from private developers and private landlords to housing associations and local councils, in order to produce practical solutions. Current policy is excessively oriented to an ideological pledge to extend Right to Buy to housing associations while selling off council-owned properties. It is not linked to any convincing plan to increase the supply of affordable homes, which is the aspect of the housing crisis that should be exercising government most. As things stand, the government stands little chance of significantly increasing the housing supply with the measures it has in mind. The Government should also pay more attention to the skills deficit in the housebuilding industry, which will be a significant impediment to building sufficient new homes. The recent reforms proposed for the planning system are unlikely to have a major impact on rural areas, which are the main concern for the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association, because their focus is predominantly urban. However, the Association would welcome the rural-proofing of all policies that impinge on rural housing. An identikit, one-size-fits-all approach to housing policy that is oriented largely to urban circumstances and criteria ill serves the challenge of tackling the shortage of affordable homes in rural communities.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come?
How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

In certain cases, particularly in rural areas, sustainability and resilience in the built environment should derive more from making the most of what that environment has to offer in order to facilitate energy self-sufficiency and provide building materials.

The rural built environment cannot continue to thrive without people committed and able to service its needs. The continued transformation of communities within rural communities from ‘residential doers’ to a commuting dormitory type local population will only erode these communities rather than preserve them. To guard against this, the provision of real affordable housing for lower paid local people is critical.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Some of the historic environment is eminently habitable even as affordable rented homes, as the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association has shown by recently restoring some listed properties. Of course, this may extend the conventionally used definition of “historic environment”, but this is probably long overdue. What constitutes the “historic environment” should not be restricted to a chocolate-box vision of the UK.

Many ministry of defence sites with historical significance have lain unused for decades (in some cases containing empty living quarters), some being heated unnecessarily, some slowly deteriorating. More innovative thinking and less red tape could have made them useful many years ago.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

The key professions cannot by themselves consider the built environment in a holistic manner when government devolution policy is so haphazard and opportunistic (e.g. the “Northern Powerhouse”). However, they possess the appropriate skills, notwithstanding some architectural disasters in the urban environment. The really troubling area of skills shortage is in the housebuilding industry, where there is a recruitment crisis when it comes to bricklayers, carpenters/joiners and site managers and supervisors. In the case of local authorities, however, it would make sense for in-house expertise in housing development – particularly affordable housing – to be augmented by the expertise that resides in housing associations. In other words, there is considerable potential for an effective contribution to
this aspect of the built environment if local authorities and housing associations collaborated in a more systematic way and more frequently.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

In the context of the acute house-building crisis, we find this question something of a side issue. However, we contend that building value-for-money homes and housing developments does not have to be achieved at the expense of good design. National leadership in this is unlikely to be a realistic option, particularly if this involves government. However, it may be possible to address the issue of “place-making” effectively and imaginatively at local level in those cases where there is strong community interest generating appropriate political pressure.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Housing associations do not get enough credit for their contribution to developing and managing the built environment, which is often progressive in design and in the extent to which it is “green”. Furthermore, they deliver a significant social return on investment (SROI). The Government is choosing to turn a blind eye to this and even appears to be dismissive of the extent to which housing associations have attached priority to SROI. Its stance therefore does not augur well for the prospects of improving the impact of the built environment on the well-being of those who live within and use it, not to mention their behaviours.

The experience of the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association is that it pays to be ambitious and progressive when it comes to the design of affordable rented homes and the immediate environment, as the enhanced quality of life leads to high tenant satisfaction and strong tenant commitment to the Association. For instance, adequate garden space is important for families with young children, and environmentally friendly houses are likely to appeal to tenants who would also appreciate having an allotment nearby. Well-maintained public areas on developments are a priority for our tenants, too, as is the Association's zero-tolerance policy on anti-social behaviour. Reducing energy bills by improving insulation and installing energy-efficient heating equipment as well as solar panels also makes sense both in terms of tenant satisfaction and in terms of income generation for the Association (from solar power). However, energy-generating schemes linked to housing developments could be jeopardized by the extension of Right to Buy. For instance, the Association has one
recent development on which the energy is generated by a biomass system. If some of the (very attractive properties) are sold under Right to Buy and the former tenants opt out of the scheme, it will no longer be viable for the remaining tenants.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Communities have demonstrated the ability to engage effectively and productively in the process of decision-making with regard to their built environment in the case of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in rural areas, which are an ideal method of securing land for developing housing required by the community in question. However, much more could be done to facilitate their growth and effectiveness. As things stand, a huge amount of time and energy is required of members of the community who are active in CLTs, and this has to be a factor in slowing down the achievement of their objectives, which more often than not involve generating housing to protect the given community’s viability.

Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association has played a large part in forming and hosting a Countywide ‘umbrella organisation’ – Lincolnshire Community Land Trust (LCLT) – which has helped form local Community Land Trusts (CLT’s) or ‘Village Companies’. Two communities have achieved the development of 24 new homes in the last year on land now owned by the community. Unfortunately, LCLT is now in danger of folding due to a lack of revenue resource. A minimal injection of public funding would reap significant return in community engagement.

In the case of the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association, the community makes a significant contribution to the process of decision-making through the Association’s tenants. They are invited to participate in regular forums linked to specific quadrants of the large geographical area covered by the Association. Issues raised by tenants at the quadrant forums are forwarded to the Board of Management for consideration. There is a tenant representative on the Association’s Board of Management.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?
The Association fears that the extension of Right to Buy to housing associations will seriously undermine the work of organizations like the Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association, which concentrates on homes for communities with populations under 5,000, by reducing the willingness to make land available at below-market prices to ensure sustainability of rural communities. This is because those landowners and local councils who have made land available on such terms on the understanding that it would be used for affordable rented homes in perpetuity would feel deceived. The Association would therefore welcome legislation exempting rural housing associations from the extension of Right to Buy. The Association also doubts the merits of extending the Starter Homes scheme to rural areas, because we fear it will push up land values while not providing homes that are affordable to low-income rural inhabitants. Of course, the Government’s decision to break its agreed rent-setting formula with housing associations and introduce a four-year rent reduction can hardly be said to contribute in any way to the current issues surrounding housing and land supply. However, it does suggest to us that devolving rent-setting to individual housing associations could well prove effective in generating housebuilding.

27 September 2015
Policymaking, integration and coordination

1) Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1. The role of national policy-makers should be to set the direction of travel or the vision for our built environment. Living Streets wants to see consistent national leadership towards resilient, smart, healthy built environments which support more walking and cycling, and journeys by public transport.

2. Unfortunately, too often what we see are reactive decisions being made at a national level which shape the built environment in the wrong ways. For example, in July 2014 the Government consulted on the removal of maximum parking standards to ensure that local authorities were more ‘flexible’ and responsive to the needs of motorists\(^{217}\). We objected on the grounds that this is a decision that should rest with local authorities. Maximum parking standards are used alongside planning and transport policies to put the right development in the right place. For example, to encourage offices (which generate a lot of traffic) to locate where they can be accessed by public transport in town centres or close to major public transport interchanges. Where there is good infrastructure for walking and cycling, and good public transport provision, limiting the number of off-street spaces enables higher density residential development. This provides more space for housing and saves the cost of providing additional parking spaces, supporting the sustainability objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It also improves public health, reducing the emission of CO2 and harmful particulate matter, transforming the quality of streets and public spaces.

2) How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

\(^{217}\) DCLG (2014). Technical consultation on planning
3. Policy coordination needs to be improved. For example, one could also ask why is health not included in this list? With the transfer of responsibility for public health to local authorities, local government has a key role to play in coordinating policy across housing, design, transport, related infrastructure (e.g. health services, schools, shops and so on). This could be through the building of ‘lifetime homes’ and the creation of walkable neighbourhoods, and the location of shops and services within walking distance.

4. Coordination at the local level needs to be matched by policy coordination across the relevant Government departments. NHS England and Public Health England have recently launched a new initiative to “design and develop new town partnerships that put innovative health and social care practice at the very heart of urban planning”. There is an opportunity right now for this to be linked to the new Walking and Cycling Investment Strategy. However, we are unaware of any discussions taking place between the Department for Transport, Treasury and the Department for Health. More broadly, the Government needs to do more to address conflicting policy requirements, for example the Town and Country Planning Associations’ Planning for Healthy Weight Environments project identified potential conflict between the ‘Secured by Design’ principles (e.g. reducing permeability through residential cul de sacs) and maximising movement and active travel by all sectors of the community.

3) Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

5. The National Planning Policy Framework provides some exemplary policy guidance. Unfortunately, there are other factors within the NPPF and its supporting guidance which undermine delivery of sustainability. For example, the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ means that where development plans are absent, silent or out of date development should be approved without delay unless the impacts ‘significantly’ outweigh the benefits (paragraph 14). This means that planning authorities are at the mercy of every speculative housing application that comes their way, irrespective of the design quality or the cumulative impact on the provision of infrastructure, such as schools and health services.

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218 http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/
219 http://www.england.nhs.uk/2015/07/01/healthy-new-towns/
220 Recommendations for planning healthy-weight environments – a TCPA reuniting health with planning project (December, 2014).
221 http://interactive.securedbydesign.com/residential/
6. The core principles of the NPPF recommend that planning should “actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable” (paragraph 17). Nevertheless, the supplementary guidance on Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres makes a special case for drivers requiring local authorities to:

“...improve the quality of parking in town centres... and, where it is necessary to ensure the vitality of town centres, the quantity too. Local planning authorities should set appropriate parking charges that do not undermine the vitality of town centres and parking enforcement should be proportionate, avoiding unfairly penalising drivers.”

7. Reactive government policies also undermine the ability of the planning process to deliver quality in the built environment. For example, proposals (in 2013) to extend the relaxation of the siting of broadband boxes from 2 to 5 years took no account of the obstruction they might cause. This ignored the potential impact that obstruction of the public highway can have on the quality of life of users of the public highway including: people with prams, those with mobility issues such as older people, wheelchair users and those with visual impairment.

4) Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

8. Yes. A recent report by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Building in the green belt highlighted the importance of introducing a spatial element to national planning policy. The report examined the likely impact on travel behaviour of proposals to build on green belt land within easy walking or cycling distance of railway stations. The assumption is often made that the majority of new residents will commute by rail to jobs in central London.

9. The RTPI analysed travel-to-work data for five medium-sized towns within the existing Metropolitan green belt, towns which are centred around railway stations and have direct connections to central London. They found that in these five towns, only 7.4% of commuters actually travel to London by train on a regular basis, despite living within easy walking or cycling distance of a station. 72% of commuters travelled to work by private vehicle, mostly driving to jobs within their hometown and to other places not in London.

223 http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1432483/Building_in_the_green_belt.pdf
10. Their conclusion was that instead of encouraging more rail travel into central London, a more likely outcome of releasing green belt land near stations for housing would be: “...an increase in private vehicle commuting within and between places in the Metropolitan green belt as individual settlements were permitted to expand, with negative impacts on congestion, pollution and wellbeing.”

11. Therefore: “Discussions on growth within the Metropolitan green belt need to move beyond the single criterion of rail accessibility and consider the need for polycentric public transport networks, critical size thresholds for local employment, the use of car-free developments, and policies which support sustainable modal shift.” (RTPI, Building in the green belt, 16)

12. Spatial planning allows for a comprehensive assessment of policy objectives and infrastructure requirements as they relate out the built environment.

5) Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

13. Local plans cover circa a 20 year timescale and should be reviewed at least every 5 years (Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 8). However, as noted by the Urban Task Force (ODPM, 1999) 90% of the urban buildings and infrastructure which will exist in 30 years have already been built224. Even if the rate of change in the built environment has increased in the intervening period, this suggests that we will be living with design mistakes for decades to come. Therefore, the planning for the future should take a longer view of perhaps 40 to 50 years. This would also create meaningful dialogue around tackling the impacts of climate change and mitigation, for example, through the use of green infrastructure and promoting a significant increase in active travel.

Buildings and places: New and old
6) What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

14. Recent reforms will lead to more speculative housing applications and less say for communities. Permitted development will encourage more piecemeal and infill developments the cumulative impact of which on transport and wider infrastructure

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is not taken into account in transport assessments prepared by the developer. The housing threshold for more detailed analysis of the capacity of junctions or highways links to cope with increased journeys by private transport is set by local authorities and can exceed 80 dwellings.

7) How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

15. Places will be more sustainable and resilient where the need to travel by motorised transport is reduced. Pedestrian and cycle infrastructure (complementing public transport) enabling access to key services needs to be designed in from the start to encourage and sustain mode shift at every stage of the life course. For this reason Living Streets support the principle of developing new towns and garden cities because these ensure that appropriate infrastructure (travel, health, education, leisure, green spaces etc) is integral to ‘place-making’ and not an afterthought.

8) To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

16. Historic environments are national assets precisely because they give areas their individuality and sense of place, and for areas which predate the car, are built as architect Jan Gehl puts it ‘at a ‘human scale’. Knowledge of a place’s history helps a community understand how it has changed – sometimes dramatically – over time.

17. Instead of just asking how can more be made of these national assets, should we not also ask what are adding to the built environment today that we will be an asset tomorrow? Too many new residential areas, in particular, lack any local distinctiveness in design or materials. Often placed on the edge of towns and shaping car dependent lifestyles, is this the legacy we want to leave for generations to come?

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225 For example, Cambridgeshire County Council guidance on Transport Assessment does not require / expect there to be a need for capacity analysis of junctions or highways links for developments of between 50 – 80 dwellings, when considering residential proposals (pers comm.).

Skills and design

9) Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

18. Living Streets would like to offer the observation that cuts to local authority budgets mean their resources are decreasing. Planners are leaving the profession, expertise and capacity is being lost and/or outsourced, so it is increasingly difficult for them to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas. This underlines the increasing importance for Cabinet leads to work together across policy agendas to ensure joined up delivery of better places.

Community involvement and community impact

11) Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

19. No. For example, planning decisions in non-estate locations tend to focus on individual buildings and their immediate vicinity. However, the layout of a street can help to trap air pollution (the canyon effect) and should be considered in the planning decision. Similarly, design considerations such as filter permeability not only allow air pollution to disperse, but also creates a healthier pedestrian environment (also a low emission facility) and encourages more people to walk.

20. The environment that people walk in should be attractive and enjoyable. It is important to remember that streets are not only places people walk through, but also destinations in their own right. This was amply demonstrated by ‘Reinvigorate York’ a programme of public realm improvements and a marketing campaign (2012-14) which recognised that the majority of the city’s visitors just want to “stroll around and enjoy the ambience of York”. Public realm interventions should consider ways to make streets places people will want walk to, for example, by creating new public spaces or enabling events to take place through temporary road closures. Active, vibrant streets add to the quality of the walking experience. As stated in the Manual for Streets (2007):
“A 20-minute walk alongside a busy highway can seem endless, yet in a rich and stimulating street, such as in a town centre, it can pass without noticing.”

21. As well as encouraging active travel, attractive streets and public spaces deliver increased economic activity through increases in footfall and rateable values of high streets. Places matter, so public realm improvements should be sympathetic to local heritage and architectural features, for example, through choice of materials and street furniture. The best way to find out what matters to local people is to conduct a community street audit to find out what they like about their local area and how they would like to improve it.

22. Living Streets has been running Community Street Audits (CSA) for over 10 years in partnership with local authorities. CSAs are an important tool because they give communities a voice, recognising that residents are the experts on where they live. Their impact ranges from low cost improvements to the streetscape, such as introducing drop kerbs, to the delivery major public realm improvements, such as narrowing the carriageway, widening the pavement and the de-cluttering of Walworth Road in London and incorporating walking into regeneration of places (see, for example Southwark’s list of completed regeneration projects).

23. Walking is a physical and social activity, and is important for mental health and wellbeing. The built environment can influence incidental interactions on streets and in neighbourhoods helping to build communities. It can also make space for contemplation. Public realm design should include places where people will want to stop, chat and rest, and quiet spaces and walks with access to the natural environment, for instance, in local parks.

12) How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

24. Not very effectively. In principle the Neighbourhood Planning process derived from the Localism Act (2011) offers the means to influence the shape of the built environment for the people who live and work there. In practice:
- Communities may not have the skills or the willing volunteers to develop the plan;
- the scope of a neighbourhood plans may not allow it to address communities’

227 Manual for Streets, ibid.
230 http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals/better-street-design-and-management/rethink-the-traffic and
231 http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200191/completed_projects/1196/the_cut
actual concerns (for example, to limit housing growth, reduce traffic and safeguard community facilities).

25. The pressure to build more homes is undermining the quality of the built environment. For example, where a local plan has not been adopted because housing requirements have been challenged (as is the case in Cambridgeshire) the presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’ means that planning authorities and local communities have little or no power to turn down speculative housing applications.

26. Conditions attached to a development are also subject to change – so a housing development may be accepted on one set of conditions only for these to be watered down or abandoned later on. A good example of this is the development of Barking Riverside. The first homes were built in Barking Reach the 1990s with the promise to residents of trams and then a connection to Docklands Light Rail. Thirteen years later and with over 4000 inhabitants “there’s nowhere to sit and have coffee, no pub, no police station, no youth club, no football pitch – unless you hire it from the school – and the doctor’s surgery will only open when there are 10,000 people living there”\(^\text{232}\). The opening of a Morrisons local earlier this year was cause for celebration “before the shop opened in February, to get a pint of milk on a morning could take an hour in the car because of the traffic”. Residents depend on their cars – a trip to Barking town centre involves two bus rides and to the tube station it is a 40 minute brisk walk. Again, the community has no say.

Locality — Written Evidence (BEN0153)

About Locality

Locality is the national network of ambitious and enterprising community-led organisations, working together to help neighbourhoods thrive. We help people to set up locally owned and led organisations. We support existing organisations to work effectively through peer to peer exchange of knowledge and best practice on community asset ownership, community enterprise, collaboration, commissioning support, social action, community voice, community rights and regeneration.

Locality has been working with communities to develop neighbourhood plans since the powers were introduced in the Localism Act, 2011. Neighbourhood planning is a way to enable people to shape their communities, influence growth in an area, and allows local residents to set their own planning policies that reflect local priorities and deliver local benefits. We have directly supported over 1000 communities to develop neighbourhood plans.

Summary

- Communities benefit from decisions about the built environment being made at a neighbourhood level. Whilst national and regional strategy is required for coordination of policies, any decisions made at these levels require meaningful engagement with the public and affected communities. Devolution provides an important opportunity for a resurgence of neighbourhood level governance on the built environment.

- Improved coordination of government policies between departments is required, including the sharing of data and evidence to shape cross-departmental policies. In addition to housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage, there is also a need to consider how the built environment impacts other areas of government policy including health outcomes and crime prevention.

- This submission makes a number of recommendations for how government can increase housing supply, including through diversifying the housing market by supporting the development of community-led housing projects. Recommendations are also made on developing the supply of affordable homes built by larger providers and integrating neighbourhood and community engagement into development.

- Recommendations are also offered on how local authorities and developments can ensure that community engagement is meaningful and impactful, including through using diverse methods of engagement such as online tools and social media.

Policymaking, integration and coordination
1) Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of Local Authorities and their partners.

1.1 The planning system in England is currently too centralised, with too many decisions taken at the national level where they would be more appropriately devolved to cities and regions. The devolution agenda is also an important opportunity to provide a renaissance in neighbourhood level governance and powers in planning. This should allow local people a greater voice in determining local priorities and a more active role in shaping the direction for the local area.

1.2 Neighbourhood forums, established in the Localism Act, offer a key opportunity to extend the role which communities have in shaping the built environment, as well as taking forward other changes such as the devolution of services which would improve wider well-being in their neighbourhood.

1.3 Over the last four years, Locality’s neighbourhood planning work has demonstrated the impact of giving local people the power to shape the built environment. Communities which had previously been ‘anti-development’, have responded very well to being given the power to make decisions for their neighbourhood on the location, type and design of development. In some cases these communities have even supported the building of more housing than allocated in the local plan.

1.4 However, there remains a role for national policy makers to provide the strategic and legal frameworks to ensure decisions at the city and regional level are properly made, as well as a strong supporting role in providing cities and regions with additional guidance and support where necessary. It is essential that national strategic planning offers a truly national perspective and is not ‘London-centric’, as has often been the case to date. When strategic decisions are made at the national level and local authority level there is a need for improved engagement with the public. Currently any engagement on decisions made at higher levels is tokenistic and has led to a growing apathy from communities regarding these decisions.

1.5 Local and national policy need to complement each other, however currently the gap between these two levels is too large. The removal of regional spatial strategies (RSS)\(^{233}\) has left a policy vacuum and there is a need for more direction at an intermediate level. The devolution agenda has the potential to address this gap. The ‘duty to cooperate’ between local authorities has proved ineffective in many cases. Only through the failure of local plans has it been recognised by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) that the duty to cooperate is instead leading to delays in the adoption of local plans, which has led to developer-led planning in areas of high housing demand.

\(^{233}\) The CIL allows local authorities in England to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in the area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development. Where a neighbourhood plan is in place the neighbourhood portion of the levy rises from 15% to 25%.
1.6 Lack of resources in many LPAs means that delivery of centrally set targets is becoming the focus of all activity. Resource constraints can also limit the speed and impact of neighbourhood planning, and restrict the ability of LPAs to provide planning advice to neighbourhood groups.

2) **How well is policy coordinated across those government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

2.1 Policy across government departments is currently poorly coordinated and lacks a coherent strategy. Through our work supporting neighbourhood planning we have often identified conflict between key priorities. For example, in areas with large numbers of heritage assets there is a conflict between preserving these and meeting rural housing needs. Often the community are keen to progress sites, whilst Historic England are opposed in principle.

2.2 There is a need to collate data and evidence from all departments to ensure coordinated policy. Land and buildings are a limited resource and a number of ministerial departments have relevant responsibilities. Improved integration across responsibilities for land ownership, land use planning and policy (rather than development control or building regulations) and statutory control of the use of some building assets (such as those under heritage and environmental protection) could provide benefits for some policy priorities such as housing provision and tax revenue investment.

2.3 In addition to the above policy areas, there is a need to consider how policies related to the built environment also impact on other policy areas including health and crime prevention.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3) **Does the NPPF provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so what should be prioritised and why?**

3.1 The NPPF has been successful in consolidating a lot of previous guidance, which is a welcome development. However the lack of key definitions leaves crucial elements open to interpretation which can present difficulties if the LPA and the community have different interpretations. The NPPF also needs provide greater clarity on what constitutes a strategic policy and how to assess whether a policy is strategic. This is crucial when determining the scope of a neighbourhood plan.

3.2 The NPPF attempts to balance local flexibility with national policy priorities regarding sustainable development. As a result it lacks specificity in some areas and does not emphasise the importance of enforcement of development control to achieving the aims of sustainable development. In addition, the detail of infrastructure provision at local level lacks clarity, particularly those associated with social sustainability, such as play and open
space. Transport provision for developments is also a key gap within the NPPF, particularly in regard to sustainable transport.

3.3 Although there are statutory consultative processes associated with plan making which enable plans to be scrutinised from a sustainability perspective, these processes need to include higher minimum standards for building control and climate change future proofing in local plans. The NPPF should reference these statutory minimum requirements for local plans. Examples of increases in minimum standards that would help deliver sustainability include: floor to ceiling heights; residential occupancy standards; Insulation; local energy generation; Amenity and play space provision; cycle storage.

4) Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 The management of space and development in order to create better places needs to reflect local context and local conditions, and therefore needs to take place at a local and neighbourhood level. However there needs to be a strategic regional dimension which overcomes potential difficulties of local politics disrupting good spatial planning.

5) Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 Different levels of planning require different timescales and it is difficult to set a standard timescale for planning, however, in order to meet current housing needs, planning needs to account for at least the next 30 years. There are a number of factors which could impact planning needs, and therefore a need to plan for various scenarios and factor in flexibility, sustainability and mitigation scenarios into the built environment and management process. It is also important to consider other particular timescales such as those for operation of land use plans and regulatory regimes.

5.2 A generation, (approximately 25 years), is the most appropriate timescale to determine the operation of land use plans. For regulatory regimes, such as building control, five years is more optimal. A much shorter period is needed for changes to business models associated with specific land uses, such as building technology for construction and upkeep and land and building values.

Buildings and places: New and old

6) What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?
6.1 The housing market in England is currently dominated by a small number of large private house builders, reducing competition and responsiveness of the industry. In order to achieve greater housing supply, a varied and diverse building industry is required.

6.2 Diversification of the industry can be encouraged by modifying the practices of large scale providers such as housing associations, local authorities and large scale build to rent operators, so that they better reflect the needs of communities and involve communities more directly. Partnerships between community groups and developers should also be encouraged in order to balance scale with the values and aspirations of individual communities. In addition, government policy needs to encourage the emergence of small scale community led housing projects, self-build and custom build projects and the emergence of small developer firms.

*Better regulation and incentives for large providers to build affordable homes:*

6.3 Changes to tax system should be considered to encourage the development of affordable homes. For example, developers could be offered tax incentives to deliver affordable homes. In rural areas, affordable housing could be delivered through the use of rural exception housing.

6.4 More stringent planning regulations are also required to prevent the large developers from land banking and the selling off of new builds to foreign investors as a profit making mechanism.

6.5 There is a need to focus on evidence based locally defined housing need. For example, a developer might plan to build executive 4/5 bedroom homes, whilst local people need smaller units.

*Developing housing supply through community-led housing:*

6.6 Our work with neighbourhood plan groups has proved the communities want growth, they can see there are insufficient houses for older and younger people and are well aware of the need for it to be sensitively developed. However often the Local Planning Authority and organisations such as Historic England are opposed to these levels of growth. LPAs and statutory consultees should be required to work with local communities who want development to make it acceptable rather than a presumption against development.

There are a number of changes government could implement to facilitate community-led housing:

- More affordable finance for housing development could be provided through the public works loan board as well as grants to support early stage projects through options or
purchase of land and a rolling land fund. Please see Locality report on the potential of community led housing.\textsuperscript{234}

- Increase land supply by making publicly owned assets available at no cost where development is led by locally based non-profits with an asset lock on schemes of less than 50 homes.

- Further powers need to be handed to neighbourhood forums so they have equal power over the 25% of community infrastructure levy (CIL) funding that parish councils receive as a financial incentive to encourage housing delivery.\textsuperscript{235}

\textit{Changes to national policy}

6.9 Current viability assessments need to be made transparent in order to scrutinise assumptions about costs of development. A national benchmarking system could be introduced which reflects the cost of creating good standards of housing in terms of internal and external space on development sites. There is a need to build decent quality housing, rather than purely focusing on a short term quantity, which will ultimately create healthier, sustainable communities.

6.10 Higher density city development should also be encouraged, existing buildings, brownfield and greenbelt development alone will not address housing supply. There is also a need to reuse existing developments to meet changing needs, and to provide greater incentives for this.

7) \textbf{How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the government play in any such undertakings? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?}

7.1 Sustainable environments need to be well planned and well designed. Focus is often placed on economic measures of sustainable development, to the detriment of social and environmental. A balance between all three needs to be achieved.

7.2 Resident participation in management of homes and communal facilities is essential, regardless of tenure. There is a need for participatory decision making and participatory budgeting, which allows communities to make decisions themselves, and which gives a voice to the poorest and most marginalised in society, not just the well-educated and articulate middle classes.

7.3 A higher set of national standards are required for house builders to address factors such as: sustainable drainage systems; energy generation, integrating solar energy on rooftops, capturing and recycling waste heat and wind power; and waste reduction. Although new build environments will often meet this criteria, the legacy of existing buildings and

\textsuperscript{234} Heritage lottery funding has been used successfully in this way and a loan system should be considered which takes into account conservation deficit and viability.

\textsuperscript{235} See our community assets in difficult ownership work: \url{http://locality.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/cado/}
infrastructure, constructed when standards for efficiency were much lower, needs to be addressed.

7.4 Requirements for retrofitting (refurbishment of existing housing stock to higher sustainability levels) to tackle resource efficiency are equally as important as legislation on new builds. Local Authorities should be encouraged to look at imaginative solutions for reusing old buildings or allow community groups to find new uses for old buildings. VAT levied on refurbishment for such buildings should also be reduced, in particular it should also be reduced for made more nuanced so that some building work that directly contributes to sustainable development in housing refurbishment is zero rated regardless of whether new units are created.

7.5 Enabling communities to lead local renewal projects is the most cost-effective way to ensure our neighbourhoods are fit for the future and allowing residents to thrive. Through empowering community groups to come together and work with local authorities and developers multiple benefits can be delivered. Such upgrades to the physical infrastructure not only tackle climate change, but can also deliver reliable and efficient infrastructure networks, improve health and well-being, secure a healthy natural environment, improve long-term housing supply, maximise employment opportunities and make our communities safe and more cohesive.

7.6 A further recommendation is valuation of a property or development should include environmental impact. For example the appraisal process could set out measures which take into account costs and benefits which cannot necessarily be financially measured, such as carbon use. Green book appraisals could also be extended to private sector land and building development propositions as part of the formal requirements of planning application.

7.7 Improved resourced regulation and enforcement by local government of land use planning and building regulations is also essential. In addition, to address the fact that the benefits of growth are uneven between different areas of the country, a proportion of CIL should be pooled nationally in order to share the benefits of growth.

8) To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place making? How can more be made of these national assets.

8.1 There are a number of excellent examples showing how the historic built environment is being used for a variety of purposes in England, including the visitor economy. There are also thriving communities in historic areas; the historic environment contributes to the unique character of a community and helps engender civic pride, understanding of the past and civic identity. The historic environment also contributes to planning, regeneration and place making goals by setting standards for design quality and attracting visitors.

8.2 These historic assets could be further developed by recognising their contribution and sharing experiences and best practice, enabling understanding of the economic benefits.
There should also be a requirement for community assets registers and related rights to be more widely publicised by Local Authorities. Often it is small dedicated groups that are working to save heritage assets, this work should be supported with funding, guidance and powers.\textsuperscript{236}

8.3 Historic England’s approach to conservation can often be very rigid, with an inflexible focus on preservation. Producing design guides in consultation with the community would ensure the growth which local people want is delivered in line with agreed guidance. This would enable necessary safeguards for the historic environment, whilst recognising the voice and wishes of local people.

8.4 In many cases, historic buildings are left to disrepair by their owners—despite being much loved by local people. They become a blight rather than a historic asset. Locality and Jericho Road Solutions campaigned for a number of years to raise awareness of the issue of delinquent owners and precious buildings at risk and the steps that communities can take to rescue buildings.\textsuperscript{237} In order to make optimum use of our historic assets Locality would recommend improving the use of existing enforcement mechanism and developing new powers so that neglected buildings can be taken away from owners. This could be achieved by extending compulsory purchase powers.

\textbf{Skills and design}

9) \textbf{Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. Planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could be begin to address any skills issues? Do Local Authorities have the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?}

9.1 There needs to be wider communication and consistency across the various disciplines involved in the built environment professions. Architects need to hold a wider understanding of the key themes and principles of the planning system and vice versa. Whilst no profession should have a monopoly on the built environment, the work necessary to ensure places are designed in a holistic manner should belong to a reinvigorated planning profession with strong urban design skills.

9.2 There is still a lack of understanding around what urban design is and why it is so important to physical and mental health, economy and community cohesion. As a result, much development in England still ignores basic design principles. Further research is needed into the impact our built environment has. Local authorities should have the legal and financial support to resist bad urban design, however cuts and lack of capacity have meant this is not always the case.

9.3 The professional chartered institutions need to address skill gaps by changing the length and content of training courses, including more field work, more independent reviews by organisations external to the statutory planning system. This would supplement LPAs in-house skills.

\textsuperscript{236} For successful examples of such guidance, see similar models in Melbourne and Copenhagen.

\textsuperscript{237} Building for Life 12 is a government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods
10) Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Key recommendations for promoting high quality design and place making at the national level:

- New guidance which promotes high quality design and place making should be developed, by referring to specific national design guidance on how to do it.\(^{(238)}\) This guidance must be regularly updated, widely consulted on and publicly debated. It should provide a consistent message about the value of urban design, provide clarity about rules and process, and be accessible to the community.

- Legislation is required to ensure that developers are unable to play off local authorities against each other, enabling them to refuse poor design without damaging investment opportunities.

- Existing design codes and industry standards, such as Building for Life \(^{(239)}\), should be better supported by government. Growth is more likely to be accepted when policies are in place to secure better quality design and development.

- Large regeneration schemes could be required to work with Design Council CABE when developing schemes. Award schemes should be developed to celebrate best practice in community engagement.

Community involvement and community impact

11) Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision makers and developers take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 Concerns about pollution and the health of communities originally lay at the heart of the UK planning system, however this focus has been increasingly lost. Decision makers and developers need to account for how the built environment impacts people’s lives. For example, obesity, sedentary lifestyles and isolation are growing issues, and these can be affected by the built environment through the way it encourages walking and cycling and interaction between people in the street.

11.2 Evidence should be collated on how design, housing size, and other factors impact on health and community cohesion. Findings should be incorporated into future policy and guidance.

11.3 Health and other community outcomes are often only measureable over long timeframes. For example a scheme with easy, safe and direct walking access to local


\(^{(239)}\) Neighbourhood planning is a key example of how community engagement is enabled by helping them learn about the planning system and people are more involved with the local plan as a result of this.
amenities that is rich in green infrastructure should have a positive impact on the community, but this will not be immediate.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement, and if so how might they be addressed?

12.1 Community groups are becoming increasingly aware of the potential of the principles of Localism, and are keen to get involved in running local projects. This capacity among community groups must be facilitated at the earliest point in the process of shaping the built environment.

12.2 Local authorities and developers need to prioritise community engagement at all levels. Neighbourhood planning is an effective method of delivering community representation at the neighbourhood level, but the community voice needs to be heard at a regional and national level as well. It is essential that this is built into new frameworks being negotiated as part of devolution.

12.3 Community engagement does not necessarily lead to development which meets the needs of communities, and communities can be left frustrated that their input is not acted upon. Key recommendations for meaningful engagement include:

- Communities need to be involved as early as possible and on an ongoing basis, rather than inserted at a later stage when the shape of the development will already have been decided.

- The engagement methods which are used should be diverse, including online tools and social media. This is especially relevant in targeting specific communities (e.g. BAME) as well as deprived areas or those with large transient populations. Engagement methods can often be outdated and ineffective; it is assumed that everyone is confident to voice their opinion, can speak English, or has the time to attend events, leaving only the ‘usual suspects’ involved in planning.

- Professionals and local authorities should work with the general public to ensure they are aware of the basic principles of good design. There is also a need to overcome the barriers created by technical language and ensure planning documents are accessible to all.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place making by private sector developers.

13.1 Council tax should be charged for unoccupied housing at higher rates than the normal level in order to make the costs of vacancy prohibitive.

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240 Increase residential sales values would increase land values, whilst increasing build costs would suppress land values.
241 http://www.savills.co.uk/land-index/development-land-index.aspx
13.2 Funding from public health and health education should be used for interventions in the public realm such as cycle paths and generally more walkable neighbourhoods.

06 October 2015
Locality – Supplementary Written Evidence (BEN0212)

Following oral evidence to the Committee provided by Carole Reilly, Head of Neighbourhood Planning at Locality, we are pleased to provide supplementary written evidence as requested by the Chair of the Committee.

Neighbourhood Planning

To date, 1692 areas have applied for designation as a Neighbourhood Planning area. This means they are already formally working on Neighbourhood Planning and have entered the first formal stage in the process. There are many more considering the process, but until they make formal contact with their Local Authority we cannot collect data on them.

Of these 1692:

- 1567 have been designated by their Local Planning Authority
- 239 have submitted for examination and are awaiting their examination
- Local Planning Authorities who have designated areas 230 (68%)
- 140 have successfully passed Independent Examination

Of these those 140 that have successfully passed Independent Examination:

- 110 have had a successful referendum
- 87 have been made and are now in Law

68% of all Local Planning Authorities have designated Neighbourhood Planning areas in their local authority boundary.

The average ‘yes’ vote at Neighbourhood Planning Referendum is 88%, with the average turnout being 33%. In total 240,079 votes have been cast. Turnout varies enormously, as shown in the table below:
Locality’s role in Neighbourhood Planning:

Locality has been running programmes for DCLG on Neighbourhood Planning since 2011.

In the 2013-5 Locality Neighbourhood Planning Programme we directly supported 367 groups on the ground with experts on the ground.

We awarded grant totalling £4,796,204 to 967 groups.

Since the current contract opened in 27th February 2015 we have awarded £282,992 to 538 groups and have supported 86 groups with technical support.

We have produced a wide range of toolkits and resources\(^{242}\) to support groups on the journey all of which are available on [www.mycommunity.org.uk](http://www.mycommunity.org.uk).

\(^{242}\) [http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/?keywords=&category=&post_tag=&programme=neighbourhood-planning&sortby=date&sortdir=DESC&filterable=true](http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/?keywords=&category=&post_tag=&programme=neighbourhood-planning&sortby=date&sortdir=DESC&filterable=true)
Locality and The Glass-House Community Led Design – Oral Evidence (QQ171-183)

24 November 2015

Locality and The Glass-House Community Led Design – Oral Evidence (QQ171-183)

Transcript to be found under The Glass-House Community Led Design
1. **About the Local Government Association**

1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

1.2 We are a politically-led, cross party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems. The LGA covers every part of England and Wales, supporting local government as the most efficient and accountable part of the public sector.

2. **Summary**

2.1 A locally led planning system is the most effective way of ensuring land with community support for housing is made available. It also provides long term certainty to encourage investment in new build housing with the necessary infrastructure.

2.2 The planning system has seen top-down changes since the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012. The focus should now be to allow the system to settle effectively and avoid large-scale reform in order to support the good work councils are doing to get up-to-date plans in place.

2.3 Over 80 per cent of councils have published local plans, which provide certainty to investors, and councils are overwhelmingly agreeing new developments with planning approvals at a ten year high. Almost nine in every ten applications are being approved.

2.4 There are a number of measures Government could introduce to support both councils and developers in their shared aim of bringing forward development, while also guaranteeing the necessary infrastructure to build strong communities. This includes introducing locally set planning fees, streamlining and simplifying Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations and guidance and removing the restriction on pooling section 106 contributions for strategic sites identified in local plans.

3. **Stability in the planning system**

3.1 Councils need the powers and flexibility to shape the supply of different tenures of housing to meet the needs of people in their area in line with their local plan and the NPPF.

3.2 Since the NPPF was introduced in 2012, and subsequent streamlined national planning practice guidance implemented, central government consultations have
introduced top-down changes to planning policy. This includes permitted development rights for office to residential conversions and exemptions from section 106 affordable housing requirements.

3.3 The recently published Housing and Planning Bill seeks to introduce new requirements on councils that they will have to take into account in the plan-making process. This includes a duty to promote Starter Homes, with the ability for the Secretary of State to make a compliance direction if they believe a council is not discharging its duty or if a policy contained in a local plan is incompatible with that duty.

3.4 Councils have made considerable progress with plan making. Getting plans in place requires significant time and effort and we look forward to working with Government on how the process could be simplified and locally led. It is crucial that plans are developed with the full involvement of local communities and they are not undermined by national policy changes.

4. Planning for infrastructure and growth

4.1 To create a planning system that is locally led, guarantees sufficient infrastructure for successful communities and supports housebuilding, the LGA is calling on the Government to:

- Introduce locally-set planning fees to ensure effective, responsive and fully funded council planning services. This would remove the burden from taxpayers who currently subsidise 30 per cent of total costs. Currently, nationally-set planning fees prevent councils from being able to recover the full cost of processing the 467,000 planning applications submitted on average each year. This call has been supported by the private sector and in a joint LGA and British Property Federation media statement243, the Chief Executive of the Federation said: “we would like to see Government undertake a review looking at how the private sector might be able to make additional payments to planning departments in return for a quality service.”

- Remove national exemptions to section 106 contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to be replaced by a more robust and transparent local viability assessment process to ensure development and supporting infrastructure meets community need.

243 http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/7550608/NEWS#sthash.AL0fkQ2V.dpuf
- Ensure that local areas are able to use the Government’s Local Growth Fund to support local housing and infrastructure investment strategy.

- Enable local communities to have a say over new development on all brownfield land and the conversion of office to residential property, combined with giving councils the power to ensure developers prioritise brownfield sites.

- Streamline and simplify Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations and guidance.

- Remove the restriction on pooling section 106 contributions for strategic sites identified in local plans.

5. Turning planning permissions into delivery

5.1 Councils approve almost nine out of ten planning applications received, but many of these permissions remain outstanding with no action on the site. For example, in 2013 there were an estimated 500,000 units with planning permission that had not yet been built out.

5.2 Councils need to be able to create stronger incentives for developers to build out sites. This is likely to require a range of powers, which may include:

- Financial penalties for developers where they have sought and acquired a planning permission but then allowed it to expire. This should include a percentage increase in the Community Infrastructure Levy liability that increases every year the development has not been commenced after the first planning permission has expired. The powers should also enable councils to charge an amount equal to the estimated annual council tax take from that development every year from the point that the original permission expires.

- Stronger compulsory purchase powers where permissions have expired and development has not commenced. This should include an exemption from the requirement to purchase the land at the current market value and pay compensation to the land owner. Instead local authorities should be enabled to compulsorily purchase land at its existing use value.

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245 [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131024/halltext/131024h0002.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131024/halltext/131024h0002.htm)
Levies on land that is considered suitable and desirable for development by virtue of its inclusion in the local plan, but that has not been built out, may also provide an option to encourage swifter housing development.

6. Better use of public land

6.1 There is significant value to be realised through better and more strategic management of public sector land. The joint Cabinet Office and LGA One Public Estate programme has demonstrated that local government management of public land can achieve significant additional capital receipts, providing councils have the necessary powers to bring forward assets for sale and development. The Government recognised the success of the One Public Estate programme in the July 2015 Budget and allocated additional funding to continue the scheme.

6.2 The Minister for the Cabinet Office, Matthew Hancock MP, stated in a written parliamentary answer on the One Public Estate programme on 11 November 2015: “Two years on, the programme has already shown that, with small levels of investment and support, a great deal can be achieved. The 12 pilot areas that joined the programme in year 1 expect to cut running costs in the order of £21 million and to raise £88 million in capital receipts by 2018, as well as creating 7,500 new homes and 5,500 new jobs.”

6.3 Further to the programme, we are calling for councils to be given the ‘power to direct’ the strategic development and sale of publicly owned sites in order to bring forward the land to develop 180,000 additional homes. Local authorities should also be able to retain at least ten per cent of receipts from sales of surplus central government land for local investment.

7. Planning Advisory Service (PAS) support for local planning authorities

7.1 The Planning Advisory Service has a significant programme of support in place for local planning authorities. This includes a combination of online tools, advice and checklists, free for all local authorities to download and use. Sector led support where councils can learn from the experience of others is an effective way of driving local plan development. The Service also organises roundtable events for dissemination and discussion of issues and best practice, as well as providing direct on-site support for authorities.

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246 [http://www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate](http://www.local.gov.uk/onepublicestate)
247 As recommended by the Elphicke-House report, DCLG, January 2015
248 The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015, Conservative Party, April 2015
London Borough of Barnet, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council – Oral Evidence (QQ261-275)

Transcript to be found under Bath and North East Somerset Council
1. **Introduction**

1.1 The goal of the planning system, as articulated through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is to achieve sustainable development. Councils, in their role as statutory Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) with responsibility for plan-making, decision making and enforcement, are ‘on the front line’ of the planning process. As such, they are well placed to witness the impact of changes to national, regional and local policy and guidance on key issues and how industry practices are influenced by policy changes.

1.2 A number of challenges are currently undermining the operation of the Development Plan-led system, and limiting the ability of LPAs to respond to key issues such as population change, rising housing costs, economic need and environmental pressures / climate change.

1.3 As the planning system is a key area of public policy through which the built environment is shaped, these issues are relevant to the Select Committee’s call for evidence and particularly relate to questions 1 (what role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment?); 6 (are further interventions required from the Government, and what effect will the recent reforms proposed have on housing supply?); 12 (are there barriers to effective public engagement?); and 13 (are there financial measures available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply?).

*The Islington context*

1.4 The London Borough of Islington has accommodated very high levels of development in recent years, consistently exceeding housing targets within the London Plan and is now the most densely populated local authority area in the country. The borough’s Development Plan sets out its aspiration to continue to deliver high levels of housing and employment growth in a sustainable way, by ensuring that development is supported by sufficient infrastructure, provides housing that meets the needs of local people and addresses environmental impacts.

1.5 Despite its commitment to deliver sustainable development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the borough has experienced increasing challenges to implementing its adopted Local Plan. This submission also draws from discussions with other authorities arising from the council’s involvement in various groups including the London Borough Viability Group which the council chairs.

2. **Operation of the Development Plan-led system**

2.1 Under law, planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan and material planning considerations (in London this comprises of the London Plan and the Islington Local Plan). Plans are consulted on extensively, viability tested and subjected to Public Examination. They inform the public, provide consistency and direction to applicants and establish the basis of delivering sustainable development. In
short Development Plans are the key tool for authorities to address economic, social and environmental needs through the built environment.

2.2 However, frequent and significant changes to planning legislation, policy and guidance including: permitted development rights, the strong emphasis given to ‘development viability’, restrictions on small site affordable housing contributions, the vacant building credit and the ability to reduce affordable housing requirements after planning consent has been granted, have created uncertainty and inconsistency with the operation of the plan-led system. These forms of de-regulation, and other forthcoming proposals, fall outside of, and conflict with, the ‘plan-led’ process and are undermining the ability of LPAs to implement their Development Plans.

3. Implications and consequences of the de-regulation of planning

3.1 Whilst a key intention of changes to the planning system is to boost housing supply, a significant consequence, particularly in London and the south-east, has been increasing land values. This is because a reduction in planning requirements effectively increases the ‘residual’ land value of a proposal generated once development costs have been deducted from development values. This raises land owner’s expectations, making it harder for developers to bid for and acquire land, and acts as a constraint on delivery.

3.2 Figure 1 compares changes in average build costs (TPI Index), land values and house prices in London since 1997. Land value would be expected to be largely a factor of changes to sales values\textsuperscript{249} and build costs, with the trend falling between the two. However, the graph shows that in the last four years, land values have risen at an extremely high rate, far outstripping significant increases in house prices. This can largely be explained by the various changes to the planning system entailing a reduction in planning requirements in order to increase supply.

3.3 Figure 1: London land prices, house prices and build cost indices (1997-2015)

\textsuperscript{249} See for example, APSE and TCPA (2015), \textit{Housing the Nation}: http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Housing_the_Nation.pdf
3.4 A particular impact of these changes and resulting increases in land values, together with the significant reduction in the national affordable housing budget and the introduction of affordable rented housing charged at rents of up to 80% of market rents, has been to reduce the ability of local authorities to secure affordable housing that provides for those in housing need. The number of people accepted as homeless is increasing, whilst a lack of affordability is also impacting on the competitiveness of the economy. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI), London Chamber of Commerce and KPMG have for example raised concerns about the difficulties that businesses are experiencing in recruiting entry and mid-level staff due to the high costs of housing in the capital.

3.5 The impacts of key national policy changes are considered below, along with recommendations that to help address unintended consequences.

4. Development viability

4.1 The NPPF requires that the costs of planning policy requirements should allow for competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable development to be deliverable. LPAs are required to assess the likely cumulative impacts of policies

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252 NPPF paragraph 173

253 NPPF paragraph 174

and standards on development, which should not put implementation of the plan at serious risk, and should facilitate development through the economic cycle\textsuperscript{255}.

4.2 Since the introduction of the NPPF, viability has become a standard and increasingly dominant part of the planning system, but there are concerns with how it is operating in practice. The emphasis placed on viability in the NPPF has led to the increasing use of viability appraisals to reduce affordable housing requirements. This has created short term financial gain for land owners at the expense of the longer term value generation that could be achieved by following a plan-led approach that takes wider economic and community needs into account.

\textit{Viability appraisal inputs and assumptions}

4.3 In areas like Islington with high rates of delivery and a buoyant market, it seems counter-intuitive that the majority of schemes are said to be unviable, even where the proposed level of affordable housing is low. Part of the issue is that viability models are highly sensitive to their initial inputs. Given the financial incentives involved, it is likely that developers will opt for pessimistic but reasonable and defensible assumptions in viability appraisals. The result of this is that, whilst every individual assumption may be reasonable, collectively the inputs modelled in appraisals will be systematically biased. Costs that are cautiously high and values that are conservative will have a big impact on the residual value and the amount of affordable housing that an appraisal indicates can be delivered.

\textit{Land value}

4.4 There continue to be huge differences in the approach to valuing land, particularly since the introduction of guidance by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) in 2012 which promotes a market value approach to land value\textsuperscript{256}. The ability to lower affordable housing provision through viability arguments is creating uncertainty in the land market. When bidding for land and factoring in the uplift in value that may come from the grant of planning permission (‘hope value’), the developer who makes the most bullish assumptions around value growth, minimising affordable housing, and maximising density, will outbid others and acquire the site.

4.5 The purchase price (or an aspirational sum sought by a landowner), together with other land transactions which may not adequately reflect Plan requirements, the circumstances of the application site and assumptions of value growth (whereas planning appraisals are based on current day values), are being used as market evidence by applicants to justify inflated land values. When applied as a fixed cost in appraisals (rather than land value being the residual) it becomes inevitable that Plan policies are found to be unviable. This issue is explored in more detail in Appendix 1, which relates to a recent Public Inquiry in Islington.

\textsuperscript{255} Paragraph 2.3.1, page 12.
4.6 The justification for this is that affordable housing requirements are subject to site viability testing and so whatever land value is assumed in a viability assessment (even if based on little or no affordable housing) must be right. However, this transfers developers’ risk onto the planning system and the community without a corresponding reduction in the developer’s profit, introduces circularity and pre-determines the outcome of the assessment. It is an approach that is in direct conflict with the 2012 RICS guidance on market value which advises that site value ‘should equate to the market value subject to the following assumption: that the value has regard to Development Plan policies and all other material planning considerations and disregards that which is contrary to the Development Plan’257.

4.7 A recent RICS research paper identified this as a misapplication of the 2012 RICS guidance and warns that under this approach ‘landowners and developers can manipulate the situation to their financial benefit’258.

4.8 A further problem with the use of market land transactions to justify fixed land value figures is that, as well as making unrealistic assumptions about affordable housing provision and acceptable development density, developers make assumptions about future increases in residential values when buying land. This inflates land prices but this value growth is not reflected in planning viability assessments which government guidance states must be based on current values and costs. This mismatch between market land values (on a growth basis) and development (sales/rental) values on a current day basis again results in artificially low viability outcomes in the planning process.

4.9 Changes are needed to national, regional and industry guidance so that viability supports rather than weakens delivery of the Development Plan. This must establish an approach to land value based on existing use values with a premium (‘EUV+) to encourage release of the site, with planning requirements recognised as a pre-requisite to securing the consent from which any additional value is derived.

4.10 Local authorities also have a role to play. Guidance setting out information requirements and an appropriate methodology provides clarity to applicants and provides the right framework for robustly assessing viability appraisals. A number of LPAs are taking steps to introduce greater transparency so that members of the public are more involved. In London, a number of boroughs have formed a viability group so that they can share expertise, take a consistent approach and build up their capacity. Islington recently consulted on a draft Development Viability Supplementary Planning Document and is in the process of analysing responses received during the consultation.

4.11 On the 22nd September 2015 the RICS published a policy paper calling for the Government ‘to endorse the RICS Financial Viability in Planning Guidance in support of the NPPF’259. The paper claims that RICS has worked with the ‘industry to establish broad

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258 NPPF paragraph 47.
agreement in understanding viability in the planning system’. Given the problems with the market value approach discussed above, which have been identified by a number of boroughs at London borough viability group meetings as well as by some RICS members at a RICS seminar held in London on 22nd September and by the 2015 RICS research paper, it is implausible to claim that there is broad agreement in favour of the approach endorsed in the RICS Guidance.

4.12 In view of the emphasis placed on viability in the NPPF, it is important to note that the NPPF also requires that LPAs will

‘for market and affordable housing, illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a housing trajectory for the plan period and set out a housing implementation strategy for the full range of housing describing how they will maintain delivery of a five-year supply of housing land to meet their housing target’.

4.13 Therefore, the starting point in any consideration of land value should be that LPAs have planned to meet their fully assessed housing need, including their need for affordable housing, through their five-year housing supply. Residential land is required to contribute towards meeting affordable housing need, which should have a direct impact on land value. This places a major and deliberate depressant on land value from what it would be worth in an unconstrained market at the heart of planning policy. Appendix 2 illustrates the differences between land value and affordable housing provision in constrained and unconstrained markets.

**Transparency and community engagement**

4.14 Whilst applicants are increasingly submitting viability appraisals which show that their schemes cannot viably support the level of planning obligations and affordable housing required by the Development Plan, they are also seeking to restrict the publication of their appraisals citing ‘commercial sensitivity’.

4.15 By arguing that the content of viability appraisals is confidential, applicants are excluding the public from the planning process and reducing the level of scrutiny that appraisals receive. A number of organisations and reports have called for greater transparency on viability matters, including the DCLG Select Committee in their Review of the NPPF (December 2014), the Lyons Housing Review (October 2014), the APSE and TCPA report ‘Housing the Nation’ (June 2015), the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report

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‘Rethinking Planning Obligations’ (July 2015) and the CPRE report ‘Getting Houses Built’ (June 2015).

4.16 The lack of transparency in viability is damaging the public’s confidence in the planning system, as they are aware that schemes are being approved without a policy compliant level of affordable housing, but are prevented from reviewing the evidence that supported such departures from policy. LPA planners are put in the uncomfortable position of having to defend their recommendations to councillors and members of the public, without being able to produce the evidence that influenced their decisions.

4.17 The recent High Court decision on small sites and the vacant building credit cited an earlier judgement which considered that a fair consultation process would let ‘those who have a potential interest in the subject matter know in clear terms what the proposal is and exactly why it is under positive consideration, telling them enough (which may be a good deal) to enable them to make an intelligent response’. In cases where the public cannot view the viability information that forms part of a planning application they are not being provided with the opportunity to make a fully informed response, and may feel that they have not been properly consulted.

4.18 This was an issue considered by the First Tier Tribunal (FTT) in an appeal brought by the Royal Borough of Greenwich against a decision notice of the Information Commissioner concerning its handling of an information request made by the Greenwich Peninsula Residents Group (‘the Group’). The Group had requested copies of the financial viability reports undertaken for the Greenwich Peninsula development that led to the council’s decision to vary the S106 Agreement for the scheme and allow a reduced level of affordable housing.

4.19 The FTT’s report states that ‘one argument against disclosure of the redacted information was that those receiving it would be unlikely to understand it’. The FTT found that ‘in our experience this is never a useful objection to disclosure … it is increasingly open to question whether the public should be expected to accept the ‘expert view’ without opportunity to see the supporting factual evidence’.

4.20 As a result of the lack of transparency in the viability process, there are currently few reputational consequences for applicants and viability consultants who provide information that is designed to limit planning requirements beyond that which could

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266 Ibid, paragraph 34.


268 Eileen O’Grady. West Berkshire District Council and another v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Estates Gazette. 15 August 2015.
viably be provided. In order to combat this, there should be an assumption that information will be publicly available unless applicants can provide a robust justification explaining why it is not in the public interest to release it.

**Viability review mechanisms**

4.21 As discussed above, viability assessments are being used by applicants to remove or lower local authority requirements for affordable housing. An example of a scheme where the applicant’s assessment of viability was far more pessimistic than the independent assessment procured by the council is provided at Appendix 3. In this instance the council has been able to review the achieved sales values for the development, which show that the independent assessment was more accurate than the applicant’s, and a significant amount of affordable housing could have been provided. This demonstrates the importance of securing viability review mechanisms which can reassess viability at an advanced stage of development based on actual values and costs to determine whether additional affordable housing contributions can be made to deliver a more policy compliant scheme.

**Conclusions**

4.22 Public sector budgets have been cut severely, affecting the ability of councils to effectively carry out their functions. In contrast, developers are typically extremely well resourced and in some cases this has accentuated an imbalance within the system whereby short-term private interests seeking to maximise value on individual sites win at the expense of effective planning for the wider area and the public interest.

4.23 Together with the other forms of deregulation discussed in this submission, the current operation of viability in the planning system is disproportionately elevating landowner windfalls and developer profit at the expense of delivering planning requirements. This is undermining the ‘plan-led’ system, and the ability of local authorities to deliver sustainable development and affordable housing in the midst of a housing crisis. Even for authorities with the political will and resources, the scale of current challenges is making it increasingly hard to secure affordable housing.

**Recommendations**

- There is a need for greater transparency – the assumption should be that information will be publicly available unless it can be fully demonstrated that this would not be in the public interest.
- An approach to land value should be established based on existing use value with a premium to avoid ever increasing market land values which undermine the delivery of sustainable development.
- The use of viability review mechanisms on non-policy compliant schemes should be supported.
• The emphasis placed on viability in the NPPF should be reassessed as a matter of priority, as it is currently operating in a way that prioritises short-term gain for landowners and developers above the development of sustainable communities.

5. Small residential sites

5.1 The impact of deregulation on the ability of LPAs to implement their Development Plans is exemplified by recent national policy changes which restricted the ability of local authorities to secure affordable housing on small developments and introduced a ‘vacant building credit’. These changes were implemented through a Ministerial Statement and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) rather than through the NPPF or legislation and have now been found to be unlawful at the High Court\(^{269}\). Incompatibility with the plan-led system (the ‘Statutory Scheme’), together with inadequate consultation and consideration of equalities implications, were the grounds of challenge brought by West Berkshire and Reading councils and upheld by the High Court\(^{270}\).

5.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have been granted leave to appeal this decision, which is creating further uncertainty for developers. This is both because land owners are unlikely to release sites while they await the decision, and because some LPAs have been trying to compensate for the loss of affordable housing contributions by making amendments to their local plans and CIL charging schedules and are now unsure of how to proceed. To end this uncertainty and facilitate delivery DCLG should not pursue the appeal, given that the challenge was upheld on four separate grounds. Small site contributions do not restrain development as they are subject to viability testing. Instead they generate funding which is important for the delivery of affordable housing.

 Recommendation

• To reduce uncertainty in the development industry and enable authorities to meet objectively assessed housing need, the appeal against the High Court decision on small sites and the vacant building credit should not be pursued.

6. Office to residential permitted development rights

6.1 Office to residential permitted development rights (PDR) are currently due to expire in May 2016 but it is anticipated that the Government will announce an extension until May 2019. It is also thought they will include a new provision permitting developers to demolish office buildings and rebuild them for residential use, provided the replacement is of a similar size.


6.2 One concern with the PDR in Islington, and other central London boroughs, is that developers are benefitting from high market values for residential properties without providing any affordable housing or contributing to infrastructure. This may be driving land values up, and not just for PDR sites. At a recent Public Inquiry in Islington the appellant used sale prices for several PDR sites to justify the amount they had paid for their site. The council had to point out that it was not appropriate to use these sites as examples of comparable market transactions, as the absence of affordable housing requirements and planning obligations makes them more attractive to potential purchasers.

6.3 Permitting the demolition and replacement of buildings under the PDR is likely to push land values up further, as developers will no longer be constrained by the layout of office buildings and will compete for buildings that can be developed free from affordable housing requirements and planning obligations.

6.4 A report prepared by London Councils lists the key consequences of the PDR which include the loss of key, occupied office space; the loss of new affordable housing supply; and the introduction of poor quality new housing. The report estimates that 39% of approvals granted under PDR were for fully occupied office buildings, meaning that the policy is affecting viable businesses. Between May 2013 and April 2015 approval was granted in London for at least 100,000 square metres of wholly occupied office floorspace, and 834,000 square metres of office floorspace in total. In addition permission has been granted for 16,600 dwellings, without any requirement for the provision of affordable housing. In Islington, two thirds of the units granted permission will be studios or one bedroom flats, which does not meet the assessed need for housing in the borough. In Croydon, the PDR has resulted in permission being granted for very small units, the smallest being just 13.4 square metres.

6.5 A report has also been prepared for the GLA on the supply of, and demand for, small offices and mixed use development in the CAZ. The report suggests that office development is now becoming more economically attractive than residential development, and that the widespread appeal of residential land use was temporary, at least in economic terms. This raises questions about the benefit of the PDR, as ‘once a building has been changed from office to residential the change is long-term, even though the economic case may only have been short-term’. To support the central London economy the PDR should be revoked, not extended.

**Recommendation**

- The Government should avoid increasing land values and promote space for economic growth by revoking office to residential permitted development rights, and in

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271 Ibid, page 64
particular should not pursue PD rights for schemes which entail the demolition and redevelopment of buildings.

7. Sustainability and climate change

7.1 In March 2015 the Government announced the withdrawal of the Code for Sustainable Homes (Code) with immediate effect. This is another decision that undermines the Development Plan-led system and the achievement of sustainable development, as many LPAs refer to minimum Code levels within their local plans. The decision to intervene was based on the assertion that the achievement of technical standards was constraining house building 274, a point that was strongly rebutted during the 2014 consultation process.

7.2 The government’s intervention is unnecessary given the purpose of the independent examination which is to ensure that new policies will not unduly constrain development. Policies containing technical standards are only adopted after it has been successfully proven at independent examination, through the submission and consideration of evidence, that they are deliverable. The examination process provides adequate safeguards to protect housing delivery levels.

7.3 This government decision, combined with the announcements in the Fixing the Foundations Treasury paper 275 has caused significant industry uncertainty, removing clear policy directions and creating policy vacuums. The government’s zero carbon buildings policy is an obvious example. Four months after reaffirming their commitment to delivering this policy, an announcement was made that the changes intended to occur in 2016 would no longer be taken forward. This has been highly disruptive to the industry as it was preparing for the policy to be implemented, with many house builders having built the policy requirements into their business plans. Further uncertainty remains, as it is not yet clear how the Government plans to meet the EU Directive requiring all new buildings to be nearly zero energy buildings by 2020, if the national zero carbon buildings policy is not to be taken forward.

Recommendations

- Constraints on LPAs’ ability to impose technical standards on housing development should be removed.
- The Government needs to clarify its position with regards to the zero carbon buildings policy, given the EU Directive to deliver nearly zero carbon buildings by 2020.

8. Starter Homes

8.1 The Government adopted a ‘starter homes’ policy in March 2015, aimed at providing new homes for first time buyers under the age of 40 at a discounted rate. The policy suggests LPAs should identify unviable or underused commercial land that could be used for housing, and grant planning permission for these sites unless there is an overriding

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274 NPPF paragraph 17
275 Peter Bill. Government’s pledge for 200,000 starter homes by 2020 looks like a non-starter. Estates Gazette. 12 September 2015.

Page 1237 of 1964
conflict with the NPPF that cannot be mitigated. LPAs should not require affordable housing or infrastructure contributions from developers delivering homes on these sites.

8.2 One initial aspect of this policy was that the Government promoted housing development on employment sites that have not been allocated for housing by local planning authorities, and may not be suitable for housing. The policy compounds this issue by preventing authorities from requiring infrastructure requirements that may have assisted in making the sites more appropriate for development. The policy also removes the ability to apply adopted affordable housing policies to meet objectively assessed housing need, contrary to the NPPF and the plan-led system276.

8.3 The presumption in favour of planning permission could also act to increase land owners’ expectations of what the ‘competitive return’ for their formerly undesirable land should be pushing up land values.

8.4 The proposed discount for the starter homes is 20% below open market rates, capped at £450,000 in London and £250,000 elsewhere. This is another aspect of the scheme that raises concerns. 80% of market rate in Islington is still very expensive, so any units delivered as a result of the scheme are likely to be at the capped rate and will do little to address the severe need for affordable housing in the borough.

8.5 More generally, new build properties routinely attract a premium of 20% above ‘secondhand’ homes277, so the discount applied to the starter homes may do little to aid their affordability in other boroughs and parts of the country. Research carried out by Shelter states that families on the new National Living Wage will be able to afford a starter home in only two percent of local authorities278. Similar research by Savills suggests that a couple on an average salary would struggle to buy a home at a 20% discount in almost half of all council areas in England279.

8.6 Notwithstanding the borough’s concerns about the affordability of the units and the unsuitability of the sites for housing, if the aim of the policy is to provide housing at more affordable prices for first time buyers, it is unfortunate that the discount is not secured on properties in perpetuity, or even on a long term basis. Instead, after 5 years owners of the units can sell them on the open market, effectively handing them a 20% windfall. The policy therefore provides a one-off benefit for developers, land owners and initial unit owners at the expense of the community and does not justify its costs.

8.7 The Prime Minister released more details about the policy during his speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 7th October 2015. Starter homes are to be included within the definition of affordable housing and LPAs will not be able to prioritise other

276 Shelter (2015). Starter Homes: Will they be affordable?:
https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1183790/Starter_Homes_FINAL_w_Appendix_v2.pdf

277 Inside Housing (2015) Couples ‘will struggle to buy Starter Homes’:
http://m.insidehousing.co.uk/business/development/government-schemes/couples-will-struggle-to-buy-starter-homes/7012173.article

278 Planning Resource (2015) Sector responds to Cameron’s conference speech:

279 Inside Housing (2015) Starter Homes plan ‘will hit association housing’:
http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/business/development/land-and-construction/starter-home-plan-will-hit-association-development/7012160.article
forms of affordable housing, such as social rented housing, over starter homes during section 106 negotiations.

8.8 In response to the Prime Minister’s speech, industry figures and commentators raised the following concerns with the policy:

- It will reduce the amount of affordable rented property delivered through s106.
- It risks increasing land values, rather than supply.
- The age and price thresholds appear somewhat arbitrary.
- It will increase demand for home ownership, instead of focusing on meeting supply.
- It might not work in the context of existing local plan policies and targets, signaling that further changes to the planning system will be required.
- The cumulative effect of the starter homes policy, the extension of the right to buy and forced council house sales will be fewer affordable homes for key workers and those in need.

8.9 S106 agreements currently require developers to work with Housing Associations (HAs) to deliver the agreed amount of affordable housing. If the definition of affordable housing is changed to include starter homes, and LPAs are compelled to accept them, developers are likely to favour them over other forms of affordable housing as they can sell them directly and realise a greater profit than they can from selling units to HAs. As HAs become excluded from this process, they will have to compete with private developers for development sites on the open market if they wish to continue operating. To be able to compete it is likely that HAs will have to provide more housing for sale on the open market, further reducing the provision of housing for rent at affordable levels.

8.10 The existing lack of housing available to rent at affordable rates has led those who cannot afford to buy their own homes to rely on the comparatively more expensive private rented sector, with the result that the annual housing benefit bill has grown. The consequence of removing LPAs ability to require affordable rented housing from new developments will be to increase the number of people looking to the private rented sector for accommodation, some of whom will require assistance from housing benefit. Others will not be able to find anything they can afford, leading to an increase in both hidden and statutorily homeless households. Local authorities have a duty to house households accepted as statutorily homeless which will further increase the housing benefits bill.

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283 NPPF paragraph 17.
8.11 Changing the definition of affordable housing to include starter homes will reduce local authorities’ ability to provide for those in greatest need. It will incur social and economic costs as homelessness and the welfare bill increase, whilst benefitting landowners, developers and households with good incomes, none of whom are in need of state assistance.

Recommendation

- While starter homes may have a role to play in increasing opportunities for home ownership for households on relatively significant incomes in London, this should not be pursued at the expense of housing for those in greatest housing need and intermediate/ shared ownership housing.

9. Automatic consent on brownfield sites

9.1 In July 2015 the Government announced that it would legislate ‘to grant automatic permission in principle’ for brownfield sites identified in statutory registers of brownfield land suitable for housing. Further details are to be provided in the proposed Housing Bill.

9.2 When the Government consulted on the possibility of introducing local development orders (LDOs) for brownfield sites in March 2015, Islington raised concerns about the ‘one-size-fits-all’ nature of the proposals. Since monitoring began in 2005, 100% of housing and employment development in Islington has been on previously developed land. The borough is fully aware of the importance of prioritising brownfield land and does not consider that specific measures are needed to ensure brownfield sites are brought forward.

9.3 Site allocations are the quickest and most efficient way to identify suitable brownfield land for housing development; this is a one-off process where multiple sites can be identified, unlike LDOs which require a bespoke approach, which evidence suggests can take around 8 months per LDO. Islington have allocated over 100 sites for housing or housing-led development. Site allocations also have the benefit of addressing issues in a holistic manner, encompassing consideration of economic, social and environmental issues in the round.

9.4 The borough is concerned that the measures do not take mixed-use development into account. The promotion of mixed-use development is a core land-use principle of the NPPF and in dense urban areas such as inner London, mixed use development is essential in making the most efficient use of land and balancing competing demands for different land-uses. The inability to provide mixed-use development, particularly on large sites, would seriously inhibit the borough’s ability to provide employment floorspace and provide for economic growth.

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9.5 Given the borough’s reservations about LDOs, the move towards automatic consent for brownfield sites is unwelcome. Clarity is needed on how design and amenity considerations will be taken into account, as design and amenity considerations relating to residential development in mixed-use, built-up areas are much more complicated than those for relatively homogenous employment areas. There also needs to be clear guidance about how Local Plan policies should be considered through the LDO process, as without this and combined with the other planning reform measures, there will continue to be a piecemeal erosion/circumvention of the plan-led system.

**Recommendation**

- The proposal for automatic consent on brownfield sites should not be implemented.

10. **Extension of the ‘right to buy’**

10.1 In the 2015 Queen’s Speech the Government announced its intention to extend the ‘right to buy’ to Housing Association (HA) tenants. They have proposed to compensate HAs who lose units through the right to buy using money generated by the sale of ‘the most expensive’ council-owned social housing units. In London, councils will be required to sell 1 bedroom units valued over £340,000, 2 bedroom units valued over £400,000 and 3 bedroom units valued over £490,000 as they become vacant.\(^{286}\)

10.2 In high value areas such as Islington, this policy could mean that every social housing unit that becomes vacant will have to be sold. The Government has stated that units will be replaced on one-for-one basis but it is unclear how the receipts generated will be sufficient to both provide replacement HA and council properties and contribute to an intended brownfield regeneration fund. As an indication of the problem, it has not been possible to replace units sold under the current right to buy system on a one-for-one basis.\(^{287}\)

10.3 Research carried out by Liverpool Economics on behalf of the London Boroughs of Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington following the announcement of the policy suggested that ‘even if the new policy to replace homes worked, there would be a time lag of at least two years from the sale of a home to it being replaced’.\(^{288}\) This will exacerbate current problems with housing supply and affordability, instead of alleviating them.

10.4 Islington has its own new build housing programme, aimed at delivering homes that will meet the identified needs of its residents. The borough is unsure of the impact that the extension of the right to buy will have on newly completed units that have not yet been occupied, all of which will have market values in excess of the thresholds outlined above. Rather than creating uncertainty, the Government should be supporting local authorities in the direct delivery of affordable housing.


\(^{288}\) BBC (2015), Why can’t the UK build 240,000 houses a year?: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-30776306](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-30776306)
Recommendations

- If the extension of the right to buy to housing associations is implemented, this should be funded by the government rather than through the forced sale of affordable housing by councils.
- The Government should increase capital funding for affordable housing in order to meet housing need, reduce the social and economic cost of homelessness, and housing benefit costs.

11. Delivery of consented schemes

11.1 Recent measures announced by the Government are aimed at increasing housing supply, but the delivery rate of developers also needs to be considered. Recent figures indicate that while the number of additional consented homes has increased significantly in recent years, delivery has tapered off289.

11.2 Developers, particularly the large housebuilders, can both phase the release of their sites, and delivery on individual sites. By controlling the rate of delivery, supply does not exceed demand and house prices continue to rise290. Removing planning requirements has not led to a reduction in new build house prices, but a number of large housebuilders including Bovis Homes291, Galliford Try292 and Redrow293 have recently announced record profits. KPMG’s UK chairman has spoken of the need to encourage owners to ‘let go of land banks’294, and in a joint report Shelter and KPMG have suggested that ‘getting more developable land into the hands of those with the incentive and the ability to build rapidly must be a key objective of housing supply reform’.295

Recommendation

- Measures should be introduced to ensure that consented schemes are delivered within reasonable timeframes.

12. Conclusion

- Reaffirm the primacy of the Development Plan-led system and its importance in achieving sustainable development.
- Implement measures to ensure consented schemes are delivered within reasonable timeframes.

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289 http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/house-builder-posts-9-profit-increase/7011323.article
290 http://m.insidehousing.co.uk/business/finance/results/galliford-try-reports-20-rise-in-profits/7011787.article
292 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d53bd03c-4745-11e5-af2f-4d6e0e5eda22.html#axzz3mZxPN7pU
• Require more transparency in viability appraisals, promote the EUV+ approach to land value and support the use of viability review mechanisms on non-policy compliant schemes.

• Reassess the emphasis placed on viability in the NPPF as a matter of priority, as it is currently operating in a way that prizes short-term gain for developers above the development of sustainable communities.

• Increase capital funding for affordable housing in order to address housing need, and reduce the social and economic costs of homelessness.

• Promote space for economic growth by withdrawing the office to residential permitted development right and not extending this to sites involving demolition and redevelopment.

• Clarify its position with regards to the zero carbon buildings policy, given the EU Directive to deliver nearly zero carbon buildings by 2020.

• Carefully consider the impacts of Starter Homes policy, automatic consent for brownfield sites or the extension of the right to buy and not pursue these policies at the expense of the provision of genuinely affordable housing.

• To reduce uncertainty in the development industry and enable councils to meet objectively assessed housing need, not pursue the appeal against the High Court’s decision on small sites and the vacant building credit.

• **Summary of the submission from the London Borough of Islington**

1. Development Plans are the key tool for authorities to address economic, social and environmental needs through the built environment. However, frequent and significant changes to planning legislation, policy and guidance have created uncertainty and inconsistency within the operation of the plan-led system.

2. Key changes include:

   • Office to residential permitted development rights
   • The strong emphasis on ‘development viability’ in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
   • The movement away from the national zero carbon buildings policy, and restrictions on the ability to impose ‘technical standards’ on housing development
   • Restrictions on small site affordable housing contributions and the vacant building credit
   • The ability to reduce affordable housing requirements after planning consent has been granted

3. The way viability is currently operating in the planning system is disproportionately elevating landowner windfalls and developer profit at the expense of delivering planning
requirements. A key impact of these changes has been to increase land values, whilst delivery has not matched the significant increase in consented homes, and house prices continue to rise. There are tangible social and economic costs to society as housing needs continue to grow.

4. In addition, further proposed policies will restrict the ability of authorities to deliver sustainable development and meet objectively assessed housing need which are key goals set out in NPPF. These include:

- The delivery of Starter Homes at the expense of genuinely affordable housing
- Automatic consent for brownfield sites
- Reduction in social rents by one percent per annum for the next four years.
- The extension of the ‘right to buy’ to housing association properties

5. Planning has the ability to address key modern day issues, produce good quality places and create long-term value through the Development Plan led system. To address these issues the Committee is asked to consider making the following recommendations to government:

- Reaffirm the primacy of the Development Plan-led system and its importance in achieving sustainable development.
- Implement measures to ensure consented schemes are delivered within reasonable timeframes.
- Require more transparency in viability appraisals, promote the EUV+ approach to land value and support the use of viability review mechanisms on non-policy compliant schemes.
- Reassess the emphasis placed on viability in the NPPF as a matter of priority, as it is currently operating in a way that prizes short-term gain for developers above the development of sustainable communities.
- Increase capital funding for affordable housing in order to address housing need, and reduce the social and economic costs of homelessness.
- Promote space for economic growth by withdrawing the office to residential permitted development right and not extending this to sites involving demolition and redevelopment.
- Clarify its position with regards to the zero carbon buildings policy, given the EU Directive to deliver nearly zero carbon buildings by 2020.
- Carefully consider the impacts of Starter Homes policy, automatic consent for brownfield sites or the extension of the right to buy and not pursue these policies at the expense of the provision of genuinely affordable housing.
To reduce uncertainty in the development industry and enable councils to meet objectively assessed housing need, not pursue the appeal against the High Court’s decision on small sites and the vacant building credit.

13 October 2015
Introduction/Summary
1. This submission addresses the following issues as set out in the Committee for the Built Environment’s call for evidence terms of reference:
   - Policymaking, integration and coordination
   - National policy for planning and the built environment
   - Buildings and places: new and old
   - Skills and design
   - Community involvement and community impact
   - Financial measures
These issues are primarily addressed in West Midlands and South Worcestershire context, with a particular focus on the city of Worcester and its environs in the period to 2050.

Policymaking, integration and coordination
2. In the early 2000s, policymakers in the West Midlands embarked upon a so-called game changing strategy of “urban renaissance” for the region with an emphasis on regeneration of the major conurbations and smaller cities, together with sustainable, integrated transport planning. These policies found expression in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS), the first iteration of which enjoyed wide public support, although its revision was less well received. Notwithstanding subsequent revocation, WMRSS has left a positive legacy in the region as reflected in the growing status of Birmingham as England’s second city, and shown that there is an important role for regional planning.

3. However, this has been replaced by so-called “localism” with a “strategic” planning dimension supposedly provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In the South Worcestershire context, the effect of this appears to be a “great leap backwards” to the kind of development which encouraged extensive green field urban sprawl around Worcester, Malvern and Evesham during the 1980s and 1990s. Although the NPPF requires planning to ‘actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable’, in practice this is difficult to achieve outside major urban areas.

4. There are a number of obstacles to achieving sustainable spatial development (which are taken up below) and these need to be tackled at the national, regional and local levels based on the principles of integrated transport. National policy-making that does not recognise this, and the important role of regional strategic planning, will simply lead to gridlock at a local level, which is precisely what is and will continue to happen in and around Worcester. Moreover, policy-making at every level must be based on good (and, ideally, best) practice,
and it is very much open to question whether the increasingly administration-led system of planning in England can maintain the status quo let alone create a better built environment.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

5. The absence of a useful definition in the NPPF of what constitutes “sustainable development”, notwithstanding its presumption in favour of this, largely arises from the lack of a spatial perspective in national policy, as well as the dismantling of regional planning in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each has a national spatial plan but, because of the English planning deficit, the UK is the only country in European Union without one. As a consequence, Britain will be unable to fully participate – should it remain an EU member – in the spatial investment plan to 2050, although the UK is forecast to become the most populous nation in the EU by the middle of the century.

6. Given that most of Britain’s predicted 80 million inhabitants in 2050 are likely to live in England, with a probable concentration in the southern and central areas, the lack of a spatial perspective and useful definition of sustainable development in national policy is very much a cause for concern. Basically, population growth on the scale forecast cannot be sustainably accommodated in commercial housebuilder-led urban extensions - or suburban sprawl - dependent on the private car and fulfil the NPPF requirement to ‘actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable’.

7. As a matter of urgency, a spatial plan for England needs to be developed based on a number of realistic low, medium and high population growth scenarios for the period to 2050. This should focus on major urban areas, together with towns and cities that can accommodate sustainable development, as well as possible locations for small and larger new settlements. However, if strategic planning is to succeed it must be democratically accountable, and not led by quangos, and this requires a national assembly or English Parliament. In the meantime, national policy-makers should address what sustainable development means in a particular spatial context, especially with regard to transport.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

8. The ongoing focus on increasing the supply of new houses must be integrated with economic development and infrastructure provision. Despite the dismantling of regional planning, there appears to be a general consensus that the city-regions around England’s major conurbations provide the most appropriate focus for national government intervention in the spatial economy. These areas also typically reflect travel-to-work or commuting patterns and, therefore, represent the most effective level for strategic transport planning. However, there seems to be considerable resistance to such regional subsidiarity in some local areas, such as South Worcestershire.
9. Discussions of housing supply in England usually focus on the very real shortage of affordable homes in certain parts of the country, including London and the south east as well as more prosperous regions beyond these, together with many rural areas. However, there are still a significant number of towns and cities in the north Midlands and beyond where property is more affordable, although employment opportunities may be restricted, and significant numbers of houses, including social-rented stock, lie empty. The economic regeneration challenges of such areas merit serious national policy attention alongside those where housing markets are over-heated.

10. Places with strong housing markets have a range of attributes which make them attractive. This often includes a historic built environment and surrounding open countryside. New development within the existing built-up area and on green field sites can be equally sensitive and calls for high quality planning at both the policy level and in its execution. Unfortunately, the process is usually landowner and developer driven as the capacity of public agencies is usually weak outside major cities. In the case of South Worcestershire, for instance, a strategic opportunity exists to develop a new settlement at Throckmorton Airfield (a brownfield site) but incremental suburban sprawl is prioritised.

Skills and design

11. Most people working within spatial policy and planning at both the national and local levels are essentially administrators. Hard skills associated with surveying, design, architecture and engineering etc are largely outsourced to private consultants and contractors. However, there must be sufficient in-house expertise and experience for procurement, co-ordination and project management to be technically proficient and cost-effectively conducted. This is not always the case and, as a result, policy and planning administrators may find themselves uncomfortably caught between their political masters, on the one hand, and external professional and commercial enterprises, on the other.

12. The need for effective in-house strategic and project co-ordination skills is crucially highlighted where alternative options need to be assessed and appraised against a set of specific criteria, whether at the plan or individual scheme level: for instance as part of the sustainability appraisal and/or statutory environmental assessment process. In addition, because of the key requirement for public engagement (see below), technical expertise needs to be combined with high quality communication skills. If the experience of South Worcestershire is to be generalised, such resources may be unavailable to many provincial English local authorities, with sub-optimal outcomes as a consequence.
13. However, the availability of an increasing range of generally very good, and sometimes excellent, online courses relevant to spatial policy-making, urban design and planning may be a means of educating both public and civil servants at the local and national levels, as well as creating better informed political decision-making and community involvement. For example, the so-called Mooc – Massive Open Online Course – model has recently been adopted by central government working in partnership with the UK digital education platform FutureLearn to run a course on contract management. This type of arrangement could well be extended to delivering content on other relevant subjects.

**Community involvement and community impact**

14. Lack of consensus around a number of issues fundamental to delivering a better built environment, including the role of integrated and sustainable transport, requires a number of “Big Conversations” between politicians, professionals and the public. The Mooc platform lends itself very well to this type of discussion, although it’s potential to “crowd source” community involvement in planning is better developed in the United States where, for instance, Coursera has run “Technicity” for several years. This Mooc explores the role of information and communications technology in smart cities, including the potential roles of digital media for increasing public engagement in both their design and operation. (1)

16. Despite the opportunities offered by new technology, planning consultations appear to have undergone so-called dumbing-down in recent years. Whether conducted by public agencies or private developers, these are frequently marketing exercises rather than genuine efforts to engage communities in decision-making about the future of their areas. Development promoters often adopt a “there is no alternative” approach, rather than providing a range of spatial or design options for consideration. People or organisations that challenge this approach may find themselves at best ignored, or more likely ostracised and excluded from future discussions. This usually has negative consequences for all concerned.

17. With regard to the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities, key issues obviously include accessibility to employment and services, as well as opportunities for informal recreation. The importance of creating places where people can easily walk and cycle to their destinations, together with attractive, green environments has received considerable exhortation in recent years. Nevertheless, the realities tend to be somewhat different from the rhetoric. Many communities are blighted by severance arising from road construction within and around towns and cities, as well as noise and air pollution associated with this.

**Financial measures**
17. Endemic problems like the affordable housing crisis in parts of England and the economic decline of other regions cannot be solved by market-led approaches alone. As an excellent paper for the Regional Studies Association recently noted: “Ultimately, spatial economic imbalance in the UK has to do with the progressive concentration of economic, political and financial power in London and its environs. The UK has one of the most centralised systems of public finance, policy-making and political control among OECD nations” (2). The present government’s devolution proposals for England will not fundamentally alter this, nor the type of property market to which it has given rise.

18. In order to tackle the shortage of affordable housing, a number of measures are required. Given the scale of the problem in some areas, a publicly-funded building programme focussed on the development of properties for let on social rents is likely to be needed, of the kind recently proposed by the Labour Party (3). With regard to the wider housing market, there is increasing scepticism as to the ability of private house-builders to deliver the kind of homes for the future that are required. Architects and property developers such as Lord Rodgers and Sir Stuart Lipton have, therefore, proposed new policies to foster business models that discourage large-scale speculative land-banking (4).

**Conclusions/Recommendations**

19. It is the speculative nature of the property market across large swathes of England that poses the greatest single obstacle to the creation of a better built environment. De-regulation of the planning system, and related measures, of the kind pursued by the present and previous governments are supposedly designed to increase national productivity. However, such policies have often had precisely the opposite effect, and additionally contributed to the boom and bust cycles which have been a feature of the UK economy since the 1980s. Instead, better regulation and incentives are required to create high quality, sustainable development. Finally, in order to engage the “Big Society” in a more constructive debate, national and local policy-makers would do well to adapt this year’s Labour Party conference slogan and promote “straight talking, honest planning”!

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4. [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a7c21a68-e515-11e4-bb4b-00144feab7de.html#axzz3nhB9SlAH](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a7c21a68-e515-11e4-bb4b-00144feab7de.html#axzz3nhB9SlAH)
Made West Midlands and Design Council CABE – Oral Evidence (QQ84-93)

Transcript to be found under Design Council CABE
Ken Mafham – Written Evidence (BEN0178)

Executive Summary

Q3 Does Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

• Planning has become formalised and standardised to the point of dysfunction. The Planning Inspectorate carries some responsibility for this.

• The principle of sustainable development, embedded in the NPPF, and interpreted by the Court of Appeal in the Hunston Judgement requires a balancing of environmental concerns with the need to provide housing for a growing population.

• A report on Housing Supply produced by Katherine Barker in 2004 *1 has dominated Government thinking since that date and tipped the scales in favour of the house building industry

Q6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

• The Barker Report was flawed in that it did not differentiate between London and the rest of the country, between market housing and affordable housing and between the very different levels of need subsumed under the heading of affordable. It also preceded the recession. The identification of planning restrictions as the prime cause of house prices rises in the country as a whole was fundamentally unsound

• The Barker Report is now out of date. It is arguable that it should be replaced by regional studies of housing supply and planning along the lines of the excellent work carried out by consultants for the Greater London Authority.

• The approach to housing land availability which adds a 20% “buffer “to deal with “underperformance” needs to be replaced by an intellectually robust process that actually identifies the causes of low house completion rates.

Q5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?
• Given the uncertainties in projecting population, households and employment the disadvantages of 20 year plans outweigh the advantages. A shorter time period, ten to fifteen years, would result in policies based on sounder evidence and option appraisal.

• Whilst local plan policies can require the development industry can contribute to meeting the need for affordable the task cannot be left entirely that sector. Revitalised Housing Investment Programmes prepared by local authorities are the best vehicle for identifying Core affordable housing needs and meeting them within an acceptable time scale.

Q12 How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

• George Osborne has used the term Nimbyism. If name calling is to part of the policy making process we would coin one to the housebuilding industry; NOOP; Not Out of Our Pocket. An industry that suffers negligible foreign competition and whose market is subsidised and enhanced by tax relief for mortgage interest and freedom from capital gains tax ought to be able to look after itself in the debate that needs to take place.

1. Introduction

Many of the questions set out in the call for evidence overlap and interact and so we have not structured our submissions by the individual questions.

The submissions are relevant to the following

3 Does Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?
12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

I am a planning consultant but these submissions are not the result of an instruction but are simply reflections on some forty five years of experience in the field in both the public and private sectors.

Context
1.1 With regard to Questions 6 and 12 Decisions on housing and planning are the responsibility of developers, local planning authorities and providers of social housing: all acting within a framework of policy constraints and incentives set by Government and interpreted in by the Planning Inspectorate. In addition the public have long taken a keen interest in planning matters and this has been actively encouraged by the Localism Act 2011.

1.2 Central and Local Government can commission expert advice. A Review of Housing Supply carried out by the economist Katharine Barker in 2004 *1 has been a major influence on Government policy towards planning and housing since that date to a very large extent.

1.3 All of the agencies involved in planning decisions are open to applications for judicial review by the High Court and the Court of Appeal. The replacement of thousands of pages of detailed planning advice and guidance by the 60 page National Planning Policy Framework has inevitably led to an increase in such applications. The criterion used by the Courts in Judicial Review are not whether decisions by local planning authorities and planning inspectors are fair but rather whether they accord with a reasonable interpretation of Government policy to such an extent that the intervention of the judiciary into the executive is justified.

1.4 If thousands of planning decisions stem from Government policy it is very important that Government policy is founded upon an up to date and comprehensive understanding of the facts and of causal relationships. The thrust of my submissions is that it is far too simplistic to assume that the environmental policies embedded in the planning system are always, or even often, the reason for the under supply of housing although that may be the case in certain areas at certain times. Dumbing the argument down does no service to either the conservation of the environment or of housing needs. The evidence is that outside London we are neither protecting the environment nor bringing forward the right number of houses.

1.5 At the heart of Government policy is the idea of sustainable development. The forward to the NPPF includes the following:

“The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations.

Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us.
Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate.”

1.6 A decision by the Court of Appeal, commonly known as the Hunston Judgement, found that at the heart of policy on housing, planning and the conservation of the countryside was the idea of a balancing of values and priorities. The NPPF makes it clear that the community should play a major part in this process “This should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them. Dismantling the unaccountable regional apparatus and introducing neighbourhood planning addresses this.”

1.7 Land use planning is a long term business and there is a tension between that time-scale and the time-scale of politicians at both national and local level. The Barker Report which we examine below has all the signs of being a response to a request for a “silver bullet” for the house price problem perceived to exist. Land use planning restrictions were identified by the Barker Report as one of the prime causes of house price rises in the period up to 2004. The very complexity of the issues made it difficult to defend the planning system against what was a pretty comprehensive attack.

1.8 In this note we do deal with some technical issues in a fair amount of detail. We accept it will be very difficult for the Select Committee to reach firm conclusions on these and be able to attribute responsibility for the current failure of the planning and housing systems to deliver housing in all parts of the country at least environmental cost. It would be appropriate for the Select Committee to look at recent experience and make judgements on the efficacy of the mechanisms that statute has established, to make recommendations for reform and then leave the correct balance between environmental, economic and social considerations to be decided on a case by case basis. What we aim to do is to establish reasonable doubt that the system we have is not working.

1.9 Our particular concern is that given the relatively vague terms of the NPPF decisions by the inspectorate and local planning authorities are easily influenced by the steer given by leading politicians who sometimes shoot from the hip. It is the privilege of politicians to emphasise the importance of particular elements of policy from time to time but it is important such interventions are well informed. In the next section we deal with a “policy” of more housing at all costs that was largely informed by the report Barker and little else. The Independent has reported

“George Osborne will pledge to tackle Britain’s housing crisis by taking on “Nimbyism” and streamlining the planning laws so that more homes can be built.

Name calling is not the right approach to what is a very complex problem.

2. The Barker Report
2.1 With regard specifically to Question 6 the Barker Report and its conclusion that planning restrictions were a major factor in the housing shortage has had a long shelf life. Research carried out in June 2015 on behalf of BBC Radio 4’s File on 4 programme by Glenigan, a leading provider of construction data, found a sharp increase in the number of houses securing full planning approval in the Green Belt. In 2009/10, 2,258 homes were approved. In 2013/2014, the number had risen to 5,607. By the following year, 2014/2015, it had more than doubled to 11,977. It is noteworthy that there was no official change whatsoever in planning policy over the period 2013 to 2015.

2.2 The Barker Report predated the recession by four years. It needs to be brought up to date in any event and so we do not wish to enter into a detailed critique. We restrict ourselves to two glaring omissions need to be any rectified in any update

2.3 The first is failure to disaggregate completion rates between market housing and affordable housing. This point is made very clearly on pages 27 to 30 of the CPRE commissioned critique of the Barker Report published in 2006. This shows that the collapse of house construction in the period to 2004 was largely due to a decline in social housing completions from around 32,000 per annum in 1993 to 13,000 in 2006. It is very clear that the mechanisms by which market and social housing are provided and the influences to which their supply is susceptible are very different.

2.4 The second factor is the failure to pay sufficient attention to the differences between London and the South East on the one hand and the remainder of England on the other. We identify a minimum of three areas that need to be looked at in the context of a strategic assessment of housing supply and the links with land use planning.

   Greater London
   The South East
   The other conurbations

2.5 We suggest that rather than a Barker II dealing with England it should be should by regional studies of housing supply and planning along the lines of the excellent work carried out by consultants for the Greater London Authority.

3. The Forward Planning Process

3.1 It is open to developers to appeal against refusal of planning permission and in those circumstances NPPF lays down strict standards against which the supply of housing land is to be assessed when individual applications are decided upon. Put simply the slower the building rate the more land local planning authorities are obliged to release. This approach shows how deeply the conclusions of the Barker Report have been embedded in the planning process. If the Barker Report is shown to be ill founded or simply out of date then this requires a fresh look at the way housing is dealt with in the planning process. It is also worth noting that statute and case law have the effect that once a residential permission has been given it exists...
in perpetuity so that there can be no real separating the sheep from the goats so far as actually developing sites is concerned

3.2 We look at whether the post Barker planning regime has resulted in completion rates that are in line with the objective assessment of housing need for a sample of areas. We do this exercise for London, the South East on the one hand and for representative areas in the rest of the country on the other.

3.3 We have looked in detail only at the period 2010 to 2015 so as to avoid the more immediate effects of the 2007 recession and because by 2010 the planning regime introduced by the 2004 Act was reasonably well bedded in. We have sought to identify

- the extent to which housing targets set out in Local Plans have been achieved and the relative scale of any shortfall or over provision
- whether any under shooting was down to the planning system, the way the building industry operate or both
- further investigations that need to be carried out
- appropriate remedial action

We have done our best with this exercise but the information’s is highly dispersed and is very detailed. There is a need in the future to aggregate the monitoring reports from the three hundred and twenty six local planning authorities into a national data base so that progress in the country as a whole and in the regions can be assessed. At the moment vast resources go into a monitoring exercise that is difficult to use at a national, regional or even sub regional level. We accept that Regional Government Offices were closed to save money but it should be possible to outsource the work; it may be that the universities have a role to play.

3.4 From a quick desk study and practical experience we suggest there is a fundamental difference between London and the South East and the rest of the country. In London and the South East ambitions about economic growth are in line with past trends. The UK is being led out of the recession by the finance activities of London. The London Plan forecasts that the number of Jobs in London will grow by 1 million 2011 to 2031 .Housing demand and the planning policies required to enable it to be met are a product of jobs growth. It is possible but by no means certain that the planning system is acting as a brake on development

3.5 Job numbers in other Cities are growing more slowly and from a lower base in many other parts of the country past rates of economic growth has been slow and the local planning authorities have made a political commitment to achieving a step change; we do not disagree with that. What we find difficult to understand in areas such as Greater Nottingham is the assumption that high rates of house building will bring about high rates of inward migration and this larger pool of labour will attract investment and create jobs. We are happy to expand on this point but in this note we are content to suggest that in contrast to London and the
South East the more likely reason for underperformance in the rest of the country is that the targets were over ambitious.

4. London

4.1 The London Plan was adopted in 2011. It set itself the task of matching the vigorous growth of jobs with a commensurate increase in the housing stock. The task of anyone trying to understand the factors at play in London is greatly helped by the excellent data base and library of technical reports available. We are also very impressed by the standard of consultancy work done for the GLA on the barriers to housing delivery. *4 and 5 The Plan was subject to alterations in 2014 which significantly increased the housing targets. The Plan is now being reviewed comprehensively.

4.2 The Monitoring Reports *3 confirm the general impression that London is booming. In the period 2010 to 2013 there was a net increase of 400000 jobs in London. This rate of 133000 jobs per year is well in excess of the average of 50000 per annum implied by the jobs targets of the London Plan and this front loading of economic growth may explain some of the higher rate of growth in house prices.

4.3 In the period 2008 to 2014 completions were 87% of target. The underperformance amounts to around 24000 dwellings for the six years less, than 1% the grand total of 3.3 million dwellings for Greater London. Nevertheless performance gave some grounds for concern and the Greater London Authority commissioned consultants Molior to “do a Barker” on London. I think they are models of clarity and relevance it is worth reading the 2014 first. They say the problem is not planning. It is (or was)

- Cost and availability of capital (much improved in 2014 compared with 2012)
- Capacity of the construction industry including small sub-contractors
- The fact that the max annual output per scheme is 100 or so dwellings regardless of the total capacity

4.4 The progress is relevant to core housing needs. In the years 2011/12 to 2013/14 34% of housing was affordable housing. Housebuilding in London has been achieved without a massive cost to the environment. More than 95% of housing development has been on brownfield land. The loss of designated open space is minimal; in fact during the period 2010 to 2014 there was a small net gain in open space as a result of development schemes in London as a whole.

4.5 Table 1 below shows that despite a fairly good rate of house completions in London house prices have grown by 17% per annum in the period 2007 to 2014 and are up 30% on the 2007 trough.
The rate of growth is far higher than the rest of the country. The rise in prices is likely to be due to a very wide range of factors but in planning terms the likely causes are

a. Under calculation of the number of new houses needed in London
b. Under calculation of housing need in the South East
c. Under-delivery of housing in the London South East
d. Obstacles to the participation of small builders in London; including lack of access to capital, knowledge of sites

4.6 The London Plan has now been amended and now includes a commitment to a target of 42000 dwellings per annum. The Mayor has stated that a figure of 49000 is achievable. These figures were not fully accepted by the independent Inspector who recommended a more comprehensive review that may have to consider meeting some of London housing need beyond the GLA boundaries.

4.7 The Mayor of London argued that London should and could meet all of its housing needs within its own boundaries. The Inspector for the Further Alterations to the London Plan in paras 55 to 57 of his Report, attached, felt there may be need to look to other authorities in the South East to meet some quantum of the need. Nobody canvassed the idea that a major upward shift in house building in other Regions would alleviate housing pressures in London.

5. The South East

5.1 From the limited amount of work we have carried out so far it appears that delivery in relation to targets in the South East is lower than in London. In Milton Keynes for example in the period 2010 to 2015 completions were only 75% of the target but in the same period and house prices increased by 19%; a mean increase of 5% per annum, far lower than in London.

5.2 An increase in the supply of housing land in London could well result in “underperformance” in the South East continuing. A careful analysis of the factors would need to be carried out and we can see no justification for the kind of knee jerk release of greenbelt sites that many have called for and the Planning Inspectorate has delivered.

6. Affordable Housing

6.1 From time to time politicians attempt to add bite to the debate on the role of planning in the housing shortage by conjuring up pictures of people sleeping on the streets. There is no doubt that some cases of housing need are extreme but an analysis of the needs assessments carried out on behalf of local planning authorities show that in many of them there is a touch of Utopia and within the overall figures there are types of household who were not housed even in the halcyon days of the 1970s and 1980s. In our view it is unreasonable to expect market housing developers to provide the bulk of funding for an affordable housing programme but this is what seems to be happening. It is reasonable to expect the public sector to play a part in what has some of the elements of welfare provision. Revitalised
Housing Investment Programmes prepared by local authorities are the best vehicle for identifying Core affordable housing needs and meeting them within an acceptable time scale.

6.2 Rather than a vigorous attack on the problem of affordable housing what we have seen is a strategic withdrawal on the part of the public sector. We offer the following assessment from a recent report. A recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation The Coalition’s Record on Housing: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015 *9 found that

- Total housing benefit expenditure increased by 9% 2009/10-2012/13.
- All other forms of government spending on housing in the UK were cut by 35% in real terms 2009/10-2012/13
- Expenditure on new house building was cut by 44% in real terms 2009/10-2012/13
- DCLG’s revenue budgets (which support spending by English local authorities on housing, such as services to homeless people, housing-linked support for vulnerable people and regulation of the private rented sector, as well as other services) for England dropped by at least 41% 2009/10-2014/15 in real terms
- DCLG capital budgets for England were cut by 54% 2009/10-2014/15 in real terms, reducing the options for local authorities to devote capital resources to housing provision.

6.3 In many parts of the country there is a demand for 30% affordable housing in an S 106 agreement attached to a planning permission. This is likely to work its way through to the price that a developer is prepared to pay for land. We have remarked earlier that in reality planning permissions do not have a limited life. If landowners do not get the price for the land they are looking for they will simply hang on to a bankable asset until better times come along. It is possible that development sites will become part of a superior vintage wine syndrome; an asset passed on from one speculator to another but never actually put to its intended use.

6.4 The production of SHMAA is in itself a growth industry. We attach two. One for Peterborough and Rutland *7 and one for Maidstone *8 we choose these simply because they are very different areas. The similarity of approach is striking.

6.5 The Peterborough example is 197 pages long excluding the appendices. On affordable housing the key paragraphs are 10.12 to 10.18 which in effect say that 50% or so of housing needs to be affordable but that maybe 35% will do. In para 7.23 the report concludes that at the present time only 2.6 % are living in unsuitable housing. Affordable needs include all households who could only afford market rents or owner occupation if more than 30% of gross income would need to go on market rents. So for an element of affordable housing we are not talking about the homeless but about households who, at least for a period of time, might have to spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
6.6 Looking at the Maidstone study, also in excess of 190 pages the % living in unsuitable housing is exactly the same 2.6% see para 7.42. The percentage of housing that needs to be affordable is 33% and it is felt this can be an achieved.

6.7 As we understand paras 7. 47 and 7. 48 of the Maidstone Study the projection of affordable housing need over the next 20 years involves projecting household incomes over that period. This has to be highly error prone and puts a question against attempting to look at such a long term view. We would favour a shorter term more robust tactical plan for affordable housing.

6.8 The Maidstone SHMA says “7.67 whilst 30% is a widely accepted and robust income threshold for the assessment, in practice, many households will choose to spend a greater proportion of their income on housing. This has to put a big question mark against the report’s detailed conclusions.

7. Issues and Remedies outside London and the South East

7.1 It is more difficult to analyse the situation outside of London because the monitoring information is nothing like as comprehensive or up to date. This is a consequence of the abolition of Regional Assemblies and Government Regional offices and also perhaps to local planning authorities having a “job done” feeling once they have adopted a Core Strategy.

7.2 The context for England beyond London and the South East is the Growth Point Initiative. This grew out of the Barker Report and was an initiative of the Blair Government but subsequently enthusiastically embraced by the Coalition. It fixed levels of growth in many area in a way that was totally outside of the planning system. In so far as many of the house price problems addressed by the Barker Report related to London the remedy increasing supply nationwide was ill conceived. It has not in fact delivered. The Growth Point initiative assumed that the supply of housing in London and the South East could not be increased to the point where prices became stable. Development in the planning of London in the last ten years show this was an ill founded assumption.

7.3 The Initiative was also meant to spread the prosperity jam more widely. It is is quite legitimate for the political leaders of cities such as Derby, Leicester and Nottingham to make a dash for growth but the difficulties in achieving a concurrent increase in the rate of job creation were seriously under estimated. I am well acquainted with the case in Nottingham where the housing figures were fed into a model and the number of jobs was an output. No attempt was made to independently assess the reality of those job targets. In the absence of vigorous economic growth it was inevitable that house completions would lag behind targets. The land supply “ratchet” mechanism to which we refer below led a gung ho Inspectorate to order the release of amounts of greenbelt land in excess of those for which the local politicians had bargained. What we have is an unnecessary release of green field sites due to conceptual inadequacies both in the formulation of the strategy and in the analysis of its failure.
7.4 We take the East Midlands region as an example. We have looked at Derbyshire, Leicestershire, West Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire. The percentages of targets achieved in the relevant housing market area over the last four years is as follows:

- Derby: 43%
- Leicester: 81%
- Nottingham: 59%
- West Northants: 30%

We do not object to optimistic targets but rather to the response to underachievement. The NPPF prescription for this low level of performance is to make more land available. Table 8 of the Leicestershire Land Availability Report *6 and copied below shows the way the DCLG “ratchet” mechanism works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Annual Target</th>
<th>Five year target</th>
<th>Available supply of land in years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic requirement</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>6400</td>
<td>5.6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement including carry forward</td>
<td>1412</td>
<td>7060</td>
<td>5.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement including carry forward and 5 % buffer</td>
<td>1476</td>
<td>7380</td>
<td>4.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement including carry forward and 20% buffer</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>8340</td>
<td>4.3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Land that can be developed within five years has to be found for an additional 1900 dwellings over and above what is seen as available. This will inevitably be greenfield land “allocated” through the appeal system rather than the Development Plan process.
For many years Governments have considered that there should be at any time a five year supply of land for the house-building industry; at the rate set out in the development plan. We explain in paras 8.2 and 8.3 that the completion rates inferred by development plans for areas outside of London and the South East are very ambitious and Para 47 of the NPPF regards this as a crisis situation and requires additional land to be found to encourage a higher rate of completions. Past experience suggests that at a planning appeal on an unallocated Greenfield site these figures would result in an inspector granting planning permission.

7.6 It is well established that in environmental matters the precautionary principle should be followed. Two questions need to be asked before reaching for the land release button. The first is whether land supply is a significant cause of low completion rates or might it be levels of demand which might allow developments to take place but not at a rate of return the developer regards as the best that can be achieved. What clearly needs to happen is that local planning authorities should commission the type of study carried out by Molior for the GLA to produce reasons why completion rates are falling behind targets. If land supply is the main reason then it may be that additional sites have to be released. This approach is supported by the NPPG states-

“The approach to identifying a record of persistent under delivery of housing involves questions of judgement for the decision maker in order to determine whether or not a particular degree of under delivery of housing triggers the requirement to bring forward an additional supply of housing.

“The factors behind persistent under delivery may vary from place to place and. Therefore, there can be no universally applicable test or definition of the term. It is legitimate to consider a range of issues, such as the effect of imposed housing moratoriums and the delivery rate before and after any such moratoriums.”

Failure to commission such studies will inevitably result in Inspectors releasing greenbelt sites for development.

7.7 The second, more general question is whether under achievement is the crisis that the NPPF makes it out to be. Over a twenty year plan period the housing market will have its ups and downs. There will be some impact on the provision of affordable housing but since the proportion of affordable housing is normally less than 30% we are talking of 20% of 30%; which calculate as 6%.

7.8 In a climate of under-delivery applicants for additional sites will argue for an affordable housing proportion lower than that set out in the development plan; citing the need to bring the development forward quickly as a justification. The other option for an LPA is to lower affordable requirements on approved sites so as to bring them forward more quickly. What then happens is that affordable housing is provided marginally quicker but the quantum over the whole plan period is smaller.

8. Time-scales
8.1 We see Question 5 as key. In my view the single most important factor behind poor planning at the present time and in the recent past has been the insistence on long time scale for plans and that progress should be at a steady rate through the Plan period.

8.2 At first sight it might seem that producing a Plan with a time scale of twenty years is highly desirable; crucially it allows for the proper planning of improvements in infrastructure which are a consequences of the land use proposals. But the same arguments could be made to insist the Treasury to growth forecasts over the next ten years. In fact the time-scale of treasury economic forecasts is two years and Governments manage to produce a budget on the strength of that. In deed national infrastructure is planned on that basis. The forecasts are limited to two years because the inherent uncertainties involved in a longer term projections would render them worth less. The technical resources available to the Treasury are enormous compared with those of a typical local planning authority. The accuracy with which local planning authorities produce forecasts is entirely spurious; Leicester City Council is making assumptions about the future that the Treasury, rightly, fear to make. A large and profitable industry has been built up in the form of consultancy to local planning authorities on this kind of exercise.

8.3 The basis for Development Plans are population projections produced by the Office of National Statistics and the household projections produced by the DCLG. These are always wrong. They are wrong because they attempt to predict social behaviour related to such issues as marriage, divorce, cohabitation and age of child bearing in 2035. For different reasons land owners, house builders and planning consultants accept a statistical exercise the accuracy of which is spurious.

8.4 We are not arguing against long term planning but typically 80% of the environmental damage is caused by making provision for 20% of a housing requirement which is in any event based on inaccurate information. The frequent insistence by the Inspectorate that local planning authorities should release sites until the completion rates implied by the twenty year strategy are achieved is the cause of even more environmental damage. We are not aware of any District where the approach has worked. The development Plan system allows for, indeed requires, fairly frequent review. Following the precautionary principle firm and binding provision should be made for say 80% of the requirement leaving the other 20% as a broad goal for which provision will be made if the growth predictions for the long term prove well founded.

8.5 Land owners and builders will not like this. They will argue that what is being suggested involves a self-fulfilling prophesy and that the growth rates will not be achieved because the land has not been provided. This is an argument that can be examined in detail at the Public Examination of development plans in particular parts of the country. For the moment we restrict ourselves to saying that typically volume house-builders maintain a land bank equivalent to six or seven year’s completions. Taylor Wimpey are currently holding a thirteen year land bank with a capital value of £2.5 bn. It is arguable that this is capital that could more usefully be used on construction of houses, not least in London the approach we are
suggesting would firmly identify sites for at least a ten year period and so would prove no impediment to building companies operating as they do at present.

9. Conclusions

9.1 These submissions are not a consultancy report but I have tried to makes the case for a consultancy report to review and update the Barker Report. Our conclusion have to be broad and tentative. In very broad terms it seems to me that in the planning system form has superseded content. Literally tens of thousands of pages of evidence fail to differentiate between London and the rest of the country, between market housing and affordable housing and between the very different levels of need subsumed under the heading of affordable.

9.2 We have no objection to the concept of sustainable development that runs through the NPPF but alongside the principle of sustainable development we must set the precautionary principle. In the words of the Rio Declaration, to which the Government is a signatory "In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."[6]

9.3 This is not to give to environmental concerns some sort of trump card when it comes to balancing them against economic and social considerations but it does imply sound research and the objective interpretation of that research. A huge amount of paper work goes into the planning system. A typical Core Strategy Examination would involve perhaps 5000 pages of evidence and submissions. Nationally this would come to a million pages. So the first prerequisite has been met. In our view it has not been objectively interpreted for two reasons.

8.4 Firstly the Growth Point agenda led many local planning authorities to technically justify conclusions that they had already reached. This is a massive waste of time and money and leads to enormous frustration by those such as parish councils and amenity groups who had been led to believe by the Localism Act 2011 that they we competing with the development industry on a level playing field.

9.4 Secondly leading politicians, following the Barker Report, have put the housing “crisis” at the top of the agenda and effectively led the Planning Inspectorate to interpret balance in a rather lop sided way. There are cases where a single report has had enormous and beneficial consequences; the Beveridge is an example. The Barker report was no Beveridge.

9.5 Statements about the housing crisis by the likes of George Osborne invariably fail to differentiate between London on the one hand and the rest of the country and between market and affordable housing. People of my generation associate housing crisis with “Cathy come Home”. That type of problem still exists but it is a problem different in nature and degree to the general problem of housing supply. It is also a problem that cannot be tackled without the vigorous and integrated participation of the public sector. To suggest that by
releasing sites in the greenbelt we will solve problems such as homelessness is to take political cynicism beyond reasonable limits.

9.6 In the 1990s the planning mantra was Plan, Monitor Manage. This approach is wholly compatible with the precautionary principle. We have only done a limited amount of planning work in London but we have been very impressed by the standard of research and monitoring. It has allowed a PMM approach. The standard of monitoring in areas our outside of London has not.

9.7 The practice of adding 20 % to housing land requirements as a response to low rates of completion is intellectually bankrupt. It is the antithesis of the precautionary principle. Investigations may reveal that land supply is the problem but it may be that the targets are being proved over optimistic and then the correct response is to review the targets.

9.8 Links to documents. The recycling of urban land is a key part of Government policy but outside of London the policy is in reverse gear. Brownfield sites tend to be smaller than Greenfield but have a higher rate of development in percentage per annum terms. The involvement of the smaller builders in the development of such sites is essential. Such builders have traditionally not been well equipped to take a very proactive role in bringing sites forward. There are also capacity problems due to the severe reduction in this sector by the recession. In the studies of low completion rates that we recommend the capacity of small builder sector needs to be investigated and strategies for increasing that capacity put in place.

Docs

1. The Barker Report
2. CPRE Report www.cpre.org.uk › Resources › Housing and planning › Housing
3 London Monitoring Reports
   https://www.london.gov.uk/.../planning/...reports/monitoring-london-pla..
4. Barriers to Housing Delivery in London 2012
   https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/.../barriers-to-housing-delivery
5. Barriers to Housing Delivery in London 2014
   https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/.../barriers-to-housing-delivery


12 October 2015
Submission to be found under Dr Isaac Jamieson
Summary

Requirements in no particular order:

Proper resourcing of planning and conservation departments.
Equal emphasis on all three arms of sustainability: environmental, social and economic.
An end to lobbying by house builders.
Land Value Tax.
Bridge the north-south divide, and halt the Pathfinder programme.
Be extremely cautious about adverse effects of devolution.
Encourage council-house building and stop the Right to Buy for housing associations.
Value the local and implement local distinctiveness.
Improve skills training at all levels.
Insist LPAs have development frameworks or masterplans for significant areas.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. i There is no one right administrative level. Successive governments talk about devolution (increasing now) but continue to impose policy – housing numbers, for example – from the centre. Centrally-imposed policy is hugely unpopular at local level, with elected councillors powerless to refuse an application because, however inappropriate, it conforms with central policy (for instance the conversion of offices to housing).

1. ii Decision-making at district or unitary level varies hugely in quality, and is too open to political interest. On the whole local policymaking is reasonable but the last 30 years have seen a major exodus of skilled planners and conservationists to the point where a council with good policies lacks the ability to ensure they are carried out. These departments have been stripped of resources; decent quality planning and conservation says they must be reinstated.

1. iii The duty to cooperate between neighbouring authorities is good although it can hold up the production of Local Plans (but see below, 3.iii, on time scales).

2. i Heritage (my particular interest) is split between DCMS and CLG; this is not helpful, although it’s hard to think it could operate without the cultural dimension and is obviously integral to planning. Better delineation of the departments’ roles would help. Alternatively, as planning and conservation is so significant, it could merit its own department.

2. ii Transport invariably trumps everything, even though road-builders are often stuck in the mindset of the 1960s: tarmac everywhere. Road-building seems to be the first reaction
of any government wanting economic development, although that is actually counter-productive; roads just fill up. The definition of infrastructure seems to be fluid, from transport and energy to large housing developments; there needs to be more local involvement with these. A new infrastructure commission will not help. Much infrastructure is profoundly unsustainable, both in terms of materials use and in the way it influences behaviour.

2. iii Sustainability is also fluid; what should be about long-term environmental considerations is too often only about economic sustainability (an argument I’ve had with government since the days of Margaret Hodge as minister). And the social requirement is often forgotten.

2. iv Within local authorities, departments conceived as competing business units is unhelpful. Probably the same applies at government level. The current dominance of the Treasury and frantic pursuit of economic growth is counter to an intelligent cooperation, sufficient to avoid clashes, omissions and duplication.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. i The NPPF that emerged in 2012 after numerous interventions by the Heritage Alliance and others was less damaging than the initial version. However last year’s Select Committee review of the NPPF seems to have been ignored. Clive Betts MP has spoken about government refusal, for instance, to collect information on the level of out-of-town vs. central retail development.

3. ii The infamous ‘presumption of favour of sustainable development’ in the NPPF is a highly political move that effectively undermines local communities. I understand the government chose not to use the internationally-agreed Brundtland definition. (See 2.iii above) For the then minister to say in his introduction that ‘Development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay’ is to ignore the fact that what is believed to be sustainable can be subjective. It also ignores the increasing under-resourcing and de-skilling of planning departments and their ability to judge this.

3. iii The NPPF states that policy must be plan-led but some 40% of LPAs still have no plan. Over-riding decision-making in authorities still in the plan process is unnecessarily aggressive. By no means all LPAs are paragons of virtue but still they operate under such constrained circumstances that with the best will in the world, producing an acceptable plan on schedule is too much to ask.

4. i If I understand this correctly, I would say the lack of a spatial perspective is damaging. Durham had its local plan rejected because it was over-ambitious, the Inspector saying in effect, ‘you surely don’t really think all those people will want to come here.’ Other cities of similar historic importance in the south east are overwhelmed with development. Policy must acknowledge - and repair rather than continue to deepen - the north-south divide.
4. ii The new development on business rates will be even more damaging, entrenching discrimination. The introduction of a spatial element should be able to address this, while protecting the environment and natural resources that are under stress from poor development policies.

5. i On the one hand planning for sustainability and fairness needs to be done now; on the other (see 3.ii) taking plan-making out of the hands of the LPA, and especially the unrealistically short target times for decision-making - when planning departments are under-resourced - is undemocratic.

5. ii There are some areas - historic settlements particularly - where policy should be protective in perpetuity. Councillors and others spend ludicrous amounts of time and resources fighting the same battles again and again. Smithfield is a good example. Developers should be told that ‘no’ means ‘no’.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. i Housing is currently a disaster zone, and cannot be addressed by the planning system alone. Extending Right to Buy to Housing Associations is a nakedly political act that should be subject to legal challenge but it appears the sector has no stomach for that. Forty percent of council houses sold under RtB are now buy-to-let, and - here in Winchester - over 300 family houses on a good-quality estate are now let to university students. The expansion of higher education has combined with inadequate planning and social policies to cause damage to the remaining community and increase the local housing shortage.

6. ii It’s tempting to say that ‘further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level’ would be a good thing, but for that the government has to be trustworthy. Given the lobbying power of the volume house builders, and their astonishing profit increases of recent years, that cannot be said to be the case.

6. iii “Affordable” has, through government policy, come to mean up to (and so almost invariably) 80% of market rent. It can also mean subsidised purchase, which merely puts up the price. In desirable areas 80% of market rent is not remotely affordable to anyone on an average income. This is a linguistic distortion which should be rectified. The only answer is for councils to be encouraged to build, but even where they aspire to, the problem is land. The landbanks of the large house builders - and the large supermarkets and others - should be centrally acquired for social development. Community Asset Transfer exists for heritage assets; centrally owned redundant land (the defence estates, for example) should be released at minimum cost for subsidised housing. Real need - for subsidised housing - is different from being obliged to plan for what someone fancies for investment.

6. iv The recent West Berkshire decision, on thresholds for social/affordable housing, is welcome but I understand the government is likely to appeal it.
6. v Some commentators - Simon Jenkins, Professor Danny Dorling - say there is no shortage, only a flawed distribution. Certainly local authorities should be allowed to levy additional council tax on second homes and empowered and encouraged to act harder and faster on empty properties. But overall nothing will change until the towns and cities of the north (far beyond the Northern Powerhouse) are made attractive and developers in London and the south are made to comply with social and affordable housing commitments. Currently it is far too easy to evade s106 obligations by citing 'viability', the assessments of which are hidden from the public and apparently too confusing for councillors.

7. i A sustainable and resilient built environment is a mixed community, intelligently located with regard to public transport and employment, with a good mix of building types. Jane Jacobs' famous line, 'new ideas need old buildings' should be carved over the portal to the civic centre. Her belief that the old buildings need not be smart is still wholly relevant - see the creative regeneration of everywhere from Folkestone to Shoreditch, before the prices rise and the artists are pushed out.

7. ii Apart from a small academic lunatic fringe suggesting that every pre-1919 building should be demolished and rebuilt on eco grounds, most people actually prefer older houses, even outside conservation areas. Inside conservation areas, higher prices reflect this. I was no fan of the Green New Deal, believing it to be as badly constructed as some of the 'green' buildings, but conservationists must make the case for the historic fabric and the embodied energy it contains. Work done for HM Courts Service on this is admirable, demonstrating that historic buildings are more efficient, in part because people use them differently. Government could help with this by, for instance, not encouraging temperatures in public buildings - schools, offices - that allow people to work in shirt-sleeves in February. The onslaught of minimally-skilled or qualified insulation installers unleashed by the Green New Deal will not be missed.

7. iii The most sustainable way to develop is by using what we already have. The traditional by-law terraced house found in all towns and cities is wonderfully flexible - see work carried out by the Heritage Trust of the North West in Nelson, Lancashire; by Assemble Architects (now candidates for the Turner Prize) in Liverpool; or research by Michael Hebbert at Manchester University. The Pathfinder (Housing Market Renewal) Programme staggers on, despite promises by government to halt it. It should be stopped immediately. A sensible and equitable programme of north-south rebalancing using this housing stock would solve a great many problems. Research by Professor Anne Power at LSE has demonstrated how repair and reuse of old buildings keeps money in the community, while newbuild exports it.

8. i I’m unhappy at the question asking about ‘national assets’. Local ones are important too. The majority of recent housebuilding is devoid of any sense of local distinctiveness, despite the term cropping up in the NPPF and so in local plans. Policies prioritising the use of brownfield land have been watered down, and are too readily dismissed by developers who prefer a clear green field. Yet the built remains of old industries, for instance, are awash with local distinctiveness and their careful reuse for housing should be prioritised. This applies even in the south: see for instance the remains of the old airship hangar in the
redevelopment of the Farnborough Air Services site. Where almost any building, designated or not, survives from an earlier age, leaving it in the redevelopment scheme acts like the grain of sand in the oyster, and produces the pearl, a better result - not least because the architect is required to think harder.

8. ii Legislation (in the Localism Act) regarding community assets was also watered down. The right to express an interest hardly compares with the right to acquire, which was initially suggested. This is a useful tool that could be made more of.

Skills and design

9. i No. Quite simply. Education is so far from holistic that the professions seldom have any insight into other aspects of the built environment, historic or otherwise. It is possible to study architecture for seven years without ever considering heritage or conservation. Remedying this should start in school, with more emphasis on creativity. With the downgrading of non-core subjects there is a risk that children are never taught how to look, to understand their surroundings. Other countries manage this better. Many of the best architects came from the old Poly system. Technical education needs to be reappraised and revalued. Erosion of further education funding should be reversed.

9. ii Few local authorities still have an architects’ department, and planning departments have invariably been slashed. Even historic cities may be without a proper conservation officer. While this pertains, there is no hope for planning, shaping, etc. the built environment decently.

9. iii You only mention the ‘professional’ skills. There is also the matter of skills shortages in conservation and even ordinary traditional building. The bricklayers who built the stunning new Saw Swee Hock centre at LSE would not have been ordinary semi-skilled brickies. The techniques required for too much modern building (e.g. cheap timber frame) are not those that will ensure the building lasts and ages well, and so is sustainable. Again, technical education needs to be reevaluated and proper apprenticeships put in place. The National Trust has a good system and the HLF funds training in conservation. Government should learn from them.

10. i The LSE building above notwithstanding, too many LPAs (and developers) want to see ‘landmark’ or iconic buildings. Most places have no room for them, and they are out of context in a historical setting. Good modest design, decently proportioned and with sound materials will last better, be more flexible and better to live in. The RIBA, CABE and others are concerned that we are building the most undersized housing in Europe. Government has allowed standards to be eroded; reintroducing Parker-Morris would be an excellent move. Instead PLAs allow what are in effect back-to-backs to gain permission as they are cheap to build. Planning committees and some officers should have at least a couple of educational sessions on architectural history and basic design. National leadership could insist on that. And architects should avoid ego-trips.
Community involvement and community impact

11.i No, again. Architecture is the one art form that cannot be avoided, yet miserable quality design and building is allowed to impinge on people’s lives. There is a fine balance between suburban sprawl and unacceptable urban density. Urban extensions to towns should not be built at suburban density, wasting land, but on the other hand a dense development needs to be finely detailed and well provided with amenities. Too many LPAs are resistant to the idea of a development framework or masterplan, instead allowing developers to pick off sites piecemeal. Not only does this undermine the provision of social/affordable housing (lots of small sites under the threshold) but it also results in a visual hotchpotch. Every conservation area or every historic town or (small) city should have a masterplan. In larger cities it should be on a neighbourhood or borough basis.

11. ii I’ve mentioned the shortage of conservation officers; tree officers and arboriculturalists are also threatened. Treeplanting and landscaping, and the spaces between buildings, are as important as the building design, and are known to promote good health.

12.i If people want to become involved, they risk being labelled nimby. If they don’t become involved, they are called apathetic. The erosion of local authority powers by central government has called into question why anyone would want to become a councillor, with a resultant drop (in my experience) in quality of members. This means officers - not planners or conservationists etc. - take control, not always to the public benefit. Governments over the last 30 years or more have conveyed the impression that only losers work in public service. This is obviously harmful, making it hard to get good quality staff. Devolution might help here but too many authorities will be so scarred by the loss of Revenue Support Grant that they will probably have no officers anyway.

12. ii The NPPF says ‘local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.’ Central government cannot slash council funding and cut quangos such as CABE and expect there not to be problems. Neighbourhood Plans are a good way of engaging communities but the community needs to be determined - especially if officers are opposed. Planning by Design, Community Architecture, charrettes - there are other less arduous ways of reaching out to harder-to-reach communities. Where it can be done, the public buy-in is great and social cohesion improved. But funds for the network of Architecture Centres, that typically did this work, were cancelled in 2010. Civic Voice does sterling work with civic societies but the membership of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Civic Societies is mostly notable for its invisibility (Laura Sandys is much missed).

Financial measures

13. i This has been thread throughout. Historic England is consulting on how to do more with less but there comes a time when there is so much less that little worthwhile can be done. Ideally before being forced to survive on this starvation diet, there would have been
all necessary conservation area reviews, Article 4 Directions issued, local lists compiled, interesting unlisted buildings designated (not just when the wrecker’s ball is poised) and the historic estate at all levels would ideally have been in decent shape. Then the cuts wouldn’t be so damaging. Instead they are damaging the thing that the country is known for most of all, its heritage.

13. ii  Land Value Taxation.

13.iii Abandon the appeal against the West Berkshire decision and ensure developers play a proper responsible role in the communities where they build, through s106 obligations - which should be for provision on-site, not off-site contributions when it is the land that is at issue. And no more poor doors. No more hiding behind confidential viability assessments. The Lobbying Act should have prevented the developers from pulling government’s strings, but has failed to do so. Not many private sector developers will contribute to the public good unless they are obliged to do so.

06 October 2015
McCarthy & Stone – Written Evidence (BEN0218)

KEY POINTS

- **A radical review of local and national housing and planning policy is required to deal effectively with the impact of the UK’s ageing population.** The current system limits the supply of retirement housing as it does little to recognise demographic change, account for the unique nature of specialist housing for older people, or proactively encourage this form of accommodation across all tenures.

- **The right planning policy could encourage the provision of retirement housing and increase supply from just 7,000 units per year currently across all tenures to 18,000 per year (Savills, EAC, 2015).** The majority of what is currently being built is for social rent, while 76% of older people are homeowners (JRF, 2012). Indeed, just 1,919 owner-occupied retirement units were registered with the NHBC in 2014.

- **This would make a sizeable contribution (c13%) to overall housing supply (currently c140,000 units per year).** Unlike Starter Homes and some other forms of housing, building retirement housing also releases dependent properties, creating a ‘two for one’ benefit.

- **There is a rising demand for retirement housing.** 58% of UK homeowners aged 60 and over are interested in moving home and one quarter, over 3.5 million people, have a particular interest in buying a retirement property (Demos 2013). Yet only around 128,000 retirement properties have been built for owner occupiers in England and Wales (Age UK, 2014). 60% of all household growth over the next 20 years will be by older people (DCLG, 2015), suggesting this is where the focus of policy should be.

- **The UK faces a significant demographic challenge affecting all areas of public policy, and housing and planning policy should evolve to meet this challenge.** The number of people aged 65 and over is set to grow by over 50% by 2033 (ONS), placing increasing pressure on public resources, health and social care. Retirement housing provides significant social and economic benefits; including freeing up local family housing, improving the health and wellbeing for older people, supporting local high streets, creating jobs and improving the energy efficiency of homes. It can therefore save public funds, particularly in the areas of health and social care.

- **Planning policy needs to urgently look at how it can meet the accommodation needs of the ageing population.** National planning policy covers this issue in passing and very few local authorities have suitable policies in place to encourage retirement housing across tenures.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
- Recognise the role and benefits of suitable housing for older people, including retirement housing, by publishing a national strategy to encourage its supply across all types and tenures
- Require local authorities to proactively plan for retirement housing across all tenures and to monitor both the policies that are put in place locally and the delivery of this form housing
- Review the impact of planning obligations to provide affordable housing, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy policies on owner-occupied retirement housing and how they restrict supply of this form of accommodation, including exempting retirement housing from CIL payments and lifting affordable housing requirements on new developments to increase provision
- Introduce a ‘Help to Move’ package, like Help to Buy, that removes the financial restraints on older people downsizing, including a Stamp Duty exemption for those moving to a retirement property.
ABOUT MCCARTHY & STONE

McCarthy & Stone provides 70% of all owner-occupied specialist retirement and Extra Care accommodation for older people in the UK. We have built c.50,000 dwellings across more than 1,000 developments nationwide over the past 37 years.

We deliver three award-winning types of specialist housing for older people:

Retirement Living (since 1977) – Similar to traditional ‘Category II’ type sheltered housing, but built to Lifetime Homes Standards. It comprises self-contained one and two bedroom apartments and includes a House Manager, communal lounge, communal laundry, CCTV camera entry system, 24 hour emergency call system, guest suite and lifts to all floors. Residents have active, independent lifestyles in a safe but private environment. Developments are for those aged 60 years and above and the average resident age at purchase is 78 years.

Assisted Living (Extra Care Housing) (since 2000) – We are the largest provider of Extra Care Housing for homeowners in the UK. The accommodation is as above but is designed for the frailer older person; is to full wheelchair housing standards; and includes additional services such as 24-hour staff attendance/oversight, a table service restaurant, function room, spa/treatment room/hairdressing salon, and one hour per week of domestic assistance, with optional/flexible domestic and personal care packages available from the on-site team. Developments are for those aged 70 years and above and the average age at purchase is approximately 83 years. Schemes are managed by a CQC-registered joint venture between McCarthy & Stone and Somerset Care Group.

Ortus Homes (since 2014) – These developments are for the more active retiree who doesn’t want to downsize into a traditional retirement housing scheme. Apartments are also built to Lifetime Homes Standards and are ergonomically
designed with innovative features to support residents as they age and prevent them noticing their physical age day-to-day. These developments typically have fewer units of accommodation than Retirement Living or Assisted Living schemes, consisting predominantly of two bedroom units with increased car parking provision (minimum of 100%). Developments are for those aged 60 years and above with the average age of purchaser being 71 years.

**THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE**

The number of people aged 65 and over in the UK is set to grow from 11.4 million in 2014 to 17.2 million by 2033, an increase of 51%, while the number of people aged 85 and over is set to grow from just over 1.5 million in 2014 to almost 3.5 million in 2033, an increase of over 131%.

There are currently 24 local authorities with more than a quarter of their populations aged 65 and over, and the figure is expected to increase to 83 by 2022. The trend of growth of the populations aged 65 and over applies across all UK regions, with an average of over 20% growth expected between 2012 and 2022. This will place significant financial pressure on public resources, health and social care services.

While there is a widely reported general shortage of housing, with the total number of households who need a home in England growing by approximately 250,000 annually, this is particularly acute amongst older people as 60% of total household growth to 2033 is expected to come from households headed by someone aged 65 or over.

Empty bedrooms in the homes of retirees are forecast to exceed 10 million by 2026, which will be a growing stimulus for those who want to downsize.

**MISMATCH BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF RETIREMENT HOUSING**

58% of UK homeowners aged 60 and over are interested in moving home but many feel restricted by a lack of supply of suitable alternative accommodation. Other reasons cited

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297 Source: Population projections by the ONS (2012 based)
299 Source: DCLG (NPPG, 2015)
300 Source: Intergenerational Foundation: Hoarding of Housing (October 2011)
301 Source: Demos: Top of the Ladder (2013)
for not moving include the cost of alternative accommodation and the cost of paying Stamp Duty and land and buildings transaction tax.³⁰²

Research by Demos shows that one quarter of UK homeowners aged 60 and over express particular interest in buying a retirement property, a total of 3.5 million people, for reasons that range from moving closer to family, to reducing the risk of accidents by moving into purpose-built accommodation³⁰³. This research is also supported by many other reports. The 2006 Wanless Review concluded that 27% of older people would consider this form of accommodation if it was available³⁰⁴. In 2012, a YouGov poll for Shelter said that 33% of people over 55 are interested in it.³⁰⁵ Shelter noted that if demand for retirement housing remains constant, supply will have to increase by more than 70% in the next 20 years. The need to look at encouraging this sector is therefore indisputable.

The ability to live independently was voted one of the highest essential factors for those choosing a new home in retirement³⁰⁶. Furthermore, those aged 60 and over hold approximately £1.2 trillion in housing equity, with £400 billion of this tied up in homes of those who want to downsize, which indicates that alongside a strong inclination to move, providing the options to allow them to access this wealth through downsizing, could help older property owners to address the challenge of funding care in later life³⁰⁷.

As of April 2014, there were only around 128,000 retirement properties built for owner occupiers in England and Wales³⁰⁸. In 2014, the NHBC recorded just 1,919 new retirement property registrations, compared to a total of c140,000 new housing completions³⁰⁹, with just 7,000 units delivered across all tenures.³¹⁰ The UK has one of the lowest downsizing rates of any developed country and only 1% of the population aged 60 or over is living in specialist retirement housing, compared with 17% in the US and 13% in Australia and New Zealand; all of which face similar demographic trends³¹¹.

THE BENEFITS OF SPECIALIST RETIREMENT HOUSING:

1 Freeing up local housing:

³⁰² Source: Legal & General and CEBR: Last Time Buyers (2015)
³⁰³ Source: Demos: Top of the Ladder (2013)
³⁰⁵ Shelter (2012) A better fit? Creating housing choices for an ageing population
³⁰⁶ Source: Knight Frank: Retirement Housing (2014)
³⁰⁷ Source: Demos: Top of the Ladder, 2013)
³⁰⁸ Source: Age UK: Buying Retirement Housing Factsheet (April 2014)
³⁰⁹ Source: NHBC figures (2014)
³¹¹ Source: Knight Frank: Retirement Housing (2014)
On average, McCarthy & Stone customers release a dependent property back onto local markets worth £303,772, and in the process release £58,853 worth of equity from their purchase of their new property. For every 5,000 purchases of retirement properties, larger housing worth £1.5 billion is freed up.

Most of our homeowners free up a family home when moving to one of our schemes, with 60% moving from homes with three bedrooms or more. On average, customers move from within 4 miles of the development, so schemes help to free up much-needed family homes in the local area, and ultimately help first time buyers through the trickle-down effect in housing chains.

Houses that are freed-up are often refurbished and made more energy efficient by their new owners.

Retirement housing also makes efficient use of previously-used land (for instance, all of our 1,000 developments and c50,000 unit sales have been on centrally located brownfield sites, in response to our homeowners desire to live in well-connected, urban areas).

2 Improved well-being for older people:

64% of residents in retirement housing said their health and well-being had improved since moving.
92% said they were very happy or contented.
83% believed they maintained their independence for longer.
51% of residents report lower or noticeably lower heating bills.

Specialist housing is able to address many of the challenges of late life through careful design.

3 Improved health for older people:

Residents have fewer visits to local health professionals and find it easier to return home after stays in hospital.

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314 ORB, A better life (2004)
315 Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
316 ORB, A better life (2004)
317 Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
318 Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
✓ 75% of residents in specialist retirement housing have not stayed overnight in hospital since moving. 60% who had stayed in hospital said that they had found it easier to return home since moving\textsuperscript{319}.
✓ One of the NHS’s biggest costs is overnight stays of older people.
✓ The annual cost of falls among older people is £1 billion each year and almost two thirds of general and acute hospital beds are occupied by people aged over 65.\textsuperscript{320}
✓ Each year a resident postpones moving into residential care, the state can save on average £28,080\textsuperscript{321}.

4 A positive economic impact and supporting local high streets

✓ Older people are essential to the health of a local community. Most of our residents have family and friends in the locality, and the average distance moved by purchasers of our properties is 4 miles or less\textsuperscript{322}.
✓ Specialist housing sustains local shopping and other services. More than 70% of residents said that their development was more convenient for local services and 78% used local shops more than once a week\textsuperscript{323}.
✓ Each development injects on average £8.64 million into the local economy through jobs and materials during construction, and £343,000 in New Homes Bonus payments\textsuperscript{324}.
✓ These same schemes average £670,000 per year in local spending by residents, £125,000 more than a general needs housing scheme, and £69,000 in council tax for local facilities\textsuperscript{325}.
✓ Around 60 local companies are employed during construction, supporting local jobs, with additional job opportunities created when the scheme opens. 17 jobs are created from a typical Assisted Living (Extra Care) development\textsuperscript{326}.
✓ Funding for owner-occupied specialist housing can be provided through the release of the £1.2 trillion of housing equity held by older people\textsuperscript{327}.

5 A sustainable form of development:

✓ Low parking requirement and built on centrally located brownfield sites.

\textsuperscript{319} Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
\textsuperscript{320} Source: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, NICE guidelines [CG161] (2013)
\textsuperscript{321} Source: HACT: Fit for Living Network, Position Statement (2010)
\textsuperscript{322} Source: McCarthy & Stone sales data (2015)
\textsuperscript{323} Source: Institute of Public Care, EIA report for McCarthy & Stone (2014)
\textsuperscript{324} Source: Institute of Public Care, EIA report for McCarthy & Stone (2014)
\textsuperscript{325} Source: Institute of Public Care, EIA report for McCarthy & Stone (2014)
\textsuperscript{326} Source: Institute of Public Care, EIA report for McCarthy & Stone (2014)
\textsuperscript{327} Source: Demos: Top of the Ladder (2013)
51% of residents report lower, or noticeably lower heating bills\textsuperscript{328}. Houses that are freed-up are often refurbished and made more energy efficient by their new owners. High density / efficient use of land. By providing much-needed new specialist housing for older people and consequently ensuring more beneficial use of the existing housing stock, there is less pressure to release greenfield and other more sensitive sites for new housing development.

WHAT IS RESTRICTING SUPPLY AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

A lack of national and local planning policy focus

The House of Lords’ 2013 report ‘Ready for Ageing’ highlighted how pressing this issue is in policy terms, observing that “Central and local government, housing associations and house builders need urgently to plan how to ensure that the housing needs of the older population are better addressed and to give as much priority to promoting an adequate market and social housing for older people as is given to housing for younger people.”\textsuperscript{329} Yet from a national planning policy perspective, the importance of addressing the housing needs of an ageing population is only acknowledged in passing in both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Given that 60% of all household growth will be in this area, the housing needs of older people should instead be the focus of both documents, which is what we would like to see and what society as a whole should want.

Due to this lack of national focus, evidence suggests that the importance of this area is not well-communicated to local authorities. A recent review of planning policy within the top 30 local authorities in England that are expected to have the greatest share of those aged 65 and over by 2037 found that only 6 councils (20\%) had strong policies in place regarding the needs of the ageing population\textsuperscript{330}. In addition, a report by the Homes & Communities Agency in 2014 found that just 14\% of councils had a policy in their Local Plan for encouraging owner-occupied retirement housing\textsuperscript{331}. This clearly demonstrates how behind the curve a considerable number of local authorities are regarding the needs of an ageing population within adopted and emerging planning policy.

\textsuperscript{328} Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
\textsuperscript{329} Source: House of Lords, Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change: Ready for Ageing (March 2013)
\textsuperscript{330} Source: Barton Wilmore: An ageing nation – Are we planning for our future? (September 2015)
\textsuperscript{331} Source: HCA: report for the Vulnerable and Older People Action Group (2014)
Due to this lack of planning, few local authorities take the specialist nature of this provision, or the benefits that it provides, into account (this is explored in more detail below), and this in turn results in a lack of encouragement for developments in this area, as well as a difficult ride for planning applications that do come forward.

**Without greater policy encouragement, housebuilders will not look to develop in this market.** Local authorities need to urgently review how they can meet the accommodation needs of the ageing population through their local planning policy. We believe this will only happen with a dedicated national strategy to address this issue. In addition, we would like to see the Housing & Planning Minister write to all Local Authorities to ask them to focus on the housing needs of older people, including the delivery of owner-occupied retirement housing, and to report back on current and planned activities and policies within this area.

**Viability constraints caused by CIL and Section 106 payments**

It is very difficult for retirement housing to compete with mainstream housing development because the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 system are not designed to accommodate or support the unique viability features of this form of housing. Planning contributions are the biggest cost on new development in this sector after land purchase and construction, and so have a major impact on the success or failure of new developments. As a result, older homeowners are being denied the opportunity to live in specialist housing that better meets their needs and aspirations in later life, and overall UK housing output is also restricted. Addressing these issues by removing CIL and Section 106 obligations (as is being done with Starter Homes) would help to increase provision in this important area.

CIL charging schedules, where they refer to “residential uses”, set a charge based on the square meterage of gross internal floorspace. While this rate may meet the viability test for standard residential sites, retirement and older people’s housing have very different densities, build costs, sales rates and include the requirement to provide communal and staff areas that are not a feature of typical residential development. This undermines the viability of many sites and risks preventing delivery of older people’s housing, and the aims of the Government. As such, any CIL charging schedule should properly assess the viability of specialist housing independently to standard residential development. **Better still, specialist housing should be viewed in the same light as Starter Homes and other forms of affordable housing and thereby be fully exempt from the burden of CIL.**
However, to-date most local authorities have not carried out a viability appraisal of retirement housing as part of the evidence base which supports the CIL charging schedule. Those local authorities who have undertaken a viability appraisal have appraised Extra Care but not sheltered housing and have generally found that, like care homes and other C2 uses, new build sale Extra Care housing cannot support a CIL payment. To address this, we would like to see:

- A CIL exemption for communal areas within specialist housing for older people across all tenures. This is already the case in social housing, but it is not the case in owner-occupied retirement housing. We also note that Starter Homes are completely exempt from CIL payments to encourage this form of housing; given the pressing need to build more housing for older people, the same incentive should be extended to owner-occupied retirement housing.
- At the very least, retirement housing needs to be correctly tested as part of the process when local authorities prepare their Charging Schedules, and we would like to see new guidance issued accordingly to Local Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate.

A more detailed paper on the impact of CIL charging schedules is available if needed.

With regard to Section 106 payments, planning policy is currently used to encourage the provision of affordable homes for groups particularly disadvantaged in the current housing market, as this has clear social value. But building homes for older people that improves their health and wellbeing also has obvious social value.

Recent reports by Demos and the University of Reading have recommended that owner-occupied retirement housing should be treated as a form of affordable housing, and given ‘enhanced planning status’ alongside low-cost home ownership for younger households because of the need for this type of housing and its associated social and economic benefits. Demos suggest that developments of retirement properties should be exempt from paying Section 106 charges towards affordable housing, and a proportion of the charges levied from other private developments should be put towards helping develop older people’s housing. This would in turn reduce the costs of these properties, making them more affordable, and stimulate new developments and support those who wish to downsize.

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332 Source: Demos, Wood C: Top of the Ladder (2013)
333 Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
Currently the additional costs of Section 106 charges are often passed on to the buyer in the form of higher prices, and research by the University of Reading concluded that as a lot of affordable housing provides accommodation for younger people, elderly middle income households were subsidising younger buyers and the process was ‘discriminatory’ against older people.334

There are also many other challenges with delivering this form of housing over and above traditional housing, which are worth outlining in some detail. This includes the need for specific design features and services, such as building to Lifetimes Homes Standards or above, including HAPPI design features, ramps, lifts, large shared areas, wider corridors to allow wheelchairs to pass, laundries, guest suites, restaurants, lounges, mobile scooter storage rooms, secure entry systems and CCTV. Some c30% or more of a specialist housing scheme for older people is communal space and thus non-saleable.

In addition, schemes typically need to be completed before sales are made as older people are less inclined to buy ‘off plan’ without seeing a dwelling, the communal facilities and/or meeting staff, meaning the sales process can take longer, and phasing is not possible as with general needs housing as developments are typically apartment blocks. There is also on-site care and support provision as well as the need for individual care packages and developments with higher levels of care often receive most of their income over the life of the scheme. A considerable amount of up-front working capital is required before revenues come on-stream.

Schemes are more than simply bricks and mortar – it is the “lifestyle” provided to the residents who chose or need this type of housing that ensures a successful housing scheme. So the planning requirements are therefore significantly diverse and few providers can be successful in this market which is the main reason for under provision – unless special planning provision is made.

Specialist housing for older people also needs to be near shops, services and transport links, where residents wish to live, and this impacts on land prices. Good sites are: hard to find; in short supply; in demand by a variety of uses including leisure and office uses (which do not pay affordable housing contributions and often have a lower CIL rate); in higher value areas; and tend to have higher development costs (often in conservation areas, in need of decontamination, or with archaeological interests that needs appropriate protection). Hence, when seeking to secure sites for development, retirement housebuilders are significantly disadvantaged as they cannot operate on a level playing field with others who are competing for the same type of sites.

334 Source: University of Reading, M Ball: Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities (2011)
Taken together, providing this form of accommodation is very different from general housing. We feel these points, as well as the social and economic benefits noted above, mean that the appropriateness of levelling S106 obligations against specialist housing for older people should be reviewed, as is being done with Starter Homes.

There would also be significant economic benefits which would outweigh any loss in affordable housing contributions. Professor Ball at the University of Reading notes that the UK needs to build many more specialist homes for older people than it does at present, with the potential of generating a build rate of 16,000 such houses a year – which at time of a dearth in house building cannot be overlooked. Such an increase would provide additional construction jobs as well as free up much-needed family housing and release it back onto local housing markets. Savills also notes that if supply of retirement housing could be encouraged it could reach 18,000 units per year\(^{335}\).

**Disincentives in the tax system preventing older people from moving**

Costs of moving in later life are a major disincentive to downsizing. They include legal and surveyor fees, Stamp Duty and removal costs. A number of organisations\(^ {336}\) have suggested that Stamp Duty should be scrapped for downsizers to support those who want to move, while the Institute of Public Care (IPC) has also suggested there should be a council tax abatement for those downsizing or for buyers of specialist retirement properties\(^ {337}\). The costs of such measures would be recouped by a housing chain reaction, generating additional Stamp Duty as families are able to move into properties vacated by older people.

A Stamp Duty exemption for older people downsizing into specialist accommodation would cost little but would greatly encourage the take-up of specialist housing and increase the number of people downsizing, as well as free up under-occupied housing. The number of housing chains this would create (with sales further down the chain still qualifying for Stamp Duty) would more than offset any loss of income for the Treasury. A 2014 review by the Institute of Public Care noted that exempting older people from Stamp Duty would benefit them and the housing market, whilst the benefit to the HMRC would be significant – an achievable 20% increase in the number of older people moving, netting the revenue an estimated additional £644m per annum. Neither is this a new concept as abolishing or

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\(^{335}\) Source: Savills: Housing an Ageing Population (2015)

\(^{336}\) Chartered Institute of Housing, The Intergenerational Foundation, All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, The University of Reading, Demos.

\(^{337}\) Source: Institute of Public Care: Identifying the Health Gain from Retirement Housing (2012)
offering relief on Stamp Duty has been introduced before - there was a Stamp Duty “holiday” for first time buyers from March 2010 through to March 2012.

In addition, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Housing and Care for Older People published a report in 2014 that called for a ‘Help to Move’ package for older people, along the lines of DCLG’s Help to Buy policy for first time buyers, calling for three key measures to help older people move:

- An equity loan, based on the Help to Buy approach, for those facing affordability issues in later life. The Group found no reason why the Help to Buy facility of an additional loan, on the same terms as Help to Buy, might not be targeted more directly at older people (e.g. through improved awareness raising and advice schemes) to kick-start an enlarged housebuilding programme for older downsizers. The difficulties older people encounter in accessing mortgage lending, even when they can afford the repayments, excludes many older people from moving. A Help to Move equity loan would address this problem.
- Stamp Duty exemptions for older people, as discussed above.
- Comprehensive financial advice, linked to the new duty on local authorities to provide advice under the Care Act from April 2015, and which should incorporate guidance on newly introduced pensions freedoms.

We call on the Government to introduce a ‘Help to Move’ package, like Help to Buy, that removes the financial restraints on older people downsizing, including a Stamp Duty exemption for those moving to retirement housing. Such a policy would send a clear message from the Government that older people choosing to move to more appropriate housing is a socially positive and beneficial act, and is likely to encourage more older people to proactively consider their housing options in later life.

07 December 2015
Evidence from England’s Community Forests

Background to England’s Community Forests

England’s Community Forests are Government approved programmes with a track record of environmental regeneration in and around our towns and cities.

Over half of England’s population lives within easy reach of a Community Forest. Our maturing woodlands are improving health and wellbeing, tackling a changing climate and setting the scene for future growth and prosperity and an essential part of the sustainable development of our towns and cities.

Each Community Forest is strategically located to support the jobs and growth agenda across key city regions and urban clusters. Our footprint includes the Northern Powerhouse, M4 Growth Corridor and D2N2.

As our woodlands have grown up we’ve developed a range of answers to the complex problems of our towns and cities. Our Forests: enable sustainable development, creating an attractive green framework for town and cityscape - places to live work and play; boost health and wellbeing; help adapt to climate change; connect people to their landscape each other and their communities; support economic growth through timber and biomass production and tourism through the outdoor visitor economy; help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

We have achieved sustainable improvements to the quality of life and place in some of the most deprived parts of England, as recognised by national planning and environment policy.

The quality and functionality of our built environment relies to a large degree on the quality, quantity and distribution of trees and other green infrastructure elements.

Trees in and around our towns and cities provide a broad range of benefits that can no longer be taken for granted including the recognised positive impacts a green environment has on property values.

Where trees are lacking we can identify “pinch points” to sustainable development.

We are pleased to provide comments on the role we think Community Forests play and can continue to play in the built environment.

Evidence
Below are set out the questions in the Call for Written Evidence followed by the response of the Urban FWAC Network

**Policymaking, integration and coordination**

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

- Trees and other green infrastructure types are an essential part of any discussion about built environment. GI needs to be planned in the same way as other infrastructures a fundamental consideration of how places function.
- Need for decision making at several levels, but clearer links between high level strategic planning and Local Authority level. Need for greater flexibility and ambition for local and neighbourhood plans and policy. We support the TCPA calls for a national strategic land use plan – to include forests and trees (Lie of the Land, 2014, TCPA).
- The need for a national GI plan that crosses planning authority boundaries. Community Forest Plans, are good starting points in the areas where they exist. These plans should be used more frequently in local decision making, using the links top NPPF and the strong links to community aspiration for their local areas.
- There needs to be some stability in plans and policy. The past 20 years has seen too many restarts/reset for plans and policy making. This has resulted in some places having started the planning process multiple times, confusing communities, wasting resources and leaving a policy vacuum.
- The natural element of the built environment requires longer term planning (stability) that can be adaptive in nature to respond to the changing demands in towns and cities.
- The Natural Capital Committee 2015 report makes a strong case for community forestry, identifying major cost: benefit returns and supporting key agendas such as housing growth, health, education and creation of attractive places for investment.

How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Government policy and implementation is not well integrated. There is a clear need to identify a lead department and establish a co-ordination team that brings in all relevant government departments to oversee delivery of GI so it is integrated into infrastructure planning for urban areas. Policy needs to be integrated once it is issued. Policy needs to have been consulted on internally before leaving government with all relevant Government Departments.

National Land use policy can help to inform the work of the coordination team, and provide a framework for monitoring alongside Natural Capital accounts.
National policy for planning and the built environment

Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

There is need for better, integrated policy guidance on natural environment – at present it has many strands and no unifying language, nor plan.

What is required is high level Natural Capital policy and GI policy, delivered locally through GI Plans, community forest plans and ecological frameworks - all of which have shared objectives.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

As a minimum, consideration should be given to our urban areas as different to our rural areas. They are the most densely populated areas with the most social, economic and environmental problems. There are also critical interrelationships which should be recognised, for example, maintaining flood plains and wooded areas up stream of rivers leading into urban areas to reduce the risk of flooding.

There should be national Green Infrastructure planning policy and guidance to making our cities towns and villages more liveable.

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Need for long term, stable plan and policy for natural environment in the built environment. These plans can be adaptive. The Community Forest plans are 40 year plans. This has worked well; it is a good model to use as the basis for planning for the built environment.

Green Infrastructure Plans will include many elements (including community forests) reflecting the multiple benefit and the partnership implementation. Delivery will be over many decades and will include projects relating to urban trees, green roofs, sustainable urban drainage, new green cycle ways, river and floodplain restorations etc. The long term integrated maintenance of this schemes also need to be considered as the project “grow” and multiply their benefits.

Buildings and places: New and old

What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level,
required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The built environment should be adapting to Climate change and the development of Green Infrastructure Plans and SUDs proposals are integral to these. GI will promote resilience, sustainability and economic benefits to urban communities that can come from GI not only amenity. GI Plans can be retro fitted to existing built areas and planned as part of new urban areas.

Ensure CF Plans are supported, where they exist, in local plans. Strengthen existing policy in NPPF to encompass all features of CFs in planning, not just in greenbelt issues.

Historic and Heritage environment create a sense of place pride. Understanding the history of where we live often leads to community involvement and community coherence. Trees and woodlands are part of the historic environment and can massively increase the value of an urban area. Historic trees and avenues in the urban areas are highly valued and add to the economic as well as aesthetic values of an area.

**Skills and design**

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

There has been a skills drain in the public sector, with the removal of the experienced planners, surveyors, architects, engineers, resulting in poor design being implemented by unskilled or poorly qualified. Local Enterprise Partnerships and other skills agencies may have a role to play to reskill our public players. Critically we require multi-disciplinary practitioners to plan urban areas who understand architecture, landscape, climate change, engineering, drainage, pollution etc.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

England’s Community Forests, The Landscape institute, the RTPI and other national bodies have a leading role to play in advising Government. These organisations have been an ardent supporter of GI and multi-disciplinary planning and their energy and passion should be channelled into Government policy making.

Page 1293 of 1964
Community involvement and community impact

Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

There is a good evidence base to support high quality green infrastructure improving the quality of life and place. These interventions, if well planned and coordinated, can be lower cost solutions to some of the problems that our towns and cities face now and in the future with pressures from projected climate change and demographic shifts.

Setting clear framework nationally and maintaining up to date plan and policy database of good practice would be helpful (planning and forestry portal was part of Env White paper – but now going out of date due to lack of resources (http://www.forestryandplanning.org.uk/)

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The reduction of the public sector work force through declining budgets has placed more pressure on the planning system. Consulting communities on shaping their built environment requires a resource that currently is not there or is present at a reduced capacity. To facilitate effective public consultation resources will need to be provided to the public sector to engage in long term sustainable solutions. These need not be large amounts but could be used to draw in third sector partners to facilitate this process.

Financial measures

Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

- There should be a re-examination of the use of tax credit to support sustainable environmental improvements to unlock housing and other land use pinch points. There is emerging evidence to show how good quality GI can accelerate development on approved sites and lead to accelerated returns on investment. This can, income retention - BE Group - accelerate investment
- Consideration of European mainland financial models and approaches to housing and urban development eg where where infrastructure goes in prior to development.
- Government should investigate Green Bank investments into City or town Centres, which elevate the value of land and produce a return on that investment through increased land values.
Government should be looking at sustainable incomes rather than one-off capital payment. Incomes should be related to other incomes such as the Community Infrastructure Levy or the Landfill Communities Fund where a percentage of the payments help maintain the public realm into the future.

05 October 2015
INTRODUCTION

This call for evidence on our National Policy for the Built Environment is welcomed.

- Many believe that the planning system has become focussed on reacting to events, with minimal emphasis on proactive town planning:
- The public has minimal involvement in the evolution of developments, and often sees development as something to object to:
- Developers are perceived as all-powerful: big schemes seem to be pushed through, but small householder projects are delayed:
- The built heritage is not being seen as a resource but as an obstacle:
- The architectural and urban design quality of much of what we produce is abysmal:
- Planning offices are largely becoming short-staffed processors of planning applications, with little creativity, trying to avoid being judged “under-performing”.

There is much to consider if we are to return to the more positive and proactive and imaginative approach which underpinned the setting up of our planning system.

Suggested responses to some of the Committee’s questions are as follows.

2 How well is planning policy co-ordinated between Government departments?

2.1 Housing provision appears to be a stand-alone subject, not linked to the provision of open space, community and education facilities, employment, infrastructure and other uses, all of which need to be balanced and inter-dependent in a properly planned way.
“Infrastructure first” should be the approach. But the funding regime for these “support” services appears to be based on “running after the problem once it has appeared”, rather than the whole planning package being integrated.

The capturing of some small amounts of social housing, or section 106/CIL payments as part of the application process is clearly not sufficient, and comes too late. Some Councils are misusing this funding to defray local running costs, rather than creating the new infrastructure to support new housing.

Government initiatives and funding are seen as “silos”, unrelated to each other or to a coordinated and unified national policy.

3 The NPPF: is its policy guidance sufficient/right?

3.1 The introduction of the concept of “viability” in the NPPF has been disastrous. The private sector developer tables “confidential” figures in discussion with planning officers. These cannot be checked by the public nor by Councillors. The officers then appoint outside firms (who often advise developers on other schemes) to check the figures. The end result is the reduction of community benefits and social housing being provided in the scheme.

2 The practical effect therefore is to increase the developer’s profits, increase the price paid by the developer to the landowner, largely eliminate the social gains that were intended to flow from the development. And significant public disquiet.

Removing this “viability” reference would return us to the previous situation where, if a developer claimed that their project was “uneconomic”, the planning office would simply say (as we did many times) “come back when it is”.

And all the secrecy, delays, extra fees and work that result could be eliminated.

3.2 The NPPF should make clear that the major reason for having a planning system is so that the public voice may be heard, as a balance to the voice of the developer. This means that the principal “client” of the planning system is not the developer, as seems to now be assumed by HMG, but the public.
One should remember the phrase: “Whose town is it anyway?”

3.3 The NPPF guidance on Heritage is weak, and fails to provide the robustness and clarity that are needed to underpin a local Council’s planning policies.

3.4 It also fails to give enough emphasis to the protection of Flood Plains, with the result that new housing for example, which is classed as a “vulnerable” use, is being accepted and indeed encouraged in the defined 3B and 3A zones, contrary to what the Environment Agency (and the NPPF annexe table 3) says.

The Environment Agency seems to lack the firmness and “teeth” to ensure that development that compromises flood plains is prevented.

3.5 Green Belt (GB) protection needs to be modified in at least three ways.

It should be made clear that the GB policies apply equally to the Metropolitan Open Lands (MOL) in the major conurbations.

This is specified for example in the London Plan, but should be integral to the NPPF.

Also, the GB itself would gain from having a more systematic analysis of why each part is designated: for example, the reasons include the separation of settlements: the quality of the agricultural land: the visual protection: nature protection and green corridors: historical and heritage elements, and so on.

And the so-called gummer law, that allows houses of supposed special architectural merit to be built in the GB, should be scrapped.

Either the GB needs to be kept clear of new development or not.

And no-one can sensibly claim to be able to say that project X is of high architectural quality. Remembering that the Shell Centre beside Waterloo was designed by the then President of the RIBA.
3.6 The operation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is not fit for purpose. As a basic concept, it was simple to understand and well thought through, but it has been watered down. The current scheme is now far too complex and expensive for planning authorities to administer. It is also likely to yield minimal financial benefits.

HMG seems to have been over-influenced by the development industry, with the result that the public, expecting to see some significant community benefits coming from such a scheme, are now to be disappointed. An example that it takes more skill to make a simple scheme than a complex one. And that when it comes to clever salesmanship, the development industry has few equals.

3.7 Land Value Capture (LVC) needs to be an integral part of the planning system. When the public sees a landowner of agricultural land, valued at £10k an acre, being offered £3 million or more an acre so that it can be developed, there is a justifiable disbelief.

Such an enhancement in value is created by the public (ie the planning system), and the enhanced land value should accrue to the public purse, and be used to fund the infrastructure, the education, social and community facilities, heritage and open spaces that such a development will require.

6 What should HMG do about housing supply?

6.1 “Solving” one problem (housing shortage) by creating others (for example by automatically allowing change of use from non-residential use) is not the answer. Lack of employment floorspace locally means that workers have further to travel. Allowing housing into commercial areas, with all the environmental and noise problems is storing up future difficulties. This dismantles one of the basic amenity and public protection standards underpinning land use planning.

6.2 Land value capture, and the dropping of “viability” from consideration (see 3 above) would encourage Councils to be more pro-active in designating land for future development.

HMG should consider funding Councils to purchase new land for both social housing, and housing for sale. By Compulsory purchase if required.
And the basis for compensation to the landowner should reflect not only the current use, but a significant additional amount for disturbance.

Such land acquisition may need to be vested in a “parallel to the Council” public body, to ensure that the financial sums generated are used appropriately.

8 How to make optimum use of the Historic Environment?

8.1 There is a major difference in performance between the works to historic buildings carried out or funded by “heritage bodies” such as English Heritage, National Trust etc (which are exemplary), and the works carried out by the development industry, working with the local Council’s planning office staff.

This is because the majority of the latter have inadequate expertise, and are working to tight financial deadlines.

The lack of planning fees for such applications is also a significant factor.

Few local Planning office staff have either the time or the expertise to monitor, advice, and if necessary enforce control on the quality of “heritage” works.

(The basic drawings that have been approved do not of course usually show the complexity of works needed when old structures are opened up).

The need for skilled staff in a planning office, who understand the construction and frailties of old buildings and how to respect them, is clear.

8.2 Currently many planning offices have only two of the three essential sections in place: Development Control (which gleams some fees and is a statutory function), and Policy which is needed to produce up-to-date plans.

Until the 1990’s most progressive planning offices had the vital third section, where
positive planning ideas for the future, design and imagination, were the norm. And where the knowledge of the historic environment was inbuilt.

This was, and perhaps should be, the main public face of the modern planning office, dealing with and briefing developers, producing the innovative ideas, leaving development control to handle process.

This aspect of creative planning has largely atrophied, driven not only by Councils cutting back expenditure, but also by the lack of suitable staff with the required qualifications.

It has impoverished the creative side of planning, and meant that staff with experience of how historic buildings are made, how they can be repaired, how they can be respected and enhanced have not been available.

8.3 The number of planners who are qualified in this area is minimal: architects with their ability in building construction and design (town planners are not designers) were an essential part of the planning profession, but now are extremely rare.

For the planning profession to be able to take on any task that society requires of it, the skill range has to include design and heritage. It is not practicable to expect every single planner to have the complete range of skills, so the profession needs to ensure that all members of the institute have the basic planning skill, and then that many should have an additional specialism, be it design, valuation, heritage, construction, statistics etc.

Currently it is virtually impossible to attract architects into the planning profession, and this needs to change. A planning profession without proper design skills is what we have currently. Should an HMG grant aid for initial training be explored?

8.4 Grant-aiding historic building works by local planning authorities or English Heritage is now, apart from some bijou projects, largely defunct.

The reason given is lack of financial resources.

Alternative positive approaches seem to receive little encouragement from HMG.
For example, a Heritage Grant scheme which provided 10% of the cost of external repairs to listed buildings and houses in conservation areas, would be self-supporting financially if it were grant-aided by HMG.

This is because when the project is implemented, the normal (c20%) tax (and VAT) paid by the building industry to HMG on each project will more than cover the initial cost of the grant. Specialist heritage firms also gain from the additional workload. Local Council planning office staff would run such a (simple) scheme using the HMG grant and their own running costs would also be covered.

We know from personal experience that such a scheme works, is simple to administer, and delivers benefits to heritage areas and historic buildings.

All that is needed is some positive thinking by HMG.

- Because listed buildings applications provide no fee income (the same being true for Article 4 Directions) LPA’s give them low priority, and fail to employ staff who are qualified to deal with design and heritage.
- If HMG does not wish to see fees paid, then it should consider making grants to the LPA to match the number of such heritage cases they deal with.

9  **Does the planning profession have the required skills?**

9.1  No. As explained above, town planners are not designers, and the profession needs to broaden its skills base.

It is no good parachuting in “an architect” to give some design input.

We have had experience of these, with no proper understanding of planning, spending their time altering the elevations of other architects – a total nonsense.

We need far more “planner-architects” in the profession.

10  **Are we using the right techniques to promote high quality design?**

10.1  No. The present method of working is that the developer arrives at the planning office with their proposal drawings. The planning staff are then supposed to instantly
respond, even though they may not know the site in any detail. The scheme architect is nowadays often seen as merely a support act, with the developer and a skilled “negotiator” doing all the presentation. (The architect is often hired just to “get planning permission” and is then dropped from the scheme).

Not surprisingly, the scheme gets off to a poor start and the planning staff have to try to get it back on track when they have had an opportunity to see the site etc.

Also, all these pre-application discussions are confidential, so the public has no knowledge of what is about to happen in their town, nor any input.

And when the application is submitted, the public has just the 3 weeks to comment, on what they see as a fait accompli, with the developer in the D&A Statement claiming that the scheme has been “agreed” with the planning staff. Unsurprisingly, the public often sees the planning staff as part of the problem, having been “won over” by the developer.

10.2 What should happen instead?

The developer should identify the site to the planning staff, and ask for a briefing. The planning staff then produce the basic urban design and planning brief.

This is seldom more than a single page of A4, and will have basic design/planning advice, such as building lines, height limits, tree respect zones, neighbour daylighting/privacy requirements, access options etc. This is then made public.

Local people will (a) have advance information that something is to happen, and (b) can contribute their own thoughts/proposals at an early stage in the design process, cutting down on last ditch objections. The architect then has the basic building envelope and planning parameters to work within.

Whether the architect follows the urban design and planning advice or not is their decision. The planning office must deal with whatever application is submitted. But it should be clear that the scheme would be measured against the original urban design and planning criteria.
And the design should never be “negotiated” or “agreed” with the planning office, which is there to offer advice: only the Council can “agree” a scheme, not the staff.

Such an approach puts the architect back into leading the design process, and marginalises and hopefully eliminates the need for professional “negotiators”. Better design should result.

**10.3** There should be no discussion about “architectural style”, which should not be a concern of the planning system (there may be minor exceptions for listed buildings). The NPPF (and its predecessor documents) in effect says this, but the reality is that Planning Committees (and planning office staff) still tread heavily into this aesthetic minefield. And unfortunately promote and support crude pastiche rather than innovative modern design.

(Style and design are two very different concepts, but are often confused. Style is essentially merely fashion, design is integral to the character and nature of a building, and allows buildings of many “styles” to co-exist).

The result of this interference is that the relationship between the planning and architectural professions is poisoned, the output by the architect is unsatisfactory, and mediocre buildings are the result. For proof of this “look out of any window”, to see what we are all currently delivering to the public.

**10.4** The basic principle should be that the planning system has to design and plan the town: no-one else can do it, certainly not the architect or the developer. The architect then has to design and plan the building, within those planning parameters. Not the other way round.

**10.5** Some of us know from past experience that this alternative approach (ie setting the basic urban design and planning parameters, and then keeping off the “architecture” as above) delivers a better result.

Better in that the architect takes sole responsibility for the detailed design.

The quality of the buildings is better, as is the building’s relationship to the locality. And the relationship between the two professions is more positive and clear cut, improved immeasurably, with fruitful collaboration being possible.
And the delays that result from a late “change of heart”, or aesthetic meddling by the planning staff are minimised.

And giving the public far more time to understand and respond and contribute to a development proposal is not only more productive, it is also more respectful.

12 **How effectively can communities engage with the development process?**

12.1 All pre-application discussions between developers and planning staff should be public, apart from genuine financial balance sheets (see above).

When this is done, the community can put together and suggest its own views on how a site should be developed, well before any application is submitted.

This could help the developer to understand local issues at an early stage of the development process. The public, with its close knowledge of local history and character, should be seen as a resource, not an obstruction.

Remember: “**Whose town is it anyway?**”

12.2 Policy-based plans are very difficult for the general public to understand. Instead of being 100 pages long, with eloquent reasoning, all plan policies should be able to be summarised onto a popular version, say 4 sides of A4.

12.3 To balance these written documents, much more should be done to encourage basic 3D plans for village and town centres, which could bring to life the sometimes dry and technical-speak plans and policies.

06 October 2015
1. Introduction:

The Mineral Wool Insulation Manufacturers Association (MIMA) welcomes the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment inquiry and the opportunity to engage in this important area.

The UK’s housing stock remains amongst the leakiest in Western Europe. This has far reaching implications for consumers and is resulting in fuel bills being higher than necessary and over two million fuel poor homes which costs the NHS an estimated £1.3bn per year. This is despite of a 30% reduction in gas consumption, that DECC believe were part driven by home energy efficiency schemes. There are further implications for the UK’s energy security, the need for additional energy infrastructure investment and also climate change.

As part of National Policy for the Built Environment, there is a clear opportunity for the Government to improve the UK’s existing housing stock and fully insulate our 27 million homes.

However to date, Government policy in the area of energy efficiency, retrofit and improving our housing stock has not succeeded in raising sufficient awareness of the benefits of investing in our stock or in driving demand from consumers. Both have had unwelcome consequences for the stability of the insulation industry and the overall success of these policies.

With this response, MIMA would like to focus on addressing policy shortcomings and provide economically viable and workable solutions that bring clear benefits to the UK Government, UK consumers but also delivers for the UK’s built environment.

2. Summary:

To date, Government ‘boom and bust’ policies to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock, such as ‘cash back’ have not generated enough consumer demand for energy efficiency retrofits. It has created an unstable supply chain with consequences for the quality of workmanship in some cases.

MIMA believes that driving the energy efficiency of the UK’s housing stock to prevent energy and money being wasted must be a central plank of the government’s economic, energy and climate change policy. This must be supported by a commitment to a stable,
long-term (at least ten-year) programme with investment in energy efficient housing as an infrastructure priority. Such an approach would:

- **Improve the quality of our homes:** Our homes are part of our national infrastructure and should be a source of pride – not the leakiest in Europe.

- **Reduce energy bills and fuel poverty:** Energy efficiency can permanently reduce energy bills by £300 each year and lift 9 out of 10 homes out of fuel poverty.

- **Deliver demonstrable benefits to health and wellbeing:** Energy efficiency can improve health and wellbeing, reduce excess winter deaths and lower NHS and social care costs.

- **Drive down carbon emissions:** Buildings are responsible for almost 37% of all UK carbon emissions. Energy efficiency can reduce carbon emissions to meet carbon targets and combat climate change.

- **Drive economic growth and creates jobs:** Investing in energy efficiency can generate significant economic growth in all regions of the UK and double the number of jobs across the UK in the sector to 260,000.

- **Increase energy security:** Energy efficiency can improve the UK’s energy security and reduce our reliance on imported gas.

3. **Policymaking, integration and coordination:**

   a) **Policymaking:**

   There are two areas of policy that MIMA would like to raise in this response – the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and the replacement for the Green Deal.

   i) **The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)**

   - Clarity is urgently needed on the ECO post 2017.

   - MIMA supports moves for the ECO to be targeted towards the fuel poor, provided there is also a commitment to put in a place a solid, long-term plan for the able to pay market.
• Care must be taken to ensure the ‘new’ ECO is not too narrowly focused. Otherwise the identification of eligible households could become as costly as the installation works.

• An area-based element should also remain based upon the CISCO/LSOA and HHCRO to cast the net wider.

• HHCRO delivery should ensure energy efficiency measures are installed wherever a heating system is upgraded to avoid wasted heat.

• However, in the long term, Government must review whether the energy companies are best placed as ECO’s delivery agent. The current model adds costs to energy bills and also results in the delivery of energy efficiency measures being based solely on cost, rather than focusing on quality installations and ensuring people who need measures the most are able to access them.

• Lastly, Government must not withdraw support/make wholesale changes suddenly or the supply chain will be decimated (again).

ii) The Green Deal replacement

Recently, the Secretary of State, Amber Rudd has signalled the end of the Green Deal, by ending funding for the Green Deal Finance Company however also called on industry to work with the Government to deliver a structure that provides value for money to the exchequer, tackles the priority issues of fuel poverty and carbon reduction and empowers consumers to keep their bills down. There is a clear opportunity to get policy right and to deliver for our homes in the UK.

Despite this withdrawal of government support for the Green Deal Finance Company and the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund, MIMA wants to see the continued use of some aspects of the architecture set up to deliver the Green Deal and the ideas behind it in new policies.

The experience of the last 2-3 years clearly demonstrates that government policies such as the Green Deal which simply ‘enable’ energy efficiency are not sufficient to drive consumer demand on their own.
MIMA strong advocates policies that not only enable people to take up energy efficiency measures (such as pay as you save schemes or low interest loans), but also drives them to want to do it. We think drivers such as tax incentives or nudges are absolutely critical. In our view, the focus on enablers in the Green Deal was one of the fundamental problems. Therefore we support moves to encourage take up through tax incentives, and wish to see future policy take the following shape:

1) Commit to a long-term (ten-year) programme with energy efficient housing as an infrastructure priority.

2) **Drive demand** by rewarding energy efficient homeowners with lower stamp duty or other tax incentives (which are cost neutral) By also requiring that inefficient homes should have higher levels of stamp duty, the approach becomes cost-neutral for HM Treasury. This incentive has the additional benefit of making energy efficient homes more attractive to buyers and triggers action to improve energy efficiency at a time when people are already thinking about refurbishing or upgrading homes i.e. when they are looking for a mortgage, re-mortgaging or a loan for home improvements.

3) **Enable** householders to see it through with low interest loans for energy efficiency improvements and other financial support to reduce up-front costs (fuel poor and able to pay). Loans would be offered by retail banks and other financial institutions with a ‘shop window’ i.e. such as high street banks. They have high visibility and an ability to reach out to consumers. Simple to understand, low interest energy efficiency retrofit loans to households have been very successful in Germany for 15 years. It would help to move the industry off the reliance on subsidies. Consumer research in the UK[338] and from other countries[339] supports this.

4) **Support** supply chain capacity and high quality delivery.

This is similarly reflected in the Respublica[340] report ‘After the Green Deal: Empowering people and places to improve their homes’ and commit to investing in delivering better homes and better lives’:

339 Mintel, Policy changes are putting a chill into the thermal insulation market, October 2014. [http://www.mintel.com/blog/mintel-market-news/policy-changes-are-putting-a-chill-into-the-thermal-insulation-market](http://www.mintel.com/blog/mintel-market-news/policy-changes-are-putting-a-chill-into-the-thermal-insulation-market)
• Government should introduce a financial incentive for consumers at a key trigger point: when buying and selling their house. Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) should be reduced in line with each Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) point a property reaches above the mid-point of revenue. Conversely, SDLT should be increased for each SAP point a property is below this.
• Introduce a ‘Help to Improve’ scheme, where Government guarantees the cost of a property’s investment in energy efficiency retrofit and provides funding through an intermediary to reduce the interest rate of the loan.

In summary, any successful government policy for the able to pay market must have two vital elements – both the engagement of consumers and enabling them to improve their homes, to keep their bills down and homes warm. By recognising that our homes form an essential part of our national infrastructure with a coherent programme which deliberately drives demand, and then enables consumers to ‘see it through’ will succeed to ensure connection with consumers and secure policy success.

b) Government department integration/coordination:

Historically government departments have not worked together holistically on policies in this sector and cross departmental coordination has been limited or even lacking. For example, there has not been a transparent, cross-departmental approach to adding new, high-performance measures to government energy efficiency programmes. This has hampered innovation and penalised companies for going beyond minimum standards.

MIMA would like to see government seeking a better way of working across departments, especially where these negatively impact upon the policy outcomes and stakeholders involved with the built environment. We would welcome active participation on seeking a practical solution that delivers outcomes for government, industry and UK consumers.

4. Building and Places: New and Old

The stop start approach of Government policy in this area has had unintended consequences for the insulation industry but also the overall success of these policies.

The building insulation market contracted by 22% in 2013,\textsuperscript{341} as the installation of cavity wall insulation fell by 46%, the installation of loft insulation fell by more than 87%, and the

installation of solid wall insulation fell by 30%, compared with the number of measures installed under the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) in 2012.\footnote{Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are a measure of the level of energy efficiency of a home. The ratings span from A to G. A-rated homes would have relatively low energy bills, whereas G-rated homes would have high energy bills, and be expensive to heat. An EPC band of C represents a reasonably good level of energy efficiency. The average EPC rating in England and Wales is currently D. Increasing the energy efficiency rating (or EPC) delivers a warmer, healthier, and more comfortable home for the resident, whilst reducing the energy bills.}

To ensure a sustainable and resilient built environment we must realise the clear opportunity to improve the UK’s existing housing stock and insulate the 27 million homes.

This can be realised by a radical new approach to home energy efficiency as outlined in the Verco report\footnote{C. Liddell, Estimating the impacts of Northern Ireland’s warm homes scheme 2000-2008, University of Ulster, 2008. http://eprints.ulster.ac.uk/26173/1/FPcostbenefitsonweb.pdf} which calls for all low income homes, by 2025, to be retrofitted with energy efficiency measures to achieve a mid-band C on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC),\footnote{Chief Medical Officer, 2009 Annual Report, 2009. http://www.sthc.co.uk/Documents/CMO_Report_2009.pdf} and for all other households to be offered 0% interest loans to improve them to an equivalent EPC standard by 2035; delivered as part of a major infrastructure investment programme. In the original report, detailed modelling assessed the economic, fiscal, and environmental impacts of this programme. It concluded that the economic case for making the energy efficiency of the UK housing stock a national infrastructure priority is strong.

In addition to making all low-income households highly energy efficient, and reducing the level of fuel poverty, the modelling has established that this energy efficiency programme would deliver:

- **£3.20 returned through increased GDP per £1 invested by government**
- **0.6% relative GDP improvement** by 2030, increasing annual GDP in that year by £13.9bn
- **Improved health and reduced healthcare expenditure**, due to warmer and more comfortable homes, and improved air quality. For every £1 spent on reducing fuel poverty, a return of 42 pence is expected in National Health Service (NHS) savings.\footnote{http://www.energybillrevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Frontier-Economics-Energy-Efficiency-an-Infrastructure-Priority.pdf} \footnote{http://www.respublica.org.uk/our-work/publications/after-the-green-deal/}
• **23,138,000 homes to be retrofitted under the scheme** including England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (not all homes in the UK require retrofitting to this standard)

Recently, this report has further been strengthened by independent research by Frontier Economics\(^{347}\) which confirms that an energy efficiency programme should be classed as an infrastructure priority. This approach helps to free up capacity in the energy network just as effectively as building new energy supply. It also provides a public service by reducing health costs and cutting carbon emissions in a highly cost effective way.

The research reveals that a programme to make UK homes energy efficient would provide net economic benefits of £8.7 billion. This is based on the Government's own economic analysis, delivering comparable economic benefits to infrastructure initiatives such as HS2 Phase 1, Crossrail and new roads.

5. **Community involvement and community impact**

MIMA supported a recent innovative report by, Respublica (REF)\(^ {348} \) ‘After the Green Deal: Empowering people and places to improve their homes’ which sets out a number of ambitious recommendations at a devolved level to realise a community based approach:

- Government should enable city regions to retain the revenue generated from Stamp Duty Land Tax, and harness this new power to introduce more local and bespoke incentives for people to improve their homes. This approach should initially be trialled within a leading city region, and then rolled out to other cities and local authorities over time.

- As part of ongoing city devolution deals, a portion of national infrastructure funds should be devolved to cities to invest in energy efficiency schemes via an open competition.

- Government should devolve revenue from a range of low carbon taxes and levies to City Regions. This should initially be piloted with a percentage of the overall amount. A portion of these funds should be used to deliver home energy efficiency schemes.


\(^{348}\) Ekelund, U et al. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2015; Physical activity and all-cause mortality across levels of overall and abdominal adiposity in European men and women: the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition Study (EPIC) [http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/early/2015/01/14/ajcn.114.100065.abstract](http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/early/2015/01/14/ajcn.114.100065.abstract)
• Government should encourage Local Authorities (LAs) to designate ‘Warm Home Zones’ to help target areas where low EPCs and poor public health outcomes coincide. Within these areas, LAs should introduce additional incentives for home owners and stricter regulations on landlords. The quantifiable benefits to health and social outcomes in each area should be re-invested locally.

• Revenues generated from carbon taxes and levies on energy bills should be retained locally. City regions should be able to invest this money in local home energy efficiency projects.

6. Conclusion:

The House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment inquiry provides a clear opportunity to recommend a policy environment that will build a long term, stable energy efficiency policy that contributes to a sustainable, resilient built environment but most importantly improves our current built environment.

This inquiry should start by recognising that our homes form an essential part of our national infrastructure. Investment in this infrastructure will bring real economic benefits to the UK – both boosting UK productivity and significant job creation, as well as energy security.

However it is vital that for any government policy to succeed it must have two vital elements – both the engagement of consumers to drive demand and also enabling them to improve their homes, to keep their bills down and homes warm.

MIMA would welcome an opportunity to expand on these solutions during the inquiry.

7. About MIMA:

The Mineral Wool Insulation Manufacturers Association (MIMA) is a trade body providing an authoritative source of independent information and advice on glass and stone wool insulation. MIMA actively promotes the benefits of mineral wool insulation and the contribution it makes to the energy efficiency of buildings and the comfort of their occupants.

We represent four of the leading insulation companies in the UK - Isover St Gobain, Knauf, Rockwool and Superglass.
Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland (BEN0039)

HOUSE OF LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Evidence from MAG

MAG is Northern Ireland’s Ministerial Advisory Group established in 2007 under the Architecture and Built Environment Policy to advise the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure as the government’s design champion.

http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/arts.../ministerial_advisory_group.htm

MAG presents the following evidence in response to the questions posed by the House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment.

Although devolution means that the Select Committee’s findings and recommendations will relate primarily to England, MAG’s experience in a recently reformed system of local government and planning may be of relevance.

Some principles that have been developed and promoted by MAG’s work appear to resonate with issues identified by the Select Committee and may offer a different approach that may inform the Committee’s work.

Providing evidence in relation to the Select Committee’s questions is also useful to MAG in advising on the continuing review of the Architecture and Built Environment Policy for Northern Ireland, which is now over nine years old.

On behalf of MAG we present a six page summary of our answers to questions, including some internet links that amplify the answers.

MAG advises that we must ‘Connect the unexpected – and sometimes the obvious – by design’.

MAG would be pleased to provide further detail and additional references about its evidence, upon request.

Arthur Acheson
Architect + Civic Planner
Chair of MAG

Andrew Haley
Landscape Architect + Urban Designer
Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland (BEN0039)

Member of MAG and Chair of Landscape Subgroup of MAG

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

MAG Evidence 1A:

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) had a remit: ‘Design, Manage, Maintain’. MAG invited CABE to present at a symposium in Navan, County Armagh in 2010, ‘Planning for Places’, and found psychological benefit in reversing the word sequence to ‘Maintain, Manage, Design’.

MAG Evidence 1B:

Maintain + manage = ‘stewardship’ (defined by the Social Capital Group in Boston USA as ‘active caring’). ‘Civic’ suggests people and places. The Social Capital Group offers us three techniques, ‘action learning’, ‘connecting’ and ‘aligning’. MAG used these with District Councils and launched an interim report at a Belfast symposium in 2013.


Stewardship can be tried out very quickly to inform and develop the ‘software’ of a place. The software needs to be designed just as its ‘hardware’ (its built form) is designed. The potential for change is rapid and universally accessible. Changing software is a quick, cheap, easy and reversible way to improve all places, from the worst to the best. Understanding the ‘place software’ can then inform the physical design. This makes for better design briefs.

MAG Evidence 1C

Successful delivery of civic places requires wide-ranging organisations and individuals to have common objectives. For larger initiatives, this requires alignment of departmental and community priorities. Development of the Masterplan for Colin Town Centre, through the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) Urban Village Programme, demonstrated the benefit of a ‘national’ policy providing the context within which a number of public departments/authorities were required to work together to make the area a ‘priority’. The active and passionate involvement of the community was galvanised by the expectation that the much needed changes were likely to be realised and that they as a community were central partners.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?
Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland (BEN0039)

MAG Evidence 2A:
During a period of Planning Reform in 2008 an independent expert, Professor Greg Lloyd, advised the Minister for the Environment in Northern Ireland, calling on government, professions and society to adopt a more collegiate approach. MAG wanted to know more. After detailed experimental work, MAG defined collegiality as ‘Organically changing leadership and support in pursuit of a shared objective, retaining the independence of all participants.’ The model is the geese crossing a great ocean in V-formation. All the birds are independent but in flight the flock is measured as 80% more efficient than a bird flying alone. It is physically not possible for a lone bird to make the journey, but by changing onerous leadership and less onerous support organically during the flight, a flock of birds flies non-stop for thousands of miles. There is always one in the lead but it is not always the same one.

MAG Evidence 2B:
MAG now uses collegiality to lead where appropriate and support where possible. Such leadership and support allows MAG to support organisations who have devoted much time to researching a particular topic (for example an urban road junction layout or a procurement issue) and to naturally lead on other areas (such as its work on civic stewardship with small, cheap or free interventions making a huge difference to places in even a single day). Mentoring on areas where MAG has demonstrated leadership can then be provided strategically to central government, local authorities and the private, voluntary and community sectors.

MAG Evidence 2C:
There is significant evidence that the application of joined-up policy requires strong leadership, not just of an organisation, but through the passion, skill and commitment of a ‘champion’ who can come from the public, private or community sector. Northern Ireland examples include leaders, in places such as Laganside and Connswater and in the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings by the private sector, who have been prominent ‘champions’. All are adept at solving problems and removing impediments to projects, in a way that ‘organisations’ are not. It is important to recognise that the energy required to be a ‘champion’ is not unending and therefore the collegiate approach to succession is vitally important.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

MAG Evidence 3A:
Northern Ireland does not have a NPPF; instead it has a series of Planning Policy Statements which will gradually be replaced by a single Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) that was launched on 28 September 2015. MAG support for the NI Department of the Environment led to the inclusion in the SPPS of specific references to urban and civic stewardship. MAG’s advocacy during the consultation on the SPPS recommended that a hierarchy of principles be adopted in the SPPS under the Guiding Principle – ‘the Planning Authority must operate in the public interest’, followed by a further Hierarchy of Principles, the importance of firstly eco-systems, secondly people, thirdly places and only fourthly policies, legislation and regulations, including economics and transport. This allows evidence for the decision to be measured to respect the public interest, which is of course ultimately a political and legislative decision. This approach may be helpful in considering the shape of any future NPPF. It is noted that there is currently a policy vacuum, in relation to the lack of a Land Strategy. This is considered important as the means of articulating a shared understanding of how competing and complementary land uses can be reconciled in spatial planning terms.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

MAG Evidence 4A:

Spatial planning is about the quality of places and how they might stay the same or change for better or worse. It depends on spatial appreciation. This is best achieved by being there – not only at times that specialised expert consultants may appear during the working day but also at other times – in the long summer evenings, on a rowdy weekend, during a cold spell when communications may be reduced, waiting for a bus, or helping a lost soul with directions when the satnav hasn’t worked properly. In other words, local people are the experts. What is good in this place and should not be interfered with? What is bad here and needs urgent attention? What changes can happen immediately with a change of habits? Which changes need longer?

MAG Evidence 4B:

MAG has shown officials and elected representatives that change (including a change of attitude) can happen very quickly. A recent ‘Six week Ward Vision’ brought together local people to explore their place; they reported in ‘six weeks’. They wanted a sensory garden to brighten the lives of children with autism. When they heard that normal timescale for a new public garden would be about 12 years they agreed that sensory wheelbarrows in the main street could be a good experimental start. By Week 2, the planted barrows were there with lovely signs saying they were a gift to the townspeople from the children’s autism
society. Why wait? Plants, including sensory plants, grow and reproduce. Perhaps there will be more sensory barrows or a sensory Main Street, well before the normal 12 year timescale because people ‘just make it happen’ and ‘don’t take “No!” for an answer’.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

MAG Evidence 5A:

All timescales can be taken into account. Action Learning happens in a single day. MAG’s civic stewardship interim report describes over 30 techniques. Some already exist, some are new, instant and free and some are low cost but take a little longer. In many places, knowledge and skills have been gained from generations of good stewardship but designers often miss or dismiss these. They can instead be appreciated, encouraged and developed by design professionals – provided they take time to look for them. They can find out how places work, not by ‘consultation’ but by involvement, and by using the civic stewardship technique of ‘connecting’. Skilled designers can gain huge benefits by, for example, trying out a street closure to see how it feels to sit there. It might feel cold and windy most of the time, so maybe fixed benches are a waste of time; perhaps tables and chairs should only be brought out on great summer days. Now, with some direct action learning, can we talk to shopkeepers, councillors, officials and residents about this? Having learned by action and having connected, is there anything we now need to align? Were there obstacles that need a change of software? Do we need to involve the police, traffic wardens, street cleaners, event managers and restauranteurs? Do we need to change the by-laws or is legislation required to align experimental findings with policy and practice? Action learning is quick. Connecting takes a bit longer. Aligning may take months or years. But all create and build upon real evidence, not designers’ surmises or their bright illustrations.

There is an urgent need for those tasked with delivering regeneration to think differently about the process of spatial planning and how to effect the desired changes. It is important to plan change relative to timing holistically. A Masterplan is important to inform strategic decisions, facilitating the delivery of meanwhile uses, interim uses and the long-term vision, recognising that at any and every point in that process there should be good stewardship that involves people and creates a continuing sense of place.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

MAG Evidence 6A:
There are many empty houses in England and across the UK. Depending on their location they may have become affordable but unpopular. Civic Stewardship (active caring for people and places) can help. Firstly, by using and thereby maintaining places, often with simple cheap techniques that are implemented by local people with modest encouragement, the perception of a street, square or rural place can be changed. Suddenly places feel brighter, less intimidating, lose their ‘run down’ appearance and become places where people may actively choose to live and work. Secondly, by managing places, perceptions can change quickly. Belfast city centre is positively different during its annual ‘Culture Night’, for example. Two ‘European Heritage Open Days’ open a church at unexpected times – presenting true delight in places for little or no cost. Where districts with houses in public ownership have become ‘unpopular’, there are schemes such as ‘homesteading’ which have been successfully employed to avoid demolition and conditionally devolve responsibility for properties to new ‘repairing owners’ to agreed standards which can include sustainable renovation. Self-build housing can be encouraged.

All this software has already been designed and is fully operable. The next design brief is to make the software available in a local and timely manner to people who care about their places. ‘Housing crisis – 1 million new homes pledged’ is today’s headline - but ‘new home’ does not necessarily mean ‘new build’. Providing a million new homes may just need a more intelligent use of our huge stock of underused and empty existing buildings. Artists in lofts in New York showed us how.

Public authorities could give active organisations guidance on removing obstacles, such as how to obtain public liability insurance for just a pound or two per day on an annual basis. Designers can be encouraged to appreciate the software that already exists for events and activities and contribute to making it more widely available. Any physical designs that follow can be informed by appreciating the operational systems of the place, making possible designs that respond to actual proven usage. During this process, people learn to use places creatively and have been given permission and encouragement to do so. It is not hard to imagine that with such well used places, leading to better design, public and private sector employers will see a place in a new light and want to locate in attractive and perhaps unusual or previously ‘unfashionable’ places with plenty of land and even lots of empty houses. Not everyone needs to live in the ‘hot spots’ where demand exceeds supply. Jobs and other necessities of life locating in and beside places where there is an oversupply of housing (not because they are forced to but because they want to – fashion – remember?) naturally helps to balance the supply and demand for housing, creating greater affordability and reducing the inflationary pressures on currently popular housing areas because there are indeed choices that work elsewhere. Government in particular, as a large employer, can encourage far fewer people to sit in rows at computers in offices and can instead design new ways to use improved communications, including the vast scope for remote working, as part of place making. If a support (or ‘back’) office can be located in the Far East, it can
certainly be located in the ‘near north’, west, or east of the country, where housing is available and affordable. Digital start-ups have taught us to work differently.

Housing in rural communities requires careful consideration. Strategic decisions are required in relation to those places where population centres should be planned to grow, relative to sustaining or underpinning the case for a new facility, such as a school or health centre. This must also relate to the planning of and investment in rural public transport infrastructure, either public transport or one of the many schemes for sharing private transport by trusted friends and neighbours. So building trust is just as important as building roads or houses – ‘active caring for people and places’.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

MAG Evidence 7A:

At normal rates of development, over half the built environment and almost all big infrastructure will still be here in 50 years’ time. It is not therefore a question of developing built environments that are sustainable and resilient but rather of using our built environments better to make them sustainable and resilient. The government should creatively promote the multi-functionality of places at different times and seasons and simply not accept ‘single function’ anything. This applies equally to rural and urban areas and to large and small settlements.

MAG Evidence 7B:

MAG was asked to advise whether an upper floor of a former factory would offer a suitable location for a proposed ‘Cultural Hub’ in a community which had ‘no resources’. Yes, MAG’s architect found that the accommodation would meet the requirements. However, MAG advised looking at alternatives. Unbelievably, in spite of having ‘no resources’, there was a youth club just across the road which was unused before 3.30pm each weekday. Around the corner was a brand new school that was not used after 3.30pm on weekdays and on weekends. The local place had public resources but each was being managed independently, by a different public agency. Proper local management, along the lines of ‘One Public Estate’ could readily accommodate the proposed Cultural Hub with no extra buildings.

MAG Evidence 7C:

In complete contrast to 7B, another school was visited where the school secretary had identified an unused piece of land in the school grounds, contacted local people to find out their needs, applied for and obtained external funding, overseen the installation of a new floodlit artificial grass pitch with changing rooms, included a bowling place for older
accompanying adults and set up the management system to have an employee available for evening and weekend use by the local community. This used already available insurances and is a community pitch with a small cost per user and a little extra for floodlighting at night. Places must learn from each other’s stories.

MAG Evidence 7D:

MAG responded to a public consultation on the handover of ‘Off Street Car Parks’ (mostly in town centres) from central to local government during the recent reform of public administration.


MAG pointed out that these are not just ‘off street car parks’ but are in fact valuable ‘public open spaces’, often in critical central locations, that happen to have been used to park cars for perhaps 60 of the available 168 hours per week. So if a place is needed for midnight soccer or to have a market or to run an art show or an exhibition, why are ‘car park rules’ applied for all 168 hours? The natural environment is not mono-functional and MAG has developed a principle of challenging single functionality in the built environment, saying ‘No more single function anything please….’

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

MAG Evidence 8A:

Resources are devoted centrally in Northern Ireland every year to developing and enhancing the software to open hundreds of great buildings for two days for ‘European Heritage Open Days’. Yet the software is not made available to local passionate communities of interest who could multiply the attendance at these historic places by many times throughout the year, all with voluntary endeavour or at a very low cost of some essential expenses only.

MAG Evidence 8B:

‘City Tour £4’ was printed on the back of his red anorak. People followed him, listened to his words of wisdom, charm and wisecracks and paid him £4 each. When he died recently, he had over 30 colleagues with similar anoraks and he had made a business out of the city and its ancient walls, enhancing the experience of the place for citizens, visitors and tourists alike. Some of this stuff is really easy, really obvious, but missed by serious public authorities in the melee of policies, projects and….. politics.

Skills and design
Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland (BEN0039)

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

MAG Evidence 9A:

The professions need to understand collegiality as described in MAG Evidence 2A and 2B. The essential requirement to maintain the detailed professional skillsets has to be augmented by developing a shared client and designer ethos that encourages and rewards challenge in the public interest. Earlier deployment of design professionals into projects enables creative challenge before the investment in a project has made it financially irreversible. Indeed government recognises that the ‘million pound mistake is made on day one’. ‘Day one’ is often before the appointment of a designer. Procurement advice offered to clients needs to recognise the benefit of design input from the earliest recognition that a project may be forthcoming. Future terms of appointment should require and include sufficient funding for designers to challenge the brief as given. Currently, designers are often appointed too late to challenge and have little opportunity to look ‘beyond the red line’ of the site ascribed to the development. Bad briefs lead to poor design quality, frustrate designers and produce a downward spiral of aspiration, resulting in the all too typical disjointed and depressing environments which sterilise valuable land behind locked gates or barriers in the name of the single function of being a ‘Health Centre Car Park’ or a ‘School Grounds’. Such places create fear after dark, encourage bad behaviour and cause ill health. Their underuse is wasteful and they do not inspire joy or delight. Mixed use schemes may appear to be more complex to initiate and manage but evidence shows that those parts of the city which are mixed use areas, operational for perhaps 18 hours a day, 7 days a week, are safer, brighter, happier and more efficient than single use places that close up at 6.00pm and need ‘security’ – more costs and more waste because the real issues are not tackled and fences are seen as a ‘solution’.

Procurement processes are inherently restrictive, seeking to avoid change and yet at the brief-writing stage it is unlikely that a Client will have a full understanding of the potential of a project. Procurement should facilitate flexibility to prototype, test, learn and inform designs in an iterative way that is currently not required or encouraged and therefore unlikely to happen. This would save time and money, but requires assured, experienced clients who understand the skills and benefits that the various professions bring to the project and who are capable of managing, rather than avoiding change. Local and central government authorities need to be those ‘clients’, in the public interest.
10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

MAG Evidence 10A:

MAG responses to government consultations indicate continuously that decisions are taken on a project by project basis with timing to expend funding within a certain financial year being a most important determinant of a project’s perceived ‘success’. This has led to a senior government official in regeneration stating that the application of funding is not to achieve regeneration but instead to account appropriately for funding expended during a specific period. Indeed the term ‘accounting officer’ is often applied to the most senior person in a public sector organisation, confirming the perceived supreme importance of accounting for expenditure.

MAG Evidence 10B:

MAG discovered that one town is seeking the creation of a new public square while a similar town is saying that its new public square should be taken away because it is causing anti-social behaviour, including being a place for drug dealing. The reason is of course that the hardware of the new square was built (likely on time and on budget....) with a covered stage, stage lighting, storage, toilets, disabled access, natural stone walls and copper roofs, but without any associated development of software, no programming, no events, no advice for users about insurance etc. and prospective honest and well organised users were discouraged from using the square by being told that they needed £10 million of public liability insurance, without being told how to get it.

It is usual for a place to become a regeneration focus for a moment in time. A ‘Masterplan’ is developed, which supports investment in a priority project, subsequently delivered. There is a lack of stamina to continue the process, continually referring back to the Masterplan and the next steps. As the place changes, the Masterplan should be updated, to continue to be relevant. There is a tendency to not keep Masterplans up to date and they become forgotten and ultimately irrelevant, rather than continually evolving and providing the strategic vision for a place and its people. A Village Plan in Glenariff included a ‘Village Handbook’ for people to keep, so like the ‘Captain’s Log’ it is updated. There is a reluctance to programme revenue funding for public realm projects. This can lead to projects being delivered, with the best intentions and with intended uses in mind, but it is essential that there is continued investment in the form of personnel and funding, to continue to care for the place and promote opportunities for uses, including ones which had not been foreseen at the outset. Such investment can most effectively involve stewardship volunteers every week, like the Audubon Society’s work in USA.
Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

MAG Evidence 11A:

MAG worked closely with Ulster University who analysed public consultation for a new public open space in Belfast. It was found that in just three hours of trying out the open space experimentally, over 30% of the reported responses were received. During this concentrated period of creative consultation, real people did ordinary things like having lunch, playing music, drawing and reading poetry. This compares very favourably with the remaining 12 weeks of ‘normal’ consultation when illustrative boards were placed in public places and written comments invited. The experimental real use of the space led to the identification of significant issues with the proposed design, including proposals for fixed seating in cold, windy places and a giant screen that blocked sunlight from the space. In effect, the conclusion of the experiment was that the open space should be redesigned for more active uses. This could have been discovered much earlier in the process; the design brief would have been realistic from the start, saving time, money and resources and producing a workable city place with a good chance of success.

MAG Evidence 11B:

MAG’s creative consultation techniques achieved more responses in a single day than the standard illustrative boards achieved in 12 weeks and tested the actual effects on the town centre of closing a street on a Saturday afternoon.

MAG Evidence 11C:

MAG agreed with Northern Ireland’s Strategic Investment Board that consultation processes were too static, too rigid, too unimaginative and too uninvolving to be of any real benefit to a project. SIB commissioned MAG to prepare a Creative Consultation Toolkit which is now available online. It comprises a pdf document that simply describes good consultation and its methodologies, a section with exemplary case studies that is easily updated to a template, a check list for consultation requirements at various stages of a project and a calculator that allows financial and time resource costs of good consultation to be assessed early so that its cost can be properly allocated in total project cost estimates. http://toolkit.creativityni.org/
12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

MAG Evidence 12A:

MAG proved that consultation processes can be creatively adapted even a month before the consultation begins. The creative consultation process in a town centre public realm scheme indicated that people can be directly involved with their place with very positive effects. Finding over 400 passionate communities of interest (as distinct from local communities) in a town of 30,000 people was an immense realisation of the pool of interest and talent there is everywhere. Discovering that over 100 of these passionate communities of interest were arts groups led to a 150 event arts festival stretching across 4 months and allowing people to interact with their town centre in the evenings when it had been previously underused.

MAG Evidence 12B:

The nicest part was that the council arts officer’s rather beautiful chalk graphic design, drawn on a plain blue background to announce the arts festival, was removed by another branch of the council, presuming it was graffiti.....

MAG Evidence 12C:

Blackboards improvised with sandpaper, primer and blackboard paint on existing display panels announced (and enabled citizens to announce) cultural and other events in a town centre. The blackboards won an all-Ireland award for arts marketing (total materials cost was under £40) and the blackboard chalk is washed off every time it rains (no cost for washing). http://www.voluntaryarts.org/2014/03/24/creative-citizens-programme-launch-ballymena/

MAG Evidence 12D:

‘Did you get permission?’ my wife (a former school teacher) asked when I told her I had been playing badminton outdoors with our grandson in the city centre pedestrian areas with a net strung up between bollards. Total cost was £10 for a kids’ badminton set and net. Did we need permission? Who knows? Who cares? We did no harm; we had fun and entertained others too.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

MAG Evidence 13A:
‘Housing’ and ‘land supply’ issues are all connected to a much wider range of factors, vary dramatically across the country and are driven by people’s perceptions of the desirability of places to live and work and the choices that they can make. Mobility varies according to circumstances. Many people in this country see themselves as fixed to their place because of history, family, work and other social reasons. Migration happens within countries, continents and beyond, affecting and being affected by housing and land supply. People move to find the best possible combination of good work and decent living conditions in acceptable places. Government can encourage better places as noted in MAG Evidence 6A. Technology means that people can work from more remote places where housing supply and land supply are not issues. Finding new ways to work is therefore a most significant financial opportunity. Reducing journeys to work can be achieved by devising systems that use electronic communications rather than physical travel. Living affordably in a good place (or in a place which can be made good by better stewardship) creates a fairer and better country with fewer ‘crises’. Available and affordable connectivity is a significant investment opportunity for government and communities. No part of the country should have to struggle with low speed or no broadband. Satellite systems are unreliable, lack privacy and are expensive. Individuals in the north of England have produced a scheme known as ‘Broadband for the Rural North’ to help to remove the ‘digital divide’. “The purpose of the project is to take a new approach to the ownership, financial and deployment models used traditionally, and still proposed by, telecommunications companies.”

http://b4rn.org.uk/#sthash.6nocDif2.dpuf Installing fibre optic cables to ‘remote’ places in the north of England can help the ‘housing crisis’ in the south east – connecting the unexpected – by design.

02 October 2015
Responses as per numbers listed in document entitled ‘Call for Written Evidence’.

1. Not nationally much more inclusion at local level. Present district level ok but must demonstrate they have listed to local level.

2. Policy is poorly co-ordinated, particularly with regard to infrastructure and transport. Heritage seems ignored and overridden under present plans, much would and will be destroyed. The above points should be a condition of planning not an afterthought. No real co-ordination between local housing plans and its impact on highways generally. No consideration of impact on historic villages.

3. There is no or little protection for the natural environment or the built. Houses are prioritised over communities. There is no relevant scale to development compared to existing built environment, eg – development that swamps villages is allowed and yet 50 houses in every village would not.

4. Generally if the Neighbourhood Plan is adhered to it would solve a lot of the issues regarding planning, especially large developments close to existing villages, ie – the spatial perspective.

5. Yes, the needs and requirements must be planned by NOW. Building is soaring ahead of ANY plan.

6. More use of brown field sites and co-ordination in an area to gather information on brown field sites used in preference to green spaces. Councils are reluctant to spend time testing and co-ordinating brown field sites. They find it EASIER to develop green field sites.

7. Create new towns/villages with adequate resources and services. Build services before or during housing build so there is less strain on existing facilities in nearby areas. All new houses to have some solar panels.

8. Development should be sympathetic to historic environment. Historic buildings could be regenerated and keep their historic perspective. Old factories into flats.

9. Local Authority has no pressure to be holistic. Local Authorities do not have the skills. There are too many influences affecting their decisions and the commitment to manage is not there, as they are significantly pressurised by builders. They need new guidelines and a reason to stick to them.

10. Are we using ANY tools? Houses are built to a price, not high quality design. Why don’t ALL houses have SOLAR panels? Should be national standard of quality design.
11. No. Those involved pay lip service to the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work in it. Noise and light are not adequately controlled. Developers also pay lip service. Many houses are being built next to very noisy roads. They are ok inside, but no outside space to use because too noisy. Street furniture, traffic calming, flashing lights, noisy crossings, nobody cares that it affects existing properties and communities. Mistakes made by builders are not put right because Local Authority do not have the incentives or the funds to take on the builders.

12. Parish Council forward comments for or against local building issues but quite often they are overruled or ignored, only later to be proved correct. More openness and accountability. No pressure on Local Authorities to act on the wishes of the community.

13. More incentives for brown field. Not aware of any financial incentives that are available to address the current issues of housing and land supply.

06 October 2015
Submission from: Prof Nick Wareham (Centres Director), Dr Jean Adams, Dr Soren Brage, Prof Andy Jones, Dr Pablo Monsivais, Dr David Ogilvie, Dr Esther van Sluijs, Prof Martin White, Dr James Woodcock. Contact: Oliver Francis,

Executive Summary

- This submission principally addresses question 11 in the Call for Evidence – with regard to improving consideration of the impact of the built environment on those who live and work within it, particularly their physical and mental health.

- Changing health-related behaviours requires policy and interventions that act at the individual, social, community and environmental levels. The built environment, therefore, has an important role to play in promoting health and healthy behaviours.

- Interventions in the built environment can potentially target whole towns and communities. Such population-level prevention initiatives have the potential to be more cost-effective and equitable than those aimed only at high risk groups.

- Built environment interventions to improve health require multi-sectoral delivery, support from academia, and a clear mandate from national policy and government.

- The built environment can be an important ‘nudge’, driving behaviour change triggers that are outside conscious (or at least explicitly recognised) awareness.

- Creating supportive environments for physical activity is an important priority for local authorities in transport and town planning – and requires that national policy allows sufficient room for local innovation and evaluation.

- The neighbourhood food environment has a potentially powerful effect on diet choices. Whilst food availability is often related to use of existing buildings, new neighbourhoods also need to be planned with consideration of food availability and dietary health, particularly with regard to health inequalities.

1. About the submitting organisations

1.1 The MRC Epidemiology Unit is a department at the University of Cambridge. It studies the genetic, developmental and environmental factors that cause obesity, type 2 diabetes and related metabolic disorders. The outcomes from these studies are then used to develop strategies for the prevention of these diseases in the general population. [www.mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk](http://www.mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk)

1.2 The Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR) is studying the factors that influence diet and physical activity behaviours, developing and shaping interventions, and helping shape public health policy and practice. It is led by the MRC Epidemiology Unit, and is a partnership between the University of Cambridge, the University of East Anglia and MRC Units in Cambridge. It is one of five Centres of Excellence in Public
2. The impact of the built environment on health

2.1 The built environment can have direct effects on the health of individuals – from air pollution to housing conditions – and is also an important determinant of health-related behaviours such as physical activity and diet. Interventions in the built environment aimed at improving mental and physical health occur in the context of the ‘socio-ecological model’: behaviours are influenced by a combination of factors related to the individual, their social relationships, community, wider society and the environment. Influences are shown to be context and behaviour specific – e.g. influences on walking to work differ from those on cycling to work or walking for leisure. Interventions in the built environment should not, therefore, be considered by policymakers in isolation. Strategies that target only a single aspect of the socio-ecological spectrum are unlikely to be successful: multiple barriers often need to be removed to achieve substantive change, and interventions need to be sustained rather than short term ‘projects’. A better joining up of legislative areas that impact on the built environment is required, together with an approach of ‘health in all policies’.

2.2 Interventions in the built environment have the potential to affect whole populations. Efforts that can shift the population distribution of health behaviours are likely to be more cost-effective overall, and strategies that involve changes in infrastructure and systems have the potential to reach large sections of the general population rather than just those at highest risk. Furthermore, by reshaping the poorest neighbourhoods, improving the built environment can also help tackle underlying factors affecting health inequalities.

2.3 Whilst continued research on the health impact of the built environment is required, current gaps in research should not be taken as an excuse for inaction. The interventions to be prioritised for piloting are those that appear promising based on existing evidence and theories. These interventions must then be properly evaluated so that best future practice and policy can be more readily identified. Whilst randomised controlled trials are rarely possible when changing the built environment, multiple and parallel developments across local authorities present a ‘living laboratory’ in which interventions can be tested. Local authorities, with their responsibilities for public health and influence over many aspects of the physical environment, are ideally placed to develop, implement and evaluate policy and practice in this area, supported by scientific evaluation of selected interventions in partnership with academia. Any national policy needs to both empower local authorities to act in this manner, and facilitate and collect learning at a national level.

3. Evidence use in practice

3.1 The MRC Epidemiology Unit /CEDAR has brought academics together with professionals in public health, transport, urban planning and sustainability to explore the multi-sectoral policy response required to create health-promoting built environments. In local authorities in particular there is a tension between, on one hand, the new goal of delivering public health benefits across sectors, and on the other, pre-existing delineated roles and budgets, and the variety in scope and priorities across sectors. Multi-sectoral delivery requires individuals who can breach silo-working, can locate evidence from a variety of disciplines, and can find a common language to integrate such evidence clearly into business cases. Practitioners would welcome help from academia to translate evidence into actionable recommendations, and to evaluate interventions. From national built environment policy they would welcome clearer mandates for health as a priority in all remits, which would strengthen their efforts to integrate health benefits in business cases and promote multi-sector cooperation.

4. The built environment and physical activity – walking and cycling

4.1 One prominent area in which the built environment relates to health is that of physical activity through travel. The myriad benefits of physical activity to health are covered in more depth elsewhere, but the scale of the possible health benefit from physical activity is exemplified by a study of over 330,000 individuals in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC), which indicated that doing exercise equivalent to just a 20 minute brisk walk each day would take an individual from the inactive to moderately inactive group and reduce their risk of premature death by between 16-30%. The impact was greatest amongst normal weight individuals, but even those with higher BMI saw a benefit.350

4.2 Given that the average journey to and from work in the UK takes 28 minutes each way,351 a necessary level of gain in physical activity to improve health could easily be achieved by accommodating walking or cycling as at least part of the daily commute and other journeys. Emerging findings indicate on average 20% of the journey to work for those travelling by bus, park-and-walk or park-and-cycle, is spent in physical activity of at least moderate intensity.352 Evidence from the iConnect study of Sustrans-led walking and cycle routes in Cardiff, Kenilworth and Southampton showed that adults whose active travel increased over the course of a year reported about two hours more physical activity per week on average, whereas those whose active travel

352 Martin A et al, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 2014; Impact of changes in mode of travel to work on changes in body mass index: evidence from the British Household Panel Survey http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech-2014-205211
decreased reported about two hours less. Importantly, there was no evidence of a compensatory decrease in recreational physical activity.

4.3 Active travel specifically has been shown to be associated with reductions in body mass index, and improved subjective wellbeing. Health impact modelling further demonstrates the potential of gains from increasing physical activity in travel. When considering active travel scenarios developed by the Visions 2030 project, even the most conservative scenarios produced reductions in a range of diseases, including reducing the burden of heart disease and stroke by over 7%, and dementia by 5%. Population level benefits are greatest if activity can be maintained at older ages when disease risks are highest.

4.4 Whilst the additional £214 million announced in 2014 for investment in cycling infrastructure is welcome, it stands in contrast to the £15 billion announced in the same year for road building. It is vital that these larger infrastructural changes support active travel as well as motor vehicles: for instance integrating bike lanes into new roads, improving walking routes when creating bypasses, and so on. Similarly, investment in the rail network must be accompanied by cycle provision. When changing or planning new neighbourhoods, it is important to consider distances and routes to work, school and local amenities, as well as the presence of green spaces.

5. The built environment as a driver of behaviour change

5.1 Improving the built environment for walking and cycling has clear potential to encourage physical activity if it reduces barriers to walking or cycling (such as actual and/or perceived danger from motor vehicles); or if it provides more direct, convenient or pleasant routes. Proximity to infrastructure is also important, and its effects may take some time to have an impact. Two years after the routes in Cardiff, Kenilworth and Southampton were developed, people living 1km (0.6 miles) from the routes had increased their time spent walking and cycling by an average of 45 minutes per week more than those living 4km (2.5 miles) away. In terms of potential negative health effects of nearby infrastructure, a study of the M74 motorway in

358 Traffic and Health in Glasgow Study
Glasgow is exploring whether living near a new motorway promotes car use, and reduces physical activity and mental wellbeing.\(^{360}\)

### 5.2 Car parking provision may also have an important influence on travel behaviour.

Research in Cambridge has shown that workplace parking charges are associated with a decreased likelihood of regular car commuting\(^ {361}\) and are particularly strongly associated with an increased likelihood of incorporating walking or cycling into a longer car commuting journey.\(^ {362}\) Depending on local factors, these findings suggest an intervention strategy could involve charging for on-site workplace parking while providing free off-site parking within walking or cycling distance.\(^ {363}\) As well as increasing physical activity for some people, approaches such as this could also help reduce urban traffic congestion and pollution, which could benefit everyone.

### 5.3 It has been recognised that much behaviour is automatic, triggered outside of conscious awareness and cued by multiple influences.\(^ {364}\) Recent research has confirmed that the influence of the built environment may be more powerful in driving behaviour change than any explicit conscious change in perceptions of the physical and social environment. In analysis of the data from the iConnect study researchers found that although residents’ perceptions of pleasantness, crime, lighting or safety improved over 2 years, these mostly didn’t explain their changes in walking, cycling and physical activity. In fact the large majority of the changes could be explained by a simple causal pathway driven by the use of the new routes. This suggests that the physical improvement of the environment itself was the key to the effectiveness of the intervention.\(^ {365}\) Interviews with local authorities, cycling groups and building contractors suggested that the visibility, scale and design of the schemes and the contrast they presented with existing infrastructure may also have influenced their use.\(^ {366}\) Ultimately, even though its effect is powerful, infrastructure alone is unlikely to overcome all barriers to physical activity: a supportive environment is likely to be ‘necessary but not sufficient’, and many interventions to improve the environment for walking or cycling have been too tentative to have any effect.\(^ {367}\)

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\(^{360}\) Panter J et al, Prev Med 2013; *Patterns and predictors of changes in active commuting over 12 months* www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3842498/.

\(^{361}\) Panter J et al, Prev Med 2013; *Incorporating walking or cycling into car journeys to and from work: the role of individual, workplace and environmental characteristics* www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3712186/.


\(^{363}\) Panter & Ogilvie, BMJ Open 2015; *Theorising and testing environmental pathways to behaviour change: natural experimental study of the perception and use of new infrastructure to promote walking and cycling in local communities.* http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/3/007593.abstract

\(^{364}\) Sahlqvist S et al, IBNPA 2015 *Mechanisms underpinning use of new walking and cycling infrastructure in different contexts: mixed-method analysis* http://www.ibnpa.org/content/12/1/24

\(^{365}\) Giles-Corti B, Donovan RJ, Am J Public Health, 2003; *The relative influence of individual, social and physical environment determinants of physical activity* www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1448014/.

\(^{366}\) Jones AP et al, IBNPA 2009; *Environmental supportiveness for physical activity in English schoolchildren: a study using Global Positioning Systems* www.ibnpa.org/content/6/1/42

\(^{367}\) Jones N et al, Health & Place, 2010; *School environments and physical activity: The development and testing of an audit tool.* http://europepmc.org/articles/PMC3820999
5.4 Active travel in children can be supported by many of the infrastructural interventions that favour adults. Furthermore, provision of safe streets or natural and challenging outdoor environments for children to engage in activity is associated with more physical activity. Whilst community playgrounds could form part of this environment, activity does not necessarily have to be formally organised: research using GPS data has found that children who spent more time outside the home were more active.\textsuperscript{368} Children are more active in school if grounds are more supportive (playground markings, playground equipment, marked sports pitches and tracks, wildlife garden etc.)\textsuperscript{369}

6. The built environment and diet

6.1 As with physical activity, greater consideration is required of the impact of the built environment on diet. Food availability is often related to how existing buildings are used, for example through licencing decisions. However, new buildings and neighbourhoods are planned with consideration of food availability, so it is important that dietary health is taken into account by planners, particularly because of the potential effect on health inequalities

6.2 An example is the proliferation of takeaway food outlets. Over the past decade, consumption of food outside the home has increased by almost a third\textsuperscript{370}, and the rise in the number of takeaway food outlets has been greatest in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. For instance, in Norfolk between 1990 and 2008, the number of takeaway food outlets rose by 45%, from 265 to 385 outlets, equating to an increase from 2.6 outlets to 3.8 outlets per 10,000 residents. The highest absolute increase in density of outlets was in areas of highest deprivation, which saw an increase from 4.6 outlets to 6.5 outlets per 10,000 residents (a 43% increase). This is in contrast to areas of least deprivation, which saw an increase from 1.6 to 2.1 per 10,000 residents over the time period (a 30% increase).\textsuperscript{371}

6.3 Data from the MRC Fenland study reveals how the density of takeaway food outlets relates to health. Individuals in the dataset were exposed to an average of 32 takeaway food outlets (and as many as 165), with exposure greatest near workplaces. Those with the highest exposure consumed an additional 40g of calorific food per week (equivalent to half a small portion of takeaway French fries), relative to the least exposed. Those with the highest takeaway exposure were also almost twice as likely

\textsuperscript{368} Cabinet Office, 2008; Food: an analysis of the issues. \url{http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/food/food_analysis.pdf}

\textsuperscript{369} Maguire ER et al, Health & Place, 2015; Area deprivation and the food environment over time: a repeated cross-sectional study on takeaway outlet density and supermarket presence in Norfolk, UK, 1990 – 2008. \url{http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829215000325}

\textsuperscript{370} CEDAR Evidence Brief, 2014; Are takeaways adding pounds? How takeaway food outlets where we live and work may affect our health \url{www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/resources/evidence/eb7-takeaways-obesity}

\textsuperscript{371} Burgoine, T et al, Does the association between neighbourhood takeaway food outlet exposure, diet and body weight differ by level of educational attainment? In submission.
to be obese as those least exposed.\textsuperscript{372} Data also showed that highest takeaway food outlet exposure was only significantly associated with likelihood of obesity among those least educated. This suggests that neighbourhood takeaway food environment modification may be particularly effective for groups of low socioeconomic status, which may help to reduce health inequalities.\textsuperscript{373}

\subsection*{6.4} National Child Measurement Programme and ONS data also indicate that children living in areas surrounded by fast food outlets are more likely to be overweight or obese.\textsuperscript{374}

\subsection*{6.5} Spatial distribution of supermarkets and other food stores does not disadvantage poor consumers overall in urban areas. However, some consumers (older, with limited mobility, without access to a car) remain disadvantaged.\textsuperscript{375} The proliferation of supermarket convenience stores with more limited and expensive food ranges than out of town stores therefore requires examination for its impact on food choice.

\subsection*{6.6} This evidence all adds to the case for the role of both national and local action on shaping the food environment. The health-impact of takeaways is recognised by a number of policy bodies including the Greater London Authority\textsuperscript{376}, NICE\textsuperscript{377} and Public Health England\textsuperscript{378}. A number of Local Authorities, including Waltham Forest and Barking & Dagenham, are already regulating the proliferation of new takeaway food outlets. As with physical activity, a stronger national framework for consideration of dietary health within the built environment would be welcome.

\textit{05 October 2015}


\textsuperscript{373} White M et al, FSA, 2002; \textit{Do Food Deserts exist? A multilevel geographical analysis of the relationship between retail food access, socio-economic position, and dietary intake}. \url{www.foodbase.org.uk/results.php?f_report_id=224}

\textsuperscript{374} GLA Takeaway Toolkit, 2012 \url{www.london.gov.uk/priorities/health/publications/takeaways-toolkit}

\textsuperscript{375} NICE Pathways – Diet overview \url{http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/diet}

\textsuperscript{376} Public Health England, 2014. \textit{Healthy people, healthy places briefing: obesity and the environment: regulating the growth of fast food outlets}. \url{http://bit.ly/1mPJ3Cn}

\textsuperscript{377} Research associate at UCL, co-manager of the Place Alliance, advisor to the European Council of Town Planners’ working group on participatory democracy.

\textsuperscript{378} A copy is available now at \url{http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2015.06.002} or on request to the author, and the final version will be available later this year online free to view (with thanks to UCL funding support for ‘gold open access’ publications).
1. The National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC) is the UK’s leading trade association for the roofing industry. The Federation has over a thousand contractor and associate members and is an active member of the International Federation of Roofing Contractors. With a turnover of £1.6bn, NFRC members represent 70% of the UK roofing market by value. Companies vary from the very smallest local company to some of the largest in the country, carrying out new build, repair and maintenance on existing buildings, and heritage work. The NFRC is also a key member of Build UK (formerly the National Specialist Contractors’ Council and UK Contractors Group) and TrustMark.

2. The NFRC has been authorised by the UK Government to run the first Competent Person Scheme for roofing, CompetentRoofer, which allows roofing contractors to self-certify on Building Regulations for roofing refurbishment work. The scheme aims to help to marginalise the less professional roofing companies that exist in all markets.

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Introduction

3. Conservation of the UK’s heritage in the built environment is critical and needs to be strongly encouraged. With so many of our country’s finest estates controlled by all four heritage bodies within the UK it is absolutely vital that they take a lead in ensuring that our heritage buildings are correctly maintained and repaired. The long term sustainability of these buildings can be assured by correct workmanship.

4. As well as a need for this building stock to be maintained appropriately, there is a need to ensure that sufficient levels of training are made available and supported, and that relevant apprenticeships are in place. Without ensuring that those coming into the building profession are trained in the correct specialist skills to work on heritage buildings, the availability of these skills will become scarce, and our heritage buildings will suffer.

5. The NFRC believes that at present the Government in Westminster and the devolved administrations (and their agencies) do not take a sufficiently strong enough lead on insisting that repairs and maintenance to its traditional buildings use correctly skilled workmen. In order to preserve our national treasures this must be reversed.

Training

6. Without encouraging incentives for contractors to train in the skills needed for this sector, the skills will eventually die out and our traditional buildings will be ruined by work completed incorrectly. For as long as the Government and Heritage Agencies do not make
the commitment to only use appropriately skilled craftsmen in all disciplines, there will remain a reluctance from contractors to commit time and resources to training a workforce in these core skills.

7. NFRC therefore calls on all Governments to set a deadline date, after which it will only use CSCS cardholders for building work. This will give all specialist trades time to ensure training is in place and that demand can be met. All publicly funded projects must contain a stipulation in the contract that only appropriately trained professionals will be used. This will assist the heritage agencies to fulfil its responsibility for protecting and enhancing the historic environment. Without this lead from such organisations, these skills will become redundant.

8. The lack of appropriate traditional skills in Scotland is reflected by Preliminary Repair and Maintenance Skills: The Research Report undertaken in 2003 (as referenced in Traditional Building Skills379), which identified only 30% of those working as “tradesmen” were suitably qualified, for example with 33% of stonemasons qualified, 33% in training and the remainder having no training.

CSCS Carded workforce

9. For the Government to make possession of the Heritage Skills CSCS Card a requirement for working on one of their properties, there must be a critical mass of cardholders. In working with the Lead Contractors Association and the National Heritage Training Group, English Heritage has demonstrated that this critical mass can be reached (approximately 75% of lead workers hold a CSCS card). The requirement for all specialist lead workers working on significant projects on the English Heritage estate to hold CSCS cards has begun.

10. With the guarantee from English Heritage to use CSCS carded workmen only for leadwork, the industry has also made the commitment to ensure there are sufficient numbers of correctly trained workmen. It is vital that this practice is expanded.

11. This is an excellent example of how industry and heritage bodies can work together to ensure that the heritage workforce is appropriately skilled. Heritage bodies should be encouraged to use the appropriate CSCS carded workmen to carry out all roofing and construction work, and government should set a positive example by doing the same.

Impact

12. The impact of a deteriorating Built Heritage is manifold – our magnificent heritage attracts huge numbers of tourists and should they not be repaired in a sympathetic fashion, this will detract from their appeal. Additionally, the overall energy efficiency of older buildings

379 Fair Energy Transition Towards Nearly Zero Energy Buildings
must be taken into consideration as we try to meet carbon reduction targets and improve the fabric of the building in a traditional manner in order to meet these demands.

Conclusion

13. Ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of correctly trained craftsmen to service the heritage properties in the UK is vital. Industry will take its lead from the Government and its agencies and, as it has been shown with the Lead Contractors Association in England, it will commit resources to ensuring there is training provision if there is a demand for those skills.

14. Additionally, the NFRC feels that the role that the Government and Heritage Agencies could have in giving advice to those seeking to undertake work on non-Historic buildings could be ground-breaking. They can strongly advise private property owners of a) the benefits of using correctly skilled craftsmen and b) the potential impact both financially and in terms of the overall upkeep of the property in not employing appropriately skilled workmen.

15. The Government must take the lead promoting the skills required to repair and maintain the UK’s Built Heritage for future generations which will also have a positive impact on tourism and energy efficiency.

05 October 2015
About NHBC

NHBC is the leading warranty and insurance provider for new homes in the UK, covering 80% of the new build housing market and providing consumer protection for over 1.6 million homebuyers.

Buildings and places: New and old

1. To sell homes with NHBC Buildmark cover, our registered builders must comply with the NHBC Standards, which set out the technical requirements for design, materials and workmanship in new home construction. NHBC Standards are consistently developed, reviewed and revised to ensure new homes adapt to changing needs and circumstances. This is particularly relevant to ensure new housing stock within the built environment is resilient and sustainable in the years ahead. The climatic extremes of early 2014, for example, severely challenged the house building industry and from roofs to basements, NHBC examined some common causes of defects. Our recently published 2016 edition of NHBC Standards has been enhanced to help our registered builders meet the continual climatic challenges in the built environment.

Skills and design

2. A number of specific recommendations to address skills issues are outlined in the NHBC Foundation’s A career of choice report published in March 2014. A good starting point in addressing the skills issue is the use of language around it. The report found that positive language related to the role and contribution of house building significantly raised the level of interest in careers in the sector.

Communications experts could play a role in developing specific narratives that will be influential with young people at different ages and of both genders. The report also suggests house building companies could actively explore the development of creative partnerships with schools and colleges.

06 October 2015
Introduction

The National Housing Federation is the voice of affordable housing, representing over 1,000 housing associations in England. We welcome the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Select Committee, following our appearance before the Committee to give oral evidence on 10 September 2015.

Housing associations currently house 2.3 million households in England and they play an important role in shaping, managing and regenerating the built environment in order to create liveable and sustainable neighbourhoods. The sector builds thousands of good quality homes a year across all tenures. At its heart is a commitment to meet housing need by delivering great homes that are genuinely affordable to people living on every level of income. Last year alone, housing associations delivered 40% of all new homes built and the sector wants to significantly ramp up this number over the course of this Parliament and beyond.

They are ready to work in partnership with government to build the homes needed to meet the growing demand for housing. Housing associations are among the most effective private-public partnerships in England’s history. For every £1 invested by government, associations put in over £6 of their own money. They have secured £76bn in private investment since the Conservative Government’s landmark Housing Act in 1988 which has allowed them to deliver desperately needed homes in every part of the country, across every tenure, and add £13.9 billion to Britain’s economy every year. Not only do they deliver great homes, housing associations also invest to make communities stronger and economies grow by helping people to live independently and by supporting tenants to find work.

We welcome the shift in planning policy through the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework such as the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the emphasis on good design and place-making. These principles lie at the heart of our members approach to designing new communities and revitalising existing ones and are so important to ensure we create resilient communities, and a built environment that we are proud of. We also welcome more recent announcements such as the zoning of brownfield land, and the introduction of land commissions to identify public land that would be suitable for development. These policies will help to remove barriers and encourage more house building. However, as we outline in our recommendations and detailed responses below, more needs to be done in order to improve housing associations’ ability to build new homes and create great places.
Key Recommendations

1. The duty to cooperate policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be strengthened encouraging authorities to work collaboratively and plan across boundaries. Strategic planning powers that are devolved across England will help to achieve this, but in areas without devolution deals, strengthened guidance is needed to encourage and incentivise the exercising of the duty.

2. Local plans are a key tool for local authorities to use to shape development and plan to accommodate growth in their area. The Government’s welcome push will hopefully see more authorities adopt a plan, but duty to cooperate guidance needs to be strengthened to incentivise local authorities to work together and plan strategically to meet assessed housing need.

3. Local authorities should be encouraged and incentivised to regularly review and update their local plans and five year supply. Doing so will ensure the planning system remains planned, and means that local authorities are more likely to plan for, and meet, their housing targets.

4. The initiative to zone brownfield land that is suitable for housing should be extended to any sites suitable for housing. This will create certainty for developers and local authorities, and will see competition for land based on design and quality rather than price.

5. The process of demonstrating viability should be more transparent and more flexible approaches to encourage policy compliant schemes should be explored. This could include re-phasing development and the use of clawback mechanisms so that planning contributions, including affordable housing, are not automatically waived.

6. The importance of rural exception sites should not be underestimated as an increasingly important tool for providing affordable homes for communities in rural areas ensuring that homes in rural areas are available for future generations.

7. The existing Affordable Homes Guarantee Programme should continue indefinitely. To make more effective use of the Government’s strong balance sheet, and the confidence funders have in the sector, government backed guarantees should be extended to cover refinancing of existing debt. Using guarantees to help restructure balance sheets would allow housing associations to lower the cost of historic debt and take on more private finance to fund affordable housing.

8. Local authorities need enhanced powers to incentivise developers and landowners to bring sites forward. This could include the ability to charge a levy on sites unreasonably held back, alongside streamlined compulsory purchase orders.
1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets a useful framework for decision making across England and clearly places the onus on Local Authorities to prepare a local plan to guide development within their area to avoid inappropriate development. This is the correct approach and gives local people the power to shape the development of their area. Several areas of the framework do need to be strengthened, however, such as the duty to co-operate along with incentivising local authorities to get a plan in place.

1.2 Giving local authorities the power to zone land suitable for housing will help to create certainty for both the local authority and the developer, and will see developers competing for sites on the basis of design quality rather than the price of land, helping local authorities to control the development that comes forward within their areas.

In addition, the emerging devolution is a welcome step in promoting further decision-making at the local level. We discuss these issues in more detail in later questions.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 The approach to policy, particularly related to housing and infrastructure, is variable across Government departments. There is often disconnect which is evidenced by local opposition to housing development typically due to concerns over supporting infrastructure. This is also evidenced in the Government’s failure to see housing as nationally significant infrastructure.

2.2 Classifying housing as infrastructure would mean that it is considered holistically and alongside other essential infrastructure that would be required to support new communities. The recent announcement that infrastructure schemes with an element of housing will be determined through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Regime (NSIP) is welcome, but we hope this will be extended to all major housing schemes.

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

3.1 The Federation welcomed the introduction of the NPPF and National Planning Policy Guidance as having the potential to deliver a step-change towards a simpler and more positive planning system that supports housing and growth. The presumption in favour of sustainable development sets a clear ambition for the delivery of new housing and growth,
and the NPPF clearly places power in the hands of the local authority in terms of plan and decision making which we believe was a positive step forward.

3.2 A Local Plan is the key tool for Local Authorities to use to promote and shape growth, and is fundamental in making sure that the planning system remains plan-led (a core principle of the NPPF). Government figures show that, since the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act came into force, 82% of authorities have adopted a local plan. However, research from Savills has shown that 76% of local planning authorities outside London and national parks do not have a post-NPPF plan in place. This is an important distinction given the policy test introduced in the NPPF for local authorities to plan to meet objectively assessed need in full.

3.3 We welcome the encouragement for Local Authorities to adopt a local plan, and the timeframe of early 2017 to allow this to happen before the government intervenes and prepares a local plan on behalf of an authority that has missed this deadline. However, this should go one step further and require authorities who do not have a post-NPPF plan in place to also update them, and where they do not, the Government should also intervene. Having suite of a post-NPPF plans adopted across the country is vital to ensuring that housing targets are based on objectively assessed needs using up to date population projections and household formation statistics.

3.4 When the Government does intervene, it should work with the authority, local communities and key stakeholders in order to prepare a plan that has mutual agreement and accords with their aspirations. Targeted and more flexible intervention would be the most productive way to intervene as some authorities may only be held up on certain policy areas of a plan – most commonly on planning to meet objectively assessed need in full and also the duty to co-operate. In these instances, intervention could help solve these individual sticking points whilst ensuring local ownership of the plan overall. Government should also encourage the introduction of ‘local public bodies’ comprising of councillors, landowners and other stakeholders as a way to of speeding up the release of allocated sites and the delivery of housing on publicly owned land.

3.5 We are particularly supportive of the NPPF’s explicit requirement for local authorities to plan fully to meet the objectively assessed affordable housing need in their area, and we believe this is one of the most important factors of the NPPF. Planning based on objectively assessed need ensures that local authorities plan to meet the full needs of their area – including for market and affordable housing. Occasionally, some local authorities will be unable to accommodate all growth within their boundaries, due to certain constraints such as the green belt. Where this is the case, the duty to cooperate is another important factor that requires authorities to collaborate and work together proactively to accommodate growth across boundaries.

380 National Audit Office - 'Impact of funding reductions on local authorities'
3.6 In theory, the outcome of this would mean that where an authority identifies that it will not be able to accommodate all growth within an area, it would be distributed across the relevant surrounding authorities. In reality, this has not been the case, and has been a reason why some Local Plans have not been found sound, thus delaying plans and leaving authorities at risk of non-policy compliant schemes coming forward within their area, on which they have little power to refuse or negotiate.

3.7 We therefore welcome the Government’s recent announcement in the Productivity Plan on strengthened guidance to operationalise the duty to cooperate. We believe that this guidance will encourage local authorities to plan across wider areas beyond their boundaries, and collaborate with other authorities to prepare joint local plans. This will help join up planning for new housing, and focus on strategic growth areas. Duty to Cooperate guidance should incentivise local authorities to:

- Collaborate and identify a sensible boundary based on housing and economic market areas;
- Prepare a joint local plan, paying particular attention to housing, which attempts to meet the housing needs of the entire area in full and is based on up to date evidence and objectively assessed need;
- Work together to identify public land for release, and work with developers and landowners to make it available for appropriate development;
- Regularly review housing delivery against targets, and update plans as necessary.

3.8 A key part of the NPPF is the requirement for local authorities to demonstrate a five year supply of land for housing. This joins up the land required to meet the target identified within the local plan, and ensures that housing is directed to the most suitable locations. All too often, the five year land supply that is submitted with a local plan for examination in public remains the current document for numerous years following adoption of the plan, and is not updated regularly enough. Where this is the case, it leaves local authorities vulnerable to unwanted development which is difficult for them to refuse and where they do, often leads to appeal decisions in favour of the applicant.

3.9 Authorities should have a duty to update key documents such as the five year land supply to ensure that it remains a reliable document for all stakeholders. This would bring increased transparency and certainty and would speed up decision making when policy compliant schemes come forward on sites identified within the five year supply.

3.10 Viability has always been a planning consideration and local plans are viability tested before they are adopted to ensure that policies and targets are deliverable. The NPPF introduced a policy relating to viability which saw a step change in the way that planning schemes are considered. This has resulted in an overemphasis of viability from the point of view of the developer at the expense of policy compliance and tipped the balance in favour of the developer at the expense of affordable housing.
3.11 Viability is a valid consideration, but there should not be a general assumption that planning requirements and contributions, including affordable housing, can be lost if it cannot be immediately afforded. Instead, schemes should re-designed or re-phased in order to capture uplift in values that hadn’t previously been taken account in initial cost studies and viability assessments. Increased use of clawback mechanisms in Section 106 agreements would achieve this and should be mandatory where planning contributions cannot initially be made in full at permission stage.

3.12 Finally, rural exception sites are increasingly important tools for providing affordable homes for communities in rural areas ensuring that homes are available for future generations. The importance of rural exception sites should not be underestimated, and government should remain supportive of such sites where they help to sustain rural communities.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 Since the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), England has lacked any form of strategic spatial planning. Although we welcome the emphasis on localism, and putting decisions into the hands of local people, the lack of a spatial element in the planning system has resulted in a highly fragmented system, which is not co-ordinated, and leads to very different outcomes across the country.

4.2 Introducing a spatial element to the planning system would enable a strategic, joined-up approach to the provision of housing and infrastructure at a regional level, and across economic and market areas joining housing growth with job growth. It would also assist in identifying regional differences in terms of growth and delivery of housing and could assist in strengthening the duty to cooperate, particularly for those authorities who are combining and plan-making at the supra-local area.

4.3 Increasingly, as housing and planning powers are devolved, we are seeing combined authorities replace the regional tier of planning. These authorities would still be bound to fulfil the requirements of the NPPF by proactively planning to meet objectively assessed need and planning at such a scale would make this requirement much easier to fulfil.

4.4 Combined authorities would also have the benefit of pooling resources, and joint evidence base documents, making plan preparation more time and cost efficient. Less evidence base documents would also have the added benefit of being more easily updated, allowing the regular updating of plans. This is vital to ensuring the planning system remains plan-led, is meeting local need, and avoids planning by appeal.

4.5 The recently established land commissions in London and Manchester to map all publicly owned land are a welcome start to adding a spatial dimension to the planning system. We would welcome this approach being adopted across the country, particularly if a single database was used to record and display all public land. Layers could then be added showing committed and planned infrastructure, high growth areas, and housing need against
housing delivery. This would complement the National Planning Policy Framework by adding a truly spatial element to it.

5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

5.1. Looking ahead when plan-making is crucial for taking into account issues such as population growth and household formation, and the period of 15 years that a Local Plan usually covers is a sensible approach. What is equally, if not more, important is the frequency of which the plan is reviewed and updated.

5.2. Regular updating of plans and their associated evidence base documents is critical in ensuring that authorities are planning for the growth within their area. Regularly reviewing Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) and five year supply, site allocations and zoned land is also vital to ensure that housing need is matched with land availability. This would be the most effective way for Local Authorities to deliver the requirement to plan and meet objectively assessed needs.

5.3. Although no longer a formal requirement, many authorities prepare Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) in order to report on housing delivery and assess how effective adopted policies have been. This would be an ideal opportunity to revise and update the evidence base documents such as the SHLAA and five year supply in line with which sites have come forward and those which are currently going through the planning process. It would also be an appropriate opportunity to identify new sites that would achieve the housing target for that year.

6. **What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central government level required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?**

**Government role**

6.1. In a planning context, Government should provide a framework for local authorities and developers, allowing them to plan how best to meet their local needs. The NPPF does this, and the encouragement to get Local Plans in place is welcome. Intervention such as planning reform is not an effective way of increasing supply, especially when compared to the approach within the NPPF to provide local authorities with both freedom and responsibility given by the NPPF. Rather, it creates a long period of uncertainty as developers and land owners re-evaluate schemes, and local authorities process updated legislation and interpret the implications for development.

6.2. Recently, the planning system has been deregulated making it easier for developers to build new homes which are not scrutinised by local authorities, and which are exempt from providing any contributions. Whilst in theory this should lead to an increased supply of
housing, there has been no material increase in supply, but uncertainty has increased, leading to poor quality development and pushing up the price of land.

6.3. We welcome the High Court’s recent decision following the legal challenge by Reading Borough Council and West Berkshire District Council, and the subsequent annulment of the small sites exemption and vacant building credit policies. Research commissioned by the Federation shows that the national threshold would affect around 52% of authorities nationally and therefore these policies should not be replaced. The Government should also cancel the office to residential permitted development right. This right has the potential to create substandard housing as local authorities will not have control over important details such as space standards, dwelling mix and tenure.

6.4. Instead, established policy should be retained and local authorities allowed the flexibility to plan for their area. This should include setting an appropriate threshold for affordable housing. This is the only way that sustainable development can be achieved.

Recent announcements

6.5. We welcome the introduction of a brownfield register to record publicly owned land in London. Devolved regions such as Greater Manchester are also using registers as an opportunity to bring forward publicly owned sites for development and we hope that other regions will follow suit. In order for registers to be as helpful as they possibly can be, we believe the following information should be included:

- Size of the site
- Current use, and proposed use (if allocated within the Local Plan)
- Details of which public bodies own the land
- Indicative dwelling capacity and mix

6.6. Following on from the register, we welcome the introduction of zoning giving automatic planning permission on all suitable brownfield sites that was announced in the Productivity Plan. However, there is only enough brownfield land suitable for housing to meet need in full for four and a half years so whilst it will have a positive effect on supply in the short term, other policy options are needed to ensure supply increases in the long term.

6.7. In areas where zoning is successful, and further land is required for housing, we believe that any sites suitable for housing could be identified and zoned and we believe that there are plans to take this approach forward. Zoning could be embedded within local plans and prepared concurrently, and include clear requirements for each site, including permitted uses, the affordable housing required and density. These could be set on a geographical basis in a similar way to the Community Infrastructure Levy.

6.8. This will have the effect of creating more certainty over what will be delivered on an approved site, send clearer signals to the land market over pricing, ensure planning requirements are properly factored into the price paid for land, remove the scope for
negotiating down affordable housing on the grounds of viability and speed up planning decisions.

6.9. Enabling major infrastructure projects that include elements of housing developments to be fast-tracked through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime is welcome news and reflects the Federation’s long standing calls. We believe that this should be the first step towards full integration of major housing schemes within the NSIP process.

Further suggestions

6.10. Tightening the planning performance regime would help to speed up decision making. This could include introducing a dispute resolution mechanism for section 106 agreements, and limiting the use of pre-commencement conditions in order to facilitate a quicker start on site. Speeding up and simplifying the planning process is important in reducing uncertainty for developers and getting more homes built, particularly in light of the proposed extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants and the requirement for one to one replacement within two years.

6.11. It is important that speed is balanced with high quality decision making on applications and section 106 agreements. Draft Section 106 agreements should be submitted as part of the pre-application process, front loading the negotiations. If it is evident from this that the parties do not agree on the level of contributions required or proposed, then a dispute resolution service could be used in order to speed up negotiations. The process would be binding to both parties to ensure that the service is useful, effective and ensures that applicants do not renegotiate and reduce obligations following planning permission.

6.12. It is not just about the sheer number of homes that are built, but about the right type of homes in the right locations. The 2013 Growth and Infrastructure Act allows developers to renegotiate the affordable housing contribution following the grant of planning permission if it is believed that the proportion, or contribution, that was originally offered makes the scheme unviable. The provision also contains a sunset clause allowing developers to renegotiate the proportion of affordable housing that would be delivered or funded as part of a development. We believe that the power within this clause should be exercised in April 2016, requiring developers to provide a wide range of tenures, in line with planning policy.

6.13. Together, these would help housing associations increase the supply of affordable homes.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1. High standards of environmental performance for new buildings are vital for the long term sustainability and resilience of our built environment. As the proposed 2016 energy efficiency standards have been rescinded, a national strategy is required to bridge the gap
between the current standards and the European target for all new buildings to be ‘Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings’ from 2020. Housing associations, as organisations committed to improving energy standards and lowering fuel costs for residents, would welcome the opportunity to participate in any review of building standards.

7.2. 70% of 2050 housing stock nationwide\textsuperscript{381} is already built and ongoing investment is imperative to ensure it is both affordable to live in and fit for purpose in a changing climate. Fuel poverty is endemic in the UK and energy efficiency policy must focus on improving building fabric efficiency of existing buildings to bring down energy bills and provide affordable warmth to the most vulnerable. A wide range of households should be able to access energy efficiency measures, based on effective targeting and a range of relevant, good quality, and affordable products. Well-designed national policy will also drive the retrofit industry in the UK towards market viability and away from subsidies. The UK’s reduced rate of VAT for energy saving materials, which helps to reduce the cost of energy efficiency improvement works, should be preserved.

7.3. Energy efficiency policy could better deliver government’s aims on fuel poverty reduction, energy security and enhanced consumer protection via more effective engagement with housing associations. 11% of England’s housing stock is managed by housing associations and ownership is highly concentrated, presenting a simplified route for delivery of large scale projects. Providing more freedoms and flexibilities to housing associations, including flexibility in how they set rents, manage and value assets, would allow them to fund improvements in existing homes without raising overall costs for residents or requiring financial support from government. For example, flexibility over rent setting would allow housing associations to charge higher rents for more energy efficient properties, where energy bills will be lower.

7.4. Planning policy should accommodate and encourage innovative approaches to improving energy efficiency. The Dutch Energiesprong programme, which is now being replicated for the UK market, provides a good example of how this can be achieved. This market transformation approach delivers fully integrated refurbishment packages supported by long term performance guarantees, aiming to make the solution commercially financeable and scalable. For this model to be effective in the UK it is essential that planning systems are simplified for energy efficiency/retrofit measures.

7.5. Sustainable communities are about more than buildings. Deprived areas that may have lost their traditional economic focus need concentrated and sustained government investment for them to re-launch and reach a successful and sustainable position. Housing associations’ physical investment in quality homes and open spaces together with their neighbourhood investment in employment and skills initiatives, education and health and wellbeing all make big differences to areas needing regeneration. They help people into work, they revitalise local economies and invest in local communities and local economies over the long term.

\textsuperscript{381} DCLG - Planning Applications January to March 2015, p.3
7.6. However, housing associations cannot do it all or alone. Towns and neighbourhoods also need investment in local infrastructure and employment opportunities to generate economic growth. Focussing investment on a strategic and streamlined approach to capital funding would enable local strategic partners such as housing associations to invest more in revitalising local communities, promoting economic growth and ensuring that local communities and ensuring that the built environment is sustainable and resilient in the years to come.

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Skills

9.1. Local authority planners are required to consider an extremely wide range of criteria when determining planning applications, from design to drainage and sustainability to landscaping. However, one area in which they are not trained, and where authorities often lack the resources and skills is to negotiate on viability. The required expertise is often contracted to a consultant and the process of negotiating takes much longer than it would be if the expertise was available in house.

9.2. Currently a significant number of applications are decided at committee level. Political pressure on members of these committees often leads to them voting against the planning officer’s recommendation, even where a scheme fits with the local plan. Inevitably this leads to costly and time consuming appeals.

9.3. The Local Plan process should always begin by engaging with and getting buy-in from the local community. Once this consultation is complete, the finished plan should represent the agreed vision for development in the area. Therefore, schemes that fully comply with the development plan should be approved by officers under delegated authority, rather than having to be seen by the council’s planning committee. We believe this would largely take politics out of the decision-making process and, ultimately, speed up decision making; free up the planning committee to focus on more complex non-compliant schemes; and provide a powerful incentive to developers to submit policy-compliant schemes. Where schemes are decided by the committee, members should receive training to ensure decisions are focused purely on planning matters relevant to the proposal.

9.4. There is a wider role for strong local leadership to set a strong and clear vision for the area and to provide an advocacy role between landowners, developers and the local authority to ensure that the best development outcomes are achieved.

Resources
9.5. Planning departments have seen a 46%\textsuperscript{382} cut in funding between 2010/11 – 2014/15. This has led to large cuts to the number of planning officers, whilst the number of applications received has remained consistent\textsuperscript{383}. At the same time, the Government has introduced a monitoring scheme which measures local authority performance on the basis of how many applications are determined within a prescribed timeframe.

9.6. This target-driven culture can put pressure on officers to make a decision, rather than guide an application to ensure the right outcome. This can often lead to policy compliant schemes being refused or withdrawn to ensure that authority targets are not compromised. Although the Federation welcomes the drive for decisions to be made in a timely manner, this should not come at the expense of reaching the right decision, even if that means extending a deadline.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

10.1. High quality design in the built environment is extremely important. The NPPF provided a step change in policy on design stating that ‘good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people’.

10.2. Design is not just about how buildings look, but about how places function to make the lives of communities better. Often, a Local Plan is a key tool to shape the way places change based on the policies contained within the NPPF and can influence the amount of open space required for new developments, the internal space of new housing and, to some extent, how new buildings are designed.

10.3. With increasingly fragmented land ownerships, a more proactive approach to good design and place-making could see a heightened role for masterplanning. This would provide a local authority with the opportunity of predating certain elements of the built environment such as layout, building height and density providing a starting point for developers when undergoing the feasibility stage of a development.

\textsuperscript{382} BRE - Cost of Poor Housing
\textsuperscript{383} MOU to support joint action on improving health through the home
10.4. Local partners such as housing associations also play a key role in place-making through maintaining and regenerating their stock and surroundings, as the case study below shows.

**Case Study: Housing associations’ role as ‘place-makers’**

The Regenda Group have a 10 year vision to regenerate Limehurst Village in Oldham by pulling private and public partners together to transform the neighbourhood through employment and training opportunities, health initiatives, and community development, as well as building new homes and improving existing homes. Residents are at the centre of this process, and have played a key role in shaping the 10 year vision for the area, which guides the whole project.

Regenda have partnered with Oldham Council, social enterprises and local businesses to bring economic opportunities to the area, and so far have supported 66 people into full time employment, 67 people into part time work, and helped 10 people to develop successful small businesses. Their long term commitment to Limehurst has secured over £5 million of new investment, with a further £12 million proposed over the next 5 years. There are now investments in the arts, sports and physical activity, wellbeing, public spaces and the environment.

Regenda have worked with residents and other local partners to create a sustainable community where people want to live because they feel safe and secure, and have access to good economic opportunities.

10.5. National leadership should encourage the relationship between local authorities and local partners to be nurtured, focusing on the benefits that they can bring and how they can assist in delivering the strategic vision at a local level, particularly where local partners such as housing associations have invested in communities for the long term.

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it?

11.1 The Care Act 2014 sets out that the 'suitability of living accommodation' is a core component of the wellbeing principle on which social care is based. The critical role of housing in people’s health and wellbeing is recognised throughout the Act. Poorly designed housing, or damp, overcrowded homes can significantly impact on the mental and physical health of individuals and communities. The Building Research Establishment\(^{384}\) has calculated that poor housing costs the NHS £1.4bn per year.

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\(^{384}\) Financial benefits of investing in specialist housing for vulnerable and older people, Frontier Economics (2010)
11.2 Whilst at a national policy level this has been recognised through the Memorandum of Understanding between health, housing and care leaders, there is still some way to go to ensure that decision makers and developers take sufficient account of the impact of the homes and communities that are built. Measures that could improve the delivery of homes and communities that help people live healthy lives include:

- Involving those responsible for Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Health and Wellbeing strategies in the process for developing key local planning documents and guidance to ensure housing reflects accurately local assets, needs and demographic trends.
- Ensuring design standards incentivise good quality, accessible housing being built to meet a range of different aspirations across local markets, in both specialist and general needs stock.

11.3 In addition, the crucial role that housing associations can play in supporting tenants and communities to improve their health and wellbeing should be recognised and supported.

11.4 Housing associations play a major role in supporting their customers to be healthy. In addition to the delivery of affordable, warm homes and good quality green space which prevent poor health, our members provide specialist housing and services for older and vulnerable people.

11.5 The specialist housing, care and support delivered by housing associations allows people to live independently, reach their potential, and prevents further ill health. We know that supported housing delivers net savings to the public purse of around £640m for all client groups, or £6,764 per person per year for people with learning disabilities.

11.6 Our members’ work improves health and wellbeing outcomes for a number of vulnerable groups, including people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, and older people. Working with partners in the health service, housing associations help the NHS to meet its public health objectives at a time of reduced public funding.

Case study: Innovative solutions to hospital discharge

385 Based on average costs of mental and physical health treatment in Hard Edges: mapping severe and multiple disadvantage, Lankelly Chase Foundation (2015), for an estimated 58,000 people (ibid)

386 When the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) published its report in 1987, it presented a new concept - sustainable development. The concept became one of the most successful approaches to be introduced in many years. In fact, it helped to shape the international agenda and the international community's attitude towards economic, social and environmental development.

The Brundtland Commission’s report defined sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Housing and care provider Midland Heart has worked with both acute and community trusts to develop re-ablement units. Each of the units is a refurbished ward, created to reflect a more homely and less clinical environment. Through a joint trusted assessment team, older individuals deemed medically fit for discharge and who do not require an acute bed, are placed into the Midland Heart service.

The re-ablement team then create a personalised support plan, to meet the social care needs of the customer whilst continuing their discharge journey home. Midland Heart’s team of reablement workers delivers a programme of activities which focuses on wellbeing, confidence building and independence, as well as ensuring that an ongoing care package is arranged or necessary adaptations are fitted to make the transition home as smooth as possible.

11.7 Housing associations’ health, care and support services are invaluable to communities across the country and to the future of the NHS. Among many interventions, housing associations are able to integrate housing and care for older people; prevent costly hospital admissions; help people with learning disabilities to live outside of institutional settings; and prevent homelessness. The operating environment is increasingly challenging. We would like to see a new approach to investment in care, support and integration:

- **A new framework for preventative support services** - the Federation proposes a new outcomes-based funding framework for support services. This would pool existing funds from across government departments, including the Department of Health, Department for Work and Pensions, and Ministry of Justice, to be targeted at preventative services that help people avoid the crises that lead to high cost interventions. The pooled budget would be match-funded locally, and a proportion of payments would be tied to particular outcomes being achieved. This approach aligns to the model Big Society Capital has advocated in its own submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review to improve outcomes for people facing particular barriers, such as homelessness, mental health issues, NEETs and others.

- The health service spend for people with complex needs is estimated to be £6,188 per person per year - that's £358,904,000 in total for all of these clients. The Federation’s proposed framework aims to reduce the need for this spending by funding services which promote people’s independence, help them to secure work, and prevent the need for them to visit A&E.

- **A Transformation Fund** - Integrated approaches to services and funding are key to ensuring that health, care and the home are coordinated around the needs of people. The Better Care Fund (BCF) was established in June 2013 to facilitate this shift. However, we believe to truly achieve the levels of service reform needed an additional Transformation Fund, as advocated by the King’s Fund, is necessary to support large-

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scale service changes and manage the transition between old and new models of care. Crucially, a Transformation Fund could support efforts at a devolved level to fully integrate health, housing, care and support around the experience of individuals.

- **Continued Department of Health investment in supported housing** – Department of Health investment in specialist and supported housing should be continued for the long-term as a key cost-saving intervention. With an investment programme that spans several years, housing associations would be better able to strategically plan to meet the housing needs of older people, people with mental health problems, and people with learning disabilities.

### 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

**Plan-making**

12.1. Generally, consultation processes are reactive rather than proactive. Proactive consultation such as workshops and exhibitions can facilitate discussions between those members of a community who otherwise may not engage with plan making.

12.2. Evidence shows that innovative methods in community planning can greatly benefit the speed of the planning process, execution of development and integration into the existing community. However, vociferous and well informed sections of the community must not be allowed to be represented at the expense of those who are in housing need, especially if they are not already part of the community.

12.3. When preparing Local Plans, more could be done to encourage key stakeholders such as Housing Associations to take an active role in the shaping of policies. As the case study below demonstrates, when partners collaborate in plan making, this can lead to positive outcomes that meet an identified need within a community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study: Involving communities in development projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midlands Rural Housing worked in partnership with Stratford-on-Avon District Council to use their “Local Choice” initiative to involve the local community in their development plans, and as a result 13 new affordable homes were built in a nearby rural area as part of a Section 106 agreement. The “Local Choice” initiative is an innovative approach which allows members of the community to promote development plans that meet their identified local housing needs. The community chose the land for development, contributed to the design of the properties to ensure they were in keeping with the surrounding properties and the atmosphere of the village, and the tenure mix and timetable for development were agreed with the Parish Council taking into account their concerns and the needs of the local area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Neighbourhood planning

12.4. Neighbourhood Planning offers communities to take ownership of development and regeneration in their area by writing and adopting a Neighbourhood Plan, though it must be in general conformity with the Local Plan to be found sound. Where a local authority has a CIL Charging Schedule in place, 25% of the levy revenues arising from development within the neighbourhood area will be given to the community to spend on infrastructure, giving an added incentive to prepare one.

12.5. Neighbourhood Planning is resource intensive and not all communities will have the finances or resources needed to prepare one. Grant funding is available to communities, but this does not necessarily make it easier for them to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. More direct support should therefore be available to communities who wish to make a plan that is affordable, if not free. Local stakeholders such as housing associations would be well placed to assist communities in navigating the process of producing a plan, and this should be encouraged.

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

13.1 There are a wide range of fiscal and financial measures that would help increase housing and land supply. Equally, there are associated and complementary mechanisms which would encourage better design and place-making. Within these, there are a number of interventions that would make a real difference to housing associations’ capacity and help them realise their ambitions. These should be addressed together and not viewed in isolation. Only by doing this will they deliver the biggest impact and enable housing associations to maximise their contribution.

13.2 In the first instance, there is a clear and compelling case for continued upfront capital investment to drive an increase in house building. It is the most effective way of guaranteeing new housing supply. And the most efficient form of public subsidy in the medium to long-term and is better value for money. It allows housing associations to plan and build affordable homes at a predictable and continuous rate over the medium to long-term. Counter-cyclical support will ensure housing associations can continue to build even when the market fails, support supply chains and smooth out delivery over the long-term.

13.3 To ensure public investment maximises value for money for the taxpayer and has the greatest impact, the current complexity and fragmentation must be tackled. The multiple funding streams should be consolidated into a single challenge fund. This should be used more flexibly and strategically to deliver tailored, place-specific interventions. It should
ensure the funding fits the project, rather than vice versa, and encourage genuine partnership working between national government, local authorities and housing providers.

13.4 The existing Affordable Homes Guarantee Programme should continue indefinitely. To make more effective use of the Government’s strong balance sheet, and the confidence funders have in the sector, government backed guarantees should be extended to cover refinancing of existing debt. Using guarantees to help restructure balance sheets would allow housing associations to lower the cost of historic debt and take on more private finance to fund affordable housing.

13.5 To increase the supply of land and improve access to that land, there are a number of steps government can take, some of which build on interventions they have already made. So, where local authorities (or combined authorities) can demonstrate they are making the most effective use of their own assets, they should be empowered to identify and map all public land and property in a local area, bring it together, assess its potential and set out a coordinated strategy for its release. This should include pooling public land and joining up estate and asset planning processes, building on the successful One Public Estate pilot.

13.6 To increase planning certainty, government should build on the announcement in the Productivity Plan that brownfield land, suitable for housing, should be given automatic planning permission, under a zonal system. Zoning should be extended beyond brownfield land, so all sites suitable for housing should be identified and ‘zoned’ in local plans. This should replace site allocations and be embedded in the local plan. It would have the same weight as outline planning permission and set clear requirements for each site – permitted uses, density and affordable housing requirement. This would help increase certainty, send clear signals to the market on price and speed up planning decisions. Together these measures should incentivise land coming forward and speed up housing delivery.

13.7 To help ensure a fair price is paid for land, Treasury guidance on best value, when public bodies dispose of land, needs to be updated. Too often this is interpreted as achieving the maximum upfront receipt, rather than the wider social, economic and environmental value. Change here would facilitate the sale of public land at a fair market value. Under this approach the price could be agreed using the residual land value model, fully costing the minimum planning requirements of a site, which could be more explicitly defined through zoning. So, instead of competing on price, competition would focus on who can deliver the highest quality, for the agreed price. Prospective developers will be assessed on the basis of how well they can deliver the minimum zoning requirements, in addition to the quality of design and any other social, economic and environmental benefits they could unlock.

13.8 Local authorities need enhanced powers to incentivise developers and landowners to bring sites forward. This will include the ability to charge a levy on sites unreasonably held back, alongside streamlined compulsory purchase orders (CPO). Placing time-limits on zoning will give local authorities the basis for taking action on stalled sites, but by creating certainty and value uplift for landowners should incentivise them to bring land forward within the agreed timeframe. Whilst a streamlined CPO process could help local authorities acquire sites
directly or make them available to other developers, there will be strict limits on how the price paid under CPO is set. It will be determined by the planning requirements of the site’s zoning. A credible CPO process should act as a disincentive for holding onto sites, ensure more sites are implemented and help stabilise land prices.

Conclusions

Housing associations are ready to boost housing supply, meet the housing needs and aspirations of people on all levels of income, and drive economic growth both nationally and locally. They are also heavily invested within the communities that they serve and are committed to long term investment within them.

The sector is committed to developing a stronger, long term partnership with the Government to end the housing crisis, and with the right conditions and policies in place, they can exceed their already impressive track record to deliver the quality homes and places this country needs.

06 October 2015
Transcript to be found under Lord Best
New Garden Cities Alliance (CIC)– Written Evidence (BEN0108)

Authors Philip Ross and Elizabeth Wrigley
Founder members of the New Garden City Alliance
Registered CIC

1. This submission to the House of Lords Select Committee of Inquiry into National Policy for the Built Environment is made in response to their invitation of July 22, 2015 to the public to give evidence.

2. The submission may be made public and reflects the views of the New Garden Cities Alliance (NGCA) of which Philip Ross and Elizabeth Wrigley are both founding members.

Founders of the NGCA are listed on our web page at: http://gardencities.info/

Policy-making, integration and coordination

1P. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level?  No – The NGCA seeks a more meaningful involvement at citizen level through mechanisms of ownership and commonhold of land

What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?  The Garden City movement requires this more fundamental citizen-led development process, without which the Government should not be able to use the term “Garden City/ Garden Suburb/ or Garden Village”.

2P. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage?  No sign of real coordination to ensure the policies join up.

How could integration and coordination be improved?  No comment

National policy for planning and the built environment

3P. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment?  Policy at a national level alone will not be sufficient, as it is not guided by the citizens who are directly affected by it.

Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others?

If so, what should be prioritised and why?

4P. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective?  No National Policy could address all the diverse local spatial issues in England adequately.

What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?  No comment.
5P. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? *Timescale should be intergenerational to meet the Brundtland definition of sustainability*. How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking? *As above.*

**Buildings and places: New and old**

6P. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? *Government role should be indirect by providing facilitating legislation for sustainable development as recommended above.* Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? *No comment.* What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system? *No comment.*

7P. How do we develop built environments, which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? *Introduce mutual ownership and control of urban sites and seek to implement the principles of commonhold – mutual ownership of sites and assets and delivery of services in new developments. Examples of this could be the Co-operative Land Bank model proposed by Shann Turnbull, who has also submitted a response to the Select Committee.* Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? *Not efficiently unless a process is started as described above.* How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made? *It requires a case-by-case analysis to reconsider the ownership and control of sites and services.*

8P. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? *No comment.* How can more be made of these national assets? *No comment.*

**Skills and design**

9P. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? *No – because they lack awareness of the invisible structures of urban environments and lack an education in how to design their governance infrastructure.* How could we begin to address any skills issues? *As above. The New Garden City Alliance is in discussions with the following professional organisations on the way forward to improve skills: TCPA; Landscape Institute: RIBA; RTPI: Permaculture*
Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas? No skills or resources are available to plan or shape the forms of governance to deliver this invisible architecture of ownerships and responsibilities.

10P. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? See 9 above.

How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced? See 7 above.

Community involvement and community impact

11P. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? No – because they have no knowledge of network governance, and lack the skills – see 9 above.

How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviour within communities? Introduce network governance to promote political, economic, social and resource self-sufficiency and self-governance. Skill-up those who will lead the process.

12P. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Cannot be as effective as it could be because the above network governance is not adopted, and they also lack the necessary skills.

Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed? Public engagement cannot be meaningful without this local governance of the public ownership of assets.

Financial measures

13P. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Yes, introduce legislation to facilitate “Locally-led” initiatives to adopt self-financing mutually owned land ownership and control as recommended in 6, and 9-12 above.

Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers? Yes, by encouraging locally led bottom up feedback inherent in the governance architecture the New Garden City Alliance recommends.

Philip Ross and Elizabeth Wrigley NGCA
Submission to be found under Dr Kerry Burton
A BETTER BUILD ENVIRONMENT.

Evidence for consideration by the House of Lords Select Committee.

The following evidence is submitted on behalf of citizens who live on Limetrees, Pontefract, because of recent experiences with planning approval of residential development neighbouring where we live.

POLICYMAKING, INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION on issues such as local planning approvals that has significant impact on the quality of lives of people, of all ages, has to be taken at local government level, in accordance with the responsibilities advised by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Currently it is apparent that the building and development does not have serious regard for environment issues.

Improvement in the quality of life and happiness of stakeholders neighbouring/involved in the development site location can be made good, if citizens and locally elected members views and opinions are seriously considered in arriving at agreed conditions of planning approved recommendations for a development.

The meaning of Localism has to be seen in any planning of a “Build Environment” With most people wanting to have a say, and many want to play an active part, in making sure that the design of their city, town or village is good and worthy of its citizens.

To achieve localism the Government needs to;

- Make improving the quality of the public realm in our cities, town and villages a priority.
- Give all citizens opportunities to actively shape the future of their place.
- Give local communities the powers they need to enable their town and city centres to prosper.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT.

We do not object to the building of houses on this site, our objection is with the access to the site which impacts severely on the quality of life and introduces fear and danger to older people who live in bungalows along the street where heavy and very large vehicles is planned to gain access to the site, vehicles that are taller than the bungalows. The enclosed photographs illustrate clearly our concerns.

There are other possible access and entrance means into the site.

There are two bends in the street that serves our homes. At around 11.20 am on Friday 7th August 2015 Lady Jean O’Brien was driving along the street to her home in Limetrees when a digger was leaving the proposed site and they met on the bend in the road, Lady Jean had
to swiftly steer on the footpath to avoid being struck by the digger, this is not the kind of environment old people should have to endure with new housing development.

To achieve a ‘build environment’ with all its meaningful aims and objectives community involvement is paramount, with any development of any type and size there can be visual, mental and physical impacts upon communities, particular where older people live.

Investment in housing must include investment in infrastructure. Schools, Medical services, Roads, Public Transport, sewers and water supply, are all essential to meet the demand of thousands of new houses, for developers to continue to rely on and couple into the ageing services is testing the environment in communities.

Recent experience locally is to receive notice that a developer has applied to build 84 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses adjacent to the area where we live, and the means of access to the site is use the street where we live.

A local farmer has cultivated the land which is the proposed site for development for 30 years, not once using the street in Limetrees to gain access his fields once but uses a track to the south of the estate, this action by the farmer is a fine example of protecting the environment of citizens.

The farmers track is available for the developer who refuses to use it for access which is a clear example of total disregard for a ‘Build Environment’.

DRAINAGE AND FLOODING.
A survey reveals that the site given approval, falls to a low point from the proposed access point where foul water drainage surface water drainage to gravity into soakaway drains is not possible. Alternative solutions has to be agreed with the water authority and the contractor to meet satisfactory drainage of the site.

Flooding and the possibility of surface water from the site contributing to an already Wash Dike which often floods necessitates issuing an order on the discharge of water into the system of a maximum of 5 litres per second. A number of pumping stations has to be constructed to handle the water discharge which is most unsatisfactory and is not good environmental planning.

New and additional surface water drainage measures should be introduced to meet the environment protection.

This is a clear measure of the requirement of the build environment principle to ensure in planning approvals that the drainage infrastructure is adequate to meet the needs of the development and that drainage problems are not allowed to be passed on the future generations.
Following representations to the water authority assurances are given that any new developments which are added to the existing network do not have any detrimental effects, and certain adopted requirements do need to be met.

It is the measuring of those assurances that require serious considerations.

To assist in achieving a better build environment there has to be investment in the infrastructure required for development.

We do address mildly the question of National policy for planning and the build environment and we consider officers involved with considering planning approval must have training to develop better Skills and design.

The citizens of Limetrees, Pontefract welcome this opportunity to contribute to the creation of a ‘better build environment’, and look forward to reading the report of the Select Committee.

With very best wishes.

Sir William O’Brien

19 October 2015
Dr Fabiano Lemes de Oliveira – Written Evidence (BEN0086)

1. I hereby respectfully answer the call for evidence invited by the House of Lords Select Committee on National Planning Policy for the Built Environment. I am a Senior Lecturer at University of Portsmouth School of Architecture, with specialism in urbanism and green space planning. I am currently completing an academic monograph titled *Green Wedge Urbanism: History, Theories and Practice*, to be published by Bloomsbury.

Q4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

2. Although the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) indicates that local planning authorities should ‘plan positively’, this is still open to interpretation. A stronger link between positive planning and spatial planning needs to be developed. The Farrell Review rightly identified the ‘desperate need for more proactive planning’ and to be visionary.  

3. The introduction of a spatial element would be welcome. This would be instrumental to develop clear and shared long-term visions and fill the gap between traditional planning and urban design.

Positive planning of green belts and strategic gaps

4. In 2014, 9% of the land in England was developed, while approximately a third was protected, 13% as designated Green Belt. This shows that Green Belt land has a vast transformative potential to improve the quality of life in urban and rural settings across the country.

5. There must be a positive approach to planning Green Belts into networks of high quality green and, if appropriate, blue places. Green Belt land has been so far conceived as a ‘negative’ space: at the same time as it has focused on avoiding growth and protecting the character of places around it, it has so far mostly renounced its own place potential.

6. Policy needs to update the purposes of the Green Belt in light of current societal needs. The NPPF states that the Green Belt currently serves five purposes: to check unrestricted sprawl, to prevent the merging of towns into one another, to safeguard the countryside from encroachment, to preserve the setting and character of historic towns and to assist in urban regeneration. Most of this refers to development control, rather than positive planning for high quality green and blue places that address contemporary needs and challenges. Recreation must be explicitly included. In addition, policy should include, as purposes: interventions aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate

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change,\textsuperscript{391} the promotion of sustainable city-regions and the generation of renewable energy.

7. Research has shown that a negative definition of a landscape typology can hardly be successful in protecting open spaces in growing city regions. Instead landscape has to have a positive definition. If a large green structure’s main reason for existence is to avoid development and has very little associated recreational use attached to it, its social values would be poor and it will be more susceptible to pressures for encroachment. Proactive planning, on the other hand, which addresses social values relating to our need for contact with nature, is the key to the positive safeguarding of green spaces. Public engagement in this process is crucial.\textsuperscript{392} Furthermore, non-integrative solutions for the demarcation of protection areas, which do not take into consideration the implications for socio-cultural activities, can have a detrimental impact in the socio-spatial cohesiveness of communities.

8. The integration between city and nature has a number of benefits, ranging from mental and physical health, environmental quality and levels of happiness. The recreational function of green spaces is pervasive. It directly addresses the human need for contact with nature, presenting both psychological and physical benefits. Research found statistically significant relationships between the use of urban green spaces and self-reported experiences of stress, suggesting that the more often a person visits green spaces, the less stressed he or she will be.\textsuperscript{393} The psychological benefits of passive or active social interactions that happen in public green spaces cannot be disregarded. The social functions of these spaces contribute to help meet people’s need to be gregarious, influencing directly their wellbeing. Community participation in, for instance, communal gardens and allotments offer behavior settings in which interaction across ages and social groups lead an enhanced sense of belonging, social cohesion and satisfaction with the local area. In terms of physical health, green spaces can help in a number of ways, including facilitating recovery from illness\textsuperscript{394} and encouraging physical activities in all age groups.

9. The provision of high-quality green and blue spaces, their distribution and ease of access is a requirement of contemporary cities, rather than ‘nice to have’. On top of the commonly associated benefits of green spaces to recreation, health, ecology and environment, they become key assets of attractiveness in competitive global cities, both for highly skilled professionals and investment. This acknowledgement is a common feature of international regional and city plans, such as the Helsinki City Plan 2013: vision for 2050, the Stockholm RUFS 2010 plan, the Copenhagen FingerPlan 2013 and the Randstad 2040.

\textsuperscript{391} Patrik Grahn and Ulrika A. Stigsdotter, "Landscape Planning and Stress," \textit{Urban Forestry \& Urban Greening} 2, no. 1 (2003).
\textsuperscript{393} Steve Carpenter Carl Folke, Thomas Elmqvist, Lance Gunderson, CS Holling and Brian Walker, "Resilience and Sustainable Development: Building Adaptive Capacity in a World of Transformations," \textit{Ambio} 31, no. 5 (2002).
10. Green Belts should be positively planned for a systemic integration of socio-ecological and environmental services. Cross-scale interactions must be considered. This approach suggests the overcoming of old dichotomies between man-made and nature, arguing for a dynamic relationship between systems, each one impacting the other. 395

11. Change must be allowed in the green belt. Adaptive capacity and diversity are pre-requisites for resilience. Furthermore, the possibility of positive transformation will unlock the Green Belt’s potential to accommodate a network of diverse and high-quality places. High diversity increases the range of possibilities that a system has to keep its functions and structures or to adapt and find new states. 396

12. Large-scale green spaces are able to accommodate diverse landscapes and a large range of ecological habitats. Wildlife migration is also better supported through the continuity of ecological corridors. A variety of landscapes, experiences, functions and activities enrich the physical and socio-cultural environment catering for diverse human and ecological needs. These in turn contribute to an area’s resilience – its ability to withstand or adapt to change.

13. London’s green belt and a number of ‘strategic gaps’ between towns in the South East are to a large extent locked in a straightjacket of non-action. Certainly this approach has its role in localised circumstances, but is wasteful. A holistic integrative view needs to be considered. Adding values, experimentation in the definition of activities and interactions, proposing hybrids can support generative processes.

14. Strategic gaps between towns and cities should also be positively planned. An example of that can be seen in the Randstad 2040 vision, which intends to transform former buffer zones into metropolitan parks. They are part of a green and blue regional infrastructure plan. 397

15. Policies that support flexibility, dynamism and change should be encouraged to make our large green spaces, and therefore our cities, more adaptable and responsive to our changing needs. For that to happen, top-down and bottom-up need to meet and control and decision-making negotiated.

Green Wedges

16. **Green Belts’** criticism includes the fact that most of the green space it contains is concentrated around the city and therefore away from where most people live, for the poor quality of its spaces, its fragmentation and lack of access to the population. 398

17. The Barker Report on Planning Use399 commissioned by the Prime Minister to review the planning system in England suggested a change in planning model to allow cities to have a larger footprint and more urban green spaces within the urban boundary. Moreover, the report stated that the government should review the merits of other models of green space provision, such as green wedges.

18. Green wedges should be considered in addition to Green Belts. Green wedges are ducts of green space from the countryside right into the centre of a city or town. The model presents many social, economic and environmental benefits, such as: a direct connection to the country from the inner urban areas, interconnected high-quality green and blue spaces in direct proximity to people’s homes, thermal regulation in the inner city, improved air quality due to trees and the ‘flushing’ effect of polluted air away from urban areas, use for sustainable urban drainage systems, and enhanced biodiversity in cities.

19. The Green Wedge model has a long history in UK planning thought. England pioneered the promotion of the idea in the early twentieth century. 400 Sir Patrick Abercrombie’s plans for London, the County of London Plan 1943 and the Greater London Plan 1944, defined frameworks for the implementation of green wedges in association with green belts.401 In addition, green wedges were key features of many New Towns. These plans could offer valuable insights into how to better articulate green belts and wedges into a cohesive green and blue infrastructure plan today.

20. Whenever possible they should follow natural features such as rivers and valleys. A flexible implementation of green wedges in consolidated urban fabrics is necessary. Milan’s ‘Raggi Verdi’ plan and Hamburg’s Green Network shows that combining historical green paces, geographical features and newly created greenery even in the most urbanised areas of the city can be a recipe for success if there is political will and public support. These plans are key strategies in these cities’ visions of a healthy and sustainable future.

**References**


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401 Beyond Retail Report


Policymaking, Integration and coordination

1. All decisions that shape our built environment, roads, housing, commercial, industrial or landscape & agriculture are taken by central Government. This is the cause of most of our problems, there is no delegation of decision making only responsibility down the pecking order.

Local authorities are too scared of not following Government dictates not spending money and leaving the office to visit villages or sites that are in remote locations.

Central Government must delegate the decision making process to those who live and work in an area. County Councils do not consult with residents of Parishes affected by the decisions placed upon them, by Government.

District Councils are similar to County Councils in attitude and consultation. If we have any partners we never see or hear from these. Parish Councils are by enlarge ignored, as far as their recommendations for major Planning Applications.

2. Policy across Government Departments appears to be non-existent.

Housing - Policy build them anywhere that landowners and developers want them. See decisions by Planning Inspectors and Secretaries of State

Designs – There appears to be no consistent policy on design, our towns, roads, etc. are littered with examples of poor design especially with respect to growth. Quantity of our housing stock in recent years has deteriorated as builders aim to minimise cost, and maximise profits, so we use the cheapest of materials etc. to comply with its ever changing and increasing level of regulation by Government.

Transport – If we have a policy on this, where is it. Except carbon emissions item appears to be no coherent policy.

Infrastructure – We have the most expensive by road tax and fuel road system in Europe, the least well designed and maintained. There is no common sense used by Government, specifiers, planners, designers, contractors, etc, just blind compliance to regulations and red tape. Our road system ignores the requirement for the growth in housing and warehousing by Government. For example Northampton needs a ring road before any further expansion takes place. A ring road that meets the expectation of residents not Government.
Railways very expensive ineffective rail system that was very good when UK population about 5m. Now inadequate HS2 should be designed as a “maglev” to meet 22nd century requirements not Victorian.

Utilities only interested in the cheapest systems therefore all the work they carry out on housing estates, roads etc. take so long and cost so much.

Sustainability needs clear definition. Heritage appears to be totally ignored reference the Overstone Hall in Overstone Park.

Delegate decisions on roads and houses to those most affected by those decisions. Classic example of no joined up thinking by Government. We need a water grid from North to South, we dig up the M1 +M6 for months for a new central reservation. Why not bury a water main at the same time?

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is treated by Local Authorities (L.A’s) and those proposing developments as a regulatory framework not guidance. Therefore it provides little scope for objections to poorly conceived developments. Examples of this situation can be found throughout the surrounding areas to Northampton. There is little or no interest by LA’s for the protection of the built and natural environment where development is concerned. Agricultural land, avenues of trees, woods etc, are destroyed in Northamptonshire due to developments for roads, houses and warehouses. The factor in the NPPF in favour of development is treated by central and local Government as the most important “regulation”. Thus this takes president over and above everything else.

The priority must be land conservation and infrastructure. We are fast running out of productive land in the South East and food production will be a big issue in the future. Our roads cannot cope with traffic volumes, schools are inadequate in number and quantity, hospitals are sprawling in efficient developments, see Northamptonshire General.

4. If a spatial perspective was added to the NPPF it will need to include a rural perspective. This must include a provision for the protection and conservation of our agricultural lands. If this is not done soon in the South East of England, so much of this productive agricultural land will be lost to development that we will have even higher food imports that we currently have.
5. We need to look 50 years into the future, and plans for the needs of our society. The policy makers must consult the current LA’s and Parish Councils to obtain a balanced view of the future. Particularly as they pay a high price to live where they do in terms of taxes, stamp duty, rates, etc. Our countryside needs to retain its character and we know from our experiences, that the Government alters studies it commissioned to suit its requirements see “Northamptonshire Landscape and Green Infrastructure Study”. Only sheep can graze in hilly or mountainous terrain, i.e. moors, dales, etc. Minton application refused by the LA, but overturned by the planning inspector, yet this development is less than 100m from Sywell Aerodrome.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. Build high rise flats in the centre of our towns, like most of continental Europe. Interventions by Westminster, only ensure their policies in favour of developments, are adopted. (See decisions by Planning Inspectors) Minton site, Sywell Aerodrome.

7. Define = sustainable!! Nowhere in the Government information, is a definition. Sustainable is by definition food. This is ignored in current Westminster thinking.

Resilient – Definition recovers from shock!!

The government must meddle less in the development of the countryside. Existing buildings can be adapted and changed if government both local and national had a more flexible approach to changing/upgrading buildings, particularly those listed or in conservation areas. Use of modern materials rather than a blinkered approach.

8. We make very poor use of our historic environments. Our Grade II listed Mansion in the village was severely damaged by a fire at the Overstone Hall, 10 years ago. Daventry District Council’s (DDC’s), lack of interest and worries about racism have delayed the restoration of this building. The building owners took the insurance monies and moved out. The local authority have shown little or no interest in the restoration of the building.

Skills and design

9. We have the architects, engineers, surveyors and planners in this county to sort out the mess we are in. However, because the Governmental/Political side of the Country, does not understand or is not interested in the opinions of the people in
the locality, where development is proposed, then we end up with a country in disarray. First sort out the infrastructure, roads, we pay the most for the worst roads in Europe. Same with railways, utilities, gas water, electric all ex-Governmental companies, overcharge for a poor service.

Local Authorities have the resources but have no idea how to manage anything. They blindly follow dictates from central government.

10. Why do you have this obsession with national leadership. This has lead to poor design, and poor planning. Stop controlling from Westminster. It is a failure, that there is a lack of trust in enabling areas to look after themselves. Why have you an obsession with targets for only houses.

Community involvement and community impact

11. They take little or no account of the effects of their decisions on the people who live near any developments. Consult and ignore is the mantra for urban sprawl. With Government idea’s of Village Design Statement, ours took 6 years, 4 different Planners ideas and comments. Months of time spent by Parish Council volunteers, only to be ignored. Localism Act, Neighbourhood Plans cost up to £30,000, takes 2-3 years for compliance, consultation and approval. However, the Neighbourhood Plan must comply with the “Government Plan” otherwise it is not accepted by the LA. Rather than the idea of having a say in what happens to one’s environment. To improve the situation as far as impacts are concerned, for rural areas listen and act upon the recommendations of the Parish Councils.

The “Federal Society” that the Government has created in this Country by its “Politically Correct” policies towards discipline, crime, education and infrastructure, needs strong locally organised and authorised communities to reduce antisocial behaviour.

12. Most people particularly, on Parish Councils are very able and willing to engage with the process of decision making. However, because their opinions and desires are generally totally ignored because of Government dictates, many are totally apathetic. The barriers to effective public engagement are created by the Government who do not really want the opinions, particularly of those living in rural areas, as they might conflict on houses, warehouses, windfarms, PV Panel farms, etc, that blight our countryside. Also Government alters reports, even those it
commissions to suit their requirements, i.e. “Northamptonshire, Land Use and Landscape Study”.

Financial measures

13. Yes, encourage high rise, developments in towns and cities within limits. Reinstate the “green belt”. Reduce the tax on land and house sales, get rid of the carbon emissions requirement for houses after 2016. There is plenty of land available however, the best land to use is that within towns and cities. Above railway yards, many of which are redundant. Above supermarkets and their carparks. The Government can encourage these developments by giving tax incentives. Better design will be achieved when cost is not the major driver, particularly for houses, warehouses, shopping centres, etc. Place making by developers, after the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL’s) etc. there is little money left to achieve place making. If they do, the LA does not maintain it. See Northants roundabouts, verges, roads all up-kempt, or potholes.

06 October 2015
The Parks Alliance

1. The Parks Alliance (TPA) is the voice of UK parks, representing the people and organisations that create, maintain, invest in and use the public green spaces that we are proud to have at the heart of British life. We campaign at local, regional, UK and EU levels to ensure that parks are properly funded, their roles recognized and developed, and that the benefits that they provide are clearly understood and recognized.

2. TPA is a not for profit company working to promote and protect the public parks. The UK-wide Alliance includes 40 organisations and senior park industry figures from local government parks services, private contractors, industry bodies, NGOs and volunteer and park friends groups. The Parks Alliance works to:
   - Protect and improve the country’s public parks for future generations.
   - Increase understanding among national politicians and policy makers of the value of public parks to the current and future quality of life and health in the UK.
   - Increase understanding among national and local politicians and decision makers that parks are a crucial part of social and physical infrastructure supporting education, flood control, health improvement, social cohesion, wildlife and helping us adapt to climate change.
   - Secure and boost the existing world-leading skills and expertise delivering UK parks as well as quality training and employment opportunities.
   - Influence national, regional and local policies and funding decisions that impact on parks.

A. Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

3. The built environment embraces the natural environment and parks should therefore be considered as part of the Committee’s inquiry. Parks are an integral part of places where we live, relax and work. Urban parks have a positive impact on physical activity and reduced obesity; property prices; local cooling and biodiversity.
4. Victorian parks were established as places to seek fresh air and respite for urban populations; the innovative tree-lined suburbs of Port Sunlight and Bourneville were planned so as to enhance residents’ sense of wellbeing; while Frederick Law Olmsted’s ambitious Emerald Necklace in Boston, USA, was designed to improve water quality and reduce the number of deaths from cholera. There is an honorable tradition that links places and public health.

5. The Heritage Lottery Fund’s report ‘20 Years in 12 Places’ gathered facts on the role parks play in people’s lives. The report shows parks have the greatest impact on residents’ quality of life, with 69% of local residents who were aware of selected parks for the survey, believing their personal quality of life to be a little better or much better as a result of having them in the area.

6. The Fabian Society’s ‘Places to Be’ report provides further evidence about the importance of green spaces in the community lives of an increasingly urban lifestyle. The report makes the case for providing parks when it says:

   “Our open green spaces more than ever provide a crucial community ballast, where we can come together, build relationships and reverse the long-term trend towards individualism and isolation.”

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

7. The Parks Alliance believes Government can create the right conditions by focusing on land assembly, infrastructure and providing quality public realm, including parks. Much more policy coordination is needed. This inquiry is a good example of the need for coordination as green infrastructure (GI), place making and the role of good public realm and parks and open spaces does not feature explicitly.

8. The TPA calls for greater emphasis on national policies that feed into local policy. For example sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) and green infrastructure (GI) policies are still considered in many cases as an after thought in developments by both public and private sectors. GI is not even considered in the London Enterprise Panel (LEP) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding as a means to include and develop holistic approaches to inclusive GI in infrastructure projects.

9. Parks cross over parish and local authority divisions and the benefits of green spaces and green infrastructure cannot be confined by administrative boundaries.

10. The Parks Alliance is concerned that until recently it was unclear where responsibility for parks lay within Government. It is still uncertain whether the appointment of a Minister for Parks can ensure a good understanding of the sector or recognition of
the contribution parks have to a number of different departmental objectives, for instance in public health. It is essential given the benefits that parks bring to public health, recreation and to sport are recognised and we are concerned there is no coordination between departments.

C. Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

11. As well as ‘grey’ infrastructure (transport, utilities, services), getting the green infrastructure right is a key component for any successful public project. New housing developments need green spaces included. For example:

The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park shows the value of a long term master plan with investment in green and grey infrastructure. Design of green infrastructure was included in the master plan and proved to be crucial. It enabled the creation of walking routes, cycle ways, places to play, surface water drainage and the space for people to commune with nature.

Manor Fields Park in Sheffield was integral to new housing developments with a SUDS scheme for the surrounding housing. During the floods of summer 2007, the scheme reduced the impact on the River Don by containing floodwater, and was able to reopen shortly after as a community open space once again.

Birmingham’s new Eastside City Park was built with the intention of complementing new housing developments which are to be built in the surrounding area.

12. Planning for growth should have overall government oversight to ensure quality, resilience, GI and spatial planning with regards to where not to build on flood plains for example. There should be incentives to reclaim brown field sites before green belt development and more incentives for land ownership mapping on local levels.

13. The future of the Green Belt; local versus regional planning and the issue of how can we identify the quality of a landscape are all important. We would call for the creation of a national standard to map and measure the quality of all green spaces.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstance in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?
14. Housing quantity cannot be divorced from housing quality and cannot be ignored. Research from the Local Government Association’s New Housing Developments Survey\(^\text{[i]}\) (2010) identified potential barriers to housing delivery. It found that 61 per cent of local councillors considered public opposition to be a significant barrier to housing development. When asked what would make housing development more acceptable to local communities, the following responses were given:

- Ensuring housing came with improved local services and facilities (including green space) – 82 per cent;
- Involving local communities in early discussions about design – 56 per cent;
- Ensuring a commitment to excellent design – 65 per cent

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

15. We need to ensure that other professionals and developers understand the nature of green spaces and the intrinsic value they bring fiscally as well as emotionally to any place. That the management and maintenance of any public realm needs ongoing budgets and needs to be addressed from the onset of any developments. Green and open spaces should be at the heart of any development, not last minute additions.

16. Registered parks and gardens, are protected from damage by the need to apply for listed building consent, or scheduled monument consent. Unfortunately local authorities subjected to severe budget cuts often have insufficient time or resources to take action when neglect or damage result in the loss of heritage assets, and have few suitably qualified staff available to deal with proposals for their development.

Skills and design
9. Do the professions involved in this area have the skills to consider adequately the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

17. Professions should work together and need to understand and accept the value of green infrastructure. Parks, green spaces and GI should not be viewed as desirable additions but as integral to any developments. The green infrastructure approach demonstrates the value of Natural Capital and is a good way of demonstrating that parks are integral in developments.

Community involvement and community impact
11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

18. No. Designing places that considers the human scale work best. That design should consider creating places that are walkable, accessible, have clean air, and are enjoyable, beautiful and well managed.

19. The management of parks is a non statutory responsibility for local authorities. This means parks are particularly vulnerable as cuts continue in local authority budgets. Yet this comes at a time when city populations are increasing and the multiple services that parks provide are needed more than ever.

20. Local councils need to retain their role as guardians of public assets but partnership between local councils and local communities is crucial. Green spaces have the potential to engage people in community life, but volunteers need to be supported. Effective management of green and open spaces requires a level of skill and experience beyond most volunteers.

Financial measures
13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

21. The Natural Capital Committee has shown that green infrastructure makes a good return on investment but is mostly voluntary or piecemeal and led by profit margins. Natural England estimate that if every household in England were provided with equitable access to quality green space then savings of £2.1bn could be achieved every year in averted health costs.

22. Parks face an uncertain future if austerity measures continue to undervalue and damage the fabric of our public parks network. The Heritage Lottery Fund’s State of UK Parks, released 2014 estimated that 45% of local authorities are considering either selling parks or green spaces or transferring their management to others.

23. We all need to explore different funding mechanism to maintain parks in the future. For instance a recent Policy Exchange report ‘Green Society: Policies to improve the UK’s urban green spaces’ called for the creation of Park Improvement Districts to help fund long term maintenance. They also thought that any new green spaces planned as part of a built development should be required to include a long term funding plan, which could include endowments part funded by developer contributions as part of the planning application.
24. The concept of Natural Capital is little understood and we would urge the Committee to visit and study UK parks’ enormous value not only in recreation but in public health, property prices and sustainability.

Rob Pearce
Business Manager

06 October 2015
Response by the Partnership for Active Travel, Transport and Health (PATTH)

About PATTH

The Partnership for Active Travel, Transport and Health (PATTH) is a collaboration of Professional Institutions and other partner organisations drawn from the specialisms of health, engineering, environment, architecture, planning and transport (listed in annex 1 to this evidence). PATTH offers a diverse range of expertise to assist in the development and delivery of effective, efficient planning and transport policies and measures, focused on the potential for improvements in public health.

General

PATTH welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. This is an issue of vital national importance as there are a number of challenges which can be strongly and positively influenced by the implementation of a robust policy for the built environment with a higher prioritisation of active travel. It is worth noting that the highway constitutes 80% of the public realm. Whilst the focus of this response is that of transport and mobility, this is set in the context of how this relates to the whole built environment.

The built environment shapes our behavioural patterns, which in turn largely determine our physical health, mental wellbeing, perceptions of and exposure to risk, security and productivity. Well over 80% of the UK population live in urban areas, yet the built environment has been neglected for decades in terms of its strategic importance to the health and productivity of the nation.

In England there is a legacy of automobile-centric development, after those responsible for developing policy for the built environment considered the automobile as the most efficient and effective mode of transportation for both people and freight. This approach can divorce people from their surroundings and promote a lack of physical activity with emerging large scale associated health impacts, social disintegration and unfulfilled economic potential. Urban design should be optimised to promote walking and cycling at the local scale and accessible public transport provided, therefore minimising reliance on personal road transport.

Healthy and vibrant, productive built environments require the movement of their inhabitants. Yet the nature, scale and mode of such movement is critical to the overall health of the communities working, visiting and residing in them. The fact that our environments effectively dissuade many people from incorporating physical activity into their daily lives impacts on each of them as individuals, but also on the national economy.
The All Party Commission on Physical Activity noted a cost of £20 billion per annum arising from inactive lifestyles.

There is a wealth of evidence in existence which illustrates that enhancing opportunities for active travel is beneficial on a wide range of levels, often demonstrating large benefit: cost ratios. We commend to the Committee the 2014 report of the Active Transport for Healthy Living Coalition (which has since become part of PATTH) which details some of this evidence.

Detailed responses to specific questions posed by the Committee

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Residents should be core to local development and infrastructure decisions as they may often be far better informed on the performance of their immediate environment than decision makers who operate more centrally. In theory, decision making is set at appropriate levels with local decisions facilitated through the Government’s localism agenda. However, leadership at a national level ultimately sets the policy framework to reflect the changing attitudes and aspirations of society.

The built environment and its communities are suffering from a market failure in which costs associated with poorly conceived and delivered development are borne by communities and not developers. It is unlikely that a profoundly deregulatory, market-driven approach favoured by the current Government will address these market failures. Indeed the current direction of policy, with further deregulation of the planning system (falling building standards, increased permitted development and Local Development Orders), is only likely to perpetuate recent trends.

How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

The level of policy coordination referred to above does exist but not at the kind of level required to achieve high quality built environments, effective and efficient sustainable transport and healthy communities. Investment in effective coordination to properly achieve multiple benefits from development is highly likely to drive far greater economic benefit across a range of sectors (including health) in the longer term than a deregulated approach. Policy and delivery appraisal should be far more robust to consider whether these benefits are being achieved.

National policy for planning and the built environment
Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

PATTH considers that the NPPF provides much in the way of strong and positive policy guidance as described, for example paragraph 17 on sustainable transport and the way in which it references the significance of healthy communities (section 8). As health was one of the few new policies added to the NPPF (the development of which was generally focused on simplification and deregulation), it is a strong indication of the importance government intended health to have within planning, but local authorities generally lack confidence that this emphasis is fully accepted by the Planning Inspectorate.

Whilst the core policy principles (page 5) are strong, others such as those relating to viability are weakly defined. We are concerned that it is often easier for developers to argue that proper (good quality) development is unviable, than it is for them to find imaginative ways to comply with a certain planning condition. We consider that the role of strong government (at all levels) is fundamental here when there are so many interrelated factors to consider, a number of which are not properly reflected by the market. A good example of leadership is that in Wales with the Active Travel Wales Act 2013.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

The existence and present scale of challenges around health, housing provision, the economy and the environment is such that there is a very real need for development to be more carefully considered in the context of these strategic issues so that new and innovative solutions may be identified and implemented effectively.

National planning policy in England lacks a strategic component which makes the delivery of the overall policy aims of the NPPF (as well as wider government and social priorities) difficult to achieve. It means that development is too often considered out of the context of its impact on local, regional and national priorities (particularly smaller developments which may have minimal impact on such factors individually but when combined, cumulatively they can be highly significant). The system should become more strategically-driven with the promotion of active travel as one of the strategic goals.

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Planning cycles across a range of different sectors are increasingly looking forward between 20 and 100 years to identify long-term (strategic) trends and priorities. Organisations which take this approach regularly are often most extensively informed, forward thinking and resilient. We consider that there is a need for future built environment needs (and the
interaction of these with national strategic objectives) to be subject to this approach at both
local authority and central government levels.

At the same time, the question is not necessarily the appropriateness of the time horizon
chosen, rather it is the capacity of planning policy to react constructively to changes in
societal need. Manifestly it is failing to do so at the present time, given the problems faced
around shortages of housing supply, health problems associated with inactivity, and
environmental damage. All too often the long term is seen as something that will happen in
due course, however the longer a strategy will take to have effect, the more urgent it is to
start addressing it immediately.

The Government’s Foresight programme, with its 25- and 50-year horizons, is an admirable
exception to the generally short-term approach to policy development enforced by the
electoral cycle and party political priorities. The current ‘Future of cities’ study has looked at
planning and the built environment and we commend this to the Committee. See in
particular “Active travel and the city of the future”.

Buildings and places: New and old

What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing
supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level,
required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for
the planning system?

The Government should encourage town centre sites and ensure that full use is made of the
potential for locating housing at or close to bus stations and railway stations. It should not
permit piecemeal erosion of greenfield sites and urban sprawl, but should instead expand
rural settlements to enhance their own economic and community viability. New settlements
should be designed to optimise walking and cycling at the local scale and provide accessible
public transport to minimise reliance on personal road transport.

We are concerned that existing planning policy implementation and its recent reforms,
together with the ongoing reduction in funding to local authorities will only facilitate the
construction of poor quality houses in inappropriate locations dependent on road traffic.
This will not assist the Government’s aims to increase productivity and economic growth. A
deregulatory, market-driven approach to the challenge of housing need is unlikely to
achieve a satisfactory long-term outcome for society, if there is any ambition to ensure that
any such provision does not perpetuate other important problems around health and the
economy.

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role
should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be
able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best
use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?
It is entirely possible to develop sustainable and resilient built environments and there are good examples internationally where this is being achieved (for example Malmo and Lund in Sweden, Freiburg in Germany). They should follow a number of principles relating to self-sufficiency and economic viability, health, activity and community integration. Because of the inherent market externalities which continue to impact the environment and sustainability, it will be necessary for the Government to drive the required change through strong policy, implementation and an appropriate balance of regulation and incentives.

It is important to encourage the use of new technologies, such as earth-sheltering, green roofs and green walls, roof gardens, and light pipes. These make it possible to find acceptable solutions to problems which might otherwise have required a choice between conflicting important considerations, for example more housing versus the protection of greenspace.

Well-designed and connected development is likely to be inherently more sustainable, resilient and adaptable than that which is of poor design. Existing buildings will need to be adapted to meet changing needs and circumstances. The alternative - large scale replacement - would be cost prohibitive. Much existing building stock is appropriate and adaptable but equally it is important to recognise where some is of poor design and replacement would be the more appropriate solution. This discussion emphasises the importance of good quality design and conception.

It is worth noting that academic evidence is beginning to demonstrate that cities which seek to design physically active living into their built environment may also benefit in terms of global profile and economic competitiveness. See for example studies by Active Living Research in the USA, or the sophisticated analysis in the KPMG ‘Magnet Cities’ project.

To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

There is also much that can be learnt from the historic environment. Historic environments are often attractive to residents and visitors alike because they are often characterful and, because they pre-date the automobile, are often inherently people-centric in terms of their design resulting in a quieter and safer environment. Given the shift in the global population towards urban living and the considerations around carbon emissions and climate change, some of the best models for future urban living may be well designed, compact historic cities which were highly self-sufficient and walkable.

It is important to maximise all features and contexts when place-making. Not only historic and apparently valuable assets. Careful design and sensitive development will make places attractive, setting context, retaining interest, yet making space for the new and innovative. This is where policy and legislative frameworks can support, obliging designers and developers to seek out features that will make even the most mundane place attractive. For
example, carefully considered and designed streets and features can be both functional and attractive, within reasonable budgets.

In other contexts, there may be opportunities to subsidise heritage railways to offer fuller commuter and community services which would usefully expand the rail system, albeit on a small scale.

Skills and design

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

There are a number of professional institutions involved with PATTH and we consider that the appropriate skill sets do exist within the relevant professions and professional institutions are key in developing and transferring these skills and knowledge to a wider range of professionals to consider the requisite issues in a sufficiently holistic manner. However awareness may be lacking within the professions on how their work impacts on public health and how to optimise public health benefit.

A greater issue is that of local authority access to such skills and resource as they are limited by their own available resource. To consider the range of issues in a properly integrated way is no small task but with present levels of investment is unlikely to occur and developer contributions may be insufficient to bridge this gap.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Quality can be promoted through policy and legislation and some championing by politicians and leaders is required. PATTH considers organisations must be required to show strong design principles, which address all social requirements (not just short term economic ones) to win funds and contracts.

Although evidence is available and being assembled continually, the case for good urban design is already proven and requires leadership and appropriate investment, not further research. It is important to bear in mind that people will walk further if the walk is pleasant and so aesthetically attractive designs, incorporating greenery, artwork or interesting architecture actually have a health value.

Good economic assessment tools exist. The WHO Health Economic Assessment Tool allows calculation of the benefit values from schemes to increase walking and cycling (and has informed the development of the Department for Transport’s own Transport Assessment Guidance). Transport for London has recently produced its Valuing Urban Realm Toolkit.
Community involvement and community impact

Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Health should be strengthened as a material consideration in planning applications and more attention should be paid to comments relating to the impact upon public health. This requires a strategic national and local perspective to achieve the health and wellbeing benefits that the built environment can provide. Ultimately this will translate into more considered urban design, including layout, public space provision, attractiveness and pedestrian friendliness of streets and integration with sustainable transport options.

Improving the impacts of the built environment on health and wellbeing requires policy emphasis and that this is actively enforced through development control. It is such considerations which often risk being omitted or reduced in developments, or compromised over time via permitted development, on the grounds of commercial viability. Quite simply this is about the prioritisation of policy and its implementation. More benchmarking and post-delivery appraisal is vital but must be allied to consequence, for example identified failures should lead to improvement and good practice should be required.

Evaluation of the health benefits investment brings could better influence funding decisions. The local planning system should take account of health in its decision making. Relevant government departments should work together on guidance promoting health and wellbeing and subsequently informed local decisions (through Health and Wellbeing Boards, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Clinical Commissioning Groups) on the approach to the built environment can be made.

Authorities are often put off asserting the primacy of these goals by the fear that the Planning Inspectorate will take a different view and award costs against the authority. The law only provides for the award of costs on a planning appeal against an authority when the authority has acted unreasonably. We would suggest that it can never be unreasonable for an authority to reject an application, or attach conditions, if the genuine reason is health grounds supported by its Director of Public Health.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Process in principle provides communities with the opportunity to play a very active role in shaping their local built environment. However in practice this is subject to communities’ ability to mobilise themselves and to the skills they may have at their disposal to produce a plan to the
required timescales. The process is potentially open to undue influence by vested interests and therefore the opportunities presented to communities may be quite difficult to realise beyond some relatively exceptional cases.

Public projects are generally well consulted yet private sector developers may often be more cautious in engaging with local communities, depending on the nature and size of the project. We consider that there should be a greater role for appropriately skilled planning professionals to assess proposals, facilitate informed public engagement and to direct development in a direction which is in the best interests of local communities and their place in a larger spatial and strategic context.

Governments, both local and national, are elected to act in the best interests of society and given that most people’s local environment has the greatest bearing on their health and wellbeing, optimising the quality of local environments should be a primary priority for the Government.

Financial measures

Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

There are a range of market externalities which result in insufficient priority being attached to many factors which are of most social benefit within the built environment. These externalities are well understood so we consider it is appropriate to provide fiscal measures to help shift the market towards healthier development and provide additional funds to invest in properly resourced development control and social and affordable housing. It is important that these externality charges are not considered to be “just taxes” but that they are legitimate market correction tools for the public benefit.

Crowd-funding may have a role in leveraging local businesses investment into street and place making. This would build a partnership between the residents/users and the local businesses, to provide a high quality and sustainable built environment.

Other opportunities might exist in the context of developing new communities and their transport infrastructure together, with one supporting the other as was the case with the North London suburbs and the Metropolitan Railway. This might offer a valuable way to start the process of developing the rail/cycle combination as a major transport mode in its own right. There have been some recent rail schemes in Canada in which capturing the benefit of enhanced land value has been more prominent than fare revenue in the actual business case.
Appendix 1. Membership of PATTH

Members of PATTH are taken from the following organisations. Their naming below does not constitute formal approval of this response in every instance.

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH)
The British Medical Association (BMA)
The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT)
The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM)
The Transport and Health Study Group (THSG)
The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
New London Architecture (NLA)
The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)
The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)
The Faculty of Public Health (FPH)
Sustrans
The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT)
The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)
The Transport Planning Society (TPS)
Living Streets (LS)
British Heart Foundation (BHF)
MacMillan Cancer Support (MacMillan)
UK Health Forum (UKHF)

05 October 2015
Dear Sirs,

Paulerspury Parish Council was of the opinion that it was unable to have any effective engagement with the process of decision making. Barriers are there which make it powerless.

Yours sincerely,

Maggie Down

25 September 2015
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Sunand Prasad, Penoyre & Prasad Architects, and Quinlan Terry CBE, Quinlan & Francis Terry Architects

Q64 The Chairman: Good morning to everybody, particularly our two witnesses. Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website, and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you briefly to introduce yourself to the Committee?

Quinlan Terry: I am a practising architect; I have practised for 55 years. I sat on the Royal Fine Art Commission for three years.

The Chairman: We are being broadcast. Mr Prasad?

Sunand Prasad: My name is Sunand Prasad. I am also an architect. I have not been practising quite as long as Quinlan, but nearly—40 years. I was president of the Royal Institute of British Architects for two years between 2007 and 2009. Although I was not involved with the Royal Fine Arts Commission, I was a founding commissioner of its successor, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, and was there for a little while. Currently, I just enjoy doing architecture.
The Chairman: It is not a bad job to do, is it? Thank you both very much. The first question I am going to ask deals with place design and heritage. What is your view of the quality of new housing and commercial developments over the past 30 years? Will the designs of today have heritage value in the decades to come? Are we doing well enough when it comes to making good places?

Quinlan Terry: We were talking outside. I think we have to say that over the past 30 years we have failed miserably. The question I should like to ask, not just to you but architects generally is: can you give me an example of a successful public space that has been designed over the past 50 years that is in any way comparable with Parliament Square, even Bedford Square, or the centre of Oxford, Cambridge, Bath or Edinburgh? The real problem is that we do not have a public space that is successful and has been built over the past generation.

The Chairman: Why do you think that is? Have the great British public suddenly decided that they just want blocks everywhere, or just want and need houses so badly that there has had to be a quick build and get on to the next lot?

Quinlan Terry: I think it comes on to other questions that you have raised about architecture, architectural training and taste. You ask in one of the questions whether we should do more to support good architecture. Of course, it gives rise to the question: what is good architecture? Unlike medicine, law or a lot of the other professions, architecture is in a state of tension between the traditional way of doing things, like the building we are in at the moment, and modernism, which is turning its back on historic traditions and doing the opposite. That has taken over the whole of our generation, so that, generally speaking, government, the schools and royal societies such as the RIBA, the Royal Fine Art Commission and the Royal Academy all heavily support modernism, thinking that this is the way forward. I think it is time that the Government reconsider their loyalty to the whole modern approach.

Q65 The Chairman: This question is not on the list of questions, but it strikes me: do you think that if we had been sitting around this table 50 years ago you would have made that sort of statement—that we would not be able to do anything—or do you think they were planning to build the Bedford Squares, Parliament Squares and Baths and all the rest of it?

Quinlan Terry: I think 50 years is not far enough back. Lutyens was vehemently against architects being qualified, because they get into an institution where they are brainwashed.
Really, you learn by working with an architect, which is what we ought to be doing. If you look at the great architects of the past, Palladio was a stonemason, Michelangelo was a sculptor, Raphael was a painter. Even thinking of this building, Pugin was an assistant to Nash, as was Barry. Barry was a draughtsman and expert on ancient buildings, which he went to measure, Vanbrugh was a soldier and dramatist, Wren was a mathematician and his clerk was Hawksmoor. I wasted five years at the Architectural Association and came out knowing less than nothing, but then I worked with the last serious classical architect, Raymond Erith. I was apprenticed to him and everything I learnt was practical. I watched him; I went to stonemasons and joiners, and talked to them. That practical world, which we see all around us in buildings like this, is not taught in schools.

It sounds a bit awful, but I think we would gain an awful lot by encouraging young people to work in an architect’s office, even a modernist, because they can see how it works and have their own point of view. We would gain an awful lot by getting rid of the schools that have taught nothing. What have any of the architectural schools achieved? I went to the best one and that was a waste of time, because it becomes a place where you employ architects who cannot do. I have probably said enough about that.

Sunand Prasad: I am going to be relentlessly cheerful. I do not want Quinlan, rather than the Committee, appointed to be the questioner, but he has made a number of points that are very well worth talking about. I start by agreeing that the condition of our public spaces, especially the more neglected areas of our cities, not necessarily the centres, is abysmal. We have very little to be proud of in the mass housing built even in the past 30 years. There are very few places of which you can genuinely say that the results of the planning system, the architecture and the patronage, whether public or private, are something to be proud of, to leave behind as heritage.

Having said that, the past 30 years are a very interesting slice of time. A great deal has been changing in the past 30 years. To start with public spaces, one of the real advances in schools of architecture, as well schools of planning, and also in practice and the public bodies that guide these things, is a real understanding of how much public space matters; how much the space between buildings is important; and what actually makes public space. Is it the geometry of it, the look of it, the way it is used, where it is or the connections, for example?
It is the sophisticated art of city-making and place-making that we are finally coming to grips with, after admittedly a period in the desert of tabula rasa architecture where good things were swept away, and there was little care for the spaces in between buildings, and where quasi-monumental buildings were built, whether for housing or something else. This is a radical transformation like, for example, the change in Trafalgar Square with the public space created in front of the National Gallery, or the removal of the concrete collar around Birmingham, the new setting of Selfridges and St Gilbert’s church and the sheer liveliness that has brought about. This is not an architect’s view. It is people who are voting with their feet to occupy these fantastic new spaces. Those are just a couple of examples.

I think style is a complete red herring in this debate. The quarrel between modernism and classicism, or current and traditional architecture, is really about style. There is so much to be learnt from history and classicism, from Pugin, Barry, Lutyens and all those forebears. We do stand on the shoulders of giants. I genuinely think that what is to be learnt from them is not necessarily or entirely the appearance of buildings—the motifs, the decoration and ornamentation—but the sublime combination of usefulness and beauty. How do we match that? The past is like a challenge. How can you do it as well in your own times with your own materials with new discoveries and new pleasures that are available, such as large glass walls which nevertheless can be managed to control the sun? There are large glassy outlooks and indoor spaces seemingly blending with the outdoors without interruption. This modern discovery is sublime and as fantastic as a Palladian villa or a Michelangelo piazza, if properly done. However, it is not very often properly done. One of the tragedies of modernism is that while there are some great practitioners, and every year we produce some fantastic buildings, they are very few in comparison with the mass of what is built. The mass is way behind the best, and that is because copying modernism is often a disaster, whereas copying classicism generally leads to success. I am using “classical” as shorthand. When you copy all the canons of traditional architecture—whether it is gothic, classical, Romanesque, Indian or Egyptian does not matter—you are unlikely to make too many aesthetic mistakes because they are an established language, whereas modern architecture is hard to copy and do well. I hope you do not mind me rambling on like this.

The Chairman: It is not rambling on, but we do have a timetable.
**Sunand Prasad**: To some extent, we have to catch up with the world as it now is. This quarrel and debate is almost in the past already. There is a generation of architects now who were never indoctrinated with modernism; even their teachers were not exposed to the hagiographies of the modern masters. They are genuinely dispassionate in this subject. I am interested to see what they are choosing. What they are choosing is a new synthesis of the old and new and the past and present. It is not either/or any more. I was party to the Farrell report. One of the most interesting and probably hidden chapters of that is this idea. It is not either/or any more, and we must seize that. It is a glorious thing to have happened. That argument has withered away. I am all for Quinlan’s architecture getting more air time, but it is not the Government who will decide; it is the market.

Can I say one final thing in defence of schools of architecture? Talking about trades, it would be wonderful if everybody learnt a trade before they became an architect. I have always believed that. I myself learnt a trade. Those who learn a trade may well become modernists because they may be inspired as much by pre-classical societies, by peasant construction, or vernacular architecture. The primitive hut is the origin of all architecture, where you put one thing on top of another and construct a simple shelter. In a way, that is nearer to some of the modern thinking about architecture than the classical language.

**Q66 Baroness Whitaker**: I want to pursue the question of the public realm. I would like to ask Mr Terry what he thinks of modern spaces such as More London and other areas of the South Bank, but my general question is this. The more iconic public realm buildings—magnificent places such as Trafalgar Square—have been very well done, but have the places where ordinary people live and work, in particular the relationship between where they live and where they work, been relatively neglected? Tourists have a marvellous impression of London—anybody who walks around the centre of it does—but the huge numbers of people who live in and around London do not get such a good deal from the current system. What is the view of both of you on that?

**Quinlan Terry**: It is a difficult one to answer. I would recommend, if they have not done so already, that everybody here familiarises themselves with the work of Create Streets. You may have heard of it. Create Streets is doing a great deal of research into exactly what you say about the place where Mr Average lives and the sort of place he can find to live. What has
come out of that is that it is not a question of density. They realise that there has to be dense building. In the old days there had to be a density of 200 persons per acre. They have found that the planning authorities seem to prefer multi-storey estates. They give lots of examples of the experience of people who live in those estates and their much greater preference for traditional terrace houses and streets, which is the more traditional way of doing things. The evidence is very convincing. We have to listen to these public consultations. They do MORI polls and things of that sort that show what people really want. I think that is important.

From an architectural point of view, crowds love to go to beautiful cities like Venice, Florence, Rome, Oxford, Cambridge and Bath. These are the cities that have been left alone, generally speaking, by modernist architects, and of course there is a limit to building height. You say the argument is over. Those cities have a very strong policy about the height of buildings, which sadly London no longer has. What one sees on the periphery of London with the permissions that have been given for very high buildings is a real tragedy.

Having recommended Create Streets, I would also recommend that more people, particularly government, listen to one man who my profession ridicules. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who spends more time and effort than almost anybody on trying to make pleasant public spaces and areas for people to live in. If you have not visited Poundbury, I would encourage you to do so. It is not encouraged by the architectural profession. I suppose I am an interested party because I have done some of the work. It is a living community; 5,000 people live there. They have work, they have affordable housing and commercial housing, they do not have a high crime rate maybe partly because it is in Dorset. It is certainly worth moving forward and giving a lot of developers an idea of how they could develop, which we will have to do in the future, and take more seriously what Poundbury has done and what the Prince of Wales has said.

The Chairman: That is interesting. We have discussed trying to get him here as a witness, but I do not think that is possible. We have also spoken about writing to him.

Quinlan Terry: I know The Duchy would love to take you round. If you want it I am sure that could be arranged.

Sunand Prasad: I agree there is a greater problem outside the thriving centres of cities. We still have not understood how to make spaces between houses and buildings that are
genuinely loved by people, partly because we have not yet quite solved the problem of the car. Developments are still very car-dominated. In addition, the skills in dealing with the external spaces and landscape are undeveloped, and external space is underfunded. Nobody picks up the tab. That is a bit of a reflection on the extent to which our society feels collective responsibility for shared things. Public space is shared space and has to be funded. We have to find ways of properly funding it and making it of good quality. The classic example is that you have a private estate with Yorkstone paving and an adopted public highway that has tarmac on the paving. Tarmac is cheaper both to lay down but also to maintain. When the utilities come along and dig it up you can just dump a bit more on top and smooth it over. There is a lack of being ‘house-proud’ collectively; a lack of a real sense of what public space is and how important it is to people. That is missing.

**The Chairman:** Yesterday most of the members went to Elephant Park at Elephant and Castle in the rain and all the rest of it. I was very struck by the very point you make about place. The space did seem to be very inviting. I even remarked to you when we were walking back on the flagstones into building areas and hiding cars. Maybe things are beginning to get there. It has been a rush to try to get up to 400,000 new homes per year. This has been absolutely central to successive Governments. I remember the first meetings in the 1960s when I worked as an adviser to Tarmac. In mitigation, I do not think that the general populace does not care about it but that other things have taken precedence.

**Sunand Prasad:** Previously, yes, but we have been failing to build houses in such numbers.

**The Chairman:** We must get on.

**Q67 Lord Inglewood:** We have been talking about this very much in the abstract. Architecture is about concrete examples. Could each of you give us a couple of examples of good and bad so that we can physically look at it?

**Sunand Prasad:** I have given you a couple of recent examples of good public space already. One way to answer the “bad” question is: drop anyone from a helicopter almost anywhere on the outskirts of any town in the UK and they will see only highway-dominated spaces, poor spaces, business parks and retail outlets. Those are terrible; they are just not for people. They are there for the hermetic idea of arriving by car, getting into the shops and going out again. There is no care for the public space. Those are two examples.
The Chairman: Mr Terry, do you have examples of good and bad?

Quinlan Terry: I thought I had given a lot of examples.

The Chairman: You have given us the good: Poundbury. What about the bad?

Quinlan Terry: I can think of one awful one, which is Harlow new town by Sir Frederick Gibberd. It is always a knighted architect who does it. I can think of very little good work that has been done.

The Chairman: Thank you. If you do think about it, perhaps you could give us a hint.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I was very interested in the anxiety about the current fashion for taller blocks. Do you think local authorities are doing them because they want to make buildings that are statements rather than functional, or are they building higher because they need to realise the value of the land as land values increase? How easy is it to get to those sorts of densities they are approaching with traditional build?

Quinlan Terry: It has been established—this is why I recommend Create Streets—that you can get the density required with a more traditional type of building. Five or six-storey buildings designed in terraces will give you the density that a point block will give you with lots of space all round it. I do not find the argument for high buildings very convincing. The other thing is that people hate living in them, with the lifts and the crime that goes on inside those spaces, whereas if it is more public, as it would have been in Georgian times, with Georgian squares and terraces, people are much happier and the space works.

Sunand Prasad: I would refer to a couple of things. One is a report called Superdensity, which is produced by a consortium of practices working in this area for a long time that started to become alarmed by the trend towards higher and higher density and taller buildings. It is a very thoughtful piece. It is not anti-tall building, but it approaches the whole subject in a very rational way, starting with the numbers. I am also a member of the London Mayor’s Design Advisory Group. We are currently completing a piece of work called “London’s Growth and Form”. A whole section of that is about tall buildings and the problems raised by their construction.

The tall buildings currently being built are very attractive to buyers, especially overseas ones, but this is slightly exaggerated. In the end, well under 10% of the actual built volume is being bought by overseas buyers. Savills and others have done the numbers. It is not the state
stipulating tall buildings; it is developers who are driving up these densities for very complex reasons. We have certainly heard evidence from Create Streets, many of whose principles I very much share, but it is not possible in the available land in London to meet the need for 50,000 more houses per year for 1 million people in the next 10 years or so—we do not know what happens after that—with three or four storeys and low-rise houses. If we went more for the pattern of Ladbroke Grove and Notting Hill, where there are beautiful streets with communal shared areas at the back, going up to eight, nine and even 10 storeys, but extraordinarily still making streets and public space, we would have a much greater chance. The identification of land in London for developing is a very big subject, but it has been thoroughly considered because of the now desperate need to build more houses. I refer you to those pieces of work.

Q68 Lord Clement-Jones: You have already mentioned the Farrell review, and I am sure you are both familiar with its conclusions. One of its concerns was that the built environment policy was not sufficiently well co-ordinated across government. I take Mr Terry’s point that it is difficult to define good architecture, but do you think that the Government are doing enough to support good architecture and design? If so, what more would you like government to do? For instance, one of the recommendations was that the Government should appoint a chief architect. Is that something that appeals to you?

Sunand Prasad: If I may answer the last point, there are three broad areas where government can be extremely influential in the outcome of our built environment. One concerns the money raised through taxes that is spent on buildings by Governments, not necessarily central government, as they devolve powers to the NHS and others. Taxpayer money is being spent in a way that you could say that the public estate is the biggest single client for all our built environment, amounting to as much as a quarter of annual construction expenditure. Do not quote me on the numbers—I am rusty on those—but it is a very significant number, billions of pounds of public money that is spent. If every one of those projects set out to be exemplary in the way they are commissioned and the client side is handled, government would revolutionise our world. It would have a knock-on effect and set such high standards. One of the biggest frustrations—I am sure Quinlan shares this—is that we know there is talent and ability out there that simply is not being captured for public benefit and the benefit of our
built environment. If government as a purchaser of architecture says that it wants to find the best but also to a cost, we can certainly say how that can be done. People have said over and over again that procurement has to be reformed. Some of the rules and laws will have to be looked at again, but that is a huge thing that government can do. There is no reason not to do it, because it would not cost any more money.

The second point is in the realm of regulations and so on. A classic example of how not to do it is the way the entire energy and thermal comfort regulations have been mishandled after a promising start towards zero carbon, for example. They have become overcomplex but diluted at the same time, with the result that the renewable energy sector is in disarray, and we as architects also lose ground when project managers say, “We don’t have to do that. Why make it more sustainable?”. There is another question about sustainability further down. The Government could do a lot.

The third point as regards potential government action refers to another of the questions that we received about the capacity of local authorities. In the end, central government delivers relatively little building. The vast amount of our taxes spent on buildings are channelled through the NHS, local authorities and so on. Local authorities and those bodies also deal with the whole of the private sector. There is undoubtedly a lack of skills. I appreciate that there is a problem here about how much central government can spend. I think central government could do a lot more to help devolved public bodies, administrations and local authorities to raise their game enormously at the very low end just by making best practice more prevalent; generally acting as a hub that can communicate best practice from authority to authority and from this to that NHS trust; and, more ambitiously, by directly intervening to help where we can see local authorities lack the skills. Local authorities do lack skills. They have been starved, and there is a huge chunk of work to be done there, and the Government could be very helpful.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Chief architect?

**Sunand Prasad:** Yes. We have a chief medical officer, a chief planner and a chief construction adviser, which has just been abolished. That abolition is not a good signal.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Sitting where?
**Sunand Prasad:** I would like them to sit in DCLG as the best of a number of unsatisfactory options in some ways. The chief construction adviser sat in BIS. That makes sense, but in a way that is why the place leadership council has been proposed in the Farrell review. There needs to be some mechanism to bring it together without creating some super-ministry or new cumbersome quango-type body. I am for a chief architect, or architectural adviser, but in the context of joining up with planners and constructors.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** I would like to hear from Mr Terry. Are you more sceptical about the power of government in these circumstances?

**Quinlan Terry:** Yes, I am. You want more freedom. Get back to the 18th century where you left architects alone, or important people did certain things. As to a chief architect, I made the point earlier, but it has not gone in, that there is a huge tension in architecture between good-quality traditional building and modernism. If you made me chief architect I would have a field day; if you made Richard Rogers chief architect he would do the complete opposite. Do not trust architects, because they are very opinionated people. You really want the clients to say what they want and choose the architect they want. It is not like going to a doctor; doctors are all pretty good. When you say, “I want a skyscraper”, fine; you go to someone like that. If you want a classical house that you want to live in you go to a different sort of architect. You cannot say that of any other profession.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** You would not have a chief government architect because they would be one side or another.

**Quinlan Terry:** They would definitely be one side or the other. There is no such thing as an architect who is not of one extreme or the other. You have two of them here.

**Sunand Prasad:** I could imagine a chief government architect whose role was not to arbitrate about the kind or style of building but it would be about process.

**The Chairman:** What would his role be?

**Sunand Prasad:** I talked earlier about how government can be a great client. I think the role of such a person would be to help government be a great client and put policies and, for example, research ideas in place.

**Quinlan Terry:** But it is not an architect. An architect feels about form and place.
The Chairman: We do not have fisticuffs here. All of us want to get involved in this particular debate.

Q69 Baroness Rawlings: To go back to sustainability, or the long-lasting, Mr Prasad, do you think the Government should be preserving good old architecture and converting old classical buildings, rather than making it cheaper to pull them down and give tax incentives basically to build new? What is your view on the tax position and pulling down all these buildings just to build something new because you do not have to pay VAT?

Sunand Prasad: Absolutely. Most of us would be unequivocal about this. If you are going to pull down a building, you must have a very good reason now, not only from the point of view of heritage, which is in itself an enormous reason. Look at what is happening round the world and the way heritage is being destroyed. We are going to emerge in centuries to come as the only place in the world with something like that still left, and we have to hang on to it.

Baroness Rawlings: They are pulling them down to build new because of VAT.

Sunand Prasad: The impact of VAT is catastrophic. I am completely opposed to charging VAT on refurbishment while there is zero VAT on new homes. The RIBA has been campaigning to get that changed since I was president. We have not succeeded. We have even found some evidence that tax revenues would go up if you equalised VAT because so much avoidance is happening because of this rule, especially with the higher rates now. From the point of view of sustainability you have to make a very good argument indeed to pull down old buildings and lose the embodied energy and carbon in them, but from just the historical point of view these are lodestones; they set standards that we need to aspire to.

Quinlan Terry: This is one thing on which I think we do agree. On sustainability, people do not realise that, generally speaking, modern construction and materials produce a building that lasts a few decades, whereas traditional materials—load-bearing masonry—produces a building that lasts for centuries. Whatever the talk about sustainability, if you are to have steel and glass buildings that have a few decades of life, you have to take that into account in the equation. A recent American report was done saying that the useful life of a steel and glass building is 25 years. Traditional buildings last for centuries and they can be repaired, but for a lot of these steel and glass buildings the whole problem is that the materials used in them—glass, plastics, aluminium and steel—have a very high coefficient of thermal expansion. When
the sun comes out it expands, when it freezes it contracts, and you have to have an expansion joint, which is its total weakness because water gets in. Therefore, you have a structure that will not last for centuries; it has to be constantly repaired with plastic seals over the gaps and glass having to be redone. The whole question of sustainability is part and parcel of the traditional versus modern tension.

**Lord Inglewood**: Is it desirable that every building should be conceived as being something that will endure for a very long period? Surely, in a quickly changing world there is an argument that with a lot of these sheds in 25 years you start again and do something completely different in line with the requirements of the world that number of years hence.

**Quinlan Terry**: I would say this building is a very good example of something that is built to last.

**Lord Inglewood**: I am not saying that nothing should be built to last, but is it right to start from the proposition that everything should be built to last?

**Quinlan Terry**: I agree there may be cases involving factories, but I live in a house that is 200 years old; my office is 400 years old. The office was also used as a shop. I have designed schemes. My Richmond scheme is mostly offices, but parts of it are retail and parts residential.

It is really a matter of what goes on behind the sash windows: a bed or a desk. Therefore, the traditional way of building in this country, which has gone on for hundreds of years, should continue in the way it did previously.

**The Chairman**: Do you not think that people are now accustomed to seeing this glass, steel and all the rest of it and would not want to go back? They think it will be retrograde to go back to the 18th century.

**Quinlan Terry**: There is no doubt at all about the place in which they prefer to live. This takes us back to Create Streets. They would rather live in a terrace Georgian-style house or construction than a glass skyscraper.

**Baroness Whitaker**: Are Frank Lloyd Wright’s houses now obsolescent? Have they collapsed?

**Quinlan Terry**: When you have a one-off architect like that it is difficult to say, but you are right; they are. Fallingwater is now falling apart. You can rebuild a glass building, but it means virtually starting again. It does not have the life that it would have if it was built with stone or brick and lime mortar, or slate roofs—all those traditional ways of the past.
**Sunand Prasad**: Can I put in a plea for this to be evidence-based and not rely just on views as to what does and does not last? I leave it to you. Please be evidence-based. We have a science of assessing buildings and doing post-occupancy evaluation to understand what is going on. It is not sufficiently widely deployed, but if we go back and learn from buildings, which we are doing, we are already collecting a lot of evidence that can bring some light into this debate.

**The Chairman**: Can I assure you that everything that we do in these scrutiny Committees is evidence-based. A lot of research has been done by the staff, so we are putting our own feelings in, in my case anyway because I am not an architect or anything like it. I can assure you that we would not quote anything or do anything if we had not tested it. If when you read the scripts you feel that this has gone wrong, perhaps you would highlight the points that you think we ought to think about as the reverse of the situation that you have described. Have I made my point clear?

**Sunand Prasad**: That is absolutely lovely.

**Q70 Baroness Andrews**: There is obviously a big issue for both of you about exactly how government can be effective. You talked about procurement. I very much take the point you made, Mr Prasad, about the integration of the historic environment with modern challenges and so on. I think it has been very successful in public space but not in out-of-town developments, estates, new build and so on. What government has been guided by and put some careful thought into is the construction of the National Planning Policy Framework. Indeed, over the past 30 years we have had statements about the value and importance of design in other bits of legislation, such as the Housing Act 2004 and then 2008. It is not that government has been unaware of the importance of design; there has been a massive disjunction between what government has hoped would be achieved without its own intervention and what has actually happened. The NPPF says quite clearly, “Planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places”. That is exactly what you have been about and what we would all like to see; it is about community building, building character, and building definition and belonging into places, but the only choices you have are planning, policy making and place-making tools. What else can we do within these legal and political frameworks that compensates in a way or incentivises people like yourself and those who implement these policies to get it right on the ground?
Sunand Prasad: I wish I knew the answer to that, because I came here thinking, “What new is there to say?”, because so many people have been tackling this subject. The formation of CABE was a very significant step. The realisation of places and spaces and the importance of those, rather than buildings, and the mistakes of modernism of the type practised after the war had already been revealed. What more can we do?

Policy is one thing, but I think actively building capacity is neglected. It is easy to make policy; it requires resources to help build capacity and have the right training so that, for example, when somebody applies for planning permission, or a group of people get together to develop a neighbourhood, those who are going to apply the policy levers know what they are doing. Policy without the means of implementing it is not going to get anywhere. We may well have good policies, but we are very short on real implementation of them. We have very good sentiments in many places, on the face of it, in legislation, but they are honoured more in the breach than the observance.

Baroness Andrews: Should we campaign for the restoration of CABE?

Sunand Prasad: We should campaign for the restoration of a body that achieves the kind of things CABE did, but not necessarily all of it. It may not be CABE if that is politically difficult, but many of us lament the disappearance of CABE and its very large and nationwide network of people who were beginning to champion locally the making of places.

Baroness Andrews: Design teams?

Sunand Prasad: Yes. My own view is that CABE became too large. It started delivering services to DCLG rather than remaining more of a knowledge, design and process-focused organisation. It became more of a delivery vehicle that had to hit targets. There would probably be little point in having a chief designer or chief architect as well as CABE. There are two or three ways of kick-starting all this. One of those would be to have an architecture policy of the kind RIBA recommended in Designing a Better Britain, which is another document that I am sure you have before you. The other one is to set up something like CABE, and another is a Farrell review-type option. I am evenly divided on those. It is the outcomes I am interested in. I think it could be achieved in one of two or three ways, but as to your sentiment about whether we should we have something like CABE back, yes.
Q71 Baroness Parminter: You mentioned earlier that we would come to the question of sustainability. This is it. Can I ask you to consider sustainability not just in the sense of longevity, which is an important part of it, but also in terms of minimising environmental impacts and tackling climate change? Do you think the criteria that the present Government have in place are sufficient to encourage environmental and business sustainability? If not, what particular criteria would you like to see? You mentioned zero carbon homes earlier, so perhaps both of you could touch on that.

Quinlan Terry: In a way, I think I have answered the big question, but your question is the more detailed one. Double glazing and all those things that reduce the dependence on burning fuel are achievable and are good. I think it is right that it is being done, but part of it is that sometimes the legislation brings in other problems. For instance, double glazing depends on a seal that has a guarantee of five years. Quite often it last 20 years or more. Nevertheless, in the case of buildings that are not owned by rich clients, in certain parts of America the double glazing in buildings has failed and people do not have the money to re-glaze them, so you are worse off than having single glazing. Like all these things, it comes down to a practical issue.

My main concern is about the traditional way of building. I need not repeat myself. If you have a building that lasts for centuries you have far fewer problems than if you have to rebuild and start again. There is not only the environmental process but the damage to the environment. Steel requires furnaces. Concrete, plastics and all these things need a vast amount of fossil fuels, bricks less so. Stone is in the earth and slate is there. The old world managed on a much less dependence on fossil fuels. In a sense it worked, although a lot of the details we now have are worth incorporating.

Sunand Prasad: I am dismayed by the way the whole picture of regulation and action on climate change has gone, especially in the past five or six years. I think there was real optimism shared by industry generally and a willingness to rise to the challenge of building really low-energy buildings and learning from the past as well as the possibilities of the present. That has gone from Government. A huge amount of action can be taken in this area if we really are to achieve this, by what I would describe as a society that genuinely learns from nature and that there is no such thing as waste in nature. Nature creates and when things die they help
regenerate the next cycle of life. The ultimate goal of creating a built world would be to match that ability and have a world without waste. There is an interesting slogan from WRAP, which is a government-funded programme, though I cannot remember what the acronym stands for.

**Baroness Parminter:** Waste Resources Action Programme.

**Sunand Prasad:** The slogan is: “Working towards a world without waste”. I think that is a fabulous slogan. Initially, it sounds like dustbins and things, but it is much more profound than that. You can see how materials are mined and harvested and can be recycled once they are used, and how you can use every single thing fully.

As to the criteria that you mentioned, we can work back from that and look at reducing energy to the minimum, reducing dependency on fossil fuels—i.e. having the energy we need come from non-fossil fuel sources—and changing our behaviour and being much more sensitive to the way we use energy and resources. Resources are not only about digging things out of the ground but also transporting them, the cost of transporting them, the fuel to do that, and how we handle the waste. Although the BREEAM technique, which all of you will know, is now a very important part of trying to make buildings more sustainable, it is too complex. It is too easy to game complex systems like that to achieve the results you want through adding bicycle parking or taking an action, whereas the focus should be on the main headlines of energy, water, waste and resources, and draw up criteria where they are the ones that matter. We need to develop a kind of literacy about such things so we understand, just like everybody understands how much houses cost, the implications and impacts of what we do in the language of tonnes of carbon, kilowatt hours, the volume of water we are using or the resources we are using.

**The Chairman:** Consumers’ bills are the biggest indication of the lot.

**Sunand Prasad:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** This is why renewable energy has such a bad name. You see your bill going up from, say, £150 a year to about £1,500 in the space of about six years.

**Sunand Prasad:** Meanwhile, in Holland there is a programme of the mass retrofit of buildings. If you like, it is a green deal properly executed and then put on steroids. Their stock does not have some of the great examples that we have. Many of the buildings we have cannot be
subjected to precisely the techniques they are using, but we can learn from it. In 10 days, with
minimum disruption to the occupant, they genuinely make their homes zero energy. Fuel bills
disappear; there are no fuel bills. Then it does not matter how much fuel costs because you
do not need any.

The Chairman: The great problem is that we are running out of time. Do you think you could
give us the evidence or reference for that?

Sunand Prasad: They are called renovation trains.

Q72 Baroness Young of Old Scone: We have already heard that you think that architects
need to be trained in a different way, in particular that they have exposure to other crafts and
skills. Is there anything more you would like to tell us about the need for changes in the way
architects are trained?

Quinlan Terry: The ideal is for them to go straight from school into an architect’s office, as
architects, like Pugin and Barry, always did in the past. I think that the five-year training of
architects is misconceived, because it is a practical subject. You are sitting down listening to
lectures by academics about all sorts of things, but when you get out of the institution after
five years you have to do working drawings of buildings. The architectural profession is now
saying that they find people coming out of the schools are almost unemployable. For instance,
in my office we have boys and girls who have gone to the local technical college, so they are
taught one day a week—we pay for that—and they do evening classes for three years, and
yet they work in the office. They are seeing what they learn in the evenings and one day how
it works out in practice on the drawing board, computers and everything else. Most of my
staff are invaluable; they have been with me for 30 or 40 years. They have never been through
a process of thinking that they are going to be designing the next multi-storey tower. They
have a humbler approach to what is expected and the really bright ones, like Barry and Pugin,
get to the top.

It would be helpful if government realised that, unlike other university courses—obviously
law, medicine and everything else have to be taught in an academic way—architecture is
much more practical. The high proportion of people who go through schools of architecture
who then do not do architecture means that an awful lot of money is being wasted on the
whole process of training. The best people can survive. In addition, you do not have to be an
architect to practise. You have to be a qualified doctor or dentist to practise, but you do not need a qualification to practise architecture; builders can put up a building, which is right and proper because, as in the old days, you wanted someone who had done something before. You would say you wanted a house or building like that. It is a long shot for government to understand that, but more people should realise that architectural training is not training like it is in medicine, law, languages and those things.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I can see Mr Prasad leaping up and down.

Sunand Prasad: I disagree profoundly with that. We get the most fantastic young people coming to my practice after completing an architectural degree. They are some of the most passionate, engaged and open-minded people who in three years have learnt the fundamentals of a very difficult art, which is to understand the world through the medium of design. Design is not just the concoction or forming of something; it is about understanding the deep structures behind how things work, and then to deploy them to make something new. As to the teaching of that critical understanding about design, the schools of architecture in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are probably the best in the world. People come here from all round the world. British architectural education, with the RIBA’s mark, is world renowned for very obvious reasons. I am a huge champion of architectural education. Some of the best schools give their students real hands-on experience. Architecture is not only about making buildings; it is about understanding communities, how cities work and the interaction between infrastructure and transport. The hands-on engagement of some of these students is exemplary in some schools of architecture.

However, we do have a problem. We are very poor at collaboration and working with fellow disciplines, because somehow the academisation of architecture, which I also partly lament—there I do agree with Quinlan—has denuded the profession of some softer skills of leadership, such as learning to work with others to realise how to marshal a whole team to get the best out of it. These things should be taught in schools of architecture. There is a lot of merit in a foundation course, or an early year, where all the disciplines work together. It is very difficult to do. People are trying, however. I would refer you to a couple of reports: the Edge report on collaboration, which I am sure you have, and the SCHOSA report on pathways and gateways. That is a revolutionary idea about changing the structure of architectural
education. It would be the first major reform since the Oxford conference of 1958. It is changing things so a student may not need five years of academic study. There would also be other ways into architecture, including on the tools and through practice and part-time ways, which would make the profession more aware of all the different ways of doing things and collaborating with others.

One of the big changes I would like to see is for the Architects Registration Board to be absorbed into the RIBA, with the RIBA also putting in place the right kind of governance to make sure it is not captured by the profession and there is lay oversight. We have the schools of architecture, we have the regulation of education and we have the gatekeeping of entry into the profession. There would not be the current three-cornered arrangement where ARB sits over here as a mini-quango, the RIBA sits there and the schools over there, with a confusion of roles. It would clarify the whole thing and make the RIBA more accountable for architectural education and entry into the profession. At the moment it can say, “ARB is responsible for taking into account European laws. Somebody else is causing this problem. We could reform everything tomorrow if it was not like that”. Let it be their sole responsibility and hold them to account for the quality of architectural education, which is fundamentally sound but hugely lacks a number of things such as collaboration, awareness of cost and the implications of what you do. You go through a school of architecture without ever designing a building to a cost. This seems barmy. Clients want to know from an architect what is possible within their means and resources, and architects must respond to that.

The Chairman: Can I thank you both most sincerely? I am afraid that old Father Time has killed us off. I think that reflects badly on the Chairman not being able to manage it very well, but it has been so interesting to all of us. The two issues we have not managed to tackle are the health of buildings and buildings for health.

Baroness Whitaker: If we could have a note on providing skills in local authorities that would be helpful.

The Chairman: I was just about to get to that.

Baroness Whitaker: That came before.

The Chairman: I am working back. The big thing is consultation to get the public involved. Several sessions have emphasised this. I think there is unanimity in their approach, but we
will have not got a real handle on how it should be done, and whether it is going to be of any use. I have probably overloaded you with suggestions. If you could get in touch with us, even with just a three-liner, to direct us to so and so, it would help. You can see that we are finding our feet. We still have a lot of time before we finish evidence sessions. We do not have to finish the report until 23 March, which sounds an awfully long way away, but there is so much. I want to thank you particularly for coming here. It has been terrific, inspiring and fun. Thank you very much.

17 September 2015
Introduction and context

This submission by Peter Brett Associates recommend that future built environment policy be more integrated to meet two major challenges with one integrated policy response. The two challenges are the housing crisis and the future of our town centres.

Peter Brett Associates (PBA) is at an advanced stage on a project for DCLG on overcoming fragmented ownership. This came about as a result of the firm’s Thought Leadership paper on getting investment back into the High Street. The outcomes will be reported in due course.

This submission comes from the author of that report and outlines the challenges and suggests that the Localism agenda provides the potential for a new kind of process to restructure and adapt town centres that are fit for the future, while accommodating housing growth.

In terms of the questions, we would comment:

1. Government should set out a clear statement (say in a Written Ministerial Statement) that recognises that structural change is necessary in our town centres and that an asset management approach, as advocated here, is part of the answer. Action should be local within the context of a supportive national policy framework.

2. Policy for housing and town centres should be better linked.

3. The NPPF could be more specific about the measures necessary to tackle town centres.

4. No comment

5. Retail forecasts in plans can be reasonably robust over 5, even 10 years, but need reviewing every 5 years. This ties in with housing assessments.

6. A major constraint on housing supply in urban areas is land assembly. This submission focuses on that acute constraint in town centres.

7. Government needs to recognise that some form of intervention will be necessary to overcome land assembly constraints, in the context of local support for such action.

8. No comment

9. Yes

10. No; in relation to town centres and housing this submission advocates new tools.
11. This submission advocates taking advantage of the neighbourhood planning process to attack the twin challenges. Encouragement to local business communities to focus on their town centres is needed.

12. The processes are there. Local authorities could give more direct support.

13. The biggest obstacle to restructuring our town centres and accommodating more housing is fragmented ownership and thus land assembly – Government needs to be more encouraging about the use of current tools (like compulsory purchase) to overcome them. The response to the recent CPO review would be a real opportunity.

John Parmiter FRICS FRSA MRTP
Consultant
Peter Brett Associates LLP
The High Street Challenge

There are significant macro-economic forces (the pace of which are increasing) putting pressure on our town centres – not least, polarisation, retail portfolio restructuring, the internet. All are posing serious challenges to our town centres’ ability to adapt: to deliver space suited to demand, to secure a better occupier line-up, the ability to respond rapidly to change, improving overall experience.

Many retailers need fewer physical outlets (and focused in bigger boxes, often in bigger centres or on retail parks); some retailers are not surviving at all; some don’t need any space; and major players increasingly care about their neighbours, dictating ‘pick lists’ on who they would like to be next to.

These trends accentuate a growing challenge to town and city centres’ ability to successfully adapt to change. There are too many town centres where vacancies are high, performance is sub-optimal, the experience is poor and, with too many shops (and often too many are too small); and with many parts of our town centres looking tired and much of the established centre in need of investment.

Our High Streets have been shaped by the past, they are now trapped in their current configurations and are in poor shape to face the future.

Shaped by the past, trapped in the present, threatened by the future.

The retail/leisure/property/investment sectors are agreed that the future of town centres is no longer mainly about retail. It is more likely to be as much about leisure, living, learning and local services.

A core obstacle to change, and attracting the investment to enable adaptation, is fragmented ownership. At the heart of this report is the development of a model to overcome this barrier and at the same time create a basis for attracting investment back into the High Street: an approach we have called Town Centre Investment Management.

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Restructuring town centres

In many town centres there are simply too many shops, especially in tertiary areas. Often the geography of the centre is too strung out and dominated by vacant or underperforming units. In some town centres there is a need for reduction. That requires re-structuring, potentially on a significant scale in some cases.

There are opportunities, however, in these areas for new and complementary activities and facilities that could serve a more compact core—new housing, open space, education, local services, even a surface car park:

![Diagram of town centre restructuring](image)

Redevelopment of peripheral areas – the report later refers to this as Zone B – is likely to be the most effective means of restructuring these areas, which can present a significant opportunity for accommodating housing growth, or adding missing leisure facilities.

Planned decline might be managed through use of the planning system, such as Local Development Orders, for example.

Adapting town centres

Take a typical struggling High Street - a poor environment, some empty shops, and sub-optimal mix, with no related parking or toilets. There is often too little scope to adapt the stock, re-allocate the space (curating), improve the environment and create a better overall
offer because most of the units are in separate ownerships, some even in the hands of an absentee landlord.

The basic idea of moving from a struggling to a successful High Street is illustrated in the Policy Exchange’s Report[^403].

![Diagram of Struggling High street vs Successful shopping centre or high street]

Source: Policy Exchange - 21st Century Retail Policy

Town Centre Investment Management (TCIM)[^404] is a tool to overcome fragmented ownership and harnessing the power of an asset management approach to achieve the transformation. It involves pooling a critical mass of assets that allow the investor to adapt the stock, curate the occupier mix, asset manage the investment and market the destination to improve the area's performance.

This approach is only currently achieved in shopping centres and, in very limited locations, conventional streets (see Technical Report case studies). Such an approach involves creating a new holding vehicle of the newly pooled assets that attracts new investment - a key to the successful future of our High Streets.

**Accommodating housing growth**

Town centres are accessible places suitable for densification and accommodating more housing. There is considerable scope for combing the restructuring of our town centres – principally focused on ground floor activities – with developing new housing.

In 2014 the Greater London Authority (GLA) commissioned Macceannor Lavington with Peter Brett Associates to address the twin issues of retail reconstruction in town centres and

[^403]: Investing in the High Street: Town Centre Investment Management and its role in delivering change. A Thought Leadership paper - Peter Brett Associates. 2013
the need to find more land for housing. The report\textsuperscript{405} showed the way the twin issues of restructuring town centres and increasing housing might be tackled.

Source: Macceannor Lavington, architects

Town Centre Investment Management was one of the solutions recommended as a means of overcoming the common obstacle to assembling sites for housing in town centres and retail/commercial uses, is fragmented ownership.

\textsuperscript{405} http://www.wolvertonpark.co.uk/wolverton-park.html
Town Centre Investment Management

The essence of Town Centre Investment Management (TCIM) involves adaptation through asset management. This is achieved by pooling a critical mass of assets, which enables their asset management, marketing, and curation as a single entity. In doing so, it overcomes fragmented ownership.

Town Centre Investment Management involves the pooling of a critical mass of property assets into an investment vehicle that allows the stock to be adapted, the mix of occupiers to be curated, the investment to be asset managed and the destination to be more effectively marketed.

By the creation of a new entity – a partnership, company or REIT typically - it becomes an investment vehicle that can attract funds into the project and thus back into the town or city centre.

TCIM process

Asset management is quite distinct from facilities management: Facilities management involves town centre management techniques, which typically focus on “crime and grime”, and often involving public realm improvements, shop front upgrades, security, cleansing and events, often run by a town centre manager, a Town Team (or equivalent) or Business Improvement District (BID). However, these cannot address the fundamental structural weaknesses of many centres, such as too many shops, poor configurations or sub-optimal occupier line-ups. Currently, outside London investors are not members of BIDs.

The opportunities through localism
The Localism agenda provides a significant new opportunity to tackle the serious and pressing current issues of town centre restructuring/adaptation and accommodating housing growth. There are two min tools:

1. The preparation of Business Neighbourhood Plans offer significant advantages - the involvement of both business and local residential communities, resulting in a statutory development plan and the delivery of a mandate for change via a Referendum.

At present too many communities are failing to focus on their town centre, rather preparing general plans for a wide area.

2. Where TCIM-type interventions are planned, the local community can make Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs), granting consent for physical and land use changes and adaptations.

The essence of the TCIM model is the pooling of a critical mass of freeholds in a given area of the town centre, to gain dominant position, together with selected leasehold and other interests sufficient to implement the required degree of change.

However, the pooling of fragmented ownerships may not always take place voluntarily and so compulsory purchase may be necessary as a backstop. The process of preparing a plan and its support through a referendum means that any compulsory purchase action is promoted from the bottom up and involving those affected — not some bullying tactic from above.

06 October 2015
Introduction

1. The Place Alliance's submission looks at how the Alliance is addressing the future challenges and priorities for built environment policy, the primary focus of the Committee. It reflects on the role that Place Alliance could play to help fill the design / place leadership gap left by the demise of the publically funded Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). In doing so it addresses question 10, as posed by the Select Committee: “Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?”

The Place Alliance: A Movement For Place Quality

2. The Place Alliance is a new movement which emerged from the Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment. It brings together organisations and individuals who share a belief that the quality of our built environment has a profound influence on people’s lives. Place quality has a value - cultural, economic, environmental, social - that needs to be recognized by everyone. The Alliance believes that through collaboration we can create and maintain better places. We aim to establish a culture whereby the quality of our places becomes a national priority.

3. By place quality we mean the recognisable and desirable qualities that the most successful parts of our villages, towns and cities share. They are: friendly (open, cherished and characterful); fair (inclusive, healthy and low impact); flourishing (adaptable, dynamic and diverse); fun (vibrant, playful and stimulating); and free (safe, accessible and democratic) (see Place Matters).

4. To promote better place quality, Place Alliance supporters share knowledge and support each other to demand and realise buildings, streets and spaces that enhance the quality of life for all. Together we aim to:
   • Inspire and raise aspirations for places
   • Support dialogue and collaboration to improve place quality
   • Build and share evidence, knowledge and resources
   • Influence policy, practice and behaviour to achieve better place quality
   • Be open and accessible to all interested individuals and organisations.
5. The Alliance is pursuing self-support mechanisms to exchange and coordinate, harnessing the power of innovation and technology. As a voluntary association of supporters we operate in a network sustained by a
   - Core supporter group, hosted by University College London (UCL)
   - Management group at UCL
   - National network of universities, and
   - Regional networks and regular national meetings ("Big Meets").

6. In its first year, the Place Alliance has covered much ground. It acts through multiple working groups which promote exchange between people across the country who are working in groups on Place Quality initiatives. Current working groups taking forward several post-Farrell Review activities are:
   - Design Literate Leadership: this group led by Councillor Sue Vincent is producing a primer to support local government in their vital role in place.
   - Healthy Places Group: is looking at the links between good design and good places and people’s health and wellbeing, and is chaired by Debbie Sorkin. A draft Healthy Places Manifesto has been produced[^406].
   - Urban Rooms Network: this group provides a network to bring together the diverse initiatives that are starting to emerge. It is chaired by Carolyn Butterworth, University of Sheffield. As well as sharing practice and offering support, it promotes the value of Urban Rooms to others.
   - Place/Design Review: sharing expertise, skills and resources to review and help improve the quality of place across the country, chaired by Ben van Bruggen.
   - University Network: developing universities’ many roles in place quality, with teaching, thought leadership, campus and city estates, as well as cross-disciplinary working and public outreach.
   - Housing Group: the latest group to be established, chaired by Steven Bee.
   - Artists and place-making: a comparatively new group chaired by Robert Powell, it has produced a "New Manifesto for the Public Arts" (to be launched 16th October), with the aim of launching a national debate on the arts and place.

7. Apart from its working groups, the Alliance is working on a programme that includes:
   - Establishing a Place Alliance website [https://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/placealliance](https://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/placealliance)
   - A national survey to map the 'place sector' and its resources
   - Developing and trialling a tool to promote dialogue about place, "TalkPlace!"
   - Drafting and agreeing a new vision for place quality, Place Matters
   - Building a network of local Place Alliance hosts using universities

• Exploring the viability of an Open Source Place Resource website, based on the Trip Advisor model
• Engaging with government
• A twice yearly programme of Big Meets

8. Big Meet 4 (27th October) will address issues of housing design quality, and devolution and the place agenda. The event will be a chance for Place Alliance supporters from across the country to get together for networking and exchange. We look forward to welcoming the Minister for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP, as a speaker.

9. The third ‘Big Meet’ of the Place Alliance was held on 24th February 2015, at UCL. Big Meet 3 was well attended with 104 people coming from as far as Scotland and Cornwall. They represented 81 different organisations, and several independent individuals. The minister of state for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Ed Vaizey MP, opened the event with a short address and then took questions.

10. First results of the mapping exercise were reported, as well as the progress of work towards the common goal of improving place quality and the Farrell Review. The whole Big Meet discussed the national survey or ‘mapping exercise’, put forward future trajectories for Place Alliance work, and participated in the first of the nationwide TalkPlace! exercises.

11. Throughout the year outreach work has been carried out, and meetings have been held with many organisations including the British Academy, Commonplace, The Design Council, Heritage Alliance, Heritage Lottery Fund, the John Muir Trust, Landscape Institute, Royal Institute of British Architects, Royal Town Planning Institute, and many more most of whom are now formally supporters of the Alliance.

Place exemplars

12. In advance of a meeting with Brandon Lewis MP, in July 2015 the Alliance asked its supporters to suggest exemplars of initiatives where local communities have been successfully brought into the planning, development and design of their areas, and where local powers have been used to positively shape places. The report, "Place exemplars as nominated by Place Alliance supporters", compiles the resulting collection of exemplar projects into three categories:

1. Housing and mixed use developments
2. Streets and public spaces
3. Local place shaping processes.

A link to the report is provided in the Annex section at the end of our evidence.

Five key lessons for place quality
13. As stated in the report, together the exemplars reveal five simple lessons for place quality:

- **Key lesson 1:** it is the holistic qualities of place that matter, rather than stylistic preferences; places should be friendly, fair, flourishing, fun and free.
- **Key lesson 2:** national Government sets the tone (through policy and action) that others follow. Government needs to demonstrate greater leadership on place quality.
- **Key lesson 3:** good place-making almost always involves positive public sector involvement and clear local leadership. Design capacity in local government is key.
- **Key lesson 4:** good place-making almost always occurs within a context of joined-up professional thinking and collaboration.
- **Key lesson 5:** a long-term commitment to place implies engaging the community early and considering the on-going stewardship of place.

Good places do not happen by accident, they need to be well designed with sustained investment from the public and private sector. When this happens, they deliver long-term economic, social and environmental value to communities. This has the potential to repay the initial investment many times over.

14. While the examples in the report seem good models, we do not know how representative they are, or how widespread good practice is. We are not aware of anyone doing research in this area, so we do not know if the situation is as bad as generally believed. We believe some sort of survey of what is going on is needed.

**The role the Alliance could play**

15. The Place Alliance is an embryonic movement, with significant potential to lead a new focus on place quality. The Alliance offers the means to bring together the multiple agencies of government who share responsibility for place quality, enabling a national conversation about place quality, and to support local leadership.

16. The Place Alliance has delivered its programme with a tiny budget of some £25,000 in its first year (the majority provided by UCL) and through sharing resources with its supporters.

17. As identified in the Farrell Review, and UCL research\(^{407}\) there is a leadership gap where the quality of the built environment is concerned. As an alternative model to the establishment of the role of Chief Architect as proposed by the Farrell Review or a new CABE-type

\(^{407}\) [bit.ly/EvaluateCABE](bit.ly/EvaluateCABE)
organisation, the Alliance offers a more representative and holistic means of providing that leadership, bringing together as it does all built environment disciplines, and all those with an interest in place quality.

18. The Alliance has asked the Government to formally recognise the importance of place quality, by engaging positively with the Alliance and publicly acknowledging its role, and consider working with the Alliance in developing policy through our networks. We are pleased to say this engagement has been positive; we have held meetings with the Minister for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP, the Chief Planner at the time, Steve Quatermain, DCLG and DCMS officials. Brandon Lewis and Ed Vaizey MP have attended Alliance events.

19. However the Alliance's role could be developed if more organisations became involved, and if there was greater official endorsement of what the Alliance is doing. Developing national place leadership through a collaborative economy model is an experiment, but the movement that has grown out of this in just 12 months and with virtually no resources is inspiring.

20. Whilst UCL has supported the establishment of Place Alliance through offering space and resourcing its administration for two years, this generosity cannot last. The model has been tested and found to be viable and now Government should be called upon to 1. Emphatically support the work of the Place Alliance 2. Enable its further development as a potential national place leader for England through providing funding in order to grow the movement and fully test the collaborative model.

Annexes

A. "Place exemplars as nominated by Place Alliance supporters":


06 October 2015
Submission to be found under Beam, Farreells and The Place Alliance
Places For People – Written Evidence (BEN0066)

Places for People is one of the largest property management, development and regeneration companies in the UK. We currently own or manage more than 140,000 homes and provide services to over 500,000 people. We have assets of more than £3.3 billion. Our vision is focused on ensuring successful places and enabling people to reach their potential. We have a long track record of successful development and a solid reputation for delivering large-scale development in towns and cities. Our approach goes much further than simply building homes. We look at what an area needs to be able to thrive — whether it is new schools, shops, leisure facilities, job opportunities, and access to learning and training or specialist support services. We were named Housebuilder of the year 2013 and Landlord of the year 2014.

We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Committee’s inquiry into the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment. Any queries with regards to our submission should be addressed to:

David Cowans

Our response

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Question 1: Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 We believe decisions should be made at the most local practical level and we support the government’s continued approach towards devolution of responsibility for planning, for example to City Deals. However, Local Authority Planning Committees are not always well placed to understand the wider geographic and political context and there can sometimes be conflict between neighbouring localities. In these circumstances Government has a role to support negotiations.

Question 2: How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 There needs to be greater join up, including more effective data sharing, across all those Government departments and agencies which have a role in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage. The NPPF and related planning process has improved cross working but it is essential that some of the silos at local level are broken down to ensure more strategic cross working.
National policy for planning and the built environment

Question 3: Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

3.1 Yes, although it is often used as a guideline but not always enforced. The NPPF had a presumption in favour of sustainable development and clear guidelines on the built and natural environment. We need to ensure planning guidance reinforces the standards.

Question 4: Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 People want to live where the jobs are, and this can place huge pressure on housing supply, infrastructure and services. Whilst there are benefits to having a more spatially driven planning system, we recognise we are in an age of localism. It is worthy of note that Scotland has a national plan which drives economic investment.

4.2 The pressures on housing in London and the South East suggests a complete review of the location and function of Greenbelt should be undertaken to set robust, long term boundaries.

Question 5: Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

5.1 In our experience planning is often too short term, reactive, and driven by low levels of resources in local planning authorities. However we recognise there has been some positive movement following the introduction of the Five Year Land Supply, and local plans, which are welcomed. Government should ensure all local plans robustly plan for the whole plan period.

5.2 We would like to see longer term planning but we recognise this can sometimes be difficult to realise given unforeseen changes in the external environment and government policy.

Buildings and places: new and old

Question 6: What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government
level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 Land release is key to meeting the country’s future housing needs and we would urge government to put in place more effective measures to review and assess all land which might be available to meet local housing needs. However as the market becomes more buoyant, there is a danger local authorities will not have the resources to deal with increased planning applications.

6.2 Central Government could boost the supply of new housing through targeted tax incentives. Tax incentives work at scale in other countries. In France and the US in particular tax breaks are available for all types of suppliers and investors to boost the provision of affordable rented housing. They come with incentives to supply good quality accommodation for those in housing need. We have carried out extensive research in this area, with our partners, DeMontfort and Cambridge Universities which has convinced us that there is merit in exploring how such an approach could work in the UK.

**Question 7: How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**

7.1 Whist Permitted Development Rights have produced good opportunities to accelerate short term housing delivery by setting them up outside of the local authority planning system, this means a Local Authority’s ability to work within the developer to secure long term social, infrastructure, amenities and governance arrangements are often limited.

7.2 The concept of lifetime homes and neighbourhoods can change but we now should perhaps look at other technology as well as design innovation to help ensure neighbourhoods and home care meet their future residents’ needs.

**Question 8: To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?**

8.1 Heritage assets have a key role in defining the character of a place, however it is more expensive and time/resource intensive to develop these sites. One way to overcome this barrier could be to use tax incentives (eg VAT) to maximise the use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place making as it can be more expensive.

8.2 Places for People has preserved the heritage and history of Wolverton Park in Milton Keynes, turning the shed which once housed The Royal Train and the surrounding area into
award winning homes, restoring the original ethos of community that once defined the area. You can find out more about this development here.408

8.3 Success stories such as this need to be shared publicly to encourage more redevelopment projects of this kind.

Skills and design

Question 9: Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

9.1 We believe the level of skills of the current workforce are generally sufficient to consider the built environment in a holistic manner, however the issue is local authorities are cutting their planning departments as a direct result of budget cuts.

9.2 Lloyds Bank has produced a report ‘Building for Growth’ (Sept 2015) which shows a severe skills shortage within the housebuilding industry could hinder plans to create thousands of new jobs in the industry in the next 12 months.

9.3 We welcome the Government’s commitments on apprenticeships. These are a vital part of the work to demonstrate successful career paths in the construction and design industries in order to grow and attract talent into the sector.

Community involvement and community impact

Question 11: Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

11.1 Housing impacts on life expectancy. The placemaking and housing system needs to focus on securing health outcomes through the planning process. Through our investment in Places for People Leisure we have strengthened the relationship between health and wellbeing and housing and neighbourhood sustainability.

11.2 We support the work the TCPA has done on re-uniting health with planning and we would encourage government and developers to use the resources which have been developed as part of this work.

408 The Farrell Review, 2014, p.75
Question 12: How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

21.1 There are few barriers to high quality public engagement, however time and cost could be seen as a barrier for some organisations. A common issue is communities not being involved at the right stage. Failure to engage communities early in the planning process can often result in them objecting to planning applications after decisions have been taken. Developers need to engage communities at the planning and decision making stage as this could then accelerate planning applications.

Financial measures

Question 13: Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

13.1 Volume house builders, by focusing on housing for sale, will always prioritise short term profit over long term investments as they see this as a cost burden. We have shown through our developments how investment in well designed, high quality homes with upfront investment in infrastructure and public realm, does demonstrably deliver a value premium. As more long term investors such as pension funds and institutions enter the residential market, the value creation seen in the rental and commercial sectors which drive stronger, long term yields, will almost certainly influence the specification of new homes.

13.2 We recommend the Government establishes a Housing Innovation Fund where a small amount of resources are available to try new ideas in the field to support a constant stream of innovation and research in practical ways to identify and trial better ways of providing supply and demand solutions in the housing market. This could be implemented quickly within existing resources to demonstrate a commitment to bringing new and innovative thinking into the sector.

13.3 There is also some merit in some pump prime funding to support innovation in housing production for example supporting growth in the self-build market; exploring innovative financing mechanisms; and mainstreaming off site construction techniques (which also have the capacity to impact on UK global competitiveness).

05 October 2015
Planning Inspectorate – Oral Evidence (QQ276-282)

Members present
Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Mr Chris Shepley CBE, former Chief Planning Inspector and Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate (1994-2002), and Ms Katrine Sporle, CBE, former Chief Planning Inspector and Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate (2003-11)

Q73 The Chairman: Good morning and thank you both very much for coming here. Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. I begin by asking each of you briefly to introduce yourselves to the Committee, please, for the purposes of the transcript.

Mr Shepley: My name is Chris Shepley. I am a former Chief Planning Inspector, between 1994 and 2002. Before that I had a career in local government and since then I have been a private consultant.

Ms Sporle: Good morning; I am Katrine Sporle. I, too, was Chief Planning Inspector and Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate, between 2003 and 2011. Prior to that I was Chief Executive of a local authority, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Since then I have
been, for the last four years, the Executive Director and Chapter Clerk of Salisbury Cathedral, dealing with the major repair programme, the Magna Carta celebrations for 2015, and the masterplan for Salisbury Cathedral. I have recently been appointed as the Property Ombudsman, and I now deal with alternative dispute resolution for citizens’ redress in the property sector for the retail sector, for lettings and sales, removal companies and other things besides.

The Chairman: Is that national or is it local to the Salisbury area?

Ms Sporle: It covers the United Kingdom, with some international jurisdiction as well.

The Chairman: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

Ms Sporle: Indeed.

The Chairman: Well, thank you very much for giving up your time to come and see us. The first question is from Lord Freeman.

Q74 Lord Freeman: Good morning. I am going to ask a question based on your distinguished past service in planning. What role should the Planning Inspectorate play in the planning system and how does this contrast with the role it actually plays?

Mr Shepley: The Planning Inspectorate plays a variety of roles in the planning system. Its fundamental role is as a quasi-judicial decision-making body, a dispute resolution body, which sorts out the problems that arise in all parts of the planning process, whether through the development plan or planning appeals or whatever else. When the Planning Inspectorate is dealing with development plans, it operates a kind of quality control mechanism. The Planning Inspectorate ensures that local plans and development plans are properly prepared, that there is proper consultation, compliance with national policy, the duty to co-operate and so on, and no doubt we will talk about all of that later. Only a relatively small number of cases come to appeal but, when it deals with appeals, obviously it is a dispute resolution process which deals with the most difficult cases and which tries to resolve them on the basis of the evidence. When it deals with strategic infrastructure projects, it has a slightly different role. It seems to me that all of those things are a pillar of the planning system: they are crucial to its operation. They maintain a level of quality, ensure there is proper research, proper background to policy, that things are thought through properly when appeals are dealt with. It brings a discipline to the appeal process. It ensures that local authorities do not make
ridiculous decisions, by and large, and that applicants, by and large, do not make ridiculous planning applications because they know there will be a proper examination at the end by a professional planning inspector.

Finally, underpinning all of that, my own view when I was doing the job was that it was the quality of and respect for those decisions that the Planning Inspectorate offered, effectively—it was the thing on which the whole Planning Inspectorate was based. I had many tasks but I saw my main one as being to maintain those standards of professionalism, integrity, openness, fairness, impartiality, timeliness, all of that; so, although there are always going to be disappointed parties at the end of any planning appeal, and disappointed people at the end of local planning inquiries and so on, none the less, they at least respected the decision and understood that it was professionally and properly made.

Lord Freeman: Therefore, in an ideal world, would you like to see any changes in that role—any enhancements or developments in particular aspects of it?

Mr Shepley: No. The second half of that question is interesting: how does the role that it plays contrast with the role that it should play? I think the role it plays is the right role. I do not see any problem with that. It is a changing role, and there is another question about that later. New things come along and the Planning Inspectorate has to adapt, and will continue to adapt. When national strategic infrastructure projects come along, you have to understand and implement new procedures but none of that is a problem. Given the way that the inspectorate has underpinned the planning system for over 100 years now, I do not see any current need significantly to change the way it operates.

Ms Sporle: I have to say I agree with all of that. What I can add, from my own perspective, is that what it is not is a national planning authority and, in my view, it never should be. Those two things are partly about fine lines, although I think it is really important to keep clarity of thought on the matter. I do think there are lots of areas of the Planning Inspectorate where there is real expertise that could be used better on a national basis, but that is different from the Planning Inspectorate being a national planning authority, as I say, which it is not and should never be.

Lord Freeman: Could you give some examples of how it could be used better?
Ms Sporle: I think there is an enormous scope for influence for the Planning Inspectorate but, where there are sensitivities and suspicions, you get an awful lot of interference in allowing that expertise to come forward. I can remember, as Chief Planning Inspector, being watched very closely to make sure that I did not have meetings with a particular part of the development industry. At the time it was particularly the wind farm industry, which wanted to make sure that I could never speak to anybody without them knowing what I spoke about. There was also a lot of: “Surely she doesn’t speak to the Secretary of State about a Secretary of State case. Well!” These are silly things, because there is a need for open dialogue and, of course, some very experienced inspectors have a wealth of expertise that they would share.

The Chairman: But do they?

Ms Sporle: They do not tend to. Inspectors feel they must keep anonymous to a large degree. For whatever reason, there is less emphasis on the learning from the inspectorate that could be shared, and that goes across the piece.

Baroness Whitaker: I would like to ask a more fundamental question, and if you would rather consider it and write in later, that will be perfectly acceptable. I would like to know how the Planning Inspectorate should conceive of the public good. Is it, for instance, the resolution of conflicts of interest or is it better place-making? Could those two concepts militate against each other?

Mr Shepley: How should the Planning Inspectorate take into account the public good?

Baroness Whitaker: No, how should it conceive of it. What is your idea of the public good? You are a public organisation, after all.

Mr Shepley: I step back a little from that. We are in a complex area here, between the policy-making area and the quasi-judicial, decision-making area. The Planning Inspectorate is not a policy-making body. Government and local authorities make policy, and the Planning Inspectorate adjudicates on the issues that arise from those policies, the interpretation of them and the issues surrounding them. It is those policies which are of concern, and I have a lot of views about them and I spent a lot of time in local government place-making, as it were, but in my role as Chief Planning Inspector it was not really my job to do that. That is not to minimise the importance of it. Particularly when an inspector is dealing with a Local Plan, their role is to ensure that there are proper policies across the board covering the kinds of
issues that you have talked about and, based on the evidence they have and the views put forward by the public, representative bodies, voluntary associations and so on—and the development industry, for that matter—the Inspector, against the background of understanding what the national policy is, in the NPPF or wherever else it might be, will seek in the public interest the best solution possible. It is not for the Inspector to suggest, “Why don’t you put this in your plan or put that in your plan?” That is the role of the local authority.

Baroness Whitaker: It is basically fair implementation of policy.

Mr Shepley: It is a bit more than implementation. I said at the beginning it is a quasi-judicial body. It is a decision-making body, and it is crucial that there is somebody who does that—that underpins, as I said, the whole system to make sure that the quality of the plan, the planning application or the infrastructure project is as high as it can possibly be, and the decision is properly made and all the evidence is there. But it is not for the inspectorate to determine how the infrastructure project, or the planning appeal or application, should be presented. I hope you understand; it is quite a fine distinction.

Baroness Whitaker: I do. It is helpful, yes, thank you.

Ms Sporle: Taking a slightly different tack, the vast majority of inspectors come up through local authorities. They are local-authority trained. They are public servants. They are there because they are concerned about the public good. I do not think anybody who works in any part of the planning system is not considering the public good and the community aspects of what they are doing. That is what a professional planner is all about, so I would say the public good is inherent to the planning system.

Baroness Whitaker: That was not exactly my question, which was about the “how”. I really do not want to hold things up now, but we ought to pursue this at some point.

The Chairman: Would you be able to give a quick answer, and then we will see if we need any more information?

Ms Sporle: In terms of how the Planning Inspectorate plays that out? I would say exactly as Chris has said. It plays it out through its role, through being clear that it is there to look at what local planning authorities have developed on the ground, and everything goes back to having a good Development Plan or Local Plan—whichever the current terminology is—and in that should be embodied public good.
**Q75 Baroness Andrews:** I should declare an interest. I had the privilege of working with Katrine as the Minister responsible for PINS for five years. I think it was a very productive relationship, and I got to learn in the process how very important the independence of PINS was, but how subtle the relationship is between PINS and Ministers. Sometimes you have to take the advice of the Chief Planning Inspector, and you have to be able to rely, and you can always rely, on that independent, scrupulous judgment that has been a consistent feature of PINS for over 100 years.

Things have changed since we worked together. There are two big changes which I think may qualify a little of what you have said. One is the National Planning Policy Framework, which has a presumption for development, and the inspectors have never worked under a presumption, to my knowledge, in that way before. What impact do you think that presumption has had on the way inspectors now respond to their need to be impartial and to make balanced judgments? This is all about balance within the planning system. The second thing is about infrastructure. In my time, we constructed the notion of the Infrastructure Planning Commission, in which PINS had a very different role; it was going to have a more proactive role. That has been done away with now. My sense is, however, that when it comes to infrastructure projects, the Planning Inspectorate still has a bit more influence to correct or to inform than it had previously, so I think the role has changed a little.

**Ms Sporle:** I am sure it has. I am always very careful: things change so quickly you have to be careful not to say, “I am a continuing expert in this field”, so I know it has changed. There are two things, though. I do not think it is for the Planning Inspectorate in any shape or form to criticise the policy of the government of the day. Different governments of different days will have different priorities and, in a sense, the presumption towards development is actually a policy of the Government of today. In my day it was slightly different: it was housing, housing, housing, at all costs housing, and when I was there, there was the beginnings of the five-year housing supply, which has been developed since. Inspectors are perfectly able to treat whatever policy is on the table in the right way and allow it to inform the decisions they make. The decisions they make are still always informed by the Local Plan, which—provided, again, as I always say, it is a good and up to date one—

**Baroness Andrews:** Or if it exists at all.
**Ms Sporle:** —or if it exists at all, that is the starting point. That is the responsibility of local planning authorities. It is for local planning authorities to get their act together and to put a proper Local Plan in place, and the arguments that some local planning authorities still put up for not having one I think are unacceptable. If local planning authorities want inspectors to take the right decisions in their areas, then they must have a Local Plan, and it must conform to national policy. I accept there are different things but I do not personally believe—Chris may disagree with me—that it changes the role of the Inspector.

**Baroness Andrews:** One of the differences, you say, was housing, housing, housing, and I agree with you, but it was never in a national plan. It was policy, and the difference is that in the NPPF we have this presumption for sustainable development, which in fact is translating into housing rather than enterprise, and it has been codified. Do you think that is making a difference to the nature of the decisions that are being made?

**Ms Sporle:** I am sure it is, because that is what it is designed to do.

**Baroness Andrews:** Exactly.

**The Chairman:** It would not be working if it did not.

**Ms Sporle:** Indeed, but I am really interested in this debate. I still think, though, that it is in the same category as policy; it is policy-driven.

**Mr Shepley:** I do not disagree with that but I would stress one of the points that Katrine made—that this is a significant change, but there have been significant changes in policy over the years before. There was not a formal presumption in favour of development in the 1980s but there was a pretty strong presumption in favour of development in the late 1980s. Then there were significant changes, limiting, for example, out-of-town retail policy, and there have been significant changes in policy ever since. These things happen all the time. They have happened rather more rapidly recently, and maybe some people have greater difficulty in keeping up currently. None the less, it is not anything particularly new, so planning inspectors are quite capable of coping with that sort of thing. Katrine is quite right to talk about the importance of a Local Plan but, on that basis, the presumption in favour of development is just another of the matters that planning inspectors have to take into account.

Do you want me to say something about the infrastructure side?

**Baroness Andrews:** Yes, please.
Mr Shepley: Almost the same point, in a way. This was a very new process, particularly the pre-inquiry part of that process, which I think everybody welcomed. I was at the Planning Inspectorate when the Heathrow fifth terminal inquiry was happening, and there were all sorts of problems with that, not all of which are well understood, but the new process got over a great deal of that and I welcomed that. I think it is now with the Planning Inspectorate. I see the inspectorate is having no problem whatsoever in taking on a new process like that, which is done in a very different way. It has the expertise, the staff, and, I hope, the resources—I do not know but I assume it has the resources to do that—and it seems to be working quite well. We still have not had a huge number of cases, but those we have had seem to have worked pretty well. I think the public have some issues with the degree of consultation the new process involves, which some people think is perhaps less comprehensive than before, but I guess that is part of the balance between speed and efficiency on the one hand, and delay on the other.

The Chairman: Do I detect a certain amount of irony in your statement about how it works? Do you really think it works?

Mr Shepley: I do think it works, yes. I apologise—I do think it works. As always, as a planner and former planning inspector, I try to put both sides of the argument. There are those who think that the truncated inquiry, which is very short now—and the opportunity for people to get involved very early in the process—means overall that public engagement, involvement and influence on major infrastructure projects has been reduced. I am not making that argument myself, but that is a view.

The Chairman: You do not mind that I made that qualification?

Mr Shepley: Not at all.

Lord Inglewood: The theme that runs through everything you do is even-handedness and a quasi-judicial approach to the policy and the parameters that are set. Is that right?

Mr Shepley: Absolutely right.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: The point was made that if local authorities do not have plans, it is their own stupid fault. We have heard from local authorities that, in the face of shifting housing targets and the resulting need to recast plans, or challenges to whether the duty to
co-operate has been fulfilled, they are constantly sent back to the planning stage to recast their plans and have been unable to get them through. Are you saying they are incompetent? **Ms Sporle:** Yes, in a word. I have no sympathy whatsoever with local authorities for not having an up-to-date Local Plan. They have professional people. They are there all year round. Local Plans were introduced—when?

**Mr Shepley:** The current system, in 2004.

**Ms Sporle:** But they have been around for many years. Policy is a changing landscape, it always has been and it always will be, and I have no sympathy. I say that as a former Chief Executive of a local authority who found it difficult to produce a Local Plan. There are many reasons why you cannot produce a Local Plan but there are no excuses for it and, in my view, there is no excuse and local authorities should get on with it. That is one of the things we will come on to in the changing world of the Planning Inspectorate, because if local authorities cannot do for themselves what they need to do for the common good, for the right community reasons, they should be helped or coerced, one or the other. I am sorry if that is controversial.

**The Chairman:** I think you have left us in no doubt. It is absolutely clear and we understand it. Thank you very much.

**Q76 Baroness Parminter:** What are the reasons for the increase in planning by appeal and what national policy measures could be introduced to counter that?

**Ms Sporle:** If I can start on this one, it is quite interesting that, again, there are some set answers to this. If there is a higher rate of refusal at local level, you are likely to see a higher rate of appeal. If you have a lot of frustration at the local level with the local authority, you will see a higher propensity to appeal. If the system is very slow, you will see a higher propensity for appeal, but I am not sure, if you really look at all the statistics over a long period, that there is necessarily a sustained higher rate of appeal, because I think the figures go up and down. What you need to do is look at the trends instead. If you look at the trends and the percentages, it is still the case that only a very small percentage of planning applications go to appeal—from memory, some 3%. It is really very small, much smaller than anybody ever realises, and of that 3%—I will check the figures—consistently over the years only about a
third are successful at appeal, and actually, the big developers and planning professionals look at those figures and they know that. They know that they will not go to appeal unless there is a real reason, because it is costly. I am not sure that there is a big drive towards that end of the system, but I know there are peaks and troughs. For example, I know there are actually less in the appeal system now than when I was a planning inspector. We were dealing up in the 23,000 region, and it is now down to about 17,000, so one has to look at these things over time and in context, but it is more important to look at the trends.

**Mr Shepley:** I agree that the proportion of cases that goes to appeal is very small, and it is very difficult to work out from the trends what it is that influences the trends. Clearly, the state of the national economy will probably be the most important factor, and when there is a recession the number of appeals goes down, and so on, and the number recently has gone up a little bit. I think planning by appeal is a danger. First, if policies are vague and difficult to understand, which sometimes happens, people will appeal, in effect, because they think their chances are better or because they do not understand the policy. They are trying to get the policy defined, and policies tend to be defined through appeal decisions and through the courts. If you have policies that are difficult to understand, you are more likely to have appeals. I think the statistics show that if you have policies that are more generous to development—looser policies—you tend to get more appeals.

I will go back into history here. There was a period in the mid to late 1980s when the proportion of appeals allowed—and Katrine is absolutely right; it has always been around a third, because that is how people calculate their chances of winning and losing—went up to about 40%, in 1987-89. That, I believe, was because there had been a loosening of planning policy and local authorities had not caught up with that, basically, and applicants were wanting to push the boundaries, as happens. There is nothing wrong with it; factually, that is one of the things that happens.

A third reason, I think, is the problem of resources in local government. In the light of recent policy, local authorities are finding it more difficult to carry out the sort of pre-application discussions and consultation with applicants that used to happen as they went through the development management process. Given that they have pretty fierce targets, there are sometimes cases where local authorities will refuse an application which, had they had more
time and resources, they might have been able to negotiate, and that becomes an appeal. The fourth reason is the absence of Local Plans, and we have already talked about that. That leads to more appeals.

**Baroness Parminter:** I have a supplementary question. Developers obviously have a right of appeal. Do you think there is a case for a community right of appeal? I have to declare that in this Chamber, I have moved an amendment to one of the various planning Bills in recent years to secure that.

**Ms Sporle:** This is a community right of appeal against an approval?

**Baroness Parminter:** Against something that has been approved but that is contrary to the Local Plan.

**Ms Sporle:** I have a lot of sympathy with that, because many people who do not understand the planning system find it bewildering if a decision comes out that looks to be contrary to everything they were told was going to happen. The way in which local authorities are required to consult and advertise that they are against the Local Plan is a bit shallow. I think one end or the other needs to be strengthened. My answer would always be to strengthen the front end rather than the back end, so, if it is contrary to the development plan, there should be something in place that allows much more debate than is perhaps currently the case.

**Mr Shepley:** I was grateful for that qualification about “contrary to the plan”. The only problem I have with that is it is not always easy to determine whether something is contrary to the plan or not; as you well understand, where there are criteria-based policies, there can be differences of opinion as to whether something is in line with a plan. I would just put very briefly the point that the system originated effectively in 1947, when a right was taken away from some people, namely landowners and applicants, and a right was given to other people, namely the local authorities and, through them, the community. Therefore, it was felt that those who had had something taken away should be able to appeal against having it taken away but that the community, having gained something—the right to object and so on through the local authority—did not need to have that given to them.

That is a long time ago, over 60 years, and the world may have moved on and there may be a case for doing it, but an unlimited third party right of appeal would be unworkable. There are
other systems in places like Ireland and Jersey which limit it, for example, to people who have previously objected—I am sure you know that—or to people within a certain geographical area, so there are ways of limiting it to something that might be more manageable. The cost would none the less be very considerable.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Some would try to say that the gross reduction in the number of appeals is because local authorities are so hard pushed that they give in more readily at planning application stage. Is there any evidence for or against that?

**Ms Sporle:** Not in my time.

**Mr Shepley:** I do not have any evidence. There are also those who say that local authorities, despairing, as it were, of their ability to sort things out, will refuse more applications. I am not aware of any evidence either way.

**Q77 Baroness Whitaker:** Can I ask you both what are the main reasons for the rejection of Local Plans? I am very happy to accept Ms Sporle’s characterisation of incompetence but, for our purposes, that is a little undifferentiated. Could you amplify these reasons and also say what the role of the Planning Inspectorate is in ensuring that the plan-making process is adequate to the task.

**Ms Sporle:** Again, I know it has changed over the years. I think I am right in saying in Chris’s day, it was an inquiry, and in my day it was an examination. We certainly, during the time I was there, did a lot of work to speed up the Local Plan process. We made a huge effort to make it more understandable and more inclusive, and I think all those things worked extremely well.

**Baroness Whitaker:** More inclusive of all the stakeholders?

**Ms Sporle:** Of the stakeholders. I apologise to all local planning authorities whom I have labelled as incompetent. I really did not mean that, because I am a great fan of local planning authorities, but the point is that nobody ever suggested that a Local Plan was easy and would be anodyne. A Local Plan is always going to be hard and it is always going to involve difficult choices, but what I am really saying is that local planning authorities and local politicians should be up for that task. Clearly, Local Plans are not accepted if the local planning authority has not followed things like the duty to co-operate, or has not put in the right level of housing supply or the right levels of sustainability.
Baroness Whitaker: Would they be the main reasons?

Ms Sporle: I think they are the main reasons. I go back to my time as Chief Executive of Basingstoke and Deane, when we were horrified to find that our Local Plan was turned down—I am going back a few years—on the basis that it was not sustainable because of water supply. We had not done our homework properly. We had to go back to the drawing board. The problem there, as I recall, was that in the time we went back to the drawing board, the political constitution of the council changed, and therefore everything went back to the drawing board. Here, there are not just the professional issues but the democratic issues, which do cause these kinds of difficulties.

Baroness Whitaker: Do they cause delay or change of tack?

Ms Sporle: They often cause a changed approach. In that case, it was a wholesale change from an urban extension in the west to an urban extension in the east.

Baroness Whitaker: How does this affect lack of homework over the water supply? I do not quite follow.

Ms Sporle: The lack of water supply was in the west, so it was changed to the east, and that fitted the political view of the day. I think what this means is that professional planners have to be able to really work hard and well, and have the skills they need to advise their councils about what they need in the Local Plan, and not leave councils exposed to being put back to the drawing board.

Baroness Whitaker: What is the role of the National Inspectorate in that?

Ms Sporle: The Inspector, I believe, does this extremely well. I think there might have been a time when the Inspector was seen as someone rigid and frightening. Currently inspectors do explain what is required at examination.

Baroness Whitaker: Can he or she come in early enough in the process?

Ms Sporle: I think so.

Mr Shepley: Shall I add a few things to that? On your last point, yes, it has been the practice for a long time for the inspectorate—not necessarily the Inspector dealing with the case—to advise local authorities right from the beginning on the process and how best they can go about what they should do and what the obstacles and problems might be. That is a long-
established practice, which was happening in my time and probably before, and obviously continues, and it is a very important thing that the inspectorate can do.

Just going back, I agree with what Katrine said but I think housing numbers, the objectively assessed need, the SHMA and all of that, and the allocation of sites, together with the duty to co-operate, are overwhelmingly the main problems that occur in most Local Plans. Sometimes there is another issue, but overwhelmingly this is the big issue that holds things up and causes problems, delay and difficulty. We see this particularly in the south of England; however, there are parts of England where it is not a problem. Then there is the duty to co-operate, which, frankly, is a suboptimal way of trying to assess these things. The abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies might have been justified, and there were reasons for it, but it took away one of the key decisions that had already been made, and it undoubtedly caused its own substantial delay. I know of cases that were delayed by two or three years because a plan which was close to completion and adoption was suddenly withdrawn when the RSS was abolished, and work started again. I really do not envy local authorities. It works quite well in some places but in most areas it really does not work at all, and I am sure other witnesses will have said to you that the absence of effective strategic planning is perhaps the biggest problem in the planning system.

Baroness Whitaker: I understand that very well, but it seems as if lack of capacity in a planning authority might also conduce to an inadequate plan.

Mr Shepley: I think now that is true. I agree with what Katrine said. There are local authorities that have been superb at producing Local Plans. Plymouth—I declare an interest as I once worked there, but some time ago—is held up as the best example in this regard, but there are quite a few others, and it is hard to understand why somewhere like Plymouth can do a really good job and others not, except that perhaps the pressures in Plymouth are rather less than in some parts of south-eastern England.

Baroness Andrews: We could have a long conversation about that, but I think the capacity issues are crucial because, as I recall, Katrine, when you were trying to speed up the plan-making process in the late 1980s, we were trying to simplify the process and strip out some of the extraneous suites of documents which everybody had to provide alongside their plan,
and if they did not get on with that, they could not get on with the plan, so a lot of it was about simplification—streamlining.

Mr Shepley: I absolutely agree. I am all in favour of that. Because the system has gradually become more complicated over a long period, things like sustainability appraisal have been introduced, understandably, and I have no problem with that, but that adds an extra dimension. The effort is considerable and the resources are reducing, and I think that will be a continuing problem.

Ms Sporle: All I would say, though, is that you only have to do it once. You have to update it, but the fact is, I have to say, the conservation plan for Salisbury Cathedral, for example, was the same 10 years after it had been done as when it started, because actually very little had changed. It is very easy to say there are problems—there are always problems. It is very easy to say that there is a lack of capacity. I agree; there is always a lack of capacity but you can still get on and make progress. If you really set your mind to doing your sustainability appraisal, and you do it well, it will stand you in good stead for years to come.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: I should declare a past interest, in that I am afraid I was the one that gave the Basingstoke plan a bit of a kicking as Chief Executive of the Environment Agency.

Ms Sporle: Indeed you were.

Baroness Young of Old Scone: Sorry about that!

The Chairman: We will pass over that. Is that all you wanted to say?

Baroness Young of Old Scone: That is all I wanted to say.

Q78 Earl of Lytton: I apologise if I have to slip away to another appointment before we finish discussing this module, but I will be quick. This is about consistency and the comments that have come out in our papers about apparent lack of consistency in planning appeals decisions. I assume it is a given that the Planning Inspectorate seeks consistency in general terms, but how does it actually bring that into being, and what are the challenges and pitfalls in trying to achieve that?

Mr Shepley: First of all, yes, the Planning Inspectorate has a whole range of processes to try to ensure consistency amongst inspectors. One of the problems it has, I suppose, is that planning inspectors all work from home, as you probably know. It is a big homeworking
organisation and has been since the 1970s, and that has some massive advantages, particularly in cost terms, but it does mean that quite a bit of time and money has to be spent on making sure they are brought up to date. The recruitment process is fierce. There is usually a big demand to become a planning inspector, a lot of applicants. I think all this is probably still true. There is a two-week residential induction process during which policy and procedures are explained. There is an annual training event which all inspectors attend, and a whole range of other training events in between on specialist topics—conservation or countryside, or whatever.

Inspectors have specialisms and they deal with particular topics as well as general appeal work. When policy changes, notes are sent out or information is provided to inspectors about the policy change. If necessary, training events are held on major changes of policy, and so on. Inspectors are also monitored and observed in planning inquiries, and their reports are read to check for consistency and for the approach they are taking and so on. A massive amount of effort is put into that, and it is the objective.

The only other thing I would say is that this is a problem I faced in local government too: that you can look at two seemingly identical cases and in fact, they can be very different. Certainly, the circumstances surrounding particular cases are always different, and until you get involved in the detail and go to the site and understand it thoroughly, that does not become clear. To give you an example, when I was in local government I can remember very well a committee that dealt with two applications for hot food takeaways, which looked identical, and we recommended approval for one and refusal for the other. The councillor for the ward where we were recommending approval was incandescent but there were significant differences in terms of car parking arrangements. The one where we were recommending refusal was on a main road with no car parking; the other one had some off-street parking, so there were differences like that, although superficially they appeared to be the same. You really have to go into the detail of it.

Finally, there is the question of the evidence which is actually presented. When I give talks about the inspectorate, I always talk about the importance of written evidence being comprehensive and all of the points being put to the inspector, because the inspector is not in a position to go out and search for evidence. The inspector relies on the objectors or the
local authority or the applicant putting evidence, and sometimes that is not done very well, so the quality of the evidence can lead to inconsistency on cases that are superficially similar. **Ms Sporle**: I would just add to what Chris has said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, really. Twice when I was at the Planning Inspectorate, we won the TPI award for the quality of our training and the extent to which we made absolutely certain that planning inspectors were up to speed and at the top of their game. The second thing is that, with a change of Government, the inconsistency issue came up and hit me straight in the face, so I randomly picked on a monthly basis 10 appeals and sent them to the Minister so he could see for himself whether there was consistency in decision-making, and I have to say I satisfied him.

**The Chairman**: The final question is from Lord Inglewood.

**Q79 Lord Inglewood**: Ms Sporle has slightly covered some of this. There clearly has to be a relationship between the Planning Inspectorate and the Government of the day. How would you define that, and how do you think in the real world they can work together most effectively for the common good?

**Mr Shepley**: This is quite a complex question actually. Katrine described it earlier as a subtle relationship. The starting point is that governments are elected and planning inspectors are not.

**Lord Inglewood**: It is rather like the House of Lords and the House of Commons, is it not?

**Mr Shepley**: I was not going to make that comparison! That is a matter for others to think about. Therefore, there is a phrase in the inspectorate that when an inspector takes a decision, he or she is standing in the shoes of the Secretary of State. You will have heard that phrase, and one is always conscious of that and everyone needs to understand that, because the Secretary of State is elected and makes policy and, as long as the policy is clear, the inspectorate will implement that policy through plans or planning appeal decisions or whatever else.

Having said that, there is an arm’s-length relationship. There was reference earlier to the independence of the Planning Inspectorate, and it operates in this independent quasi-judicial role within the context of the policy which the Secretary of State or the Government of the day set out. That slightly awkward arm’s-length relationship, whilst standing in the shoes of
the Secretary of State, has worked extremely well. I never had any difficulty with it. The Secretaries of State that I dealt with when I was there, who mainly were Lord Deben, as he now is—John Gummer—and Lord Prescott, as he now is, and the junior Ministers who worked with them, understood that completely and there was never any problem; no one tried to bring any influence to bear that they should not have, and we had a cordial relationship. That was how it was. Of course, Secretaries of State can recover appeals, and have been recovering rather a lot recently. They can change that relationship in particular cases.

As to how they can work together, Katrine talked about this earlier. She talked about how the inspectorate has knowledge not about what the policies should be, because that is not for the inspectorate, but about how policies are working, whether they are effective or not, whether they having the intended effect, whether they are clear and what confusions are arising. I am sure when Katrine was there—when I was there, we would regularly feed that information back. There used to be quite extensive consultation with the Planning Inspectorate about policy changes when I was there, so that we could say, “We think that will work”, “We don’t think that will work”, or whatever. I am not sure that happens to quite the same extent as it used to.

Baroness Parminter: In recent years we have seen the Government taking our energy infrastructure out of the planning process, and obviously fracking is the latest example which is going to be pulled out. You are saying in the past, the Planning Inspectorate would have given a view on whether or not that was appropriate, given your understanding of the working of the system. Are you saying that is not happening quite so much now?

Mr Shepley: The Planning Inspectorate would have been consulted not on whether it was right to take fracking out, but on the practicability of it. Let me give you an example of what I have in mind. Somebody mentioned wind farms. There is a policy on wind farms which talks about the wishes of the local community, or words to that effect, but the local community is not defined, so the planning inspector would say, “Hang on, we need to know what you mean by the local community. Do you mean the people in the immediate vicinity or do you mean a much wider community?” The planning inspector would not be saying, “You should not do this”. They would be saying, “You can do that but it’s not clear what you mean and therefore we will have problems in inquiries.” That happened a lot when I was there, and although I do
not have direct experience of it, given the speed at which things happen these days, my sense is that rather less of that consultation takes place.

**Baroness Andrews:** From my experience, I completely concur with that. When we were in government, we spent a great deal of time listening to the Planning Inspectorate about the impact of policy, and it was extremely valuable advice we received—and it was completely independent. I do not know whether it was Katrine or one of my fellow Ministers who said to me, “Never refer to the Planning Inspectorate, as one Minister once did, as ‘my Planning Inspectorate’”. It is “the” Planning Inspectorate, and when cases are recovered, that principle of independence really makes an impact on Ministers, who know they have to follow those principles. We are in a quasi-judicial position as well, because you inherit that from the Planning Inspectorate, and judgments you make on recovered cases have to be seen to be independent.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. Is that a happy note on which to end? An equally happy note is that we are sorry you are going because it has been terrific—a wonderful session. You have engaged with us terrifically and given us a lot more information than we knew we needed or expected. I am particularly grateful to you for giving us this time. You will of course have the transcript. Thank you.

*03 December 2015*
Planning Officers Society — Written Evidence (BEN0162)

Introduction

This submission is made in my capacity as a Director of the Planning Officers Society, which represents senior professionals and managers of planning functions in the public sector serving English Local Authorities. The Society is the credible voice for public sector planning practitioners. Its aim is to make planning more effective in delivering sustainable development to support the well-being of our communities;

As Founder of NOVUS, a thinktank affiliated to the Planning Officers Society for young built environment practitioners working in the public sector. NOVUS currently has over 130 members from local authorities throughout England;

As Proactive Planning Champion of the Farrell Review, and author of Public Service, a proposal for a social enterprise to put exceptional placemaking practitioners (architects, urbanists, planners) at the service of everyday places, through placements in local authorities. The initiative will be to the built environment what Teach First is to education;

And on the basis of eight years’ experience of public practice in the built environment within the Croydon Council Placemaking Team, recognised in the Farrell Review as an exemplary authority for proactive planning, and in the Greater London Authority Regeneration Team.

This submission focuses on the issues of Skills and Design identified in the Call for Evidence.

Skills and Design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Two initial qualifications to answering these questions:

- Firstly, built environment practice varies significantly from authority to authority, in relation to different financial, structural, political and geographic conditions. There are examples of excellent practice, as well as areas of practice that need to be addressed. It is therefore difficult to make generalisations about local authority skills and capacity, and unlikely that there is any single solution that will work for all authorities.
- Secondly, whether local authorities have adequate skills and resources depends on the role we expect local authorities to have in planning, shaping and managing the built environment. The pressure on local authority budgets means that planning departments are increasingly retrenching to focus resources on statutory or fee-paying services. As a result our approach to the built environment is becoming more reactive. Reactive planning creates longer-term costs from missed opportunities.

This paper proposes that “to consider the built environment in a holistic manner” we need to build the public sector’s capacity for proactive planning.

1. The Value of Proactive Planning

1.1. Proactive planning is fundamental to creating the conditions and opportunities for good growth. It is the crucial work of establishing a long-term vision, securing and coordinating investment, shaping development, galvanising communities, and strengthening the character of a place.

1.2. The Farrell Review states that “the industry is united in the belief that the current housing crisis will only be solved by thinking long term and through proactive planning”. My experience of working at Croydon Council, which is identified as an exemplar of this approach in the Farrell Review, demonstrated that proactive planning can:

- **Increase certainty** by providing a robust and comprehensive planning framework to guide development through the local plan and delivery-focused masterplans. For example the East Croydon Masterplan, which received the NLA Award for Best Masterplan in 2012, resulted in a 100% approval rate for five planning consents for over 1,250 homes and 1 million sqft of commercial development.

- **Accelerate delivery** by frontloading placemaking input at the pre-application stage, resulting in a more efficient planning process and minimising the risk of abortive work. For example the developers of the 100,000 sqft Renaissance development bought the site on 6 January 2012, submitted a planning application on 16 February, received consent on 30 March, and started construction on 11 June 2012.

- **Raise the quality projects and places** through the integrated involvement of in-house placemaking expertise in plan making, development management, and Council-led capital projects. For example Croydon schools have been named as building of the year in London by the NLA, and the ‘best school in the world’ by the Architectural Review.

- **Strengthen local support** by proactive and ongoing engagement with communities in shaping plans for their area, rather than reactively consulting on individual schemes. For example in New Addington, where designers were commissioned to work ‘in residence’ with the local community group so that plans were both fully informed by local knowledge, and had full local support.
• **Secure external funding and inward investment** by putting forward a compelling and co-ordinated case for investment, backed up by a track record of delivery. For example the Connected Croydon programme, where over £50m funding was secured from sources including Network Rail, Greater London Authority, Transport for London, Heritage Lottery Fund, Sustrans, S106, and Council capital funding.

• **Stimulate local enterprise** by proactively engaging with and supporting emerging initiatives including community groups, social enterprises and start-ups. For example a programme of smaller grants including Portas Pilots and Meanwhile Use funding in Croydon has supported social and economic activity including Matthews Yard, Turf Projects, Croydon Tech City, and Croydon Old Town Business Association.

1.3. Proactive planning relies on successful cross-disciplinary collaboration between placemaking professions, including planning, surveying, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, conservation, engineering, and regeneration. It relies on practitioners’ skills, as well as their local knowledge, experience, capacity and the scope of their involvement. It also depends on successful cross-sector collaboration; bringing together individuals and organisations across the development industry, from the public to private sectors, and housebuilders to housing associations.

2. **The Skills Gap**

2.1. Proactive planning is not solely dependent on the capacity of the public sector. But the biggest barrier to proactive planning is currently a real and widening skills gap between the public and private sectors across the placemaking professions. As a country we arguably already have the overall expertise and capacity we need to deliver proactive planning, but there is potential for it to be more effectively directed and distributed.

2.2. Significant reforms of the planning system have been introduced over the last few years to support sustainable development. But their success depends on having the right expertise to implement policies at a local level. The Farrell Review found that “attracting and retaining the best individuals for local authority planning departments was seen as key to enabling a culture change from reactive to proactive planning.”

If anything, it is the people rather than the policies that make the biggest difference at a local level. “Good people can work round bad polices but good policies cannot work round bad people.”

2.3. The 2008 ‘Planning Matters’ report forecast a labour shortage and skills gap in local government. “There is a drastic shortage of planning officers, estimated to affect 46% of local authority posts by 2012. There is also a significant and growing skills gap among those planners who remain within the system.”

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409 The Farrell Review, 2014, p. 149
410 Communities and Local Government Committee, Planning Matters: Labour shortages and skills gaps, 2008
411 Institute for Fiscal Studies, Central Cuts, Local Decision-Making, 2015
constraints have exacerbated an existing shortfall. Net local authority spending on planning and development services reduced by more than half between 2009-10 and 2014-15 – the largest scale of reductions to any service area.\textsuperscript{412} With similar levels of savings projected for the future, there are few options available for planning departments to bridge the gap.

2.4. This gap is not just about staff numbers and budgets. It is also about talent. There are many examples of excellent practice within planning departments, but in the context of economic constraints public authorities are finding it harder to attract the most talented placemaking professionals, and harder to keep those with the ambition and capabilities to find jobs elsewhere. “Across the country, even where resources are available, it has proved difficult to attract good professional staff, especially with design skills, to work in the public sector. The present pressures on local authority budgets are only likely to exacerbate this problem.”\textsuperscript{413} As a result, authorities are increasingly turning to external consultants and private agencies to fill the gap – eroding local knowledge and capacity over the longer-term, and resulting in unnecessary costs.

2.5. At the same time, the skills that public authorities do still have in-house are not necessarily the right type to deliver proactive planning. In the House of Lords debate of the Farrell Review, Lord Tyler raised concerns over the design literacy of local authorities, and identified a lack of three-dimensional design skills such as a result of a reduction of in house architectural expertise. In the 1970s 50% of architects were employed by the public sector, now less than 9% are.\textsuperscript{414} It is therefore unsurprising that 67% of London boroughs require or strongly require more visual communication, drawing and presentation skills.\textsuperscript{415}

2.6. None of this is news. The skills gap is longstanding and systemic, and cannot be attributed to austerity measures alone. The 2011 Bishop Review warns that “The erosion of capacity and design capability within local authorities is a major issue. Although this is a process that has been going on for years (if not decades), it has now reached a critical stage and needs to be urgently addressed if costly delays and poor quality schemes are to be avoided.”\textsuperscript{416} Even in 2008, the Communities and Local Government Committee concluded that “perhaps the most surprising, and frustrating, point to arise repeatedly from this inquiry is the fact that labour and skills shortages in planning are so unsurprising. They have been evident for well over a decade but review after review, report after report, recommendation after recommendation have not resulted in their reduction. This must change.”\textsuperscript{417}

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\textsuperscript{412}Design Council Cabe, \textit{The Bishop Review}, 2011
\textsuperscript{413} RIBA Building Futures, \textit{The Future for Architects?}, 2011
\textsuperscript{414} Mayor’s Design Advisory Group, \textit{London’s Placeshaping Capacity}, 2014
\textsuperscript{415} Design Council Cabe, \textit{The Bishop Review}, 2011
\textsuperscript{416} Communities and Local Government Committee, \textit{Planning Matters: Labour shortages and skills gaps}, 2008
\textsuperscript{417} Local Government Information Unit, \textit{Localism at Risk: Is the NPPF delivering planning for people?}, 2013
\end{flushright}
3. **The Impact of a Lack of Capacity**

3.1. Holding back the public sector’s capacity for proactive planning will hold back the delivery of homes and growth. The twin pressures of an increasing need for housing at a time of decreasing resources means that local authority planning departments are under-resourced at the time when they are most needed. 60% of Local Planning Authorities disagree or strongly disagree that future levels of human and financial resource and capacity in planning departments are adequate to meet future workload.418

3.2. These concerns are shared by private sector developers who, in a separate study, “expressed the view that in the current climate of fiscal austerity, there was a risk that planning departments would become under-resourced and that this could delay and undermine the planning process.”419 There is strong evidence that developers or investor are willing to subsidise additional local authority capacity if it helps to de-risk the planning process and timescales. A recent survey of housebuilders identified providing additional resources to local authority planning departments as the single most important policy measure to boost housing supply.420

3.3. Housing need is particularly pronounced in London, where the GLA has identified public sector speed and delivery as one of the main ‘Barriers to Housing Delivery’. Capacity does not always correlate with areas of planned growth - a survey of London’s placeshaping capacity carried out in 2014 shows that 67% of boroughs said they require or strongly require more skills to carry out architectural design, urban design and masterplanning in house.421

3.4. Inadequate resourcing also brings an opportunity cost - a lack of proactive planning is failing to prepare strategically for the future and realise the public sector’s potential to deliver growth. Conversely, increased housing delivery demands a proportionate strengthening of local government’s proactive planning capacity to ensure we are making the most of opportunities to deliver great places.

4. **Recommendation 1: Set Planning Fees at a Sustainable Level**

4.1. Planning fees currently cover only 59% of the costs of providing an effective and efficient planning system – leading to an annual shortfall of £156.2 million.422 The most immediate and essential first step in putting planning department resourcing on a more sustainable footing would be to realign fees at a national level to allow for full cost recovery, with an automatic rise for inflation.

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418 Smith Institute, _Housing and Planning: what makes the difference?, 2014_  
419 Knight Frank, _Gaining Ground Housebuilding Report, 2015_  
420 Mayor’s Design Advisory Group, _London’s Placeshaping Capacity, 2014_  
421 Research highlights funding gap faced by planning departments  
422 _The Farrell Review, 2014, Recommendation #20_
4.2. The principle of setting fees at a sustainable level is supported by the Planning Advisory Service, British Property Federation, Home Builders Federation, Federation of Master Builders, Planning Officers Society and the Royal Town Planning Institute. Realigning fees would represent a cost saving to Government, and result in an improvement in the speed and quality of service for the development industry.

5. **Recommendation 2: Introduce a New Generation of Proactive Planners**

5.1. Setting fees at a sustainable level is essential to addressing the statutory role of planning and delivery of the development management process. However, it will not help bring about a shift towards more proactive planning alone. Many aspects of proactive planning happen at a ‘pre-pre-application’ stage – whether setting the vision for a place, securing funding and investment, or engaging proactively with local communities and businesses. Genuinely proactive planning needs not only better resourcing, but a new culture of practice.

5.2. Public Service is the working title for a social enterprise to put exceptional placemaking practitioners (architects, urbanists, planners) at the service of everyday places, through placements in local authorities. The initiative would be to the built environment what Teach First is to education, and Frontline is to social services.

5.3. Public Service would deliver on the Farrell Review by “attracting and retaining the best individuals for planning departments”\(^{423}\) “to bring about a revolution in support of proactive planning in this country.”\(^{424}\) It would do this by offering local authorities hand-picked, highly motivated and specially trained placemaking professionals for flexible placements at affordable rates, subsidised through private sector support.

5.4. Public Service would build a national pool of skills and expertise to grow the public sector’s capacity to deliver homes; support collaborative planning and sharing of resources across authorities; and develop a new generation of proactive planners committed to working with communities to shape better places.

5.5. The initiative already has the support of organisations including London Councils, the Place Alliance, Future Cities Catapult, Planning Officers Society, Future of London, Urban Design London, New London Architecture, University College London, Barratt London, Cathedral Group, Pocket, Allies & Morrison, and Arup. 15 London Boroughs have already expressed an interest in offering placements, and there is a strong pipeline of placemaking practitioners who have expressed an interest in applying.

5.6. A paper introducing the proposal was launched on the back of the Farrell Review in March 2015. A business plan is now being developed with the support of the Greater London Authority, with a view to launching a London pilot in 2016.

\(^{423}\) The Farrell Review, 2014, Recommendation #19

6. **Recommendation 3: Make the Most of Existing Expertise and Knowledge**

6.1. Local authority planning departments already hold significant expertise and knowledge, which could be shared more effectively across the public sector through innovative use of technology.

6.2. Planning services are increasingly being provided through dispersed models, whether through combined authorities and the sharing of staff, commissioning and outsourcing to the private sector, or planning departments charging out their services to other authorities.

6.3. This emerging structure offers the potential for sharing best-practice, better benchmarking, and allocating resources more efficiently across planning departments. However it is also a shorter-term and less place-based model, which makes it more difficult to maintain local knowledge, relationships and accountability over the longer-term.

6.4. The Planning Advisory Service already performs a vital function in this area, as did CABE before its transition to the Design Council. The sector needs more, not less, of this kind of support. There is also an opportunity to use technology to enable less resource-intensive peer-to-peer learning and development.

6.5. It could be extremely useful to establish a single, consolidated web-based platform to build collective technical and place-specific intelligence over time. For example, rather than rely on centrally issued guidance, this could provide a forum for sharing evidence and reports, a map for sharing place-based annotations, or a wiki for writing policies and conditions.

Finn Williams, Director of the Planning Officers Society, Founder of NOVUS

*06 October 2015*
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Mr Richard Blyth, Head of Policy, Royal Town Planning Institute, and Mr Finn Williams, Director, Planning Officers Society.

Q132 The Chairman: Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by the members of this Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript, where necessary. Can I begin by asking each of you for the purpose of the record to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee, please, starting with Mr Blyth?

Richard Blyth: My name is Richard Blyth. I am head of policy at the Royal Town Planning Institute and a chartered planner of 25 years’ standing.

Finn Williams: I am Finn Williams. I am a director of the Planning Officers Society and the founder of NOVUS, a think tank for public planning, and a proactive planning champion of the Farrell review.
The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. You have had the questions, and the Committee members will now ask them in turn.

Q133 Lord Freeman: Good morning. What are the principal reasons for skills and capacity shortages in planning and built environment professions? How can national policy, specifically government, ensure that the right skills are available to local planning authorities and others involved in the planning process?

Richard Blyth: We have done a deep study of the situation in the planning authorities in north-west England, and we certainly found a one-third fall in the number of planning staff in the five years between 2010 and 2015. That has not helped. As a consequence of that process, we found that there have been forced redundancies of more senior members of staff, and their replacement by temporary staff, which means that you tend to rely on people who are possibly at the beginning of their careers rather than more senior.

The Chairman: That is not very helpful, is it?

Baroness Andrews: What are the impacts of that?

Richard Blyth: We received feedback from people who want to make applications for planning permission that there are delays in the process. You sometimes find that the person who is dealing with the application changes and, as I say, you are dealing with people who are probably earlier in their careers and less confident at doing the work.

Baroness Andrews: Can you see the impact on the quality of decisions about, say, the degradation of conservation areas?

Richard Blyth: No, the quality of the decisions is fine. It is the time it takes, the difficulty of communications between the applicant and the local authority, and the difficulties of people not being available—the shortage of staff kind of question.

Lord Freeman: What do you believe central government can do to alleviate the problem?

Richard Blyth: There is a debate about whether the fees for planning applications should be increased. There is a whole series of reasons, which I probably do not have time to go into, about the pros and cons of that and the impact on different parts of the country to do with the strength of the economy in different areas. There is a difficult question to do with local government being a free agent. It is not for government to say to councils that they should spend particular parts of their overall funding on specific functions. That would be to intrude.
In the past, government has specifically grant-aided planning as a function, as a top-up. That is one possibility, but we are in a tight spending environment, so that may not be at all conceivable at the moment. We noted in the north-west study that £16 million of new homes bonus has gone into the north-west authorities. This is the money that is attached to the completion of homes. So our report recommends, if you like, an education process for councils that says in effect, “Planners are bringing all this money into your council coffers just for the new homes bonus, not to mention the impact on the local economy of building homes and creating jobs. So if you were to see the planning function within your organisation in those terms, rather than simply as a small department with a few staff, that might enable you to bring resources in to fill vacancies, and possibly to restore a little the status of the chief planning officer in the top management team of authorities, which over the last 30 years has pretty much been cleared out”.

**The Chairman:** Was this a report that you published?

**Richard Blyth:** Yes.

**The Chairman:** Could we have a copy of it?

**Richard Blyth:** Yes. It is linked in our evidence, but I can also provide the clerk with a complete copy.

Q134 **The Chairman:** Thank you. May I ask a simple question, and then Lady Young wants to ask a question. Do you think that respect for people in planning by other members of the councils is fairly low; it comes as an add-on at the end of schools and all the rest of it? Are there any really shining lights among councils who believe and support their planners, and who make sure that the function is fully staffed?

**Richard Blyth:** Yes. You have hit on two things. There is a mixed picture. As I say, one of the difficulties about local authority staff grading has been the introduction of the single status, which makes all posts the same and possibly does not give a particular status to professional staff. There is the question of attributing status within the organisation to the number of people you manage and the size of your actual budget within the council, rather than thinking of the role in terms of its wider economic and social significance, which has been a difficulty. I can point to Plymouth City Council, where the role of planning is held in very high regard. The Plymouth plan is an all-encompassing cross-sector plan of the council as a whole. It is not
simply a plan full of development control policies produced, if you like, in a corner of the council; it is the council’s full expression of what they wish to achieve.

**The Chairman**: That sounds ideal.

**Finn Williams**: Going back to the question of the skills and capacity in the sector as a whole, arguably they are there across the country as a whole, but they are not evenly distributed, and they are not necessarily in the right places all the time. London, in particular, is one of the world centres of skills in place-making and has an extraordinary concentration of talented architects. Only 16 architects work in local authorities in London. They are not necessarily distributed between the public and the private sector either. The action has tended to be for graduates looking for jobs in the private sector, or at least that is the perception, and as a result many of them are going into the private sector rather than the public sector.

There is also a debate about what we see planning being for within the public sector. In that context, professions such as architecture and urban design can be more attractive. On the whole, we have an extraordinary wealth of talent; we need mechanisms to get them in the right place.

On the question of what government can do about it, getting the funding in place to resource the system adequately is obviously critical, and certainly raising planning fees to a sustainable level. Currently, taxpayers are subsidising a third of planning fees across the country to the tune of £150 million a year. Setting those planning fees sustainably is a no-brainer. The industry is calling for it. Seventy per cent of developers and housebuilders would like to see fees raised to a sustainable level. Eighty-two per cent of housebuilders identify resourcing as the single most important issue for boosting housing supply.

You also need to define the job as something that is really exciting for people to do and to present it as really worthwhile and a privilege, not necessarily a last resort. You need a mechanism to get those people into the public sector and to give them the tools to do the job. I hope that we can go into each of those in more detail through subsequent questions.

**The Chairman**: That is a very good tour d’horizon. Lady Young, you want to ask something.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone**: I have one very brief question on the skills squeeze from a particular point of view, and that is the leadership role. There is a difficulty with the gross numbers of planners, but is there also any shift from having people who have been around
the block for a time, who have the ability to influence other departments and other players, and who have a sense of vision of the place over a longer period? Is that still there or is that beginning to disappear? Are some of our more experienced planners being written out of the script as well?

Richard Blyth: In all construction-related sectors there is this difficulty that, whenever you have a recession, everyone gets thrown out. It is not just planning; it can apply to the whole construction industry. There may be something to be said for the kinds of approaches taken in some other countries where you do not necessarily throw everybody out when there is a recession; you keep people going, because you know there is going to be an upturn. In certain parts of the country, we are now facing a shortage. I think that has been contributed to by fairly strongly recommended early retirements of people during the trough, which has then caused them not to return, and for us to now focus particularly on what we can do about getting entrants.

We have had a lot of success with our postgraduate one-year master’s degree. I frequently meet people who have done other careers for, say, five or six years and then, in their late 20s, they do a one-year master’s degree and get jobs amazingly quickly, particularly because they have picked up quite a wide range of business and life skills earlier in that process, so they come to the academic part of the planning training with communication skills that they have honed in other jobs.

We are very pleased to report that since the spring of this year we have set up 40 bursaries to do the one-year planning course. That is with support from the Scottish Government and a number of planning consultancies in the UK, and the universities pay a quarter. It is £1,000 all together: £750 from the sponsor, £250 from the university. We have 40 students in place doing that starting this term.

Baroness Rawlings: Which part of the country are we talking about for those bursaries? Are they in London or elsewhere?

Richard Blyth: We have around 40 planning schools accredited in the British Isles. It is available at any particular one; it is not attached to a particular locality.

Finn Williams: The issue of temporary staff has certainly become a real problem on a number of fronts, because of the pressures from a lack of budgets. In a survey we carried out of
London boroughs, we found that 83% of London boroughs are recruiting agency staff regularly to cover shortfalls. That is always going to be part of the solution, but when those staff are costing upwards of £500 to £1,000 a day and costing three to five times more than employing someone in-house, the costs are financial but also relate to long-term knowledge and relationships with the people of the place, communities and stakeholders. It can also result in inconsistent decisions when you get a high level of churn through the system.

Q135 Lord Inglewood: I would like to ask Finn Williams a question. This is not intended to be a critical question at all. I have looked at your CV, and I am pretty impressed. It strikes me that you have had an interesting career, but I do not think you have really worked in the public sector as such, have you?

Finn Williams: Yes, I have.

Lord Inglewood: It seems to me that you could not have had as good a career if you had been in the public sector.

Finn Williams: Funnily enough, I have. I have worked in the public sector for the last eight years: five years at Croydon Council and approaching three years at the Greater London Authority. So I have been employed as a completely straightforward planning officer in a place-making team at a local authority level, and now in the regeneration team in the Greater London Authority. It is true that I came to that from working for a so-called starchitect in Holland, and certainly among my peers that was a very unusual move to make, but part of what I do is to try to encourage other people who I teach in schools and universities to do the same thing.

Lord Inglewood: Do you think one of the problems is that, taken in the round, working in the private sector gives you more exposure and more interesting work?

Finn Williams: I have thought about this a lot, because I made that choice. For me, the choice was between, frankly speaking, designing extensions for friends of my parents as a private architect and doing really meaningful things for a place that really needed it: Croydon Council. In a way, the team that we had there was similar to running your own practice: we had a guaranteed flow of work, we had an extraordinarily talented group of people to work with, we had the luxury of being able to think long term and make decisions genuinely for the public good, and we had a great array of tools to work with. Our solution was not only proposing
another building; we could work with our parking or housing colleagues to propose very different ways of managing a place. It is an extraordinarily privileged job to have, but you need to be able to create the conditions for people to approach it creatively.

**Lord Inglewood**: Are there many of them like the ones you have described? Were you an exception?

**Finn Williams**: One of the reasons why I joined the Greater London Authority was to try to find ways of encouraging and building that culture elsewhere. It is possible. It is happening elsewhere. There are extraordinary teams in Haringey, Brent, and other councils. Admittedly, my experience is focused in London, but there are great teams out there. We need to build more.

**The Chairman**: Suddenly the grey sky has gone and the sun is shining. It is very nice to have that enthusiasm, I say. Lady Andrews wants to ask a quick question.

**Q136 Baroness Andrews**: I want to go back to the issue of fees, because at the moment this seems to be the only way of raising the capacity of local authorities if there is no fee income coming in. Because fees are complex, you may need to write to us about this. Of the various fees that can be charged, which ones could be increased, on whom would the burden fall, and would there be any perverse consequences? Do you think there is scope for a new fee regime on things that are now not charged but which could generate income?

**Richard Blyth**: There is a body that the Government sponsor within the LGA called the Planning Advisory Service. The Committee may have come across it in its work. It has done some fascinating analysis of how to run a local planning department like a business, by which I mean understanding where most of your money is coming from and where most of your activity is. I have to say that it is an 80:20 situation. I do not have the statistics with me, but a large part of the money comes from very few applications. An awful lot of applications are free, such as the ones related to trees. Then there are the householder applications to extend your home that, viewed in a narrow business sense, are loss-making applications. On the other hand, a large housing development where the fees are per unit of housing up to a maximum effectively subsidises the others. The very large housebuilding applications that are contributing to the homes that we need probably pay more than they cost to process and deal with. It is not only a question of the level of fees, as you say, but the distribution between
the classes of application. I think that is a matter for Parliament to consider. Do we wish to see a continued arrangement whereby the smallest applications are subsidised? If that is the will of Parliament and the Government, that should be identified almost as a specific subsidy, because if you are trying to run your department as a business and to get efficiencies and invest in people and in equipment, it is very difficult to do so if you have a compulsory subsidy which you have to pay for within your resources.

**Finn Williams:** There is also a question of what you do with the fees once you get them. If applicants are paying more for a service, they will want to see an improvement in that service. How government defines that improvement is critical, because development management is only part of the planning process. It is right at the end of the planning process in many ways. A lot of the really valuable work on place-making and the quality of the place is the proactive planning that happens at a pre-application stage. Unfortunately, that has been the place to suffer first, because it is not the area that is bringing in fees.

To answer the second part of your question, I think there is a role for alternative mechanisms that could help to reinforce and build that earlier part of the planning process that sits alongside a proper sustainable fee level. As an example of that, there is currently a regime of planning performance agreements whereby particularly large or complex developments can pay additional amounts of money to cross-subsidise the cost of processing their fees. That happens on a case-by-case basis in a not particularly strategic or long-term way. There is potentially a model that could see longer-term and wider pooling of the kind of subsidy you get through planning performance agreements in order to really build capacity over time.

**Baroness Andrews:** Are you aware of anything happening in CLG about this?

**Finn Williams:** I am afraid I would not know. The conversation about setting fees on a sustainable level is constant and regular, so I would not be surprised if something happens about that—I would certainly hope so—but I do not know about planning performance agreements.

**The Chairman:** That is really very useful. Lady Whitaker?

**Q137 Baroness Whitaker:** You have touched on the answer to my question, but I would like to pursue it. How might the most talented individuals be attracted to public sector planning? I recall that when I first became interested in the subject a long time ago, we had the legacy...
of the visionary planners, many of whom came over as immigrants, and of course we had the
garden cities. We were pioneers in visionary planning. How do we get that vision back again?
Particularly, how can local planning authorities attract talent without extra money? For
instance, it might be interesting to see what more could be done in schools to encourage the
right A-levels for planning and that kind of thing. What are your views about that?

Richard Blyth: Last year, in our centenary year, we had an ambassador programme into
schools with a superb video about why planning is a good thing. We sent our chartered
members into schools to share what they do day to day and to encourage people, because it
is often not a profession that people have heard of while they are in school. That has been a
useful thing.

Your Lordships have referred to what the Government can do. What it could perhaps stop
doing is repeated attacks not on planners, to be fair, but on the planning system, and
regarding the planning system as a drag on development. In the productivity plan only of 10
July, there was a long preamble, using evidence that is now quite old, saying that planning is
a drag on the economy, and lots of numbers were produced. In our organisation, we have a
research workstream called “the value of planning”, which says, in effect, “By all m
means let us
improve planning processes and not have applicants frustrated by delays, but at the same
time let us have a planning system that gives society as a whole a huge series of benefits
around creating places that people want to invest in”, as well as, as Finn was saying, the steps
that need to be taken before you even get to having a planning application. None of that is
quoted in things like the productivity plan. If I was 21, I might think, “This doesn’t sound
particularly encouraging or a place to
work in. I might want to do accountancy instead”. A
little less of that mood music is something that we are very concerned about.

Finn Williams: The skills shortages that we are talking about are not only post-2008, they go
much further back; they are long-standing and systemic. For me, they are not purely about
resources; they are about what we think planning is for. In 1976, half of all architects worked
for the public sector; it was what public sector planning was for. Now it is less than 2%. In
1976, the public sector was building half of all our housing, and now it is around 1%. There is
a proportionality to how far we give the public sector the ability to get their hands dirty,
deliver and get stuck in. That is what makes the job exciting. That is what attracts you from the private sector.

This is certainly something that I care very passionately about, and I have put together a proposal, which I am working on at the minute and which I have presented as part of the evidence, which is a sort of Teach First for planning. Teach First is a great example of something that has been cost-neutral to the education sector, but they have the most talented young graduates working in the most deprived schools in Britain. I see no reason why you cannot generate the same amount of zeal and social mission around planning in places that really need it. You need to create the right conditions for that. On the costs aspects, with all the money that we are currently spending on agency staff we could quite easily create a not-for-profit agency as a social enterprise that is cross-subsidised by the private sector. They are very willing to do it, as we heard previously. They see the value in a strong, innovative public sector. They are willing to put that resource in to cross-subsidise a not-for-profit programme that would give local authorities access to the most talented staff, and, indeed, would give the young place-makers I teach an opportunity to work for the public good, on their own terms. There is a whole new generation that is desperate to do that.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Should government prime that pump particularly, and how?

**Finn Williams:** I very much hope so. We are talking about a London pilot at the minute. Eighty six per cent of London boroughs have expressed an interest and said that it would be useful, and 15 boroughs have agreed in principle to take part in a pilot. The opportunity is clearly on a national scale. Once it is established it will be self-funding, but there is a certain amount of work to do to get it established.

**Baroness Whitaker:** So national government could have a role there.

**Finn Williams:** I would certainly hope so.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** We looked at the Birmingham City Council scheme and were quite impressed by the number of trainees—I do not think the word “apprentices” was used—who they took on board in rather an exciting context.

**Richard Blyth:** Waheed Nazir is the chief planner there and is very impressive. He is one of our members. He was faced with a situation where they said, “We want to privatise you”, and
he said, “No, give me some time. I want this to be in-house”. Then they said, “Will you do it for a certain sum of money?”, and he said, “I’ll do it for half that, but give me the time”.

It is also interesting, because that is done through the local enterprise partnership in Greater Birmingham and Solihull. One of our particular concerns is that the whole area of devolution and local enterprise partnerships needs to be brought closely in line with the housing planning that is done in those kinds of areas, otherwise there is a risk that you have economic planning in one corner and more of the traditional planning in another. I sometimes feel that there is huge talent in our local authorities that is not really employed on the strategic economic plans of local enterprise partnerships, because they are seen as a different organisation and in a different sort of silo, which I think your call for evidence was addressing. Certainly, if local enterprise partnerships are concerned about being tiny, lean and mean without huge numbers of staff, if they call on the local planners in the same area to contribute, a lot of them are eager and panting to do so, but there are structures that mean it does not happen or, as we heard earlier, that dealing with the planning applications—the day job—is so difficult when you are short-staffed that you do not have time to think where Birmingham and Solihull will go in the next 20 years.

The Chairman: The type of vision is not right.

Q138 Earl of Lytton: I am interested in the timetable for bringing in these young people or, for that matter, retraining people from allied or other professions sufficiently quickly to start making a real difference, given where we are with housing and other issues and the great importance of making sure that what we are now building, as opposed to what we might build in 15 years’ time, is fit for purpose and, indeed, creates built environments that will be durable. How long will it take for the bright young things, or people from other professions, to become sufficiently numerous and carry the authority and status to drive these sorts of policies forward? How many years do we have to wait?

Finn Williams: You can make an impact immediately, and not just through work on the ground. Realistically, the difference is made in the details of the conditions you write on the application, the Section 106 agreement you secure, and the way you procure a contract. Those are fine details that you work on the front line and at the coal face. That is why we need those skills there right away. Certainly I would hope that these new people coming in will
become the new generation of leaders in time. Simply by presenting the public sector as an exciting place to be planning, you hope it will have a wider effect of generating a movement to see planning in a different light.

The programme that I proposed should certainly not be limited to young people. I do not see why people towards the end of their careers, who have worked in the private sector their whole lives and want to give something back, could not be part of it.

Earl of Lytton: There is hope for me yet then.

Richard Blyth: Regarding the routes to chartership, suppose you are a 29 year-old and want to do a planning degree on one of our bursaries. That will take you a year. Proceeding to full chartership takes two years, although that may depend partly on what you did before the degree, because some of that might count. By that method, we ensure that people abide by a code of conduct, undertake regular, continuing professional development and have a set of very carefully analysed competencies, which we review regularly. You would be fully operational within three years. The competency framework is very much not box ticking; it is looking for things such as how you demonstrate leadership and other skills in your workplace and whether you can describe to a third party how you did that. We have a logbook, and that is how those things are checked out, so that we press for the highest standards.

One thing that sometimes concerns me is that quite a lot of people are employed in the sector who are not chartered, which seems a wasted opportunity. If more people pursue the professional qualification working in planning, that might address the concerns about skills and capacity.

The Chairman: May I pursue that point about the people who do not pursue the chartered route. Surely if it is as beneficial, as I am sure it is, you should be able to sell it to these people.

Richard Blyth: We work very hard on that, yes.

The Chairman: What is their reason not to pursue it? I ask this because I was president of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. We had a similar situation, and had to have both carrot and stick. Why do you think they are reluctant to do it? Is it just not sold with enough emphasis?

Richard Blyth:Scrolling back, there was a time in local authorities when progression to principal planning officer was related to membership of the institute. That has almost certainly been ruled out nowadays. Sometimes people do not consider it as important in an
environment where you are in quite a large public sector organisation, because what you do is evident to everybody. You are promoted because people see what you have done, whereas in the private sector there is more of an attachment to letters after your name, because you are selling your services to clients whom you have not necessarily met. Certainly I think that having more chartered planners in local authorities would be a great improvement.

Q139 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: My question follows on from what you were saying about how to recruit people. Going beyond staff resources, what other tools are needed to support better place-making in the built environment? In answering that, could you address place-making from the point of view also of the mental and physical health of people who are in that environment, and how you get some cross-cutting awareness and ensure that the built environment is suitable for people who are there in whatever role as they become older and who may face degrees of disability. They might be impaired by learning difficulties or acquired mental difficulties, not only by mental illness and so on. We know that there is a link between really poor place-making and mental health; the question is where you improve it. I wondered, listening to your previous answers, whether you feel that when you have granted planning approval and the final product does not match up to your expectations, you have adequate levers, or would you like the capacity to go back with some financial penalty?

Richard Blyth: Questions about mental health and an ageing population are interesting examples of how important it is that the planning is integrated fully across government departments and within localities across the various functions. When health and well-being boards were established, we pressed very hard for the planning function within local government to be strongly represented. It was quite difficult, because we had the difficulty of two tiers, and health and well-being is at the upper-tier level.

At the moment, we are looking in a study at the location of planning permissions, because there is a question both of the immediate environment and whether that is conducive to people as their lifestyles and the public health aspects of their life change, and of where things are. We are concerned that in the drive to get a five-year land supply at all costs, there may be a risk that planning permissions are being granted in quite isolated places as extensions to small villages. That might be attractive if you are my age and you think, “I would quite like to live in a nice house with a big garden in a small village”. In 25 years’ time I might not be as
happy about being in such a remote place. There are wider considerations, in the drive for more homes, which we definitely need, to make sure they are not only designed in a way that is suitable for all the health aspects that may apply but are in the right places. Remote locations may not be very suitable in the long term for people who cannot drive themselves or who end up in huge traffic jams.

Finn Williams: I will answer the question on tools and address one particular tool that has come up previously in this Committee, which is design review. I have been a member of a design review panel for the last six or so years and the vice-chairman of the one in Tower Hamlets. Clearly, it holds an important place in the National Planning Policy Framework as one of the specific checks on quality. For me, it is very important to recognise that design review is no substitute for in-house capacity. In fact, it does not work without enhanced capacity to see through those recommendations.

Some recent work that we did in London demonstrated that only 28% of major applications undergo design review. In fact, that represents 1.5% of all planning applications, whereas Croydon’s place-making team, which I used to work in, provided design advice on 94% of all major applications. On its own, design review simply cannot be comprehensive. If we forced every major application in England to undergo design review at CABE’s current prices, it would cost £120 million, which could of course be spent on 2,500 design offices, or seven for every local authority. So there is an argument about where that resource sits. It is very useful if you have the resource in-house; that is great, but the priority needs to be about getting the offices there in the first place and embedding that resource long term.

To a certain extent, the same thing is true of engagement with communities and the more vulnerable. That close, one-to-one level of conversation is harder and harder to have when you are increasingly processing a case load of 90 applications at one time from Google Earth, as opposed to getting out on the street and speaking to people. I do think that there is an element of the profession itself and its diversity needing to change to reflect the diversity of the population, and therefore to really understand who we are planning for. That is something that new recruitment programmes need to address to achieve proper representation.

Q140 Lord Inglewood: In your previous response you indicated what the best system would do. Are we living in a world where it can be done that way? If we are not, what is the second
best, which is going to be the best that we can achieve? What worries me about the whole planning issue is that, in an ideal world, it would work in a particular way and produce wonderful outcomes—England beautiful and all the rest of it—but I cannot see that we are ever going to be in a position to achieve that.

**Finn Williams:** Ultimately, we are planning across 340 or 350 authorities just in England. There is a hugely divergent picture already. There are already some examples of brilliant practice, but you will never get all those hundreds performing in exactly the same way. There is not one solution to this. There is a baseline that needs to be brought up across the country, and that includes things like planning fees. It is the professional basis of the RTPI and making sure that we are setting bare minimums of performance but also resourcing to enable that performance. There is a huge uncaptured additional capacity that we could bring in. Even if that works on only 20% of local authorities, that will have knock-on effects on the person joining their local authority that might not be part of the programme.

**Richard Blyth:** I also wonder whether we might not benefit from some kind of blue-sky thinking about what the resources are. Finn has mentioned that you could re-think design reviews. The move of the NHS into Greater Manchester, for example, is a very exciting opportunity to start thinking about a place—in that case a city region—in its entirety.

I produced a paper for the Government Office for Science for Foresight Future of Cities programme, in which I talked about the concept of diagonal funding. The difficulty, particularly in relation to the health aspects, is that the things you do now, such as locating housing close to public transport or to cycle ways, are all costs that fall now, but the benefits are in the future, because you hope that the NHS bill will be lower in the 2030s as a consequence of investment made now. There are difficulties over time in relation to that and because outside Greater Manchester the NHS budget is a different budget from, say, the budget for the Department for Transport. Might there be ways of creating a municipal bond or something in which the finance is made available to increase the ability to invest now and to have benefits from the reduced costs later? I do not know, but we certainly ought to explore ways in which we think of resources not strictly within, say, the Department for Communities and Local Government’s ambit of spending, but look at wider things, such as dealing with diabetes and obesity. I saw some figures for Swindon when I was there on
Monday, and it was extraordinary to see what would happen if the current trends on diabetes and obesity were to continue just in one small city into the 2030s.

What could be done about active travel? Again, you have a health budget and a transport budget, and they are seen as different chapters in the comprehensive spending review. One thing that we proposed when we talked about a map for England, a database and website, was whether the implications of the spending review on individual places could be regarded as a requirement for publication by the Treasury. What will happen to, say, Teesside as a consequence of what the spending review announces later this month? That would be very useful and would mean that Teesside could say, “Can we move some of this stuff around, because by pooling some budgets we think we could achieve some wider benefits?” That is place-making at a high level and in quite a radical way, which we have not done very much of in the UK so far.

Lord Inglewood: But the bean counters will run a mile from this idea, however good it may be. I am not saying you are not absolutely right, but the people down the road in the Treasury building in Whitehall will take one look at this and say that this is financial controls gone out of the window.

Finn Williams: What do you mean by “this”?

Lord Inglewood: This approach to accounting forward and evaluating the way in which your public expenditure programmes may go.

The Chairman: If our report gets reasonable coverage, we might be able to change that and have a complete knitted plan. We started this. At our very first meeting, we brought in the health idea, the gearing idea, the demographics, and now on top of that we have another one, which is a much higher increase in the birth rate than anywhere else in the European Union. It is joined-up government. I know that we have heard it for about 30 years, and there are not many examples of it, but this might well be the thing that will crack it, because it is such an important issue, particularly, as Lady Finlay says, from the point of view of health, transport, greenness and waste of fossil fuels. All these issues are down to the built environment.

Richard Blyth: If someone had said to me even 12 months ago that there was a remote possibility that Manchester would have its own health service, I would have laughed.
The Chairman: All things are possible.

Richard Blyth: The agenda can change quite suddenly.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: If you were in our shoes and could have your wish list, given your answers just now, what do you think we should recommend for planning, for example for health and well-being boards, and for other areas? You spoke earlier about a low status, unappreciated, undervalued group, and within the change it seems that we have the opportunity to make recommendations.

Richard Blyth: Certainly for me, and you too may wish to take this up, the devolution agenda is on a slightly different track from the housing and planning agenda within central government. I suggest that they are the same topic. In my institute we have a to-do list about making sure that we communicate our ideas on strategic planning to the emerging leaders.

The Chairman: The institutions.

Richard Blyth: Particularly the northern cities where it is starting, and to communicate to them that it is one thing to have, say, the Manchester Metrolink, which is very nice—it goes all over the place—but what are you doing about housing? Similarly, in other areas that are starting to work together, this is not just about getting handouts from the Government; this is about you working together for example to provide enough land to meet your housing challenge, and making sure that the housing and planning agenda is completely overlain with all the exciting things that are happening in the devolution agenda.

The Chairman: Mr Williams, would you like to comment, briefly, on Lady Finlay’s wish list?

Finn Williams: Building proactive planning into large-scale public spending is critical, whether it is through devolution and also potentially through the National Infrastructure Commission and looking at a new generation of public sector housebuilding in a different way. There is also a role for taking that leadership at a central government level with resourcing and expertise, whether that is through an individual—a built environment officer or a chief architect—or perhaps through something that is more like the Cabinet Office Policy Lab or Government Digital Service, a lab with pioneering and innovative thinking that crosses boundaries. Often with a discrete unit, you are able to move horizontally in a way that is more fleet of foot and can start to connect up different initiatives across government.
Q141 Baroness Andrews: A lot of my question has been answered. It is essentially about cross-disciplinary working. We have said a lot about that. I think that the idea of a place-making budget that integrates funding, if it could be articulated in Manchester, which is probably further down the road, is really interesting, and not a million miles away from the sort of work that was done for things like City Challenge some time ago. We have some models for that.

In national policy we have very few levers. We have virtually no joined-up work or policy direction between housing and ageing and health and ageing. We have less connection than we had between planning and heritage because of the separation of the departments. What tools do we have other than the NPPF? You spoke about the Cabinet Office maybe having a lab for this. Is there anything that you could put into the NPPF that could be implemented and make any difference at all?

Finn Williams: The NPPF, in a way, is only as good as the people who can implement it. Good planners can work around inadequate policy but good policy cannot work around inadequate planning.

Baroness Andrews: Very good.

Finn Williams: When I worked on planning applications in Croydon, we found that we could get things done that were worthwhile for the developer and the place that were not necessarily written in a policy. There is an element of needing to make sure that you have enough people on the ground interpreting these things in the first place, and to a certain extent there is probably resistance to further change within the NPPF from the sector. In a recent survey, 98% of the public and private sectors said that they did not want to see the NPPF disappear. The majority of people wanted it to stay exactly the same or with a few small tweaks. The constant changes in policy, whether right or wrong, are a barrier to embedding good place-making planning over the long term.

Richard Blyth: With regard to the NPPF, it was a great idea to have a single document. I very much welcome the way it has made planning policy accessible to everybody. You can find it quickly. When public health got into the NPPF, there was a lot of applause, but what really makes a difference is how the Department of Health and Public Health England do things with their money and what their guidance is. It is fine to have your own sentence in the NPPF on a
subject that is important to you, but it is what is going on behind and underneath that is a key issue as well, whether that is heritage, public health or transport.

Heritage is interesting, because a simple assessment of the time taken to make planning applications happen, and the cost of this therefore to the economy—which we have seen a lot of evidence produced on—does not take account, for example, of how you would value Liverpool Waterfront, and therefore of how you would assist Liverpool to help itself to make that work. It is not simply by saying that a planning application costs so much and delays so much, so it is a drag on the economy.

**Baroness Andrews:** Especially when Liverpool Waterfront is a world heritage site and raises huge issues of how you value that sort of environment.

I have one very quick question. One of the dogs that is not barking so far is what to do about local councillors and their lack of appreciation of planning impacts, because in the ways you have suggested we can find ways of jacking up capacity among officers, but ultimately the decisions are taken by councillors, who may or may not be at all versed in the implications of their decisions.

**Richard Blyth:** This month in Birmingham we are running our annual Politicians in Planning Association conference, which is intended to network councillors on planning committees. We bring in experts, people who are working in planning all the time, to share with people who are councillors and therefore doing it as well as their other work. We have a particular stream this time on new councillors, because our understanding is that since the May elections many are on planning committees for the first time. So we are doing our bit to say that the RTPI is not just for people who are members of it, but we have a role in relation to people who are, as you say, the vital decision-makers on how to make better places.

I have a lot of sympathy for councillors, because a lot is put on their shoulders that is difficult to deal with. The responsibility for delivering all the Government’s aspirations on increasing housing supply is a big ask when you are accountable to ward members. One of the advantages of thinking across city regions, counties as a whole and strategic planning is that to a certain extent a bit of that is taken away. We, along with the Planning Officers Society and local government, have put in recommendations to Greg Clark on a two-tier concept on
planning whereby the whole strategic area has one plan and is then filled in at local level. In that way, the local members do not have to bear the whole burden of these wider discussions.

Baroness Whitaker: Can we see a copy of that? Is it in the public domain?

Richard Blyth: Yes.

Baroness Whitaker: That would be very helpful, thank you.

The Chairman: Mr Williams, do you have anything to add to that?

Finn Williams: Only to support what Richard said, and to add that the Planning Advisory Service, the Place Alliance and Urban Design London are running really great courses to engage with local members, and have strong programmes on that front. It is happening; it needs to happen more.

Baroness Andrews: Are they compulsory?

Finn Williams: No, they are not compulsory.

Q142 Lord Clement-Jones: I have an interconnected question. I want to come back to the whole question of proactive planning regimes. I mentioned Birmingham earlier. We have an inkling of what a proactive planning regime looks like. What do you think characterises a proactive planning regime? What changes are needed to help move the planning system towards that? You mentioned various mechanisms earlier; I think you mentioned planning performance agreements and the Government’s attitude towards the planning system. What sort of package would you put forward?

Richard Blyth: If I had a short amount of time I would focus on the use of public land, particularly all the public sector’s land ownership within a city or wider area. There have been some exciting moves to put all that in a single database. The evidence is one thing, but the policy is another. A key element in proactive planning is to think of the use of public sector assets in the long term, maybe encouraging local authorities to use them as a way of creating homes for rent that could then provide the local authority with its own income stream. Simply selling off public land to get the highest price in the first instance is definitely an attack on proactive planning. It would be easier if you could get control using all that land, some of which at the moment is not always used particularly efficiently in making the most use of the asset.
There was an amazing report written by Keith House and a colleague, Natalie Elphicke, under the last Government. I heard Keith House, who is the leader of Eastleigh Council, say, “I say to everybody I meet, ‘Go and employ planners and property professionals in your authorities, because they will make you money’”. Thinking in a wider sense about meeting all the challenges that an area has to meet—housing, health—the land that it has and quasi-public agencies such as fire and the police all have huge assets that, if integrated, could be put to fantastic use as an underpinning of a proactive planning approach.

**Lord Clement-Jones**: Thank you, particularly for the reference to Keith House, because he is a Lib Dem colleague and friend of ours. You mentioned LEPs earlier and taking a broader view. Is that specific to those conurbations, or do you think there is a broader lesson there?

**Richard Blyth**: The whole country is covered. In fact, it is overlapped by LEPs, so what I say about conurbations I would say equally about shire counties. There are some shire counties that have a unitary authority in the centre, and we need to think about strategic planning in such a way that that unitary authority co-operates with other parts of the traditional geographical county in a wider co-operative arrangement that addresses these wider questions.

**Finn Williams**: On the question of what proactive planning can do in many ways and how you get there, many of its benefits are longer term, as Richard has referred to. It increases certainty for developers making planning applications; there is a very real benefit there. It accelerates delivery, if you do it right. It raises the quality of projects, and in turn strengthens local support, because people see better development and are willing to see it come forward. Certainly, as has been demonstrated, it helps to secure more inward investment and funding and stimulate enterprise at a very local level.

On the question of how we get there and what it could look like at the national level, some things we have talked about already. Yes, we need to prioritise the resources for place-making at a local level and have a mechanism to get people into those posts, such as the proposal for a place agency. I certainly think there is a role for leadership within a central government department along the lines of an individual or a built environment lab.

There are ways in which we could use technology much more intelligently to free planners up to be more proactive. One of the no-brainers in the industry that would benefit the private
sector and the public sector is not so much having planning consultants but reducing the requirements on planning applications.

Lord Clement-Jones: With all due deference to Lord Inglewood, we can get there not simply just by putting in resources or whatever; it is an approach that we can adopt.

Finn Williams: I certainly think so, yes. Technology to reduce the work that our current planners do, and allowing them to spend that energy and intelligence further upstream in the process to really shape places as opposed to reading through boxes full of statements, would, I think, be welcomed by everyone.

Lord Clement-Jones: Fantastic. Thank you.

Q143 Baroness Young of Old Scone: Can I turn the question around the other way? What I am beginning to hear is that with good will, collaboration, skills and resource locally, not much change is needed nationally. You can get quite a long way past the blockages by proactive planning on a local basis. I never hold my breath waiting for national government to do anything, and calling for national change is often like whistling in the wind. If you had good planners, visionary members, collaboration across the sectors, pooling land for economic benefit, good proactive planning locally—all the things you talked about—are there still some real blockages that need to be addressed nationally, or could you get quite a long way locally?

Richard Blyth: One thing I would like to recommend is that the Home and Communities Agency’s disposal programme is not solely considered as something to reduce the size of the national debt as quickly as possible, but that land is thought of in wider place-making objectives. That is within Ministers’ control. I appreciate that there are huge pressures, but there needs to be some kind of compromise between getting the maximum return and some of these wider considerations. Some halfway house between one extreme and the other might have to be a useful compromise.

There is a lot of fear in local authorities about property ownership. There could be some warm words around the fact that it is not illegal to consider wider issues than the highest price you can get. I put in evidence to you that you could, for example, establish a situation in which you said that you were doing a disposal. Obviously there must be safeguards to make sure it is not to friends, but one way of doing that would be to say, in a design and build kind of concept, “On this piece of land we wish to see the following objectives”. Anybody is allowed
to compete, therefore, to achieve those objectives, and who has the best deal to achieve that wider set of objectives will get the contract and be able to purchase the site.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** But that could happen locally now?

**Richard Blyth:** Yes, but there is fear, so one thing has to be to make people feel that if they did that they would not get into deep water.

**Finn Williams:** I agree with that. There is also the option of delivering it yourself as a local authority. The will is there among local authorities, but there are nationally imposed constraints, particularly on borrowing caps in relation to HRA, that limit the ability of councils to be genuinely proactive in that sense.

I think the will is there across the sector. There are great people working in local authorities, but where they are making good things happen they are really struggling against a whole series of reforms, which seem to be moving in the opposite direction. So while it is possible on a case-by-case basis, a lot of the most recent reforms have tended to remove agency from the local planner, and even from the local authority, whether that is through the increasing role of the Planning Inspectorate, the increasing number of appeals, to a certain extent special measures, permitted development, the national infrastructure schemes, and even, dare I say it, neighbourhood planning. They are all ways of placing power in the hands of people who are not the local authority and not the local planners. Where the will is there, the tools to do the job are increasingly disappearing or going elsewhere.

**Baroness Rawlings:** You mentioned the National Health Service moving to Manchester. I declare an interest here. I used to work in the Department of the Environment in the early 1980s and was involved with Salford. There has been a big change with the BBC moving up to Salford. What is your view on big government organisations moving perhaps north to less developed areas? Is that a good thing, with everything that follows?

**Richard Blyth:** The BBC has been a good thing, but it was made possible by an enormous amount of preparation. We featured MediaCityUK in some of our best-practice literature. If you look at what happened—I appreciate that you probably know Salford better than me—a lot of work was done by the Central Manchester Development Corporation, with high levels of co-operation between two, or possibly three, metropolitan borough councils and the 10-council-wide Transport for Greater Manchester pushing through the Metrolink, and the work
of Peel holdings as the property owner. All that had to happen before the BBC was able to consider a move of that kind. That preparation lasted at least a decade, possibly longer. So it can happen, but on its own it probably would not work; it depends on a lot of groundwork being done. But the consequences were astounding. The BBC is a small part of the whole process now. Regarding the number of jobs, ITV, start-ups and supply-chain companies have all clustered around, so it is not just a BBC question now by any means.

**The Chairman:** It is a great practical use of clusters.

**Baroness Rawlings:** It could be looked at for further possibilities.

**Q144 Baroness Whitaker:** One thing proactive planning can do is anticipate the future with a bit more evidence of trends. Can I impose on you by asking you to write in, because we do not have much time, about how proactive planning can help in place-making in the much longer term? In his evidence Mr Blyth referred to a 20-year housing supply rather than five years. Even that may be too short. Could you map how you think proactive planning could help with place-making needs—transport, environment, housing, infrastructure—over a much longer term so that we know, as much as we can, what kind of people we are going to be?

**Richard Blyth:** We are happy to do that.

**The Chairman:** We started off thinking that it would be 30 years, but now we suspect that 30 years is probably a stepping stone. Is that, in a sense, your idea, Mr Williams?

**Finn Williams:** As far as I see it, the job of planner is often to redefine the here and now. It is a bigger “here” and a longer “now”, and that longer “now” could be 30, 50 or 100 years. We are currently doing a piece of work in London on the London infrastructure plan up to 2050. New York is planning up to 2100 with its infrastructure plan. These pieces of infrastructure and the stuff that we are delivering now had their origins 30 or 50 years ago. We need to do that thinking for the next generation.

**Baroness Parminter:** One of the key themes emerging from a lot the evidence that we have heard today is the lack of this national spatial planning framework. The RTPI has come up with its proposal for a map for England. Can that deliver all that is required, given the failure of there to be anything at the national level at the moment? If not, what else is needed alongside that?
**Richard Blyth:** The Map for England was proposed as a multi-layered geographical information system database in which government departments would be invited to put their plans for the future in one place so that if you are, say, in Teesside, you can identify all the things that are going to happen to you. It was not proposed as a national plan, which would be a very big step, but as a way in which people could tell, for example, whether the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was proposing something inconsistent with that proposed by the Treasury. You could see it all there and drill down.

The priority for us is to concentrate on getting sub-regional planning—that is, for cities, regions and counties—working as a first priority, and then getting them to talk to each other. At the moment, we have an initiative with the think tank IPPR North called, “Do we need a Great North Plan?”. We have a northern summit coming up in January, which is really about saying that it is fine to have Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Sheffield City regions, but are there some questions that we need to consider across all these areas together? Railways and motorways often seem to be talked about, but do we also need to consider, for example, where the new health-related new industries and advanced manufacturing might be concentrated, and how a series of city regions can work together, building on particular strengths that parts of them may have.

Given the Government’s devolution agenda, the interesting level at which the interactions are going to need to take place is not national. On the other hand, there are policies, for example the way in which the Department of Health approaches the issue of new buildings for healthcare in growing areas, that are currently at odds with the Department for Communities and Local Government’s drive to have more homes. There are policy frameworks where more co-ordination and discussion of impacts would help, but maps and that level of interaction I see as happening much more at the sub-national level and getting people to work together in the future.

**Finn Williams:** There is no doubt that the absence of larger than local planning has been one of the causes of delays in the production of local plans in many instances. More often than not, they boil down to negotiations over housing numbers one way or another. There needs to be an alternative mechanism, I would suggest, and I totally support things such as the map for England in creating a broader, longer-term, wider framework for those sorts of discussions
across authority boundaries. I agree with Richard that it does not have to be a government statutory national plan; it could be more of an alternative mechanism to plan spatially at regional level. There are examples from elsewhere. After a terrible earthquake, the city of Constitución in Chile managed to replan the entire city in 100 days just by setting a time limit on it and getting everyone in the room. It might just need a completely alternative approach—locking everyone in the room in a charrette type of scenario, for example—to unlock some of those areas where negotiations have come to a standstill over the production of local plans.

Q145 The Chairman: Is there a body of literature anywhere about how different major cities and countries in the world have adopted large plans? Only last week, I was down in the Caucasus, and I was told by the speaker of the parliament that there was a huge plan that completely changed Baku. One of the things they said was that there should be no further skyscrapers because they were blocking out the views. Also, it is very notable now how much friendlier New York and Manhattan are because there are much wider pavements and they have taken out the ground floors of shops and offices and made spaces that people can walk through and sit by a fountain, and all the shops and offices go up from there. It is very good. Is there anywhere an idiots’ guide, if you like, to this sort of thing?

Finn Williams: There are certainly publications.

The Chairman: Could you give us a list?

Finn Williams: I am sure your clerk will be able to point you in the right direction.

The Chairman: I am sure he would.

Richard Blyth: Looking in our strategic planning work at other countries, the challenge of getting different councils to work together is almost always a problem across the entire globe. There are very few areas of the world—London is unusual in this—where a single body controls a huge area. In most of the world there are different councils that have to work together. What is interesting are the recipes for success in doing that.

Lord Inglewood: Can I go back to what you said earlier about the way in which more of the initiatives should come at a more local level? Given that we still live in a very centralised country, do you think that the likely response of central government is favourable towards this form of further devolution?

Richard Blyth: Yes, in a word.
Lord Inglewood: So you think the wind is behind the idea?

Richard Blyth: Yes.

Finn Williams: I think certain reforms to the planning system have not been moving in that direction recently. A change of direction with an emphasis on, for example, simply promoting proactive planning at a local level as something that is positive, and indeed necessary, for growth would be a big step in the right direction.

Lord Inglewood: Where you have local initiatives that run counter to the sentiment of the centre, that is when you get trouble.

Finn Williams: Yes.

The Chairman: The last question I was going to ask was what problems are caused for planning professionals by a lack of co-ordination across government on built environment policy, but I think we have covered it all. It has been a fascinating and very stimulating session. I want to thank you both very much indeed. If you have any bright ideas—of course you have lots of them—that you think we need, could you please let us have them. We would be more than grateful. Thank you.
Dear Sirs,

The land Use and Transport Sub-group of Pontefract Civic Society has been active in planning matters concerning the town of Pontefract and its environs for a number of years and has responded regularly to public consultations conducted by Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and other bodies, which affect the town. Unfortunately, this particular consultation by the Select Committee has only just become known to us and is active for only a few more days. As a result of this we are only able to offer a brief submission in the time available but we hope that our comments will be of use to you in your deliberations.

About ten years ago we were involved in a consultation process with Wakefield Council under the Local Development Framework. This was at a time of recession, but the work was being done to identify suitable land for development at a later date. As a result of this work local housing developers were able to work up plans for more than 3,000 homes in our immediate area as part of the major housing growth for Wakefield Council's overall target of over 5,000 dwellings. The Council, under the terms of its LDF, agreed to a larger amount of development than might have otherwise been expected.

When the financial situation eased and housing was being promoted, the local construction industry went straight into building homes all-round the district.

As covered in the answer sheet, we, as a society, have had our reservations about the houses being erected, which appear to be at the high price end of the market. Locally, the jobs market is not good, so we believe that this type of house build will lead to a greater number of journeys to work. The work opportunities are at all points of the compass, so provision of public transport to cover all this would be impractical and possibly economically unsustainable. This means that private car use is the only way to commute to work.

What is needed first of all is a strategic road plan. Some roads of a very local nature have been built using S106 or C I L monies (Developer contributions), but we do need some major new roads to take commuter traffic away from town centre road junctions with the associated delays, pollution, and stress factors that arise from this. A case in point for us is a link road to join together areas of business growth, which would take some of the load off town centres. This is known as the South East Link Road and has been on and off the agenda since 1995. This is too big a project to be funded by developer contributions, but would be an ideal scheme for Central Government funding to eliminate local “Pinch Points”. We understand that this (pinch points) is a justification for Central Government funding provision.
We are seriously worried about the lack of extra school places to cope with the population growth inevitably resulting from the 3,000 plus new houses. Someone, somewhere must have figures relating to the average number of extra school places required per thousand households. Is C G funding available for education needs?

Our final concerns related to environment and health issues, though these are not directly requested in your search for evidence.

On the health of the population, at the moment waiting times for GP appointments, unless of an urgent nature can take up to two weeks, Outpatient appointments can be much longer. A & E waiting times are very long as staff levels and resources are stretched.

Finally, water, sewage and surface water drainage. We are fortunate here to have a good supply of drinking water under most circumstances and the local water board assures us that they can cope with the extra foul-water drainage demands. However the rivers rise and fall very rapidly after heavy rainfall, and the suspicion is that surface run off from all the hard surfaces of the built environment is a major factor in this, where formerly there was a land area acting as a sponge to take in water and release it slowly, as opposed to the current rushing torrents down surface water drains.

We hope that the evidence we submit here is of a useful nature. We think that the questions you are asking are relevant to our current situation.

Yours faithfully,

Derek Vaux. Secretary.

Per pro Peter Cookson. Chairman. Land and Transport sub group.
Written Evidence relating to Policy for the Built Environment.

**Pontefract Civic Society's** brief response to questions posed by the Select Committee.

Responses to

- National Policy makers should be looking to matching infrastructure with work distribution, education and health provision as their main priority leaving the local authorities to plan the required building strategy for homes.

- It is not possible for us to say how well internal structures linking different government departments actually work but our perception is not very well. Generally speaking, developers try to maximise profits by delivering as little infrastructure developments as they can get away with. Striking the right balance is difficult as developers must make profits and the built environment must have the right infrastructure to function properly. The value of local consultation should be strengthened and would help, but finding the right balance of competing interests will always be difficult.

- As regards the built environment NPPF should ensure that quality and suitability of design matches local needs whilst maintaining a suitable mix of affordable housing in the right locations. E.g. taking into account access to work and public transport. Agricultural land should be safeguarded from becoming an easy option for development.

- There seems to be an almost universal law that causes the rich to become richer and the large to become larger. The discrepancy between rich and poor, large and small becomes ever wider and this problem must be addressed at all levels. In the context of planning, the tendency to centralisation of services has caused our major cities to become large and prosperous at the expense of our smaller towns where most of the people actually live. The consequence of this (amongst others) is that this organizational model forces people into unnecessary and expensive travel to access services which were formerly available locally- with all the concomitant ill effects that this brings.

  There needs to be an intervention at national level to reinvigorate our smaller towns to ensure their viability, because natural processes will only exacerbate this problem. The Select Committee should consider setting up a group to look at this serious and urgent problem. This is not a question of equality but of proportionality- whether the balance of investment between our cities and smaller towns is right.
• Ten years would be a maximum time scale. Local circumstances are changing all the time and may overtake planning strategy.

• Government should be exerting more control on the housing mix. The impression we gain locally is that developers are aiming at the high value end of the market to maximise profit from land use. We also wonder whether the time is right to increase “Council Housing” stock levels to reduce the waiting lists for those families/persons financially unable to buy or preferring to rent.

• More direction should be given to re-instating existing housing and business properties within the urban boundaries. Relating housing to the places of work within easy travelling distance should be better for both the workforce and the environment.

• Historic environment properly advertised, managed and maintained attracts tourism with a spin-off to the benefit of the local business economy. The historic environment has suffered badly in recent years. Cuts in services provided by councils have resulted in far too few officers working in this area and extensive depredations have taken place to the detriment of our historic townscapes. The historic heritage of our towns (particularly our market towns) is a huge asset and should be developed and refurbished to improve their viability.

• The skills issue needs to be addressed at local authority level. The squeeze on councils has led to suitably qualified staff being made redundant putting excessive work load on those remaining in office. Funding from Central Government needs to be targeted to address these shortages after full consultation at local levels.

• National leadership would be enhanced by finding people with the highest skills at this level. They would be the very people to know what are the right skills etc to do the job.

• In a word, “No”. Housing build is usually done where land is easily available at an affordable price. This provides housing at a lower cost than in the more logical brownfield sites where development is needed. Developers almost always go for the easy option. The end result of this is often the unnecessary use of virgin land, longer journey times, more congestion, pollution and stress. The quality of family life can be seriously affected.

• Despite consultation processes being in place, the impression gained here is that it is
a perfunctory process to be gone through but rarely takes into account the opinions of the people with local experience. At times it appears that the easy option is to pass everything put before the planners to avoid having to justify objections. May be better addressed by a more transparent consultation process. This could be done by requiring developers to produce a post-consultation document explaining why certain proposals have been adopted and others rejected. This would go some way towards convincing consultees that their suggestions have been heeded.

- Does not apply much in our immediate area. We have one of the highest rates of housing growth in the district. This is explained in the covering letter.

Society Chairman. Paul Cartwright. Secretary Karl Gilbert

01 October 2015
Written evidence submitted by Portsmouth School of Architecture and Radian Group

21. We hereby respectfully answer the call for evidence invited by the House of Lords Select Committee on National Planning Policy for the Built Environment. This written evidence is part of the outcomes from a research and innovation collaboration between Radian Group Limited and the University of Portsmouth School of Architecture in the area of custom build and urban design, focusing on how the definition of frameworks for the design and delivery of custom build housing can be interrelated with urban design codes in order to achieve recognised qualities of place and organisational coherence. Named participants in the project are Ms Andrea Smith (Radian), Dr Fabiano Lemes de Oliveira, Mr Dan Blott, Dr Silvio Caputo and Ms Rebecca Cooper (UoP).

Custom build

Q6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

22. We welcome the fact that the government is promoting custom build as a means of increasing the supply of new homes. Custom build refers to hybrid models whereby individuals or groups work with a specialist developer to help deliver their homes,\textsuperscript{425} along the scale between self-build and traditional development.

23. There is strong evidence to suggest that there is the capacity and demand to increase the number of custom-built housing projects in the UK.\textsuperscript{426} Although a recent survey found that over half of respondents reported they would be interested in developing a custom build home in the UK,\textsuperscript{427} custom build accounts for less than 10% of overall new housing supply. This is in stark contrast with elsewhere in Europe, where custom build is relatively commonplace. Harnessing this untapped potential can make a significant contribution to the housing supply both in terms of quantity and quality of homes.

24. An obstacle preventing this leap is that the current custom build market is fragmented and lacks profile, making it difficult to navigate for many.\textsuperscript{428} Raising awareness of the

\textsuperscript{425} National Custom and Self Build Association - NaCSBA (2011). An action plan to promote the growth of self build housing, 2.


\textsuperscript{427} National Custom and Self Build Association - NaCSBA (2011). An action plan to promote the growth of self build housing, 5.

benefits of custom-build for the clients, developers and the public in general is needed; as well as guidance on the processes involved in such undertaking.

Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come?

25. Through the formation of a consumer-centric process, clients inherently feel valued and more invested in the end product. As a consequence, as was the case of Vauban, a shared overall vision developed through strong level of participation may push for higher quality of design, both of buildings and open spaces, and for enhanced environmental performance.

26. This tends to lead to more socially sustainable and resilient communities. Those living in custom build projects move on average only once every 25 years, compared to the national average of once every 6 years.\textsuperscript{129}

27. Living in the same house for over 25 years poses challenges of family growth and shrinkage, and the associated need for more or less space. Consideration for possible custom build expansion and retraction of homes catering for the specific needs of residents through their lives should be given at planning stage.

Q12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

28. Place quality is the central preoccupation of the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment. Whilst in traditional development, developers tend to focus on controlling costs and profitability often at the expense of design quality, custom build neighbourhoods offer a contrasting alternative. It has the potential to substantially contribute to better design quality and place making in the country.

29. Creating strong communities has been a key objective in UK housing policy for a long time.\textsuperscript{430} A crucial structural weakness of the speculative housing model points to the fact that the end users are not involved in the process, one of the consequences being that social relationships with neighbours do not start until the spatial structure of the community has been built. Custom build housing on the other hand starts creating communities by forming relationships during the actual process of making place.\textsuperscript{431}

30. Strong involvement of future residents from the onset and throughout all phases of the development in the co-design of their homes and communal spaces, as exemplified by


the case of Vauban in Freiburg, is a key factor in enhancing the levels of satisfaction, sense of belonging, community and identity.

31. The co-design process needs to be effectively led and managed. There is evidence to suggest that having too much choice may result in confusion rather than satisfaction, leading to a more time consuming and stressful process for the client. Clear goals, timelines, expectations and limitations need to be agreed early on.

32. Limiting the co-design process to customised modifications of dwellings may fail to attain neighbourhoods in which communities develop a long-lasting sense of ownership. Conversely, custom build projects in which the masterplan was co-designed tend to result not only in a good provision of dwellings but also in a successful public realm (and public spaces) for local communities and the city at large.

References


Response from Potterspury Parish Council to
Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Community involvement and community impact

Question 12 How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision
making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any
barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

1. In 2013–15 the village of Potterspury in south Northamptonshire, was subject to two
speculative planning applications by developers. The first (S/2014/0390/MAO) was
for a development of 65 houses on a green-field site outside the confines of the
village, and the second (S/2014/2356/MAO) for 195 houses on a large field, also
outside the village boundary. The first would have increased the size of the village by
10%; the second by 40%. This last scheme was presented by a large national
developer, was ill thought-out and demonstrated lamentable local knowledge.

2. To date, both these schemes have been dismissed, the first at appeal and the second
during the first stage of the planning process.

3. Our comments are based on our experiences over the past two or three years.

4. Potterspury Parish Council has produced a parish plan in consultation with residents
with a vision for the development of the village over the next decade. Between 2011
and 2014 the village expanded by more than 11% with the addition of some 70
houses. The Parish Council does not rule out further development, but would like it
to be achieved sensitively, with regard to the existing built environment and without
stretching local amenities such as schools, local transport and shops.

5. The Parish Council fully engaged with the planning process, and the local community
regarded it as the leader of the campaign against both developments. But both
proposals caused considerable alarm and upset, and it seemed to the Parish Council
that we were comparatively helpless in the face of the professionals.

6. Developers are bound to consult local communities, but in reality seem to pay little
regard to local opposition that is based on hard facts, such as rights of access,
accessibility and flood plains. And if a community opposes development, for whatever reason, surely by the principals of localism, those views should be given serious credence?

7. In our experience, planners’ public engagement at the most basic level was cynical. Consultation leaflets promised parks, amenities and a school extension – conveniently omitting the fact that none of these could be delivered without additional money from local government. The sustainable transport statement was simply not grounded in reality.

8. Local people have to fight to be heard; they must familiarise themselves with the rules and deadlines of the planning system; they must acquire a rudimentary knowledge of the language of planning law simply to understand the application and why the developers believe it is feasible.

9. Parish councillors must do this too, only more so, and if they want to represent the community effectively at the district council, volunteer a significant amount of their time. Two of our parish councillors spent four days at the district council attending an appeal hearing. Both are self-employed.

10. Furthermore, the success or otherwise of both applications in Potterspury depended on whether or not South Northamptonshire was deemed to have a secure five-year land supply for housing. This matter was entirely out of the hands of the local community.

11. At the appeal for the first application, there was much legal discussion about the overall plan for housing supply in the local area and it was clear that the local council had a clear holistic plan for the area. The developers spent a great deal of time and money trying to find flaws and legal loopholes.

12. The application process seems weighted towards developers.

a) There is nothing to stop developers presenting speculative proposals that quote chapter and verse of the NPPF and obscure facets of planning legislation in order to reinforce their proposals.

b) Parish and neighbourhood plans are cursorily acknowledged, often ignored, and occasionally face a legal challenge.

c) Local councils must shoulder the considerable burden of legal costs in having to oppose speculative and opportunistic plans that cause misery to local communities.
d) Money. Developers simply have more money at their disposal than local councils, which enables them to engage large teams of staff. Many councils have cut staff, leaving planning departments under-resourced.

e) Parish councils can be represented at planning appeals, but in our experience, there was little guidance about what was expected of us and how we should contribute to the discussion. Local councillors may face cross-examination by an urbane but ultimately hostile lawyer, which is not an experience for the faint-hearted.

f) Timescales – the planning process is governed by deadlines, but the outcome of appeals seems to be more flexible.

g) Despite the recent ‘slimmed down’ NPPF, planning policy and legislation is not an easy area of study for lay-people, and constitutes a serious barrier to public engagement.

15 September 2015
Response by John Preston MA(Cantab) DipTP IHBC

I have over 40 years’ professional experience, largely in local government planning (latterly as Historic Environment Manager for Cambridge, dealing with historic buildings and trees, taking redundancy when my post was abolished in 2012), and over 30 years’ experience in building conservation at local and national level. I currently lead on sustainability and green issues for the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), having previously served as the Institute’s Education Secretary for 10 years; I am a Trustee of the Council on Training in Architectural Conservation, and on the Steering Group of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA).

Place-making, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

National policy guidance is a vital framework for local decisions. Leaving individual local authorities to reinvent the wheel with their own guidance is wasteful, uneconomic, and thoroughly bad resource management.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Too often, very poorly coordinated, both between and within departments.

To take just one example:

I have been part of efforts over the past 3 years to resolve a very damaging lack of coordination both within DECC, and between DECC and CLG in relation to retrofit works to counter climate change. DECC has promoted a “one size fits all” approach through ECO, the Green Deal, and CERT and CESP previously, in the face of a strong and growing body of evidence that this approach is totally inappropriate for solid wall buildings of traditional construction; these form well over 25% of the building stock (while 1919 seems to have become accepted as the division between “traditional” and “modern” cavity wall construction, I am writing this in a 1938 semi-detached with solid brick walls) and 34% in Wales. Although DECC has commissioned research highlighting the problems (notably the STBA’s “Responsible Retrofit” report 2012, the Solid Wall Insulation Literature Review 2014, and the current Solid Wall study being carried out by Building Research

433 Solid Wall Heat Losses and the Potential for Energy Saving

434 Awaiting publication; very worrying preliminary conclusions presented at Ecobuild 2014
http://www.slideshare.net/BREGroup/colin-king-ecobuild-6-march-2014

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Establishment Wales\textsuperscript{435}), there is no sign of a change in approach, or even of a systematic audit of projects already carried out. This appears due to both lack of coordination within DECC, and political sensitivity regarding potential massive waste of public money.

What is already clear is that very large amounts of money (both public money and the premium customers have had to pay towards the Energy Company Obligation) have been spent on works to traditional solid wall buildings using inappropriate methods and materials whose rectification is bound to incur further major financial and carbon costs. The issues are highlighted by the BRE Wales Research for DECC\textsuperscript{3}.

These issues were exacerbated by lack of coordination between DECC and CLG. In promoting retrofit schemes, DECC totally ignored safeguards for traditional buildings in the Building Regulations (Part L1B para 3.8 onwards) which were introduced in 2002 specifically to avoid such problems. I twice raised this issue at the All-Party Parliamentary Green Deal Group with the former Minister Greg Barker MP, each time being promised follow-up from civil servants that never came.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF is narrowly focused on planning. Where previously PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) at least included paragraphs cross-referencing transport, sustainability, and access, the NPPF has nothing. There is a woeful lack of requirement for transport proposals to take proper account of the historic environment: as I write, here in Cambridge there are 2 separate and totally uncoordinated City Deal transport proposals (cycle and orbital bus) for new routes (including river crossings) through unspoilt and very historic water meadows (along the Lents and Mays rowing course), with no coherent environmental assessment.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Long time horizons are vital, not least to ensure a fully strategic and coherent approach to meeting (e.g.) statutory Climate Change obligations.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

\textsuperscript{3} ibid – the examples shown in the presentation relate to failed retrofits of 1920s and 1930s solid wall buildings
Older, more flexible buildings are often best suited to adaptation and re-use, by comparison with precisely designed modern buildings with short design lives.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?
   Far too little, in my experience (notably in relation to Cambridge, see 4 above).

Skills and design
9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
   No. There is a major problem within the construction industry in that for the last 40 years professionals and trades have been trained almost exclusively on new buildings, not on traditional construction. This is exacerbating the problems noted in 2 above. Immediate, serious and strategic consideration needs to be given to how a suitably skilled workforce can be trained to meet climate change retrofit targets.

   Across the country, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of conservation staff dealing with the historic environment. This has severely reduced not only the skills but also the accumulated knowledge available to planning authorities.

Financial measures
13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

   Current short-term financial measures (e.g. ECO and Green Deal in relation to climate change) and precisely NOT what is needed to secure long-term successful solutions, or the sustained industry (and training) investments needed to deliver them.

   I urge the Committee to review the relationship between Treasury policy and its counter-productive environmental impacts.

   Apologies for this brief submission. I would be happy to provide further information if requested.

   06 October 2015
1. This submission is based on evidence of how the built environment and planning policy has a direct affect on the health and welfare of the human body. By recognizing these factors policy has the potential to provide preventative solutions that address human health passively rather than reactively.

There is an emerging and growing condition affecting western modern society called Electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS) it is characterized by a group of symptoms caused by exposure to electromagnetic fields. A more specific term used in medical literature is idiopathic environmental intolerance attributed to electromagnetic fields (IEI-EMF). Other terms for IEI-EMF include electro hypersensitivity, electro-sensitivity, and electrical sensitivity (ES). Idiopathic refers to the fact that the cause is unknown. However there is considerable and growing science that these symptoms are biological not physiological.

2. There is considerable science showing a very real and significant risk to the general health of the public, wildlife and the environment from exposure to Electromagnetic Fields, especially those of very low frequency used in Wireless transmitters, mobile phones and mobile phone infrastructure. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) an agency forming part of the World Health Organisation have already categorised RF as a Group 2b carcinogen for the entire spectrum, however some members are publicly vocal that the classification must be increased to Group 1 carcinogen.

These scientists have collectively published over 2,000 peer-reviewed papers on the biological or health effects of non-ionizing radiation, part of the EMF spectrum that includes Extremely Low Frequency fields (ELF) used for electricity, or Radio Frequency radiation (RFR) used for wireless communications. 70% of non -industry funded studies are showing negative biological affects from exposure to these frequencies. Lennart Hardell MD PHD professor of Oncology, Sweden (whose work was used as evidence for the 2B classification) has concluded from three out of four recent studies that there is a definite link between brain tumours and EMF. See Letter to World Health Organisation (appendix 1)

3. In May 2015 the International Scientists Appeal to the UN was submitted to the United Nations requesting they adopt more protective exposure guidelines for electromagnetic fields (EMF) and wireless technology in the face of increasing evidence of risk. These exposures are a rapidly growing form of environmental pollution worldwide (appendix 2) https://www.emfscientist.org

4. Following the Fifth Paris Appeal Congress, which took place on the 18th of May, 2015, the attending European, American and Canadian scientists unanimously decided to create a working group and to write a Common International Declaration.
to request an official recognition of these new diseases and of their sanitary consequences worldwide.

The declaration calls upon national and international bodies and institutions and particularly the WHO, to take urgent responsibility for recognizing electro hypersensitivity and multiple chemical sensitivity as real diseases, including them in the International Classification of Diseases.

This International Declaration also asks national and international institutions to adopt simple precautionary measures of prevention, to inform populations and requires the appointment of real independent expert groups to evaluate these sanitary risks in total scientific objectivity, which is not the case today.

8 Susan Foster, advisor for the Radiation Research Trust UK (http://www.radiationresearch.org) estimated that in Europe alone there are approximately 37 Million sufferers (data February 2015). However, with the roll out of more wireless networks, smart meters and 4G, this number is increasing at an accelerated rate. Due to the varying nature of symptoms, many people are not yet aware that the underlying cause of their lack of wellbeing could be from EMF.

9 Dr Gerd Oberfield (Salzburg, Austria) and Orjen Hallberg predict that due to the proliferation of EMF in the environment, 50% of urban population could well be affected by 2017. Dr Oberfield’s informative report on the Evaluation of Electromagnetic Fields can be read here: http://www.salzburg.gv.at/Oberfeld-EMF-enviro-med-evaluation-2007.pdf

10 In 2014, Professor Dominique Bel Pomme of the French ARTAC (Association for Research on Treatment Against Cancer) stated, based on statistics from Europe, that 10% of the population currently suffers from this syndrome of intolerance to EMF.

11 37 million Europeans are estimated to be suffering from this condition. It is not an illness it is an allergy because when they are removed from the irritant (EMF) their bodies recover. These people are totally handicapped from exposure to these frequencies. Many give up jobs and move to the countryside to try and obtain relief. They then have to try and avoid Hospitals, Schools, Doctors offices, public facilities, restaurants, cafes etc. due to Wi-Fi. This is not a finite conclusion, there is now Wi-Fi blanketing even rural communities. As Ofcom and

Government work towards 100% mobile phone coverage, there is always the risk of a planning application for a mobile phone mast nearby, (easy money for cash strapped farmers, rugby clubs and churches). Even camp sites are not free from these signals as the Caravan Club and many independent campsite owners are now promoting and installing Wi-Fi (after a visit from a Wireless salesman). If moving is not a financial option, sufferers can shield their property (not a cheap option) but then become prisoners in their own homes as venturing out into the urban
environment it too painful for them. Many become socially isolated and mocked as this condition is portrayed as a ‘mental condition’ and denied to exist by the British Medical Association. There is no medical drug that can treat the root of the problem. Anti-depressants, anti-anxiety and a multitude of other medicines can be prescribed, but the root cause is the EMF exposure. This is no doubt costing the NHS millions. It is not only affecting adults but a growing amount of children are being exposed and are starting to show symptoms as Wi-Fi and iPads are now part of daily school life.

12 Many people I have met suffering from this condition are incredibly intelligent balanced individuals, many with PHDs, from the IT industry, the mobile communications industry, ex-city traders (where exposure was historically at its highest). I have also met teachers, marketing executives and local authority office workers, everyday people succumbing to the condition.

13 In January 2015, the EHS community held their breath in hope, as the TEN committee of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) met to discuss a draft opinion to recognize the causal link between EMF and EHS. (draft opinion available at http://www.iemfa.org/wp-content/pdf/EESC-TEN559.pdf). In his statement which closed the meeting, Richard Adams gave a counter opinion, see (http://electromagnetichealth.org/electromagnetic-health-blog/eileen-oconnor-eesc/) that people with this condition did indeed suffer real physical symptoms, but it was not caused by Electromagnetic exposure. He concluded that the main course of treatment for this condition is Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. (37 million Europeans requiring mental health treatment). For further ‘comment’ see http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/news/2015-01-20-eesc-final-opinion.asp.

14 The Final vote - 138 votes for the counter opinion, 110 votes against and 19 absentions. EHS would not be recognized. The following report on the meeting was produced for ES –UK http://www.es-uk.info/attachments/article/65/EESC%20Adams%20counter-opinion.25.1.2015.pdf

15 Public Health England states that ‘there is no consistent evidence to date that exposure to radiofrequency (RF) signals from Wi-Fi and WLANS adversely affect the health of the general population’. However this has challenged by ‘The Safe Information Technology Alliance’ (SSITA). As PHE has failed to respond a formal complaint has now been forwarded to the ‘Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman ‘(2015) supported by individual complaints from UK residents who’s lives have been adversely affected as a result of this guidance. For details of the full complaint go to http://ssita.org.uk/complaint-to-the-health-protection-agencypublic-health-england/

16 The voices of concern are gaining ground and getting louder. Government and policy makers need to take note and address this issue not only on health grounds but economic. Technology spend is leading GDP growth, however the ‘internet of things’
bubble could very well burst.
The Built environment - other biological affects

For thousands of years the human body has had an intimate relationship with our natural surroundings. Modern society is now a creature of the indoors, spending on average 90% of our time inside built structures.

We are not only being exposed to pollution from EMF in the built environment. There is growing research showing the correlation between other environmental factors and how they affect our health and wellbeing:

- Indoor **AIR** is often contaminated with various different compounds from building materials, paints, carpeting, furniture, uncirculated air.

- Tap **WATER** samples can show traces of contaminants such as phosphates, plastics, some heavy metals, hormones and even trace cocaine.

- Even **LIGHT** affects the human body. The circadian optic nerve regulates our 24-hour sleep/wake rhythm by exposure to light. In bright light (natural daylight, blue spectrum lighting) cortisol is released which keeps us awake and alert. At dusk, cortisol is suppressed and melatonin produced to aid sleep. The wrong spectrum of light at the wrong time can play havoc with sleep patterns.

- **INTERNAL DESIGN** and layout also have an affect on the body. For example, by placing stairwells next to windows, lined with uplifting and colourful art, stair use has been shown to increase. Compare this to less enthusiasm showed to use internal artificially lit stairwells.

- **ARCHITECTURE** itself can affect the human body. Compare the design of historic and ancient architecture, churches, public buildings with their intricate design and geometric patterns against sharp angled square block buildings. Modern architecture versus traditional design, which is the more visually satisfying and promotes a feeling of wellbeing?

In conclusion, based on the above evidence, the Committee for the Built Environment needs to consider the following:

a. The potential economic, social and financial impact of EMF pollution within the built environment. What affect will this have on future urban and rural housing demand and social habits?

b. Human Rights and the disabled with regard to access to public services (transport and healthcare), the right to live in a safe and healthy environment, earn a living and access community resources.
c. We do not need to lose modern technology - we need to refine how it is accessed. Wired solutions to replace wireless where possible to be made standard in new builds with a focus on those frequented by vulnerable group, schools, Hospitals, Surgeries, disabled and care homes.

d. Establishment of protected rural areas and designated urban areas guaranteed free of Electromagnetic pollution from mobile and WiMax infrastructure (White Zones).

e. Planning legislation with regard to the siting of mobile phone/Wimax/Airwave masts must take into consideration the science on health affects if challenged.

f. Household wireless systems currently feed ‘open zone’ hot spots. [Link](https://www.btwifi.co.uk/find/) The signal from a household WiFi will travel over 25 meters outside the boundary of the property into the airspace of neighbouring property and public rights of way. These ‘Hot spots’ encroach into the air space and homes of neighbours. Current planning rules do not allow building onto the boundary or overhanging a neighbours land. Bushes and hedges that overhang a neighbours land may be removed to the boundary, Environmental health law protects neighbours from noise pollution, smoke pollution etc. Yet, there is NO LAW with regard to EMF pollution and the affect on a neighbours land or public right of way.

g. Legislation for operators to ‘share’ mobile phone infrastructure. Therefore reducing the need for multiple masts and hardware (as in Europe).

h. Encourage and promote biological sustainability via awareness, education and certification within the UK Green Building council, building and architectural industries.

i. Embrace concepts such as that of ‘building biology (Bau-Biology of Switzerland and Germany) which consider EMF overload and remedies in building design

j. Consider the Wellness models presented by DELOS [http://delos.com](http://delos.com)

k. Investigate studies of quantum science that claim to mitigate or neutralize the damaging carrier wave of EMF frequencies. eg: Biogeometry.

l. Environmental sustainability has been the leading driving factor behind building policy in the last few years, however we are ignoring human and
biological sustainability. It is time for Wellness to be given equal focus in both building design and policy. In return a happier healthier population will be more economically productive and there will be less demand on public and social health sectors. Advances in modern technology have given us ever increasing comfort, convenience and global connection. However some elements of this technology as discussed in this submission are showing obvious conflicts with all living biological systems. We cannot go back as society is now so reliant on this sector. We can however move forward by finding multiple holistic solutions, rather than ‘fire fight’ the growing problems that this will cause to future health and welfare.

Surviving is not the same as thriving.
Appendix 1


Appendix 2

http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/11/ny-emfscientistorg-idUSn8w115200a+100+BSW20150511

20 November 2015
Introduction

Some of the UK’s most pressing health challenges – such as obesity, mental health issues, physical inactivity and the needs of an ageing population – can all be influenced by the quality of our built and natural environment. In other words, the considerate design of spaces and places can help to promote good health; access to goods and services; and alleviate, and in some cases even prevent, poor health and thereby have a positive impact on reducing health inequalities (1, 2).

1.2 The move, in 2013, of public health responsibilities from the NHS into local government is seen as an opportunity to reunite public health practitioners with the wider levers of change under the umbrella of local government. Planning is one of those key levers. This new context provides a strong base for developing good practice in the integration of health, spatial planning and design. Call for action on this area has been advocated across the board, both from within planning as well as from health organisations and local government based on an emerging evidence base. (3-11).

1.3 This document, prepared by Public Health England (PHE), describes the evidence of the impacts of the built environment on health and wellbeing. It also describes PHE’s priorities and its role in translating evidence into national action for health improvement.

Public Health England

2.1 Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

2.2 Our vision is that everyone, wherever they live, should be able to live, work and play in a place that promotes health and wellbeing; sustains the development of supportive and active communities; and helps reduce health inequalities.

2.3 The importance of this agenda is highlighted in the PHE priorities document ‘From evidence into action’ (12) which recognises the importance of place and place-based approaches in promoting long term health and wellbeing, rather than just treating illness.

Impacts of the Built and Natural Environment on Health

3.1 Our health as individuals, and as communities, is influenced by many factors – our family background, gender and age, our lifestyles, the health and other services we receive and the wider physical, social and economic environment in which we are raised, live and work (13).

3.2 There is a growing body of evidence that links public health outcomes to the natural and built environment. The Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy Lives (2), dedicates one of its
six policy domains to the theme of ‘Healthy and Sustainable Places and Communities’ – in recognition of the role the built environment plays on health, and health inequalities. If you live in the most deprived areas of the country, compared to the least deprived, you are:

twice as likely to be obese;

ten times less likely to live in the greenest areas;

more likely to live near fast-food outlets which can contribute towards the disparity on levels of obesity; and,

more likely to feel unsafe in your neighbourhood, with consequent negative effects on health (14).

3.3 It is difficult to quantify with precision the impact of the built and natural environment on health, but McGinnis et al (2002)(15) reported that social circumstances and environmental exposure contribute to as much as 45% to health outcomes. Alternatively, for instance, New Local Government Networks (16) quoting The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research estimates that the impact on health of the social and economic environment is 50% and environmental factors 10%. What seems to be consistent amongst recent research is that the majority of our health outcomes are explained by factors other than healthcare (9). The built environment is one of the wider determinants that has a role in shaping our behaviors and determines our exposure to health hazards.

3.4 Rao et al. (2007)(17) examined how the design, maintenance and availability of services could affect a range of environmental and social features which, in turn, could impact on both physical and mental health and wellbeing. A wide-ranging array of diseases was identified as being affected by the built environment including, amongst others: asthma, depression, accidents, reduced cognitive performance in children, obesity, cardiovascular disease, infectious diseases, musculo-skeletal problems and some forms of cancer (see Annex 1). The paper also identified how other aspects of the built environment could prevent or prolong recovery from disease. The strength of the evidence of the impacts of the built environment on health is not consistent across all these linkages. However, although complex, for many issues, there is a fairly direct interaction between the environment and its impact on the health of individuals and populations (6, 7, 18-21).

3.5 There is also a strong economic case for action. Poor diet-related ill health is estimated to cost the NHS £5.8 billion per year (22). The estimated cost of physical inactivity is £7.4 billion a year (£0.9 billion to the NHS) (22, 23). Alcohol costs the NHS £3.3 billion (22, 24), overweight and obesity costs the NHS £5.1 billion (22).

**Healthy Communities and Neighbourhoods**

4.1 Neighbourhood design can have a profound impact on the physical and mental health of communities. The key to successful places lies in the communication between services and proximity of amenities, from healthcare facilities to green infrastructure to local transport
networks (1). Compact neighbourhoods that feel safe, well connected and provide access to several amenities and destinations, seem to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing (25-30).

4.2 There is evidence to show that well serviced, compact, walkable and connected neighbourhoods, promote physical activity, cycling and walking (18, 27, 29). Cycling and walking are in turn shown to increase the overall number of opportunities for social interaction and networking, which foster a sense of community and a general feeling of safety within a neighbourhood (29). These factors are all linked to positive mental and physical health (28).

4.3 The delivery of healthy neighbourhoods does not only deliver health benefits. DCLG’s report Economic Case for Cohesion (31) stated that a total of £530M per annum could be saved through an increase in community cohesion, based on the expected reduction in a number of types of crime (violent crime, burglary, theft of and from a vehicle).

4.4 Research also suggests that reducing social isolation is associated with reduced levels of mortality from cardiovascular disease, accidents and suicide (26). Better social support is beneficial to mental health; associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression. Good neighbourhood design can promote community networks and reduce severance caused by transport networks (32) thereby promoting community cohesion and reduced social isolation.

4.5 There is a graded relationship between environmental conditions and levels of area deprivation:- residents of more deprived neighbourhoods tend to experience less favourable living and environmental conditions than people who live in more affluent areas (2-5). The design, location and layout of neighbourhoods can have an impact on these, particularly exposure to noise (33, 34) and air pollution (35).

4.6 PHE, in a 2014 report, estimated that 5.6 per cent of all deaths in over-25s in England were linked to air pollution, although the figures vary considerably by region (36). There is evidence linking increased levels of air pollution, with an increase in respiratory illnesses and higher levels of deprivation (19), with some of the most deprived areas in the country having the worst air quality and a disproportionate number of the most vulnerable (35).

4.7 Noise causes a number of short- and long-term health problems, such as sleep disturbance, cardiovascular effects, poorer work and school performance, hearing impairment (34). In the UK about 10% of the population is thought to live in areas where daytime sound levels exceed 65 dB LAeq (37), which WHO considers detrimental to health (38), and 34% in areas where night-time sound levels exceed 50 dB (37). It is known that continuous internal noise of over 30dB disturbs sleep (37).

Healthy Natural Environment and Sustainability
5.1 The relationship between health and exposure to nature is well documented and evidenced. Contact and access to green spaces is associated with a range of positive health outcomes including: better self-rated health (39), reductions in levels of stress and depression (28), lower levels of obesity, improved mental health and increased longevity in older people (3, 40).

5.2 Access to green space is not equal across the population of England. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to live in the greenest areas, and will therefore have less opportunity to gain the health benefits of green space compared with people living in the least deprived areas (39). Research also shows that access to green space is associated with better health outcomes and income-related inequality in health is less pronounced (7, 21, 39).

5.3 Open green spaces also have a strong impact on the sustainability of the built environment (21, 41). Some of the environmental benefits of green spaces include: improved air quality (42), water quality and noise absorption (39), decreased risk of flooding, mitigation against the impacts of climate change (41, 43, 44) and mitigation against overheating caused by buildings and roads - the “urban heat island” effect (39, 44, 45).

5.4 Extreme weather events, including flooding, are likely to become more frequent due to climate change (46). These are likely to have significant impacts on health as extreme temperatures contribute directly to deaths from cardiovascular and respiratory disease (41, 43, 44, 47-49), particularly among elderly people (43), flooding can increase risk of injury and infection, as well as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (46).

5.5 In England and Wales, in the heat wave of summer 2003, more than 2,000 excess deaths were registered, an 16 per cent increase (50) in deaths compared to the baseline for that calendar period. Extreme cold temperatures also impact on health. There were an estimated 18,200 excess winter deaths in England and Wales in 2013/14 (51). It is important to note that the number of excess winter deaths does vary significantly from year to year however health impacts of heat and cold are affected by the quality of buildings such as homes and workplaces (see later section on 8. Healthier Housing).

Transport and Active Travel

6.1 A key priority for improving health is to encourage active travel as a means of reducing car use and increasing physical activity, with its consequential benefits for physical and mental health as well as sustainability and climate change (29, 52). Half of women and a third of men in England today are not active enough to stay healthy (52).

6.2 Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK, and if current trends continue we will be 35% less active by 2030 (52). Yet, as the former Chief Medical Officer has noted: “The potential benefits of physical activity to health are huge (Annex 2). If
a medication existed which had a similar effect, it would be regarded as a ‘wonder drug’ or ‘miracle cure.” (53)

6.3 There is evidence to show that walking is one of the least expensive and most broadly accessible forms of physical activity, it is rarely associated with physical injury and can easily be adopted by people of all ages, including those who have never participated in physical activity (25). However, distances walked have declined dramatically since the 1970s and travel by car has increased, as people travel longer distances and more frequently. The increasing affordability and convenience of car travel have led to the decentralisation of urban activities (eg. out-of-town shopping centres) with the consequence of a rise in the need to travel by car in a reinforcing cycle (54).

6.4 There is also a health inequalities dimension to transport. Children in the ten per cent most deprived wards were more than three times as likely to be pedestrian casualties as their counterparts in the ten per cent least deprived wards. This is compounded by the fact that more children live in deprived areas, so that more than one quarter of child pedestrian injuries happened in the most deprived tenth of wards (55). There is evidence to show that traffic calming measures are effective in, not only reducing the occurrence of accidents, but also having a significant effect on their severity (2, 56).

Healthy Food Systems

7.1 More than half of the adult population in the UK, with 67% of men and 57% of women, are either overweight or obese (57). This means that the UK has higher levels of obesity and overweight people than anywhere in Western Europe, except for Iceland and Malta. The latest figures also show that a third of 10-11 year olds and over a fifth of 4-5 year olds are overweight or obese (58).

7.2 Being obese can increase the risk of developing a range of serious disease, including hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, several cancers, asthma, obstructive sleep apnoea and musculoskeletal problems (22, 59). Evidence also shows that overweight and obese children are also more likely to become obese adults, and have a higher risk of morbidity, disability and premature mortality in adulthood (58).

7.3 Estimates of the direct costs to the NHS in 2006/07 of overweight and obesity was £5.1 billion. These costs are projected to reach £9.7 billion by 2050 with the wider costs to society estimated to reach £49.9 billion per year by 2050 (59).

7.4 The built environment has a role to play, as part of a whole systems approach, not only in terms of encouraging physical activity, but also in terms of promoting access to healthy food (60). Recently published evidence looked at the associations between exposure to takeaway food outlets, takeaway food consumption and body weight in Cambridgeshire. The study concluded that, overall, access to takeaway food outlets in all domains combined
(home, work and along commuting routes) was positively associated with takeaway food consumption, body weight and obesity (61). Strong links between obesity and deprivation have also been established (62) as well as links between higher levels of deprivation and higher concentration of hot-food takeaways (62).

**Healthy Housing**

8.1 Evidence suggests that poor housing is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, depression and anxiety (10, 46, 48, 63). The greatest risks to health are related to cold and damp homes (including mold and fungus), which affect and exacerbate respiratory conditions, indoor air quality, dust mites and other allergens. House type and overcrowding represent further examples of risk factors (64).

8.2 The elderly, and children, are particularly vulnerable to poor housing conditions and are also more likely to suffer ill health in a cold home (48, 65). Evidence also shows that exposure to multiple housing problems increases children’s risk of ill-health and disability. One study suggested an increase of up to 25 per cent (48). The urban heat island effect (see Healthy Natural Environment and Sustainability), and the increase in the number of extreme weather events, is also likely to put increasing demands on housing, both in terms of heating and energy efficiency, as well as cooling mechanisms (66, 67).

8.3 According to the latest English Housing Survey (68), 4.8m homes in England do not meet decent homes standards, which is equivalent to 21% of England’s housing stock. “The private rented sector had the highest proportion of non-decent homes (30%) in 2013 while the social rented sector had the lowest (15%). A fifth (19%) of owner occupied homes failed to meet the decent homes standard in 2013”.

8.4 While housing conditions improved in all tenures between 2006 and 2013, the greatest improvement occurred in the social rented sector where the number of non-decent homes almost halved from 1.1 million (29%) in 2006 to 593,000 (15%) in 2013. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) recently estimated that the total health cost of poor housing to the NHS is £1.4 – 2.0 billion per year for England (69).

8.5 Housing impacts on health, not just through the quality and suitability of the housing supply, but also its availability, or absence of housing. Latest research suggests that some 240,000-245,000 additional homes will be required each year to meet newly arising demand with nearly one-third of required at below-market prices and rents (70). All forms of homelessness, including precarious housing, were estimated to cost the public purse (including health services) £1bn per annum (71) and the latest data indicates that a homeless person is 4 times more likely to be admitted to hospital and visit A&E than the general population (72).

Translating evidence into action – delivering healthy built and natural environments
9.1 Although the links between the built and natural environments are well established and evidenced, the planning process does not always consistently deliver communities which can enable these benefits (73). CABE’s study, which used the Building for Life methodology, found that only 18 per cent – fewer than one in five – of the private housing developments audited could be classed as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. They also found that the better private housing schemes tended to be in more affluent areas and the poorer private housing schemes in less affluent.

9.2 The National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) recognises that the planning system can play an important role in creating healthy, inclusive communities. This recognition has been welcomed and supported by PHE which has collaborated with DH and DCLG in the production of the Planning Practice Guidance on Health and Wellbeing. The purpose of the Health and Wellbeing PPG is to further explain the health and wellbeing issues raised within the NPPF and provide further policy context and indication of the role of the built environment in promoting health communities.

9.3 In order to support action on health through the built environment, PHE has published or co-produced a series of guides, evidence briefs and reviews that recognise the role of the built environment on health:

- **Planning Healthier Places** (Town and Country Planning Association)
- **Planning Healthy Weight Environments** (Town and Country Planning Association)
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to support joint action on improving health through the home with 19 other housing and health related organisations
- **Fuel poverty and cold home-related health problems** (Institute of Health Equity)
- **Improving access to green spaces** (Institute of Health Equity)
- **Everybody Active, Every Day**: a framework for increasing physical activity

9.4 PHE also supported the production of 2 guides published by the Department of Health:

- **A guide to the healthcare system in England for local planning authorities** (Dept of Health)
- **A guide to town planning for health organisations** (Dept of Health)
Annex 1 - The Impacts of the Built Environment on Health

Source: Rao et al. (2007)
Annex 2 – Physical activity contribution to reduction in risk of mortality and long term conditions

Physical activity: Our greatest defence against ill health and disease

| Physical Activity contribution to reduction in risk of mortality and long term conditions |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Disease            | Risk reduction | Strength of evidence |
| Death              | 20-35%          | Strong           |
| CHD and Stroke     | 20-35%          | Strong           |
| Type 2 Diabetes    | 35-40%          | Strong           |
| Colon Cancer       | 30-50%          | Strong           |
| Breast Cancer      | 20%             | Strong           |
| Hip Fracture       | 36-68%          | Moderate         |
| Depression         | 20-30%          | Strong           |
| Hypertension       | 33%             | Strong           |
| Alzheimer’s Disease| 20-30%          | Moderate         |
| Functional limitation, elderly | 30% | Strong |
| Prevention of falls | 30%             | Strong           |
| Osteoarthritis disability | 22-80% | Moderate |

Adapted from Department of Health and Human Services (2008).
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59. Inquiry into the Impact of Physical Activity and Diet on Health: Hearing before the Health Select Committee(2014).


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13 October 2015
Transcript to be found under Dr Matt Egan
Introduction

1. Pupils 2 Parliament is a project to enable school pupils to think about, and feed in their views to, consultations and inquiries being carried out by Parliament, the government and national public organisations. The project has been approved by the Clerks of both Houses of Parliament to use the word ‘Parliament’ officially in its name.

2. Pupils 2 Parliament brings the special viewpoint of children and young people to people carrying out inquiries and consultations - plus the uniquely fresh and often challenging analysis that children and young people bring to making decisions and policies.

3. The project gives school pupils the chance to learn and think about important decisions being made by parliament, government and public bodies, and to take part for real in democracy by feeding their views into real national decisionmaking.

4. We gather pupils’ views independently, through discussions with groups of pupils led by someone from Pupils 2 Parliament. We use material from the relevant consultation or inquiry document to explain things. We specialise in putting the issues and questions even-handedly, without leading pupils in any way or suggesting any responses. All views therefore come straight from pupils, with no adult prompting.

5. This report gives you all the views pupils gave us, without us leaving anything out, adding anything in, or making comments on what pupils said. The views in this report are pupils’ own views, and nothing but pupils’ views.

6. The views in this report came from 41 pupils, aged from 9 to 14, who we consulted in three groups, at Newtown High School, Powys, John Beddoes Campus, Powys, and Quarry Bank Primary School, Brierley Hill, West Midlands.

7. The report gives the pupils’ views about buildings and how decisions should be made about buildings, to feed in to the Lords Select Committee which is looking at the future policy and decisionmaking about buildings. We explained that the Committee wants to know pupils’ views about the built environment – meaning places where we have buildings around us. We asked about what pupils did and did not like about particular sorts of buildings, their favourite buildings and the places where there are buildings, keeping old buildings, building new buildings, and who should make decisions about giving permission to build or change buildings.

8. The questions we asked were agreed with the Select Committee, and the Chair of the Select Committee asked us to put some particular questions to the pupils.
Why do we need new buildings?

9. This was a question the Lords Select Committee asked us to put to the pupils. Here is the complete list of pupils’ answers (not in any special order):

- If they are needed for a definite purpose – for someone to live in or work in (but buildings should not be built if we aren’t completely sure they will be needed – buildings put up without enough reason add to ugliness and pollution)

- For business expansion and to provide jobs and buildings to work in

- To provide more places to educate people and to provide different schools for people in education to move on to

- To provide hospitals to treat injured people

- To replace houses with new ones so “you’re not stuck with what you’ve got”

- To provide larger houses for people who need them

- To replace old buildings

- For new housing for the growing population; “people are being born every day and need somewhere to live”, “we all need a place to live”

- For people who cannot afford other housing, or are having to “squish in” living with others

- If they are needed to provide services to support new housing – such as schools and hospitals to go with new houses

- To feed in to the economy

- To replace old buildings that are no longer adequate or up to standard

- To replace old buildings because technology in buildings is always improving

- Because humans are evolving technologically so buildings need to as well, to meet our new needs and demands on buildings and the new ways we go about our lives
• To expand our towns – but need to do this without cutting down on wildlife
• To help employment by expanding workplaces that need bigger space
• To replace houses and buildings that have become dangerous
• To give the country more modern and more attractive buildings
• To house and employ people coming into the country through immigration
• Because people need more room
• To house and provide facilities for more vulnerable people
• So builders can get work and be paid.

10. All three groups said a main reason for putting up new buildings was to provide more houses for our growing population, which then needed buildings for the services those people need. All said new buildings were needed for more employment. All spoke of people coming into the country from elsewhere needing houses. And all said we need new buildings to replace old ones that now need replacing. One group was very clear about the need to make sure that no new building is put up unless people know it is definitely going to be used and to meet a need.

What are pupils’ favourite buildings – and why?

11. We wanted to find out more about what pupils thought made a building an excellent one, and asked pupils to name either their favourite building – anywhere in the world – or their favourite type of building. We asked them to say why they had picked it as their favourite. We did ask them to pick a building other than their own house.

12. Two actual buildings were picked as favourites by more then one pupil each – and each of those buildings was picked by pupils in different groups from different schools. Both were tall landmarks – one was the Eiffel Tower, the other was the Shard.

13. The Eiffel Tower was was picked because it is an interesting tourist building, its design is interesting and famous, it is historic, and because of the way it was made. The Shard was picked because of its interesting and unusual shape, because it is taller than the buildings round it, and because its height means it doesn’t take up much space on the ground. The shape of a building can make it attractive.

14. What made many buildings favourites was not to do with the building itself, but because of what went on in it. Buildings are liked for what happens in them. The list of these (in no special order) is:
A pupil’s church – because of friends and activities there
Swimming pools – to enjoy swimming
An Air Force Cadet building – because the pupil wants to become an air cadet
Tennis courts – to enjoy playing tennis
A local leisure centre – because of weekend swimming activities there
Any library – because of the enjoyment of reading
Local games buildings – because they contain favourite games
A pet shop – because of love of pets
A local indoor skate park – where you can enjoy skating and scootering
Unusual and interesting shops
Supermarkets – because of what they have in them
Macdonalds – because people like what they provide
Animal care centres – because of what they do for animals.

15. Other buildings were picked as favourites because of what they were like as buildings. The list of these (again, in no special order) is:

- A very high glass sided restaurant – because you can see for miles from it
- Modern buildings – because they have new facilities
- Modern buildings that are big
- Tall skyscrapers – because they have good views from inside
- Attractive looking buildings; simple designs with bold coloured details like brightly coloured doors
- A holiday building in Turkey, because it was cool with a cold floor and air conditioning and walk-in wardrobes
- Merry Hill shopping centre, Dudley – because it is big enough to get lost in!
- The Statue of Liberty – because of the detail on it
- Seaside piers – because of the feeling of being above the sea, both inside buildings on the pier and when walking outside on the pier
- Buckingham Palace – because it looks so posh
- A cousin’s house – because it is big and warm
- Cinemas – because you always feel relaxed and calm in one
- Buildings which are tall and have dark shading – because this makes them look imposing
- Buildings in towns with windows that let you see in easily from outside
- The derelict house next door – because it can be fixed up, so we can use something old and make it look better
- Powys Castle – because it has been saved from ruin, and is now used for lots of different exhibitions
• Country cottages, if they are listed or old, historic and safe to live in – because they show “the beauty of simple design”
• The Taj Mahal – because it is symmetrical and pretty, and has a real story behind it
• Warwick Castle – because it was hand built without machines and is historic
• One storey houses – because they are humble, small and quiet.

16. There are some themes in what made particular buildings or types of building a pupils’ favourite. Favourites included big buildings, tall buildings with good views, imposing buildings, unusual buildings, historical buildings, famous monuments, older buildings, and buildings of a simple design. But they also included buildings where things pupils liked happened, regardless of their design.

**What buildings do pupils really not like, and why?**

17. This question was the other side of the last one. Having heard what pupils chose as their favourite buildings or types of building, and what made a favourite building, we wanted to find out what pupils really didn’t like, and so what made a building disliked by children or young people.

18. Again, some buildings were not liked because pupils didn’t like what went on in them. Some said they didn’t like school buildings because they found school boring. Some said they didn’t like shops, because they were boring places to be.

19. Some pupils told us they really didn’t like some of the types of building that others had chosen as favourites. Supermarkets had been chosen as a favourite, but someone else disliked them because they took a lot of time just walking around them for things. Fast food restaurants were somebody’s favourite because they liked fast food, but disliked by someone else because they didn’t like unhealthy food and worried about obesity. The Merry Hill shopping centre in Dudley, though it had been someone’s favourite, was disliked by someone else because it is always so busy, and that pupil did not like shopping.

20. One pupil had chosen Powys Castle as their favourite building because it had been restored. Another pupil said they really didn’t like it because it had been restored – really old historic buildings should be allowed to fall into ruins. They were then attractive because they were in their natural state for that stage in their life as a building and had not been made unnatural by being restored or rebuilt.

21. Some pupils disliked particular shop buildings, not because they found shopping boring, but because they thought those shops were too expensive for people to afford. Others disliked particular shop buildings because they didn’t like what they sold – one disliked the local ‘chippy’ because they did not like that food, and another disliked a specialist
chocolate shop because its chocolate was not normal chocolate and they didn’t like it. One pupil disliked the building of a particular takeaway, because they had found some metal in a meal they had bought from there.

22. One pupil had liked libraries because they enjoyed reading, but another said they really disliked libraries because they are too quiet.

23. Good or bad things happening in a building can make you like or dislike the building whenever you see it.

24. Here is the list of buildings or types of buildings the others chose as ones they really didn’t like (as always, in no special order):

- Old buildings that are derelict and boarded up and untidy
- Old abandoned buildings – “the sort people would throw stones through windows”
- Buildings that are old and not good looking – like some of the pupils’ own old school buildings
- Old castles that are ruined standing alone in fields
- Hospitals – because they smell nasty
- Old buildings that are boring and have no interesting features
- Old buildings that are simply old-fashioned and not updated
- A derelict house being sold – which may have growth in it that triggers someone’s allergies
- A petrol factory – because it smells bad, smokes, is grey and ugly and kills birds
- Derelict historic buildings
- Buildings that don’t fit in where they are – “like a jigsaw puzzle with a wrong piece stuck in it”
- The “concrete and asbestos buildings” round Chester
- The new buildings in Telford – because they look horrible and are badly designed with “random sticky out bits”
- Gigantic buildings built to be “impressive buildings that are meant to make an impression on you” – with the statement “hi – we are gigantic buildings”. Good buildings get the balance right between being impressive and being plain and boring
- Too many takeaway shops near each other – because this can even make you feel sick
- Rows and rows of the same type of house with nothing special about them.
- “Boring square brick buildings”.

Page 1535 of 1964
25. Some of the themes in what pupils said were that buildings that are either boring or designed to be too impressive can be disliked for that – there needs to be a good balance of interest and plainness – and buildings are disliked if they are run down or derelict. Out of date buildings can be disliked if they are run down rather than historic. It matters that buildings fit in with other buildings where they are. The smell in or around buildings can be important. And as with the choice of favourite buildings, what goes on in a building can be the most important thing about what you think about the building.

**What makes a good looking building?**

26. Architects and planners pay a lot of attention to what buildings look like, and pupils had talked about how important it can be that a building looks good. So we asked pupils to say what, for them, made a building a good looking one – to give us their guide to architects and planners on making the built environment look good.

27. Some said the size of a building is important. It needs to look the right size for its purpose. A building that looks and feels too small for what it is doesn’t look good. It also needs to look as if it has the right amount of land around it – the right size of garden for it if it is a house. Having greenery outside helps make a building look attractive.

28. As well as this, pupils told us that a building needs to be in the right position on its site. It looks wrong if it is put too far to one side, or too far forward or back on its plot.

29. Some talked of buildings needing to look interesting, and to be attractive by standing out from the other buildings. A good looking building is eye-catching, “appeals to the crowds”, and has something of a “wow” about it. A row of buildings needs to have different styles and shapes of building in it to look good and “more than just a row of houses”. But in trying to make a building stand out from other buildings, it is important not to put too many unique buildings next to each other, or it doesn’t look right. In a town area, catchy signs and posters can make buildings stand out and look good.

30. Having “jazzy” colours can make a building look interesting and attractive – one pupil said there were good examples of use of a variety of colours in the buildings in Amsterdam. Colours can stop a building looking too grey and boring, and are useful to break up big areas of glass on large or tall buildings. A building can be made to look good by using different styles and colours of bricks. Another thing that can make any building look good is to put a lot of interesting detail on it.

31. Some pupils gave us examples of very good looking buildings – Big Ben’s tower looks good because of its size and how it stands out, and Buckingham Palace looks good because of its different shading and different bricks. Generally, mansions looked good if they were big and posh.
32. Pupils in different groups again used the word “balanced” about the design of buildings to look good. The design needs to make a building stand out and be interesting, but not go ‘over the top’ and make it look odd or as if it is just trying to look impressive. As one pupil put it, it needs to be “not too odd, not too bland”.

33. And again, pupils talked about the ‘purpose’ of a building. To look good, a building needs to look right for its purpose.

34. Another factor that makes a building look good is looking sturdy and well built, and therefore safe and likely to last. “It is going to stay upright – going to last”. This factor came quite separately from pupils in different groups. In one group, a pupil said that a good building should look as if the builder has taken their time to build it well; “built right, not rushed, not just put up on a Friday”. A good looking building also looks well looked after.

35. Different pupils had different favourite styles that they thought looked good. Some thought modern looking buildings look good; “modern and big, not too small”. Other choices were black and white tudor style designs, rustic styles with thatched roofs, the stone cottage look, and the style of buildings from the industrial revolution like the Albert Dock in Liverpool. Another choice was modern glass fronted buildings, provided they were well designed and mainly white around the glass. One pupil liked Victorian houses because of the colours used in them.

36. One point made about new houses was that they should look “more than a box”, by having a room or part of the building outside any basic box shape.

37. There was one view though that there aren’t many good looking buildings around; one pupil said “I ain’t seen a good building, to be honest”.

**What are pupils’ favourite built environments?**

38. The Select Committee is interested in the built environment, not just buildings alone, and so we asked pupils what their favourite places were because of the buildings there (rather than because of the natural scenery of the place like hills, fields, rivers or coast). Here is the list of their favourites:

- Madrid – because its buildings look good together
- The fun buildings at Alton Towers
- A row of shops
- Torquay – because the buildings stand out at night
- My own street – because there are nice houses all around it
- Country buildings in Devon
- Disneyland glowing in the dark
• Weston-super-Mare – because there is a screen on a building you can watch
• Centre Parcs – because of the tree houses and different sized houses
• Buildings in lovely countryside locations
• Ireland – because the buildings are not too close together but still near enough for a sense of community, and are a good design
• London – because it is really busy and the buildings include stations
• The old industrial canal areas of Birmingham – because they fit the era and are small scale
• Seaside villages – because they feel serene
• Streets in India – because there is colour and everything happening, nothing organised, all going on and because of the atmosphere
• Venice – because of the buildings on the canals and the atmosphere
• Spain – with buildings on a slope and pretty golden houses, with skyscrapers throwing shadows on the hills
• Newtown, Powys – because the community is special, it “has everything” and doesn’t need new facilities, has a pretty clock tower, and “the people make it special”
• New York – because it is attractive and modern
• Paris – for its landmarks and the Eiffel Tower
• London – because of its tall buildings
• Cardiff Bay – because it is modern and up to date
• London’s rows of uniform houses
• Stourbridge’s rows of uniform houses
• London – because it has tall and impressive buildings in the centre, and nice and new houses around the edges, but it does have a dirty and untidy area between the centre and the edge, like most cities
• Knighton – because of its nice buildings, facilities and a particular department store there
• Dubai – because it is really interesting.

39. Some common themes here are pupils saying how the setting of buildings is important to the built environment (eg being set in countryside or well spaced out in a country area), how there is a difference between ‘nice’ and ‘impressive’ parts of a city and the unattractive band around the city centre, how London and some other cities abroad feature as attractive places, how lighting up can affect how somewhere looks, and how tall buildings and rows of uniform but attractive houses can be good. It is also clear that pupils regard the facilities of a place, and its atmosphere, as being important to the built environment – not just what it looks like.

What do pupils think of new buildings?
40. Thinking about the design of buildings in the future, we asked pupils what they either most liked, or most disliked, about new buildings being put up nowadays.

41. Some pupils told us they didn’t like seeing building construction going on around them – a building looks weird when half finished. It also takes ages for new buildings to be built.

42. Some liked new buildings that looked posh and expensive, and thought “the dear ones are the good ones”.

43. Lots of pupils liked new buildings that had a unique design and different shapes and some contrasting colours, as long as they weren’t too bold or odd-looking, had loads of windows that looked right and let in plenty of natural light, were good for environmental factors, and looked strong and safe. Permission to build any building should only be given if it was going to be safe. New buildings should have a good layout and be built out of good quality materials. As one put it, the “science of structure” had to look right.

44. New buildings should not be built “in the middle of a field” if they don’t belong there – “don’t build on nature”. There should be plenty of space to build the building and it should not look out of proportion to the buildings around it.

45. How the building looked was not always the architect’s idea of how it would look to people – pupils saw buildings in their own way, “not what ways the building wants you to see”.

46. Windows were vital to how a new building looked. Many pupils didn’t like new buildings with no windows, oddly shaped windows, windows in odd places, or windows that were too small or too big for the walls they were in. A building with no ordinary windows “looks weird and tacky”. Circular windows don’t look right. Massive rectangular windows mean you can see the people inside. Window sizes matter, and windows should not look like a puzzle. Windows also have reflections in them when you look at them from the outside, and what they reflect needs to look pretty. The reflections can help make interesting contrasting colours.

47. Size and space were important to pupils. They liked new buildings that had good size, and used their whole space properly without being cramped. A new building should not be built so close to its neighbours’ land that it inconveniences them.

48. Other things pupils didn’t like about new buildings were plain brick buildings, buildings that looked too plain, buildings that didn’t look right in their environment, buildings that were too bold, buildings that didn’t look safe, and big or tall buildings that shade or hide other buildings around them. One also didn’t like new buildings that had small rooms in them that soon looked neglected.
49. Again, pupils told us that it was important that any new building is only built if it will definitely be used and is needed. “Don’t build things that won’t be used”. It is important to “predict the future” in deciding whether a building will carry on being needed and so whether to give permission for it to be built. Some thought strongly that everyone affected by a new building should be asked about it, and it was important that “everyone should agree with the plan”.

**How important is it to keep old buildings?**

50. We asked pupils to vote on what policy there should be about keeping, or replacing, old buildings. We gave three options to choose from: to keep as many old buildings as possible, only to keep very special old buildings, or that it is not at all important to keep old buildings if the space is needed for something else.

51. Here are the pupils’ votes, putting all three school votes together:

- Keep as many old buildings as possible: 11
- Only keep very special old buildings: 23
- Not at all important if the space is needed for something else: 7

52. The pupils clearly voted for a policy of only keeping very special old buildings. Over half the pupils voted for this policy. Of those who voted for other policies about keeping or not keeping old buildings, most wanted as many old buildings to be kept as possible. Only 7 out of the 41 pupils voted that it is not important to keep old buildings if their space is needed for something else.

53. One worry was that if some old buildings are not kept, everywhere would be “just loads of new ones”, which would not be good.

54. Because the majority of pupils wanted very special old buildings to be kept, we asked what would make an old building very special. Most saw an old building as very special, and therefore one to keep, if it had history to it. This might be because something important in history had happened there, or because someone important had lived there, if the building had played a part in a big change for people in the past, if it was an important part of our culture, if it had links to royalty, or if it was an important part of our past. It was important to keep old buildings if they are “ones that people want to see”. Popular, famous, beautiful, unusual, rare or landmark buildings should be kept. Old buildings like castles should be kept and turned into tourist attractions.

55. Buildings that have been there a long time should always be considered for keeping, and buildings should not be knocked down just because they are old, as long as they are still
safe and people like them. Old buildings should only be knocked down if nobody really cares about them any more. “Only get rid of non-historical buildings”.

56. Buildings special enough to be kept could be many different sorts – they could include monuments as well as buildings as such.

57. One pupil group pointed out that it was easy to make decisions about keeping old buildings if lots of people thought they were special, but that planning people need to consider that a building may be special to a particular person, and knocking it down could upset someone who really likes it, even if nobody else does.

58. Pupils said it was important to keep buildings that have already been ‘listed’ as special, and many told us they thought the system of listing special buildings should carry on.

What rules should people putting up buildings have to follow to make a TOWN CENTRE a really good place to be?

59. We asked pupils to consider what rules should be followed before giving planning permission for new, or changed, buildings in town centres.

60. Here is the full list of rules they suggested:

- Respect the buildings already there
- Only build after asking local people and if there is public consent for the new or changed building
- Ask local people what they think about the design of the proposed new building
- If houses are being built, ask whether local people would want to live in that sort of house
- Only build if there is a definite need or if local people want the building or change
- Avoid having too many of the same sort of facility
- Avoid having too many of the same sort of building together
- Only build if it will benefit or give enjoyment to the local community
- Keep disruption to local people to a minimum while the building work is being done
- Don’t build too many new buildings in an area
- Keep a variety of buildings and facilities in the area
- Make sure landlords and solicitors are properly involved
- Make sure the new or changed buildings are safe
- Have two separate sorts of permission that people have to get – firstly, permission to knock any existing building down, and secondly permission for the new building they want to put up.
61. One pupil was very clear that how disruptive the building work will be to local people should be considered in deciding whether to give planning permission, as well as the buildings that might be knocked down and the building it is proposed to put up. Building work can cost lots of people lots of time, for example when a diversion around a large building site makes a journey to school or work far longer than it usually is, for a very long time.

**What rules should people putting up buildings have to follow to make the COUNTRYSIDE a really good place to be?**

62. We also asked pupils about the rules they thought should be followed in making decisions on whether to allow new buildings in the countryside. Here is the full list of the suggested rules:

- Ask people around if it’s ok with them to build there
- Only build in the countryside if there is a real need for the building to be there
- Ask local people if it’s a good spot to build, or whether the building should go somewhere else
- Only build in a field if it is safe and if nobody needs the field for other uses
- Don’t disturb or build on animals’ habitats
- Don’t build too much in the countryside
- Respect country activities
- Don’t make the countryside look like a town or city
- Don’t affect views
- Make any buildings suited to the landscape – including how they are positioned in the landscape and whether they are going to be on land that floods
- Don’t spend too much money developing building in the countryside
- Don’t allow “random buildings” in the countryside
- Allow some expansion of country towns if that is really needed
- Ask for the views of local farmers.

63. One common theme from all our three groups was not to build too much in the countryside, and keeping buildings there to what is really needed there rather than somewhere else. Many were concerned about keeping the countryside and not letting it become like a town area – as one pupil put it, summarising for many others, “sometimes I feel like we are losing the countryside”.

**How pupils would change the buildings in their local area to make it a better place to be**
64. We asked pupils to think about a built environment they all knew – the area around their own school. We asked them what changes, if any, they would want made to the buildings there to make the area as a whole a better place to be.

65. Many pupils at each school said they liked the buildings as they were, and would not make any big changes. As well as this though, many would like the buildings generally to be a bit better looked after, painted and repaired. “Fine as it is”, but needs a “good lick of paint”, “paint it and make it look nicer”, “everywhere needs a touch up”.

66. Some wanted particular buildings kept, but “revamped”. It was important to maintain buildings so that they don’t “just look old”. It was also important to keep buildings and the area around them clean. Buildings generally needed to be kept looking good and well-painted not plain. One proposal for improving the town while keeping it’s character was to “modernise buildings but don’t change the outside”.

67. Pupils thought it was important to keep the old character of old towns. “Old towns should stay old towns”, “keep the history of the town”, “do things up but don’t change them”.

68. It was important that the insides of buildings – like schools – were kept in a clean and good state. Chewing gum under tables, and graffiti, need to be removed. There were also some particular problems that needed sorting out in some areas – like the ‘leaky lampposts’ in one area.

69. Those who wanted changes wanted different sorts of improvements. These included making housing estates look nicer, making houses stand out from each other, knocking down buildings that were in a bad condition or now in the wrong place, making the place more modern, clean cut and neater. They also included having more and better maintained parks, getting rid of graffiti, and improving local roads to make places more accessible.

70. Some felt their town was too cramped, and proposed helping the place to look and feel “less squished”. It was important too that if new houses were to be added, they shouldn’t be ugly new houses, and shouldn’t be built cramped together.

71. There were proposals to improve security and ban smoking at a local large shopping centre, and to provide more to do locally with new facilities ranging from more climbing equipment and slides in the local park to giving the locality a multi-screen cinema and swimming baths.

72. Some discussed shops, and thought it was important that there should be proper research on what sorts of shops people actually want in their area. New shops could be
added, but without getting rid of old shops. There was concern that adding new shops and businesses could damage the existing ones; “don’t add new shops because old businesses will fail”.

73. In one group, there was a discussion about whether the old town clock should be demolished or kept. When someone proposed that it should be demolished, there was a general objection to this around the group, as it was an old local landmark. So we put that issue to a vote of the group. One person voted for the clock to be demolished, 8 that it should be kept as it is, but two, having heard the views discussed, were now undecided and abstained from voting either way. Proposals affecting something many see as historic or a landmark can raise strong views.

**If new houses need to be built, what kinds of places should they be built in?**

74. We asked pupils to consider the question of finding places to build new houses when the growing population needed them.

75. Pupils were keen that new housing should be built on existing unused land, without going into the countryside too much, and without taking away farmland. Sites like abandoned factories or other industrial sites should be used first, and housing should be built so that it fits in with nearby buildings. Existing buildings that don’t have a purpose any more could give way to new housing. Derelict or unoccupied housing should be reused or replaced.

76. They also thought new housing should be built on the outskirts of existing towns or villages, with a focus on cities rather than open countryside. Housing estates should be built on the edges of towns. Old places should be expanded, rather than new ones started.

77. Big plots of land that are not fully used should be found - where there is a massive house on a big plot of land, it could be knocked down to build more houses on the site. Building houses should happen in nice neighbourhoods which have spare land if possible, to make nice streets for the new people to live on. It is also important for new houses to be built next to areas that are already busy, so that people moving in can make friends easily. New houses should have schools nearby, so children don’t have to catch buses to school. It is important that new housing shouldn’t be overcrowded.

78. Some proposed that a lot more flats rather than houses should be built where there wasn’t much land available. The ‘bedroom tax’ also means that more smaller size houses should be built. New building should also include cheaper houses.
79. There was one thought about making existing towns and cities bigger. This was that building some small areas of new housing in the countryside away from towns might be safer should there ever be another war involving bombing.

**Who should make decisions about what sorts of buildings can be built where?**

80. One of the Select Committee’s questions was about who should have the final say on where new buildings can be built. We asked the pupils to vote between four possible options; that decisions should be made by the national government, or by the local council, or by the people who live or work nearby.

81. Here are the pupils’ votes:

- The government of the whole country: 2
- The local council: 15
- The people who live or work nearby: 23

82. There was a clear pupil vote in favour of the final decision on giving planning permission for new or changed buildings being made by the people who live or work nearby. The majority voted for this. Planning decisions being made by the local council came a strong second choice.

83. A final say on this came from one pupil on giving different people a say. They wanted local people to have the main say about whether a new building should be allowed, but thought that there were others who should have a say too, like the local council or government which had to find places to build new houses, which might not always be popular locally. Their idea was that planning permission decisions should be made by a voting system which gave most weight to local people, followed by the local council, and followed finally by the government. Different weights should be given to the views of different groups of people.

I am grateful to the Head and staff of Quarry Bank Primary School, of Newtown High School and of John Bedddoes campus for the chance to hold these discussion with their pupils. I am especially grateful to the school staff at each school who worked very hard taking detailed notes of each of the views given by each of the children. And above all I am very grateful to each of the pupils for their thinking, votes and views.

Dr Roger Morgan OBE

25 October 2015
Quinlan and Francis Terry Architects and Penoyre & Prasad Architects – Oral Evidence (QQ64-72)

Transcript to be found under Penoyre & Prasad Architects
Introduction

1. Reclaim London was formed in 2015 to campaign for a fair, open, accountable and genuinely democratic planning process. We are an alliance of campaigners representing all parts of the capital, with direct experience of the planning system. We strongly believe that the planning system should include residents in the conversation about how their cities should develop.

2. Although the NPPF was supposed encourage public participation in the planning system by simplifying the planning rules, it has been our experience that this simply has not happened.

3. In our view the overriding problem is that the ‘flexible’ approach to planning policy means that almost any policy, no matter how important, can simply be set aside by a planning authority often with little justification. In London in particular, almost every development is seen as ‘exceptional’ and granted special dispensation to be allowed to depart from the local plan.

4. This approach of giving authorities almost limitless latitude with the development plan has been endorsed by the Planning Inspectorate and upheld by the courts, who have consistently refused to intervene to quash decisions, even in very clear circumstances where the NPPF has been ignored and where the failure to implement the NPPF has been challenged by the public.

5. What is particularly disturbing is that in an environment where the planning authorities are free to negotiate away planning policies the public are quickly shut out. Without any clear rules about how planning decisions should be taken the public are unable to hold planners to account for their decisions. The result is that almost no new buildings in London conform to the development plan. And as the development plan must reflect social need, this is creating a city that is unable to provide for its own population or protect its history and culture. The
NPPF aspires to create ‘change for the better’ but this is not happening in London.

6. It is clear that Londoners, generally speaking, wish to live in a city that has a diversity of people, buildings, neighbourhoods and economic activities. Yet as a result of current planning decisions London is becoming closed to all but the wealthiest, dominated by large businesses and by an increasing number of anti-social buildings and spaces. The common feeling among people from all income groups, backgrounds and areas of London is that the present planning rules need to be strengthened, not weakened.

**Question 1**

7. A well-resourced local authority should be at the heart of the decision-making process and the national policymakers’ role should be to apply checks and balances where appropriate.

8. There needs to be a stronger policy on when the Secretary of State should call in a decision, with call-in being mandatory in certain circumstances.

9. A shocking example of the failure of the current call-in policy came with the decision on Elizabeth House in Waterloo. Elizabeth House is in the setting of the World Heritage Site in Westminster. UNESCO, due to the increasing concern over the tall buildings being granted permission in the setting of Westminster issued a public statement saying that the Government’s treatment of the Elizabeth House decision would be the ‘litmus test’ on whether the UK wanted to retain Westminster’s World Heritage Site.

10. The Secretary of State refused to call-in the application and the planning minister, Nick Boles, wrote to Westminster Council saying that the application only raised local issues. The Secretary of State was content to leave the future of Westminster’s World Heritage Status to Lambeth Council. A decision which many found surprising, but was nonetheless found acceptable to the High Court in a subsequent judicial review of the decision launched by
Westminster City Council.

**Question 3**

11. The stated intention of the NPPF was to provide the public with a much clearer and consistent set of planning policies in order to allow them to better engage with the planning process. But in the context where all planning policies are seen as flexible and decision makers can arbitrarily set them aside, then the public finds the tools they need have been blunted.

12. The Shell Centre decision provides a clear example of this. The application to redevelop the Shell Centre on London’s South Bank resulted in a loss of more than 4,000 sq m of open space. The NPPF is clear\(^1\) that open space should not be built on and any loss of open space must be replaced with open space of equivalent size. The inclusion of this paragraph in the NPPF was the result of a hard fought campaign by the National Trust and others to protect England’s open spaces.

13. A subsequent judicial review of the decision found that the loss should be regarded as acceptable. The explanation given was that the provision in the NPPF should be interpreted flexibly.\(^4\)\(^3\)\(^6\) If the loss of 4,000sqm of open space in the centre of a dense urban environment is acceptable under a flexible interpretation of the NPPF, then it is difficult to see what meaning can be given to the NPPF at all.

14. Regarding prioritisation, the way in which the NPPF is interpreted is dominated by the weight given to the need to promote economic growth though building and construction. We see this being applied, often crudely, with other policies ignored. In many cases in London the size of a project seems to steer the decision, the implication being that any development will have a beneficial economic impact.

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\(^1\) NPPF paragraph 74
\(^2\) Turner v Secretary of State CLG paragraphs 31-37
15. This approach risks minimising the negative impacts of development proposals on local economies. This can include a loss of space for small businesses and affordable office and workspace, as well as loss of amenity, which damages the value of surrounding areas. However these losses are seldom quantified.

16. As part of economic considerations in the NPPF, the viability of schemes is also being seen to trump all other policies on a grand scale. It is an obvious and necessary reform for developer’s viability claims to be made public.

17. It is common in London for a developer to declare their scheme to be financially unviable and therefore there is a need (they say) to depart from the development plan to allow the scheme to become viable.

18. This approach is problematic for two reasons. Firstly developers have no obligation to disclose their financial information and the public must trust that they are right. Frequently evidence has emerged that the viability claims of developers are fictitious, resulting in an unnecessary departure from the development plan.

19. Secondly the use of viability as a get-out from the development plan turns the entire planning system on its head. Planning should be about encouraging the development of appropriate buildings. Yet if a developer proposes an inappropriate building and claims it is viable, the planning authority often feels compelled to accept the proposal, even if it is a significant departure from the development plan. Whether or not a building that conformed to the local plan would also be viable is a question that is left unanswered.

20. It is interesting to note that the court of appeal in the Barnwell case found that the protection of heritage assets took precedent over all other planning policies, as it was the only planning
consideration that the Secretary of State had a statutory obligation to take into account.\textsuperscript{437}

**Question 4**

21. We feel that London needs to be defined separately within the NPPF because much of it was written to apply to the non-metropolitan centres, such as the need to encourage building. What matters in London is a greater emphasis on quality and amenity for communities within the high-density areas designed to boost the UK’s housing quota. Again, this has got to mean stricter planning rules.

**Question 5**

22. A more forward-looking approach is vital. New developments of unaffordable apartments may provide an immediate gain, but they are at risk from global capital movements. Looked at more closely, new development areas such as Vauxhall are not being provided with basic amenities and infrastructure and may be rendered unusable in years to come.

**Question 6**

23. We feel strongly that the important and often-overlooked issue here is the lack of supply of appropriate housing.

24. In Central London 75\% of new homes are sold to overseas buyers. This international demand has fuelled a boom in house prices. On the South Bank prices have hit £2,000 per square foot. The result is that very little housing supply is available to the domestic market, which is driving the current housing crisis. The knock-on effect is felt across the whole of the city, with London

\textsuperscript{437} Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd V E.Northants DC, English Heritage, National Trust & SSCLG [2014] EWCA Civ 137
prices now at over ten times the average wage. Some way to prevent the dominance of overseas buyers in the market must be found.

25. In this context the new planning reforms announced by the Prime Minister at the Conservative Party conference are of little effect to deal with the housing problem. The proposal to give first time buyers a 20% discount on new homes will not help the majority of people for whom a stable home remains out of reach.

26. In addition, because the majority of buyers in Central London of new homes will not be permanent residents, there is a temptation on the part of developers to dispense with many crucial elements that settled populations require: adequate daylight, open spaces, children’s play spaces and communal spaces.

27. Further relaxation of the planning rules are likely to lead to more poor quality homes for people who do not need them and fewer good quality homes for people who do.

28. Instead Government should consider giving allowing councils to use CPO powers to take control of development land where landowners refuse to bring forward appropriate development. CPO powers have been used in a number of cases to remove residents from estates that are then demolished to make way for unaffordable market homes. However, if a developer sits on land for years and attempts to bring forward proposals that are not in line with the development plan he is allowed to continue this game endlessly.

**Question 7**

29. There must be a greater obligation to keep and improve already existing buildings including those that give areas a sense of place and local identity.
30. Increasingly, the demolition of council estates and their rebuilding at higher density is seen as the way to boost housing supply. However, local authority housing estates are often much denser than other types of housing stock. Planners would do much better to look elsewhere for development potential, such as in the outer London boroughs. A proper consideration of the social and environmental effects of what is being lost when you erase whole communities from estates is missing from these over-simplistic equations. We refer the committee to UCL Engineering report *Demolition or Refurbishment of Social Housing: a review of the evidence* 2014.

**Question 8**

31. The record of the protection of historic assets in our cities has been poor. Liverpool’s world heritage site has been assessed as ‘in danger’ by UNESCO and there are threats to place Westminster on the World Heritage In Danger list too. The ‘Walkie Talkie’ skyscraper has destroyed views of Tower Bridge and the Tower of London. This damage is purely the result of the failure of the Government to apply planning policies.

32. In the cities we can only dream of the level of protection afforded to rural historic assets and the threat they have seen from wind farms. The Secretary of State has frequently called-in wind farm applications and treated the impact of these with far greater care than the impact of development on our cities’ heritage. The impression given is that the Government’s action on the protection of heritage is driven more by political considerations than by policy.

**Question 9**

33. The biggest problem we see is in the lack of skills around the analysis of development viability. Developers will frequently claim that financial considerations prevent them from delivering

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the development plan, however Councils have no in-house ability to scrutinize the claims made in Financial Viability Appraisals.

34. Often they will buy in that expertise, however, frequently the consultants hired by the local authority will be working for the developer the next day. The public perception is that these consultants always have one eye on their next job and are unable to properly scrutinize the developer’s proposals to ensure that Local Authorities are getting the benefits they are due from the scheme.

35. If Viability Appraisals were made public, the public has the skills to understand and scrutinise the figures.

Questions 11 and 12: Community involvement and community impact

36. Many of these questions have been answered previously. We strongly believe that more account should be taken of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it. As we have suggested, the way to improve this is to refuse schemes that go against public amenity such light, green space, spaces for children, community space, heritage assets, as well as those which do not provide sufficient levels of affordable housing.

37. Of particular concern to Reclaim London is how the engagement with the public by planning authorities is often seen as tokenistic. For example, in a number of London boroughs the public is given only two or three minutes to put forward their objections to a planning committee. By contrast, developers will have had many hours and days of meetings with planners and decision-takers in the run up to a decision being made.

38. This is an example of how the positive aims of Localism agenda currently play no part in the daily business of the planning system.

Question 13
39. In London developers are making huge profits from building luxury housing. In this context it is inappropriate for the Government consider further fiscal measures to support developers.

13 October 2015
1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

I. As we set out in our recent report, Devo Home, the only way to plug the shortage of affordable housing is through the creation of new local institutions – Local Place Partnerships (LPPS) – that devolve housing to people and places. The LPP model can dramatically increase the numbers of homes built through bringing together all the interested parties: private developers, housing associations, residents, civil society and local business, and addressing their concerns and wishes through one decision point. Housing Zones, introduced by the Greater London Authority and the 20 Zones announced for England outside London, is recognition of the benefits of this approach. We believe more must be done to move from a command and control model to one in which not just local authorities but also other local stakeholders are empowered to address local housing need. More also needs to be done to address the fragmented terrain that is the current housebuilding process, which prevents ambitious action from becoming a reality.

II. We also believe that there is a significant role for communities in shaping their local built environment. Research shows that people highly value beautiful places, spaces and developments – and that experiencing such places can bring significant physical and mental health benefits – but that access to these, particularly for the least wealthy in society, is limited. Original polling conducted for our July 2015 report A Community Right to Beauty found that those most able to access beautiful places, spaces and buildings in their local area were households earning more than £45,000 per year. To address this question of social justice, and promote publically beneficial outcomes, we believe that communities must be given a greater say in promoting the creation of a local built environment they consider ‘beautiful’.

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

III. The NPPF retains the commitment to good design in buildings and spaces, and makes reference to the importance of visual appeal, attractiveness and beauty,
but submerges them beneath considerations such as viability and sustainability. Yet the appreciation of beauty is something that is much valued by the public – in one poll, 81% of those surveyed responded that everyone should be able to experience beauty regularly, with only 3% disagreeing.

IV. We therefore believe that the idea of beauty should be given more explicit weight in the NPPF, in order to drive a large-scale re-evaluation of the importance of beauty in the planning system. To give beauty a stronger emphasis in relation to other considerations, our July 2015 report A Community Right to Beauty detailed four alterations we believe should be made to the text of the NPPF. These were as follows:

i. Under Core Planning Principles, amend the fourth bullet of paragraph 17, so that it reads: “Planning should ...
   - always seek to secure high quality, create beautiful places, and provide a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings”.

ii. Under Requiring Good Design, amend the sixth bullet point under paragraph 58, so that it reads: “Ensure that developments ...
   - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping and protect or enhance the beauty of an area”.

iii. Under Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, amend the first bullet point under paragraph 109, so that it reads: “The planning system should contribute to an enhance the natural and local environment by:
   - protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, natural beauty, geological conservation interests and soils”.

iv. Under Plan Making, Local Plans, insert a new bullet at paragraph 156 which reads: “Local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include strategic policies to deliver:
   - Places of urban and natural beauty that enhance the character and visual appeal of an area”.

V. This is not to say that beauty should take precedence over all other considerations in making decision about buildings, places and spaces. However, the fact that beauty is not always the most important consideration does not mean it should be considered a luxury only to be addressed when the finances allow.

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed
VI. As we argue above, we believe the Government should enable and empower local authorities to work with their communities and collaborate with neighbouring authorities to address local housing need at the appropriate scale. Local authorities built housing at the needed scale in the post-war period, but too often homes were ugly, cheap and utilitarian. Housebuilding under the command and control model of recent times has been stifled by the fact that, as a nation, we stop development. This is not simply ‘nimbyism’: it is very often a legitimate reaction to the commonly negative impact of new developments on communities, infrastructure and places. A new institutional model is needed to enable communities and local authorities to work together to steer local development and build communities in which people not only live but thrive.

VII. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should devolve powers to LPPs to introduce Local Development Orders as a mechanism of land value capture to finance infrastructure and affordable homes; develop beyond brownfield land; offer whole sector investment opportunity; and enable the development of cross-boundary development plans. The DCLG has a crucial role to play in quality assuring Local Place Partnerships and the cross-boundary development plans they produce.

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

VIII. Attractive public spaces are important factors in individuals’ physical and mental health. ResPublica’s July 2015 report A Community Right to Beauty included original polling which found significant discrepancies in respondents’ satisfaction with their mental and physical health according to their perception of the beauty of their area. Those who rated their local area as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ in terms of being a beautiful place to live were significantly more satisfied with their physical and mental health than those who rated the beauty of their local area as ‘fairly poor’ or ‘very poor’.

IX. We therefore believe that more attention should be paid to the impact of individuals’ perception of the beauty or otherwise of their local built environment on those individuals’ health outcomes. Improving consideration of this impact will require giving communities a greater say in shaping their local built environment in order to create spaces which they consider beautiful and which can promote positive health outcomes of this kind.
12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

X. The absence of pre-existing exceptional buildings, places and spaces – most especially in deprived areas – ratchets down the expectations of communities as to the potential for new development to promote the beautiful and of the role they can play in improving the look of their built environment. Only through exposure to high quality environments can we develop the language and the confidence to demand more from new buildings and spaces. This can perhaps be seen in the geographically unbalanced uptake of Neighbourhood Planning; ten of the sixty completed Neighbourhood Plans are located within Arun District Council in West Sussex. We therefore believe that proactive efforts to involve communities in improving the appearance of their local built environment will prove self-reinforcing. *A Community Right to Beauty* made a number of recommendations as to how to encourage efforts of this kind; a selection of these is outlined here.

XI. Architects and developers should be given the space to physically display their plans, models and proposals for any new local developments, which should then be subject to a design competition and local vote. Communities should have the power to choose their preferred design and developer in line with what they believe will contribute most to the beauty and ethos of their locality and deliver the greatest community value.

XII. Decisions surrounding local development and place-shaping are often cumbersome and long-winded, which puts many people off engaging with the process. To respond to these concerns, and to reinforce the principle of democracy in the planning system, we recommend the introduction of local Citizens’ Juries, a model deployed in Australia and elsewhere to draw together a representative group of people from a given neighbourhood via a stratified sample of those on the electoral roll. A Citizens’ Jury would provide communities with the support and the access to experts and skilled professionals to enable them to come to a decision and conclude with their recommendations. The Jury could be triggered where there is widespread concern or disagreement over a particular area or development, or simply to facilitate the construction of a Neighbourhood Plan. This must be a community-led but expert-supported process, working within a defined public budget, and the local authority should be bound to adopt the Jury’s conclusions and recommendations.

XIII. Government should allow certain buildings, areas and spaces of local importance to be designated for preservation or improvement by introducing a new class on the Community Asset register: ‘local beauty assets’. This designation should seek to create a coalition of interest in favour of that
preservation or improvement between property owners and the community.

XIV. The Community Right to Reclaim Land should be extended to include buildings and spaces, to enable communities to challenge local councils and other public bodies to improve derelict, void or unsightly developments and areas, or to release such assets to enable the community to improve them. This process would be greatly assisted if local authorities were required to register unused or underused buildings and spaces to make clear for communities the assets that could be improved in this way. Where public land or development remains unused, the community should have the right to buy or use the asset in a way which will most benefit the neighbourhood, for example converting an unused piece of land into a community garden.

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

XV. The tax which would be levied on private sector developers via Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 should be reduced or waived to incentivise beautiful design in cases where the development has been progressed as a result of a local referendum to choose a preferred design and developer.

XVI. To incentivise improvement in the visual appeal of specific individual buildings, spaces and places, where such work is called for by the community, point relief on Capital Gains Tax could alternatively be used.

XVII. Although currently limited by EU legislation, we recommend that in the long-term a partial VAT relief on refurbishment costs (for example, from 20% to 10%) should apply where developers and owners can justify, through community engagement, the claim that the work would enhance or maintain the visual appeal of buildings and spaces.

XVIII. In our Devo Home report, we set out how a land value capture (LVC) mechanism can be instituted to fund infrastructure and affordable housing. A LVC mechanism can be led by local authorities through the use of Local Development Orders (LDOs). Through LDOs, local authorities can unlock sites and support developers in securing planning consent by establishing parameters for housing on brownfield sites. LDOs can enable local planning authorities to work with local communities to develop workable solutions to determine the development in their areas, providing a means for the planning system to incentivise development to meet a whole range of locally specific policy objectives. Through LDOs they would be able to capture the value of that site and set a bespoke levy, paid by the landowner, which would contribute to the cost. A major issue with Section 106 and CIL is that they can create an atmosphere of uncertainty the
terms of the agreement are not set out from the outset. By empowering local authorities through LDOs, which can form part of their cross-boundary development plans, the costs and requirements will be clear for all to see upfront.

02 October 2015
Policymaking, integration and coordination

Q1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

A1.1 Currently, decision-making processes are spread across a wide number of bodies: Historic England (HE) and the Secretary of State take decisions regarding Scheduled Monuments and Grade I and II* buildings, although the current financial situation means that HE has insufficient resources to carry out these functions adequately. Local authorities determine applications for Grade II buildings and conservation areas without advice from HE. Undesignated archaeological sites are catered for in some authorities through the provision of specialist advisors - although not all LPAs have, or have access to, such advice, thus these sites are often not considered in sufficient depth. HE does not provide support or advice relating to Grade II Registered Parks, meaning that these sites often lack any specialist input if and when decisions need to be taken. Decisions about maritime heritage are nominally settled on HE - but the MoD has recently taken apparently unilateral and financially-driven decisions about treasure recovery from the wrecks of the SS Gairsoppa and the SS City of Cairo, with scant regard to the heritage value of these sites or the artefacts therein. A coordinated approach to heritage decision-making would clearly be advantageous. Decisions about important heritage sites should be taken out of the hands of unqualified and poorly-advised local authorities: HE must be provided with sufficient resources to do its job effectively. National policymakers should also ensure that where they put measures in place, they follow through with appropriate guidance, instruction and monitoring of their effectiveness. It is clear (for example) that many of the heritage principles set out in the NPPF are regularly ignored or discarded at all levels of decision-making.

Q2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

A2.1 Coordination is poor. Each area of concern constantly attempts to trump the others. Where planning is concerned, "sustainable development" is given greater weight than heritage. Underwater, treasure recovery is a higher priority than adherence to international maritime guidelines. Good design concerns carry no weight whatsoever - as illustrated by the large number of inappropriate buildings constructed in London over the last decade - and is only supported by random meaningless statements. What is "good" design? - it is not defined anywhere.

A2.2 Even where individual concerns are under discussion, competing interests intrude:
the recent introduction of the HE Good Practice Advice Notes that replaced the PPS5 Planning Practice Guide are an example of this: a number of heritage bodies responded to the consultation on the draft version of the documents - but GPA 2 was delayed by the sudden introduction of a hitherto unseen and totally unsuitable proposed new archaeological planning condition by DCLG. The profession was given no opportunity to comment on this, and the version now included within the GPA is entirely unsatisfactory, and some bodies (the IHBC being one) have we understand refused to engage with the published document to the point that they are planning to release their own.

A2.3 Improvements should involve properly-stated policy aims, and a commitment to developing practice on the back of them that seeks to reconcile competing interests rather than allow blanket superiority of certain issues. If policy is sound, then decisions can be made equitably: in some cases, it might be appropriate to develop in the green belt, or to demolish a listed building - but in other cases it will be wholly unacceptable. This should be decided on a case-by-case basis on the back of robust policy positions. The current system affords advantages across the spectrum to development at the expense of the environment and this is unacceptable.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

Q3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

A3.1 See discussion about equitable decision-making above. The NPPF sets out certain policies, but singularly fails to attempt reconciliation of possibly conflicting interests, instead promoting the primacy of "sustainable development". This phrase is then misleading in this context of default development, as much NPPF-driven development is anything but "sustainable" - resulting as it does in the wholesale loss of heritage sites, environmental landscapes, and green belt land. Recent discussions regarding housing site allocations at Shropshire are a case in point: the proposals to develop a site adjacent to the Scheduled Old Oswestry Hillfort are clearly inappropriate - yet convoluted discussions involving various decision-making groups have created a ludicrous "solution" that is obviously unsustainable and vehemently opposed locally, yet allegedly within the parameters of current planning policy.

Q4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy

A4.1 It is clear that certain parts of the country require regeneration more than others. Spatial policy should give weight and financial incentive to works in deprived areas - similarly, cramming more and more dense and inappropriate development into the south-east should be the subject of developer surcharges to form a national "regeneration fund". If every new house built in the south east were subject to a £5000 developer surcharge, the
resulting fund could be used for heritage and environmental benefits to offset and mitigate the damage. Alternatively, the fund could be used to provide a £5000 developer grant per unit, for new properties built in deprived areas in the north or midlands.

A4.2 Spatial policy should also coordinate transport planning. It is clear (for example) that yet another runway at Heathrow will be exceptionally damaging to the local natural and historic environment - yet an efficient rail link to the midlands and new airport capacity in the north could provide the impetus to encourage proper regeneration of deprived communities outside of London and the south.

Q5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

No comment to make.

Buildings and places: New and old

Q6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

A6.1 See above. The government should be the driving force for national regeneration. Incentives should be provided for sensible development in deprived areas, with further incentives for businesses - both small and large companies - to move to those areas. There must also be penalties for excessive development in the poor locations. Blanket housing allocations for every local authority damage confidence and trust in the development process locally, and result in poor development overall. Current planning measures - especially the recent extension of permitted development rights - are already starting to result in poor-quality, overly dense inappropriate development that will be unsustainable in the long term. This simply repeats the mistakes of the past.

Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

A7.1 There appears at present to be generally no need for "existing buildings" to adapt to future needs, as the current development ethos is either simply to demolish wholesale and begin again on a swept-clean site or, in many instances, alteration in such a way as to destroy intrinsic character and the local scene. This clearly doesn't create a built environment that is "sustainable and resilient" - but obviously such a regime is not what recent Governments have intended. The best use of existing housing stock is not to sell off housing association or LPA rented accommodation. There is no reason why poor design and materials should accompany economic measures in building; nor why potentially attractive
existing housing stock should not be renovated in order to provide good housing on a human scale where communities can retain their sense of place and their social needs can be met.

Q8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

A8.1  Optimum use is not made of heritage assets. The NPPF promotes retention and sensitive design - but allows "sustainable development" to take precedence. Combined with a VAT system that penalises building repairs with a 20% surcharge, but zero-rates new works, this has created a development framework that actively works against incorporating heritage assets in regeneration and place-making. This framework must change if we are not cause significant and irreversible harm to our national heritage assets. VAT rules must be relaxed to promote building conservation.

Skills and design

Q9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

A9.1  There is a chronic lack of conservation officer and archaeological officer provision at local authority levels. Planners should not be expected to possess all skills involved in the process of decision-making, as many of the areas of concern are highly specialised in nature. However, it is a reasonable expectation of the public that planning authorities should be able to call upon appropriately-qualified, independent expertise at the necessary times, to influence and support decision-making adequately. This is not the case where a local authority lacks the provision of a conservation or archaeological officer, or where the local authority does not have access to a properly resourced and up-to-date Historic Environment Record. Addressing these skills issues is a simple undertaking - HERs and advisory services should be made a statutory requirement as the heritage profession has been requesting for some years to no avail.

Q10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

A10.1  What are the tools and techniques in use? There is no coherent approach to these concerns as far as Rescue is aware. Recent development in London - the prime example being the infamous "Walkie Talkie" building - illustrate this admirably, where inappropriate and wholly unsuitable buildings are thrown up without any thought to their surrounding impact. In the aforementioned example, the structure reflected focussed light rays into the surrounding streets to the point where it melted cars, and its unusual shape has created a hostile and windy micro-climate at street level. The structure itself is ugly and overbearing, detracts from numerous heritage assets in the area including the World Heritage Site of the
Tower of London, and spoils views of the city for miles. The development has been a disaster for the environment and has created no positives whatsoever.

A10.2 Hypothetically, "good quality" designed buildings could potentially fulfil the criteria for Listing in the future. This therefore ought to mean that the Listing criteria should be applied during the planning process, as a test of whether a structure could be considered to be of "good quality" or not. Where a proposed structure obviously is of a nature or design or construction that would not qualify for Listing, it might reasonably be concluded that - despite what the architect's description might state - it is not of sufficient "quality" of design to warrant approval. Such a selection principle would not prevent development taking place - but it would certainly contribute significantly to ensuring that (for example) "landmark" buildings were of sufficiently considered and careful design to ensure they were satisfactory and sympathetic contributors to the surrounding environment.

Community involvement and community impact

Q11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

A11.1 No - and the fact they do not is blatantly demonstrated clearly by the burgeoning number of local campaign groups that have been formed to protest inappropriate and insensitive development proposals. Across the country, local groups are committing to oppose their own councils and local developers in inflicting irreversible damage on local environments.

A11.2 Improving the consideration of the impacts will involve legislative changes in the first instance, to remove the inherent default development bias within the NPPF and other planning documentation, and restore equitability of decision-making. However, it is obvious that simply being elected to a local authority is not a satisfactory qualification to enable someone to take planning decisions. The Government should require mandatory training programmes to be undertaken by elected officials, to ensure that they are competent, and aware of both relevant legislation, and their own responsibilities, before allowing these individuals to sit on planning committees. Local authorities should also be required to have local referenda on their strategic development frameworks and site allocations before putting them in place - and should be subject to a robust and easily accessible process for local challenge if and when they deviate from the agreed principles. No local community should find itself subjected to development proposals as inappropriate as or as contentious as recent examples as have been proposed at The Strand, or Smithfield Market in London, or was approved at Jessop's Hospital in Sheffield, without access to a simple process to challenge these in an independent and accessible way if (as in all these cases) the proposals deviate from previously-agreed development frameworks. Current rules for "calling in"
approved applications, and the appeals process, clearly favour the developer excessively, and to the detriment of local residents - particularly when such processes can incur significant fees.

Q12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

See response to Q.11.

Financial measures

Q13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

A13.1 Possible financial and other measures to put in place to address this question have been articulated throughout this response. Please refer to the answers to questions 1-12 for these.

04 October 2015
Riverhead Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0156)

Question 2

1. Coordination at local level is inefficient. New developments are signed off with no means for the NHS to provide doctors for surgeries and little means for Highways Agency to implement measures to deal with the new traffic. [see Re-Development of Cold Store in Dunton Green, Kent]

Question 8

2. Protection should be extended to old buildings with character that are not necessary listed. New developments should incorporate old façade instead of destroying the memory of places. Continuity should be preferred to total renewal. [Around Sevenoaks station, Kent, the old market place and two old pubs were destroyed and replaced by entirely new buildings with no character or interest. Station and surroundings should be landmarks welcoming people home]

Question 11

3. Developers should be legally forced to sell the entire square footage that they acquired initially. If they don’t, they might have disappeared 20 years later and unusable strips of unsold land will be derelict with no owner responsible for their upkeep. [Riverhead Parish Council, Kent is facing with many of those abandoned pieces of land that cost too much for a Parish Council to maintain; old staircase with dangerous bannister, old collapsing stone walls, piece of land with unstable trees].

4. Developers should also give guarantee [in term of money] that the development proposed will effectively take place in a reasonable time especially when they will first destroy existing building. [For the last 5 years Sevenoaks station faces a big hole where a pub was previously standing and no enforcement rule exist to force the developer to fill the gap]

Question 12

5. When a District Council is in charge of the planning decision in an area, the planning committee is usually chaired and composed by people who do not live in that area, who have not been elected in the area. Local people voice is largely ignored and District Councillors work hard to influence decisions toward the wishes of their electorate but in reality they carry very little weight in major decision and only manage a few amendments. Because planning and environment have such an effect
on people, their elected representative should have a much bigger say. [No one living in Sevenoaks would have ever accepted the complete destruction of the pubs surrounding Sevenoaks station. Similarly, the building of a new Liddle on an already very congested road would not have been permitted considering three large supermarkets being already present in the small town]

06 October 2015
This evidence is submitted by the Royal Academy of Engineering. As the UK’s national academy for engineering, we bring together the most successful and talented engineers from across the engineering sectors for a shared purpose: to advance and promote excellence in engineering.

The views described in this response were assembled through consultation with our Fellows. These include civil, structural and building services engineers, as well as experts in construction, resilience, sustainability and systems engineering.

Executive summary
An overarching strategy for the built environment is needed to address major challenges. This will improve the connectedness of built environment policy across departments. Decision-makers need to take a systems approach to the planning, design and management of the built environment, and to recognise where interdependencies add value.

Smarter targets for sustainability and resilience are essential. For example, it is important to understand what levels of resilience and sustainability are needed and how these translate into design objectives and expectations. Alongside this, decision-making and measures of success must move from cost-based to value-based, necessitating smarter procurement and better educated clients. The planning, design and management of the built environment must be considered alongside infrastructure as the two become increasingly interdependent.

Existing knowledge on energy efficiency of the existing building stock needs consolidation. This will help to improve understanding of the performance/delivery gap and provide a basis for new policies that take into account both social and technical drivers for energy consumption in buildings, and the impacts that any future intervention might have. Any measures to improve the energy efficiency of the built environment must be considered in the context of the future delivery of the UK’s whole energy system. Furthermore, sustainable markets are essential, and for this reason policies need to be consistent over time to provide certainty for the market.

The ability for built environment professionals to work collaboratively with other disciplines is central to achieving a holistic approach. This must be at the core of teaching in universities. It is essential that professionals understand and engage with the outcomes of their building projects to a much greater degree. There also needs to be a repeatable, verifiable way of integrating the question of how to reduce carbon emissions into the design, procurement and construction process so that the average is raised. National and local government require better in-house expertise to understand high level issues and to have the ability to act as an educated client.
Understanding the impact of the built environment on people is key to achieving objectives around important challenges for the built environment, including the use of resources, health and well-being, and performance and productivity.

**Question 2: How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

1. An overarching strategy is vital to address major challenges, such as climate change, improving health and well-being, wealth creation, economic growth, productivity, inward investment, export growth and job creation. The strategy will provide a high level vision and ‘asectoral’ aims to which all other policies can respond.

2. Currently there is a lack of connectedness in policy in relation to how the built environment is conceived, designed, operated and managed. As a result, progress is piecemeal, with policies often running in contrary and conflicting directions. The focus also needs to be on what we should build, rather than just how to build it.

3. Decision-makers must take a systems approach to the planning, design and management of the built environment. This approach considers the interdependencies between the various components, including the fabric of the built environment, the transport and energy networks, water supply and digital infrastructure, in the context of broader challenges such as an ageing society, changes in the economic environment and climate change. A more integrated policy approach is needed across the relevant government departments.

4. Synergistic interdependencies should also be recognised. An umbrella body is required to ensure that the value resulting from positive interdependencies between co-located infrastructure systems is maximised. An evidence base is needed that informs policy development and supports cross-sectoral systems approaches that deliver whole life cost benefits.

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439 An example of this approach is the ‘five cities model’, that sets five areas of achievement for all sectors, and places people at the centre. See: Tyler N (2013) A Vision for Cities: the 5-cities model, ARGNote (1)5, www.cege.ucl.ac.uk/arg/Pages/ARGnote.aspx

440 The built environment comprises the planning, design, construction and operation of buildings, built areas and the public realm, and includes the economic infrastructure required to enable built areas to function (energy, water, waste, transport and ICT). So defined, the built environment has a market size of conservatively 10% - 15% GDP in a developed country such as the United Kingdom.

441 For example, the costs to the NHS of ill health caused by poor quality housing are substantial. Improving the housing stock and preventing health issues would be paid for by reductions in NHS operating costs. Nicol, S., Roys, M. and Garrett, H., (2011) BRE Briefing Paper - The cost of poor housing to the NHS http://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/pdf/87741-Cost-of-Poor-Housing-Briefing-Paper-v3.pdf
5 A stronger voice is crucial within government to champion a high quality built environment, and to lead on a systems approach to policymaking. Government departments should each have a single point of leadership and coordination to further connect and integrate built environment thinking and action.

**Question 5: Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

6 Current timeframes for thinking and action in the built environment sector are too long. Realistic but far more aggressive timeframes for strategy, planning and action should be set and then adhered to in order to drive meaningful focus and urgency from all involved.

7 We support the work that Infrastructure UK is doing in co-ordinating and simplifying the planning and prioritisation of investment in UK infrastructure, and await with interest the formation of the new National Infrastructure Commission chaired by Lord Adonis.

**Question 7: How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**

**A sustainable and resilient built environment**

8 The built environment needs to be resilient to a large range of factors that include:
   - the impacts of climate change, requiring adaptation of the built environment
   - knock-on effects of a failure in one part of a system, for example, a failure of the electricity grid leading to a loss of the ability to pump water
   - failures of individual components. Redundancy in systems has been significantly sacrificed over the last few decades in the narrow interests of cost cutting
   - failures due to ageing, worn out components. Much of our infrastructure is still dependent on components and facilities that were built more than 100 years ago using the best methods at hand then
   - demographic change, for example, the needs of an ageing society and increasing population size, both in the UK and in individual cities.
9 It should be noted that climate change has two very different types of impact, both of which must be considered in adaptation:

- **Acute impacts** – resulting from increasingly severe and intense wind storms, rainfall, tidal surges and heatwaves. These will cause damage to buildings (particularly tall buildings), flooding and spikes in mortality caused by heatwaves, for example;

- **Chronic impacts** - resulting from gradual increases in sea level and temperature, and changing rainfall patterns. These will require modifications to coastal defences, and will lead to changes in the properties of ground conditions and an increased need for air conditioning, for example.

10 In order to achieve resilience, the planning, design and management of the built environment must be considered alongside infrastructure, as the two become increasingly interdependent.\(^{442}\) This will minimise the risk of failure in one part of the system affecting other systems. Government intervention in cross-infrastructure ‘hardening’ will be important, as individual operators have little business motivation to work together to reduce vulnerabilities. Guidance exists that can help lead project sponsors within government departments to a simple systems view of how their project fits within a wider, interdependent, infrastructure system of systems\(^ {443}\).

11 Mitigation measures, that aim to limit the scale of climate change, can often contribute to resilience too. For example, retrofitting buildings with insulation and renewable energy technologies reduce energy use and are also adaptations that increase resilience. Interdependencies between mitigation and adaptation should be identified so that interventions can contribute to both.

12 We must agree what ‘good’ looks like in order to then set smarter targets that we can collectively aim for, using consistent language and definitions. What do we actually mean by resilience and sustainability? What levels of resilience do we actually need, and how do these differ between sectors? How does this translate into design objectives and expectations? These issues need to be addressed in the context of the overarching strategy for the built environment.


13 The assessment of future scenarios and resilience must be an integral part of the design process in order to embed sufficient flexibility to provide future adaptability to climate change and to other future societal needs.

14 Decision-making and measures of success must move from cost-based to value-based in order to significantly lift the quality of delivered solutions. At the moment, cost drives too many decisions and important social and environmental issues are too often lost. Smarter procurement is needed, and better educated clients who focus on high-quality design and delivery. This approach need not automatically lead to increased costs, but will result in better and more appropriate long term solutions.

15 A strategy around climate change must consider how to make decisions about demolishing existing buildings, and whether it is appropriate to build very tall buildings that use more energy to construct and operate.

16 The focus of revisions to the building regulations in recent years has been on reducing carbon dioxide emissions from the built environment, but this has not been balanced with proper consideration of the impacts on resilience and on health. A good design team with the proper engineering expertise can take a systems engineering approach to balancing various demands and constraints and avoid these issues. The problems occur when developers lacking this expertise rely instead on the building regulations as a design standard. As long as the standards are developed piecemeal without a full systems engineering approach across the board, then the risk of creating such problems remains.

17 Engineers must develop further their ability to embrace probabilistic methods and flexible solutions, and to deal with complex risk scenarios. There has been a lot of work on risk analysis but for the most part it has been simplistic, for example, addressing just one risk element whereas future challenges involve a range of factors. Promoting the skills needed to address the full range of risks is essential, as is using modelling techniques and the methods of scenario planning. The professional engineering bodies should lead on promoting and developing skills in systems thinking within the workforce.

Energy efficiency of the existing building stock

18 New policies are needed urgently in the area of home energy efficiency given the recent withdrawal of funding to the Green Deal and uncertainty over the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive. We welcome the independent review of UK housing energy efficiency by Dr Peter Bonfield OBE FREng. A policy encompassing small business premises is also required.

19 Any measures to increase the sustainability of the built environment should be viewed within the context of the future delivery of the UK’s whole energy system, and the need to decarbonise energy supply, including heat and transport. Understanding the uncertainties around the future energy system is key; for example, if the gas grid becomes unsustainable, this will have a large impact on how people heat their homes. The transition from fossil fuel to renewable electricity for heating would place substantial additional burden on the grid – the increasing use of embedded, non-dispatchable domestic renewable generation are already having an impact on some local networks.

20 We must learn from less successful policy initiatives and also from initiatives that are succeeding. In particular, an understanding is required of the performance/delivery gap\(^{445}\) that exists in relation to energy efficiency measures in housing, and the financial, social, behavioural and technical factors that contribute to this. Existing knowledge is extensive but patchy, and it will be important to identify where gaps in knowledge are and to consolidate existing knowledge.

21 A more detailed understanding of the social and technical drivers for energy consumption in domestic and commercial buildings is crucial for addressing the performance/delivery gap. For example, a more nuanced understanding of occupant attitudes and behaviours is needed, as well as an understanding of how users control their environment using smart technologies.

22 Better dialogue with the public is vital around smart meters, particularly in relation to privacy and trust issues. The benefits to the public of smart meters must be communicated to help ensure that they are accepted.

23 The technologies required to retrofit exist, such as electric heat pumps, CHP units, and district heating, but it is important to appreciate in which contexts and for which types of consumers these will work best. Quality evidence is essential to guide the selection of technologies, which in the past have been blighted by ‘hype’. Fitting different technologies means disruption to people’s living space and requires people to

\(^{445}\) The performance/delivery gap means that the measures delivered failed to achieve the expected improvement in performance.
understand the operation of these technologies which may be very different to conventional technologies.

24 The possible unintended consequences of policy interventions, either beneficial or negative, should be understood and considered as a socio-technical systems matter when planning interventions, for example in relation to retrofitting.

25 Sustainable markets are essential, and for this reason, it is vital that policies are implemented promptly and then not regularly changed, to provide certainty for the market. Standards and procurement policies are effective alternatives to regulation in achieving some of these outcomes. A greater understanding of the motivations and behaviours of all stakeholders is needed, and where these work together or conflict. New approaches should be examined; for example, new business models are in development for retrofitting energy efficiency measures446.

26 A joined up approach to achieving the right balance between planning and energy-efficiency requirements is essential. We need to ensure that there is openness to new ideas that can help address major challenges.

**Question 9: Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?**

**Professional skills for a holistic approach**

27 A report published by the Academy in 2012447 highlighted the importance of specialist engineering education in providing the knowledge and skills required by the construction industry to contribute to energy efficiency in buildings. This type of education extends beyond traditional boundaries, combining building engineering physics448 with engineering, architectural and systems design.

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446 Energiesprong: Transition Zero http://energiesprong.nl/transitionzero/

447 Royal Academy of Engineering (2012), *The case for Centres of Excellence in sustainable building design*

448 The discipline of building engineering physics is described in: Royal Academy of Engineering (2012), *Engineering a local carbon built environment: The discipline of Building Engineering Physics*
28 Built environment professions need to be able to and willing to work in collaboration with other disciplines and built environment stakeholders to develop solutions by means of a holistic approach. For example, architects, behavioural scientists, civil, environmental and building services engineers, planners and urban designers, scientists and technology developers, and clients will need to be able to work in an integrated way. Very few are able to cross disciplines, although individuals that have done so, such as Jan Gehl, Jaime Lerner and, Alejandro Echeverri, have through differing perspectives brought about massive change in cities in different parts of the world.

29 Built environment researchers need to have the ability to understand their contribution to the whole, while focusing on their own specific areas. They also need to understand how to collaborate across research disciplines, such as engineering and social sciences, and this will require the development of shared languages. Built environment research covers (at least) the areas funded by AHRC, EPSRC and ESRC. A greater willingness to fund collaborative funding programmes is needed.

30 A holistic approach has to start with education at undergraduate and postgraduate level so that any architect, planner, engineer, urban designer, has this core principle. Particular skills in these fields can then be developed on that holistic core. For example, Academy Centres of Excellence in integrated sustainable building design have been set up to provide engineers with experience of interdisciplinary, collaborative problem solving. However, universities will follow the market, and are not likely to develop courses unless there is a clear ‘pull’ from industry. This pull is not currently apparent.

31 While architects remain the authors of building designs in the minds of the public, many of the design issues that must be dealt with in creating sustainable buildings are actually engineering design issues. The engineering professions associated with construction need greater public visibility and clarity of their professional role. Thus clients commissioning building projects will be able to ensure that they receive appropriate professional advice and avoid the problems often cited in relation to the building performance gap. Further, increased visibility for the building engineering professions will aid recruitment into this key sector.

32 There is a need to raise the average, not just support excellent practice. However, there are barriers: the construction supply chain is highly fragmented with design and delivery of projects divided across may different professions, none with overall responsibility for ensuring the sustainable performance of the finished product. This makes the

dissemination of innovation and best practice difficult. The construction industry therefore urgently needs a repeatable, verifiable approach to integrating the question of how to reduce carbon emissions in the design, procurement and construction process. Approaches to procurement and project team organisation need to align risk and reward for all parties to encourage collaboration and team working and to establish smarter ways of driving innovation, especially from the supply chain.

33 National and local government are struggling to justify retaining in-house expertise. It is important that government itself understands the high level issues and is capable of acting as an educated client as a pre-requisite to delivering effective policy. For example, government must be able to understand a quality, high value solution when it is presented, and conversely, when a poor quality (cheap) solution is presented and should be blocked. As the conversation moves from cost towards value, this knowledge and understanding will be essential.

34 Building Information Modelling (BIM) supports integrated teamworking by developing a common language and a standardised process for sharing information. Future developments will extend its applicability to all stages of the lifecycle including operation, and to a scale beyond the individual building, supporting the development of smart cities. The seeds are in place, and we welcome the government’s requirement that government contracts use BIM. However, it is essential that the use of BIM is embedded further. Skills development and an ‘open systems’ approach will be vital in achieving this.

Question 11: Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

35 The effectiveness of built environment policies and of design is improved by understanding behaviour and by having the appropriate tools to apply this knowledge in practice. Greater understanding is needed of how the built environment functions as a socio-technical system with people as a central component. This will help to achieve

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450 Royal Academy of Engineering (2012), *The case for Centres of Excellence in sustainable building design*


objectives around important challenges for the built environment, including the use of resources; health and wellbeing; and performance and productivity.

36 There is scope to improve the consideration of health and wellbeing in spatial planning and in the design of all types of building, including offices and housing for example, as well as hospitals and healthcare centres. It is important to consider the design of buildings alongside the public realm. Collaboration between researchers and practitioners is key to developing evidence-based design principles and guidance.

37 Professionals need to be exposed to, and engage with, the outcomes of the building projects. Ongoing post-occupancy evaluation to measure the actual performance of buildings in operation, assisted by the Internet of Things and data analytics technologies, will improve understanding of the way in which the built environment impacts on people, including how it influences health and wellbeing.

38 Government must promote collaboration between local government, clinical commissioning groups, planners, architects and the local community in planning and design. Lessons should be taken from other initiatives, such as the Center for Active Design in New York453.

39 Some sectors within the built environment are better at designing in quality at the outset; hospitals that are designed to promote recovery, schools that are designed to promote learning. Key Performance Indicators are identified and measured, with best practice swapped. This approach is not consistent however and many commercial developers do not consider the long term use of their products and their interests too often wane rapidly after completion. Best practice should be shared and smarter targets set for everyone to deliver against, in alignment with an overall strategy. Where deficiencies occur, there should be an obligation to correct these.

06 October 2015

453 Center for Active Design: promoting health through design http://centerforactivedesign.org/ A non-profit-making organisation that provides training, technical assistance, as well as research and policy support on the implementation of Active Design to promote healthy living and chronic disease prevention.
1. About us

We are the largest organisation of blind and partially sighted people in the UK and welcome this opportunity to respond to the consultation.

We are a membership organisation with over 14,000 members who are blind, partially sighted or the friends and family of people with sight loss. More than 80 per cent of our Board of Trustees are blind or partially sighted. We encourage members to be involved in our work, and regularly consult with them on government policy and their ideas for change.

We campaign for the rights of blind and partially sighted people in each of the UK’s countries. Our priorities are to:

- Be there for people losing their sight.
- Support independent living for blind and partially sighted people.
- Create a society that is inclusive of blind and partially sighted people’s interests and needs.
- Stop people losing their sight unnecessarily.

We provide expert knowledge to business and the public sector through consultancy on improving the accessibility of information, the built environment, technology, products and services.

RNIB regularly supports blind and partially sighted people to make the built environment more accessible. We also advise decision makers, such as local authorities, on how to make the built environment more accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

RNIB welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Built Environment Call for evidence.

2. Response
Policymaking, integration and coordination

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

RNIB think decisions are taken at the right level (a mixture of national and local); however we are concerned about the postcode lottery approach taken when councils implement local and national regulation or guidance.

There are two sets of regulation/guidance which need to be considered – specific built environment legislation such as The Highways Act (1980) and specific equality provisions which are important to our service users such as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

A good example of national policy which is not followed correctly at a local level is the regulation of tactile paving and guidance around shared space. Whilst the political tide is heading toward devolution, it is important to recognise that some policies/regulations need to be the same whatever part of the country a person lives or works in. A blind person living in Surrey but commuting to work in London should expect tactile paving to be of the same standard, fitting and installation in both locations. If not the independence of someone with a visual impairment is likely to be seriously impacted. One of the biggest problems with some of the existing legislation can be the different interpretations that local authorities make about how to implement it. For example, The Highways Act (1980) states that it is illegal to obstruct the highway, but this is interpreted in different ways by different local authorities. On top of this, if other legislation exists around the same topic (such as the use of Traffic Regulation Orders in relation to parking on pavements) some local authorities will give that a higher status than The Highways Act.

The other issue which quite often impacts upon our service users is how specific equality legislation is implemented. Though essential to protect the needs of disabled people, some local authorities do not always follow the regulations as they should, resulting in planning and development which can considerably impact on the mobility of those with a visual impairment. We know from a freedom of information request we carried, we know engagement with blind and partially sighted people was limited.

Many local authorities use ‘Inclusive Mobility’ as a best practice guide to ensuring the built environment is accessible. However, this guidance is out of date and desperately needs reviewing. In its current form, Inclusive Mobility fails to offer adequate information on things like parking, cycling, pavement obstructions and shared space. Much of the guidance it offers is vague, leaving local authorities to interpret messages in different ways. Consequently, this results in different approaches being taken across the country when introducing street furniture and managing pavement obstructions.
Finally, the context in which the political landscape is changing is important – devolution and greater regionalisation/integration could be a significant opportunity to improve the policies and practices around the built environment. A number of local authorities, in their recent submissions to the Cabinet Office, have asked that Transport/Highways be included in their devolution bids. However, to avoid adding to the postcode lottery in certain cases, for example shared space, guidance needs to be reviewed and strengthened.

**How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

RNIB thinks there could be better integration across Government departments where often there is enormous cross over where one department has the lead in terms of ministerial approval or policy making, but their decisions have considerable impact on another department. A good example is the Department of Transport and its interaction with the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Disability issues can also affect a number of teams within one department. A recent policy example which had considerable impact was the political and financial weight given to cycling improvement. Considerable money has been spent on improving cycling infrastructure, but this was done without looking at some of the impacts on blind and partially sighted people who want to navigate streets, crossings and public transport.

National policy for planning and the built environment

**Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

We do not believe the NPPF provides sufficient policy guidance for those in planning, development and protecting the build environment. It does not deal with disability or inclusion in any great detail. It only talks about inclusive design and communities in a very limited way (four times). The only time in the document disability is mentioned is in Annex 2 in the glossary of terms.

Buildings and places: New and old

**How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**
Sight loss affects nearly 2 million people but with an ageing population this is set to rise to 4 million by 2050. We also have an ageing population that is living longer and is encouraged to live independently as long as possible. To do this housing must be fit for purpose and should be as accessible for physical and sensory impairments as possible. Improvements and adaptations to homes can help people continue living independently; but this requires an assessment from the local social services team. We know more and more of the services, grants, and relief that were once offered by local authorities are being restricted or cut. Government needs to make sure national regulations are fit for purpose for the ageing population, while also providing resources at a local level so that the existing housing stock can be adapted, and new housing stock is built to a high standard.

All too often we review plans for new developments that do not have enough parking provision for the type and level of houses being built. This results in environments which do not support the needs of pedestrians or motorists, and creates the need for pavement parking. Parking on pavements is one of the biggest barriers which prevent blind and partially sighted people getting to where they want to go.

Campaigner Charlotte shared with us, “the main route I have to take to get to the bus stop and the shops has a lot of cars parked on the pavement. It’s normally deliveries for the local businesses and things like that. Walking into wing mirrors, or the back of the car itself can really hurt. I often can’t get round the car by staying on the pavement, so have to walk out onto a main road which has fast traffic and buses.”

Any new regulations need to include clear guidance around planning for parking so that new housing areas have pavements free for pedestrians.

In addition to this, we have seen an increase in housing developments that includes the provision of shared space as part of its overall design. By removing kerbs, blind and partially sighted people can often find it difficult to navigate the area. It also increases the chance of colliding with a parked car.

New regulation is needed to guide developers away from using shared space ideology as a means of achieving aesthetic goals while discounting the practical implications.

Skills and design

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
We do not believe the professionals have an adequate understanding of inclusive design or accessibility. Quite often aesthetic values supersede the concerns around inclusivity or disability. A good example is the current Government review of tactile paving regulations – changes are being proposed by a highways professional who does not seem to understand the mobility needs of blind and partially sighted people. As a result we are spending a considerable amount of time mobilising blind and partially sighted people to respond to a very technical consultation. If elements of this consultation proceed, it could seriously impact the independence and safety of blind people.

There are also very dangerous trends taking place across the country, such as the growth of shared space developments. Architects and planners think these developments create a positive impact on the built environment, but for someone who is blind or partially sighted their independence can be severely limited.

Campaigner Anne told us, “I was born blind. I can see light and dark but I don’t see any other useful clues such as steps or obstacles. I have a guide dog who works with me to navigate the streets. We don’t have shared space in my area yet, but it seems to work on the drivers and pedestrians making eye contact and signalling who will make the first move. But I can’t make eye contact or see what a driver is intending to do. Even if drivers are really attentive, it makes me very vulnerable. My guide dog had no idea what to do. He normally gives me some direction, but he needs markings like kerbs so he knows which bit is the road and which bit is the pavement. When we cross a road he needs the kerb to govern where the crossing point is. You can’t direct your dog, there are no landmarks, it’s just a massive square. You can’t judge where you are. My dog was so confused he just stopped moving. I know many of my friends who are blind or partially sighted say these spaces are no-go areas for them.”

As well as Anne’s experience, others have told us that shared space has resulted in serious injury.

Local authority Access Officers’ have responsibilities to engage with, and support, disabled people to shape the built environment. These officers are often the point of contact when disabled people experience difficulties accessing environments. These officers are often tasked with supporting Access Forums and groups who are well placed to inform local planners and developers about barriers to inclusive design. However, these vital posts are particularly vulnerable to local authority cuts and without officer support, access groups have closed, or don’t have the weight needed to impact decisions made by councillors or council officers.

To help address these issues, more blind and partially sighted people need to be involved in the training of professionals. Local authorities need to have an access group which includes blind and partially sighted people, and they need to make sure they talk to other teams within the local authority who also have knowledge and expertise, for example
rehabilitation officers who train people to use a white cane. All staff and elected councillors should have relevant diversity and equalities training – the training should specifically refer to the work they are involved with – for example someone in the planning department should have an understanding how someone with a disability could effectively engage with a consultation and what some of the barriers are.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Aesthetic values should not supersede inclusivity – an area has to be inclusive for all, not just people with no mobility issues. Although RNIB recognises that local issues sometimes require local solutions, there is scope for national guidance to play a role in protecting these groups who are quite often ignored at a local level.

Community involvement and community impact

Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

We do not think that those involved in delivering and managing our built environment take sufficient account of the way these changes and development affect blind and partially sighted people. I refer to the points made under the answer to question nine. However, in short this could be improved by having a local access group that decision makers and developers could engage with throughout the process. Also, good staff training for officers and elected councillors around disability equality would better help them to represent the needs of those who face barriers relating to the built environment.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Blind and partially sighted people are usually excluded from planning process due to lack of accessible information – the process relies on people being able to use their eye sight to access documents. We recently carried out a Freedom of Information request of all upper tier local authorities and we discovered that no local authority had sent out accessible formats of planning materials in the last 5 years. The way planning proposals are advertised is incredibly inaccessible. This results in blind and partially sighted people often not knowing about decisions being taken locally which could affect them.

One suggested improvement is that local authorities could use their registration lists to contact those people who are registered blind or partially sighted in their area. But this very
rarely happens. Blind and partially sighted people have told RNIB in the past that they think local authorities should do this particularly in relation to planning proposals that may affect them.

An example of where this worked well is a local council who consulted everyone on their VI list when moving the position of dog waste bins. They realised that a proportion of blind and partially sighted people have guide dogs, and therefore may have a view on where the dog bind were positioned.

06 October 2015
The Royal Institute of British Architects champions better buildings, communities and the environment through architecture and our 40,000 members. We provide the standards, training, support and recognition that put our members – in the UK and overseas – at the peak of their profession. With government and our partners, we work to improve the design quality of public buildings, new homes and new communities.

The RIBA welcomes the decision to create a House of Lords Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment and would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to submit evidence.

Issues relating to the UK’s built environment have achieved significant political attention in recent years. From the growing housing crisis, to the need for new infrastructure investment that both boosts the economy and protects the environment, decisions about what we build, where we build it and how we engage with the public need to be urgently addressed.

However, the UK’s approach to tackling built environment challenges has too often lacked an integrated approach, failing to consider the roles of the various professions involved or the associated impact on the built environment and society of developing (or not developing) an area. The RIBA’s response contains a number of recommendations about how policies and structures could be changed to address these issues.

Our primary recommendation is the appointment of a Chief Built Environment Advisor tasked with overseeing the integration of built environment policy into the wider policy making agenda through the establishment of a national strategy for the built environment.

To accompany the national strategy, we believe that subsidiarity needs to be applied more widely in the balancing of national goals and local implementation. Local government organisations of all sizes and structures need to be in the position to make positive decisions about the development of their areas. This will require the resource, expertise and the political will to make tough decisions.
Finally, we believe that the Government has a vital role to play in driving new approaches to harnessing technology that improve the ability of the public, professionals and the public sector to communicate their thoughts about proposed developments. We believe that this can help change the attitude of the public and professionals about how developments are planned, designed and delivered.

1. **Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?**

One of the major challenges faced by people interacting with the UK’s built environment today is the lack of coordination across the various decision making bodies. Decisions about the regulations governing housing, planning, transport and other factors which influence the quality of the built environment are often made in isolation. As a result, the process of planning and building or rebuilding is too often slanted towards one discipline or another depending on local or national political developments, instead of taking a coordinated approach to delivering the best possible outcome.

To maintain an effective planning system, decision-making at different administrative levels needs to be balanced to allow national and local priorities to be addressed. To help reach this situation, RIBA believe that policy makers at a national level should have the remit to develop an overarching national strategy for the built environment that addresses national priorities. This overarching strategy must be flexible enough to allow local policy makers to deliver local ambitions. It is vital that there is sufficient local resource raising elements to these plans.

2. **How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

The current approach to developing built environment policy is fragmented with polices and guidelines developed across different departments to meet different agendas. We believe that one of the most significant challenges to tackling this lack of clarity and direction is the absence of a single body with responsibility for developing a long-term approach to national level policy making.
A single cross cutting policy for the built environment should be developed. To help facilitate this, the RIBA has previously argued that a ‘Chief Architect’ sitting within the Cabinet Office or the Department for Communities and Local Government should be appointed. However, given the range of issues that this role could cover on a day-to-day basis, we would urge the Committee to consider the benefits of a Chief Officer for the Built Environment who could promote policies across a range of government departments. Based on our discussions, we believe that a policy along these lines would attract broad support from a range of built environment professions.

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

   In our view, the NPPF promotes financial viability more prominently than social or environmental factors. To encourage the development of resilient places the NPPF should be reviewed to balance the tenants of sustainability - economic, social and environmental.

The NPPF was developed as a response to unlocking stalled development in the recession. As such, it represents a response to an economic situation which no longer exists in many parts of the country. The imbalance between London and other areas of the UK highlights the need for a more devolved planning system. In particular, clearer guidance is needed from the Government on the ability of local authorities to mandate standards on key issues like Section 106 and CIL.

Some of the associated elements introduced at a similar time to the NPPF- in particular the decision to allow buildings to be changed from commercial to residential use without planning permission- have been hugely damaging, leading to a large number of small new apartments that fail to meet a wide range of standards that apply to newly built homes.

4. **Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

   There is a lack of clarity and vision over the future strategy for planning in England. The RIBA believes that a national strategy for the built environment should be developed to integrate major decisions around the economy, planning, housing and infrastructure.
A clear and coordinated strategy would shape national, regional and local priorities in a way that brings together built environmental and economic policies for England and helps inform the work of the National Infrastructure Commission. In addition to this macro-level change, we believe that there should be a consideration of the spatial impacts of individual schemes.

5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

It is essential that upcoming changes in society are managed proactively through a coordinated strategy that ensures new and existing communities are designed in preparation for change. A built environment policy would set out a high level coordinated vision for the future of the built environment in the UK up to 2025. The document would demonstrate leadership and stimulate a partnership between government, the professions and industry. We note that the requirement for local authorities to identify a five-year land supply for new housing is proving to be very challenging in many areas, so further work will be needed to identify how longer term processes can be established.

6. **What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?**

Government needs to support the development of new housing at a local level and encourage a more diverse and competitive housing market. In particular, we are supportive of the Government’s ambitions to increase the role of small and medium sized house builders. In rural areas, the decline of these developers has been particularly damaging as the smaller sites favoured by them are often too small to be of interest to the larger house builders. Other initiatives like the release of public sector land can help speed up housing development. However, they are not of the requisite scale to tackle the housing crisis.

We welcomed the recent introduction of a national minimum space standard for new homes, however, unless this is widely adopted by local authorities, we do not believe it will end the disappointing fact that new homes in the UK are amongst the smallest in Europe.

7. **How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and**
places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come?
How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The Government’s decision to abandon the Zero-Carbon Homes standard was deeply
disappointing. The RIBA believes that the UK requires a zero carbon building policy and
higher energy efficiency standards in Part L of Building Regulations to ensure built
environment assets are able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

Planning policy and buildings regulations should have more flood preventive guidance and
stipulations. There is a significant base of knowledge on how new developments can be
made more able to deal with heavy rain and flooding, in future we hope that the
Government will look at the regulations covering these issues in more detail.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of
future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these
national assets?

The value of heritage buildings needs to be better recognized in planning, regeneration and
place-making. We believe that greater proportionality is needed in local planning decisions
to strike a better balance between the needs of historic buildings in use and other
protection schemes such as archaeology. We are concerned that heritage assets are
currently not treated as buildings whose usage and condition will change over time. This can
create significant issues for the owners of these buildings and those who work on them.

In addition to planning issues, we are concerned at the lack of an integrated strategy to
address the growing skills shortages in the sector both in local authorities, and in the
profession. A greater role for accredited conservation architects can help address the
shortage of conservation officers in local councils, and RIBA is keen to work with DCMS and
other stakeholders to address this. However, central government must do more to stimulate
a strong pipeline of heritage skills to design and deliver conservation projects.

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers
etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner?
How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to
the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in
their areas?
There is undoubtedly a need for a more holistic approach to decision making both on behalf of professionals in the sector and the government. Multi-disciplinary teams can address built environment issues holistically but clients including government often make poor procurement decisions which put the focus of a project on one area over another.

The ongoing reduction in funding for local government has in many cases undermined the ability for local authorities to adequately appraise the quality of proposed schemes. The loss of skilled and experienced professionals is particularly challenging at a time when demands on local planning departments are rising in many parts of the country.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Design support services such as design review and enabling can promote better and more sustainable places however further funding needs to be made available to ensure a high level of service is available nationally. We believe that planning authorities should be able to mandate the use of design review on schemes in their area.

Government leadership has proved highly effective in promoting the take-up of new approaches to delivering high quality design – particularly the promotion of the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) tools through requirements for the use of BIM on public sector projects. With reference to our response to Question 9, BIM has also proved a valuable tool for architects to work with engineers and contractors to improve the quality of project outputs.

Looking to the future, we believe that a focus on digitising the planning system could be a valuable tool in helping professionals and the public engage with the developments at an early stage in a way which helps ensure that decisions about design are informed by as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. Government leadership and support for this process would be very welcome.

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?
The current decision making structures do not encourage sufficient consideration of the impact of the built environment on those who live and work within it. Many developments are subject to significant opposition because of legitimate concerns about the impacts on schools, healthcare and transport infrastructure. There are currently few options open to local authorities to address these concerns before the developments start. A more integrated approach that gathers early input from communities and public service providers can help address this opposition – as well as highlighting the infrastructure consequences of failing to address demand for housing, a significant and growing issue in many rural communities.

Better and more systematic approaches to measuring the impact of the built environment are also urgently needed. User feedback and Post-Occupancy evaluation can enhance our knowledge of the outcomes of the Built Environment if they are collected effectively and regularly.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The current system creates some opportunities for communities to engage positively with the design process for individual schemes. However these are often at a late stage where the design is advanced and inflexible. This can lead to significant opposition to development, even when all efforts to engage with residents through statutory and voluntary consultation have been made.

There needs to be further opportunities for the public to engage at a strategic planning level to proactively input into the design and decision making process. In areas where major developments have taken place and won public support, one common theme has often been the proactive role of the local public sector in helping make the case for high-quality developments. This combination of leadership and partnership requires both political will, and the ability

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?
As we have previously stated, we believe that a stipulation requiring design review would be one way to increase the quality of design and place making and address public concerns about development.

The Government has a range of decisions to make about the use of fiscal and financial measures to increase housing and land supply which go outside the RIBA’s core areas of expertise. Therefore, we will not be responding in detail to this question. However, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight two issues that we believe the Government should consider as it debates its central role in developing new communities.

Firstly, the Government’s focus on the disposal of public sector land for new homes should consider the core aims of the Social Value Act. If the Government decides that the goal of land sales should be maximum initial return, then it is likely that the cost of land will be increased to a point whereby developing the well-designed communities that the Government seeks will be challenging. We believe that a longer-term return should be sought so that developers are incentivised to deliver schemes which bring net benefits to the infrastructure of an area. The creation of the London Land Commission offers a promising model for establishing a register of available land that can be used to build new homes. We hope that this model can be extended nationally if it proves successful.

Secondly, the current approach to the release of land for housing is clearly failing to match demand. We therefore believe that the Government should commission a review of the green belt to assess the environmental and amenity value of the green belt and compile an evidence base to support Local Authorities in local decision making.

06 October 2015
Members present

Baroness O’Cathain (Chairman)
Baroness Andrews
Lord Clement-Jones
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Lord Freeman
Lord Inglewood
Earl of Lytton
Baroness Parminter
Baroness Rawlings
Baroness Whitaker
Lord Woolmer of Leeds
Baroness Young of Old Scone

Examination of Witnesses

Ruth Reed, former Past President, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and David Henry, Planning Director, Savills, appearing on behalf of Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Q146 The Chairman: Mr Henry and Ms Reed, welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript, where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves to the Committee for the benefit of the record that we will be producing?

Ruth Reed: Good morning. I am Ruth Reed. I am past president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. I am an architect. I am also director of a planning and architecture consultancy. I have been a professor of professional practice. I no longer teach.
David Henry: Good morning. My name is David Henry. I am a town planner and chartered surveyor in private practice. I also chair the RICS planning policy panel. I am here representing the RICS.

The Chairman: Thank you. I saw you sitting in on the last session. I hope you found it interesting. We want to whip through this, but the problem is I am not a very good timekeeper.

The first question is mine. How would a chief built environment adviser—or other advisers with specific remits on built environment matters—help to deliver better outcomes at a national level?

Ruth Reed: The RIBA would welcome such a person, because we believe that they would not only co-ordinate policy across the policy-making departments—BIS, DCLG, DCMS—but co-ordinate a joined-up approach to procurement in the spending departments, leading the country by example in good practice in design and procurement and ensuring that policy was joined-up, that it did not repeat itself or contradict itself and, to take the good example of the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that you have a pared down, succinct approach to built environment matters across government. The built environment is so much more than buildings. I know it is odd for an architect to say this. It is about a co-ordinated response to the needs of the population, which I am sure you are very well aware of. It would be extremely helpful to have a single responsibility at the heart of government driving that approach and co-ordinating excellence across all matters to do with the built environment.

The Chairman: There was a suggestion for a chief architect, but that is slightly different from a planner. If that ever came to fruition, would you think there was a need for an equivalent chief planner as well?

Ruth Reed: We have had discussions with the fellow institutes on this matter. We recognise that each of us brings a different aspect of skills to the built environment. We are quite open to the idea that each of us could bring something to the role, should it fall to a member of one institute or another, and some of us—not me—hold skills across different disciplines. I do not think that the RIBA is continuing to say that only architecture should be pushing this; that could be too building-specific rather than to do with the broader environment. It would
not be helpful to be that prescriptive about which discipline should take it on. It is a role that is much needed and we would not want to stand in the way.

The Chairman: Yes, but you do not want it to slip between two stools either, do you?

Ruth Reed: No. The chief planning officer has particular responsibilities for communication between DCLG and the planners. That may be in statute; forgive me if I am wrong. That might be somewhat different to subsume into this role.

David Henry: Picking up on that last point, first of all it is about acting as a focal point for experience. After all, very few issues to do with the built environment are singular. They are not just architecture, just property or just anything else. There is a distinction. It is one of the reasons why there is recognition in the various professions of that overlapping-ness and the need to work together. They are part of a continuum, after all. That is the first point to grasp. The second thing is that we look far beyond the immediacy of any particular issue. A chief adviser is there, to some extent, as the critical friend, as the prod for sometimes saying, “If you do this, it might also have a knock-on consequence to that, so you should take that into account beyond the immediate realms of the professional interest”. The holistic consequences are very important as well.

The third reasoning is to act as a signpost. I listened to the session just now, and the point was made that we can look back 50 years but we should be looking forward another 50 or 100 years. Quite often there is a need to have that vision for a place, and to challenge, to identify opportunity, and look at how one might steer and guide decision-making within that context. The job description is the more important initial issue, beyond the who, what and where that applies to it.

Q147 The Chairman: Is there a usual channel of communication between architects and planners at the Royal Institute of British Architects level, or are they rather like the engineering field used to be, with 50 different institutions never speaking to each other? That is a slight exaggeration, but it was true, and that was why they put the Engineering Council together.

Ruth Reed: In recent consultation responses to the other House, we put forward a joint response with the other institutes calling on different areas of knowledge. I think you are
already aware that the Landscape Institute has taken a particular lead on the flooding issue, where it might be more appropriate.

Baroness Andrews: I apologise if this sounds rather cynical. As you have been speaking about the prospect of a chief officer for the built environment, I have become more persuaded. The problem is that I am looking for an analogy across government, and it could be the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government. The problem with having somebody for the built environment is that there are huge vested interests at play across the built environment, and there are now huge stakes in policy-making on housing and infrastructure. It is slightly different in science. With respect, you would have no power to speak of if you were the chief built environment officer, so how could you exert influence, given that your main opponent would be the Treasury and you would cover practically every department in government?

Ruth Reed: It is fair to say that the complexity of it and the lack of a joined-up approach to the built environment is the very reason why you might want somebody to attempt this gargantuan task of pulling it all together. I would not want to think that nobody ever tried to make it work. There are great examples across government, including a forward consultation on procurement that could easily be brought, with Treasury backing, to the spending departments, as the requirement on the way in which government procurement and delivery in the built environment are delivered. I would not want to say that it was not possible. Any role has to be given a mandate and support, and the Treasury is a very powerful place to begin.

Q148 Lord Inglewood: We have had a lot of evidence, and people have told us different things, but I think there has been agreement from all our witnesses that we do need some kind of joined-up or holistic national strategy for the built environment—not that I terribly like the word “joined-up”—and certainly nobody has told us that we do not need it. That being the case, how would you set about doing that in order to deliver high-quality new homes, meet housing and other development requirements and conserve what is good? To declare an interest, I am a member of the RICS myself.

David Henry: I am glad to hear it. It is a big question. A simple place to start is vision as to what we are seeking to achieve out of this. I was interested to hear in the session before about spatial planning, regional plans, local plans and the like. Certainly I think those have a
strong role to play in there somewhere; at what level is for discussion. To have vision of place is a good starting point, because otherwise the inputs become rather dislocated and self-interest starts to kick in. The second thing is sharing understanding and knowledge of what is going on out there in the built environment as a whole. In our submissions, for example, we talk about sharing a database to look at what knowledge is already there and making sure that people are aware of that so that it informs the decisions in a more objective and better way. These are all important ingredients to that mix.

Staying on the spatial planning point, I was struck in the previous session by some of the comments. As far as I am aware, England is the only part of the UK that does not have some form of spatial planning in its planning system. That tells me something—you can tell by my accent, perhaps, that I have an interest in this. It tells me that they cannot all be wrong. Therefore, that requires a little bit of exploration about whether the frameworks are correct to allow the drive and the vision to be expressed and delivered through, however those mechanisms fit in.

**Ruth Reed:** I am slightly conscious that we follow on from the planners, who will have facts that are not at my disposal. There is a danger that we are underplaying the strategic level of decision-making that is needed to deliver the things that will support the new housing and economic development arising from a growing population. At the moment, we have no mechanism for forward planning for the health, education and transportation provision to support the housing that is so needed. We are already behind with the housing. We have not even begun with the other support mechanisms that build a holistic society. There is a danger that in devolving to a very local level, we have lost that ability to see the whole picture across the country, which essentially is what spatial planning is. There is a considerable reluctance to centralise planning. There is a feeling that the local population should have a say in what happens, but there are some big decisions to be made about where everybody is going to live and how communities will be built.

**The Chairman:** It would work, would it not, if there was an umbrella of national planning and people really bought into it bottom-up, whereas the other would be top-down?

**Ruth Reed:** Yes.
The Chairman: I can envisage that happening. When we were in Birmingham we could physically see what they did in that area around the station. It is possible, I am sure.

Q149 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: You spoke about the demographic change in the health and infrastructure needs of the population, and one could perhaps use the word well-being for the people who use it. What powers do you feel would be needed for such a role to function, and function well? I could see the danger in it having a liaison role and a forward-looking role but not having any levers to make changes either happen or not.

Ruth Reed: I assume that the role would come with sufficient power to oblige central government to identify how it was going to support growing communities and for strategic development—whether it be a town extension, a new town, whatever form it took—to oblige health and education to explain how they would support this rather than for everything to be reactive to the imposition of new housing and new development.

David Henry: If I can build on that a little, it is about making sure that the different factors are recognised, taken into account and given due weight in the decision-making. There is a great tendency to have fragmentation of the different inputs without joining them together in a balanced decision. If the role is to have that duty, it would be to ensure that all the relevant factors are properly taken into account. It is almost like a wicket-keeper type of role, so that the health inputs, the utilities, the infrastructure investments are properly factored into the decision-making and planning making at whatever level that is, whether very localised or national. Many of the complaints that one sees and hears come from, “Oh, you didn’t listen to me and now we’ve got a consequence”.

Baroness Andrews: I seem to remember that when the big housing numbers were put forward in 2005-06, when Kate Barker gave evidence to us, there was more or less a national debate that was more reactive than proactive. It was about how we build infrastructure. Water became a big issue, because we were in periods of drought in the mid-2000s. That sort of dialogue seems to have disappeared. Do you think the National Infrastructure Commission should take responsibility for that? Do you think there is a danger that, having created it, we may have more of a division in the debate on where and how much housing and infrastructure, or that it can be more easily integrated now?
David Henry: It follows from what I have been saying, I hope, that the challenge is certainly there for it to become that animal. I have had quite a lot of experience within the water industry and of the dislocation that has occurred there between spatial planning and the asset management plans—the AMPs, as they are called—and trying to anticipate exactly where growth is going to be. It is the same in other sectors. The National Infrastructure Commission has the opportunity, perhaps, to step into that realm. My point about growth and where it goes is that it is not just about the direction of travel but how you support it, and making sure that those factors are properly encompassed within that.

Q150 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: I will, if I may, address this question first to Mr Henry, but it would be very helpful to have another view on it. What are the issues raised for the built environment by the existing system of viability assessments? What problems do you see emerging in practice? Do you think that policy changes are needed at national level?

David Henry: The first thing is to look at what the question asks. Many people become rather scared of this issue of viability. What is it? Essentially, it is a simple financial equation. There are many ways of approaching that equation. There is a disposal price, a sale price, a cost of construction, a total development cost, and a residual sum—a land value or whatever it is. Viability comes into this discussion when changes in the total development cost impact on one or other of those outriggers, whether it is the sale price or the residual land value; something gives somewhere in the equation. The art, of course, is to look at striking the right balance and for mechanisms to ensure that one does not unduly adversely prejudice the other, because otherwise the whole thing becomes fraught with challenge and difficulty. So the first thing is that it has to be looked at in terms of that overarching equation and it has to be understood.

The response is to make sure that people are not frightened by the concept of viability, that they understand where to look for advice on viability, which comes into the policy realm, that there are good practice guidelines, including through our own institution, on looking at what the rules of the road are before one engages in the debate. Having done that, where might policy change take place or be improved? First of all, it is about the signposting that I touched on. Where does one look for advice on the issue? Where does one go if one cannot resolve any debates on viability? Independent mediation, arbitration, whichever one feels ought to
be pursued. Also, are the changes in built-environment cost and complexity properly acknowledged as material considerations in that decision? Quite often, it is almost the Cinderella in planning decisions: the cost of something is somewhere in there, but we are never quite sure what it is and how it impacts. Does it have a knock-on consequence to other equally worthy aspects of making a decision, whether it is schools, hospitals, affordable housing? Understanding that mechanism is key to it. The response in policy terms is to direct people on how to find out about it, what the rules of the road are, and how to arbitrate or mediate on the issue should there still be a dispute.

Lord Woolmer of Leeds: I would like to hear from Ms Reed and then I will come back.

Ruth Reed: The Growth and Infrastructure Act brought in the concept of challenging the viability of providing full Section 106 provisions on affordable housing as holding back development during a period of economic downturn, if not recession. It enabled developers to renegotiate. At the moment, that situation has not changed. Where we are now experiencing growth, we are still seeing developers able to renegotiate their Section 106 terms. It is not always perceived—I do not have any knowledge either way—as the most open and transparent process.

The consequence for society as a whole is that less affordable provision is coming through from the private developers, which in the long term is a disaster for those who are not in a position to purchase their own home. I imagine that the situation with regard to renegotiating Section 106s will change with time, because, particularly in the south-east, economic conditions are looking up. From a personal perspective—this is not an RIBA view—it all goes back to the value of land at the base of it. There is a fundamental problem about relying on the private sector operating in an open market to deliver affordable social housing through the provision of an obligation on any development. There will always be a pressure from those who quite rightly want to make money out of their day job to resist the need to provide social provision. In the long term the whole provision needs looking at. That is a personal opinion, and I happily accept there are others who have greater knowledge of that than I do. At the moment, viability in planning is not as transparent as it should be, and that is an observation from my daily practice.
The Chairman: I sense that there are changing attitudes in social housing versus rented housing, even in local authorities that are building houses for purchase. A lot of people—not just us—are looking at this in the round at the moment. It is probably quite a good time to sow seeds to bring this out into the open. Certainly it was very interesting in Birmingham; the housing development that we went to had social housing of one or two bedrooms—five bedrooms in one case—cheek by jowl with housing owned by the council that they were going to sell. A lot of the barriers seem to be coming down and reality is coming up, we hope. Lord Woolmer wants to come in on this one again.

Q151 Lord Woolmer of Leeds: One view expressed to us by, I think, Islington Borough was that in practice the viability test leads to the developers who make the most bullish assumptions about growth minimising their costs, what they are going to do in social housing, and what they need to contribute to wider development and social development over 30 or 40 years. Those who make the weakest assumptions about what they need to contribute will always be able to outbid others. Is not one of the problems that in practice those bidders secure the land and then minimise what they contribute to the rest of society? In reality, is that not a consequence of the marketplace, whether it is good or bad?

David Henry: The reality depends on how you perceive it. It is an open market. Some people have deeper pockets than others, so of course there will be people who will bid more than others. It depends on their perception of risk, when they will get their reward from it, and so forth. It is not necessarily a simple linear discussion of the sort, “They will always win”. People have different appetites for investment in different parts of the market or, indeed, the geography of a place. First of all, there is a need to understand how markets function. However, your point does rather chime with what I was saying: that this is about understanding how those debates, negotiations and rules of the road are applied. In my practical experience, the ability to understand the equation, as I put it, is not very strong in some places, so the negotiating position is weaker for some people and some authorities to understand exactly the scope of a negotiation and approaching things in more innovative ways. We had the example of Birmingham just now. Are there different elements of the equation that can be brought in to deliver goods to the benefit of the broader community? If you have somebody who is vastly experienced and somebody who has little experience having
that conversation, it is one-way traffic, and that may be the sort of discussion that you are referring to. This goes back to my point about signposting: where do you go for best advice, how do you apply that best advice, how do you feel that you have a rational, balanced decision out of these issues?

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** Many local authorities, through no fault of their own, have inadequate numbers of planners and architects. They have inexperience, and some of them have a rapid turnover of agency planners. Is it not inevitable that in many local authorities the experience and ability to compete on equal terms in the marketplace with perfectly reasonably hard-headed developers is a bit of a one-sided market? Is that not the reality?

**David Henry:** I sympathise with that point. I just said that. You have taken it a step further. There is a degree of truth in what you say. The resourcing, the skill sets, the understanding of mechanisms can be one-sided, so where does one look for support and experience to find more confidence to have a dialogue around these issues?

**Lord Woolmer of Leeds:** So what is your advice to local authorities?

**David Henry:** First of all, I would say prioritisation and whether the built environment is seen as a key service. With all due respect, we have put a lot of investment as a nation into our health and education. We have just talked about the longevity of our built environment. Is it not as much a key service at some level as anything else? Therefore, the resourcing to address the under provision would be an important element to that. In the short run, as I said, there is a need for signposting: where to go to find the right advice, whether independently from district valuers, the Planning Inspectorate, RICS, RIBA, whoever it is, to look at that. Thirdly, there is also a need to look at deploying those resources as effectively as possible through the sharing and pooling of resources, particularly cross-boundary—which goes back to the devolution discussion—and whether one needs more national-level resourcing brought to the fore again so that in effect one has flying squads of expertise to bring into particular areas to call on.

**Ruth Reed:** It is symptomatic of a loss of skills within local authorities. It does not just apply to viability. We have addressed this in our written responses to your questions.
Q152 Earl of Lytton: I have a particular interest to declare, because I am also a chartered surveyor. I chair one of the other panels that deals with party walls, right to light and other esoteric matters.

I am very interested in this business of what I used to know as a development appraisal, but it gets retrofitted and turned around in different ways. Often we deal with valuation of non-market principles, on which I know the RICS has done a lot of work in the past. We used to laugh about the old business of whether you are buying or selling, because people come to the issue with completely different sets of objectives. Then you have the question of issues that cost money today versus value tomorrow; I am thinking in particular of long-term management, use and enjoyment—the downstream things that build communities, societies, a sense of place. You have touched, first, on making the process more transparent: in other words, the Excel spreadsheet of your development appraisal.

David Henry: Yes.

Earl of Lytton: Do you think that there is value in making more explicit some of the consequences of asking for a certain level of affordable housing, for instance, on the entire scheme and future management project, and in connection with that the costs that might be imposed on a particular developer of doing something that applies to the wider community? In other words, the tariff should not be attached to the particular developer but in some way equalised out. Is there a more explicit process that we can create? Sorry, that is rather a long question.

David Henry: There is quite a lot in there. The last point is the hardest one to respond to. Let me pick up on a few of those points. First of all, it is a day-to-day occurrence in my realm to have exactly those conversations about the short term versus the long term. In fact, you can have whatever this good is, but there is a cost in doing so that is offset somewhere else. For example, if a local priority is the provision of a high level of affordable housing, it may in the overall equation of things—I accept there is a negotiation here—have the knock-on consequence that there is not so much of something else in there. That is for exploration, but that is how it works. As I said at the beginning, this is the basic equation. Priorities and how you set those come into that.
Royal Institute of British Architects and Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – Oral Evidence (QQ146-158)

The second thing is to look for where the added value comes in. There is some very interesting research—I know you are interested in looking at these things. For example, the Prince’s Foundation did some great work a few years back on the added value of green space in development. How does property price increase if you have a view over the park, putting it at its simplest? That is very interesting, because that is another aspect of built-environment quality reflecting on the property value, hence the valuation—discounted cash flow, or whatever approach one is taking—and how one calculates the effect of that. Again, one of the aspects here is looking at how far ahead you go, what assumptions you build into this in relation to the increase in value of the land, property, whatever it is. A lot of investors of course are looking for those horizons: not just the immediacy of planning today but the investment value—the YP, if you want to put it in the jargon—of what is happening over 25 years, et cetera. I wonder if that helps.

The Chairman: I do not think it does.

David Henry: Sorry.

The Chairman: The reality is that you have a nice view over the bay or of the mountains, and then you have the house, and each of them is going to have a different value. They are not going to stay in the same relationship.

David Henry: No, they are not.

The Chairman: Unfortunately, the houses—the bricks and mortar—seem to be accelerating at a much greater rate. Interestingly, people I know who have bought over the river say that it will always be that amount, but it will not necessarily be; it depends what happens to the river.

David Henry: Objectively exploring those issues is quite helpful in trying to look at the overall value.

Q153 Lord Inglewood: Ms Reed, in your private capacity you gave us some thoughts about housing. Listening to you, I sensed that you had thought about it a bit further than that. I wonder whether in your private capacity you are prepared to share those thoughts with us. Do not feel that you have to.

Ruth Reed: My answer follows on from the response to the previous question, in that the provision of social housing and other social infrastructure through viability and the Section
106 and CIL process is forced to be reactive. This is essential social infrastructure, yet it depends entirely on the ability of a local authority, equipped or ill equipped, to negotiate to achieve sufficient money to support the housing that is being built now, with no real ability to plan forward from that. There is a very real prospect that we will marginalise areas that do not have the skills or where the developments are not producing sufficient income through contributions, because their level of social infrastructure, particularly social housing, will be diminished as a consequence of the inability to raise money through the private sector, which is effectively what it is. I am not proposing an alternative—it is way beyond my ability to be able to suggest how else this money may arise—but at the moment it is leading towards a very iniquitous situation, geographically and socially.

Lord Inglewood: In the background papers there was mention of your having a practice and experience based in Wales. I am a Cumbrian. Is it the same problem that we are facing in Cumbria that you are talking about in Wales?

Ruth Reed: To be fair, I ceased practice in Wales in 2006, so I do not have current knowledge. I cannot comment on how it works there any more, I am afraid. Sorry.

David Henry: Can I pick up on that, because it is quite an interesting perception? With the reduction of public sector expenditure, as a generality the public do not realise how many of the public goods, whether it is the primary school, the road, the park, are now provided out of private sector development, so the equation, as we put it, the dialogue, is a matter for that prioritisation. As I said in response just now, what comes first—the primary school, et cetera? It is those issues that are the immediate ones, balanced against the longer-term issues of added value and so forth that we have touched on.

Lord Inglewood: Let us talk about housing, for example. Where I live, housing is substantially less expensive than it is in, say, the south-east. The ability of the developer to deliver the school, which costs the same, more or less, wherever you are, is curiously severely diminished.

David Henry: Absolutely.

The Chairman: It skews it completely.

Baroness Whitaker: I just want to pick up on what Mr Henry said. Do you think the rules of the road should be changed in the public interest?
David Henry: May I ask for clarification?
Baroness Whitaker: You keep referring to the rules of the road, which is the system that produces the viability problems that we heard about. Do you think the rules should be changed?
David Henry: As I said in response—we have put this in our evidence—it is about pointing people to where they find those rules, if I can term it like that, and the processes by which valuation and negotiation take place. The National Planning Policy Framework and the planning policy guidelines take you to a certain point, but they do not take you further and tell you how you calculate where the good practice examples are, and where one looks for them.
Baroness Whitaker: Are you recommending a change in the guidance?
David Henry: Not a change in the guidance, but taking the guidance perhaps a step further.
Baroness Whitaker: Maybe we could ask for something in writing. It would be very helpful, if you do not mind setting that out.
David Henry: I suspect it is there, but as a user of the system you get to the point where you think, “It’s all smoke and mirrors because I don’t know where to look to find out how those rules are applied”. It is there, but you need to be able to hunt it out. I suggest that the rules need to be clarified to that degree.
Q154 Baroness Young of Old Scone: If everybody else is declaring interests, I ought to declare that I am an honorary fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. It means that I get my subscription free, which is even better. I want to talk about sustainability and resilience. We have seen zero-carbon homes gone, the sustainable building code gone, and quite a few other things are going. What would you do to try and redress that? Do you think that in the current red in tooth and claw drive to get development to happen this is an unfortunate and necessary casualty of the process?
Ruth Reed: The RIBA’s position is very clear on this: we cannot rush for quantity and lose quality. That applies to performance as it does to any other aspect of the built environment. We cannot reach a point at which we are so keen to build houses that we accept that they put a greater load on this planet. As far as the institute is concerned, it is not an ethical position that can be sustained. Without making any political point, you have been talking
about 30 to 50 years hence. This has to be part of the consideration: that buildings can continue to perform to the best of our current knowledge and technological ability. It would be very wrong to lose sight of what we know about the impact of how much carbon is wasted through the built environment.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** Can I take that one stage further? Are you saying that at the moment we are building buildings that in the future are not sufficiently sustainable, not just in a carbon sense but in other ways as well?

**Ruth Reed:** We know that we can build better. What we have lost at the moment is the regulatory and political drive to do that. It is regrettable. We need to go back to a point where we are constantly pushing the average to get better and the very best to innovate. I am very sorry that we appear to have lost that drive, particularly on carbon sustainability.

**The Chairman:** There is also the consideration of developments in building materials. We were quite struck by Quinlan Terry, who said that nobody has yet developed an effective seal between glass and steel; they all go eventually. He made me think. We have all these huge buildings using these seals and they are all coming unstuck in the building I live in now. It is a risky job.

**Ruth Reed:** We know that when mankind is pushed to innovate there is extraordinary capacity.

**The Chairman:** That is true.

**Ruth Reed:** We have removed the push at the moment.

**Baroness Andrews:** Could you give us a list of the deregulatory arrangements introduced over the past five years in order that we can evidence exactly what you have said about the loss of quality, and test that against what the developers have told us about what they would like to build and the viability test?

**Ruth Reed:** We can certainly provide that.

**The Chairman:** That would be very helpful. Thank you.

**Q155 Baroness Whitaker:** Ruth Reed referred to a lack of public sector skills shortages in the built environment professions. I would like to ask both of you how this might be remedied. What other changes are necessary to ensure that existing built environment skills and expertise are better co-ordinated, because you have also commented on the lack of that?
Ruth Reed: We suggested, particularly with reference to the historic environment but generally across the board, that there are skills out in the private sector that would be available to local authorities if they want them.

Baroness Whitaker: If they had the money to pay for them?

Ruth Reed: There is also the requirement for developers to pay for design review, so you could very rapidly get to a point at which you could invite the professional bodies and representatives of the various built environment professions to have a proactive input into the design of places and buildings.

Baroness Whitaker: By “proactive” you mean earlier on in the process?

Ruth Reed: Everything that we know about design review is that it is most effective very early on in the process. If you attempt to influence a building or development that has gone a long way down, it is counterproductive for all involved. There is help out there. Local authorities have been inconsistent in their take-up. There is not necessarily an understanding of the importance of good design.

Baroness Whitaker: How can their understanding be improved? Are we talking about courses for councillors?

Ruth Reed: You heard that in the previous session that I sat in on. I gather there is plenty going on.

The Chairman: Mr Henry, do you want to come in on this?

David Henry: Just to endorse what has been said from practical experience. I am based in Cambridge. I have taken a scheme three times back to the local design panel before it is even submitted as a planning application. Those initiatives are there and they work very successfully at building in the quality before the scheme gets to the decision-making point.

The Chairman: Can you give us a little background to that particular issue if it has gone back three times? Were the parameters not right?

David Henry: In the particular instance that I evidence, there are a number of subjective choices to be made in design. Therefore, it becomes a dialogue to get to a balance and think, “Okay, this is about right between various different factors”.

The Chairman: Are the public involved in this at all?

David Henry: Yes.
The Chairman: You poll them?

David Henry: Not within the immediate design conservation panel made up of the various professionals, but certainly as a factor into the design process through the consultations taking place as an input to that.

The Chairman: Do you think three times is the average?

David Henry: No. This is a very special case. It was to support the view that it is not a whim; these things do happen very effectively.

Q156 Baroness Rawlings: I had better declare an interest as a member of the Georgian Group in relation to the question I am about to ask. In your RIBA submission you take the view of the importance of heritage and how it is understood, which is dear to my heart. How do you feel the public sector gives better recognition to the importance of heritage assets, history, quality of life, and difficulties perhaps with listing? What challenges do your members face in handling conflicting demands of new and existing buildings?

Ruth Reed: There is a question of capacity in local authorities in heritage, as there is in all other aspects of both planning and managing development. The danger is there is a very safe route to saying no to intervention in the historic environment rather than a considered route that says, “How best can this environment be sustained into the future? How can buildings be readapted? How can places be made part of our living lives again rather than preserved?” There is capacity outside of the local authorities to assist with this. The RIBA has a conservation architecture accreditation, which is held in high regard by Historic England and is a prerequisite of their grants system. These are people who understand not only the sensitivities of the environment and the significance of the buildings they are dealing with but how they can be sensitively reused or enhanced and brought back. There is a danger that the heritage environment becomes a “them and us” between the local authorities and the agents outside. Architects and surveyors are extremely sensitive to the needs of those environments. They are the line between clients who may be pushing things a little too far and the local authorities. It is important that there is a mutual respect for what we all know, and perhaps there can be some degree of consultation about heritage matters with those of us working in the private sector. We are not pushing for major change. We know a great deal about how buildings can be managed well.
Baroness Andrews: You have talked about capacity and it is a real issue because of the loss of conservation officers. I declare an interest as an ex-chairman of English Heritage. Would you not agree that there is a perfect storm because of the loss of conservation officers and the potential loss of capacity from some of the agencies such as Historic England and English Heritage, which is making it much more difficult for local authorities to hold the line on the historic environment? I am not talking about monuments; I am talking about the everyday historic environment that we live within. Do you have views on that?

Ruth Reed: The RIBA is conscious of this and is currently doing some research into the responsible reuse of buildings and what a proportionate response is. We have a huge number of listed buildings and conservation areas in this country, which, if all ossified and prevented from change, would contribute to society’s ills and lack of addressing the needs of climate change. We need to take a responsible and forward-looking attitude to that. We will work with Historic England to have that recognised by local authority planners as a matter of authority so that they can rely on that advice, because there is a lack of capacity. The institutes are trying to assist. The problem is that without a conservation officer, even the question of knowing where to go and how to approach the information that is being thrown at an authority has been lost as well.

The Chairman: Mr Henry, what do you think?

David Henry: I am going to make a connection between the two parts here. First of all, the heritage aspects of the historic environment are always evolving and changing, so it is a misconception to look at them as being somehow fixed. It is absolutely essential that we understand that process and where beneficial change can take place, and the added value—sorry to use that hackneyed phrase—from that change can be achieved without denigrating the underlying integrity of the asset. Between the institutions, there is quite a lot of research looking into those issues.

Picking up on the first point, again from practical experience, listed buildings tend to be described as the skeleton of the building, the bricks and mortar, but not the life of the building and its longevity. Understanding its cultural capital, as it were, its historic and economic interests, the well-being that it adds to place, are all aspects of added value that get lost in the smoke of discussion about simply the architecture, dare I say it. We should pick up on that.
and say, “No, there is a future, they can be dynamic and positive assets”. Unfortunately, that does lead back to viability and how one achieves that, but that may be a different aspect of the discussion.

**The Chairman**: Thank you very much. We come to our last question.

**Q157 Earl of Lytton**: I am looking at some of the criticisms encountered from the evidence that has come before us on the quality of new housing development and lack of good design in the built environment. We know some of the reasons for this: cost-cutting and not factoring in the long-term durability, because things can be sold at any price because of the demand. We know there is that element there. Could you share your views on how we can support good design that fosters a long-term sense of place and the value that people attach to it in use? How might this be promoted through the national policy? Are there ways in which built-environment professionals can work together to support that element of better quality design that makes all the difference in the long term?

**David Henry**: Perhaps I will start on this one. First of all, you used the word “sharing”. You heard from both of us there is an increasing and strong element of that, perhaps coming from different aspects, but understanding and addressing common issues. We live in the era of what is called “big data”. There is a lot of information out there that we need to pool. Where is the cost benefit of this? How does the equation work between design and cost of construction in return? That is one aspect of it: the bricks, as it were, of getting to quality design. Having a good understanding is very important.

Secondly, research is very important—looking forward at these very diverse and multi-faceted issues. We just touched on the role of heritage, which has more to it than simply the framework of the building. How do we make sure that quality of design is understood, dynamic and multi-faceted in that respect? So research would be the second key thing that I would put in there.

The third is making sure that construction and design skills are supported and understood. Earlier you heard about training for decision-makers. Dare I say that that also applies to professionals, making sure that they understand the width of skill they require to get to good design? Beyond that, we do not have a monopoly on good ideas. There is good experience
globally, never mind within the UK, that needs to be brought to bear on these issues to challenge poor design and to say, “Look, it can and should be done in a better way”.

Ruth Reed: I, too, have three points. The first is going back to earlier discussion, which is the promotion of excellence by example in the public sector. There is a real opportunity for the public sector to demonstrate what it requires of its built environment through its own work. The second is to put in place a requirement to review good practice to understand why that has benefited. You will be aware that a school won the Stirling prize again. That is a fantastic example of where good design has benefited a whole community. We do not always learn from what we do well. Frequently, we appear to learn from what we do not do well. It would be useful to have a review process to support that excellence agenda.

Baroness Whitaker: Are you talking post-occupancy?

Ruth Reed: Post-occupancy or some kind of holistic community review beyond building users. The implications of good design in public sector buildings go beyond the immediate users and benefit the community.

The third is regulatory change. You may or may not be aware that the RIBA began a campaign called HomeWise, which looked at the size of homes. That began in 2012. We found that new homes were some 7.5 square metres smaller than good homes standards would suggest, which is the size of a small bedroom. We have revisited those figures. The report is not ready yet. Unfortunately, from what we can see, it shows that these matters have not improved. The Government brought in discretionary home sizes through the planning system, but unfortunately with the construction of the planning system requiring evidence leading to policy change, leading to adoption only where a local authority is interested in bringing it in, that is going to be a very slow process. In a system that is underresourced, it will probably not happen, not for lack of will but for lack of time and money. How many more very small houses are going to be built before anything can be done about it?

The RIBA will be putting the idea of an amendment through to the Housing and Planning Bill suggesting that it should be moved to the building regulations. This would be a very simple, straightforward way of ensuring that an aspect of good design was brought about through regulation. It will change a lot of people’s lives to live in larger homes—somewhere for the
kids to do their homework and with proper storage—all the things that we have identified are missing from quite a lot of the developer housing on offer at the moment.

**Q158 The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed. I am sorry if I truncated some of the answers, but we started at 10 o’clock this morning. New subjects keep arising. We need a long breather to go back over the evidence. This has been very useful and the transcript will be very useful to us. I will reread your submission, it has been very helpful. If you were sitting where I am, what glaring questions do you think we have missed?

**Ruth Reed:** This is a personal response. At the moment, people who are directly affected by development are not necessarily the people making the decisions about whether it should happen or not.

**The Chairman:** I think that is coming through. There needs to be much more consultation about the needs of every human being. It is the biggest investment and part of their lives, yet they are not really consulted.

**Baroness Whitaker:** Not so much consultation as involvement in the process of working out what their place ought to be.

**The Chairman:** It is the same sort of thing, is it not, consulting what they want for the rest of their lives?

**David Henry:** If I can endorse that, it is about the dislocation of place and how that place changes. I touched on that in my example of how funding takes place in many of the facilities the whole community uses. It is about how that is done through engagement, whether it is through localism, plan-making, design, charrettes, whatever it might be. There are a multitude of ways of doing that. It would be very interesting to explore how one re-establishes that connection with place.

**The Chairman:** Have any surveys been done about that mismatch of the final product with what the local people really wanted?

**Ruth Reed:** My point was rather that it may not be the local people who eventually use the buildings.

**The Chairman:** Yes, it is the ones in 30 years’ time.
Ruth Reed: It is also the people who move into the houses, who were not part of the democratic process that led to them being built. It is a wider problem, way beyond the scope of looking at the existing situation.

The Chairman: True. Do you think any country has mastered it?

Ruth Reed: I doubt it.

The Chairman: In one way, that is a relief.

Lord Inglewood: Can you suggest how you consult the people who are not yet born?

The Chairman: We are not going into eugenics. Thank you very much. I am sure I speak for the whole Committee when I say that we are delighted that you are here and you have stimulated us. It will make very interesting reading. If you think, “Gosh, why didn’t I say that?”, or “Do they really know the implications of X or Y?”, could you jot it down or give us a call?

Ruth Reed: Of course.

The Chairman: This will all come together in January when we come back after Christmas, because we have to have this report ready by 23 March. That is going to be a really long haul. At the moment we are garnering all this very interesting evidence. We have already had 147 written submissions. It seems like 400. That is not a complaint. Thank you very much.

05 November 2015
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors – Written Evidence (BEN0185)

RICS – Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is pleased to respond to the above consultation.

RICS is the leading organization of its kind in the world for professionals in property, construction, land and related environmental issues. As an independent and chartered organization, RICS regulates and maintains the professional standards of over 100,000 qualified members (FRICS, MRICS and AssocRICS) and over 50,000 trainee and student members.

It regulates and promotes the work of these property professionals throughout 146 countries and is governed by a Royal Charter approved by Parliament, and monitored by the Privy Council, which requires it to act in the wider public interest.

Since 1868, RICS has been committed to setting and upholding the highest standards of excellence and integrity – providing impartial, authoritative advice on key issues affecting businesses and society. RICS is a regulator of both its individual members and firms enabling it to maintain the highest standards and providing the basis for unparalleled client confidence in the sector.

There has been an attitudinal shift in public policy towards the built environment over the last decade; the establishment of this Select Committee itself attests to the increasing attention placed on the built environment is receiving and as such is warmly welcomed by the RICS. The political capital that is being invested in addressing the national housing crisis and meeting the UK’s infrastructure needs also reflects the increasing recognition of the importance of the built environment for the national interest.

Nevertheless, there remains an urgent requirement for an integrated and comprehensive approach to policy to meet the public need. This must encompass a holistic understanding of the interplay between the various built environment professions, and their role in delivering effective public policy. A multifaceted challenge requires a multifaceted solution, and we are keen to continue to work with this committee to develop an effective response to the challenges the UK faces.
Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

In principle, policy decisions relating to the built environment should be taken as closely as possible to the communities which they affect; broadly speaking this means they should be taken at the lowest level possible. This is in keeping with the localism agenda that has characterized Government over the last 5 years or so. However, this principle must also take account of the full scope of any particular policy, and the fact that many decisions are of national strategic importance with an impact that goes far beyond any particular locality.

In this context, the role of national policymakers is to provide a robust overall framework and strategic direction within which policy decisions can be made effectively. A good example of this is the recently announced Infrastructure Commission to be headed by Lord Adonis. RICS have long called for such a body and worked closely with Sir John Armitt on his proposals prior to the General Election in May. We welcome the adoption of the concept by the Government, and will watch closely to see how the Commission works in practice. Fundamentally, the Commission should transcend the electoral cycle and extend the time horizons over which infrastructure priorities are formulated and delivered. This should not be about removing politics from infrastructure policy-making, but about developing a long-term strategic framework within which decisions can be made. A similar approach should be applied to other areas of policy.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

All policy decisions pertaining to the built environment have consequences far beyond the primary area to which they apply. For example, housing and planning decisions have major implications for our infrastructure requirements and vice versa. The establishment of this committee is itself an acknowledgment of the interdependence of all areas of the built environment, and policymakers should reflect this. The National Planning Policy Framework
and the National Infrastructure Plan are in themselves welcome attempts to harmonise policy, but as yet they don’t always link together effectively.

As the leading body for property professionals, the RICS can play a crucial role in coordinating the full spectrum of professions across the built environment. The appointment of Government advisers across construction, surveying, engineering, architecture and planning would be an effective way of crystallizing decision making and ensuring coherence across the built environment professions.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritized and why?

Our members broadly welcome the NPPF, and through our consultations we have found it to be much preferred to the ever-proliferating amount of guidance that preceded it. The greatest strength of the NPPF is its holistic nature, and as such no one element can realistically be identified as more important than the others – the framework must be considered in its entirety.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

A fully coordinated national policy for the built environment necessitates a spatial perspective. Our members identified the Scottish approach in particular as something which England could learn from. The National Policy Framework there includes spatial guidance which applies to a whole range of strategically important national projects and policies, and furthermore, this framework interacts effectively with the Scottish National Planning Policies (the Scottish equivalent of the NPPF). England would benefit from a similarly joined-up approach, and should take full account of the spatial implications of key Government policies, especially its plans for devolution and the Northern Powerhouse. We will also soon be launching our Place-making and Land Value paper which looks at the drivers of value in residential developments, which we are happy to discuss in greater depth in due course.
5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

There is no ‘one size fits all’ answer to this – the appropriate time horizon for policy-making depends on the particular policy and circumstances in questions. Broadly speaking, the UK would benefit from a more long-term approach which transcends short-term constraints such as the electoral cycle. This is of particular importance in areas such as infrastructure, where lead-times are long, the economic benefits widely dispersed and long-term, and the costs immediate and easily assigned to individual interest groups.

Whatever time-horizon is decided upon, policy should be agile, flexible and responsive to changes in market conditions.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The RICS recently launched its Residential Policy Paper, which includes a raft of recommendations for improving housing supply and tackling the UK’s housing crisis. In particular, we have called for measures to increase the availability of land for building; changes to the planning system such as the enforcement of local plans and the extension of Housing Zones; developing improved delivery models through increasing the availability of finance for SME builders, the recognition of Community Land Trusts (CLTs), and the creation of Development Delivery Units (DDUs); and creating incentives for older homeowners to ‘right-size’ and unlock supply at the top end of the market.

Ultimately, the UK’s housing supply crisis will only be addressed through a coherent and coordinated strategy for building across the tenures. At times Ministers have been resistant
to the idea of a national strategy for housing supply, and whilst we agree that strategy alone will not meet our needs, we do stress that it is necessary for central Government to provide an overarching plan and strategic direction.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Sustainability is crucial, and the Government must set clear minimum standards in the areas of design, promote innovative construction techniques, and ensure energy efficiency targets are met. Our Residential Policy Paper recommends that Government implements a series of measures to encourage the retrofit of existing properties. These include requiring local authorities to publish data on empty properties together with a measurable timetable for bringing empty stock back into use, using new City Deals to promote large-scale renovation projects (particularly in areas such as the Midlands and the North where demand is low), and tax incentives to encourage the repair and maintenance of existing properties.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more use be made of these national assets?

A key feature of our built environment is the extent to which it represents our national heritage, and policymakers need to take full account of this. Policies should ensure that our historic assets are preserved, maintained and enhanced, making the best use of their economic and social potential. The historic environment not only provides financial benefits for the UK, it also has a positive impact on quality of life. It must be a key part of a holistic approach to policy in the built environment.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environments in their areas?

The built environment professions as a whole do have an appreciation of the breadth of issues involved in this area and the range of skills and viewpoints required to deliver a coherent strategy, and this appreciation exists even where particular skill sets are focused on a particular niche area. The RICS especially has a unique perspective on the built environment, given the scope and breadth of surveying as a profession.
We have identified several measures the Government could take to address those areas where skills are in short supply, including the introduction of a Construction Skills Investment Charter to encourage more young people to enter the sector. In addition, there may be scope for the professions to collaborate more closely to align the various routes into the professions, including training programmes, university degrees and apprenticeship schemes.

There are significant gaps in the skills available to local authorities. In particular, we have identified a lack of resource in local planning departments as a serious barrier to effective planning policy. Our Planning Resource Thought Leadership Paper made a number of recommendations to address this problem, including ‘flying squad’ planning teams that can be deployed across local authority boundaries, and better deployment of personnel on strategically important projects.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high-quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Our members have raised the concern that the market tends towards the lowest common denominator on design and place-making in the absence of any incentive to do otherwise. Government should provide clear guidelines and where necessary, enforce standards to ensure the quality and effectiveness of design.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Partly as a result of the lack of a coordinated policy for the built environment, there is not at present sufficient data to assess the health and social impacts of the built environment on the general population. A more joined-up approach would help to address this – in particular the Department of Health should be involved more closely in decision making to improve the effects of policies for the built environment on other areas of public policy.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment within which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed? Communities could be better involved through the promotion of neighbourhood plans as a component of local plans. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is another area that can be utilized to greater effect – the RICS has a sophisticated dispute resolution service that is an effective way of resolving conflicts without recourse to the courts.
Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

The question of how fiscal policy can be designed to increase housing and land supply and improve design is vital, and merits a fuller response than can be given here. However, the RICS has called for the issuance of Property Tax Forward Guidance for the market, to give clarity and certainty to investors and stakeholders. This would remove uncertainty and allow longer-term, strategic decisions to be made. We have also recommended financial incentives to improve the use of existing housing stock, such as a 5% VAT rate on repairs and improvements.

Conclusion

RICS welcomes this consultation, and we are keen to work with the committee on an ongoing basis to develop an effective national policy for the built environment. The key theme of all our recommendations is coherence. All aspects of the built environment must be considered as part of a whole, they cannot be looked at in isolation. Policymakers need to understand the interconnectedness of the built environment, and fully appreciate the broader economic, social, and environmental impacts of their decisions. Only then can we develop a truly holistic approach that meets all of the UK’s needs.

13 October 2015
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Royal Institute of British Architects– Oral Evidence (QQ146-158)

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Royal Institute of British Architects– Oral Evidence (QQ146-158)

Transcript to be found under Royal Institute of British Architects
SUMMARY

1. The RSPB’s interest in national policy for the built environment primarily relates to the way in which national policy can help to:
   - Halt and reverse the ongoing decline in biodiversity;
   - Enhance people’s health and wellbeing through access to wildlife-rich greenspace.

2. Nature is in trouble. The recent State of Nature report has highlighted that 60% of the species monitored in the UK over the last 50 years are in decline, with 31% declining strongly. The built environment has been a contributing factor to this decline.

3. At the same time, we are experiencing a national health crisis, with increasing levels of physical inactivity, obesity and mental health problems, which are costing the UK economy billions of pounds every year.

4. Whilst the way in which we plan, build and manage the built environment can have adverse effects on people and nature, it also has a key role to play in overcoming these problems and in providing positive benefits. In responding to the Select Committee’s Call for Evidence (focussing on Questions 7 and 11), we make a number of recommendations on how these positive benefits can be achieved.

5. With regards to Question 7, the Government’s manifesto commitment to ‘develop a 25 year plan to restore the UK’s biodiversity’, provides a key opportunity to ensure that we plan, build and manage the built environment so that it is more sustainable and resilient. In particular, we recommend that the 25 year plan should put in place specific measures to: (a) protect existing nature conservation assets; and (b) restore and enhance biodiversity. These are outlined in paragraph 14, below. We also make recommendations on the forthcoming Housing Bill and the proposed streamlining of Local Plans.

6. With regards to Question 11, the Government’s manifesto commitment for an ambitious programme of Pocket Parks, provides a key opportunity to address mental and physical health issues by increasing the extent, accessibility and quality of wildlife-rich greenspace in the built environment. In particular, we recommend that the Government takes account of Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) when considering the location, size and quality of these Pocket Parks. In addition, we recommend that the Government develops a more coordinated approach between funding streams and initiatives for health, the environment and the economy.
QUESTION 7: How do we build built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing building and places be able to adapt to the changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7. From the RSPB's perspective, the key issue to be addressed under Question 7 is to ensure that the built environment is planned, built and managed in harmony with nature, for the benefit of both people and wildlife. [N.B. The response to question 7 focuses primarily on wildlife - the link between a wildlife-rich built environment and people’s health and well-being is covered in more detail in response to Question 11].

8. Nature is in trouble. The State of Nature report, produced by the RSPB and 24 other UK nature conservation and research organisations, has highlighted that 60% of the species monitored in the UK over the last 50 years are in decline, with 31% declining strongly. This decline is particularly severe for some of the species associated with the built environment, such as the:

- House sparrow – declined by two-thirds, from approximately 30 million in the 1960s to approximately 10 million.
- Hedgehog – declined from approximately 30 million in the 1960s to less than 1 million (in other words the hedgehog population has declined by more than 1 hedgehog every minute over the last 50 years, on average).

9. Much of this decline, especially for those species associated with the built environment, is due to the way in which we plan, build and manage the built environment, including: destruction and fragmentation of habitat; loss of green spaces; changes to buildings (e.g. loss of nest and roost sites for building-dependent birds); and water and air pollution.

10. Whilst the way in which we plan, build and manage the built environment can have adverse effects on people and nature, it also has a key role to play in overcoming these problems and in providing positive benefits for people and nature. The range of environmental, social and economic benefits that can be provided by addressing these issues in an integrated way are detailed in key publications such as the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) and the reports of the Natural Capital Committee.

11. Recognising these potential benefits, the RSPB has joined forces with one of the UK’s largest home-builders – Barratt Developments – to set a new benchmark for wildlife-friendly housing developments. This is the first national agreement of its kind in the UK and the flagship project will be a 2,450-home development in Kingsbrook, Aylesbury Vale that will also include new schools and community facilities. 50% of the Kingsbrook development will be green infrastructure, including 250 acres of wildlife-rich open space as well as orchards, hedgehog highways, newt ponds, tree-lined avenues, nesting boxes and nectar-rich planting for bees and other pollinators.

12. The RSPB’s aspiration is that the Kingsbrook development will set a high standard for wildlife-friendly housing that can be affordably reached for other housing
developments in the future, such that wildlife-friendly housing developments become standard practice.

13. The Government has a key role to play in helping to address these issues. Whilst it already has a variety of legislation, policies and strategies in place that seek to halt and reverse the decline in nature, in many cases these are either insufficient or not being delivered effectively or being weakened by current Government proposals. For example, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages local planning authorities to:

- Plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of coherent ecological networks.
- Plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries.
- Identify and map components of local ecological networks.

However, the report, Nature Positive Local Plans, recently published by the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts, found that:

- Less than one-third of Core Strategies (that have been adopted since the publication of the NPPF) present a clear strategic approach to planning for biodiversity.
- Only 20% of Core Strategies identify cross-boundary biodiversity matters that might need to be addressed in cooperation with other local planning authorities.
- Less than 20% of Core Strategies have spatially expressed habitat restoration priorities.

14. The Government’s manifesto commitment to ‘develop a 25 year plan to restore the UK’s biodiversity’, provides a key opportunity to ensure that we plan, build and manage the built environment in harmony with nature, so that it is more sustainable and resilient. To deliver this aspiration, we recommend that 25 year plan should put in place measures to address the following issues:

(a) Protect existing nature conservation assets, including the hierarchy of designated sites and priority habitats and species, in particular:

(i) Sites and species of international importance:

- Oppose any changes to the Nature Directives under the European Commission “Fitness Check”; making changes to the Directives would undermine decades of progress and cause unnecessary uncertainty for developers.
- Fully implement the Nature Directives and make this a key milestone in the Government’s forthcoming 25 year plan for biodiversity.
- Conduct a review of the extent to which the measures outlined in the 2012 Habitats and Wild Birds Directives Implementation Review have been adequately implemented.
o Continue to support the ongoing work of the Defra Great-crested newt Task Force which is working to deliver better solutions for both developers and this protected species.

(ii) Sites of national importance:

o Ensure that housing developments (and other built environment developments) do not have an adverse effect on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). In particular, we recommend that the Government should reject the proposed housing development at Lodge Hill, in Kent, which would destroy the majority of the Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI, as it is inconsistent with the NPPF and the Government’s very strong presumption against developing SSSIs. Similarly, the Government should reject the Rampisham Down Solar Park, in Dorset, which would damage the Rampisham Down SSSI.

(b) Restore and enhance biodiversity, in particular:

(i) Identify and create a national ecological network, built at the local level, which incorporates ecological networks in the built environment. Robust implementation of the biodiversity policies of the NPPF by local planning authorities will play a key role in delivering this aspiration. In implementing these policies, every local planning authority should be required to set out a coherent strategic and spatial vision for the protection and restoration of biodiversity. Ensure that all local planning authorities have access to good ecological expertise and up-to-date ecological information to enable them to plan and manage nature-positive development and infrastructure.

(ii) Promote the production - and use - of relevant standards and guidance for biodiversity in the built environment, such as British Standard (BS) 42020 (Biodiversity: Code of Practice for planning and development).

15. The forthcoming Housing Bill will provide another key opportunity to ensure that we plan, build and manage the built environment in harmony with nature. In particular, we recommend that the Government should exclude brownfield land with nature conservation designations - and other nature conservation assets - from the proposed statutory brownfield land register. If any brownfield land with such designations or assets is included on the register, ‘permission in principle’ should not be granted for such sites.

16. Finally, we recommend that the Government’s proposals to streamline the Local Plan process, currently being addressed by the Local Plan Expert Group, should specifically acknowledge the benefits of early engagement with nature conservation NGOs, Natural England, etc. Such early engagement has been proven to help speed-up the Local Plan process by identifying and filtering, at an early stage, the key environmental / nature conservation issues on which the planning authority should focus its resources. It can also help to ensure that Local Plans are not withdrawn on the basis of
environmental issues, such as the Habitat Regulations Assessment, not being addressed in a satisfactory manner.

**QUESTION 11:** Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

17. From the RSPB’s perspective, the main issue to be addressed in Question 11 is to enhance people’s health and wellbeing by providing easy access to wildlife-rich greenspace, close to home. At present, sufficient account is not taken of this issue. Not only do existing approaches fail to exploit the opportunities that exist for enhancing people’s health and well-being through greater contact with nature, in some cases they undermine people’s long-run health and well-being by failing to account for the underpinning role played by critical ‘natural capital’ assets.

18. The UK is experiencing increasing levels of physical inactivity, obesity and mental health problems, with these health issues being skewed towards poorer sections of society. For example:

- Physical inactivity affects 60–70% of the adult population, costing the economy £20 billion per year, including direct treatment costs and work days lost through sickness.
- In the UK, 67% of adult men, 57% of adult women and 28% of children are overweight or obese.
- At least one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives.

19. Yet there is considerable evidence to show that contact with nature can help to prevent and reverse poor health and wellbeing. For example:

- Proximity of green space to the home is associated with higher levels of physical activity and improving access to green space can encourage people to be more active.
- In general, individuals with easy access to nature are three times more likely to participate in physical activity and 40% less likely to become overweight or obese.

20. Crucially, greenspace quality, including its richness in wildlife, may be more important to mental health benefits than its quantity. People living near high-quality, wildlife-rich greenspace are twice as likely to report low psychological distress as those living near low quality open spaces.

21. Providing access to wildlife-rich greenspace, close to home, is therefore a crucial strand in addressing the UK’s health crisis. Initiatives such as the Kingsbrook housing development, where the RSPB is working in partnership with Barratt Developments (see
paragraphs 11 and 12 above), are showing how nature can be put at the heart of such developments, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

22. However, relying on voluntary action by developers is highly unlikely to be enough on its own to deliver the scale of change required. In many areas, there isn’t sufficient provision of wildlife-rich greenspace. For example, in Hertfordshire, only 36% of households have access to an accessible natural green space of at least two hectares (ha) within 300 m of their home - the minimum level of provision recommended in Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). If this situation is to be rectified, the housing sector will need regulatory, or financial, incentives to encourage the provision of wildlife-rich greenspace.

23. The Government’s manifesto commitment for ‘an ambitious programme of Pocket Parks’ provides a key opportunity to address mental and physical health issues by increasing the extent, accessibility and quality of wildlife-rich greenspace in the built environment. In particular, we recommend that the Government takes account of Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) when considering the location, size and quality of these Pocket Parks.

24. In addition, we recommend that the Government develops a more co-ordinated approach between funding streams and initiatives for health, the environment and the economy, for example, by:

(a) Incorporating access to wildlife-rich greenspace as a key component of initiatives such as NHS England’s Healthy New Towns initiative.

(b) Developing closer links between Health and Wellbeing Boards, Local Nature Partnerships and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

(c) Targeting deprived areas with poorer-quality environments and increased levels of physical inactivity, obesity and mental health problems.

(d) Providing funding for further research into the connection between mental and physical health and the (wildlife-rich) built environment.

15 October 2015
House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment, Response to Consultation.

1. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 23,000 spatial planners. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of spatial planning for the benefit of the public. As well as promoting spatial planning, the RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development. In preparation for our response we have drawn on the experience of some of our most highly experienced and senior practitioners in planning and the built environment, representing the public and private sector and distributed around the country (England). Please see our response to the questions posed by the call for evidence:

Q1) Levels of Decision Making

2. Local Authorities should remain the main administrative level on which planning is done. However, there are many parts of the country where there is a severe lack of strategic coordination at city-region or county level. We have put forward proposals for how this might be done. There should be closer link between local authorities exhibiting cooperation and government’s spending plans.

3. The key to success of effective strategic and local plan making and day-to-day decision making rests with authorities’ ability to be properly staffed with professionally chartered planners, who are able to provide elected members with sound, well-rounded advice to balance the needs of the community with wider strategic needs such as housing and infrastructure delivery.

Q2) Coordination of Built Environment Policy

4. We are very concerned that different government departments pull in different directions. Given the high degree of centralisation in England, coupled with a corresponding high degree of delegation or even privatisation of functions to autonomous bodies, this is a matter of even greater concern that it might otherwise be. How does this play out in practice?

5. An example of the tensions created is the lack of coordination between the Department for Health and the Department for Communities when it comes to ensuring that health and housing are planned together, and that new homes do not cause an adverse impact on health provision.

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454 Strategic Planning 2015, Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries, RTPI, January 2015
6. Councils are being urged by the Department for Communities to make provision for more homes. However from a strictly health perspective this may not necessarily be good news. The practical outworking of Department of Health guidelines is that any new health premises and the staff to run them (at first) should be financed by landowners accepting lower prices for land, and effectively deeding the balance to finance health care. However the development industry does not necessarily work in such a theoretically elegant fashion: prices for land cannot be retrospectively changed once deals have been made. And there are many calls apart from health services on the potential uplift in land values that occurs if planning permission is granted.

7. Another difficult area is the tension between economic development objectives and others. Under direction from the Business Department, Local Enterprise Partnerships have produced Strategic Economic Plans. In some cases the level of job growth proposed in SEPs is not compatible with the level of housing growth proposed by the constituent local planning authorities under the tutelage of the Department for Communities. Nevertheless SEPs have been accepted under these circumstances and even grants for investment in economic development have been made. Not only does this cause considerable dissension between interest groups within LEP areas, but can in the worst cases lead to poaching of labour from adjoining LEP areas, which means more unsustainable commuting and a threat to the economic development aims of adjoining areas.

Q3) Sufficiency of the NPPF

8. The NPPF does not generally make choices between the various priorities it recognises. There are advantages to this approach given the variety of circumstances within such a large country as England. More direction could be regarded as trespassing on local discretion. However lawyers can observe in appeal decisions that there are general trends in priorities which can vary even within a single year. Arguably if government is going to prioritise elements of the NPPF this should be easily readable and not require careful scrutiny of cases.

9. A critical exception to the neutrality of the NPPF is the priority placed on the preferences of landowners in paragraph 173. Arguably if a landowner holds a piece of land which is critical to the sustainable expansion of a town, it is a form of ransom behaviour to withhold land from development in the hope of a better deal in the future. Given the general neutrality of the NPPF in making choices between priorities, this is surprising.

Q4) Spatial Perspective

10. There are certain elements of national planning policy which are spatial, such as the small number of site specific Nationally-Significant Infrastructure Projects in National Policy Statements. But there are arguably fewer of these than was envisaged when the Planning Act 2008 was enacted to speed up decision making.

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11. The RTPI commissioned a study\textsuperscript{456} in 2012 which on the other hand found 95 different policies in government departments which have a spatial dimension – either explicit or implicit. We are concerned that this complexity makes it difficult to gauge the impact of government’s collective policy on places. In an era of ever more open data, we believe the public should be able to see such impacts, and propose there should be a website called Map for England where all these interactions can be appreciated.

12. Therefore a spatial element for national policy would be useful if it extended to all relevant national policy. There would little point if only one government department was involved.

Q5) Timescale for planning for the Built Environment

13. Investment decisions are costly and long lasting. We consider there may be a downside to the current emphasis on the short term. For example we think consideration should be given to a 20 year housing supply rather than a 5 year one. We have commissioned a study of all the major planning permissions in a dozen city regions in England to assess both whether they are in sustainable locations and whether the scale of projects is sufficient to support infrastructure. We will be able to come to conclusions on the possible impact of the emphasis on 5 years only at the beginning of 2016.

Q6) Addressing Housing Supply

14. The problem of the price of housing (either to rent or buy) has a large number of causes of which planning is but one. Over the long term there is a need to increase housing supply and to increase the number of units permitted each year, but this will only make a difference if coordinated, as the inquiry suggests, across government. The Productivity Plan of July 2015 is not encouraging in indicating the necessary support from the key departments of Health and Education Environment and Energy to ensure infrastructure provision in proper lock step with housing growth. One key aspect of public objection to housing is the impact it places on public services (see question 2).

15. The RTPI has researched the issue\textsuperscript{457} of how to get large housing sites completed and has made a list of 15 recommendations, not all addressed to government, which would help. As regards the government ones, it is critical that when public sector land is sold, this is not done to the person prepared to pay the highest price. What matters is whether broader outcomes are achieved. It would be quite possible to undertake a competitive sale in which purchasers were judged on price once they had all committed to a common series of obligations around affordable housing and infrastructure provision.

16. The Productivity Plan’s aim to reduce planning risks to development does seem a worthwhile area to pursue. In the early days of the post 1947 planning system councils

\textsuperscript{456} RTPI Map For England 2012
\textsuperscript{457} Delivering Large Scale Housing, RTPI, September 2013
would grant permissions to themselves for redevelopment of land and this could assist with bringing difficult sites forward.

Q7) Creating Sustainable and Resilient Environments

17. Sustainable and resilient environments are the result of well-planned places.

18. The findings of the “Location of Development” work we have commissioned should help identify that places which are well located in terms of access to housing, jobs and transport bear all the hallmarks of sustainable and resilient places and we will be happy to our findings with the select committee once complete.

19. Buildings should be constructed to high standards, they need to be designed with people in mind and there should be a symbiotic relationship between the built and natural environment. Government needs to support planning departments’ abilities to engage in effective and visionary place-making in the public interest and positively incentivise them to do so.

20. Local plan policies can encourage improvements to sustainability and resilience of new developments. However, where requests to improve developments (e.g. better materials) are criticised for making them unviable, the challenge for planners has become even more significant as decisions must now ensure proposals provide competitive returns for landowners. The deregulation bill, which will prevent local plans from having technical standards for housing and withdraws the code for sustainable homes, is arguably a step away from achieving this aim. On the other hand, examples of government-backed changes in legislation, such as amendments to permitted development rights for renewables and micro-generation and legislation on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) have been effective tools in achieving environmental resilience. Similarly, legislation on heritage (such as Conservation and Listed Buildings Act) have always been powerful tools to help facilitate imaginative ways of bringing old buildings back in to use.

21. We have welcomed proposals to improve CPO powers but believe more should be done to allow local authorities to be able to intervene on empty homes to secure re-use.

Q8) Historic Environment

22. Many settlements with a historic environment already make full use of that environment and it can be at the very heart of future planning, regeneration and place-making. In places such as York, Durham and Chester (and very many lesser sized settlements), the historic environment is seen as a key economic asset (often of international value) that creates considerable social benefit for local communities and provides a means of retaining the continuity of heritage. “Liverpool One” is another good example of how new major developments have been woven into the historic
fabric. There are many lessons and much good practice that can be drawn from existing examples and applied elsewhere, to prevent the further loss of historic environments and promote successful heritage-based regeneration. On a small scale, the heritage railways across England provide a good example, with the Worth Valley Railway in West Yorkshire and the North Yorkshire Moors Railway between Pickering and Whitby providing excellent case examples.

23. Since every place has ‘history’ of some kind or other (Whitehaven is a good example) there remains considerable scope for making more of such assets. They are part of what makes us who we are. Strong and resilient planning policies for the historic environment remain a key ingredient for success (especially blending historic and modern buildings; providing historic character assessments), as do a successful combination of public, private and voluntary sector resources to kick-start initiatives. English Heritage are important for monitoring and evaluating the historic environment and strong Government support for them must be retained, even in face of often short-sighted austerity measures by the Government.

Q9) Skills of built environment professionals

24. Chartered Town Planners, accredited by the RTPI are trained to consider the built environment in a holistic manner. They must complete post graduate training and demonstrate a wide range of skills and competencies over a two year period, measured through an assessment of professional competence. They are also required to undertake continued professional development in order to remain accredited. The RTPI are constantly reviewing professional competencies required of planners and have identified the following priorities for 2015-2016;

25. Understanding and practicing in a market economy; Health and inclusive planning; Delivering housing to meet national needs; Understanding land as a resource (demand for energy); Communication, mediation and negotiation skills; Effective decision making, Management and business skills and Ethics.

26. We are working to help address a shortage of planners in the profession, recently offering 50 bursaries for students to undertake postgraduate planning courses, funded by the RTPI and sponsored through partnership organisations. We have also introduced an apprenticeship scheme for school leavers in partnership with a number of planning consultancies and local authorities.

Q10) Tools to promote Place Making

27. We need to recognise the economic value of good design and place making. Techniques and tools such as Design Review provide valuable tools in promoting high quality design and so there should be continued support for the Design Council to carry on supporting these activities. Continued training facilitated by the RTPI and others on matters of design continue to provide professionals with necessary tools. Opportunities for
knowledge transfer also exist within the professions, such as the RTPI’s Urban Design Network. Inter-professional and non professional groups such as the “place alliance” do well to promote the message that people want to live in great places.

Q11) Consideration of all those who use the built environment.

28. Decision-makers are increasingly taking account the effects of the built environment has on the community at large. To a large extent this has been a result from the statutory duty to publicise plans and proposals and to engage in public consultation. Developers should always consult with local communities on the design content of major schemes, even before the submission of a planning application.

29. The value of neighbourhood plans is that they encourage and stimulate debate in the community about the quality of the built environment and highlight those features which are most valued.

30. The sharing of best practice in areas like inclusive planning is a good way to improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment on the mental and physical health of users. We have signed up to an Inclusive Environments Action Plan together with the Construction Industry Council, one of the outcomes should be Design Council led learning tools for practitioners.

Q12) Community Engagement

31. There are statutory requirements which ensure communities are consulted during the planning decision making process and the plan making process. However, our research papers have recognised that more can and should be done in order that planning is truly inclusive but also to enable development. Consultation by developers and authorities with a wider community bases as early as possible are an example\(^{458}\).

32. Neighbourhood plans can provide a more systematic way of achieving engagement in localities particularly where they conclude with a list of priority projects and a live delivery programme. This can hold the local authority to account and may support more community projects and action to deliver some of these requirements. However the challenge remains for those areas that do not have the time or energy to devote to more than surviving and here there may need to be encouragement and support for these processes. Guidance that the RTPI and Planning Aid England have produced is one way\(^{459}\). But this will take more resources and will than many local authorities have at present but nevertheless planners and planning can give a lead on these issues. There is also a need to reinvigorate and revive those planners in local authorities. We need to improve their confidence and allow them some space to use their skills in working with communities.

\(^{458}\) RTPI “Delivering Large Scale Housing” 2013 P10 and 11

\(^{459}\) See Planning Aid “Good Practice to public engagement in Development Schemes”
Q13 Financial measures to address housing and land supply

33. The price of housing is a function both of limited supply and inflated demand. Demand is driven by:

- Lending against high multiples of two incomes
- Property (council) tax falling lightly on expensive homes
- No taxation of sale of family home
- No taxation of imputed rent of family home
- Shortage of pension saving options people feel safe about
- Shortage of good long term rental options for housing

34. Action could be taken in parallel with land based measures to work more effectively long term to lower real prices.

06 October 2015
Key messages for policy and practice

The forthcoming (23/11/15) RTPI-University of Liverpool research report detailing three case studies from Hamburg, Lille and Nijmegen shows how public investment in planning can be used to stimulate development in the private sector. Planning tools that increase the quality of places, such as coordinated transport infrastructure investment, or land assembly tools have the effect of increasing demand for land in those locations. Where planning is used to coordinate the development of this land, development can be forthcoming at high levels of quantity and quality.

Planning can coordinate action in situations where cooperative working between multiple stakeholders is necessary to catalyse development or meet social and economic objectives. The ‘first mover problem’, when planning intervenes to reduce risk or ensure fair share of rewards, is a prime example of the role planning can play to encourage development into being and facilitate the subsequent entry of private sector investments. For example, if there is excessive demand for housing in a location but land is held by multiple owners, it is unlikely that an uncoordinated approach would be able to deliver the desired quantity or quality of development. Here, planning can provide the solution by using tools such as pooling of property rights that enable the development of plans that can allow supply to meet demand.

The assembly of coalitions is often an essential precondition to effectively marshal the development process. The durability of such coalitions is dependent upon the belief of coalition members that they have more to gain as part of the coalition than by acting alone, a notion known as ‘superadditivity’. This might occur through the translation of shared interests into a formal agreement and a strategic vision that balances ambition with systematic inclusion. Moreover, this concept can be extended to include forms of intra-metropolitan cooperation where development may otherwise be disrupted by the presence of formal administrative boundaries.

A behavioural shift towards a model that sees planning act as a ‘market maker’ for the private development industry does not imply a shift in the ethical goals of planning in favour of economic objectives. What we see from the case studies is that planning interventions that boost demand and value go hand in hand with those that make great quality places for people, such as good public and active transport provision, the supply of green space, and high quality design. That is, they are the kind of interventions which also facilitate the achievement of social and environmental goals.

However, only planning which is well resourced and culturally supported can deliver these kind of positive development outcomes. All too often in the UK we leave development outcomes in the built environment to chance, passing up the opportunity to plan proactively
and thus being left with lower quantity and quality in output than might otherwise be the case.

**The ‘Value of Planning’**

The UK Government has key economic priorities to boost national productivity and ensure that economic growth is sustainable and the RTPI believes that planning in the UK is an underused tool that can help achieve these goals.

For example, we know that many of the outcomes produced by good planning are essential for a strongly performing economy. We know that good transport connectivity between homes and jobs provides greater economic opportunity and supply in the labour market. We know that places which induce healthy lifestyles can produce more productive labour forces. We know that developing inclusive places, safe places, and cohesive places, can all reduce the need for Government expenditure on services like health and social care and crime prevention and security, whilst increasing consumption opportunities.

Greater investment in the kind of proactive planning, that is rarely seen in the UK but much more frequent in continental Western Europe, can play a leading role in delivering the kinds of places that can improve local economic outcomes.

**Empowered planning**

In the case study cities planning has been empowered and is provided with legislative, cultural and financial support and we see startling results in terms of development quality, laying the foundations for sustainable, positive economic outcomes. A culture within which planning is charged with engaging with the market provides responses to inconsistencies and market failures with which a more passive, regulatory model of planning would be ill-equipped to deal.

**Coordinated planning**

The Nijmegen case study illustrates how planning might be used to lead and coordinate development through the use of specific mechanisms that guide and stimulate the market. ‘Land-readjustment’, a term used in the Netherlands to refer to a specific form of planning whereby land rights are temporarily pooled to deliver infrastructure or collective area-benefits, delivers individual benefits to private land-owners that would significantly outweigh any garnered from acting in isolation. In this model, risk is reduced for the public sector without the need to engage in resource intensive compulsory-purchase procedures, and the very processes involved in bringing private land-owners into cooperation often creates healthy coalitions which are able to share knowledge and ensure that the development closely reflects the interests of the stakeholders.

**Leading with planning**
In Hamburg, a strong guiding role for a planning institution points to ways in which large scale developments can be used to channel private sector innovation and delivery capabilities to achieve higher overall development quality. As a result of the Lander (regional State) and the city developing a strong planning institution that was able to undertake upfront land assembly and infrastructure provision, planning was able to shape the form and structure of development in the area, encouraging a density and quality commensurate with the economic aspirations of the region.

Planning coalitions

The Lille case study shows how planning institutions can be empowered to employ strategic foresight and cooperative incentives to overcome institutional deficiencies which might otherwise prevent coordinated development across jurisdictions. Coalition building, whereby neighbouring authorities pool resources in order to share the products of investment that would be greater than they could achieve in isolation, is crucial for the successful results in the region. Strong planning institutions and tools, devolved funding, and local leadership that encourages strategic spatial planning is central to the delivery and maintenance of this model.

Achieving better outcomes

The report argues that the outcomes of such approaches to animating urban development can produce better quality, more sustainable built environments. Much recent research that explores the relationship between planning and the wider economy has used a neoclassical framework to investigate the costs of the activity. Using this approach an analysis of planning has emerged that points to the constraints that this form of statutory intervention places on ‘development’ (widely construed) and, correspondingly, economic growth. The currency of this academic argument has in turn had a significant bearing on political debate. In this respect planning is now routinely perceived as an overbearing, regulatory state function the principal effect of which is to supress our economic performance and contribute to the major social dilemma of the day – our collective inability to provide sufficient housing at accessible prices.

This is a false understanding of both what planning can achieve and how land and property markets actually function.

The report illustrates that in reality, only strong planning institutions, where planning professionals are well resourced, empowered, and culturally and societally supported, can routinely deliver positive outcomes for places. Taking a wider international perspective points to the possibility that the kind of outcomes that will enhance economic performance through the creation of great places will require more planning, and proactive planning in particular, not less.

Policy Implications
Supporting locally devised approaches and devolved decision making

Devolved decision making allows contextually specific planning problems and their solutions to be devised locally. Those currently involved in pursuing and delivering greater devolution settlements in the metropolitan regions of England should focus on how they can use planning most efficiently to deliver better built environment outcomes. Sharing best practice via digital forums could aid policy transfer within and between regions and nations of the UK, as well as those in Europe, would be essential to the stimulation of professional exchange and supporting locally-attuned responses to planning issues.

Since the General Election of 2015 and the Scottish Independence Referendum, the process of devolution of greater political powers to the various regions and nations of the UK has begun. One of the core functions that a new polity of British city-regions would have is greater control over its ability to be more creative and strategic with pooled resources for urban planning. Ensuring continuity across and between territories with differing jurisdictional authority will be essential if built environment development is not to be disrupted and piecemeal. Ongoing research on the effects of this potentially variegated approach to the scales at which planning power is vested is essential.

A re-consideration of the use of development agencies

Development agencies provide the chance to integrate public and private interests, especially in the case of large-scale or stalled developments. Research presented in the report identifies the common role development agencies may play in kick-starting and managing development. The Town and Country Planning Association’s urging of a reappraisal of the New Towns Act to create development corporations (TCPA, 2015), as well as the Labour Party’s Lyons Review (Lyons, 2015) arrive at similar conclusions to those of the current government as to the potential value of incorporated bodies to lead the development process. The findings of this report similarly point to the ways in which the UK’s nearest continental neighbours have used development corporations/agencies to guarantee consistency of focus in strategically important developments.

Moving from instrumentalism to strategic planning in area development

While strategic planning has appeared and reappeared on numerous occasions over the course of the post-war era, the form it has taken in the UK has tended to focus on the broad spatial pattern of development (for example across a region) rather than taking a strategic view of the form taken by specific developments. The strategic dimension in area development is constituted by such factors as the use value of the built environment, the resilience of development to shocks (economic or otherwise) and the role of architecture and urban design in raising living standards. Encouraging a behavioural shift, such as that which is currently occurring in aspects of the case study research presented in the report,
from goal-specific regulation to strategic intervention, could potentially contribute to addressing these aims.

**Further research on the implications of local government reform**

The aggregate of reforms affecting local government across the UK are likely to have profound behavioural effects, not least the creation of more autonomous and entrepreneurial local authorities in some cases covering city-regional territories much greater in size than the inherited boundary settlement. The research presented in this report points to the dilemmas these increased powers and spheres of influence create. The degree to which the changing landscape of local government in the UK prompts a corresponding change in focus in how development is animated should be a focus for further research.

*19 November 2015*
Royal Town Planning Institute and Planning Officers Society – Oral Evidence (QQ132-145)

Transcript to be found under Planning Officers Society
Rushden Town Council would like to make the following responses:

1. We feel that Neighbourhood Plans should be an important part of the decision making on built environment. Whilst this plans need to be consistent with overarching plans, they should carry considerable weight as they are derived views of the people who live and work in the said built environment. Localism embraces the opinions of the local residents and a good Neighbourhood Plan that has satisfied all the consultation processes will give a good indication of how residents wish to see their town or village develop.

   Obviously Town and Parish Councils need to work closely with their District and Borough Councils to ensure all parties understand the needs and requirements of residents. There needs to be a National Framework which gives a guide for any local plans that may be implemented.

2. Government departments need to adopt a holistic approach to matters such as housing, design, transport, heritage and sustainability. Consultation at a local level is very important and this should be carried out robustly to ensure local residents views are taken into consideration. National plans with no consideration for local views will only be harmful to the planning process.

3. With regard to supply of housing stock, this can only be considered in conjunction with adequate infrastructure to support it.

   Rushden has now been recognized as a growth town and we are happy to take further housing stock as long as we have the adequate infrastructure to support it. We wish to rebalance our employment opportunities and sports and leisure facilities as part of our growth. We consider a balanced housing mix, adequate infrastructure to include schools, medical facilities, leisure and sports facilities a sustainable transport network and increased employment opportunities is the only way to successfully increase housing supply.

   We would welcome a more positive approach to brown field site development for both industry and housing and in our immediate area a restriction on B8 warehouse
type development. This type of development does not create a good built environment to jobs ratio.

In conclusion we feel whilst there is a need for a national framework for planning greater consideration should now be given to local needs and consultation at a local level is vital to ensure residents needs and aspirations are met.

06 October 2015
Five radical ideas for a better planning system

1. Planning should be for well-being not just growth
2. Planning powers must be radically devolved
3. The benefits of planning regulation should be recognised
4. Land reform is essential, including local land ownership and land value capture
5. The democratic deficit in planning must be tackled.

Why radical change is needed
The planning system has changed significantly over the last five years. Regional planning has been abolished and emphasis thrown on the smallest ‘neighbourhood’ level. Policy guidance is produced via a single National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which falls short of a spatial plan for the country as a whole. The current system doesn’t connect regional and local planning, and planning tools favour market-led urban development.

There is growing criticism that the system lacks strategic direction and is not fit for purpose. Given the continued government drive for deregulation of the system, compounded by shrinking local authority budgets, now is the time to call for an improved approach to deliver a sustainable future.

The five radical ideas for change comprise a package that should be implemented as a whole. Together they can deliver better economic, social and environmental outcomes. This is illustrated by a topical policy issue in each case.

Five radical ideas for change

1. Planning should be for well-being and not just growth
Well-being should be the key principle of planning. Planning needs to rediscover its original purpose of delivering fairness and promoting collective well-being. It should delink from the narrow measure of GDP that gives no consideration to how rising income is shared out, where it came from, or consequent negative environmental impacts. It should not rely on a discredited ‘trickle-down’ theory or the assumption that all public goods can be funded from the profits of private-sector development.

What this means for Garden Cities:

- Location not determined solely by their contribution to economic activity or the ready availability of land through the market
- Location rather determined by a range of factors such as the potential for sustainable living
➤ providing a high quality local environment in areas of housing need as well as in areas of market demand
➤ not dominated by private sector housing developments but rather providing for all sections of the community in terms of housing and social needs
➤ through good design promoting low carbon lifestyles, sustainable water management and enhanced provision for biodiversity

2. Planning powers must be radically devolved
Ensuring a legitimate planning system is a pressing concern. Genuine decentralisation of planning powers as part of a wider reinvigoration of direct, participative and representative democracy is required. This will involve a move away from the ad-hoc deal-based system that characterises current central-local relationships in the direction of enduring and stable frameworks based upon the principle of subsidiarity.

The issues that affect the UK have a national, regional and local dimension and these all have to be reflected in the planning system. There is a pressing need to:

• set national frameworks for key issues such as a rebalanced economy, housing supply, national infrastructure and the response to climate change;
• recognise the democratic right of cities and regions to shape their future directions; and
• have regional and urban frameworks for strategic planning matters based on democratic decision-making.

What this means for Green belts:

➤ communities able to consider how land in their regions and localities should be used to accommodate urban growth and change
➤ the ability to allocate new land for protection from development if existing green belt is considered suitable for urban development.
➤ full and open debate on land development needs and aspirations and how open space provision could be met
➤ a shift in emphasis away from protecting green belt land from development at all costs towards allocating land to meet a range of important regional and urban needs

3. Planning should recognise the benefits of regulation
A good planning system should be proactive in delivering the right development and infrastructure in the right places, at the right time, and take a positive and engaging approach to producing a vision for the future. But planning also needs the power of regulation in order to be able to implement policies, prevent harm, control externalities, and maximise social and environmental benefit.

Regulation allows for the preservation of amenities and the protection of the environment. Through regulation, planning can help improve the quality of development. Deregulation is
currently preventing this. Specifically it is undermining the ability of local authorities to provide more affordable housing in high-pressure areas and to deliver proper strategic plans for town centres.

Planning regulation is not a barrier to economic growth as evidenced by the fact that in 2014, 88% of all planning applications were granted permission. Rather planning regulation as a system ensures that developers meet certain agreed standards and empowers planners to negotiate improvements to schemes for public benefit.

What this means for tackling the housing crisis:

- planners’ ability to influence the nature of new development seen as a positive intervention, rather than a ‘barrier to growth’
- local authorities able to ensure the provision of affordable housing in all new development
- regulation complementing a renewed programme of council house building, allowing local authorities to plan effectively to meet housing needs in their localities
- developers benefitting from increased transparency, simplicity and certainty in the planning system arising from clear regulatory policies

4. Land reform is essential, including local land ownership and land value capture

Since nationalisation of development rights in 1947, the financial benefits of development have become increasingly concentrated in the hands of private landowners, and there has been a gradual erosion of public planning, with many 'permitted development rights' returned to those same owners.

The ambitions of 1947 have been all but lost – a system of planning that was known and renowned around the world is now effectively broken. In order to change this situation, three things need to happen:

- there needs to be a reiteration of the collective ownership of development rights in the UK;
- more effective and consistent mechanisms should be introduced to capture and share the benefits of land value uplift; and
- land reform is needed to enable communities, where appropriate, to take direct
control of local land assets for the purpose of community development.

What this means for place making and associated transport infrastructure systems:

- mechanisms to create new opportunities for timely infrastructure investment and broader investment in place making
- greater control over land ownership at the local level and regional funds for public transport infrastructure generated through value capture
- greater potential for creating urban settlements that meet communities’ needs while respecting the environment
- greater possibility to plan new urban development locations and to encourage more sustainable patterns of travel as well as socially successful residential settlements
- local priorities, such as safe cycle routes or a broad range of community assets, being adequately resourced.

5. The planning system must be democratic

The planning system – through spatial planning at national, regional and local scales, regulation of development proposals and proactive proposals for new development – can only operate in the public interest if it is democratic.

Ensuring the full involvement of local communities, alongside inputs from key stakeholders, is essential. This must be complemented by transparent decision-making. This requires the following measures:

- planning department budgets, community grants and the education of planners should all reflect that engaging communities requires skills, time, commitment and resources;
- the tendency for neighbourhood planning only to benefit communities who already ‘have’ or ‘can’ results in inequality; engagement strategies which actively give a voice to marginalised communities and encourage a greater diversity of voices can help counter-balance this;
- conflicts between different local viewpoints are inevitable, but a democratic form of local planning will be equipped with ways of responding to these in the public interest;
- above all, the planning system has to convince local communities of their ability to deliver urban change for their collective benefit.

What this means for neighbourhood planning:

- local governments with access to a substantial and dedicated budget for supporting disadvantaged communities in preparing neighbourhood plans based on: strategic planning, infrastructure investment, land ownership powers and transparent
Summary: Key principles for making better planning decisions

- Planning should seek to deliver quality in our urban and rural environments in line with broad public goals; a system orientated to profit cannot deliver this.
- Planning should seek to develop strong city and regional economics, aim at a fairer society and facilitate the transition to an environmentally sustainable future through reductions in carbon emissions, adaptation to climate and waste-less use of natural resources.
- Planning should operate democratically through the participation of communities in full and open dialogue; the principle applies at all scales and to all stakeholders.
- The planning system should be fully equipped with the range of tools and resources needed to enable the effective implementation of agreed policies and plans.

The full document is available at [http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/five-radical-ideas](http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/five-radical-ideas)

The five radical ideas for a better planning system have been devised by members of the UCL Bartlett School of Planning in conversation with their colleagues and is the outcome of expertise and debate. It is our collective view that the future of the planning system is in need of urgent debate, conducted within and between political parties and across society as a whole.

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

I am a land use planner with over 40 years experience of working in public, private and voluntary sectors. I have also provided training to property lawyers in planning and taught planning at Oxford University Department of Continuing Education. I make regular contributions to the trade magazines and newspapers.

Introduction

Government will be aware that the planning system is extremely hierarchical; with powers delegated to LPAs but under supervision by the Communities Secretary/Inspectorate through the examination of development plans and conducting appeals against refusals of permission. Although those working with the planning system are generally hoping for a period during which there will be no significant (or even minor changes) for them to learn, understand, communicate and implement, the Communities Secretary does have extraordinary power to bring about positive change through what he says and how Inspectors are briefed. Many if not most changes are based on a misunderstanding of how the system could or should work and are often responsible for making things worse rather than better. Government then blames the 'system' for these failings and introduces further misjudged changes. Ministers seem incapable of taking or acting on a holistic or systemic view of the environment.

The recent successful challenge of West Berks and Reading BC to a written ministerial statement which was found to be incompatible with the existing statutory scheme should be taken as a lesson for Government (and its ministers) to be sparing with its interventions and ensure that changes are carried out through due process and are compatible with the system as formally established.

Questions

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

The most important consideration to be taken into account in our planning of town and country is the 2008 Climate Change Act and Carbon Budgets that are formulated by the National Climate Change Committee. It is essential that central government is seen to be adopting these budgets and providing advice to lower tiers of government that they must be adhered to and how. It is unacceptable that the Government appears to be retreating from the implementation of the well-established carbon reduction measures when even these were likely to prove inadequate without further innovation and development.
There does not appear to be any rationale behind the Government’s insistence that the appointment/election of mayors is a prerequisite of regional devolution. It is true that the structure of local government is a mess, primarily due to the motivation of saving money. If, however, a more logical system could be (re-) introduced, including regional planning authorities, as were dismantled in 2012, then devolution should not be much of a problem.

Given the obvious problems that are being caused by further development in what is already a very congested South East region, there is also a strong case for a National Spatial Plan. This should be drawn up primarily from the regions ‘up’ and not from central government ‘down’.

2. **How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?**

Since 2010 the coordination of ‘sustainable development’ has been an unmitigated disaster. Different offices of the Communities Department and different inspectors have been operating like a random number generator in terms of the Code for Sustainable Homes. This, and the Zero Carbon Homes 2016 target have been removed by written ministerial statements of dubious legal authority (post the West Berks/Reading Borough judgement). Local Planning Authorities must be working on development plans and making planning decisions so as to “contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”. It is unacceptable that they should be doing so without some coherent and consistent advice from the (new) Communities Secretary so that his offices, inspectors, LPAs, developers, neighbourhood planners, and the public know where they stand and can pull in the same direction.

The National Policy Statements are vague and obscure. The NPS on the national road infrastructure was/is incompatible with the 4th Carbon Budget, mainly in respect of the continued reliance on the growth of use of the private car. The interference by the Treasury in transport decisions (most obviously seen in the planning of new high-speed train services, and recently in regional improvements) results in a very incoherent strategy. Transport should be the primary job of the Communities Secretary as part of spatial planning.

In respect of housing, the most urgent need is to address the unsustainable levels of under occupancy which could be done through a written ministerial statement, entirely compatible with the existing statutory scheme. There is no place for central government in respect of design, except to encourage adaptability in terms of new dwellings and Lifetime Neighbourhoods, both intended to improve the social sustainability and resilience of residential areas.

Heritage is a matter that has been satisfactorily divided between local and central ‘government’ (eg English Heritage).
The latest unwarranted interference was that by the Treasury/Chancellor the Business Secretary (‘Fixing the Foundations’), with the Communities Secretary’s name not on the document.

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

The most important part of the NPPF is the “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. The previous administration demonstrated such a low-level of understanding of or interest in the principles of sustainable development that the presumption became meaningless and/or discredited. The Communities Select Committee has already investigated this matter and recommended that the definition be refined and made fit for purpose.

Whilst there or many advantages of the discretion available to decision-makers in the operation of the planning system founded under the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act, on matters as important as the presumption in the NPPF there should be some clear and effective guidance from the Communities Secretary. It should not be possible for one inspector to make the following findings:

60. If one considers locational sustainability i.e. being adjacent to an existing built up area and able to take advantage of any existing services and infrastructure, then developing this site would score heavily. On the other hand, if we seek a Bruntland scenario, whereby today's development would not impose environmental costs on future generations, we are a considerable way from achieving that. There was certainly no expectation that the development would 'consume its own smoke'. The application does not deal in many specifics and targets, other than the aim to reach Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.

61. As for movement, there is little beyond broad principles and these are largely internally focused. A Travel Plan was submitted with the application, but this only covers a residential offer. There was nothing about the employment or leisure uses. Similarly, there were no proposals for energy
generation on the site or firm sustainable drainage projects. When additional draft conditions were suggested they were accepted, and the saving grace is that this is an outline scheme and one that could be up-rated as part of the submission of details, so long as appropriate conditions are attached at this stage. Such matters as design, layout and even the orientation of buildings are crucial in this context.

www.planningportal.gov.uk/planninginspectorate 12
Appeal Decision APP/N2345/A/12/2169598

And, for this to remain an honorable exception to the ducking and diving of other decision-makers, fearful that their considered and professional the view of what constitute sustainable development would not be supported by the Secretary of State.

Nothing could be more important than the reduction in carbon emissions. There is no model or precedent (outside wartime or deep recession) for the scale of carbon emissions required to meet the official carbon budgets (6% per year) or the Tyndall Institute estimate of 10%. Planning guidance and development plans are fundamentally dishonest in the lack of attention being paid to this existential challenge. The Environmental Audit Select Committee ‘Reducing Carbon Emissions from Transport 2005/6 based its recommendations on an honest appraisal of the problem – advising the Government that a lower speed limit (evidence had been given of the need for a 55mph limit) was necessary, not just to reduce carbon but to send the right message to the general public. 10 years later, denial of the scale of the challenge posed by the required level of carbon reduction far exceeds the insignificant level of denial that climate change is being influenced by carbon emissions. This H of L Committee should take the same rigorous position based on the available scientific evidence but, with ten years of missed opportunities, the challenge has become very much greater. Carbon reductions have largely been achieved by exporting emissions from manufacturing/mining and by picking some low hanging fruit. The reductions that are now required will have to come disproportionately from buildings, as transport (while the speed limit reduction continues to be rejected), agriculture, industry, and power generation (with the Government retreating on renewables) sectors will all have more difficulty. New buildings can be carbon negative (solar positive) using existing and affordable technologies (with the added benefit of reducing the incidence of fuel poverty). We have to talk about ‘one planet living’ starting from now, a time that we are living as if we have three.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?
Possibly. One element of a national spatial plan would be to put a stop to HS2. Improving the regional rail network should be a priority. Any capacity problems in the routes into London occur within a 50 mile radius that can be addressed by express coaches using the over-taking lanes on the radial m-ways and trunk routes. These coach services can access many more centres of employment than can rail terminuses. Cars would be limited to 50mph to meet the carbon reduction targets (see above reference to Environmental Audit Committee) and car drivers will soon become coach passengers. Commuting coaches will not add to the congestion in the area around Euston that will not be able to cope with the 30,000 additional in and out movements were HS2 to be built. The few minutes saved on the high speed train journey will be lost on the already congested road and underground system within the Euston area. The regeneration of the area around Old Oak Common is a perfectly good idea but this is not a remedy for the congestion likely to be caused by HS2 and could happen with a normal rail connection. Railways are essential to the country’s low carbon future but High Speed Trains need a far more objective assessment that the Government seems capable of delivering. The same seems to be the case of additional runway capacity.

5. **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

There should be no problem with development plans being drafted for about twenty years with frequent if not continuous reviews. A serious problem has arisen from a misunderstanding of the ‘five year housing land supply’ requirement set out in the NPPF. If development in a particular area is booming then it could be argued that the lack of 5 years land supply would harm the forward planning of the house-building industry and employers in that area. If development is sluggish, then a shortage of allocated and permitted land is not harmful and should not form the basis for allowing even more land that is not required (and would deflate the value of permitted sites making their development less profitable and slower to deliver). This leads to arguments about viability; s106 contributions and the proportion of affordable housing. By definition, ‘necessary’ infrastructure - including housing affordable to key workers - cannot be sacrificed to artificially inflated assessments of land values. Hence, a 5 year housing land supply can only be a suggestion for what would be a sensible target averaging good years for building with bad, and not a justification for allowing more land that is actually needed. This should be reflected in planning decisions where, in law, weight should be given to the real harm being caused by a breach of policy and not simply to the breach itself.

The necessary trajectory of carbon emissions reductions does not allow the Government to delay showing that it is treating this matter with the required degree of seriousness and ensuring that their plans, and those of all LPAs, reflect the necessary annual reductions of between 6% and 10%.

6. **What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central**
Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Almost every intervention by the Government has been to the “demand-side” (Funding for Lending, Help to Buy, discounts for 1st-time buyers) all of which have the effect of maintaining or raising prices and reducing affordability to all those not on that particular scheme. There has never been more housing space per capita and the Government which introduced the pernicious bedroom tax in the social rented sector (this could have been managed satisfactorily were there an adequate supply of smaller dwellings available) must be aware of the even more prevalent under-occupancy by owner occupiers. Under-occupation is, without exception, the most unsustainable aspect to our housing system. A very simple and easily implemented policy would be for the Communities Secretary to require LPAs (and inspectors) to ensure that all new housing is of 2 bedrooms, unless a special case has been made out for larger dwellings. Even in that case, such dwellings should be designed to be easily subdivided. Further, planning conditions should be imposed on new developments to prevent extensions in order to retain the balance of the size of households (average size approaching 2) and housing (there is already a surplus of larger dwellings), and the energy efficiency. The Government should also revisit the very sensible and important concept of ‘consequential improvements’. This is one of the few ways in which the existing housing stock (80% of existing houses are EPC ‘D’ and below) whereby dwellings cannot be enlarged without upgrading the energy performance of the whole. Why must properties be upgraded prior to rent and not prior to sale? This has become urgent in the context of the demise of the Green Deal.

The government should not continue to change the scope of ‘permitted development’. The ‘permitted’ change from offices to residential without any contributions to affordable housing, infrastructure or sustainability should be revoked. The permitted change from agricultural buildings to residential in remote rural areas also comprises unsustainable development.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Reference has already been made to the unsustainable level of under occupation of the existing housing stock. This should be the first matter for the Communities Sec to address by signalling his support for predominantly smaller dwellings. Adaptability should also be a requirement of all larger dwellings to enable relatively cheap and simple subdivision (preferably exempted from further planning applications)

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?
There is a danger that the Government preoccupation with 'Brownfield' sites could endanger some sites of very high heritage value. For example the best examples of Cold War airbases have been substantially harmed by new development. Such sites are in unsustainable locations and their status as 'previously developed land' should not be a justification for inappropriate development.

9. **Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?**

The most topical and damaging shortage of skills has been the inability of LPAs to deal effectively with viability assessments. It is extremely encouraging that the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors has been instrumental in setting up an All-Party Parliamentary Group to address planning and housing. Viability assessments have been used to justify material reductions in the provision of infrastructure and affordable housing. The Communities Sec should ensure that such assessments are made available to both decision-makers and public and the RICS should use powers and influence under its Code of professional conduct to ensure that assessments genuinely reflect the profitability of developments and their ability to pay for necessary infrastructure.

11. **Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?**

The Government has been supportive of self-building. This has probably being seen as a way of diversifying the supply of new housing. In fact, self/group/custom-building/finishing could be made into a large and viable and vibrant 'industry' were it to be treated with the required level of seriousness. There needs to be proper definitions of different types of delivery, training, supervision and funding. One of the benefits of these forms of building would be community development and place-making.

12. **How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?**

There is increasing evidence that neighbourhood plans are not being produced to include policies with the necessary level of precision, prescription or proscription. Most policies are of a 'permissive' type that set out what might be allowed but say nothing about what should not be permitted. The fault lies with the supervision provided by LPAs that must now treat 'made' NDPs as the 'development plan' for decision-making purposes. This process should
receive far more attention and is likely to result in a set of properly worded policies from which parish councils and neighbourhood forums can ‘pick and mix’.

One of the ways in which local people could be enthused about future development within their area would be neighbourhood competitions. Individuals and groups could receive small incentives to submit their development proposals for the use of empty, underused or derelict sites/buildings. The most promising proposals could then receive further funding to demonstrate viability and sustainability.

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Since 1947 successive Government have failed to capture the additional value of land attributable to the permissions allowing for its development (see 2015 Housing Review by Sir Michael Lyons. Most if not all of this value relates to the social and physical infrastructure which has been created as part of the public domain and the only uplift that should be permitted in the interest of fairness to the landowner would be that sufficient for them to agree to sell. A system that condones land values of $< 10,000 \times$ agricultural value cannot be in the public interest and is a serious impediment to the provision of housing of sufficient scale, at genuinely affordable prices and of the right quality (including zero carbon – see above). The fact that developers should be made to pay for the necessary infrastructure (which includes depreciation/renewal costs of roads, schools and public transport as well as housing for key workers and others unable to pay market rates based on inflated land costs), should mean that in most parts of the UK development would pay its way. In fact there would be an immediate impact on land costs that should make all the housing more affordable, so that this would need less cross subsidy from the development.

10 August 2015
Training needs of Built Environment Professionals

Briefing points in response to discussion

Key Points

1. We need to change public and political awareness of the positive work that planners and built environment professionals do. The left hand slide is a popular misrepresentation of planners as negative regulatory controllers when a lot of their work is about positive joined up working across professions and sectors.

2. Many built environment professionals operate in specialised work silos partly due to their early specialisation at school and university which stifles wider interdisciplinary thinking regarding how the built and natural environment jigsaw is joined up. The current fetish for housing numbers alone illustrates this thinking without wider recourse to the need to create sustainable communities with the services they need.

3. There is a need to consider the skills planners need now as well as in 20 years time to ensure that planners are future proofed. We are moving away from a need for
specialist planners in favour of more flexible and adaptable built environment professionals who understand how the different professions work together for societal interest and benefit. Of particular importance is the need to understand the business, commercial, environmental and legal aspects which are currently underplayed in many planning schools. As we look long term there is a need for better PR about the planning profession itself and how it contributes to better places. Here it was stressed that professional institutes need to work better together to present a united message about the value of successful places in joined up planning. E.g. RICS, RTPI, ICE, RIBA, LI, and IEEM. This also requires universities to join up their different built and natural environment courses.

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<td>• Business awareness – context</td>
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4. Core themes in future of training in the built environment

From the discussion we had on 15th October I would identify the following core actions.

- Encourage work experience type modules in partnership with practice. BCU have modules in both architecture and planning which expose students to real world of work as seen through this lens.
- Improve the understanding of how to collect, analyse and interpret evidence in effective and accurate ways
- Manage change to best advantage using tools and techniques to establish trade-offs in decisions.
- Promote teaching away from specialist modules into responding to particular spatial planning challenges and then bring together the people and resources needed to tackle them.
- Do not get fixed on the built city environments at the expense of the peri urban and rural environments which are all too often disintegrated within planning policy and responses. Here improved dialogue between government departments eg Defra and DCLG is imperative.
• Improve learning situations across different built environment courses as far as timetables can allow. To reflect the real world of work.
• Training needs to embrace interdisciplinarity to help create a new more flexible and adaptable breed of planners. Crucially their role as place makers and shapers needs to be recognised. This thinking needs to be embedded in our secondary schools.

5. Finally planners need to use the words of Captain James T Kirk and boldly go with confidence into their profession. At present there is a lack of confidence and champions that promote what good planning is. All too often others outside planning do this.
Appendix: Supplementary Evidence to Built Environment call from Professor Alister Scott

Sources:

Evidence for the committee is drawn from the following research projects.


In addition your questions on governance formed a major part of our ESRC (2102) report. We have produced a video to highlight what we call the natural versus the built environment divide and to start to cross it through a shared dialogue. https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9GD0hZ84Ws0

A more conventional report to address your concerns is attached below.

Executive Summary  In my research on the operation of the English planning system I have highlighted the lack of integration in policy and decision-making leading to what I termed ‘disintegrated’ development. In particular, the coincidence of different governance frameworks within the built and the natural environment has shaped significant conflict over the kind of places that are wanted. Typically, this is pursued within largely urban centric land use models as towns and cities expand into their surrounding countrysides with little thought given to potential ruralisation of our city spaces.

At present England has no spatial plan or vision to shape development. This hinders the development of a national infrastructure and energy, transport policy which signals uncertainty to investors and communities alike. It also leads to ministerial announcements that can change the policy landscape overnight causing confusion and uncertainty; the real enemies of enterprise.

Whilst the NPPF represented a simplified level of guidance for planning it is currently too vague and continually being added to through extra legislation, NPPG and permitted development procedures that are cumulatively hindering more joined up planning responses.
1. The Disintegration of planning governance for the built and natural environment through a fetish on housing numbers

The issue of housing policy, delivery and affordability is becoming increasingly important in political debates and for many represents a crisis\textsuperscript{460} that has been building due to inadequate government interventions\textsuperscript{461}. It has dominated planning concerns of the present government.

Current estimates of future housing need reveal an annual need for some 265,000 additional dwellings but, due to significant past undersupply, this figure may well need to rise to 300,000 (RTPI, 2014). Invariably, building houses on this scale will invoke negative political and public responses at the local scale. So how and where is this to be achieved?

In my view, there are no ‘magic bullet’ solutions as the housing question is complex and demands much more cross-sector thinking as housing does not exist in its own policy silo; but this type of approach is something conspicuously absent in contemporary policy and decision-making processes for the built and natural environment.

Arguably, we have reached this impasse because the ‘wrong’ question is being asked. Leaving aside the intractable issue of how ‘need’ is measured, the question should not be how many houses do we need to build; rather it should be: what kind of future places do we want to create? But this fundamental societal question is overlooked as the housing debate becomes increasingly disintegrated. New development is viewed in isolated pieces without reference to its place in the overall built and natural environment jigsaw. The fetish for housing numbers alone pays little reference to the infrastructure, community, economic and environmental services needed to support functioning places. This is symptomatic of a wider agency and sectoral myopia.

Potential solutions of new garden cities such as Ebbsfleet and Bicester have been heavily promoted and lauded by government. Yet the government is also providing renewed policy support for protecting green belt from new housing incursions; such political posturing and potential contradictions generates significant scope for land-use conflict and uncertainty.

This is exacerbated by the vacuum in strategic planning and where some 85% of local authorities are yet to make their local plans fully NPPF compliant. Increasingly, questions are being asked about the competency of the duty to cooperate across neighbouring local authorities in resolving unmet housing demand, together with other fundamental components of the housing question such as speeding up the development pipeline.

\textsuperscript{460} \url{http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/house-prices-hit-record-high-as-uk-housing-crisis-worsens-10189495.html}

\textsuperscript{461} \url{http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/09/how-can-we-solve-britains-housing-crisis}
overcoming landbanking by developers, identifying viable delivery mechanisms, and delivering affordability and social and environmental justice through new schemes such as help to buy. Indeed recent pronouncements by the government for affordable houses in line with the ‘Ryan Air’ model will merely exacerbate social exclusion and alienation.\footnote{http://www.24dash.com/news/housing/2015-03-02-Tories-pledge-200-000-homes-for-first-time-buyers}

**Potential Solutions**

First, there needs to be a more holistic approach to the legal requirement for authority-derived objective assessments of housing need. At present, too many assessments are made by the local authority in isolation resulting in challenges at examination. Unfortunately, the guidance and metrics for housing need assessments are beset by statistical anomalies and dubious econometrics, making any derived figure disputable. A collaborative approach such as that pursued by the joint housing study of the Birmingham and Black Country LEPS provides a useful model forward under the auspices of the duty to cooperate requirement. However, there is a powerful case for making such models more transparent and understandable and also linking them to transport, employment, waste and climate projections.

Secondly, there needs to be strategic consideration and assessment of different growth models, set within the opportunities and constraints of housing market areas not just within single local authorities which do not represent functional geographies. Despite claims to the contrary, there is no way that a solution based on garden city ideas alone can address the housing requirement or, equally, no way that brownfield sites alone can meet the projected housing need. So we need to bundle several options together within housing market areas that deliver multiple economic, social and environmental benefits. Here a potential option mix might include new towns, urban extensions, urban densification, public transport extensions and dispersed development for example.

Thirdly, we need to move away from any one-size-fits-all approaches that restrict such options. Here the green belt has moved past its ‘use by’ date. I have argued elsewhere that we need to sensitively rethink the value of the green belt in order to maximise its environmental and social credentials, but only as part of a wider discussion of placemaking. Such green components form a vital link in development considerations: not as bolt-ons, but rather as core infrastructure to help liveability and growth and to deal with issues associated with flooding and health.

Fourthly, we urgently need to consider how housing and employment developments are to be financed and delivered. All too often, the debate revolves around the perceived problem of securing planning permission, but this is only one part of the overall development pipeline. Significantly, the development of 10,000 homes at Northstowe is being delivered by the Homes and Communities Agency as landowner on former RAF land – hence a
brownfield, previously-developed site. In many ways this might provide an instructive way of overcoming some of the stagnation observed in the development pipeline. Significantly, the TCPA has provided some much-needed leadership on this issue within its New Town Act manifesto with the idea of a revitalised development corporation delivery vehicle.

Finally, we need to think about the quality of life for residents and users of the new places we create. All too often the social and environmental components are seen as luxury bolt-ons to new developments. Recent legislation by government has for example removed affordable housing provision on viability grounds and recent national planning guidance downplayed the value of green infrastructure. Yet, in reality, they need to be integral components of the mix from the start. Issues of climate change and health demand that we rethink how our cities, towns and countryside are designed and planned to avoid costs and disruption in the years and generations ahead; flooding, drought and extreme weather conditions demand more proactive responses. These are all issues that will greatly add to the sustainability and liveability of our settlements.

At the heart of the planning debate lies the need for a culture change from agency and sectoral insularity to more cooperative and collaborative ventures across the built and natural environment professions and the wider public to understand, view and assess better the housing picture within the wider economic, social and environmental settings in which it sits.

2. The operation of The National Planning Policy Framework

Using the headlines from the recent CLG select Committee inquiry into the NPPF I offer my own assessment; I scored this 48% in a recent post for the Birmingham Post. http://www.birminghampost.co.uk/news/news-opinion/national-planning-policy-framework-school-8302693

We should ensure that the same weight is given to the environmental and social as to the economic dimension;

Economic considerations continue to trump environmental and social matters in decision making through our fetish for economic growth. In particular, the assessment of viability in the NPPF has been too heavily weighted in the developer interest. The lack of transparency in these assessments is a matter of concern as brownfield-first policies and affordability housing quotas can easily be bypassed. It is also equally important to consider environmental and social limits in such decisions where the concepts of natural and social capital provide useful tools for decision making.


Professor Alister Scott – Written Evidence (BEN0227)

All councils must move much more quickly to get an adopted plan in place

Only 41% of local authorities have a local plan in place. At present it is in the developer interest for plans to be delayed enabling development to be considered on an ad-hoc, case by case basis on sustainable development grounds as defined within all 209 paragraphs in the NPPF. This developer free for all does not make for good or consistent planning and certainly goes against any form of localism. From my observations at local plan inquiries this leads to developers queuing up to challenge housing need numbers within their own pseudo ‘duty to obfuscate’. This local plan delay is further hindered by the acute lack of planning inspectors after significant cuts to the Planning Inspectorate.

There also needs to be clearer guidance about how housing need should be assessed.

At present local authorities are required to undertake objective assessments of housing need. Unfortunately, this new requirement is a statistical minefield, with the key DCLG and ONS data on which such assessments are based, full of statistical anomalies and difficulties associated with the impacts of the recent recession and (im)migration. This leads to excessive dispute about any derived figure by local authorities causing further delays to the local plan process. In my view there needs to be an approved methodology subject to local modifications before housing need assessments are undertaken, thus eliminating disputed figures. Joint initiatives such as the Greater Birmingham and Solihull and Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership joint housing study provide a model here for the way forward.

The Duty to Cooperate is a flawed model.

The replacement of strategic regional planning with the duty to cooperate has been beset by problems. First, is the fetish for housing as the principal driver for the duty to cooperate tests. Other strategic matters such as climate change, energy and infrastructure seem to be bypassed here in favour of only one part of the built and natural environment jigsaw. In my view it is time for a more strategic model of planning to support the NPPF as for example provided by Futures Network West Midlands. At present we are sleepwalking into a half-baked regional model based on local enterprise partnerships and some combined authorities (as long as they follow the government requirement for an elected mayor). This piecemeal, ‘make it up as you go along’ approach is not the way to do proper planning and is an insult to the professional training that planners receive. At the heart of this lies the need for closer integration and collaboration across scales and sectors but without further complicating the many layers of governance we already have.

Local authorities should be encouraged to review their green belts as part of the local planning process.

There is clear evidence that the green belt is not fit for purpose. They seem to be all too readily bypassed in some planning decisions whilst they also help fossilise landscape. There needs to be wider recognition of the way a revitalised green space designation can help to maximise environmental and social benefits as opposed to the current fossilization of the
landscape with no positive incentive for land management. There needs to be improved leadership here by government to recognise the wider benefits of such a green designation that works with the development needs of an area. The concept of multiple benefits is key here.

**Permitted development is the enemy of good planning**

There have been a whole raft of recent permitted development changes which are eroding the fundamentals of good planning. This incremental change to planning policy is also unwelcome as it creates further uncertainty and indeed can operate against the main policy focus of an approved local plan such as town centre regeneration. Crucially such provisions have been imposed on local planning authorities challenging any notions of localism. Thus the ability of conversions from employment to residential uses in town centres is leading to the hollowing out of town centres further threatening their viability. The recent changes in rural areas allowing farmers to convert barns to residential uses goes against a firm tenet of countryside policy to avoid isolated development in the countryside unrelated to settlements. The policy on enabling 8m housing extensions also fails to take account of the cumulative impact of such developments on a neighbourhood.

In conclusion the NPPF can do much better and needs to improve the cooperation across local planning authorities on all matters; not just those dealing with housing and employment land. The lack of strategic planning is a serious problem at present and the consistent tinkering with the system in the name of economic growth is simply creating further uncertainty in the planning system. It is this which is the true enemy of enterprise.

3. **Using spatial planning and the Ecosystem approach to improve our planning system**

Ecosystem science offers, in theory, a powerful new lens to improve the understanding and management of the natural environment. The [UKNEA 2011](#) provided the first base line assessment of the state and value of the UK's natural environment, concluding that the services provided by nature were in significant decline, in part because nature is consistently undervalued in policy and decision-making. This poses fundamental questions about how we can mainstream nature into policy and decision-making in practice, particularly when economic growth seemingly trumps most considerations.

Currently, the built and natural environment professions exist largely in their own silos with separate theories, governance and interventions. Virtually all ecosystem science has been funded, for research and practice in the natural environment sector through Defra and NERC with the consequential effect that ecosystem science and its voluminous and complex lexicon is perceived as alien and largely irrelevant to the built environment sector. Yet arguably it is the built environment which has most impact on the ecosystem services through the planning system.
Although impact assessment tools help ensure environmental considerations are taken into account there remains a dominant narrative that the environment is a constraint to be overcome; a perceived cost to development. The twin concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services both lack sufficient currency and traction in the built environment, making them vulnerable to ‘cherry-picking’ to support particular policy position (policy-based evidence) where decision-makers value only what is measured rather than measuring what society actually values. The Ecosystem Approach principles collectively help overcome these potential abuses in policy- and decision-making, but only if they are used collectively within policy and/or decision-making processes.

Consequently, we have translated these ideas within a NEAT tree hosted by EKN which focuses attention on the universal stages by which ALL policy and decisions are made. Each stage has guidance that is adapted from the ecosystem approach signposting the bundle of tools to use.

So to mainstream ecosystem thinking into practice within a given sector you first must identify their key ‘hooks’ that drive their work practices. For the built environment these are illustrated in Table 1 with the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance as key. These have statutory clout and resonate in discussions. Within these documents we can identify other key concepts and terms. It is from these terms that we then can then apply our understanding of ecosystem science to start maximising synergies.

Table 1. Built Environment Hooks mapped against Ecosystem Approach
Table 1 shows how, by focusing on key policy hooks in the built environment, we can cover all 12 principles of the Ecosystem Approach within new opportunity spaces to offer improved and additional insights into the operationalisation of these concepts.

So for example the NPPF chapter 11 paragraphs 109-118 recognises the value of ecosystem services making connections with ecological networks and connectivity and the role that green infrastructure can play. Here there is an explicit link with the NEWP. This offers opportunities for mapping ecosystem services from which you might then make planning interventions based on siting new housing and industry development using water regulation services or develop new market based instruments such as PES schemes.

The Duty to Cooperate (Localism Act 2011) requires planning authorities to consider strategic planning issues that cross their boundaries. Most attention has been placed on housing markets but using ecosystem services we can start to factor in new geographies of flooding, climate change and biodiversity using existing/new partnership vehicles.

Within the NPPF viability has focussed on economic issues associated with securing developer profit margins but within ecosystem thinking concepts of environmental thresholds and limits through ideas of natural capital can challenge the economic orthodoxy.

Ecosystem thinking can also help to expose operational limitations with current tools such as CBA where there is a failure to take a long term view beyond 25 years with the application of a suitable discount rate for environmental factors.

Unfortunately there still remains the expectation that other professions will simply adopt ecosystem thinking and hence little effort is put into translating the language of ecosystem science into the hooks of other professions. Perhaps the most exciting opportunity here is the progress that can be made linking the NPPF explicitly with the Natural Environment White Paper through improved landscape-scale thinking; where LEPS meet LNPs.
debates over city regions and biodiversity offsetting can be considerably enhanced when bringing in an ecosystem perspective challenging the often simplistic media debates than ensue. The shared language of multiple benefits transforms the way the environment is viewed and valued and we urgently need to boldly go into new sectors understanding and using their languages to maximise ecosystem service mainstreaming.

02 February 2016
Comments and description of how the PC went about receiving 150 dwellings in to a small rural village.

Sellindge is a small parish consisting our around 700 properties in Kent. It is cut in half by the A20 with various sizes of housing developments each side of the A20

The School and the Doctors surgery are on opposite sides of the road. Sellindge is also bounded by the M20 and the HS1 railway.

It is in the district of Shepway and considered a ‘hub’ village due to the other facilities we have.

In January 2015 a 150 dwelling development was given the go ahead, in two phases, one of 50 and the other of 100 properties. This was all with the support of the majority of residents – only one letter of objection was ever sent to Shepway District Council – and the Parish Council

The reasoning behind such overwhelming support was the inclusion of villagers from the start.

Meetings, exhibitions and leaflet information drops took place over a period of around 2 years, meaning that even minor details, put forward, were accepted by the developer and incorporated into the designs.

Sellindge Parish Council (PC) feel that this is the way forward for all developments and should be part of any policy moving forward.

Below we have made comments to the questions raised and hope that in some way the voice of a small PC will be heard.

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

   National Policy does not appear to take in to account the effect on the local communities, after any new development has been completed.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?
'The South East is one of the driest areas in the country' (KCC document)
This places great strain on any proposed developments and often has a negative effect on those already living in the area. Water companies should be given the opportunity to consider whether or not there is the infrastructure to accommodate more dwellings in any given area.

Large developers do not always consider the type of property within the village/parish and build to what they consider is appropriate cost wise. Often placing urban type dwellings in rural areas, with little regard to the local heritage. Sustainability is a word often used but without meaning. Building in a small village with very little bus and other public transport encourages the use of private motor cars

The way to improve the co-ordination and integration would be to make the planning system more inclusive of parish and town councils rather than they just receive a planning application for comments. More input should be arranged prior to any application being submitted to the local Planning Authority.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The natural environment often gets side-lined using the statement that the development in question is sustainable (see reply above) especially in the rush to build more housing.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

It is considered that having a spatial element within the policy would be beneficial to planning across the board at all levels, whether a small infill or larger development.

4. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

It is our understanding that the current 20 or 30 years is sufficient, however there should be a policy in place to downgrade the number of dwellings should the need arise, rather than at the current time where once the numbers have been agreed there appears to be no recourse to reduce them.

Buildings and places: New and old

5. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level,
required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Local Planning Authority (LPA) should be given the opportunity to state what they can achieve in any given situation before any statements from central government is made, at present it is very top down. This is contrary to the Localism Act, notwithstanding that local plans are making a difference at local levels.

6. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

All of the larger developments (the numbers to be agreed) should be considered for environmental issues, for example water capture, individual solar panels etc. to reduce the need/use of fossil fuels.
Also the Government should instruct LPA make more use Brownfield sites regardless of the development size, rather than issue guidelines saying it should be used first.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

It is considered that in the main, the historic envelopment is protected sufficiently

Skills and design
9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

It is felt that each expert tends to concentrate on their own area or field of knowledge rather than looking holistically. (This was demonstrated by the events that took place in Sellindge when during public events questions to the experts attending, each could only answer in their own field. This proved that there was no holistically dialogue with others involved in the development)

It is considered that LPA do not always have the resources required and with the current cuts are finding it more difficult to buy in this expertise.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?
Yes it is accepted that these are the correct tools and techniques however these do not always get filtered down to local levels.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

LPA do not always have the opportunity to take account of local inputs, due to the top down pressures of development.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

On a positive note, the fairly recent development about to commence from Taylor Wimpey was a success in that collaboration and dialogue was introduced very early on in the proceedings which meant that the PC could gain insight into the resident’s wishes and hold public exhibitions to agree even minor details.

Sellindge PC believes that all major development should be carried out this way and this should be a policy not just a recommendation in the NPPF

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Local groups do not always have the resources to consider large developments due to inexperience and there is not always the financial backing to aid them in carrying out this important role.

At local parish and town level it would be greatly appreciated if finances or other resources could be put in place to enable better or improved communication with the LPA and Developers.

This would ensure that any misunderstandings did not occur and residents would feel they have made an informed decision. This may also reduce the time taken going through the planning system and allow the developments commence earlier.

This report produced by
Shelter and Dame Kate Barker – Oral Evidence (QQ41-51)

Transcript to be found under Dame Kate Barker
Response from:

SHINE
(Supporting Healthy Inclusive Neighbourhood Environments)
a Bristol Health Partners health integration team

Prepared by Marcus Grant CMLI FFPH (Co-director)

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

We want to focus our answer on an important re-framing of the question. To develop a spatial long-term strategic plan, taking on board goals of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), requires development planning and infrastructure investments that are blind to local administrative boundaries. Much academic work has been published on cross-boundary planning, its necessity and its implementation (For example Allmendinger and Haughton 2012; Pugalis and Townsend 2013).

The administrative boundaries of Bristol City Council and associated neighbouring authorities are not the correct starting point for functional housing growth and settlement planning that will address sustainability objectives, be they economic or environmental. Sectoral catchments are paramount – in terms of, say, commuting to work, hospital catchments, species corridors, watersheds, food growing and resilience, urban waste and resources. It is the functional catchment, resource flows or impact footprint that matters – these are independent of local administrative boundaries – which can get in the way of good planning. Development policy and the associated investments in a functional city region need to be planned across administrative boundaries in a co-ordinated and integrated manner for efficacy and financial reasons.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

A spatial planning approach is necessary (see later point 4), as other sectors/departments such as health, education, food/farming interests, that impact on ‘territory’ need to also be part of the policy co-ordination. There is a lack of clear cross-cutting joint objectives; with no transparent process for managing the inevitable tensions between different departmental objectives.
We suggest population, community and individual health - using a broad definition of health that includes wellbeing - could provide a valuable common framework for setting joint objectives and measuring success.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. *Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?*

Economic wealth and prosperity has been a key goal in the NPPF. This needs pursuing in planning and development as a long-term goal harnessing the ways it can support resilience and underpin population health. Currently, the NPPF has allowed decisions that favour short-term economic objectives to override long-term goals. This creates a greater future economic burden on the public purse and constrains the ability to provide the necessary development processes that will deliver places that support strong and prosperous communities.

In terms of the natural environment, moving away from a ‘protecting’ narrative towards one that recognises the important role of natural capital and natural assets in delivering a range of ecosystem services for urban living should be prioritised. The development of the concept of ‘Nature Based Solutions’ both at EU level and nationally should be prioritised as a way of defining, communicating and operationalising this.

Land disposal mechanisms at local authority level often serve as a block to achieving the objectives set out in the NPPF. At a local level ‘Best Value’ policy is usually interpreted as being required, when disposing of land, to secure maximum financial receipt for the public purse. The current climate of austerity intensifies the need for capital receipts. However, the Best Value calculations all too often only address direct fiscal receipts and do not take into account the future increased burden on the state from poor design. Where a local authority owns land legal mechanisms, such as conditions controlling the urban form, can be used to reduce future burden to the public purse arising from lack of attention to health and well-being in the housing and neighbourhood layout and design.

4. *Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?*

Correctly introduced, a spatial planning approach is necessary to properly align all sectoral policies that have territorial impact to achieve the NPPF ambitions. This is currently lacking. If a long-term perspective is taken, commensurate with life-cycles of built infrastructure investment (see point 5), the effect would be savings across a
number of policy areas and better quality of environment for communities and people across their life-course.

5. *Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?*

This is a complicated field with different categories of infrastructure, and a need to address the ability for renewal and retrofit, plus inevitable technological advances (say transport IT systems for example). However investments in the ‘hard’ urban built environment generally have a broad life-span of some 120 years or more in many cases. Turn-over of built stock is less than 1% a year. Moreover, sustainable development would lead to an imperative to extend that time considerably by building in future flexibility of use at both unit, building and neighbourhood scales.

In terms of greatest benefit to society, private and public interests, long-term cross-generational timescales need to be used. For example in landscape planning, it may take in excess of 20 years for an energy enhancing tree shelter belt to achieve meaningful performance, with correct management this can be then maintained indefinitely - at no additional gross cost and with many health and well-being co-benefits. Stable and self-supporting communities can take time to emerge but can be destroyed very quickly. Ideally a 50-70 year timescale should be the minimum, with a view to longer-term flexibility too.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

6. *What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?*

No comment.

7. *How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?*

It is vital for the Government to step in to address evident market failure. The market is unable to deliver built environments that are sustainable and resilient. The financial model for the volume developers and house builders is of necessity, in their current mode of operation, risk adverse and unable to capture the external disbenefits of their product that put a cost on the public purse. There are well evidenced arguments that market-driven neighbourhood form can give rise to preventable non-communicable
disease (Barton 2009, Grant and Braubach 2010). Leading to unnecessary costs falling to health, social care, community safety and education budgets.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

No comment.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Public Health specialists, who understand the impact of neighbourhood form on health and well-being, must be involved in these processes. Through the Directors of Public Health, local authorities have a responsibility to support the health of the population, and to reduce health inequalities. To use the NHS most effectively there needs to be more recognition of public health’s role in providing population health objectives, health focused design processes and an evidence base to the built environment professions.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Greater use needs to be made of participatory, and non-weighted (inclusive), prospective health appraisal methods to guide policy and design development iterations.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

Those current involved in delivering and managing our built environment have a gap in their skills, mindsets and knowledge bases to be able to adequately use development to actively promote and support health and well-being, including reducing health inequalities. Public Health specialists, who sufficiently understand the
impact of neighbourhood form on health and well-being, must be involved in these processes. A good yardstick is the degree to which vulnerable sectors of the community (identified as those to whom the form and design of the built environments can become an impediment to their own independence and health status) are being included in the decision making too. For example the inclusion of older people population and those vulnerable to living in isolation by decision-makers in design development. Greater use needs to be made of participatory, stakeholder-based, and non-weighted (inclusive), prospective health appraisal methods to guide policy and design development iterations.

12. **How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?**

The formal planning system, even with its cycles of consultation, often serves as an impediment to engagement. Local capacity building, and then devolving real decision and investment influencing power, is the only way to effectively engage. Experience shows that if carried out in an authentic manner, this pays back through its positive influence on social capacity, inclusion and ownership of the final results (Bryson et al. 2013; Rydin and Pennington 2000).

**Financial measures**

13. **Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?**

Evidence is growing that certain attributes of urban form at the neighbourhood scale, and specific urban design detailing at street level present risks and challenge to health (Grant and Braubach 2010). Better attention to reducing these impact at the planning and design stage would lead to savings to the public purse through reducing the burden on health and social care services and providing co-benefits for education and community safety budgets. Early on in the design and planning, these attributes may have minimal extra cost, and/or long-term savings easily outweigh such cost. A financial mechanism is required to ‘recycle’ long-term and future savings to the public purse, across several budget heads, into the extra initial cost of development that promotes healthier lives and more inclusive communities. There are already a few groups in England working on the margins of the required research such as the BRE Housing Health Cost Calculator; UWE’s Wellcome trust ‘Our planet, our health award’; and here at SHINE we have a pilot financial model for proposed housing development. More of this research could be funded and tested through the NHS Healthy Towns initiative.
References


06 October 2015
Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. No comment

2. No comment

National Policy for planning and the built environment

3. The aspect of sustainability: economically, environmentally and socially is unhelpful in all of its aspects and is too much open to interpretation. What is economically sustainable in a business environment which changes very rapidly? From an environmental point of view building on greenfield sites is de facto not sustainable.

4. Yes it does lack spatial perspective. In order to distribute business opportunities and wealth but also the environmental burden which very often goes with it more evenly across the country, a national spatial policy should seek to further decentralize from London and the Home Counties.

5. This depends on the aspect. E.g. housing demand. One aspect population growth/decline as a result of the UK can be easily predicted. However immigration or emigration on national or local are less predictable and are sometimes a consequence of housing provision (self fulfilling prophecy): more house building will lead to more people moving into the area where houses are available.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. The fact that today fewer people live on a larger built footprint than e.g. 60 years ago, is connected to higher income (in relative terms) and overall higher standard of living.

If income and standard of living are declining (as seen since 2009) we will have to reflect on our demand for living space.

As there is also only a certain amount of land available we will have to learn to live in dwellings with higher density: multi-generations homes etc. More provision for couples and singles in one-2 bedrooms apartments.

The chancellor’s suggestion to extend ‘upwards’ in suitable parts of London is very inspired as is the Prince of Wales plea for ‘Midrise Solutions’. This could be the way forward for all urban environments instead of building on greenfield sites. And extended towns and cities horizontally.

7. As mentioned above: midrise building and midrise extensions in towns and cities will help with living space in times of population growth.

8. I believe on a national level the UK is very good at using the historic environment especially for ‘place-making’. This is in my opinion the most important reason for tourists to
come to the UK. There is in so many cities, towns and villages a ‘sense of place’ rooted in continues use of a place for hundred of years. The problem at the moment is that even very historic places are under threat from being spoilt by unsympathetic development near such a national asset (e.g. Leeds Castle). Guidelines for building in conservation areas are not strict enough with regard to design or the use ‘open spaces’ (public or private) which are also part of the distinctiveness of a conservation area. (e.g. Lenham) Too many ‘anywhere’ houses even in conservation areas.

Skills and design

9 From my experience in Maidstone District the planners have been completely incompetent in producing a new Local Plan. Important preparatory work such as Landscape Assessment, Blue and Green Infrastructure Plan, Transport Plan are being produced after the first draft of the Local Plan has been published. The correct process would have been that the various plans are informing each other as a process in their making.

How to address the issue? Funding is certainly an issue. If the head of a planning department earns so much less than any planning professional in the private industry it will be impossible to attract the most qualified people into the job.

Outsourcing can be a part solution, but it might lead to councillors being completely intimidated by the expert views (as seen in questioning the ‘objectively assessed housing need’) and there is a question mark over the independence of the expert towards from developers.

10. By asking councils to provide a detailed character assessment of a historic place and its setting before any changes are made. Then providing guidelines how to build in order to adhere to these historic character traits. (One example of how this can be done is ‘A Vision of Britain’ by the Prince of Wales)

Community involvement and community impact

11 By developing ‘statues’ based on established facts.

E.G. negative impact on respiratory system if people live too close to busy roads. In the past we built bypasses or bypassing ‘A roads ‘to give people relief from pollution (air and noise). Today houses are built directly adjoining the bypass as if it were a village street. Examples: Harrietsham, Lenham (in the planning), Langley. In Ashford (Kent) a beautiful private care home for elderly people with dementia was built directly on a very busy roundabout.

In Germany they build noise barriers next to very busy roads to protect inhabitants in adjoining towns and villages. Why is this not mandatory in the UK?

12 I like the idea of Neighbourhood Planning but I believe it will be too costly in the long term and is too much to cope with for elected councilors of small communities. In Neighbourhood Planning the affected community can not question the amount of development which is a fundamental flaw.
There should be instead a proper consultation process between planning authority and e.g. parish before any draft plan is published. The parish should be an official consultee. This would give communities a chance to become aware of certain issues which can be, if done well, also a learning process), discuss them and have an input before they are seen to be ‘objectors’. Any development which is allowed in non compliance with the Local Plan should have a ‘Community Right to object’.

Financial measures

13. Brownfield development should attract fiscal advantages to make it more attractive to developers.

There should also be tax advantages to add a storey or two (Midrise solution) to existing buildings in suitable locations in towns and cities.

A certain percentage of land for housing in any development plan should be required to be available for self-built. This will lower the cost, make houses more affordable, will create local jobs from architects to builders and plumbers.

05 October 2015
The quality of the built environment – why it’s like it is and how it might be made better

1. Everything in the built environment is the result of our decisions to make, remove or retain things, and use them in particular ways; or the consequence of interactions between the natural environment and human-made things and activities. These decisions involve conscious or unconscious design, because we form the built environment by shaping processes and materials. They cannot be shaped without some idea of what is intended and how it should be achieved.

2. So why doesn’t the built environment always look beautiful or work well? Reasons, include:

2.1. Complexity: Making and caring for the built environment is complex in both the common usage and scientific senses. Complexity means that decisions do not always have their intended consequences. Things interact in unexpected ways. Risks are not always easy to foresee or accommodate. Good intentions do not guarantee good results.

2.2. Governance: Many people are involved and they often have different priorities and objectives. Interests conflict. This makes governance of the built environment difficult. A good result may not always be popular, making life difficult for democratic decision-makers. In non-democratic processes (e.g. market-based decision-making), interest groups can prevail at the expense of the public good, or of other interest groups. To be fair, this can also be an unintended consequence of democratic governance.

2.3. Agency: Often, quite simply, those people who would prefer better outcomes do not have the ability or power (agency) to influence decision-makers or compel them to act in the interests of better quality.

2.4. Skills: The right skills are often absent, or lacking, amongst decision-makers and their constituencies. Our education system does not prioritize and reward spatially aware disciplines, such as art and design, as much it values STEM subjects. Geography (a key knowledge-base for many town planners) is part of the mainstream curriculum, but still valued less than maths or sciences. Maths, statistics, biology (especially ecology) and physics are important to the built environment, as are economics and accountancy; but they need to be combined with an understanding of other subjects, such as aesthetics, engineering and psychology, that are not in the core curriculum.

2.5. Society’s priorities: As society focuses increasingly on economic and financial value it becomes more difficult for intangibles to play an equal part in decision-making; yet they are usually critical elements in decisions about the built environment. Arguably, we are also moving towards being a society that values individual expression more than collective action (or, at least, where the State, as the guardian of the public good, is less welcome and trusted as an arbiter of what should be done); and where consumerism dominates the discourse – do we talk about
consumers of the built environment or citizens? These changes are not necessarily bad. It has been suggested, for example, that groups of non-expert individuals can come up with better results than experts - though there do need to be accountable mechanisms to gather and apply the ‘wisdom of crowds’ in the built environment, and there is no prima facie reason why democratic planning processes should not be able to do this. So, not necessarily bad, just different; but these changes need to be considered when framing how we tackle shared problems. The State has traditionally carried huge responsibility for much of the built environment. Rights and responsibilities are seen differently depending on whether you are a customer or a citizen. Ambiguity about whose job it is to build and fix the built environment is a guarantee that things will go wrong.

2.6. Change and inertia: As Yogi Berra allegedly said: ‘It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future’. All the main decisions about the built environment involve anticipation of future needs. Future needs don’t always turn out as expected. Innovation and change in other sectors impact on the built environment. Those responsible for the built environment aren’t always well informed about such changes. Also, buildings and infrastructure are big investments and are intended to be long-lasting. In a rapidly changing world, they (and even whole neighbourhoods or towns) can be left behind because it is difficult quickly to adapt fixed assets. They may outlive their usefulness but be difficult and costly to replace – hence dereliction.

2.7. Development economics: The way that the market works for property and the way that funders, developers and consumers respond to it has an impact on quality. Suppliers such as house builders, with no long term direct interest in the properties they build, can more easily compromise on quality than developers who build to retain property, or build it for an investor client. This is not always true, of course. Some house builders care passionately about quality; some funds invest in industrial sheds with little to recommend them other than cheapness to construct. On the whole, though, the incentives for investors to build something that will last, and attract people for the long term, are stronger than they are for traders. Additionally, in housing, the fact that we have a massive supply shortage means that just about anything will sell, so the market is more focused on finance than on the quality of new homes.

2.8. Gulfs between who benefits and who bears the cost: Economists use the term ‘externalities’ to describe what happens when one person’s actions benefit or disbenefit another. A negative externality is one that costs somebody other than the person who took the action. The built environment is littered with problems arising from negative externalities. In fact, litter is a good example of a negative externality. When someone throws an empty cigarette packet from their car they hand the cost of disposing of it to the community. Others include derelict buildings where the owner walks away and leaves the State to pick up the tab for regeneration, housing estates where crime is facilitated by poor design, projects which create traffic congestion due to under-investment in infrastructure, and retail developments which suck the life out of town centres.

Page 1688 of 1964
3. This seems like a pretty depressing list, and quite intractable. In fact, of course, the built environment also produces positive externalities – it does good for individuals and communities. It does this for most of us most of the time. In some cases it does it brilliantly.

4. This submission is about problems, though, so what are some of the consequences of the above?
   4.1. The built environment contains many wicked issues.
   4.2. There are more dilemmas than problems (a problem can be solved; a dilemma has no single right solution).
   4.3. Different sectors have different perceptions. For example, the private sector might view planning gain as a tax on development, whereas the public sector might see it as a legitimate way to cover costs imposed on society by a development (negative externalities).
   4.4. Politicians are often reluctant to take difficult decisions that need to be taken, or to regulate where regulation is necessary.
   4.5. People often feel that they lack agency, or that it is not clear where agency lies.
   4.6. The best solutions may not be found because the skills to find them are not brought to bear.

5. Some other factors are also important:
   5.1. Councillors represent very small geographical patches. Often they are only elected by narrow margins by small numbers of electors. It is difficult to stand back and look at the bigger picture in these circumstances.
   5.2. Partly as a result of 5.1, there is nobody to represent the opinions and needs of people who are not yet constituents, such as those who might need a home in an area where NIMBYs oppose new housing.
   5.3. The built environment is increasingly seen as a local issue by the UK government. While Localism is an excellent idea, not all decisions can, or should, be taken locally and not all policies should be local policies. There is sometimes still ambiguity about where decisions will be taken.
   5.4. In fairness to politicians, the built environment does not carry the same weight with electors as, say, the NHS, immigration or the economy. It may have more importance in local elections but even that is not always clear-cut.
   5.5. Historically, as the Farrell Review showed in an excellent diagram, the UK government has divided responsibility for the built environment between departments. That makes it difficult to get the government to think across departmental boundaries; but the built environment is not bounded in the same way as government departments.
   5.6. We have, in the main, an adversarial planning system, which can make working together difficult.
   5.7. The built environment sector has many professions, which sometimes conflict and overlap.

6. How might we improve the way we value the built environment so that we know better how to get the positives and avoid the negatives?
7. We need to think differently, taking our cue from the environmental sciences. Thinking about the way we are entrained holistically with Nature, they have developed the concept of ‘eco-system services’. That is, the benefits people get from natural eco-systems. They include:

7.1. Supporting (e.g. waste recycling).
7.2. Provisioning (e.g. food, water).
7.3. Regulating (e.g. air and water purification).
7.4. Cultural (e.g. spiritual development, recreation, appreciation of beauty).

8. We should think in the same way about the built environment. Built environment system services (BESS) are provided by physically intertwining and functionally interdependent systems and networks. They include:

8.1. Shelter for living, working and relaxing.
8.2. Meeting points and places of exchange for labour, ideas, knowledge, goods and services, genes.
8.3. Connection, through transport and information networks.
8.4. Information - direct flows such as advertising, or indirect, such as knowing where we are by the shape of the place and the style of the buildings.
8.5. Cultural, national and local identities.
8.6. Recreation.
8.7. Aesthetic pleasure and artistic expression.
8.8. Resilience – defence, disaster management, begetting and accommodating economic and social change.
8.9. Economic benefits from developing, replacing and servicing the built environment.
8.10. Opportunities for eco-system services to work within our urban habitat – parks, gardens, sustainable urban drainage, street trees etc.
8.11. Infrastructure to support modern lives – drains, public utilities, waste management, end-of-life (cemeteries, crematoria).
8.12. Citizenship - the benefit of living in a town or city. It used to be highly prized (think what it meant to be a Roman citizen); by many, it still is. It brings rights, responsibilities and civic pride, all of which benefit us by developing our potential as individuals and communities.
8.13. A legacy for us and our descendants. Athenian youths swore the oft-quoted Ephebic Oath not to diminish their heritage but to leave Athens greater and better. Given the relative permanence of most towns and cities, and the heritage that we inherit through them, an important benefit of the built environment can be a sense of continuity and belonging to a long history. There are also tangible inheritances, such as bridges, railways, sewers, reservoirs - assets which go on giving, so long as we maintain them properly.

9. One irritating thing about lists is that they often separate things that are, in fact, interwoven. A quick glance at this list will show that many built environment system
services offer benefits because of how they are interleaved as well as in their own right. In this way they mimic eco-system services, which have the same characteristic.

10. This way of understanding the built environment helps us to see past some divides to which we have given so much significance that they can inhibit developing a better built environment. They include divides between things which appear to make a profit and those that seem to impose a cost, between public and private sector rights and responsibilities, and between those with an existing stake in a place and those who might want or need one in the future.

11. Instead, by recognizing that the whole built environment is delivering essential habitat services we might begin to chart ways in which we can maximize their benefits for us all. This doesn’t automatically solve wicked issues such as who should pay for what; but it does enable us to address issues of governance, choice and benefit from a new perspective. It also draws attention to the need to resolve built environment issues in cross-disciplinary, cross-governmental and inter- as well as intra-community ways.

12. It leads to the first key question to be asked about interventions in the built environment: how will this action (or inaction) improve the delivery of built environment system services, or will it harm them?

13. The second question is who will benefit, or suffer harm? This is important because the benefits of built environment system services are not always equitably distributed. To what extent they should be is a policy question – for example, a new road will benefit travellers but may harm the environment of its neighbours. That does not necessarily mean that the road should not be built; but it should be a factor in deciding whether the built environment system services it will provide are sufficient to justify its construction. Regardless of policy, it is always important to understand not only what will change but for whom.

14. The third question is what impact will the intervention have on eco-system services? The built environment exists within eco-systems that sustain it, and us. Impacts beyond the built environment cannot be ignored.

15. Thinking about the built environment in this holistic way is fine in theory, and I hope it might help the Committee to consider how all dimensions of the built environment contribute services that are essential to our livelihood and wellbeing. It is, though, a big step from thought to action. Is there any evidence that this approach might actually work in practice?

16. New Scandinavian housing is widely admired for the quality of its design and placemaking. In a recent article in *Built Environment*, I and Karin Krokfors, a Finnish

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architect, have looked at case studies from Stockholm, Malmö, Copenhagen and Helsinki. Although they don’t use the term ‘built environment services’, what is evident is that an holistic approach to design and an openness to partnerships between public and private sectors has brought results that we can only envy. I have appended our ‘top ten’ learning points from the case studies. Similar ideas have been applied in other countries such as the Netherlands.

17. This was also a finding from the late Sir Peter Hall’s last book, *Good Cities, Better Lives: How Europe Discovered the Lost Art of Urbanism*, written with contributions from Nicholas Falk (Routledge, 2014), which I commend to the Committee.

18. Other propositions arise from the issues I have outlined. Some echo the findings of the Farrell Review. Others are distinct from it:

18.1. Decision-makers need to be given better skills, and better access to advisors with the skills necessary to understand the issues and come up with creative solutions. They also need good and consistent data to help them to navigate complexity.

18.2. Partners usually deliver better results than adversaries, so we should increase the amount of partnership working in the built environment and attempt to reduce the current combative nature of much of the town planning and design discourse. This entails culture change in the industry and professions and a better understanding that delivering built environment system services is a collaborative process. No one sector, profession, industry or political ideology has a monopoly, nor all the right answers.

18.3. We need an honest conversation about agency. Are local people really always the best decision-makers? When do strategic considerations outweigh local opinion?

18.4. We should not be embarrassed to regulate to reduce the impact of negative externalities and to encourage the market to innovate.

18.5. There should be stronger advocacy for the needs of those who do not yet have a place in the locality, but need one.

18.6. We should revitalize built environment education for young people. It assists with the STEM subjects but it also helps them to understand the importance of built environment services.

18.7. Faster progress is needed on the government’s side in implementing the Farrell Review. Although most of its recommendations are for the industry, the proposal that there should be a stronger cross-governmental relationship with the built environment sector would be a step towards developing an understanding of the value of built environment services. The Place Alliance is seeking to develop this relationship and the Government should respond positively, meaningfully – and emphatically cross-departmentally.
In Stockholm, Malmö and Copenhagen, strategy and policy demand that homes should be set in townscapes, landscapes and waterscapes that are both functional and beautiful. This is for reasons of wellbeing and aesthetics; but also because it enables systems that offer ease of walking and cycling, and deliver eco-system services to residents. […] We have drawn out the ‘top ten’ factors [...] which, we believe, help to explain how Scandinavia achieves the quality which makes it justly admired.

1. **Aspirational leadership from stakeholders with the leverage to insist on good design.** A senior city official, asked in 2015 for the key drivers behind Copenhagen’s housing achievements, answered clearly and simply: ‘commitment and will.’ A defining success factor in our case studies is consistent and persistent aspiration to achieve very high quality design. Those with this aspiration have not just been designers. They include civic authorities, developers, other clients, customers and the public. Ambition has been there in the early planning of projects [...]. It has carried on through delivery, enabled by tools from design competitions (particularly effective in Copenhagen) to design codes; and, as in Malmö in the recession, even when times were tough. There is often a tendency to emphasise Scandinavian municipal leadership, [...]. In fact, good design has not sprung solely from public bodies. The Malmö Dialogue, the emerging importance of co-operatives as demanding clients in Helsinki, and the interaction between city and developers in Hammarby show that leadership can come from any stakeholder with the authority to require high standards; often it is shared across sectors, sometimes by inter-organisation project teams.

2. **Building consensus, collaboration and partnerships for design quality.** Inter-organisation project teams are part of a wider process of building consensus that homes should be well designed, and forming partnerships to do so. Inevitably there were disagreements and tough negotiations between city authorities and developers in all our case studies; but Malmö’s belief that dialogue with developers would take quality to ‘the next level’ is typical of an attitude which bred agreement [...].

3. **An investment attitude.** In the majority of projects, care was taken to create long-term value and liveability [...] the long view is, demonstrably, in the minds of those behind much Scandinavian housing, as building infrastructure ahead of development [...] and arts investment show [...] In Malmö, design quality was not sacrificed when recession hit.

4. **Innovation, especially for environmental and social sustainability.** [...] innovation defines the best Scandinavian housing design (especially in Sweden and Denmark) because of its progressive integration of environmental sustainability into mainstream projects. Innovation is design-led, spanning and interlocking architecture, engineering and systems design. Where it has operated long enough to evaluate, it appears to be doing its job [...] As Copenhagen exemplifies, however, our
cities do not rest on their laurels. They design further innovation into new developments.

5. Use of contracts and compacts to secure quality, rather than relying on civic or national regulation. The way quality is guaranteed in all four cities does not rely purely on regulatory design controls like those found in the UK’s planning system. The use of contracts – usually linking the right to acquire land and build to the quality of the product; or compacts - as in Malmo’s Dialogue – ensure that what gets built is of the required standard. This is not a new practice. It goes back at least to landed estates which oversaw urban growth in parts of eighteenth century London [...] and was used by the UK’s Urban Development Corporations in the 1980s. Modern Scandinavian practice confirms the efficacy of this approach, when combined with the other factors in our ‘top ten’.

6. Application of learning to new projects. Reflection and evaluation are practiced in all four cities’ development programmes. Experience from projects has been consciously garnered to improve subsequent designs. In Hammarby and Ørestad, the two pioneering areas that we consider, shortcomings and successes have been analysed, understood and used to change later programmes. In Helsinki, the poor reception of monotonous housing design led the city to change land disposal methods to exert more leverage over innovation and quality. In Copenhagen, advances in sustainability were based, in part, on understanding the efficacy and limitations of what had gone before.

7. Integration of design elements – holistic thinking. In the best Scandinavian housing, design does not stop at the doorstep. Integrating design elements holistically improved design quality in our case studies, whether by networking area-wide environmental measures into homes; mixing land uses, public spaces and tenures to make new housing areas attractive and busy; or employing art to build new identities. [...] 

8. Use of guiding masterplans, design policies and briefs. Aspiring to quality is not the same as communicating what is needed to achieve it. The successful projects we describe were specified using governing documents which established principles, rules, standards and methods that made aspirations concrete. Standards can stifle innovation and creativity if they are not applied sensitively. [...] On the whole, though, the care taken in preparing governing documents, and their clarity, made them ideal vehicles to catalyse discussion and establish consensus about design [...] They made a valuable contribution to design outcomes.

9. Use of architects and their retention throughout projects’ lives. The projects we describe all benefited from the involvement of architects. Even in Helsinki, with its history of speculative housebuilding, developers value experienced designers. Many places (notably the UK) see much less use of architects to design housing, more application of standard products [...] and sometimes withdrawal of architects’ contracts once permission to build is obtained [...] It is no coincidence that Scandinavia gets high quality housing. Employing architects is prevalent and they see their buildings through to completion.

10. Responsiveness. Our case studies were all highly responsive to feedback and changing circumstances. Hammarby adapted to unexpected numbers of children in
the mix. Malmö used [...] processes to engage citizens and developers and respond to what they wanted. Helsinki listened to criticisms of the diversity of new housing and changed things. Copenhagen held dialogues with citizens and businesses about sustainability and design, concluding, for example, ‘that aesthetics is important [...] to securing public support for renewable energy infrastructure’ [...] This responsiveness, built-in to the majority of major projects, does not reduce design to lowest common denominators. It leads to attractive and popular solutions.

[...] Does something inherent in Nordic culture lead Scandinavians to design better housing than the rest of the world? [...] We conclude that Scandinavian norms enabled dialogues, partnerships and aspirations that produced results envied by other nations.

That does not mean that other cultures should be unable to emulate Scandinavia. Adopting some of our ‘top ten’ methods would be straightforward in any planning, design and construction environment. Others require translation and adaptation – examples being the operation of town planning systems and the powers of local government. We hope this commentary helps adaptation and encourages those who build housing to aim high.


05 September 2015
Dr Richard Simmons, Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones and Professor Rachel Cooper – Oral evidence (QQ1-12)

Transcript to be found under Professor Rachel Cooper
Introduction.

Int.1. Consideration of The Built Environment must deal not only with structures, their design, purpose and spatial distribution but also with the green spaces within them and around them. The built environment will provide the dwellings, places of employment and the transport links plus other infrastructure including some sporting and leisure facilities but it is the green land that will provide the spaces for outdoor recreational activities ranging from active sports (formal and informal) to contemplation, so vital for the well-being of humankind, as well as improving the oxygen: carbon dioxide exchange so vital for life itself.

Int.2. Attention is drawn to a quote from Bill Bryson (a writer born in America now a UK citizen with a great love for rural England) in the Sunday Times Magazine of 27 09 2015 p.20 that “Taking the English countryside for granted --- its greatest threat. --- the things that make the landscape of Britain comely and distinctive, hedgerows, country churches, sheep roaming over windswept hills and much more, are almost entirely no longer needed and can only now rarely be justified on economic grounds and for most people in power these are the only grounds that matter;” my thinking entirely.

Int.3. As a member of CPRE (Campaign to Protect rural England) my concern is that new building should be in those areas that do least harm to the green countryside, starting with building on brownfield land. Consideration of the built environment must also consider the effects on the countryside and the need to protect that countryside that forms the setting for the built environment. CPRE has estimated that building homes on identified brownfield sites and bringing back into use empty dwellings would contribute about one and three quarter million additional dwellings, a five year supply for estimated requirements, even longer at current annual completions. Such action would give more time to plan the location of new housing and infrastructure in more appropriate locations to satisfy sustainability criteria and thereby protect the countryside.

ANSWERS to the SET QUESTIONS which are submitted separately.

Numbering 1-13 reflects the numbering of the questions)

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1.1 No, decisions that shape England’s built environment are not taken at the right level. It was a mistake to remove the strategic planning function from County Councils, so there are no overarching planning policies for wide areas of the country. Although the NPPF in para.
178 states that “Public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those that relate to the strategic priorities set out in para. 156” which deals with housing, employment, other commercial development, a range of infrastructure projects, health and the enhancement of the natural and historic environment including landscape, such cooperation, much less any “collaborative working” does not always take place. Local Authorities (District Councils) are vying with one another for development to meet perceived Central Government requirements or to encourage “prestige development” even when this is purely speculative.

1.2 A Government so concerned to create” urban power houses” should also consider returning strategic planning powers to County Councils via County Structure Plans, and thereby show appreciation of the interdependence of rural and urban communities. This would also provide the opportunity for planners to plan and not just react to developers’ proposals.

1.3 It is obviously inevitable that national policymakers will take and preserve a role in shaping the built environment, as this is so significant for voters. It is important that there is consistency in the approach. At present lip service is paid to the importance of local decision making, yet the Government’s demand for built development to provide housing, jobs and infrastructure, seems to encourage economic development regardless of the cost in terms of a reduction in the quality of life of the existing residents of an area. This encourages Local Authorities to “Go for Growth”, again regardless of the harm to the environment and the quality of life of their residents. It is the lack of appreciation of the spatial dimension of government policies that contributes to the feeling of being pressurised to have development at any cost. (Also para. 4.1).

2.1 In general, policy does not seem to be well coordinated across the relevant Government departments. Particularly there is no drive to develop brownfield land as a real aid to the regeneration of declining built areas, especially within many towns, nor to bring back into use unoccupied dwellings. Also new housing could be provided by investment in restoring historical sites with well-designed “enabling development”. It seems that the Treasury is involved with many Departments but does not exercise a positive coordination role, even if this would improve the” value for money” aspect of development.

2.2 Improved coordination might happen if Cabinet members and Junior Ministers discussed well researched papers that explored detailed breakdowns into housing needs and suggestions as to how these might be provided within ideas of sustainability including protecting the environment, rural and built. There must also involvement with the many Agencies onto which Government has offloaded much responsibility for development and environment protection.

National policy for planning and the built environment
3.1. Although the NPPF provides policy guidance for those involved in planning and developing the built environment, the emphasis on development expressed in para. 11 by the “presumption in favour of sustainable development” has in practice meant that despite the words of the NPPF, development proposals are paramount and so there is insufficient protection for the natural environment and in some cases not even for the built environment with a heritage aspect. The Ministerial Foreword has a rather wishful thinking content: “sustainable development is about change for the better, not only in our built environment” and he lists various areas in which there can be improvement but he does not consider that even such development can be detrimental. He writes “sustainable development is about positive growth - making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. He does not consider that many developers and indeed councillors will pursue developments and make claims that the proposals are sustainable, leaving it to local groups and residents to prove that such development is not sustainable. The paragraph on neighbourhood planning misses the point that neighbourhood plans must pinpoint locations for development whether or not any development is appropriate wanted by local people for that locale.

3.2 Given CPRE ’s emphasis on brownfield development first, “Section 2 Ensuring the vitality of town centres”. Para.23 which states “local planning authorities should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities, and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality” should continue by stating “in promoting development, priority will be given to brownfield sites within the town centre and then to brownfield sites on the edge of the town centres.” The sequential test is mentioned in para.24 but as there is no appeal against a planning decision by the local authority, is easily by-passed. Thus regeneration opportunities risk being lost.

3.3 Similarly the Sections 9. “Protecting the Green Belt, 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment and 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment” contain much protection guidance e.g. para. 109 “by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes” yet it is difficult for local people to have an effective say in the designation of such landscapes, especially if they cover areas such as the foreground of the escarpment of the Kent Downs AONB and the Low Weald in Kent.

3.4 Essentially more emphasis needs to be put on protecting those elements of a place that make it attractive for living, especially now that attention is being paid to the happiness of people in England. Development pressures for large scale housing and employment buildings and the supporting infrastructure, on precious green land that not only supports food production but also serves as important leisure areas, creates anger and distress.

4.1 Yes national planning policy in England does lack a spatial perspective. There is insufficient recognition that for communities to flourish there must be an appreciation of the place occupied by those communities. Thus any development must take into consideration what and who is there already on the land in a specific place.
4.2 Having a spatial dimension would, hopefully make politicians and other decision makers more aware that planning policies apply to the real world of places where people live, work and participate in leisure activities within particular environments.

5.1 Very difficult to determine. However the 20 years for housing numbers,(now 16 years to 2031), is too long and is resulting in large areas, particularly of green land, being given planning permission for housing, when the future just cannot be determined by taking forward some past trends . Many of the housing figures are based on dubious evidence based on those past trends and assumptions about the future. Also, there is no coherent policy on phasing such development and an absence of a strategic overview. Even Communist Russia was unable to make its 5-year plans realisable because of circumstances not foreseen at the start. Even the 5 year housing bank demanded by Government is flawed since it is usually based on a proportion of the 20 year total. A return to the 10 year projections used in the Structure Plans would seem preferable to the present system and enable a more realistic appraisal of future requirements to be incorporated into Local Plans.

5.2 Those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy should be looking well into the future, but not expressing their thoughts as policy. Rather they should be concerned about the risks of assessing demand and supply for built development and the investment required.

Buildings and places: New and old

6.1 Before the Government intervenes further in addressing current issues of housing supply, in order to avoid the lack of proper coordination it is important that it has a good understanding of the complexities involved including that supply must take many forms to satisfy the variable needs of those seeking new-to-them housing. (See also 6.4 *sponsoring research). Generalizations may not cover sufficient aspects to be effective, including certain assumptions about the way people wish to live and where they wish to do that living. It is important to know that widespread owner occupation is a relatively new phenomenon and aspirations must be tempered by the reality of earnings lest sub-prime mortgage problems return. A new factor is that for some people owning a dwelling is an investment not a home. This has implications for the creation of communities with a sense of valuing a place and widens the assets gap between dwelling-owners and those renting.

6.2 Such understanding is necessary as it seems that the Government’s main role in seeking to address housing supply is to provide additional finance, especially to speed up the building of new dwellings in the affordable subsidised housing sector, most particularly on brownfield sites, often stated by developers to be more costly than greenfield sites. To increase the stock of affordable dwellings the Government must withdraw the almost blanket promise of right-to- buy for Housing Association tenants, unless they have lived in the same dwelling for, say, 15 years, or at least with the same HA, given the Government’s
“bedroom tax” encouraging tenants to downsize. It is especially important that the right to buy is not extended to affordable dwellings on rural exception sites specifically for people with a local affinity, lest this lead to creeping development in the green countryside.

6.3 So the Government should:

* clarify, and alter in necessary, its fiscal policy as regards housing:
  i. subsidies for affordable (social and first time buyer) homes and
  ii. inheritance tax levels and recipients lest the elderly “hang on” rather than downsize

* encourage, perhaps by grants, Local Authorities to take over empty properties and renovate them if necessary for rent or even sale in some circumstances

* encourage, perhaps by grants or loans, the reservation of some land within large private housing schemes for self-build dwellings

* impose penalties on the properties of “non doms”, who buy up large houses particularly in London but do not reside in them, especially when several houses are turned into one dwelling.

* allow Local Authorities to impose a full council tax on properties left empty for whom the owners are known and so not liable to be purchased for others to inhabit.

* sponsor independent research on housing demand, not only numbers but also size and location. There is now talk if not hard evidence, that older, retired people/ “empty nesters” may wish to move from the suburbs into urban areas in order to have easier access to entertainment facilities, but wish well-appointed apartments which are also well-maintained and managed. Also that many young people wish small studio or one bedroom flats close to their work in the urban areas. Thus flats may become more popular especially if the reforms encourage more building-up on existing buildings in urban areas. Greater density of occupation emphasizes the importance of well-maintained green spaces within the built environment.

6.4 The Government might also, CPRE suggests:

* give the Homes and Communities Agency, or its equivalent, greater power to redevelopment large and difficult sites

* develop a pro-active approach to identifying brownfield land with the emphasis on regenerating large sites with multiple owners.

7.1 There must be the requirement to consider of equal importance the three aspects of sustainability: economic, environmental and social, in relation to the needs for quality of life of the existing population as well as future generations. The provision of infrastructure facilities must happen alongside any built development for housing and economic development, and again the emphasis must be on retaining and indeed enhancing, where
necessary, green spaces within and outside the built environment. Hence the importance of considering the location of any additional built development in relation to its surroundings. Government must ensure that policies are upheld.

7.2 The question, will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs requires a crystal ball. Quality of the building materials would help, as would design that wins general approval. Fashions in living change, the values of quality of life may change, the demography of the population of an area is likely to change, personal and government finances will change, and all may affect the demand for the built environment and the way it is used.

7.3 The best use of existing housing stock is to seek to ensure that empty dwelling are brought into reuse as permanent ones, and that rundown housing if of sound structure, is modernised for the existing tenants or owners but is demolished and rebuild if the cost of conversion is considered unviable. There must be no further demolition simply because the housing stock was old. Also sound redundant buildings and spaces within existing buildings could be converted into dwellings. VAT on renovation and new build should be equalised, preferably for both at zero.

7.4 Similarly built environment assets may require some modernization to become more efficient, and in the case of some schools and hospitals may need to be demolished and rebuilt with improvements. There might also be the opportunity to use some of the land for additional building providing the green space provision was not compromised. Government funding may be required.

8.1 No, optimum use is not made of the historic environment, which can give character and value to a particular place. When plans are submitted for “enabling development” on historic sites, much of the promised restoration of the historic attraction is “mislaid”. In urban, suburban and village streets again some of the new build is out of keeping with the street scene in a desire to be “modern”. New build in Conservation Areas should be more strictly controlled. For many people, the recognition of the heritage aspects of their living space is important.

8.2 So even for “national assets” local views are very important, as they will show the value to the community of its historical buildings and other features. The Government can help by ensuring that Agencies dealing with historical sites have the funding to appraise properly development proposals. Within the built environment additional funding to restore and renovate historic assets would increase the character of that place and encourage a view that the past that has shaped individuals, communities and the country matters as well as the present and the future.

**Skills and Design.**

9.1. The skills may well be there, either directly employed by Councils, or through the use of consultants, but in so many instances the will may be lacking as there is no indication that
the built environment is considered in a holistic manner, merely piecemeal according to the wishes of senior officers and members. Few Council planners actually plan but are reactive to developers’ proposals. So skills may not be the issue, rather the pursuit of specific outcomes. This is compounded by the comments of qualified professionals on planning applications, as it sometimes seems that their professional appraisal of a situation is governed by the developer’s brief. There is an increasing assumption that no information is independently provided.

9.2 As it is members who are supposed to look after the interests of their residents, especially quality of life issues, more training for those members on the wide range of matters to take into account in determining planning applications, large and small might enable members to challenge officers reasoning and so produce better planning for the District. Also required is consultation with the residents whereby information is given to residents and groups and responses are listened to and digested by councillors and officers. (see para 12.2). Funding for training should be incorporated into Local Authority budgets from Government.

10.1 Not certain high quality design and “place making” can be created just at the national level. The significance of a place is its location in a particular area. Even if the building or feature is of national significance it still should fit into its surroundings, urban and rural. The perception of good design is personal, so function and cost must also be a consideration. Any additions to the built environment must be “fit for purpose” and meet all the sustainability criteria. National leadership should be involved if additional funding would improve the usage of the proposed building and protection for the surrounding environment.

Community involvement and community impact

11.1 No, and so there is a requirement for acceptable high standards of building materials and design coupled with protection for and enhanced maintenance of the green spaces within the built environment and protection of the green land around and beyond.

11.2 Behaviour within communities, a subject on which there is much pontification without always good evidence, seems to be related to the extent to which people feel they have a stake in what is happening within and around their community, varying from a street or small housing estate to a parish or even a town. That stake may take the form of active involvement in decision making or just taking pride in living in that place. One way of encouraging that pride is ensuring that community facilities are available and are well maintained, as that encourages local people to protect those facilities by acknowledging their value to the community. Such community involvement requires funding and even if some comes from the community itself or from donations, some government funding, often at a local level is necessary, to establish creditably.
12.1 Not very, since at present many local authorities pay little heed to local groups or individuals, not even to elected Parish and Town Councils. Yes, developers hold public meetings to show off their prospective development proposals but rarely indicate the degree of opposition.

12.2 A barrier to effective public engagement is not only time but the feeling that the “planning powers” ignore any representations from the public as individuals or groups. More proper consultation (see para.9.2) is required. It is assumed that Government devised Neighbourhood Plans as a means of providing effective community involvement in the planning of built development in an area. So far these have had limited interest from the relevant Local Authorities, and seem top down as the main decisions are on where development amount already proposed by the LA should be located. Resisting proposed built development is hard given the Government’s push for such development. Government should allow local communities more freedom to reject development proposals, especially where locals feel swamped by the proposed new built development.

12.3 One aspect of the planning procedure that would help to encourage effective public engagement would be to allow an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate/relevant Secretary of State against a decision by the Local Planning Authority.

Financial Measures.

13.1 By increasing the grant to Local Authorities/Housing Associations to enable more affordable housing to be built especially on brownfield land, with a higher subsidy if the land is contaminated; by providing some funding for bringing permanently empty housing into new permanent usage. Government must recognise that additional housing cannot be achieved without some Government investment in that provision. Also refer back to Paras. 6.2 p.4, 7.3 and 7.4 pp 4 and 5.

13.2 Probably by LPAs refusing development considered to have poor design of buildings and layout, after local as well as professional consultation. However some LPAs are reluctant to do so because of the cost of appeals. Local Government funding levels again an issue.

13.3 Place-making would require the provision of additional high quality community facilities commensurate with the expected increase in residents. Developers must make a financial contribution and that money should be spent on those community facilities. The ability of LPAs to spend developer contributions elsewhere needs to be curtailed, so the former 106 Agreements system should be reinstated. There must be a clear direction by Planning Authorities of the amount of any levy and the quality of the infrastructure to be funded, commensurate with financial viability, but the final say must be: no infrastructure provision no addition to the built housing environment.
This submission is from Social Life, a centre of expertise in placemaking and social sustainability, established by the Young Foundation in 2012.

About Social Life
All of Social Life’s projects are about the relationship between people and the places they live in. We specialise in work that explores the social outcomes of regeneration and development, understanding the social dynamics of places and how residents, local businesses and community-based organisations are affected by change. We work with local authorities, public agencies, community organisations, planners, developers and housing providers in the UK and internationally. More examples of Social Life’s recent work are included in an appendix.

Background: Social Life’s approach to social sustainability
Social Life has developed a framework for social sustainability - sitting alongside environmental and economic sustainability - which is applied in all our work. We believe that this can be a powerful way of helping built environment professionals and agencies think creatively and effectively about what they do. Our thinking on social sustainability frames our response to this call for evidence.

Our social sustainability framework originated in a commission from the Homes and Communities Agency (HAC) in 2010 to audit what was known about what makes places thrive. It was originally published on the Future Communities website (http://www.futurecommunities.net/), developed by the Social Life team and hosted by HCA.

A small, but growing, movement of architects, planners, developers, housing associations and local authorities are advocating a more ‘social’ approach to planning, constructing and managing cities. They are increasingly using the language of social sustainability to frame decisions about urban development, regeneration and housing, as part of a burgeoning policy debate about the sustainability and resilience of cities.

Social sustainability is one of the three pillars of sustainable development, first articulated by the Brundtland commission in 1887.

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Social, economic and environmental sustainability are familiar terms. Social sustainability has often been overlooked in comparison to the other two elements, being less easy to understand, quantify and action. However, social sustainability is now emerging as a new strand of discourse within sustainable development internationally. This is in response to the dominance of environmental concerns and technological solutions in urban development and the lack of progress in tackling inequality, displacement, liveability and growing needs for affordable housing in urban areas. In the UK, a combination of fiscal austerity, public sector budget cuts, rising housing need, and public and political concern about the social
outcomes of regeneration schemes are focusing attention on the relationship between urban development, quality of life and opportunities.

Much is known about the importance of the quality of the built environment and community facilities, and how these contribute to residents’ satisfaction and wellbeing. There is less understanding however, about the practical steps that can be taken to make these aspirations tangible; about what can be done in practice.

Social Life’s definition of social sustainability is:

"a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world – infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve."

Social Life’s framework has been developed to help understand how the idea of social sustainability can be applied to different places. It is intended to be used as a flexible tool, what sits within the different elements of the framework will vary between context, for example people living in rural and urban areas will have different needs in terms of transport and infrastructure.

The diagrams below show Social Life’s framework. When this is used on existing communities and area regeneration schemes we put a greater emphasis on adaptability and resilience under “space to grow”.

Social Life’s social sustainability framework: for new housing developments
Responses to the Select Committee’s questions
We have addressed the questions where our work has given us a particularly valuable perspective.

National policy for planning and the built environment
Q 3 Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The NPPF has increased the focus on sustainability within planning and design for the built environment, and this is welcome. However “sustainability” in practice tends to be interpreted as environmental sustainability, or (less frequently but still commonly) economic sustainability. Social sustainability – how the physical environment supports resident wellbeing and community strengths – features less often within the language of planning officers or committees, or within planning applications.

Social Life’s work has demonstrated that social sustainability can be “built” into new housing developments, by carefully considering the relationship between the existing and planned developments – for example whether community facilities can be shared, whether social relationships between different groups of residents can be fostered; by careful provision of new facilities and shared spaces; and ensuring that design brings people from different groups and backgrounds together rather than encouraging them to live separate experiences.

We have worked with private sector developers and housing associations to explore how social sustainability can become part of their thinking about new development. For example, for The Berkeley Group we have developed a method for carrying out “early stage” social sustainability assessments of their planned developments, interrogating plans to explore their social aspects would and how these aspects can be strengthened. For Notting Hill Housing we have devised a monitoring framework for their regeneration of the Aylesbury estate in Southwark which measures key social sustainability indicators, including residents’ sense of belonging, wellbeing, their relationships with their neighbours, fear of crime and community cohesion.

The NPPF should be strengthened to put a greater emphasis on social sustainability and how this can be accelerated. We believe that government, the HCA, and local authorities could take a leading role in promoting the importance of social sustainability and the approaches that can work to boost it.

The diagram below, “the building blocks for social sustainability”, gives some examples of tangible, mainly low cost practical measures that can boost social sustainability.
Buildung blocks for social sustainability: from Design for Social Sustainability (Social Life, 2012)

Buildings and places: New and old

Q6 How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Our social sustainability framework includes a focus on what we call “space to grow”, which encompasses the capacity of local neighbourhoods to flex in the face of change. This might be in response to changing demands from people who use the space - for example the
demand for cycle routes and community gardens is far greater now than a decade ago; or to improve the use of spaces and facilities – for example making new pathways or creating new community buildings; or in response to residents demands or wishes for change.

The places that are best loved are often those that have evolved over years, and places that are over designed and rigid may not thrive in the future. There can be a danger within masterplanning processes that places become over specified and inflexible. Our experience is that developers across sectors can be reluctant to leave flexibility developments fearing that this will be seen as “messy” by potential residents, both buyers and renters. However the wish to pin down all aspects of the built environment, including shared spaces and landscaping, can backfire when no flexibility is allowed. For example, we worked on one development where more children moved into the new apartments flats than anticipated, overwhelming the limited play provision and creating noise and nuisance problems for others. However there was very limited flexibility within the design to provide the play provision that was needed.

Skills and design

Q9 Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

We believe that planners, architects, developers and other built environment professionals have much more skill, expertise and experience in considering the “hard” or tangible aspects of the built environment than the social dimensions. There is a substantial literature and breadth of experience in the UK about creating places that work for residents, from the utopian developments of the 19th century, like Saltaire near Leeds, or Ebeneezer Howard’s garden cities, to the New Towns after 1945 and the thinking behind the mass housing of the 1960s and 1970s. Although not all these experiments worked, many did succeed socially (including some of the much maligned 1960s and 1970s council estates) and consequently a great deal has been learnt about how to design the social fabric. However built environment professionals are often unaware of the importance of this and of the knowledge and experience that exists. This is also true of local authority housing and planning departments.

Professional bodies – from the RPTI to RIBA, the Nat Fed and the HCA – should put a greater emphasis on the social dimensions of place in their training and accreditation.

Community involvement and community impact

Q11 Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

We believe that our social sustainability framework provides a good starting point for thinking about the impact of the built environment on the people who live and work in it. It
was developed as a framework for planning and reviewing places, rather than a prescriptive framework. It is impossible to prescribe what social sustainability will look like in different places - when we use our framework to train built environment professionals – for example in the professional practice sessions we deliver for the Barn wood Trust in Gloucester – we emphasise the need to consider what should be in place in each dimension of our framework (amenities & infrastructure, social & cultural life, voice & influence, space to grow) and what will work in each area.

Places that promote good neighbourly relationships, that feel comfortable to be in, that encourage people to use outside spaces for exercise and leisure and that feel safe and welcoming are more likely to improve mental and physical health than hostile unfriendly environment.

Q12 How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

It is often very difficult for communities to engage with decision making. Some issues – like the seemingly long timescales for developments to be planned and built – are difficult to overcome. But others can be tackled – for example making sure that plans are communicated accessibly in writing and through visualisations, and using best practice in engagement. The Social Life team, whilst at the Young Foundation, wrote the HCA’s community engagement guidelines, we believe that this and other good practice tools are readily available and should be the minimum expected practice (sadly this is not currently the case).

Social Life believes that communities should be able to, and encouraged to, shape their built environment and that places that work with the grain of existing communities are most likely to work in the long term. In thinking about new developments, the focus is often on the future, on new provision, rather than the people living in the area. However current residents are the link between the planned future and present and plans are weakened when their needs and experience are not fully taken into account.

One of the aspects that hampers community engagement is the declining amount of support for communities through dedicated community development workers, planning aid centres or other independent advice. When communities are not supported with good quality advice and information they may find it more difficult to engage constructively with plans, often debates between agencies advocating new development and communities become strained and mutually untrusting.

Communities will be most likely to engage with local discussions about development when they feel that their assets are recognised. It is important that decisions about the built environment, whether for regeneration schemes or new build, pay attention to conserving what is working now. Some low income communities, including big council estates, are home to complex social networks and support networks that help people facing difficult life circumstances to thrive. When estates are demolished, these networks are demolished as
well, and more care than is often now the case needs to be paid to preserving local social assets.

APPENDIX

Social Life’s recent work

- For **Notting Hill Housing** (in partnership with Southwark Council) we are monitoring the impact of the regeneration of the Aylesbury estate in Southwark, and over the summer of 2014 carried out an initial benchmarking exercise. For **Countryside Properties and L&Q**, we are also developing a social outcomes measurement framework to assess the impact of regeneration at South Acton.

- For the **Berkeley Group** we have developed a metrics framework to measure the social sustainability of their new developments, which has now been mainstreamed across the business. This includes assessments of developments that have been completed, those that are at the mid-point, and those that have yet to get planning consent. This work has been on-going since 2012.

- For **Grainger**, we are developing a comprehensive social and economic sustainability for their new Wellesley development in Aldershot.

- We are advising the **Realdania Foundation** in Denmark about their place based collective impact programmers.

- For **Hounslow Council** we are developing a data framework that will enable them to measure wellbeing and community resilience in Hounslow’s neighbourhoods, and for **Sutton Council**, we have developed a social sustainability toolkit that will enable their officers to assess how well Sutton’s neighbourhoods are thriving, piloting this in Beddington in the south of the borough.

- For **Lambeth Council** we have carried out community development and options development for two estate regeneration schemes.

- For **London & Quadrant** housing association, we have assessed the social value of shared courtyards and garden spaces on four housing developments.

- For **Wandsworth Arts Team** (part of LB Wandsworth) we carried out a viability study in 2014 for a community arts hub as part of the regeneration of the Alton Estate in Roehampton.

- For **Brixton Green**, a mutually owned organisation set up to regenerate a vacant parcel of land in Brixton, we convened a series of deliberative workshops to develop plans for Somerleyton Road, a poorly used site in central Brixton.

- For the **Royal Society of Arts (RSA)**, we wrote a report in their “Plugging the gap” series, published in 2013, exploring how local services can continue to meet needs in a time of austerity, focusing on low-cost ways to support people living in places most affected by the collapse of local economies.
With Cisco Systems, we set up the Social Life of Cities collaborative, which brings together cities interested in exploring how their strategic plans can better fit with the complexities of residents’ lived experience. Our early work in Chicago, supported by the University of Chicago, explored how digital technology could boost community resilience in the deprived areas of Chicago’s south side. We are now taking this forward with SIX – the Social Innovation Exchange – looking at how participatory mapping can be used as a tool for innovation and inclusive placemaking.

06 October 2015
Stelling Minnis Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0093)

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

1 More notice needs to be taken of the views of Parish and Town Councils. They have the local knowledge and are more in touch with local people and their views.

2 District and City Councils (the planning authorities) need to be more accessible for discussion and should take more notice of issues raised by Parish and Town Councils on any given planning application. Little account seems to be taken of the wider transport and infrastructure needs when considering planning applications, especially at local level. The granting of permission for a large development in one authorities area can have serious impacts on adjacent authorities’ areas, which are not always taken into account.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

3 The NPPF guidance should be just that. Local planning authorities should be required to apply common sense, in consultation with Town and Parish Councils, to apply variations to the NPPF or their own local policies, to meet local needs or requirements.

4 The effect of introducing a spatial element to national policy, whilst desirable to meet local needs, could lead to precedents being applied to places where they would not be acceptable; nevertheless some flexibility or latitude is desirable.
5. The time scale should be at least 30 years or whatever timescale is actually required to access the impact of the proposals and plan for infrastructure including water, railways, roads, telecommunications and other matters which themselves have long lead times to bring to fruition.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

6a. All developments, of more than just a few residential dwellings, should have land set aside for the provision of small, low cost and affordable, homes for single people and couples before permission is given to build. There are now more single people living on their own than any other time in history.

6b. Before any planning permission is granted, there should be an investigation into whether there is the necessary infrastructure to support the new buildings/homes.

7a. Attention should be given to empty/rundown accommodation and the owners made to either improve, if finances are available, or sell if they are not, if those buildings are in area(s) where homes are still being sought.

7b. Brownfield sites should be considered for development before spreading onto Greenfield sites or the Green Belt. Perhaps tax advantages could be used as an incentive?

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?
9  Not sure that local planners do have the skills to consider the built environment in a holistic manner. This could be addressed by training individuals or more effectively, efficiently and economically be utilising expertise on agency basis to advise on the wider impact that developments would have on the environment.

10  No views on this question.

Community involvement and community impact
11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

11  In short the answer is no. Consideration would be improved by consultation with the local communities through their Town and Parish Councils, whose views should carry more weight than they do currently. It is local people and their Town and Parish Councils who are best placed to understand how a particular development will affect them and their environment.

12  Not very effectively. Again this could be addresses by taking more notice of the Town and Parish Councils views. Better awareness of potential developments to local people by use of modern communications, top down, should be considered. For example the publication of planning application summaries should become part of the audit transparency requirements for Town and Parish Councils.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

13a  Tax advantages, waiving of capital gains and/or government contributions should be considered as a way of overcoming any financial restrictions on housing and land supply.

13b  If planning permission conditions made developers responsible for financing the required infrastructure associated with any development, then Brown Field sites would be more attractive than sites out of town.
05 October 2015

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and Arun District Council – Oral Evidence (QQ208-223)

Transcript to be found under Arun District Council
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Call for Written Evidence — Submission by Stop Smart Meters! UK

[001] Q1: Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

[002] SSM! UK: Not in some cases. A clear example of where decision making is not taken at the right administrative level is in relation to the placing of mobile phone cell towers and antenna arrays. For example, it is our understand that under current legislation, local authorities and communities are blocked from preventing the installation or expansion of cell towers due to health risk concerns. As more than 5,000 scientific studies now show, these concerns are bona fide and growing — a fact supported by the WHO-IARC’s 2011 classification of RF emissions from mobile phones and other wireless devices, e.g. ‘Smart’ Meters, WiFi routers and other so-called ‘Smart’ technologies, as Class “2B Possible Carcinogens.

[003] As a result, not only are the hands of every community in the UK tied to the Government’s blanket decision to block prevention of cell tower installation, the Government has implicitly tied itself to liability for any harm that may be caused.

[004] Given the increasingly wide-spread deployment of such technologies, this arguably represents a significant threat in terms of public health impacts, financial compensation, remediation and redevelopment and so those shaping England’s Build Environments must now play a proactive, precautionary role. The stakes could not be higher. For example, it has been suggested — by eminent scientific researchers and medical doctors — that the consequences associated with chronic exposure to wireless radiation at certain levels could have inter-generation impacts on fertility, reproduction and genetic heredity. Critics of presently supported “safety limits” for RF exposure in the UK have included Noble Prize co-winner Dr Devra Davis of the National Institute for Environmental Health in the United States. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also voted against the UK’s RF standards in 2008, labelling them “obsolete” and out of date. These standards, however, remain active.

[005] Q2: How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

[006] SSM! UK: If policy associated with housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage does not involve engagement with functional, informed and
responsible departments that are fully briefed and accountable for the apparent health and privacy risks of digital technologies, then not well enough.

[007] Policy creation for the application of digital technologies — whilst offering great potential in some respects — is failing to grapple with the health impacts of artificial, electromagnetic EL- and RF-fields, e.g. handheld wireless devices, routers and cell towers, as well as other important human rights imperatives such as individuals’ rights to privacy, data and cyber security. Built Environment policy must take all of these issues into account.

[008] Departmental consultation should also involve the public — the people who will actually have to live and contend with the consequences of centralised policy-making.

[009] Q3: Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

[010] SSM! UK: No comment.

[011] Q4: Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

[012] SSM! UK: No comment.

[013] Q5: Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

[014] SSM! UK: Time is absolutely of the essence for this Committee consultation. The optimum timescale for planning is now — and should have at its core the need to be precautionary in the face of new scientific understanding.

[015] Planning which includes consideration of the impacts of RF radiation on both individuals who are sensitive (EHS) and who are not immediately sensitive to artificial wireless frequencies (but who are nonetheless still affected by them at a biological level) must happen right away. It is already late in the day for this kind of activity to happen but the consequences of not doing so now are of potentially huge significance and severity.

[016] With respect to the consideration of EMF safety, planning should account for the generations yet unborn. They have no voice, yet it is today’s policy that they will inherit and face the consequences of— good and bad. There is little point in shooting for the stars with innovative Built Environments if we have no future generations to fully live in, work in and enjoy them. There will be no second chance to take a precautionary approach to unproven, artificial EMF technology proliferation.
[017] Q6: What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

[018] **SSM UK**: No comment.

[019] Q7: How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

[020] **SSM UK**: When one calculates the need for sustainability, the formula tends to begin with protection of the environment and its resources. But the inhabitants and neighbours of Built Environments must also be considered. Humans, animals, insects and plant life are dependent on suitable, harmonious and responsible Built Environment planning. They cannot be placed at risk until mainstream scientific dogma finally catches up with those who are making significant leaps in our understanding of electromagnetic in living organisms and their susceptibility to interference from artificial EMF pollution.

[021] More than 5,000 studies now show that artificial electromagnetic pollutions from wireless technologies such as cell towers/mobile phone masts can have a substantial impact on the health and well-being of people, animals and plant life. Many of those studies are peer-reviewed, replicated and include clear evidence of mechanistic pathways that explain not only what harm is caused by non-ionising EM fields, but how harm is caused, e.g. Prof Martin Pall, 2013.

[022] Existing housing stock and build environments must be factored into a purposeful and sustainable approach to EMFs and the Built Environment for the viability of this stock to be maintained.

[023] Q8: To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

[024] **SSM UK**: Historic environments should set examples for how innovation, sustainability and precautionary approaches to safeguard environmental and human well-being can combine successfully.

[025] Q9: Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers, etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?
SSM! UK: No. Professionals working in this area are not bio-physicists and have no understanding of this issue in a professional capacity. And they have little recourse to public health agencies in the UK which maintain out-of-date and obsolete EMF safety standards. Most notably, Public Health England — tasked with protecting the public from artificial EM fields — takes its lead on EMF safety from ICNIRP — a private industry group that has no official accountability to any governmental authorities. And ICNIRP’s guidelines on EMF are very much in question — as mentioned earlier, PACE voted these standards as “obsolete” in 2008, yet they are still in use in the UK. Even ICNIRP’s former chairman, Paulo Vecchio, warned that ICNIRP’s guidelines are not “defensive walls for Governments to hide behind” nor are they “the final word” on EMF safety.

On the contrary, in fact. These standards take little if any account for non-thermal effects of non-ionising radiation, something that is now a matter of scientific double-think as approaches to diseases like Alzheimer’s disease apply pulsed, non-thermal applications of ultrasound to effect biological changes on neurophysiological plaques. These approaches simply would not be possible, let alone shown to work, if non-ionising radiation only effected humans when heating occurs.

Consequently, we find ourselves in a situation where most of the professionals designing and constructing “Built Environments” have no knowledge of the risks and effects of artificial electromagnetic fields. And possibly without presently knowing it, they themselves have little recourse or reliable advice from authorities asleep at the wheel on the issue of EMF.

The issue of accountability in this discussion, then, is evidently a troubling one; but more troubling is the potential extent of the damage that might be done to those occupying, working, living in or near to the UK’s current and future Built Environments where this issue of artificial EMF remains unchecked. Artificial EMF pollution is missing from the conversation. It needs to be added.

Q10: Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

SSM! UK: Britain has an opportunity to move from a very poor performer in relation to EMF safety to being a global leader. The tools and techniques that it employs moving forward for designing environments that are not only high-quality but suitable for long-term human occupation and ‘place-being’ must include a recognition that there is an awakening to a wide-spread understanding of the role of electromagnetic fields in both positive health and disease.

Tools and techniques at present do not include this understanding. But they could do and they should do. If we are to move forwards with a responsibility to guarantee the safety of both adults and children alike — something that is required under the Children’s
Act 1989 — we will do. To not do so would be negligent and ignorant of a substantial and growing body of high-quality, credible, peer-reviewed scientific research.

[034] Q11: Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

[035] **SSM! UK**: Please firstly see answer to Q10.

[036] In relation to mental health, it has been shown that artificial electromagnetic fields can lead to adverse cognitive impacts as well as stimulating emotional changes in the state of mind of some subjects. Research in this area was lead by the military in the 1960s and 1970s and resulted in assertions that in excess of 100 different mental and physical symptoms can be caused by exposure to non-thermal, artificial electromagnetic fields that are increasingly abundant in Built Environments.

[037] Q12: How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

[038] The voices of individuals and communities are entirely absent from the table at which exposure to artificial EMFs are discussed and decided up. This represents a huge omission — and one that may come home to roost soon as the understand of how artificial electromagnetic fields impact upon living organisms. Thousands of peer-reviewed scientific papers now show that EMF exposures that are now in wide-spread use across our Built Environments cause harm. New papers are also now available which show that this harm is manifested in repeatable and predictable ways.

[039] Present legislation prevents communities from blocking cell tower proliferation. Energy policy currently supports the national roll-out of ‘Smart’ Meters despite emerging evidence of harm. People’s personal spaces at home are violated without permission by increasingly powerful cell towers, street-level wireless routers, ‘smart’ meters and WiFi hubs from neighbouring homes. The issue of accountability therefore lies with those making and enforcing the policy. This consultation is therefore timely and crucially important.

[041] Q13: Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

[042] **SSM! UK**: Yes. There is a significant financial incentive for design and place-making to take account of the existing and growing body of evidence showing harm from artificial electromagnetic fields. This applies to both government and private sector developers who,
when deploying potentially harmful wireless technologies, run the risk of needing to pay large financial compensation to victims.

[043] This issue was highlighted in 2012 when a court in Brescia, Italy, ruled that a company director’s brain tumour was caused by use of a company mobile phone. He was awarded compensation.

[044] The floodgates to more cases are open and in view.

6 October 2015
Teresa Strachan, Newcastle University, School of Architecture Planning and Landscape – Written Evidence (BEN0173)

Teresa Strachan, Newcastle University, School of Architecture Planning and Landscape – Written Evidence (BEN0173)

Evidence Presented by Teresa Strachan, Professional Practice Tutor, on behalf of the School of Architecture Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

Question 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

1.0 Research undertaken by students of town planning at Newcastle University since the autumn of 2012 has explored the extent to which young people feel that they can influence the planning decisions that affect their local environments. This group of students has worked with young people ranging from eight to twenty years of age, in a variety of settings and with different gatekeepers to supervise. The research began with a questionnaire that was completed by fifty 13 and 14 year olds from a school in a Northumberland market town and by fifty 13 and 14 year olds from a school in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Below is a summary of the group’s findings.

Figure 1: Is it important for young people to have a say in their local area?

![Figure 1](image)

Source: Stephenson, B., 2013

2.0 Thirty-six of the one hundred young people said that they should have a say in planning decisions because they live in the area that is being planned. Twenty young people stated that it was only fair in terms of equality of rights that they should be consulted. Only one
young person stated that they felt that young people wanted change so should be consulted for their ideas and input. This correlates with subsequent research by the team with other groups of young people who indicate that they are less inclined to be suggesting any change to their environment, but are only seeking inclusion in a decision making process.

Figure 2: Why young people should or shouldn’t have a say

Source: Stephenson, B., 2013

3.0 Those who said that they shouldn’t have a say gave the following reasons:

“kids could say things that’s never going to happen whereas adults have better and reasonable ideas” (Rural Male 1)

“because they might make stupid ideas but it would be like how they want it to be” (Urban Female 1)

“young people don’t generally know what they want” (Urban Male 1)

4.0 When the young people were asked if they wanted to know more about town planning in their area, 57% responded positively (rural young people 74.5% and urban young people 38.5%).

Figure 3. Do you want to know more about town planning in your area?
5.0 The young people were asked about which of the suggested ‘values’ were true of young people and their local areas. Seventy three percent of young people stated that it was very important for them to feel safe in their local area.
Whilst ‘feeling safe’ was indicated as being a common value for the young people, there was a lack of time in the project to explore their interpretation of this concept. Subsequent workshops with other groups of young people have clearly highlighted their concern for antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime that stems from this.

6.0 When asked about the barriers to getting involved in local decision making and planning, the young people made the following observations:

“**Adults don’t think we’re responsible enough**”

“**Adults won’t listen**”

“**ADULTS, their views get talked about but ours get ignored**”

“**Because they (adults) don’t ask us because they forget about our age people**”

This initial research has led to further work with young people to identify methods in which town planning students can begin a dialogue about town planning through the activities in an engagement toolkit (available on the Newcastle University website: http://toolkit.ncl.ac.uk/resource/planning-future-toolkit-engaging-young-people-town-planning). There is clearly a desire amongst young people for them to get involved and their attachment and value for the local area is unquestionable. Ensuring that young people’s views reach the decision makers and feeds into a planning process remains a considerable challenge.

Reference:

Stephenson, B. (2013): A Rural/Urban Comparison examining the impact of place on young people and their identities, perceptions and values, Linked Research Project, Newcastle University, unpublished.

09 October 2015
Dear Sirs

National Policy for the Built Environment Call for Written Evidence

Introduction

SPS is a non-political, independent, self-funding charity that was established in 1929. Its charitable objects are to “promote the conservation, protection and improvement of Suffolk’s physical and natural environment for the public benefit by ensuring any change is undertaken sympathetically and to the highest level of design and sustainability possible”. It also acts as the CPRE county branch in Suffolk.

Suffolk’s built heritage, its historic buildings, conservation areas, diverse landscapes and the sustainability of its communities are a major part of the SPS’s work in protecting what is fundamentally important in and to the County. The county has over 13,200 listed buildings and nearly 150 conservation areas as well as important historic parks, gardens, cemeteries and other historic landscapes.

Scrutiny of planning applications that affect heritage assets are a particular focus in helping to deliver a County with rich and varied townscapes and landscapes that communities have pride in and that respect its vernacular past. SPS campaigns on important development issues which affect its remit and we work constructively with the county and local planning authorities and other relevant statutory agencies and bodies to help achieve better outcomes in planning and the management of our historic natural and built environment. SPS works and promotes co-operation with other groups whose objects are consistent with its own including town and parish councils and local amenity societies on common issues.

Policymaking, Integration and Co-ordination

Evidence on the ground in Suffolk indicates that the Government’s commitment to stimulating housing supply is failing to deliver high quality places in appropriate locations. Current planning policy has sought to deliver quantity at the expense of quality and failed because too often the market has not delivered the right kind of housing in the right places at the right price. This has been exacerbated by de-skilling and a loss of capacity in the building industry leading to utilitarian construction and a failure to deliver distinctive places. Underfunding of local authority skilled staff and imposition of artificial and often unachievable housing targets are also contributory factors. The government needs to redress
i. the balance; less of the top-down approach and give lpa’s the tools, highly skilled staff and ability to invest in social housing, to address the acute shortage of homes combined with devolved powers to communities through improved delivery of Neighbourhood Plans. Highway Authorities frequently lack urban design skills and how these contribute to attractive place-making. This militates against good built environment outcomes. Furthermore, Highway Authorities frequently are located at county level (where services have not been outsourced) and are frequently divorced from district planning departments who need to ensure an appropriate local context for development is achieved. Transport proposals should be subject to planning permission and undergo extensive public scrutiny and appraisal. The detailed design work of highway departments should be much better integrated into the heart of the development management process and for development schemes – particularly large residential developments and urban extensions – should be located at district/borough level. This would ensure that transportation and development agendas are dovetailed to deliver genuinely sustainable transport schemes that are compatible with high quality built environments. Furthermore, Manual for Streets guidance should be elevated in status and adopted as policy not just advanced as good practice.

ii. National Policy for planning and the built environment

iii. The NPPF is predicated on the principle of achieving sustainable development but it is not always clear that the stated balance that needs to be achieved between economic, environmental and social factors (NPPF paragraph 7) is evident in practice, with far more emphasis on economic aspects at the expense of the other two. The SPS and CPRE campaigned effectively to ensure that the intrinsic beauty of small towns, villages and the countryside was acknowledged in the Framework. Nevertheless, the five year housing land supply policy has distorted the planning process and inevitably the pressure for development in inappropriate places has irrevocably undermined both the credibility of the planning profession to adequately protect these attributes and by extension the special rural qualities of Suffolk. In those districts where there has been a delay in adopting a Local Plan (Suffolk Coastal and Forest Heath), we have witnessed an “open season” of speculative developments that are uncoordinated, fail to meet the local housing need and fail to provide the necessary infrastructure. Since the introduction of the NPPF in March 2012 parts of the county have been the subject of unprecedented development pressure. Insufficient clarity around housing need has resulted in delays to plan preparation and has created opportunities for developers to cynically challenge adopted housing figures, which has left lpa’s vulnerable to inappropriate development in form, scale and location. In turn, the statutory duties to protect the historic natural and built environment have been undermined by this policy vacuum with more emphasis on the economics of development than on cultural and social values and sustainability criteria to the detriment of the county. Furthermore, the NPPF gives inadequate weight to requiring good design which is vague and very hard for lpa’s to defend. A clearer policy framework to support good design is required.
including greater weight to the work of Design Review Panels and the requirement to take expert design advice and clearly demonstrate that it has been taken into account in approved schemes.

iv. -

v. The current timescales which dominate planning making decisions are the 5 year housing land supply and the duration of the Local Plan. However, increasingly the five year housing land supply figures are distorted by the transient market conditions which affect viability. Councils need clearer guidance on methodology to assess housing requirements, not least in assessing viability and the extent to which affordable housing can be delivered. Increased transparency is required regarding housing need and how it is calculated, which must be detached from commercial interests of developers and not tied to the short term vagaries of the market. A clearer and transparent definition of housing need is essential to ensure that the brownfield sites are developed preferentially and developer contributions to infrastructure are made fairly and that transient economic up/downturns are not used to distort deliverability of much needed housing.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

vi. The Government should continue to support local authority commitment to the prioritisation of new homes developed on brownfield before greenfield. It is essential that a co-ordinated database of all brownfield sites should be put in place, and local authorities should be required to submit annual returns in order to ensure a reliable data set of brownland that is available for housing. It is regrettable that a requirement to prepare a regularly updated register of brownfield land was abolished by a previous government, and should be reintroduced. The current system of SHLAA’s is developer led and does not accurately capture all available brownfield sites and in short is not consistent, coherent or comprehensive.

The recent planning reforms to allow Starter Homes to be built on rural exception sites raises concern as it may result in a net loss of affordable housing when Starter Homes can be sold on the open market after 5 years, unlike affordable housing, which currently is held in perpetuity by housing associations. This reform represents a potential risk of further loss of affordable housing in rural areas, and this may be exacerbated if housing associations are required to sell off their properties under Right to Buy proposals.

The shortage of resources in LPA’s is likely to have implications for the delivery of Local Development Orders on brownfield sites. It will be necessary for developers to share the cost burden of drafting LDO’s in order to make this mechanism effective.

vii. Sustainable and resilient built environments flow from building high quality homes in locations where people want to be, close to work, family and amenities and not
characterised by high density living, generic anonymous design and over reliance upon the car. The government must commit to requiring local authorities to fund highly skilled design and conservation staff who in turn will promote the agenda for quality of place. This is a pre-requisite for translating the government’s commitment to delivering new homes into the creation of high quality places where people want to live. In the last decade the planning profession has been reduced to providing building stock at the expense of creating sustainable, beautiful places that are conducive to a high standard of wellbeing.

viii. The historic environment is a huge driver of economic regeneration and quality place making. The chronic decline of heritage professionals from planning departments since 2006 (30% according to IHBC research for English Heritage/Historic England) has meant that this resource of precious historic buildings and conservation areas cannot be properly protected or adequately managed and many opportunities to regenerate historic areas and buildings is lost. The Government needs to restore adequate funding to local authorities and funds should be earmarked for heritage posts to develop and bring forward schemes to maximise the benefits of this national resource.

Skills and design

ix. Local Planning Authorities have undergone a massive decline in resources which has ultimately impacted upon the quantity and quality of staff in recent years. Since 2008 many Lpa’s have seen their most experienced staff leave and their posts have been lost from the structure or downgraded to make savings. Accordingly, in Suffolk only one of the seven Lpa’s (Ipswich) employs a qualified urban design officer and the number of conservation officers across the county has been reduced by approximately 30%. This means that at a time of unprecedented development pressures both the capacity and expertise within planning departments is deficient. The RIBA Suffolk Design Review Panel has been set up in a bid to address the shortcoming of new development proposals (on both greenfield sites and in heritage contexts). However, the administrative costs of having a case review (currently £350) is payable by the body that refers the scheme to the panel. This often acts as a disincentive to the majority of developers of the small/medium sized schemes that are more typical of Suffolk. In summary, Lpa’s require more resources, both human and financial to build in capacity and expertise to raise the design standards that the mass volume housebuilders seem unwilling to address themselves. This is despite the guidance provided by publications such as ‘Building for Life’.

The SPS acknowledges the need for more homes, however, the current mechanism succeeds too often in providing low quality housing of ubiquitous design that is too expensive for local people to afford, is frequently located far away from where people work, dominated by car parking and lacking the distinctive architectural and design characteristics that define Suffolk’s special character. In order to deliver high quality environments Lpa’s
need the dedicated skilled design staff to deliver it. This requires greater direction from central government.

Recently the brief for architectural policy has been transferred from DCMS to DCLG with the intention that higher architectural standards would pervade the planning system. Nevertheless, recognition of the importance of the built environment generally and the creation of attractive memorable places needs to be raised within Government. A minister clearly and principally responsible for not just the mechanism of planning but with an emphasis on architecture and producing a high quality environment that understands the implications for wellbeing and behaviour is required urgently. Planning has become a political football and held responsible for the inadequacy of the free market. The Society notes that recent announcements about planning policy have been made by the Treasury not CLG suggesting a lack of architectural and planning policy input by those who understand it. Planning as a profession is effective in delivering planning consents; it is the imperfections of the market which has stopped the delivery of the much needed housing and jobs.

x. A minister responsible for housing and design in the cabinet is now required to raise the profile of this fundamentally important aspect of modern government. For too long the quality of Britain’s built environment has been a Cinderella subject, an afterthought that can be applied to the economic reforms that the country has been in search of. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the importance of how and where we live. An integrated approach to planning, regeneration, conservation and urban design is essential to maintain the tradition of internationally important architectural history and town planning. The post war New Towns Programme was at the cutting edge of town planning, but for the last 30 or more years the UK has fallen behind in the arena of creating new settlements and inspiring places to live and work. There is for example a fundamental misunderstanding about what garden cities are and that they should not be large housing estates “with extra trees”. The status of the planning profession needs to be restored to give us an environmental legacy of which the country can be proud. The government for too long has held the profession responsible for the shortcomings of the market and the mass housebuilders who dominate it.

Community involvement and community impact

xi. The SPS is dedicated to standing up for the quality of the new development in Suffolk. Too often the policy presumption of sustainable development eclipses the commitment to the quality of place. The requirements of viability, affordable housing and parking standards too often give rise to a dismal design outcome that fails to acknowledge how the places that we build today will influence the way in which people live sustainably in the 21st Century. The profile of The SPS is committed to ensuring that the legacy of our decision makers is one worthy of our county. We make our best efforts to ensure that significant planning schemes in the county achieve high quality housing and public realm. This is increasingly difficult to
achieve in a climate driven by targets, both numerical and financial. To that end the government should seek increased community engagement, not just through Neighbourhood Plans, but through vehicles such as civic forums, shared ownership and self build schemes where places are influenced by those that will live in them rather than just the developer and the decision makers.

xii. The interest in and delivery of Neighbourhood Plans in Suffolk has been patchy and slow. While the recent confirmation of funds for NP groups is welcomed, the process is long, frequently technical and favours middle class areas. In Suffolk we see large areas of the county including Ipswich, St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath with no areas currently designated, while Babergh, Suffolk Coastal and Mid Suffolk each have approx. 8 plans in various stages of gestation but these cover tiny areas by comparison with the size of the county as a whole. It is clear that the Ip’a’s that have dedicated staff in place are generating greater levels of activity and ultimately adopted plans. It is essential that the government continues to stress the importance of communities producing their plans, providing adequate technical support and in particular to those areas which are more socially and economically deprived.

In Suffolk large scale housing schemes are often lacking effective master planning. Too often token public participation events are hosted by developers, but the views and opinions of the community are rarely translated into the masterplans which they produce. The master planning of large scale sites should be driven by Ip’a’s informed with visual analysis and design (which frequently do not have requisite resources to prepare development briefs) and subject to meaningful community engagement, and not just led by developers who undertake their own consultation. Public engagement in master planning will increase in direct proportion to the weight given to their views on the places that they want to live in.

Financial measures

xiii. The issue of landbanking by developers is seriously impacting upon the deliverability of housing. The government should impose a “use-it-or-lose-it” requirement for developers that will make them build out their consented schemes or risk forfeiting them. Too often in Suffolk we see cases of developers having bought at the peak of the market and where the scheme is not being built out until market conditions improve. Councils and developer partners should have the power to acquire those sites at current values and deliver them.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Cairns BA(Hons)

Director

Suffolk Preservation Society
Response of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA)

(0.1) The Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (STBA) is a collaboration of not for profit organisations that acts as a forum for sustaining and improving traditional buildings in the UK. The STBA aims to promote and deliver a more sustainable traditional built environment in the UK through high quality research, education, training and policy.

(0.2) In the context of concerns over climate change, much policymaking in recent years has centered upon improving the energy efficiency of the built environment. Now that problems are starting to emerge as a result of poorly planned and executed retrofit, it is clear that a different approach is required. Traditional buildings (including solid walled buildings up to the late 1930s) constitute at least 25% of the building stock, and they need to be properly understood in their context before decisions can be taken as to their retrofit.

(0.3) The STBA has therefore worked closely with DECC and other leading stakeholders to identify the key knowledge gaps, skills gaps, and implicit errors in approach. The Responsible Retrofit Report (2012) sets out the key concerns. Since then we have developed tools, training and guidance to help designers, contractors and building owners to manage and address these issues.

With this in mind, we can offer the following comments in response to:

Question 2
Question 7
Question 8
Question 9.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

(2.1) The drive to make buildings more “energy efficient” can sometimes lead to situations in which Sustainability and Heritage can appear to come into conflict with each other. Looked at narrowly, a retrofit measure which damages or covers up heritage may be questioned on these grounds. However, such conflicts normally arise when one or other imperative has not been fully understood. The sustainability of buildings is too often assessed purely in terms of carbon emissions from buildings in use and this definition missed several key points.

- There is good evidence to show that traditional buildings do not perform as poorly as had been assumed (due to the use of limited and erroneous models).
• The embodied energy of buildings in some cases outweighs the energy used for their operation. Our traditional building stock has relatively low embodied energy and has lasted for over a century.
• Modern buildings often do not have such long design lives so their embodied energy is more significant. When these buildings are taken down, it is also necessary to account for their impact on waste streams and recycling.
• Retrofit, like all building work has an impact in terms of energy use and the use of scarce resources, and this impact needs to be measures and offset against actual savings achieved during the life of the measure and the building.
• The **unintended consequences** of measures to improve the energy efficiency of the built environment can have consequences not only for building fabric but also for human health.

(2.2) Heritage itself is also an asset, an asset which should be protected and enhanced for the benefit of future generations. Responsible retrofit delivers both enhancement of Heritage and an improvement in Sustainability of the built environment.

(2.3) Lastly, the retrofit of buildings may be used to achieve a wide spectrum of other social, economic and environmental goals. In addition to providing local employment and assisting with community regeneration, there may also be the opportunity to use the retrofit process to reduce waste, water use, drainage impact etc, depending on the context.

(2.4) Integration and co-ordination of policy can be improved through a *more fundamental cost-benefit analysis*, which reflects the importance of human health, the value of heritage assets and a wider set of sustainability goals alongside opportunities to deliver genuine regeneration.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

(7.1) As outlined above, there is an opportunity to make great improvements to the existing building stock in terms of its sustainability. However, there are also great risks and, if this process is handled badly, there will be serious negative consequences for the environment, for human health and for the longevity of the buildings themselves.

(7.2) To reduce these risks, the STBA has developed the **whole-building approach to retrofit**, an approach which has been endorsed by our key supporting organisations and welcomed by DECC. This approach acknowledges firstly the *importance of context* – so any measures selected for retrofit must recognise the value of a building and its appearance to the local community and be appropriate to its location, exposure and condition. The whole building
approach also takes account of the interactions between building fabric and its services, and the crucial importance of interactions with the occupants.

(7.3) The Government can play a positive role by endorsing and encouraging the whole-building approach to retrofit.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

(8.1) Traditional buildings and places have much to teach us about genuine sustainability. How people constructed and lived in traditional buildings, and the economic/social circumstances within which they were built, of course differs from the perspective of the 21st century. However, in current thinking there is a lack of understanding of place-making and the value of the traditional built environment in people’s sense of identity, both locally and nationally.

(8.2) The STBA is developing a framework that may be used to address these issues and we would welcome UK Government support for this work.

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

(9.1) As identified in the Responsible Retrofit Report (2012), there are significant knowledge gaps in the understanding of how traditional buildings function, and also how they function when subjected to retrofit. The most significant of these is a lack of understanding of moisture movement in buildings, and of how to manage the risks of moisture build-up in both new construction and retrofit. With DECC’s support and with widespread agreement across the industry, we have developed a new Moisture Risk Assessment and Guidance; this is shortly to be reflected in a new British Standard on Moisture in Buildings.

(9.2) However, to specify appropriate retrofit measures requires an understanding of traditional buildings and of moisture risks; at present there are very few building professionals at present who are technically qualified to make the necessary assessment. Training in Moisture Risk Assessment is therefore required – materials and courses have yet to be developed so we recommend that this task is undertaken in parallel to the issuance of the new British Standard on Moisture.
(9.3) Planners, surveyors, architects and engineers usually lack the full set of skills to assess the built environment in a holistic manner. Most do not have sufficient technical understanding of traditional buildings and many lack a full appreciation of the value of heritage and its contribution to genuine sustainability. The STBA has contributed to training courses for Supervisors/Technical Officers and on Retrofit Co-ordinators, developed by CITB and CoRE respectively. There remains a need for more technical training of surveyors in particular – as they should have the primary responsibility of determining the most appropriate measures for retrofit. The existing workforce is almost entirely trained for new construction; retraining is required to work on retrofits and to learn the basic techniques of repair.

(9.4) We are actively working with Local Authorities (currently Bristol City Council) to test out the whole-building approach to the decision-making process for the selection of retrofit measures. We would welcome UK Government support to disseminate this approach to all Local Authorities and to embed it within their planning processes.

Nigel Griffiths, Director, STBA.

06 October 2015
Syresham Parish Council met to review the 13 questions and felt it should respond to Q12.

The Parish Council would like a more robust method to ensure the planning officers are more thorough in their community consultations to ensure everyone has the chance to comment on planning applications.

05 October 2015
1. **Introduction**

1.1. Tata Steel is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. Tata Steel is a key member of the UK’s foundation industries, directly employing 17,000 in the UK with many more dependent jobs in our supply chains and local communities. We are a key partner of the construction industry, with our products being used in high volumes in landmark buildings and infrastructure projects in the UK and across the globe.

1.2. While we are unable to comment on issues such as administrative responsibility for the built environment, responding to the housing shortage and approach to ‘place-making’, we feel that the lessons we have learned in our mission to provide sustainable and energy efficient construction products may be of interest to the committee.

1.3. In 2012 the UK’s metals sectors comprised 24,000+ enterprises and employed over 330,000 people. They are worth over £45.5bn to the UK economy, generating £16.5bn GVA and sector exports 150% of UK demand. Tata Steel exports around 50% of its products to Europe. Steel is a driver of productivity which, along with other UK Foundation Industries, is characterised by sector productivity of 136%. Steel has a clear, strategic value to the country and is valuable in driving export and productivity growth.

1.4. Steel is a key foundation of significant, strategic supply chains (e.g. automotive, construction, energy) and an engine of regional growth and opportunity. Two to three jobs are dependent on every direct steel sector job, often in less prosperous parts of the country. The industry produces hundreds of high skilled, high value-added apprentices, vocational trainees and graduates. We are well linked into the UK’s innovation infrastructure through partnerships with leading universities, participation in Catapults and own R&D investment. In this regard, steel is a real asset to a high value, high skill economy.

2. **Steel and the built environment**

2.1. Construction is one of the heaviest consumers of natural resources and uses around 40% of global raw materials (around 3 billion tonnes annually). The construction industry produces more than three times as much waste as domestic properties and the operation of buildings accounts for almost half of all energy use and carbon dioxide emissions. If the construction industry is to truly embrace sustainability it must be embedded through the whole life-cycle of the building. This combined with the fact that some 41% of global energy use is in buildings, means that it is critical that companies like Tata Steel lead the way in the development of processes, products and services which reduce the use of materials and increase the efficient use of energy during the life cycle of a construction product.
2.2. Steel buildings are inherently efficient in design, construction, use and even demolition. Steel buildings are flexible in use and highly adaptable. Steel structures are lightweight and thermally responsive and steel building systems help to minimise energy use in buildings. Meanwhile, using steel in construction helps to save precious resources, since it is efficiently collected and truly recycled in demolition. Steel is used in many of the most sustainable buildings. Steel building systems are very well rated in schemes such as BREEAM and LEED and our products are frequently used in some of the highest-rated buildings.

2.3. At Tata Steel, we produce a range of products to make buildings more efficient. Our wide range of structural products enables design efficiency, while our building envelope products are the most durable available. Our latest products are designed to harness energy, turning buildings into energy generators and aim to bring the goal of zero carbon building ever closer.

3. **Examples of Tata Steel's contribution to the built environment**

*Sustainability*

3.1. Tata Steel was a key partner of the recent World Green Building Week, hosting a number of seminars to facilitate discussion about the role of the built environment in helping meet global sustainability targets. We were proud to demonstrate leadership in this area by showcasing our efforts to help reduce energy consumption by buildings by encasing them with Transpired Solar Collectors, effectively turning buildings into power stations.

3.2. Non-domestic buildings account for 17% of UK energy consumption, with over 60% of energy used in these buildings being spent on heating. Renewable energy uptake has been very low in non-domestic buildings which rely predominantly on gas boilers. Tata Steel is able to help reduce gas dependency in such properties by coating them in active building envelopes containing Transpired Solar Collectors. This is a simple but effective product which requires no specialist installation training, can be installed in a short period and has no additional operation costs. It has a 75% conversion rate of solar power into useable heat and can provide up to half of a building’s space heating requirements per year. The committee may wish to consider how built environment policy can ensure that buildings make use of such technologies to help reduce UK energy consumption.

*Building Information Modelling*

3.3. Data management is increasingly important to the UK economy and the same is true for the built environment. We recognise that not everyone needs the same data, and especially when supplying products across a number of territories, externalising the data is crucial. It provides users with the flexibility to select the data they need and for manufacturers, the potential to tailor their information to local requirement. To achieve
many national Governments are now developing strategies and standards to implement BIM (Building Information Modelling) over the next few years.

3.4. We recognise that the move to a digital environment is only the beginning, and the Tata Steel Digital Product Platform forms a key part of our long-term construction strategy. Over the coming months, we will be enabling BIM objects for our products in the Construction, Energy & Power and Rail sectors across all territories, with some 7000 products already included. Tata Steel’s BIM objects include software agnostic data, along with 2D and 3D geometry in appropriate software for the product.

3.5. Our aim at Tata Steel is to provide accurate, reliable and accessible digital information on our construction products that support improved information flow and exchange throughout the lifecycle of an asset. This programme will help support our customers, partners and specifiers in delivering a sustainable built environment through a more efficient, collaborative supply chain approach based around an offsite modular construction approach. Enabling wider adoption of BIM platforms across industry will help reduce the costs of design, construction and operation, ultimately helping deliver sustainable built environments as efficiently as possible.

Responsible sourcing

3.6. Responsible sourcing is fast becoming a critical issue for the construction sector and its wider sustainability agenda. Construction clients need to be confident that their sustainable approach is supported by the construction products that they use. Tata Steel has become the largest company to acquire the BRE responsible sourcing standard BES 6001 for its UK construction products. All of our construction products manufactured in the UK are now certified ‘Very Good’ under the British standard.

3.7. The UK Government will soon require all the construction projects it funds to use BES 6001 certified products. As a result, sustainability-minded main contractors, architects and engineering designers are increasingly asking their supply chain partner to verify where their products are sourced and to demonstrate how they are ensuring that the products they use have been produced in as sustainable and responsible a way as possible. Designers and developers can specify and use Tata Steel’s UK-made construction products confident in the knowledge they are fully certified to BES 6001. They can thereby secure maximum credits under the responsible sourcing of materials sections of other standards, such as BREEAM, the Code for Sustainable Homes, and CEEQUAL.

3.8. BES 6001 is an independently certified standard recognising companies that go that bit further to act responsibly and to promote sustainability. The standard not only assesses the sustainability of our own operations but requires us to demonstrate confidence in the responsibility of our raw material suppliers all the way back to the point of mineral extraction. BES 6001 has been developed by BRE Group to enable construction product manufacturers to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability both within their
own operations and through the responsible sourcing of raw materials and other products from suppliers. Certification requires companies to demonstrate that they have systems and policies in place covering many aspects of environmental and social performance, including that their raw materials are traceable back to the point of extraction and that environmental and social responsibility is evident throughout the supply chain.

4. **Threats to this contribution**

4.1. We appreciate that the issues raised in this submission do not directly address some of the Committee’s published terms of reference. But, as described, the UK’s steel sector is closely integrated into the country’s ability to plan, design and create a built environment in a sustainable way. But the UK’s capability to do this is under threat.

4.2. The threats to the UK’s steel industry are increasingly high profile. The sector was seriously damaged by the global recession and never fully recovered. UK steel demand in 2015 is forecast to be ~75% of pre-2008 levels vs. 94% in Germany and 180% in China. We expect this to result in increases to their export volume, which is already at record levels. Additionally, the strength of Sterling against the Euro is having a negative impact on UK demand for steel as UK exporters struggle to compete in European markets.

4.3. On a specific UK policy basis, we have experienced the costs associated with policy and regulations growing at a disproportionate rate during this very challenging time. Energy taxes levied on the business in the UK do not exist elsewhere, leading to our UK energy costs being 2-3 times higher than among EU peers. This comes on top of regulatory costs charged across the EU, such as the EU ETS and considerably higher wholesale costs.

4.4. Adding to this is the costly business rates system. The disproportionately high level of business rates paid in the UK by Tata Steel mean they are treated as a fixed cost and are therefore given prominence over taxes when making investment decisions. The fact they are 5-10 times higher in the UK than among other EU countries clearly reduces the UK’s attractiveness as a destination for investment.

5. **Helping to protect this contribution**

5.1. In terms of protecting the UK’s capability to maintain the built environment, the Committee may wish to examine the policy areas outlined below. These wield considerable influence over the future of the steel industry, and its ability to continue to act as a key strategic supplier to the construction industry. Taking the actions outlined below would help ensure that UK suppliers to those more usually associated with the built environment – architects, infrastructure providers, and housing developers – can continue to engage in this strategically important sector. In this respect, the Committee may wish to examine how to strengthen UK supply chains.
5.2. The value of steel to the UK lies not just in its production but in the way in which it can influence the Total Cost of Ownership of an end product or project. This ‘total value’ approach to procurement is critical if the UK is to optimise its own capability and boost the contribution made to UK supply chains and the wider economy. It is total value, not cost, which will drive economic growth. This is partly how we have arrived at a situation where increased steel demand is being met by foreign suppliers. Although UK steel demand rose 12% in 2014, imports rose by 22% the same year. Clearly this increased demand is not benefiting home producers.

5.3. Foreign competitors will continue to win contracts ahead of UK companies until manufacturing industries are able to work collaboratively get their products through the value chain. Government action on issues such as energy costs and business rates can help this, but when it comes to supply chains, Government can promote procurement strategies that support domestic manufacturers, encouraging innovation and job creation. This will help rebuild the markets we sell to in the UK, such as construction, with the effect that these sectors rely less on imported materials, and more UK-made products are consumed at home and abroad.

5.4. This can be done within EU law (as demonstrated by France and Germany) and would reduce the risk that spending will gravitate towards cheaper foreign suppliers based on short term cost based considerations.

5.5. To achieve this, our understanding of how supply chains are built and operated in the UK must change fundamentally. The majority of industrial supply chains are vertically integrated. The steel industry’s is complex, fragmented and ranges from nuts and bolts to large sections of a power station. Procurement policy must ensure that vertical industrial supply chains are aligned with the metal industry’s horizontal supply chain.

5.6. Sustainability targets can be partly met if the UK better utilised its local supply chains. Sustainability for Tata Steel is a serious concept; it is core to our values and increasingly important to our strategy of differentiation. The BES6001 standard mentioned previously is one such quality mark that Tata Steel supports. Increasing the visibility and emphasis on such quality marks and standards, and approaches such as life cycle analysis, benefits not just the environment but many more responsible participants in the UK supply chain.

5.7. Supply chains can be further nourished by maximising the contribution to major projects by local content. This carries an inherent benefit to local communities in the form of new jobs (both direct and indirect) and voluntary community initiatives. This can be incentivised by introducing: criteria on local economic benefit in assessing tenders for major projects; targets for or local content quotas in major projects or products; and reporting of local content within major projects.
5.8. With a major spend forecast on UK infrastructure (funded through both public and private money), as well as continuing spend in areas such as education and prisons for example, there is ample opportunity to maximise the local content of such projects. This can be achieved through the inclusion of community benefit clauses which ensure that the wider economic benefit of such investment is factored into the project benefits at the CAPEX as well as the OPEX phase.

5.9. This Total Cost of Ownership approach should be transparent and measurable and subject to review after completion of a project. Major projects which are privately funded but with significant Government support, such as infrastructure projects which are attracting private overseas investments but are securing Government subsidy support, should be subject to local content provision which ensures that any public subsidies result in some form of benefit to the local area.

5.10. Such action to rebuild domestic supply chains will make our industrial sectors more competitive. In this regard, it is imperative to recognise the inherent value of securing completeness in UK supply chains. The inability to create many end products solely in the UK is a major driver of the UK’s lower productivity and sectoral competitiveness when compared to other major EU countries. Securing completeness builds a ‘reinforcing circle’ into supply chains. It reduces costs, encourages and enables more focus on innovation and new product development. This also increases the size of the domestic market to sell to and buy from, thereby reducing reliance on imported goods and reducing the UK’s trade deficit. Completeness generates significant value and keeps it in the UK – something which the UK economy does not currently encourage.

5.11. There is a massive opportunity to create new manufacturing jobs, filtering through into other companies engaged in built environment development, if we can revitalise these supply chains. A recent CBI report revealed more than half a million jobs could be created across Britain’s regions if these supply chains are rebuilt. Taking such steps will enable us to retain true UK strategic industries and we will no longer need imported steel to build our bridges, landmark buildings or power stations. These can be created in the UK and revitalise the communities in which they are made.

13 October 2015
Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, Professor Rachel Cooper, Dr Richard Simmons – Oral Evidence (QQ1-12)

Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones, Professor Rachel Cooper, Dr Richard Simmons – Oral Evidence (QQ1-12)

Transcript to be found under Professor Rachel Cooper
Written evidence submitted by:

Mhora Samuel
Director, The Theatres Trust

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The Theatres Trust welcomes the establishment of the House of Lords’ Select Committee to consider the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment.

1.2 The Theatres Trust was instrumental in ensuring culture and cultural well-being were included as part of the 12 ‘Core Planning Principles’ when The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced. Whilst the streamlined Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) introduced in March 2014 provided clarity on certain aspects of the NPPF, we are concerned about how NPPF guidance is being implemented and the adverse effect this has on cultural facilities (which includes theatres), cultural and social well-being, heritage, and town centres.

1.3 Details responses to the questions are contained within section 3, however our main concerns are:

- The presumption in favour of sustainable development is unbalanced. Too much weight is applied to the economic component of sustainable development and on housing at the expense of community and cultural buildings and heritage considerations;
- Authorities at both a national and local level generally do not fully understand or value the role culture can play in encouraging economic growth and the development of vibrant communities, especially in town centres;
- Local Plans are being found sound by Inspectors even though they clearly do not reflect the NPPF principles ‘to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs’;
- The distinction between ‘harm’ and ‘significant harm’ in the NPPF causes confusion for local authorities when making decisions about listed buildings;
- There is a lack of clarity regarding the policy to support and retain existing community facilities;
• Timeframes do not support the often complex design and long-term capital planning required for theatre buildings;

• A decline in local cultural and heritage specialists in local authorities is leading to negative outcomes for the overall protection of the cultural and historic environment;

• The absence of a definition for the term ‘community facilities’ or ‘community infrastructure’ that clearly includes cultural venues and theatres, and;

• We would welcome a clearly stated commitment to culture and theatres in the National Policy for the Built Environment from the House of Lords Select Committee;

• We would also welcome acknowledgement of the role The Theatres Trust plays in the protection of historic theatres by recommending that the Trust becomes a statutory consultee on statutory designated listed theatres.

2.0 About The Theatres Trust

2.1 The Theatres Trust is an Advisory Arms Length Body of the DCMS. We were established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 and The Theatres Trust (Scotland) Act 1978 'to promote the better protection of theatres'. These Acts apply to all theatre buildings in England, Wales, and Scotland. The Trust’s 15 trustees are appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

2.2 The Theatres Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning system. Local authorities are required to consult the Trust on planning applications which include ‘development involving any land on which there is a theatre.’ Theatres are *sui-generis* and are therefore considered separately from D1 and D2 uses. The statutory instruments setting out the consultation requirements in England are currently included in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Trust reports on its pre-application advice and planning application advice annually to the Department of Communities and Local Government. In England, we are also a consultee for Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders, and encourage local authorities, parish councils and local groups to consult the Trust on Local and Neighbourhood Development Plans where they involve a theatre.
2.3 The Theatres Trust is therefore a good example of an advisory body that works at local authority level within the areas of responsibility of both the DCMS and DCLG. We are often the only source of expert advice on theatre use, design, conservation, property and planning matters available to theatre operators, local authorities and official bodies. Our statutory role in the protection of theatres means that we are actively engaged in the role of theatres in placemaking and their contribution to the built environment.

2.4 In addition to providing advice in relation to cultural and theatre provision in local and neighbourhood plan consultations, we provide advice to local authorities and those in the development sector on the role of culture and theatres in the built environment. Given the pressures on local authorities to reduce staffing capacity in arts, cultural, leisure, property services and planning departments, with many arts and planning posts having been lost, we have been receiving an increased number of requests for advice.

2.5 The Theatres Trust employs a Planning Adviser, a Theatres Adviser and an Architecture Adviser enabling us to deliver our statutory obligations to provide planning and heritage advice. In 2014/15 this included 8 pre-planning applications, 117 planning applications and 57 listed building applications. The Trust also responded to 298 local and neighbourhood plan consultations and 59 plans were altered to improve policies related to cultural buildings. In addition, in 2015, the Trust identified 31 Theatre Buildings at Risk which we are focusing on to upskill and assist the owners and interested community groups to conserve and save these buildings for their communities.

2.6 Our aim is to promote the better protection of theatres on behalf of the nation, particularly at a time when many more theatres in the UK are facing the prospect of managing their assets on diminishing levels of public subsidy.

3.0 Specific Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

3.1 Q1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our
built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

3.1.1 In our experience the quality of life and well-being of those living in our cities, towns and rural areas is shaped by access to good quality cultural and community facilities. These facilities include many theatres that are often distinctive cultural buildings, whether dating from the mid to late 1800s such as the Newcastle Theatre Royal, or more recently built theatres and arts centres such as the Lowry in Salford and the Curve in Leicester. Decisions relating to cultural planning of facilities should be made at local level, but should also take account of regional and national provision. This is important to protect the viability of existing theatres reliant on specific catchments of audiences.

3.1.2 When new housing and other developments in the built environment are being planned the inclusion of a new or replacement theatre will often support the success of that development. Not only will a theatre provide an important social and community focus for the new development, it can also support its future viability. A recent example of this is HOME in Manchester. National policy makers should be encouraged to recognise the importance of the inclusion of cultural facilities including theatres in decisions relating to the built environment and should support the ambitions of local authorities and their partners to continue to provide a rich cultural life within our built environment.

3.2 Q2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

3.2.1 We believe that it is important that all Government departments with a role in the built environment should be encouraged to include consideration of the provision of cultural facilities and theatres in their policy making. In particular we would welcome a clearly stated commitment to culture and theatres in the findings of the House of Lords Select Committee’s consideration of National Policy for the Built Environment. We would also welcome recognition of the role The Theatres Trust plays in developing and advising on policy that protects theatres and ensures they are a valued part of the built environment.
3.2.2 The Theatres Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning system, commenting on any developments involving theatres. The impact of this since 1979 is very significant. Today the West End of London has a thriving theatre scene which contributes to the national economy. The role of the Trust has ensured that theatre buildings, required to sustain this economic activity, remain in place or are modernised and replaced to ensure they are fit for purpose.

3.2.3 However The Theatres Trust is not a statutory consultee on listed theatre buildings. This has a negative impact on effective policy co-ordination particularly when a listed theatre may be under threat of demolition and the Trust is not consulted. When the proposed Heritage Bill was being debated the Select Committee and Government of the day recognised the importance of making provision for The Theatres Trust to become a statutory consultee on listed theatres, on a par with the National Amenity Societies. We would welcome recognition by the House of Lords Select Committee that The Theatres Trust be given this status.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3.3 Q3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

3.3.1 In our role to promote the better protection of theatres, The Theatres Trust reviews every local authority Local Plan Core Strategy consultation and considers how it addresses the NPPFs Core Planning Principle (para.17) to ‘take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.’

3.3.2 The NPPF also specifically states in para. 70 that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services that the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan for the use of shared space and guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities. In addition to ensure that established facilities and services are retained and able to develop for the benefit of the community in para. 156 the NPPF states that Local Plans should include strategic policies to deliver the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure.
3.3.3 Policies to protect and provide community and cultural infrastructure to ‘improve health, social and cultural well-being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs’ do not affect the soundness of a Local Plan. Most English local authorities have at least one theatre or performance space in their community, but in most Local Plans, policies to support and retain existing community facilities are unclear. We would welcome greater recognition of the policies to protect and provide community facilities in tests of soundness.

3.3.4 Although the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) recommends that a range of issues should be considered through the plan-making and decision-making processes including social and cultural well-being, local authorities tend to focus on the issue of ‘health’ with access to GPs and leisure centres.

3.3.5 We therefore regularly find that The Theatres Trust is having to recommend that guidance for the provision and maintenance of social and cultural facilities be strengthened.

3.3.6 Neither the NPPF nor the PPG specify what is meant by the term ‘social and cultural well-being’, and we therefore suggest for clarity that the Select Committee recommend an explanation for this term is included in guidance documents, as it is evident that many local planning authorities do not know how to interpret this phrase into practical policies.

3.3.7 In our opinion, well-being is having a sense of satisfaction with life. Social and cultural well-being includes the un-measurable personal experiences that make us happy and content. Such experiences are intangible, not financially rewarding, and can either be active or passive. The provision of community infrastructure for tourism (cultural heritage) and town centre vitality (cultural facilities) are vital for their contribution to residents’ and visitors’ life satisfaction. Quality of life is dependent on the provision of a range of community facilities.

3.3.8 The Select Committee could also recommend that the NPPF glossary include a definition for the term ‘community facilities’ or ‘community infrastructure’ that would clearly include cultural venues and theatres. We recommend this succinct description which would obviate the need to provide examples: community facilities provide for the health and well-being, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community.

3.3.9 More guidance should be provided as to how Local Planning Authorities can include policies for cultural facilities in their local plans. As cultural specific criteria were only
introduced with the NPPF in 2012, many local authorities are not sure or even aware they need to include specific policies and many local plans have been found sound without any policy for promoting cultural aspects of the built environment.

3.4 Q4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

3.4.1 We would welcome a greater appreciation of a spatial perspective in national planning policy in relation to cultural planning. Theatre and entertainment producers rely on being able to take their productions, artists, and entertainers on tour throughout the UK, visiting a strong and viable network of theatres, performance venues and arts centres. Each city, town and rural community should have or will have access to a range of suitably sized venues to be able to present shows at all scales – from the large scale musical, the touring theatre production, to the small scale rural touring venue. By introducing a spatial element to cultural planning we can protect this network of theatres and venues, plan for future provision in relation to demand, and secure the viability of theatre buildings and their place within the built environment.

3.5 Q5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

3.5.1 Theatre buildings are unusually complex buildings in their design and location. Provision needs to be made to ensure theatres can be easily accessed by audiences and companies presenting shows through sufficient public and private transport infrastructure, routes and roads. Theatres also often work on 10-year timeframes when planning their capital needs. We would recommend that policy makers be considering at least a 10-year timescale when planning future cultural facilities and provision.

Buildings and places: New and old
3.6  Q6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

3.6.1 No comment.

3.7  Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

3.7.1 For built environments to be sustainable and resilient they need to take economic, environmental and social needs into equal consideration. Cultural wellbeing is an important policy direction through which to achieve this and which Government should continue to promote. The quality of the built environment has to support cultural wellbeing. Theatre buildings have a direct impact on this both in relation to their use and their presence within the built environment.

3.7.2 However we consider that more could be done to ensure theatres continue to be viable as needs and circumstances change.

3.7.3 A successful theatre can have a direct positive impact on the economic success of a town centre and the businesses around it. However, theatres can be negatively affected by other development around them, particularly where this challenges their ability to operate economically. Government should be fully aware of the unforeseen consequences of further relaxation of planning legislation which could impact on theatres’ viability, with resulting reduction of economic activity, reduction in the vibrancy of town centres, reductions in employment opportunities and a slowdown in growth.

3.7.4 We also consider more could be done through tax regimes to support theatres and cultural facilities to adapt for environmental change. Theatres are important community and cultural facilities and they often take a lead on forming public opinion and awareness of measures to mitigate climate change.

3.7.5 Many theatres are also listed buildings and wish to make environmental adaptations. We would welcome measures that help to make these adaptations more affordable and possible within the listed building regime.

3.7.6 The Trust is also concerned with the distinction between ‘harm’ and ‘significant harm’ in the NPPF and its implementation in planning decisions. Whilst the new PPG
The Theatres Trust

has somewhat helped to clarify the point, The Trust feels that confusion remains over what it actually means. Many local planning authorities do not have the expertise to assess the level of harm being presented in listed building applications and often the economic considerations of developing a site are given more weight than the preservation of an historic asset. Many historic cultural facilities are being lost or intolerably damaged as local planning authorities push through town centre regeneration schemes.

3.8 Q8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

3.8.1 All Local Plans should begin with the assumption that they exist to protect and enhance the existing built and natural environment before moving onto criteria for new development. As Historic England has stated, ‘There is a huge amount of waste generated by the construction and demolition of buildings, something like 24 per cent of all waste is generated by demolition and construction. It is simply better in sustainability terms to use and recycle old buildings than to demolish them and to build new ones’. Therefore in the absence of a robust and balanced Local Plan, the default position should not be to automatically grant planning permission for new development, but rather to ensure that existing development is conserved and used efficiently.

3.8.2 When the NPPF was introduced, the DCLG established a presumption in favour of sustainable development with the aim of ensuring development was not unduly delayed unless it was against the collective interest to permit it. However, this position does not help conserve or enhance existing cultural and community infrastructure within town centres, nor is it ‘sustainable’.

3.8.3 The Select Committee may wish to review NPPF paragraph 14 so that developers and local planning authorities would need to demonstrate the cultural, social and environmental sustainability of their policies and planning proposals, as well as their economic objectives. We recommend the following additions:

3.8.4 For plan-making this means that:

local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, while conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment and ensuring community facilities meet local needs.
3.8.5 For decision-taking this means:

*Giving equal consideration to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.*

Skills and design

3.9 Q9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

3.9.1 We are concerned that without adequate cultural planning provision and historic environment professionals within the local authority, the NPPF objectives will not be met.

3.9.2 Whilst the NPPF states that local planning authorities should consult the historic environment records and appropriate expertise (para. 128) in determining applications, the decline in local specialists could have negative outcomes for the overall protection of the historic environment.

3.10 Q10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

3.10.1 The Theatres Trust actively champions best practice in relation to high quality design of theatre buildings and the role of theatres in placemaking. The Trust is able to take a nationwide perspective on the quality of theatre buildings and along with our expert advice also offers peer based Advisory Review on the capital development of theatre buildings. We would welcome recognition of our role by the Select Committee.
3.10.2 We also welcome the role of the Place Alliance in developing national leadership in relation to promoting high quality design and placemaking at national level and are pleased to be part of the Place Alliance.

Community involvement and community impact

3.11 Q11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

3.11.1 It is our opinion that a built environment with a rich, broad range of community facilities has a positive contribution to residents’ life satisfaction and overall wellbeing. Theatre buildings lie at the heart of their communities and make a vital contribution to the vitality of the built environment. We are concerned that too much weight is applied to the economic component of sustainable development, and on housing, at the expense of community and cultural buildings and heritage considerations.

3.11.2 We welcome the role of Civic Voice and we are pleased to be a part of the Localism Alliance in championing the engagement of local communities in local decisions. Active participation serves to encourage personal social responsibility and inspire individuals to contribute practically to the maintenance and improvement of communities and the places where they live.

3.12 Q12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

3.12.1 We believe that more should be done to empower communities to engage with the process of decision making in their locality. We support the principle of putting communities at the heart of the planning system and champion opportunities for
local communities to have greater power in the decision making process surrounding their built environment

Financial measures

3.13 Q13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

3.13.1 Planning Obligations are an important measure by which developers are encouraged to support future planning of cultural facilities. We would welcome measures which further enable developers to incorporate theatre provision in their schemes.

3.13.2 Arts and cultural facilities are important places in their communities and are often a catalyst for regeneration, providing both economic benefit and placemaking (both in terms of brand identity and community appeal). There is real benefit for developers to commit to partnerships with the arts, and we actively promote the role of culture and theatres in promoting quality of life in new developments.

06 October 2015
Dear Sirs,

I wish to highlight the devastating effect that pulsating microwave radiation has had on the homes and lives of Electrosensitive people in the UK. This type of radiation is emitted by mobile phone masts, wi-fi routers from neighbouring properties and smart meters. It penetrates through glass, wood and modern building materials into the homes of sensitive people — against their will causing serious illness and disability. This is contrary to their human rights.

Many such disabled people have been forced to leave their home, and are unable to find suitable jobs or properties away from such man-made wireless radiation. The higher the level of pulsating microwave radiation and the longer the exposure, the more Electrosensitive people become ill — horrific head pain, horrific eye pain and visual disturbance, heart arrhythmia, blood disorders, tinnitus, nausea, dizziness, insomnia, thyroid problems, cancer, depression, Alzheimer’s. There are over 5,000 independent research papers confirming this, and the government must act now to protect the health of the nation and stop dragging it’s heals on this human catastrophe.

Schools, hospitals, nursing homes and other public buildings including places of work should be built with areas considered “white zones” — areas which have levels of pulsating microwave radiation less than 0.02v/m. This is imperative. Suitable building materials should be used to contain these areas to allow Electrosensitive people to live, work, learn and be medically treated safely and equally with all other members of society.

Smoking used to be considered safe, then “no smoking zones” were introduced. But too many people were made ill and died because of lack of a precautionary approach by the government. All new builds should have a percentage of accommodation devoted to “white zones”. This should be set by National policy. It is estimated that up to 35% of the population is now affected in some way by pollution from pulsating microwave radiation.

I have failed to find a retirement property (which are being built by the score) which would be suitable for Electrosensitive people. Flats and apartments are affected by neighbour’s wi-fi which penetrates through party walls. Even detached properties are blighted by pulsating microwave radiation from phone masts, wi-fi from neighbours up to 100 meters away and smart meters on the public highway. This is tantamount to torture and must be seriously considered by this committee.

In 2013 I compiled a comprehensive Case Study Report which was sent to Stephen Dorrell, the then Chair of the Commons Health Committee. In his reply to me he expressed his concern at the lack of action taken by government bodies with regard to this issue. I trust that Electrosensitive people who have become disabled as a result of torture from man-made radiation will be seriously considered by this committee, equally catered for and their human rights to a safe home and work place secured.
I hope that this matter will now be thoroughly and satisfactorily addressed through The House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment.

01 October 2015
Submission to be found under Professor Jay Ginn
1.0 About the TCPA
1.1 The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) is an independent charity working to improve the art and science of town and country planning. The TCPA puts social justice and the environment at the heart of policy debate and inspires Government, industry and campaigners to take a fresh perspective on major issues, including planning policy, housing, regeneration and climate change. Our objectives are to:
- Secure a decent, well designed home for everyone, in a human-scale environment combining the best features of town and country
- Empower people and communities to influence decisions that affect them
- Improve the planning system in accordance with the principles of sustainable development

2.0 Summary
2.1 The TCPA welcomes the House of Lords Select Committee’s timely inquiry into the Government’s approach to securing a high quality built environment. The TCPA’s experience of promoting high quality built environment outcomes for ordinary people spans almost 120 years and it is with regret that we conclude that the Government’s current approach to the built environment represents a historic low point in the finance, policy and philosophy of planning and place-making since the second world war. This is manifest in complex ways from a lack of policy priority given to quality and inclusion in the built environment to the removal of many of the key building standards which are the basis of good outcomes. The current planning framework elevates the needs of landowners and developers to a preeminent position, but fails to account for the long-term benefits of good planning and place-making, for example the benefits of green infrastructure or accessible and energy efficient homes to individuals and the wider economy. There is a general failure to value the multifunctional benefits of actions in the built environment. For example, high quality green infrastructure can help tackle a wide range of challenging problems, including:
- Obesity (good local parks and green spaces encourage activity)
- Air pollution (particle capture by trees)
- Economic attractiveness of places
- Active travel and reduction in over-crowding of public transport
- Reduction in water run-off to drains during storms
- Reduction in over-heating in urban areas (heat-island effect)
- Reduction in stress and better mental health outcomes
- Increased social cohesion.

2.2 The net result of the deregulation of planning and housing standards is that England is falling behind many of our international competitors both in the quality of design and the sustainability of our buildings and communities. For example, the zero carbon homes policy was a world leading initiative for sustainable development, crucial to driving innovation in the development industry and providing a firm foundation for
planning decisions. The cancellation of the policy in July 2015 marks the end of any benchmark for building the high quality, sustainable homes that we so desperately need.\textsuperscript{466} The cancellation of the policy is also a marked contrast to other nations who have created entirely new industries from building highly sustainable new places. The abandonment of any meaningful commitment to sustainable development has removed the core objectives from planning and place-making leaving a fragmented and under-resourced system which often achieves little more than the facilitation of market outcomes rather than the wider public interest.

2.3 HM Treasury’s recent document ‘\textit{Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation}’\textsuperscript{467} sets out the course of further planning and housing reform which will be implemented by three pieces of legislation and by further policy changes. The paper is significant not simply for the precise policy measures it contains, but because it signals a strong continued commitment to a deregulatory agenda based on an overarching analysis that regulation of the built environment is anti-competitive. It has neither meaningful content on Sustainable Development nor any discussion of how the policy measures set out within it contribute to place-making. Significantly it identifies regulatory costs of planning, but makes no attempt to value the benefits of place making.

3.0 The Select Committees Questions

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

The current administration of policy on planning and built environment in England is confused and dysfunctional. In March 2015 the TCPA published the ‘\textit{Future of planning and place making}’\textsuperscript{468} which concluded that the English planning system was not fit for purpose and required attention to secure clear progressive objectives and a logical structure which reflected the functional geography of England. The paper concluded that England had:

- No effective national spatial planning which resulted in lost opportunities to coordinate housing and infrastructure delivery.
- A dysfunctional sub-national planning framework with the abolition of regional planning and consequent data. The Duty to Cooperate\textsuperscript{469}, a mechanism which requires

\textsuperscript{466} TCPA (July 2015) Cancellation of zero carbon homes policy is bad news for the green economy, the environment and society. TCPA press release: \url{http://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources.php?action=resource&id=1260}


\textsuperscript{469} The Government’s Planning Practice Guidance defines the Duty to Cooperate as: It places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local and Marine Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. The
local authorities to consult one another, which even where it has been successful in its own terms, has not delivered the benefits of strategic planning.

- A non-spatial National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which deprioritised place-making, affordability, equality and inclusion and prioritised the needs of developers and landowners.
- A local plan process which, because of inherent flaws in national policy, led to legal uncertainty and increased levels of successful appeals.
- A demoralised and chronically under resourced planning service.
- A much less powerful local planning framework as the result of wholesale deregulation of permitted development which has removed key controls over the urban environment.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

The TCPA can find no evidence of an overall coordination of policy on the built environment. On the contrary relationships between some Government departments on key policies such as building standards, renewable energy and green infrastructure appear to be strained or absent. This is partly because of unresolved policy conflicts and partly because of a significant loss of experience and expertise from the Civils Service in general and on built environment matters in particular. Solutions lie in a lead department on the built environment, a remit which the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) currently does not fully fulfil. Of particular concern is the apparent lack of specific expertise and insight in the dominant departmental leads of HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office. The ‘Fix the Foundations’ paper demonstrates a lack of understanding of the benefits of a high quality built environment.

The implications of this failure to incorporate place-making into the heart of Government thinking are significant and will have long-term and negative impacts on society and the environment. It will also damage our economy by failing to drive innovation in new technology. The cancelation of the zero carbon homes commitment, a moratorium on onshore wind and the prevention of local authorities from innovating on housing standards in planning all contribute to a sense of a national view which is backward looking. Both the other nations of the UK and our EU competitors have strong regimes of policy to deliver higher quality outcomes. In Wales the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is an example of policy innovation while Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, France, and in particular, Germany all have stronger national or local regulatory frameworks to drive innovation in design and implementation.

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Policy on green infrastructure provided a key illustration of this lack of priority and coordination. Responsibility for green infrastructure is split across a number of Government departments. For instance, Defra has responsibility for policy regarding the natural environment; DCLG is responsible for policy regarding urban parks and green spaces; and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has policy responsibility for playing fields, and is the sponsoring department for the Royal Parks and Heritage Lottery Fund. There is currently no co-ordination between the departments about policy for green spaces or wider networks of green infrastructure. The recent work of the independent, but Government-appointed, Natural Capital Committee has highlighted the huge economic value of green spaces in and around urban areas, and has recommended that investing in such spaces should be a Government priority. However, implementing these recommendations effectively through policy initiatives will be more difficult than it should be given this fragmentation across departments.

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The principle of single condensed national policy document is welcome, but the NPPF does not provide a balanced or detailed framework for place-making. This is partly the way it is interpreted by bodies such as the Planning Inspectorate who focus on issues such as the Duty to Cooperate, the viability test and five year land supply much more than a wider sense of high quality place-making. Briefly there are six strategic policy concerns in the NPPF and accompanying NPPG:

1. There is no coherent definition of sustainable development in the NPPF with key aspects of the concept such as social equity, intergenerational equity and resource conservation either absent or deprioritised.
2. The presumption in favour of development where plans are out of date means that NPPF is the key decision making frame for a growing number of developments.
3. The NPPF is not spatial. It does not recognise that differing parts of England may differ in policy approaches or have different policy issues.
4. The NPPF viability test is economically flawed and results in vital place making policy being removed from plans because of the needs of landowners and developers have been made preeminent.
5. The NPPF currently provides almost no guidance about key issues such as green infrastructure, since Natural England’s guidance was archived at the end of 2014. The TCPA, along with other organisations, are currently talking to DCMS about how the NPPG could be updated to include more guidance about green infrastructure and we hope our recommendations will be accepted.
6. The NPPF, for the first time, has a chapter on Promoting Healthy Communities which the TCPA welcomes. Many local authorities are beginning the relationships at improving integration between public health and planning for the built and natural environments. However there should be greater emphasis and integration at Government department level to ensure that planning decisions place health and wellbeing at the heart of considerations.
4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

An understanding of places and their geography is remarkably absent from current Government policy. At a macro level having a sense of the complex functional geography of the nation and being able to shape policy to reflect these realities is obviously an important policy foundation. This appreciation allows for infrastructure to be related to demographic change, to consider long term resource use and most simply to plot strategic flood vulnerability. Such an approach would have allowed HS2 to be planned with a proper consideration for the opportunities for new settlements which might meet housing demands in sustainable new locations.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

In general our approach to the built environment lacks a long term and strategic component. While 10 to 15 year time horizons are required for local plans in practice planning is focused on short term housing numbers. Plans should address time horizons of 50 to 100 years for key issues and in particular climate adaptation and mitigation. One key example of this is planning for where flood plains will be rather than where they exist now. In relation to coastal communities this is a vital exercise and should have led to radical changes in how housing growth is planned in areas such as the East Coast of England. The detail of how and why these longer-term time scales are a vital part of planning for the built environment are set out in the Planning and Climate Change Coalition manifesto.471

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

The Government has deregulated planning and reduced investment in social and genuinely affordable homes in the hope that the private sector would substantially fill the gap. The results have been deeply disappointing, not only from what has been delivered, for example incredibly small homes such as the 13.1 square metre flats for sale in London472, but in the widening gap between what has being approved through planning and what is being built. In

472 Mail Online (2014) Budge up! Step inside London’s smallest flats where you can reach the hob from your BED (and they're being snapped up in hours for hundreds of pounds a month) http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2654275/Budge-Step-inside-Londons-smallest-flats-reach-hob-BED-theyre-snapped-hours-hundreds-pound-month.html
the 12 months to March 2015, 261,000 homes were approved in England but the private sector built only 112,270 out of total 137,200. Some of these units are approved through permitted development where planning has no control over quality. What is clear is that consent is now being given for more than the estimated demographic need of 240,000 per annum. The private sector is building roughly around its post war average and may be able to marginally increase output. As these figures illustrate, numbers of planning consents is not the prime cause of the dysfunction in our housing model.

Government is proposing very radical change to the local planning system by introducing a zonal system whereby sites allocated in plans for housing will confer automatic planning permission in principle. These measures to be introduced by the Housing Bill are unlikely to have a direct impact on housing supply. As yet, we have had no indicated that the Government is going to use this legislative opportunity to modernise the existing New Towns legislation to allow for genuinely locally-led new places built to highest design standards. The TCPA has made the case for Garden Cities and multiple benefits they bring for housing supply and in terms of quality outcomes. As yet the Government has neither addressed the issue strategic housing growth nor adopted the place making-standards at the heart of the Garden City model.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The challenges of climatic change and demographic growth will place increasing demands on our built environment. Climate resilience, in particular, demands new approaches to design and construction and to strategic planning. Almost all of the technologies and design approaches are in place to deal with these challenges but in general we are not creating environments which are resilient to the future. The role of government is to show leadership in setting pathways to a low carbon and resilient future. It should do this by making firm policy commitments to set a direction of travel and backing this up by clear standards.

What is particularly unhelpful, for both communities, councils, developers and investors is making commitments on the environment and then cancelling them. The experience of the cancelation of zero carbon illustrates the short sightedness of this approach.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

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475 See the ‘Garden City principles’ page of the TCPA website, at http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html
Town planning was directly informed by those such as William Morris and John Ruskin who had an acute sensitivity to the past, both for its intrinsic value and its ability to inform and guide modern design. This sensitivity, to local vernacular architecture for example, has almost completely disappeared from our dominant housing model which produces ‘units’ which are neither strikingly modern nor rooted in past techniques and materials. The economic value of the historic environment in place-making is also clear, but there is still a cultural sense in much of the development industry of these assets ‘getting in the way’. The historic environment needs to be emphasised as key creative element in place-making.

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

The professions of the built environment do require significant reform. Practices which were once united like planning and architecture are now fragmented with insufficient dialogue and understanding between them. Planning education is in particular need of reform to encompass key skills on climate change, human health and public participation. The position of local authorities is particularly challenging with very significant cuts to planning services and to related skills in energy, climate change, building conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development. The TCPA believes that many authorities have simply been hollowed out with insufficient skills and resources to provide an effective and quality service to both regulate and positively promote changes to the built environment.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

There is no doubt that national political leadership on place-making would be the most significant starting point in rebuilding quality outcomes. Rather than focusing all of DCLG’s capacity on setting up ministerial groups on the detailed process of plan making, the TCPA recommends more emphasis and capacity is directed to the much more important issues of effective place-making.

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

The TCPA has been actively involved with individual local authorities on reuniting health with planning. The national planning policy on planning for health is clear and the TCPA welcomed the NPPF chapter on creating healthy communities. However the TCPA believes further direction and support from central Government departments on monitoring and evaluation
as part of both the plan-making and development management processes is needed to secure the benefits of current development for future generations.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

The planning system pioneered community participation in decision making, and from the 1960s developed innovative techniques such as Planning for Real to engage a range of communities. However, barriers remain and in some cases have been reinforced by the lack of capacity of the planning service to focus on reaching out, particularly to excluded communities. Barriers remain around technical and legalistic language, around basic knowledge of how the system works and confusion over its powers, given the large scale deregulation of the service. Neighbourhood planning offers a new opportunity to some communities to have a say over a limited range of local issues. However, the lack of democratic accountability in urban areas raises significant questions as to their legitimacy in dealing with complex inner city communities. The TCPA has advocated a comprehensive review of people and planning based on the frameworks of rights set out in the Aarhus Convention.\(^476\) The last Government review into the relative power of people and planning was carried out in 1968.\(^477\) Since that time the asymmetry in the planning system between communities and the development sector has, in general, widened, with a failure to focus Government resources on those communities who need them most.

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Access to land in the right location and at the right price is the foundation of successful new places. Garden Cities demonstrate how a land value capture can create high quality self-financing places. The TCPA is advocating the use of modernised New Towns legislation which is founded on the use of development corporations. Development corporations have the power through compulsory purchase to deliver comprehensive land assembly. Compulsory purchase powers are a vital part of this effectiveness but changes to the compensation code in 1960s have meant that there is no longer a fair balance between the needs of landowners and taxpayers. This issue is not being addressed by the Government’s forthcoming changes to compulsory purchase which focus on technical issues.

Compensation must be fair to tax payers and the wider public particularly when land is to be used for a purpose which is in the national interest and where increased land values results mainly from the actions of the public sector. This issue is vital because the capture of the uplift in land values, which the granting of planning permission and development creates, is vital to


\(^477\) HM Government (1968) Report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning (The Skeffington Committee Report)
fund debt repayment and long-term reinvestment in a new community. If land compensation deals are too generous to landowners, this viability may be compromised with less ability to deliver public goods such as social housing or greenspace. If, on the other hand, compensation is unfair, landowners may challenge decisions in the courts. The whole issue of how to strike a fair balance is mired in procedural complexity, but urgent reform is needed, based on the following working assumptions:

1. The value of land is dependent on the use for which it can be developed. The landowner has a right to carry on the current use of land, but has no right (with some exceptions) to develop the land for other uses without the permission of local government. All development rights are effectively owned by the public sector.

2. The increase in land value between current use and the use for, say, housing is an ‘unearned increment’ or betterment, a value accruing to the landowner through the actions of a public authority. The landowner has done nothing to ‘earn’ the new value of their land since they did not own the right to develop it. The value gap between these current use and use for homes is substantial and can be up to 100 times.

3. The logic of 1947 planning system was to tax this value, but despite two further attempts at comprehensive betterment taxation the system was last abandoned in 1985. Since then the exchequer has in practice failed to collect billions of pounds of public assets in what amounts a substantial development subsidy to landowners. The continued logic of this major tax loop hole is unclear particularly in an era of financial austerity.

4. The reason this matters for the development of new Garden Cities is that capturing this betterment as well as the wider rental and land sale income is the main way of financing new development and paying for high quality outcomes and long term management. In short, the public asset of betterment needs to be captured and recycled for public benefit. It was this mechanism that made the mark 1 New Towns program so profitable. This is in stark contrast to the current position where developers of some schemes do not even meet the cost of the direct impacts of development on public services such as education. They can escape such ‘impact fees’ by arguing that schemes are unviable. Viability is dependent on land price, development cost, public investment and acceptable profit margins. The landowner’s expectation of betterment drives inflated land prices and reduced viability.

5. The compensation rules for compulsory purchase for New Towns have changed over time and particularly after the 1961 Land Compensation Act. It is now based on the market value of land. This value is derived not simply from its market value in its current use, typically agriculture and including any valid planning permissions, but also in relation to its speculative future development for uses such as housing. This is known as ‘hope value’. Determining hope value requires a judgment of what the courts have described as a ‘fantasy world’ in terms guessing what might happen to land over time.

6. Parliament tried to restrict the scope of ‘hope value’ by ensuring that the impact of some forms of public development, including New Towns, should be disregarded in

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478 As a result of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 the right to develop land is no longer a proprietary right in English land law

479 Hall, P (2014) Sociable Cities 2014 page 224
the calculation of compensation\textsuperscript{480}. The problem is that the law still allows for a reasonable assessment of hope value regardless of whether the New Town was built or not. The allowance for ‘hope value’ based on a speculation of what might have happened to land over time is illogical and represents a real unfairness to the taxpayer and holds back the provision of high quality homes and places by inflating the price which is paid for land through compulsory purchase orders.

7. The landowner is in effect asking not simply for the best current use market value, plus all normal allowances for disturbance, but also for a speculative value based on the future actions of a public authority. They are asking for compensation for development rights which they do not own for betterment values for which they have no logical right.

This conclusion is important because while no one is suggesting that landowners are not treated fairly, and indeed generously, the values at the heart of debate are substantial and need to be dealt with prudently. The question then is how to capture a proportion of these values for public good. The TCPA has set out the case for change in more detail that can be found here, but there is clearly a need for wider debate on fair land taxation in the UK. A return to a general betterment charge collected through corporation tax and capital gains tax which provided a central fund for housing and infrastructure investment it worth exploring.

In relation to new Garden Cities two options should be urgently explored:

- Changes to the compensation rules specifically for New Towns and Garden Cities to restrict hope value planning assumptions, and
- A change to compensation rules for New Towns and Garden Cities to produce a simple flat rate of compensation based on a proportion of final scheme values.

There is a clear legal consensus that the compensation law is outdated and in the TCPA’s view the recent HM Treasury technical review of compulsory purchase orders did not address the core issue of the calculation of hope value\textsuperscript{481}. There is also a consensus represented in the independent Lyons Housing Review final report that some form of land taxation which deals with betterment is both fair and essential in the funding of high quality new places\textsuperscript{482}. The TCPA is asking ministers to agree to an HM Treasury sponsored review of the compensation code. In advance of, and without prejudice to, the outcome of that review the TCPA is calling for an enabling clause which would allow the Secretary of State to set special compensation rules for New Towns and Garden Cities by order at a later date.

\textit{07 October 2015}

\textsuperscript{480}See schedule 1 of the 1961 Land compensation Act


\textsuperscript{482}The Lyons Housing Review (2014) \textit{The Lyons Housing Review. Mobilising across the nation to build the homes our children need} (page 70) http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/The_Lyons_Housing_Review_2.pdf
Town & County Planning Association and Campaign to Protect Rural England – Oral Evidence (QQ109-120)

Transcript to be found under Campaign to Protect Rural England
Summary
THSG is an organisation which exists to promote the study of links between transport and health and to advocate for the development of a healthy transport system. The key links between transport and health include the role of active travel in physical activity in promoting physical activity, access to health-promoting facilities (including countryside), the role of transport in maintaining social support networks and opportunities for work and volunteering, the climate change impact of transport emissions, other health effects of transport emissions, the role of community severance in disrupting communities and social networks, the stress associated with transport systems, the adverse impact of transport on climate change, inequalities arising from unequal transport opportunities (including issues of isolation for disabled people, older people and poor people in rural areas), the transport needs of the health and social care systems, transport safety and the promotion of safer modes of transport (such as rail combined with walking and cycling separated from cars) in preference to the dangerous modes we currently use (cars, and walking and cycling mingled with cars).

The largest single issue amongst these is the role of active travel in combatting obesity, mental ill health, osteoporosis, heart disease and other diseases of physical inactivity. A healthy transport system would use walking as the prime mode of transport for journeys of up to about a mile, cycling for rather longer journeys of a few miles, and the train/cycle combination for journeys that are too long for cycling alone. There are a number of issues for the built environment in creating such a transport system. They include:

- Developing living streets as the norm for residential areas
- Creating cities designed for walking, cycling and public transport rather than cars
- Mixed development so that people can live closer to their place of work
- Designing homes and neighbourhoods to encourage working from home or from neighbourhood work stations
- Aesthetic enhancement of walking routes so as to encourage people to walk further
- Better arrangements for pedestrians and for cyclists
- Avoiding the use of residential streets as busy access routes for motor traffic
- Avoiding centralisation of facilities to a degree which increases considerably the need for travel
- Pedestrian permeability of street design in new developments. There is evidence that the impact this has on obesity could equate to a difference of 1 death per year per 1,000 population yet pedestrian-impermeable designs are currently being promoted by the police as part of the Safer By Design initiative.

The first six pages of this evidence begin with a cameo of life in a society with a healthy transport system and then set out recommendations for bringing such a system about. These are drawn from our e book Health on the Move 2 and in an appendix we attach further extracts from that e book.
Living with a healthy transport system

This cameo of life in a society with a healthy transport system first appeared in our e book Health on the Move 2. Jean checked her diary for the day. It wouldn’t be necessary to go into HQ. But there were some meetings which would need her to use the video facility at her local neighbourhood work station. She pondered whether to go to the work station for the whole day or whether to work at home in the large office that they had built in the garage when they gave up the cars. She’d rather like the company, she thought, and Angela was always there on a Tuesday so she’d be able to ask Angela for advice about storing her parents’ motorised transport contraptions once they convert their garage into a downstairs bedroom. It had taken her so long to persuade them to do this but, of course, her parents’ generation had grown up in the days of private transport and found it hard to abandon old attitudes. Angela always used the community transport bus door to door whenever she needed to go further than her self-propelled wheelchair could manage. Jean had only ever used this when she had heavy luggage but she wondered if it would answer all her parents’ travel needs too now they had finally given up driving regularly.

Coming back to the present she settled down to eat her breakfast. Bacon from the pig farm in the next village. Eggs from her own hen. Toast and marmalade, made from good Sheffield oranges grown in the multi-storey farms of the Don Valley.

David had overslept. Not surprisingly after the late night he had had the previous evening. As she was finishing her breakfast he joined her, spent a few minutes bolting down some cereal (from the multi-storey farms at Ringway, built on the site of the old airport) and rushed out to get his bicycle.

“It’s pouring down” she said “Why don’t you walk?” “Too late” he said as he pedalled off to the station.

Jean followed him but she walked along the covered walkway to protect her from the rain. It was a nice street. Rose gardens and trees and children’s play areas filled the gaps between the opposing houses. On a sunny day Jean would have wandered amongst them, chatting to neighbours and watching the children play in the street out of harm’s way but today the weather called for being under cover. Half way to the work station there was the facility that Jean had pressed so hard for when the street was being designed – the open air swimming pool. As she passed the swimming pool, the delivery van bringing the shopping up to the local shop for people to collect was picking its way along the carriageway. Unlike the straight direct cycleway, motor vehicles had to negotiate the gaps between the obstacles rather than having a protected carriageway. Jean watched the van, its guidance devices, speed regulators and obstacle detectors all fully engaged, as it inched gingerly along the edge of the pool. It reminded her of the incident last winter when the council had only had enough grit to do the pavements, cycle ways and busways and the roads had been closed. The delivery van driver had foolishly ignored this and had ended up in the swimming pool and winner of You Tube’s Idiot of the Week.
As Jean arrived at the work station, checked her booking of the videoconference for the meeting that afternoon, switched on her computer, and started to write a lecture for medical students setting out the evidence for the powerful health benefits of social networks, David was arriving at the Metro station.

He inserted his card and keyed adult single with cycle to Emmerdale into the journey planner. A recorded voice came over the intercom. “Next but one service from Platform 3. Change at Angerfield, which is the fourth station, for a bus to Emmerdale from stand E.” Then a real human voice replaced it as the controller intervened. “The Emmerdale bus is demand-responsive and you are the only person booked on it today. If you’d prefer we could let you have a car from the Car Club for the normal bus fare and without road charges.” They often made this offer when he was going to Emmerdale. Usually he took it but today he was feeling tired and he didn’t think it would be safe so he declined, collected his tickets and made his way to the platform. The freight train to the shopping distributive warehouse at Angerfield was passing as he reached the platform, then the fast train to the city drew up into the platform making the wayside stop that it made here once an hour instead of running through non-stop as it did the rest of the time.

David knew this train stopped at Angerfield. They wanted him to wait for the tram because he would get no benefit from the train due to the connection and they liked to keep short distance passengers on the trams if they could. But he rather fancied the plusher seats of the train so he climbed aboard, stored his cycle in the cycle van and lounged back into a seat. The train flashed past the three intervening tram stops and overtook the freight train as it manoeuvred itself into the shopping sidings. Then the train drew up at Angerfield. He made his way to stand E and relaxed in an armchair watching the trolley buses come and go as he waited for his own bus.

While he waited, he thought about their holiday. 15 days on a cruise train. They started with a day in Paris, then a slow daytime ride across the Alps with a break at Innsbruck. Full days spent, in Venice, Bled, Dubrovnik, Athens, Istanbul, Samarkand, St Petersburg, Narvik and Bergen, sometimes linked by high speed overnight travel, sometimes interspersed with slow, looking out of the window days. He thought Samarkand and Athens would be the highlights of the trip.

In this little cameo of the future we can see many features of a healthy transport lifestyle. There is powerful evidence that social support benefits health. The living streets that provide opportunities for social networking show how we can learn the lessons of Appleyard & Lintell1 and Joshua Hart that streets full of traffic isolate and separate us. In the future we should find that intolerable. Living streets can also create greener local environments, with the street becoming a shared garden. Evidence is emerging of the importance of pleasant green surroundings to health – even to the point that people recover faster from operations if they have plants in their hospital room or can see the natural environment rather than a brick wall from their window Motor vehicles should not be banned from living streets but
they should, like the delivery van in the cameo, be out of place, picking their way slowly round obstacles.

The guidance devices, speed regulator and obstacle detector on the van reflect the fact that the kind of technological controls that have long been a feature of the railway need to apply on the roads as well. A transport system which doesn’t force people to drive is also safer – David had the choice of the car but chose the bus because he felt tired. Climate change should be a major factor in transport policy. Reduced need to travel and reduced freight distances are achieved by the use of local produce and by local work stations. The use of local work stations rather than home-working is a way to provide facilities – like Jean’s videoconference - that it may not be worth providing to every home. It also sustains the social support of being at work. For many types of employment, similar benefits can be obtained by mixed use in urban planning – close proximity of homes, workplaces, and services rather than siting these in discrete locations. Electric traction should be used as far as possible, although electricity is only clean if it is generated by renewable means.

In the cameo, aviation has been curbed – we propose that it be limited to flights across oceans and polar ice and to islands. Where such travel is unavoidable. International high speed trains would replace it. Although long distance business travel would have declined dramatically with many business meetings and conferences taking place in cyberspace, the world’s ecosystem should be able to afford to provide a reasonable number of long distance holidays.

The car has also been curbed, limited to journeys where there is nobody to share a bus or a train. The combination of the cycle (for short journeys) with the train (for longer ones) has all the flexibility of the car. The cycle is healthier (and would be safer if it didn’t have to mix with heavy traffic) and the train is safer and faster. Active travel - walking and cycling - has an immense potential to enable people to get more daily exercise. Calculations based on American research into the effect of pedestrian permeability, on mean body weight has shown that simply making it easy to walk can have an impact of one per 1,000 per year on death rate. Given the worldwide obesity epidemic these finding are of even greater importance.

The lifestyle described in the cameo is neither an isolated travel-free lifestyle nor an unpleasant restricted one. It is a technologically feasible lifestyle. It is healthy. It protects our environment. It actually offers chances to improve our lives – the extra space in the house because the garage is no longer needed, the extra garden taken from the street, the extra personal time due to shorter journeys and less travel time. Why should it not come about?

**Recommendations to Create a Healthy Transport System**

Our e-book Health on the Move 2 contains a comprehensive list of recommendations for creating a healthy transport system. We have extracted and included in this evidence those
which relate to planning of the built environment. We have left the numbering as in the original document and made minor amendments only (eg removing cross references to material not included and recommendations that have been overtaken by events).

010. We recommend that local transport planning continues to be seen as important and as relevant to health, and that those involved in local transport planning take full account of the above strategies, build health impact assessment into their planning process and pursue the following priority actions.

011. All local transport plans should include an assessment of the carbon footprint of the local transport system and an estimate of the extent to which the plan will reduce it.

012. All local transport plans should include firm plans, committed resources and a target date for completing a cycle network usable by new cyclists as well as established cyclists and for providing cycle parking.

013. All local transport plans should include a timetable (with firm plans and committed resources) for closing rat runs so as to reduce the number of households experiencing heavy street traffic and so as to contribute to recommendation 012.

014. In developing their cycle network, all local transport plans should use a revised hierarchy of provision which gives high priority to linking quiet streets to create a comprehensive quiet cycle network.

015. All local transport plans should include firm plans, committed resources and a target date for improving pedestrian routes by removing engineering obstacles to pedestrians, providing safe crossing points over busy roads, and enhancing pedestrian signage.

016. All local transport plans should include firm plans, committed resources and a target date for aesthetic enhancement of pedestrian routes.

017. All local transport plans should develop plans for bus priority measures which will ensure that the bus network operates freely. Transport planners should have the confidence to transfer road space for this purpose, recognising that the significance of the Downs-Thomson Corollary of Pigou’s Theorem is that a free-flowing bus network will ease congestion but additional road space will not. (Note:- Since this was written the concept has emerged of hotlanes – lanes which can be used not only by buses but also by vehicles paying a toll, the toll being set at a level to keep the lane flowing freely, and flexed so as to favour high occupancy vehicles. Technology has also developed in which induction loops in the road could facilitate management of hotlanes. This concept would have been mentioned as one possible form of bus priority measure if we had been writing the recommendation today).

018. All local transport plans should focus any efforts directed at congestion upon improved public transport rather than new roads. Where bypasses are built to divert traffic, the bypass should be of no greater capacity and no faster than the road it replaces (to avoid
traffic generation) and the old road should be closed to through traffic and traffic calmed. Under no circumstances should money be wasted on enhancing the capacity of the road system. Capacity issues should be addressed by public transport or rail alternatives.

019. All local transport plans should address road safety by area-wide 20mph speed limits in residential areas and at accident black spots on main roads.

020 We recommend that those engaged in spatial planning recognise the significance of the Appleyard / Lintell / Hart findings and proceed on the basis that it is entirely plausible that within the near future it may come to be considered that heavy traffic in a road renders houses bordering that road unfit for long term human habitation.

021. There should be a strict prohibition on new development of any kind being accessed via a residential road (other than a major road with residential development along it) if this would increase the flow of traffic along the road to a steady flow. If it is necessary, in order to avoid this, for the main car parks of a new development to be some distance away with the final access being on foot, then so be it.

022 There should be a strict prohibition on residential properties being built with their principal pedestrian access being from a main road, with exceptions for owner-occupied plots purchased before the policy was adopted, holiday homes, or properties to be used as temporary lodgings.

023 In new residential developments there should be a strict limit on the number of properties that might be accessed by a residential road. Developments larger than this should either have multiple access points or a non-residential access road.

024 Where residential properties have already been built on a main road, spatial planners should facilitate measures to address this, including reorientation of the properties’ relationships to the road, shared gardens or conversion to holiday homes, temporary lodgings, or business premises.

025. The Home Zone should be adopted as the norm for all new residential streets.

026 All future large residential developments should be divided into residential cells, so as to prevent the creation of new rat runs. There should, however, be pedestrian and cycle links between the cells, with only motor vehicles being prevented from passing through.

027. Residential developments should have a pedestrian-permeable street design, with good cycle routes and aesthetically attractive pedestrian routes through them.

029 (Not included in the original but we would add it if writing the recommendations now) There should be a review, including a health impact assessment, of Safer by Design so to bring to an end the situation where this is used as a justification for building pedestrian-impermeable developments)
030. We also recommend that Government recognises the importance of spatial planning to health and other social values, that the NICE work programme on spatial planning cancelled by Ministers in December 2010 be reinstated and that those engaged in spatial planning adopt a policy that the health of the people shall be a material consideration to any development proposal, build health impact assessment into their procedures, and pursue the following actions.

031. Spatial planning should aim to ensure that the whole population can access the sources of a healthy lifestyle – recreational exercise opportunities, affordable healthy food shopping, parks and countryside, work, education, places of social interaction, health facilities.

032. Spatial planning should aim to ensure that people are provided with opportunities to build exercise into their daily lives more easily than to avoid it.

033. Spatial planning should have a goal that people spend as much as possible of their day in surroundings that are green and aesthetically attractive and should to that end make as much use as possible of street trees, grass, open space, green roofs and living walls.

034. Spatial planners should aim to make it easy for people to obtain facilities as close as possible to where they live and work. Much of the movement that we call ‘increased mobility’ is a human benefit but much of it is not – much of it is the hardship of having to travel a long way to find something that once was local.

035. In making provision for transport infrastructure spatial planners should move away from thinking ‘car’ and towards a future that is ‘train, bus, cycle and foot’.

036. Insofar as spatial planning must be intimately linked to economic development, it must recognise good environments as an economic driver since the knowledge-based industries of the future, much freer in the choice of where to site themselves, will want to place themselves where it is pleasant to live.

037. Two of the aims of town planning should be firstly, to minimise journey lengths, by resisting the trend to fewer and larger facilities, and secondly, to ensure that all facilities are easily accessible by foot, bicycle and public transport. This is particularly important for shops, schools, health services, local authority services, recreational facilities and places of employment.

038. Planning should ensure that residential developments can be serviced by public transport. Particular care needs to be taken with areas of low residential density since these tend to be difficult to serve by public transport.

039. (not included in the original but we would add it if writing the recommendations today) The use of viability as an argument for building developments which do not comply with planning policies should be restricted by requiring account to be taken of the social costs,
health damage, and public spending costs that will result if there is widespread non-observance of the policy.
Appendix – other relevant extracts from health on the move 2

Following the words “Why should it not come about?” at the end of our cameo of the future as reproduced above we continued:

In the middle of the last century, a comprehensive rail and bus network provided effective transport for most people. Those who bought a car bought greater freedom and greater speed. But as car ownership grew, this freedom and speed became eroded. People buy a car in order to drive on an open road - a typical advert might show a drive across a Scottish moor. However they use it to inch their way through city centre traffic jams searching for somewhere to park. The car owner today may travel further – and certainly spend more time doing so – but is much less mobile than the car user of the 1950s. Indeed within city traffic, the car owner of today is no faster than the public transport user of the 1950s, although it must be recognised that even in the 1950s rural public transport was often infrequent, so today’s car-based system is more flexible.

If the car owner of today enjoys only slightly better mobility than the public transport user of the 1950s, what about today’s public transport user? Over half of the route-mileage of the railway system has been closed. Rural buses and late night buses have been reduced. Non-radial public transport routes have diminished. Public transport is no longer a comprehensive network. In order to have access to a comprehensive network, it is necessary to buy a car. And so the vicious circle takes another twist. The vision of increasing car ownership points us towards the situation of Los Angeles, where two-thirds of the land area is occupied by roads and car parks and smog is a major hazard.

Yet there is another vision. Fast, modern, comfortable, frequent public transport systems can provide cities in which everybody can travel without encumbrance. In recent years, new stations and the Channel Tunnel high speed railway have been opened, with new high speed railway routes planned. New developments such as people movers (small personalised computer-controlled tracked vehicles) make it possible for public transport to meet even the unusual and individual transport needs for which the car has hitherto been the only possible system.

Trains can now travel at speeds of more than twice the motorway speed limit, light rapid transit offers the only hope of congestion-free city centres, and people movers can challenge the car even in the area of lightly trafficked distinctive journeys, so some people now argue that the car and lorry are in the situation that the horse was in between the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825 and the railway boom of the 1840s. Its dominance of the transport system was complete. The alternatives were scattered and the idea that they could be made comprehensive was visionary. Yet the end of the horse as the main mode of transport was as inevitable as its inevitability was, to many, imperceptible. Those towns and nations who were the first to see the future gained an economic advantage which lasted for many decades.
Is this political and economic argument one that has relevance for public health or are transport and public health separate spheres of human activity? The Transport and Health Study Group believes that transport is a public health issue. Public health must consider the socially unequal distribution of opportunities for access to such health promoting facilities as shops selling healthy food, sports centres and the countryside. Opportunities for social networking and for children’s independent travel and play are public health issue and we cannot overlook the potential that traffic-calmed streets hold out for enhancing community life. Roads were made for cars, but streets were made for people.

Much of this policy statement consists of detailed analysis and proposals. Yet behind the detail there is a vision. It is a vision of a society where we no longer accept that children cannot play in the streets for fear of being killed, that disabled people should be confined to the home, or that the poor cannot have access to healthy lifestyles because they cannot travel to their sources. It is a vision of a people who enjoy the beauty of their cities instead of scurrying along narrow pavements, who breathe unpolluted air and who read and chat as they travel rapidly and unimpeded about their business. It is a vision of a people who can choose to live in rural areas and know that they can readily access the goods, services, and people they need without needing a car for most journeys. It is a vision of a future where people will no more accept road crash deaths than we accept maternal mortality or diphtheria.

Public health has always been driven by such visions. The vision of clean water and sanitation in the 19th century; the development of housing standards and the eradication of infectious diseases in the 20th century; the virtual ending of maternal mortality in western countries; the idea of a clean atmosphere in which you could stand on top of a Pennine hill and see the industrial town below; the idea that people in workplaces and public places shouldn’t poison their neighbour with cigarette smoke in the 21st century. These are the visions, dismissed as crackpot when first articulated, fought for against powerful economic interests, and yet, today, accepted without question as part of the inevitable onward flow of civilisation.

The health of the people is a fundamental social value. In comparison with the battles we have fought and won in the past, our vision of a healthy transport system does not seem at all ambitious.

1.4.3 Is it realistic to plan for such changes?
Almost everybody who now works as a transport planner or transport system manager has spent their entire career in an atmosphere of retrenchment where the emphasis is on squeezing more and more through the existing system and where it has been assumed that the trend towards the car is unstoppable. It is not surprising therefore that many of them have expressed unease at the scope of the measures which we describe as the minimum necessary. And yet, the wider societal costs of transport in urban areas in England has recently been estimated as costing £38 – 48billion.

As we have already said, public health is used to being described as “unrealistic” – even “crackpot” - when it advocates the inevitable. The transport system that we advocate is no
more unrealistic than the building of the sewers or the removal of industrial and domestic smoke from the air was in the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively. What is totally unrealistic is to believe that as a species we will allow ourselves to become extinct because we refuse to use available technologies to stop carbon emissions destroying us, or that we can tolerate a situation where it becomes normal to be obese, or even that we will allow our large cities to grind to a halt in gridlock. We are the realists. It is those who pretend that we can avoid these measures who lack an understanding of reality.

*Extract from chapter 12 – Lessons for Transport Professionals. We have extracted the section relating to urban design.*

### 12.8 Urban design: home zones, walkability and social support

The replication by Hart of the earlier study by Appleyard & Lintell now makes it clear that motor traffic in residential streets diminishes social support networks amongst residents and also leads to a lack of sense of possession over large areas of the street. The implications of this are very serious – social support is a major factor reducing mortality while areas of street over which residents do not feel possession will increase crime, disorder and vandalism. It should now be regarded as unacceptable for a residential street to have a steady flow of traffic and development control must prevent any further such situations on new developments.

A major rethink of the street system is necessitated by the recognition of the high public health priority attached to walking and cycling coupled with the recognition from Appleyard/Lintell/Hart’s work that steady traffic flows in streets have a serious impact on the health of residents. The urban street system needs to be seen as fulfilling three roles. It is the final link in the urban road system allowing vehicles to reach homes, shops, workplaces and businesses. It is the gap between houses – a community open space with important functions in maintaining social networks and community interaction. It is a set of routes that can be used to make provision for walkers and cyclists away from main roads. The problem for the highways engineer is how to balance these three roles. This balance may not be achieved by unthinkingly applying traditional design approaches which give pre-eminence to its role as a passage for local traffic.

#### 12.8.1 Walkability: permeability and pedestrian priority

According to the DfT National Travel Survey 2007, the majority of adults agreed everyone should be encouraged to walk for their health (97%), the environment (94%) and to ease congestion (92%). However, only 41% of men and 33% of women questioned in a general population survey reported walking ‘brisk or fast’ for ten minutes in the previous four weeks. Nationally, 11% of commuters walk to work.

Residents in a high walkable neighbourhood are likely to take more steps per day and walk more for transport than residents in a low walkable neighbourhood. This is particularly pronounced for adults who previously had a preference for non-active transport and/or a low intention to walk or cycle. Pedestrian-permeable street designs are associated with 6lb
lower mean population weight than pedestrian-impermeable environments.60 This difference in weight is equivalent to an annual death rate of 1 per 1000 – which means one extra death every ten years in a population of 100, which could be as few as 25-30 houses.

Walking more slowly than needed to increase fitness still aids weight control, as the same amount of energy is used up almost independent of the speed walked. The key elements of a walkable neighbourhood are small block sizes and low, slow traffic flows.

Block size is usually determined by architects, so a key role of transport professionals is to influence designs at an early stage, referring to best practice such as the Urban Design Compendium

Slow traffic flows means traffic should move at 20mph or less. Driving two miles at 20mph takes 6 minutes, as opposed to 4 minutes at 30mph or 3 minutes at 40mph. There is little to be gained by driving faster than 20mph in residential side streets or streets outside schools, and therefore the safety of pedestrians in these areas should be the clear priority. 20mph zones should therefore be the standard in residential areas and outside schools at the beginning and end of the school day. Manual for Streets provides the key design guidance on how to create these.

Where closure or diversion is proposed of minor urban roads (eg alleys) or rights of way used for utility walking it is important to be aware of the fact that utility walking is very distance sensitive. Any diversion of more than about 50 metres needs to be thought of very carefully and diversions of more than 100 metres should be seen as seriously affecting a walking route. This is important when alleygating proposals are concerned. Alleygating of a back alley which is no more attractive than the parallel main street may well be acceptable. This cannot be said for gating of cross alleys, link passages or routes that are more attractive than the proposed alternative. Other solutions must be found to security problems. If 30 houses suffer loss of pedestrian permeability then, if there are on average just over 3 residents per house, there will be one extra death every ten years. We cannot solve problems of minor antisocial behaviour by killing people.

12.8.2 Social support
Research has shown that strength of social support is associated with a four-fold difference in all-cause mortality – a difference comparable in magnitude to the effects of poverty. The effect was so striking that the researchers initially refused to believe it, and undertook extensive further studies which confirmed the effect.

Studies by Appleyard & Lintell in San Francisco, repeated more recently in Bristol by Joshua Hart, show that motor traffic levels in streets are a key determinant of the strength of social support – the greater the traffic levels, the less likely people were to know and interact with their neighbours. However, street design can also promote community networks, by providing space to interact and play.
Access to state social support such as health services requires there to be relevant transport services. Hospitals with poor public transport access or located at the top of a hill will not provide as good a level of social support to people without access to cars as they would if provided with comprehensive public transport and a good walking environment.

12.8.3 Severance

Severance was defined in the late 1970s as: “the sum of the divisive effects a major urban road has on the inhabitants on either side of it.” Severance results in: “pedestrian delay, trip diversion and suppression, pollution, perceived danger and overall unpleasantness.” Because severance disproportionately affects pedestrians and cyclists, it also encourages modal shift towards the car, or trip suppression where people do not have access to a car. Severance by major roads or train lines also creates noise, pollution and frequently leads to visual blight. Community severance can give rise to stress and isolation, by increasing the effective distance to places of employment and health promoting facilities such as schools, parks, shops, leisure centres, and health services. This means that community severance is linked to social exclusion and its associated health disbenefits. In addition to causing stress, noise can also impair health by causing a lack of sleep. A 2006 survey found that half a million Britons move house each year because of noise, although it is not clear to what extent traffic is the cause. However noise effects can to some extent be designed out – quieter road surfaces such as porous asphalt can reduce noise by 4-8 decibels, equivalent to almost halving the volume of traffic.

Community severance cannot be quantified effectively at present. Valuable indicators of community severance that could be empirically assessed include traffic volume, noise levels and pedestrian delay in crossing roads. In 1969, the Urban Motorways Committee proposed pedestrian delay as the most important indicator of severance by major urban roads, and pedestrian delay was used in the willingness to pay study of traffic calming by Garrod and colleagues. In San Francisco, 94% of pedestrians on the light traffic street reported waiting not at all or only a few seconds, compared with 49% on the street with medium, 25% heavy and 19% very heavy traffic. The Kensington Environmental Management Study considered that a peak figure of 300 vehicles/hr provided an appropriate standard. However the amount of traffic is mediated by the road layout: the Buchanan report ‘Traffic in Towns’ showed that the wider the road, the lower the volume of traffic required to cause the same pedestrian delay. The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA) and the Transport and Road Research Laboratory (TRRL) proposed that vulnerable groups be identified, the facilities (such as post office or health centre) they are likely to use be listed, and the catchment areas of those facilities be delineated. The number of people living within this catchment area but separated from these facilities by major roads would form a measure of severance.
Unfortunately, however, decisions regarding the critical delineation of these catchment areas remain arbitrary. The TRRL approach specifically involved creating a severance index which considered how many people (especially vulnerable people) have impaired access to their nearest facilities, together with traffic density and a mitigation factor representing the presence and acceptability of crossing facilities.

Although there is not yet a widely accepted methodology for assessing, quantifying, and monetarising severance, there is an assessment of severance in DfT transport analysis guidance (Web TAG), meaning that new infrastructure that would sever communities should be avoided. Where existing infrastructure or physical features such as rivers exist, the priority should be increasing the density of pleasant, safe, and universally accessible crossing points.

These crossing points should be at grade, since steps and ramps add distance and time to walking and cycling trips, and can be insurmountable barriers to less mobile people. Subways and bridges can also be dangerous and unpleasant for users.

**The Crossing of Roads by Pedestrians: minimising physical severance**

Roads on which traffic creates a steady flow without many gaps or on which traffic is fast require safe crossing points. It is essential that these crossing points are located on pedestrian desire lines and do not require deviation — because each step is noticed, pedestrians are highly sensitive to deviation from their intended direction and will often take unsafe routes where a direct crossing is not provided.

It is tempting to provide crossing points on the basis of observed flows of pedestrians. However this approach is open to the very powerful criticism that there may seem to be no demand to cross the road simply because it is too dangerous for people to attempt it and hence the pedestrian cross flow is small. Such assessments should be replaced by a deliberate planning of pedestrian flows based on an assessment of local trip generators and attractors, and the desire lines between them. These should be provided in such a way as to minimise pedestrian deviation when accessing key destinations along the road (e.g. bus stop, school entrance) and destinations past the road (e.g. hospital or train station one block back from a main road).

If we had been writing this today we would have added something about the time allowed to cross at light-controlled crossings which is often inadequate for older people.

Where there is no ‘stand-out’ trip attractor, crossings should be provided at regular intervals to ensure that pedestrians are not deviated unacceptably from their desire line. Where pedestrian networks are carefully designed so as to provide flows of pedestrians separate from flows of motor traffic a safe crossing point should be provided wherever a pedestrian route crosses a road with steady or fast traffic. This same principle can be followed for allowing walkers on rural footpaths to cross the main road – wherever a footpath crosses a road there should be a safe crossing and wherever a footpath ends on a road there should be a safe crossing before the next footpath on the other side of the road.
On roads with speeds above 40mph only signalised or grade-separated crossings will suffice for this purpose. At-grade crossings are preferred whenever they are feasible due to a myriad of problems with grade-separated problems: not only are they often unattractive and leave pedestrians vulnerable to attack, they are also difficult for people with mobility difficulties to access, whether it is stick-users for whom flights of stairs are a major barrier, wheelchair users for whom extensive ramps are too large a challenge, or scooter users who can frequently have their path blocked by barriers intended to prevent cycle access.

On roads where visibility is greater than sight stopping distance at the actual traffic speed, zebra crossings can be a satisfactory alternative to signalised crossings. On such roads central refuges may suffice if the traffic flow is small enough that gaps in the traffic will occur every minute or so even if only in one direction although it is important to note that a study of elderly pedestrians and scooter users found that feeling in control of traffic (using signalised or zebra crossings) was key to a feeling of safety on crossings.

When speed falls to less than 20mph and cars and pedestrians mix more as equals, the majority of crossings are likely to be at informal locations. However even in these areas, regular formal crossings should be provided with raised tables and tactile pavings, to ensure that people who need these facilities are adequately catered for.

### 12.8.4 Aesthetics

Studies have shown that aesthetically attractive settings, particularly those including greenspace or water features, may diminish physical ill health. Conversely, traffic impacts that preclude tranquillity such as heavy traffic or aircraft noise have been shown to have negative impacts on health.

Traffic, whether moving, stationary or parked, reduces the visual amenity of streets. A 2007 survey by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) found that 31% of residents in new developments thought that roads and car parking dominated their development. Aesthetics are also key to establishing the priority on a street – whether it is a place for people or a link for vehicles. In streets where the majority of gardens have been converted into parking bays the width of the road is effectively trebled, leading to increased traffic speeds and increased risk and occurrence of accidents. Conversely, streets where trees, benches, and grassed areas are used instead of chicanes or road humps as natural obstacles to slow traffic benefit from an attractive public realm and better traffic control.

### 12.8.5 Urban Residential Streets

Hart’s replication in Bristol of Appleyard & Lintell’s San Francisco study about the effect of traffic in streets on social networks has far reaching consequences for design of residential streets.

It should now be regarded as unacceptable for a residential street to have a steady flow of motor traffic that interferes with its use for community networking. The first impact of this should be on the attitude taken to rat runs – streets which are not intended to be major roads but have come to have heavy traffic flows because they form short cuts. Such rat runs should be closed to through motor traffic. This has two benefits;
the residents are given back their lifesaving tranquillity and if a passage is retained for cyclists a new cycle route is created. The closing of rat runs has in the past often been a last resort, partly because of technical difficulties and partly out of a sense that motorists have the right to use the highway system. In future it should be the first and immediate professional response to steady traffic building up in a residential street due to a through traffic flow developing on what was meant to be only a local road. Rising bollards can be used as the obstruction if there is a wish to allow selected traffic (e.g. residents, buses, refuse vehicles, emergency vehicles, delivery vehicles).

The second impact should be on the advice highways engineers give in relation to planning applications which route traffic along residential streets as their means of access or which create a risk of such a route being chosen. Highways engineers should strenuously object to any development which will create a steady traffic flow along a residential street for a significant part of the day (there may perhaps be a balance to strike if it is only for a very limited part of each day). If this means that car parking must be remote from the development and access on foot then so be it. Where the development is accessed by a proper access road, but there is a risk of traffic ignoring that and taking short cuts along a residential street, highways engineers should ask that the developer is required to fund the closure of the potential rat runs.

The third impact should be to render out of date the traditional design of the street as consisting only of carriageway and footway. The aim in future should be to carve areas for community interaction from the street—perhaps a tree with a seat around it, perhaps a play space, perhaps a communal garden to be maintained together, perhaps extensions to private gardens to be maintained privately but to be walked through and enjoyed together, or perhaps zanier ideas like a swimming pool. A residential street is the gap between houses. It needs to be possible to walk along it and move vehicles along it and there needs to be space to park vehicles but there can and should be other things as well. The carriageway may in the end be merely the gap between obstacles and in this context parking spaces can be arranged so as to serve as obstacles and to provide chicanes to slow traffic down and barriers to protect gardens or communal areas.

12.8.6 Urban Shopping Streets

Just as we must now think of urban residential streets as primarily for community interaction so we should think of shopping streets as being primarily for shopping. Studies conducted in Austria 10 years ago and in the UK recently found that retailers greatly overestimated the importance of the car and how far their customers travelled and underestimated how many of their customers walked, cycled or used public transport and how many shops they each visited.

The passage of heavy traffic between rows of shops served from narrow pavements is unpleasant to shoppers. It removes spontaneity from crossing and recrossing the street, which becomes a barrier. It is dangerous in enticing people into dangerous crossing movements.
Where the street can be pedestrianised (except for cycles, buses and access) this should be the norm. It may be, however, that this is impossible without routeing through traffic along residential streets, which need protection even more. A “high street” design with wide pavements, frequent crossing points, and controlled traffic speeds is the solution to such situations. Traffic should be slowed both for safety and also to increase the capacity of constrained road space so that the traffic flows freely but slowly.

Extract from chapter 20 – Other strategies - we have extracted the sections that relate to spatial planning

20.1 Planning and development control

20.1.1 Spatial planning
Mean population weight is 6lb lower in areas with good pedestrian permeability. A 6lb difference in mean population weight is important – equivalent to a death rate of one per 1,000 per annum. Pedestrian permeability should not, therefore, be lightly sacrificed. For example, some police architectural liaison officers argue against pedestrian links for crime prevention reasons. These arguments can seem compelling if the health implications seem minor or theoretical, but are obviously less important than the health issue when the health impact is large. For example, Home Office guidance on Alleygating commends as an example of good practice a local authority which had closed a pedestrian passage that was being used for young people to gather and engage in minor antisocial behaviour. This closure affected walking routes to local shops but the Home Office commented that the diversion was “only” 450 metres. For many people, the distance they are willing to walk is about 1km (less for many elderly or disabled people) so a diversion of about half that length will seriously reduce walking. Some local authorities have therefore not proceeded with gating alleys because of concerns about reducing walking although this effect of alley gating is not mentioned in Home Office advice to the public A walkability index has been developed in the USA.

In the scientific section of the book we described the evidence for the effect of traffic volume and speed on community severance and the use of streets for social and communal purposes. Traffic is also a major deterrent to cycling and to walking, particularly regarding crossing roads. No new developments should be allowed to create the situation of a steady flow of traffic in a residential street. There should be limits to the number of houses that can be accessed via any residential road. Industrial developments or other developments generating high traffic flows should have their own access roads and not be accessed through residential neighbourhoods. If this necessitates placing car parking some distance from the development then so be it – this will also promote walking.

Spatial planners should ensure that residential streets do not become thoroughfares carrying long distance traffic, as is currently often the case in rural areas. Where this has occurred it should, if possible, be reversed by closing the street to through traffic but in some situations where it has already happened, the situation may be irreversible. For
example, many cities have houses lining the main roads into and out of the city, as do most villages. If the road is wide enough to segregate part of it as an access road it might be possible to separate this from the main road by a hedge or even a glass barrier similar to those used alongside a motorway that runs through a residential area in Dordrecht, creating effectively a lightly trafficked street alongside the main road. It is plausible that social interaction similar to that achieved in quiet streets can be created by use of communal gardens. Sometimes pedestrian access to the houses can be relocated to the back. In irreversibly heavily trafficked streets close to town centre, it may be that houses as they become empty should be turned into shops, offices or housing for temporary use such as holiday lets.

Spatial planners should ensure that there is a high frequency public transport network and that development is designed to make use of it. Development should also be designed with cycle and walking access strongly encouraged. Spatial planning can make the largest contribution to the distances travelled to access goods and services. Residential areas located at a distance from commercial districts, entertainment areas, shopping precincts, all separate from each other, are not conducive to walking and may not be feasible for cycling. Keeping distances short has sound economic and environmental reasons but also promotes social inclusion. This requires both mixed developments and increased density. Parks and greenspace are important contributors to walking and so is the retention of city farms or country parks within the city. Living walls (walls with plants climbing up them), green roofs, green security (thorny hedges rather than metal fences), gardens and street trees should all be encouraged by spatial planners for a number of reasons. They contribute to overcoming the urban heat island effect, there is increasing scientific evidence that they improve health directly by promoting tranquillity, but they also make pedestrian routes more attractive and therefore more likely to be used.

20.1.2 Local Transport Planning
The promotion of walking and cycling (active travel) is an essential part of the strategy to address obesity, mental health, and osteoporosis. The contribution it can make is substantial and it should be seen as lifesaving and a core public health goal. As an indication of its significance, lack of pedestrian-permeability raises death rates by one per 1,000 per annum (equivalent to one extra death every 10 years in a population of 100; this could be as few as 25 to 30 houses).

Key policy measures to promote active travel include infrastructure and the physical environment; information, education and marketing (‘smarter choices’); partnerships; commitment to and resources for the plan; and evaluation and monitoring. Promoting cycle friendly streets and road design using the ‘hierarchy of provision’, combined with measures to reduce the speed and volume of motor traffic, are necessary to increase the attractiveness of cycling as a travel mode and divert drivers out of their cars. Reducing the use of the private car contributes to addressing climate change.

The Downs-Thompson Corollary of Pigou’s Theorem shows that once the road system is saturated road congestion will be influenced most by the availability of alternatives to the
car as this provides an additional alternative to using a car or not travelling and therefore raises the equilibrium speed at which congestion leads people to make a decision not to travel. Hence expenditure on roads is wasteful and useless. Downs and Thompson specifically advocated investment in public transport but for reasons described above this is a limited perspective and to address congestion local transport planning needs to focus on the development of walking, cycling and public transport and do that in parallel with spatial planning measures. A typical road lane can carry seven times as many bicycles as cars.

The promotion of walking requires attention to pedestrian needs in relation to road crossings, junctions and the like. People will walk further if routes are attractive so the development of an aesthetically attractive network is important.

20.1.3 Development Control
Development control needs to be deployed to address the above objectives. There is no point having a local transport plan emphasising walking, cycling and public transport if developers are routinely asked to pay for road improvements and are rarely asked to contribute to developing walking and cycling networks. There is no point having a spatial plan which emphasises local facilities if centralised facilities are allowed to expand and develop without taking steps to establish local outposts. There is no point having a walking strategy which calls for the creation of walking networks if planning applications are approved which close pedestrian routes without adequate replacements or which build loop and lollipop cul de sac designs without pedestrian interconnections to make the area pedestrian-permeable.

The replication by Hart of the earlier study by Appleyard & Lintell now makes it clear that traffic in residential streets diminishes social support networks amongst residents and also leads to a lack of sense of possession over large areas of the street. The implications of this are very serious – social support is a major factor reducing mortality while areas of street over which residents do not feel possession will increase crime, disorder and vandalism. It should now be regarded as unacceptable for a residential street to have a steady flow of traffic and development control must prevent any further such situations on new developments. They should limit the number of houses that can be accessed by a residential road either by preventing houses being built on the access road or by requiring large developments to be broken up into residential cells with multiple accesses and no through vehicular routes (although there should be through cycle and pedestrian routes). They should prevent existing residential streets being used as access routes to developments likely to generate substantial traffic, even if this means that parking for the development must be some distance away. This principle should be seen as a high priority and not lightly sacrificed to conflicting considerations – the time may well come when we will see houses built on heavily trafficked roads as unfit for human habitation.

Development control officers have to weigh conflicting considerations and it is important that the development framework emphasises the priority to be attached to the above strategies.
Often development control officers are blamed for failing to enforce the above strategies when, in reality, they have not been provided with the clear policy frameworks that would justify them so acting. In order for development control officers to act as enforcers of local transport plans, spatial plans, and traffic-free residential streets, the plans need to be clear and unequivocally incorporated into the policy framework applicable to the development control process.

The power of development control was undermined both by the Thatcher Government and the Blair Government. The former imposed a presumption in favour of development which diminished the power of development control to pursue desirable and preferred development instead of simply judging what was laid before them. The latter established a strong drive to make decisions to fixed timescales so that many planning departments shifted their role effectively to making defensible decisions within those time limits rather than taking the time to get decisions right. At the same time an increasing tendency to award costs at planning enquiries made it difficult for planners to listen to communities – indeed it was even sometimes suggested that commitment to the views of a local community was an improper bias.

The Coalition Government was committed to giving more power to local communities and this might have empowered Development Control officers to support local communities in shaping patterns of human settlement, regaining in the process much of their lost vision and purpose. However deregulatory impulses and antipathy to local government eventually prevailed.

20.1.4 Less Road Building
The belief that road building relieves congestion and stimulates economic regeneration is not supported by the evidence. In fact road building generates traffic increasing road use by as much as 8-10% per year until congestion, possibly on other parts of the road network, is undiminished. Then there may be demands for yet more road building. This is self-defeating and damaging to the public health. Decisions regarding investment in public transport and new roads should use comparable criteria. These should monetarise all social and environmental costs and benefits, including effects on pedestrians and local employment. Such comprehensive cost benefit analysis would result in more investment in public transport and less in road building.

The decisions should also be made together. Often they are made separately so that roads are built because rail planners are not engaged. The idea of a rolling motorway through the Woodhead tunnel instead of the damaging road improvements planned is a classic example of an idea which was difficult to advance in a system where rail and road planning are completely separate.

Indeed, looking to the future, it is questionable whether road building ever makes sense now that it is vital to start to reduce the role of the private car and lorry. It is like investing in
an ostler’s business in the 1830s: it may have seemed sensible, it may even have met short term economic tests, and no doubt many people did it. But actually it was taking passage on a sinking ship.

06 October 2015
1.0 Introduction

1.01 What is TDAG?

The Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG) established in early 2007 and now a registered charity is an a-political pioneering group of individuals, professionals and organisations from both the public and the private sectors who have come together to increase awareness of the role of trees in the built environment throughout the United Kingdom.

TDAG set out a 10 point action plan and central to these was the requirement that all TDAG guidance on the value of trees in integrated urban solutions is backed by evidence based research (see Appendix 3).

1.02 Why evidence on trees in the built environment?

The majority of people live in urban environments and this percentage is expected to significantly increase over the next two decades. We need to act now to ensure that the built environment is sustainable, resilient and liveable and contains all those elements that contribute to the welfare of both people today and for future generations.

Trees have a key role in integrated solutions for the financial, environmental, social and health benefits that they bring.

1.03 Trees? The history of urban trees is very interesting as described in a recent book. Apart from parks and gardens significant street tree planting really began with Haussmann in Paris and was developed in the UK with major infrastructure projects such as the Bazalgette Embankment (1865). At this stage trees were part of the townscape and amenity value of the place. See Embankment images in Appendix 2.

1.04 One of the reasons for tree losses today is the lack of including trees in integrated solutions. This is having an impact of health (and the NHS budget), on higher energy consumption and poor air quality. Meanwhile research has identified quantifiable social, environmental and economic benefits provided by urban trees (see London i-Tree Report and work of US Forest Services) and this has placed trees as the largest living organism at the heart of much infrastructure planning and development. It is TDAG’s contention that integrating green, grey (engineered) and blue (water) infrastructure to provide a sustainable integrated infrastructure should be at the heart of urban planning and development. (Several research projects are working on this; see also the UK Water Partnership).

1.05 The benefits of urban trees (the urban forest) are extensive (see diagram in Appendix 4).

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To identify a few:

**1.06 Health Benefits:**

Dr William Bird (Intelligent Health) and others have identified the physical and mental health benefits of trees and urban greening such as:

- Improving the environment to encourage walking and cycling
- Access to green space reduces stress and improves mental health
- Areas of London with trees have been shown to have a lower use of anti-depressant drugs.
- It is estimated that the NHS bill would be directly reduced if there was adequate integration of trees in the built environment.

**1.07 Physical benefits:**

Climate change means that our cities will face serious impacts if they are to be resilient to the anticipated changes. The most serious are probably firstly those linked to water management and secondly to what is called the ‘urban heat island’ effect. Trees have a major role to play in both these instances. Trees also have a major role to play in supporting urban biodiversity on which we do all depend. As farming has become more ‘industrialised’ it is often urban areas that support the greatest diversity.

**1.08 Social benefits:**

Research has shown that trees offer a range of social benefits:

- Crime reduction
- People feel better
- Cities are competing globally and air quality, comfort and resilience as to the attractiveness of a city to investors and professional people.
- Sense of place and identity. As trees are (and should be) long-lived they can span generations and provide a local identity. An example of this is Berkeley Square in London where many of the original 18th century buildings were bombed and have been replaced but several of the 18th trees are still there and Berkeley Square has become identifiable more by its trees and garden than by its buildings. So trees have a major role to play in place-making. The TDAG evidence will not expand on this as we know that the wider subject of place-making has been discussed by others.

**1.09 Economic benefits:**

The i-Tree studies that have been carried out or are planned in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Torbay and other UK cities demonstrate quantifiable benefits in terms of the ecosystem services provided by urban trees. Headline figures from New York City showed that investing
$1 in trees could return $5 in quantifiable benefits.$^{485}$ Trees can also improve local economies and retail uptake.$^{486}$

The London i-Tree Survey shows that there is currently only one tree for each Londoner. Should we not be aiming to improve on this? Headline figures from the London survey (due to be published in the first week of December 2015) include the value of the services that London’s trees provide – see table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>London’s Urban Forest - Key Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of trees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner London</td>
<td>1587000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>6834000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tree Cover</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner London</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Canopy Cover</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner London</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Most Common Species</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner London</td>
<td>Birch, Lime, Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>Sycamore, Oak, Hawthorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pollution removal (per annum)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner London</td>
<td>561 tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>1680 tonnes</td>
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$^{486}$ Dr Kathleen Wolf, University of Washington ([http://staff.washington.edu/kwolf/KW_CV/](http://staff.washington.edu/kwolf/KW_CV/))
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stormwater Alleviation (per annum)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>705,000m³</th>
<th>£310,000</th>
<th>£1.5 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>2,709,000m³</td>
<td>£ 1.19 million</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon Storage (whole value)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>499,000 tonnes</th>
<th>£30.9 million</th>
<th>£146.9 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>1,868,000 tonnes</td>
<td>£ 116 million</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon sequestration (per annum)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>15,900 tonnes</th>
<th>£987,000</th>
<th>£4.79 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>61,300 tonnes</td>
<td>£ 3.8 million</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Energy Savings (per annum)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>£223,000</th>
<th>£260,600.00</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>£37,600</td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Avoided Carbon Emissions (per annum)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>£23,600</th>
<th>£54,600</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>£31,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>Replacement Cost (whole value)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>£1.35 Billion</th>
<th>£6.12 Billion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>£4.77 Billion</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenity Value (CAVAT) (whole value)</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>£17.6 Billion</th>
<th>£43.3 Billion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>£25.7 Billion</td>
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<tr>
<th>TOTAL ANNUAL BENEFITS</th>
<th>Inner London</th>
<th>59.54 Million</th>
<th>£ 132.7 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outer London</td>
<td>73.16 Million</td>
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This is not insignificant in financial terms and justifies investment in the planting and maintaining of our urban forests.

1.10 How do we ensure that trees are integrated into our urban environments?

Over the last 7-8 years TDAG has endeavoured to encourage an integrated approach to planning, design and delivery. This means that we need to overcome the ‘silo effect’ at national and local government level as well as taking a cross-disciplinary approach by built environment professionals and delivery teams. (See Collaboration for Change, Paul Morrell, former Chief Construction Advisor and The Edge as well as the work of the Farrell Review and the Place Alliance). This integrated approach has been achieved in other countries for example the Greater Lyon Authority has published its second Tree Charter (available in English at [www.tdag.org.uk](http://www.tdag.org.uk)). TDAG is making small advances in that our latest guidelines *Trees in Hard Landscapes, A Guide for Delivery* was developed in partnership with cross-professional institutions ICE, CIBSE, CIHT and the ICF with a forward by a transport minister from DfT.

2.0 Specific questions

Having given some background as to why we think it is so important that urban trees achieve the necessary recognition in this Committee’s inquiries we will now give a tree-focused input to your specific questions.

2.01 Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

**TDAG**: National policy makers need to provide clear leadership on matters of the environment (energy, water management, soil), the built environment, infrastructure including transport, health and education. Local authorities can then ensure that this is included appropriately (given regional differences etc) in their own local plans and in terms of development it would ensure that all involved (developers, built environment professionals) would be working to the same requirements.
In terms of ‘trees’ it would be very valuable to have a National Tree Charter or Framework incorporating trees in integrated urban solutions.\footnote{487 See also Greater Lyon Authority Tree Charter available in English at www.tdag.org.uk (http://blogs.grandlyon.com/developpementdurable/files/downloads/2015/06/Charte-v-british-complete-2.pdf) \footnote{488 See work by Dr William Bird, CEO Intelligent Health and promoter of the Natural Health Service and the work of Dr Matilda van den Bosch (http://www.slu.se/en/departments/work-science-business-economics-environmental-psychology/staff/matilda-van-den-bosch/) \footnote{489 Lord Framlingham put this question in a House of Lords environment debate 15th January 2015}}

TDAG proposes that there is an urgent need for \textit{Trees in Towns III}. This would follow on \textit{Trees in Towns II} researched in 2004 and provides the baseline survey information on the present state of our urban forest to better inform policy. DCLG supported the earlier document. It would be helpful if government could help to support the follow up which is in line with the DCLG recommendation that this should be undertaken every 10 years.

2. \textit{How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?}

\textbf{TDAG:} We would like to add health and education to the departments listed above. It has been estimated that the NHS is limited in what it can do to improve health, perhaps 10\% of health problems, while the other 90\% are usually linked to life-style diseases and the quality of the public realm and built environment would be beneficial here.\footnote{488}

From an urban tree perspective, which government department is responsible for urban trees? DCLG linked to planning? DfT linked to highways? Both? Neither? The fact that we do not really know is indicative.\footnote{489} One of the problems with government departments, looking from the outside, is that there is quite a rate of staff turnover i.e. people get knowledgeable in an area and then seem to be moved. Is there a cross-departmental team supported by external advisors who could, for example, help to support a more integrated approach?

2.02 National policy for planning and the built environment

3. \textit{Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?}

\textbf{TDAG:} Not sufficiently in our view. From an urban tree perspective a few minor changes in the NPPF such as the inclusion of the word ‘trees’ at appropriate places would be helpful. TDAG has prepared a paper on this if it would be helpful.

Defra set up the Natural Capital Committee under the chairmanship of Professor Dieter Helm. The work of this committee should be a material consideration in built environment planning and development decisions.
4. *Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?*

**TDAG:** Yes it is. The loss of regional planning is very unfortunate. Indeed, just as our Regional Spatial Strategies were about to be disbanded a visiting American academic commented that they were considered essential by American Planners who suffered from a more localism based agenda⁴⁹⁰.

5. *Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?*

**TDAG:** When discussing urban trees, these are long-lived and can be cross-generational and so trees planted today could live for 100+ years. Once planted and established they should become part of the elements in the environment taken into account regardless of future development plans. Trees tend to deliver their greatest benefits at 30+ years.

2.03 **Buildings and places: New and old**

6. *What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?*

**TDAG:** This is outside the tree remit

7. *How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?*

**TDAG:** Trees have a major role to play in a sustainable and resilient urban environment. Trees have a role in the local micro-climate and therefore in the performance of buildings as well as local water management (SuDS etc). This is not always well understood in the UK.

8. *To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?*

**TDAG:** The historic environment has a significant role to play in identity and placemaking. Heritage trees also have a key role in continuity of the environment – we also need to be aware of the heritage trees for tomorrow and so must restrain ourselves from cutting down trees that have that potential just because a developer and their design team does not want

⁴⁹⁰ Ellen Dunham-Jones  ([http://www.arch.gatech.edu/node/142](http://www.arch.gatech.edu/node/142))
Trees and Design Action Group – Written Evidence (BEN0182)

to accommodate them. Some historic trees (100+ years) are as important and valuable in the built environment as historic buildings.

A recent RICS report compared housing values and found that the greatest value was Accordia in Cambridge and the existing historic landscape which gave a sense of immediate identity and permanence to the new housing would seem to be a major element in this. (Placemaking and Value. RICS 2015 - https://consultations.rics.org/consult.ti/placemaking)

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

TDAG: There needs to be a much more integrated approach to planning, design and delivery (as first proposed by Latham in 1992). As far as built environment professions which include landscape architects are concerned this could relate back to initial training and how it should be more holistic for future practice. The Edge/Morrell report on Collaboration for Change includes education and it is a topic that is exercising built environment educational establishments as some courses are more integrated than others.

When talking about a more integrated approach it is also important to engage early with all involved on both the supply and the demand side. If local authorities are charged with ensuring that planning applications are properly interrogated and then delivered, it is important that the overall cost-benefit of this ‘service’ is properly understood and supported financially.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘placemaking’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

TDAG: From a tree perspective we would like to see a National Tree Framework or Strategy (our document Trees in the Townscape, A Guide for Decision Makers sets out 12 principles which could be the basis for this for urban trees) to which all departments and local authorities could subscribe. This would also signal a value for urban trees that would encourage the owners of the c. 70% of urban trees on private land to be seen as valuable assets not potential liabilities and there could, perhaps, be a way of rewarding private tree owners for looking after their trees as they contribute significantly to the urban forest and the city wide benefits that this delivers. A modest reduction in council tax, for example?

2.04 Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the
impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

TDAG: In our introduction we describe some of the benefits of urban trees in these areas. Some local authorities are better than others at engaging with the community/public on street tree planting for example. Well-informed developers engaging delivery teams that involve the right professions at the right time should be sufficiently knowledgeable and able to understand the impacts of all aspects of the built environment and put forward proposals that will improve those environments.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

TDAG: Certainly with trees it is important to have community support and even involvement in caring for trees to prevent vandalism etc. There are examples such as Rocky Park in Bethnal Green⁴⁹¹ where the local community got together and created liveable, pleasurable gardens and green spaces on socially deprived estates. When developing new sites without an existing community, could community members such as those who inspired Rocky Park comment on proposals? Facilities Managers are increasingly included early in the design of buildings, so perhaps we need proven community builders to advise on housing projects?

2.05 Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

TDAG: Time and again developers are telling us that they will go the extra distance to plant trees if there is a level playing field so that all developers have to achieve the same standards. National leadership is desperately needed to provide that level playing field. By breaking down silos at government and local authority level it would be possible to provide budgets across departments. For example, street trees have a role in highways for traffic calming, improving uptake of passenger numbers on bus routes (see case studies in Trees in Hard Landscapes) and so street trees and 5 year maintenance programmes could be part of the highways budget which has more funds than the ‘green space’ budget.

The health benefits of trees could help to reduce the NHS bill and so some funds that would go to health could go to improving the built environment so that it has health giving properties.

⁴⁹¹ Rocky Park established by Teesdale and Hollybush TRA
http://www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk/growing_communities/hollybush_rocky_park.aspx
Beyond the role of trees but linked to it as we would like to see more trees in developments, the London Borough of Islington has an consultation SPD on Development Viability (http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Planning-and-building-control/Publicity/Public-consultation/2015-2016/(2015-07-09)-Development-Viability-SPD-Consultation-Draft-(July-2015).pdf)

At a recent tree seminar we discussed the question of land value and one conclusion was as quoted below: “All costs of development, including landscape, should come off the land price and this needs to be compulsory on all to be taken into account by the developer/contractor for them to reflect it in their bid price for land otherwise competition leads them to ignore it.

In this situation the developer/contractor shouldn’t care, in a level playing field, except that the big firms, particularly house builders, are also land owners and thus oppose anything of this nature, thus the opposition to SUDS.

There is always going to be a conflict between development for private profit and the public good, Planning post WW II was established for this purpose, but all the political parties are signed up to the mantra of ‘sustainable development’ where usually it is the development that triumphs rather than sustaining life.”

If we are serious about a future resilient built environment for people and nature then we need to take some bold approaches to the conservation and perpetuation of our urban trees.
Some specific physical benefits provided by urban trees.

**Trees combat climate change**

Excess carbon dioxide (CO2) caused by many factors is building up in our atmosphere and contributing to climate change. Trees absorb CO2, removing and storing the carbon while releasing the oxygen back into the air. In one year, an acre of mature trees absorbs the amount of CO2 produced when you drive your car 26,000 miles.

**Trees clean the air**
Trees and Design Action Group – Written Evidence (BEN0182)

Trees absorb odours and pollutant gases (nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulphur dioxide and ozone) and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark.

**Trees provide oxygen**

In one year an acre of mature trees can provide enough oxygen for 18 people.

**Trees cool the streets and the city**

USA trials show that average temperatures in Los Angeles have risen 6°F in the last 50 years as tree coverage has declined and the number of heat-absorbing roads and buildings has increased. Trees cool the city by up to 10°F, by shading homes and streets, breaking up urban “heat islands” and releasing water vapour into the air through their leaves.

**Trees conserve energy**

Three trees placed strategically around buildings can cut summer air conditioning needs and protect people in streets from the heat. By reducing the energy demand for cooling we reduce carbon dioxide and other pollution emissions from power plants.

**Trees save water**

Shade from trees slows water evaporation from grassed areas. Most newly planted trees need only fifteen gallons of water a week. As trees transpire, they increase atmospheric moisture.

**Trees can help to manage storm water**

Trees can help to reduce peak flows in increasingly heavy rainfall events.

13 October 2015
Dr Shann Turnbull – Written Evidence (BEN0110)

1. This submission to the House of Lords Select Committee of Inquiry into National Policy for the Built Environment is made in response to their “call for written evidence” of July 27, 2015.

2. The submission may be made public and reflects the views of the writer, Dr Shann Turnbull, and does not necessarily represents the views of the New Garden Cities Alliance (NGCA) of which he is a founding member. Founders of the NGCA are listed on its Home page at: http://gardencities.info/. I was invited to make this submission when attending a “Principles” working group meeting of the NGCA in London on September 23 when all three directors of the NGCA were present. A draft was distributed on September 29th.

3. This submission builds on the expression of interest sent by my colleague, Thomas-Emanuel Hoepfner of May 30, 2014 to The Hon Nick Clegg and The Hon Rt. Eric Pickles pursuant to a prospectus issued in April 2014 inviting expressions of interest for initiating “Locally-led Garden Cities”492. Thomas Hoepfner became a founding director of the NGCA. His expression of interest was co-drafted by myself and can be viewed at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B13bh2n3zrFAVDczQkVFcjVtSGs/edit?usp=sharing.

4. I am a resident of Sydney, Australia and would I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions as may be desired by Skype. A bibliography of my writings on reforming the theories and practices of capitalism are posted at: https://independent.academia.edu/ShannTurnbull. My articles on reforming the invisible ownership, control and financing arrangements for the built environment are archived by the NGCA at: http://gardencities.info/reference-documents/01-principles/community-land-bank-clb/community-land-bank-bibliography/.

5. There are three fundamental intellectual gaps in policy regarding the built environment:

   5.1 The invisible architecture of ownership, control and financing of the built environment is not considered as a policy variable;

   5.2 The existing invisible architecture creates gross inequality, inequity and alienation of citizens to deny them access to affordable housing;

   5.3 Citizens lack the power to directly initiate changes to correct the above problems.

6. To correct all three problems it is recommended that Parliament:

   6.1 Amend the Local Government Act 1972, or introduce other facilitating legislation, to allow citizens to initiate local referendums493 within their local government areas to redesign the invisible architecture of their built environment to allow urban sites and


493 Like holding a “local re-set referendum”. However, different conditions are suggested in this submission.
services to become self-financing to remove the cost of land for home owners and commercial developers/investors.

6.2 Not undertake, approve or permit any major urban infrastructure expenditure unless the ownership and control of the land whose value is significantly increased by such expenditures becomes mutually owned and controlled by all resident voters of the affected precincts. In particular, this condition should apply to any expenditure pursuant the prospectus issued by the Department of Local Government and Communities in April 2014 referred to above. Otherwise the expenditures will become counter productive in providing affordable housing by increasing the cost of land and so housing. Mutual ownership of land, but not necessarily any of its improvements is a core requirement for a precinct to be recognized as a Garden City by the NGCA.

7. The right to call a “Locally-led” referendum would depend upon one or more developers providing a feasibility study that the precinct is sufficiently large to capture sufficient uplift in values from its development or redevelopment to make the ownership of sites and services self-financing. This would eliminate the cost of land for both homeowners and commercial developers. The land value of UK housing can be expected to be at least half the price of a dwelling if it follows US and Australian and experience. Making urban land self-financing would then half the cost of housing and also create a compelling magnet to attract commercial developments. This would reinforce the self-financing processes by attracting further investment to generate a virtuous self-reinforcing further uplift in land values and sources of rent/rates to cross subsidize the housing sector. Details of how land sites and services can be made self-financing are indicated in a study by the London Center for Land Policy Studies and in my feasibilities studies and articles.

8. Only residents in the precinct with citizen voting rights would vote in the referendum. A vote of say 75% of eligible voters would oblige all owners of property to exchange their existing title deeds for two separate but stapled deeds to allow the ownership of all land in the precinct to become mutually owned through a Cooperative Land Bank (CLB). This would

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498 Ibid.


500 Lord Glassman suggested on June 30, 2014 that a 75% vote would be sufficient to protect members of the House of Commons from undue influence of property owners in any of their constituencies that may be affected. He made this suggestion after opening the second Garden Cities conference at Letchworth.
create a “Duplex” title system. Existing private ownership of any improvements on the land would be retained on a negotiable basis. So no lender with a mortgage over existing titles would be disadvantaged as no equity values are lost and could well increase even without re-development proceeding. No-residents would obtain equity in the form of non-voting participating redeemable and negotiable preference shares. Only residents obtain voting shares to enrich democracy to further local self-determination.

9. If more than one developer provided a feasibility study then citizens could also vote for which developer was employed by the CLB. All residents whether owners or renters would vote to control the CLB. This constitution of the CLB would possess provision for any affected stakeholders to form their own advisory councils to create an inclusive “Network” system of governance as described at: https://tinyurl.com/NetGovernance to promote self-governance and so further and enrich democracy with local self-determination.

10. It is important for Law Makers and their constituents to understand the differences between a CLB and the more widely known Community Land Trusts (CLTs). CLTs were developed and established by my close associate Robert Swann, the President of the E.F. Schumacher Society in the US. He promoted the CLB concept in various seminars, lectures and publications from the 1980’s as he recognized how they made a fundamental difference in ameliorating the inequities, inefficiencies and alienation created by current system of owning, controlling and governing the built environment as noted below because:

10.1 CLT’s require public money or private grants to acquire land to perpetuate the current inefficient and inequitable system of property rights;

501 Equity value could increase because the CLB would be sharing the value of land not previously privately owned in the precinct. The CLB could be considered like a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) that did not necessarily own any buildings on the land. The value of CLB shares would be established in a similar way to a REIT.


505 Pat Conaty, one of the three directors of the NGCA, was largely responsible for introducing the CLT concept to the UK. Both CLTs (pp. 85-100) and CLBs (pp. 289-295) were featured in his 2012 book co-authored with Michael Lewis: The Resilience Imperative: Cooperative Transitions to a Steady State Economy, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers.

10.2 CLTs exacerbate inequality by not sharing uplift in site values with residents who contribute to their creation because CLTs do not issue shares to residents;

10.3 CLTs make housing affordable by removing land values from the market and so in the words of Kelso & Kelso\(^{507}\) on page 33 they introduce “the sterilization and morbidization of capital ownership”.

10.4 CLTs do not provide a basis for transforming the ownership and control of the existing built environment to a more equitable, efficient and sustainable system as proposed in paragraph 6.1.

10.5 Because of point 10.1, CLTs do not operate at a scale to:

(a) Establish viable garden cities in green or brown field sites;
(b) Provide competitive advantages in attracting commercial developments to cross subsidize affordable housing on a sustainable basis;
(c) Possess the bargaining power to attract new commercial investment on a basis that denies the overpayment of investors in perpetuity;
(d) Establish a viable independent currency region.

11. The writer could provide further information as may be desired by Skype. For completeness, brief answers to the 13 questions raised by the Select Committee on “Policy making, integration and coordination” are set out below in italics. - The answers are made on the assumption that the recommendations in paragraph 6 are implemented.

**Policymaking, integration and coordination**

1P. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? *No – There is little meaningful involvement at citizen level*

   What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners? *Policy makers should restrict their involvement to indirect empowerment as recommended in paragraph 6.*

2P. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? *No comment*

   How could integration and coordination be improved? *No comment*

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3P. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? *Policy cannot possibly be sufficient, as it is not guided by the citizens affected.*

   Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? *Yes – Citizen*

engagement to enrich the quality of democracy and self-determination.

If so, what should be prioritised and why? Answer in previous question.

4P. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? Yes, Kate Henderson, TCPA Chief Executive said508: “England is alone in North West Europe in having no national or sub-national spatial planning approach to the major challenges that face us as a nation, including housing, climate change and rebalancing the economy”.

What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy? Views on how to answer this question are currently under consideration by the NGCA.

5P. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? Timescale is to sustain humanity on the planet with minimum intergeneration changes.

How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking? As above.

Buildings and places: New and old

6P. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Government role should be indirect by providing facilitating legislation as recommended in paragraph 6.1 and directly by not aggravating affordable housing with tax benefits, grants and subsidies, etc as proposed in paragraph 6.2.

Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? Only as proposed in paragraph 6.

What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system? No comment as no knowledge of recent reforms. But they are most likely to be based on simplistic grants, subsidies and so counterproductive as described in paragraph 6.2.

7P. How do we develop built environments, which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Introduce mutual ownership and control of urban sites and services as described above.

Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? Not efficiently unless the current ownership and control system of sites and services are mutualised as described above.

How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made? It requires a case-by-case analysis. This would be required on a case-by-case basis to mutualise the ownership and control of all sites and services.

8P. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future
planning, regeneration and place-making? *No comment.*

How can more be made of these national assets? *No comment.*

**Skills and design**

9P. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? *No – because they are poorly aware of the invisible structures of urban environments are not fit for purpose and lack an education in how to design their governance infrastructure*\(^{509}\).

How could we begin to address any skills issues? *Sponsor education for governance architects*\(^{510}\).

Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas? *No skill or resources available to plan or shape the invisible governance architecture described in footnotes 12 & 13.*

10P. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? *Adopt the two recommendations set out in paragraph 6.*

How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced? *Adopt the two recommendations set out in paragraph 6.*

**Community involvement and community impact**

11P. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? *No – because they have no knowledge of network governance described in footnote 12.*

How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities? *Introduce network governance to promote political, economic, social and resource self-sufficiency and self-governance.*

12P. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? *Cannot be as effective as it could be because network governance is not adopted.*

Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed? *Public engagement cannot be meaningful with government based on top down command and control hierarchies.*

**Financial measures**


\(^{510}\) [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B13bh2n3rzFABiVm5zhWVzIXNDA/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B13bh2n3rzFABiVm5zhWVzIXNDA/view?usp=sharing)
13P. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Yes, introduce legislation to facilitate “Locally-led” initiatives to adopt self-financing mutually owned land ownership and control as recommended in paragraph 6.

Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers? Yes, by locally led bottom up feedback inherent in the governance architecture of Cooperative Land Banks.

Shann Turnbull PhD
Principal: International Institute for Self-governance
Founding member: Sustainable Money Working Group (UK)
Founding member: New Garden Cities Alliance

06 October 2015
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Written Evidence from UK-GBC

The UK Green Building Council (UK-GBC) is an independent, membership-based, not-for-profit organisation committed to radically improving the sustainability of the built environment by transforming the way it is planned, designed, constructed, maintained and operated.

UK-GBC campaigns for buildings which benefit people and the environment. Energy efficiency in buildings is vital for reducing energy demand and cutting the UK’s carbon emissions. But buildings can also play a key role in improving the health and wellbeing of people who live and work in them, and UK-GBC is part of an international campaign, Better Places for People511, which aims to highlight this link.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Although many decisions that shape our built environment are most suitably made at the local level, where need and capacity can be effectively evaluated, a clear long-term ‘destination’ or ‘aspiration’ from central Government is needed to deliver a sustainable built environment. Currently this leadership is missing.

Even in the relatively quantifiable area of carbon, where we have the carbon budgets, we don’t have clear enough targets by sector to translate the need to drastically reduce our carbon emissions into clear strategies and backstops for our built environment – e.g. what emissions reductions should we be achieving from commercial buildings or homes by 2020? Without a sense of the destination, it is impossible for the different administrative and industry players to work out how to get there.

The built environment industry needs, at a minimum, this long-term direction to enable investment, innovation and the reduction of costs for delivering sustainable and future proof new communities and regeneration of existing communities.

There is a clear role and responsibility of policy at local and national level to deliver socially and environmentally desirable outcomes within our built environment.

511 http://betterplacesforpeople.org/
In some significant cases there are no drivers outside of policy to clearly direct the market to deliver. One such area is the delivery of energy efficient and sustainable new homes. Consistency and policy clarity are essential pre-requisites for continued private sector investment and innovation. In this market, we strongly believe that consumer demand alone will not be enough to drive the delivery of energy efficient, well-designed sustainable homes.512

In the removal of the zero carbon homes policy (which expected to be introduced next year) and through the levelling of national housing standards as a result of the Housing Standards Review, the Government has removed the national policy driver as well as removing the ability of local planning authorities (LPAs) to promote locally relevant ambitious policies to deliver energy efficient and sustainable homes. Furthermore, with the removal of the Code for Sustainable Homes Government has removed the common language that has been used by LPAs and housebuilders or developers to negotiate or work in partnership to deliver better than regulated standards.

How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

The lack of policy coordination across the main Governmental departments responsible for buildings has been made very clear over the last few months. Announcements made within the same week from DCLG on the scrapping of the zero carbon policy that would have delivered highly energy efficient new homes and DECC on the importance of improving the energy efficiency of our homes sent highly contradictory messages.

In the UK we do not have a Minister for Buildings or the Built Environment, neither do we have a national policy for the built environment, which means there is no portfolio in which holistic consideration for all types of buildings and the interconnections between them sits. We have also recently lost the role of the Chief Construction Advisor which only indicates that the currently not-joined up situation will continue if not worsen.

National policy for planning and the built environment

Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

512 Reasons for this include: the shortage of homes resulting in a lack of choice for buyers; the market value of a home not reflecting the long term costs/savings of a home; poor knowledge/awareness of labelling schemes amongst the public; a lack of knowledge about the improved comfort/cost savings of living in a more efficient home etc.
The presumption in favour of sustainability in the NPPF does not provide enough guidance on the balance between social, environmental and economic balances.

Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Planning for our future built environment needs to take into account the incredibly long lead times for delivering developments and even longer times for infrastructure projects which can easily extend to three decades.

The carbon budgets provide us with one certain factor by which we can undertake such long term planning. The buildings we build today will still be standing beyond 2050, by which date the 80% carbon reduction target will require us to largely decarbonise the building sector. Therefore planning and policies that define our built environment must be brought into line with and expressed in the terms of the requirements of the Carbon budgets.

Buildings and places: New and old

What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

Government’s most recent intervention in the housing supply market – the scrapping of the zero carbon policy and the Code for Sustainable Homes, does nothing to address some of the primary barriers to more homes being built but has ensured that the large numbers that are built will not be built to appropriate standards.

There is no clear evidence that the removal of the zero carbon standard, which will have devastating effects on the sustainability and energy efficiency of our new homes and on the green construction industry, will enable more homes to be built.

Tighter regulated standards for energy performance do not drive up the purchase price of new homes, rather the potential additional construction costs impact the purchase price of land.

DCLG identified small builders as the business group which it predicted would be most negatively affected by higher energy performance standards (in the Department’s Nov 2014 consultation on an exemption for small sites to the zero carbon definition). However, the business challenges for small house builders were summarised in a recent NHBC report (Oct 2014). The top barriers identified (unprompted) by small housebuilders and developers were: planning and process conditions, obtaining finance, availability and cost of land, and
skilled labour and cost of labour. Legislation/red tape received only 4% of the responses (363 companies surveyed).

How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

Retrofitting the existing building stock to reduce energy demand will be crucial to tackling emissions from buildings and achieving the UK’s carbon targets. But improving millions of homes and commercial properties represents a significant challenge in driving interest among owners and facilitating effective improvements. Given the scale of this challenge, improving the energy efficiency of existing building should be recognised as a national infrastructure priority, backed by a long term infrastructure strategy and Government capital investment.

An infrastructure strategy should be based around ambitious long term strategic outcomes and overall demand reduction rather than the success of individual policies. Before its cancellation, the zero carbon policy for new homes provided this form of long term certainty and was extremely successful in driving innovation and cutting costs. Particularly for existing housing, this approach would allow demand drivers and finance mechanisms to be developed which are bespoke to different tenures and household circumstances.

Government has a key role to play in helping to drive the link between energy efficiency and property value. Minimum standards for privately rented properties are due to be introduced in 2018 but are already beginning to have an impact on business investment decisions. The use of operational energy ratings through Display Energy Certificates also has the potential to create a reputational driver for businesses to choose more efficient properties and reduce energy usage. Similarly, homeowners could be incentivised into buying more efficient properties by factoring energy efficiency into stamp duty rates and mortgage affordability calculations.

To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

Skills and design

Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could

513 UK-GBC has produced recommendations for a long term policy framework for home energy efficiency:

514 For more information about factoring energy efficiency into mortgage affordability calculations, please see:
http://www.ukgbc.org/resources/publication/role-energy-bill-modelling-mortgage-affordability-calculations
we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Skills are a significant issue for both public and private sectors.

We are concerned that there is a skills shortage in Development Control which has been exacerbated by public sector cuts. This is impacting on the ability of local authorities to seek out the requisite expertise to ensure that development is appropriate and meets high sustainability standards. Under-resourced Local Authority Planning Departments pose significant risks in slowing down appropriate development and the delivery of appropriate and unsustainable development. Local Authorities need to be supported to build up expertise in planning and development control.

Professionals within the built environment in the UK are well-skilled and diverse. A broad range of interrelated skills will be vital to deliver low environmental impact, healthy and productive buildings and communities. Everyone – from architects to law firms to building managers need to continue to learn and take, on new information as the sustainability challenge evolves. Skills development and training at all levels and in all professions needs to respond in advance to future needs and trends.

The industry has made huge progress to develop the skills and techniques needed to deliver sustainable built environments and thriving communities. However the industry will find it very difficult to continue to invest if there are no clear signals provided by a national strategy or direction.

The recent announcements around the scrapping of the zero carbon targets, the removal of the Code for Sustainable Homes and the abandonment of the Green Deal have sent a very damaging message to the industry on future intent.

Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Building design in the UK is greatly influenced by the structure of Part L of the Building Regulations and by SAP and SBEM as the tools used to prove compliance with Building Regulations. A recent UK-GBC Task Group made a suite of recommendations on essential improvements to Part L and SBEM.

Community involvement and community impact

Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?
The body of evidence on the impacts our buildings have on the health, wellbeing and productivity of the people who live, work and learn in them is growing and UK-GBC is making a significant contribution to this work (see UK-GBC’s health, wellbeing and productivity work).

Consideration of a number of factors that if overlooked can impact heavily on the health impacts of new homes has been lost with the removal of the Code for Sustainable homes and not picked up through either Building Regulations or the new national standards. Daylighting, sunlighting, ventilation, overheating (and the important interplays between them) are not dealt with effectively under the Building Regulations only system. Furthermore, Building Regulations do not encourage a focus on the materials used in new homes and the ‘off-gassing’ of VOCs can have one of the greatest impact on indoor air quality in a new building.

As recommended by the Housing Standards Review Challenge Panel, these issues need to further investigation.

How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Financial measures

Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?
Q251 The Chairman: Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by Members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections, where necessary. Can you just introduce yourself with a small background for the purpose of the transcript?

Louise Sunderland: My name is Louise Sunderland. I am the senior policy adviser for the UK Green Building Council. I specialise in new-build policy in the UK Green Building Council, although we have a large programme of work on the existing building stock. I undertake some work in a freelance capacity working mainly on European energy efficiency delivery and policy.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. What would be the main impacts on sustainable development resulting from the abolition of the zero-carbon homes requirement?

Louise Sunderland: I think a colleague of yours, Lord Deben, put it very well last week when the Committee on Climate Change, which he chairs, launched their report on the fifth carbon budget. He said that with the scrapping of the zero-carbon targets we are in danger of building homes today that will need to be retrofitted tomorrow. I totally agree with that. I would go
further and say that we are not in danger; these homes will need to be retrofitted tomorrow. The contribution that will be necessary from the building stock is very clear in the carbon budgets. That is a very large contribution. Our homes will need to be incredibly energy efficient and, unfortunately, the regulated standards that we have today do not get our new homes to that standard for the future. I do not need to explain to the Committee the added difficulty of retrofitting homes when householders are living in them and when a lot of structural decisions have already been made. There are multiple barriers to doing that work at a later stage.

On the ground, we are in real danger of standards going backwards. We have had a situation in the past where, driven by the zero-carbon policy which was announced in 2006-07, we had a very clear trajectory. Local authorities, where they have seen viability and need in their area and where they have been ambitious, have encouraged and required higher standards. Certainly from the UK Green Building Council’s membership’s point of view, there are a lot of housebuilders and developers who have sought to pursue higher standards. That has meant that we have seen quite a lot of developments coming forward. We are talking about some very large numbers of above building regulation standards.

The combination of the scrapping of the zero-carbon policy, on the one hand, and the housing standards review, on the other, which has restricted local authorities’ powers to require higher standards in their planning policies, means there are very few drivers for going above building regulations. Where we have seen collaborative or voluntary action, pushing the standard a little higher, I feel there is very little to continue to drive that. Arguably, that is now prevented, given this combination of the zero-carbon policy going and the housing standards review restricting local authorities’ powers. That means we have gone from building regulations holding the role that regulation should have, which is to bring up the bottom, to a point where building regulations become almost a ceiling, and that is an incredible worry.

The other important point to make is there are very few market drivers for energy efficient homes. So this is an area where regulation is incredibly important. Lots of factors prevent a true and strong signal coming from the market to a housebuilder to illustrate that investment
in more sustainable housing will be rewarded, valued and eventually work within their business model.

We have lack of supply, which is incredibly evident, but also lack of choice and larger factors that influence a house buyer’s choice of home—not least school catchment area, access to public transport, those kinds of things—which mean that, even if a house buyer would choose a more efficient home over a less efficient home, we are not seeing those signals because they are being clouded by all these other factors. That is quite bleak. I do not feel I have dressed up that situation at all; it is a fair and accurate analysis of the situation for housing standards.

Perhaps I could say a couple of other things about the broader carbon objectives that will suffer and the industry perspective. From the point of view of broader carbon objectives across the piece, I think everyone will know the zero-carbon standard for homes had within it two major pieces. One was a minimum standard that needed to be delivered in the home, or on the site of the home, through fabric improvements—insulation—and potentially renewable energy. Then between the minimum standard and the full target there was a flexibility element, cognisant of the fact that some sites have restrictions on them. If the stretching standard could not be cost-effectively delivered on one site the offsetting mechanism allowed the costs not to be pushed too high for those particular sites. That allowable solutions mechanism, which was how it was termed, provided a huge potential for a national fund or locally delivered solutions to overcome some of the barriers to delivering other built environment sector solutions. We might be talking about decentralised heat and retrofitting of existing stock, two really big challenges that I think we are yet to tackle effectively.

At the time the Productivity Plan was launched in July, the UK Green Building Council membership had a group in place looking at how the building sector could get most value and most carbon value out of that allowable solutions mechanism. This is another huge piece that has been lost, aside from the individual homes and the minimum standards delivered there. This allowable solutions mechanism was another piece of potential that the building sector was keen to pursue that has been lost through the loss of this standard.
The only other thing to say from the broader perspective is that we did not only have in place a zero-carbon homes standard, but we also had a standard for zero-carbon non-domestic buildings to follow in 2019. We should be clear that that standard has been scrapped as well. The two sister policies sitting together have been got rid of. This does not follow from the justification that was given for the removal of the homes standard, which was about the housing crisis and needing to deliver more homes, more quickly, and reducing regulation. We do not have a non-domestic buildings crisis in the same way as we have a housing crisis. It is very difficult to understand why that target was also scrapped.

Touching on the impact on the industry, we have a housebuilding industry that has spent the last 10 years preparing for this, and they have spent an awful lot of money. Anecdotally, a single member puts the amount of money spent and wasted in the tens of millions. That is a single member. We have 400-odd members just in our membership. The industry is much broader than that.

Lord Inglewood: What do you mean when you say they have spent this money?

Louise Sunderland: That would be on research and development in moving the house designs from delivering previous standards in expectation of delivering the higher new standards. I do not have the figures, unfortunately, but I could look to provide them to the Committee, of the construction products industry, which has to move faster than the housebuilding industry. That industry has to move much earlier with research and development to bring products to the market to offer to the housebuilders to include in their designs, and their investment would be huge.

The Chairman: If you have any other ideas on that particular aspect, could you drop us a note about it?

Louise Sunderland: Yes, I will. The final point is that we are now slightly adrift. In the last 10 years we have had this very clear trajectory and everyone has known where they are going and have had a lot of time to put in place the strategies. Now we do not know where we are going. We do not know when the next update to building regulations might be and, therefore, industry has nothing to place its investment in. Not only have we had wasted investment, but
we now have no replacement trajectory. The arguments for repeated investment next time, based on a governmental policy, will be much harder to make.

**The Chairman:** My final question is: who is making the Government aware of all of this? Are you? Is there a trade association? Is there an institute? Is there anybody who is bringing the cause up and showing them, as you have done to us very clearly, what the problem is?

**Louise Sunderland:** There are a lot of us trying. The UK Green Building Council has a very long history, particularly with the zero-carbon policy, because we were involved in its origination. The Zero Carbon Hub was set up as a collaboration between industry and government to work out the technical standards. Certainly on the zero-carbon perspective, we have shouted as loud as we can, to be honest with you. With a vast group of other commercial organisations, green groups and membership organisations, we have also made representations to the other Committees in the House of Commons who are looking at similar issues around green growth and the building sector. We have made representations.

**Q252 Baroness Andrews:** I want to ask a couple of quantifiable questions. In percentage terms, how much do our homes contribute to our carbon emissions?

**Louise Sunderland:** Off the top of my head I think it is around 22%.

**Baroness Andrews:** In relation to new homes, can we quantify the increase in our emissions? Can you work that figure out for us?

**Louise Sunderland:** I am sure the Committee on Climate Change has those figures. I do not have them to hand here, but I could certainly follow up with those.

**Baroness Andrews:** How much is it going to save developers? What is the economic argument for making this change in terms of development costs of new housing?

**Louise Sunderland:** The most recent cost analysis of delivering the previously defined zero-carbon standard was done at the beginning of 2014. That looked at the entire cost, both delivering the minimum standard and the cost that might be offset through the allowable solutions mechanism. That came at an average cost of around £3,600 per unit. That is not the minimum or the maximum. Obviously flats being delivered would have an extra over-cost of much lower than that. The important point from that report was that this was the second of these analyses—the first was done in 2011—and they had seen a 50% reduction in those three years in the extra over-cost, so in the extra cost for a developer to deliver this standard.
Baroness Andrews: It had come down 50%.

Louise Sunderland: It had come down 50% in three years. This was two years ago and they projected that the costs would fall hugely. It is also important to say that costs fall with volume. Things become cheaper, products become cheaper and designs and delivery become cheaper when the supply chain is well-oiled and delivering a lot of volume. We saw that 50% reduction in cost when there was not a huge volume of that standard of homes going through. Some of the major housebuilders were involved in a project, which I can send you information on, AIMC4, where housebuilders came together to look at how they could deliver homes to code level 4 on energy efficiency at the same price as the previous standard. They were confident at the end of that to say they had not delivered those homes at that standard for the same price yet but, with volume, they would.

Baroness Andrews: Have the developers joined with you in telling the Government that this is not cost-effective, or are the developers really pleased that this “burden” has been taken off them?

Louise Sunderland: Obviously I speak for our members, who are members of the UK Green Building Council, which indicates they may be more progressive. I cannot speak for the rest of developers and housebuilders in the country, but from our membership, on which sit some of the biggest housebuilders, there was a complete willingness to deliver this standard. All of the work that was done by the Zero Carbon Hub, which is part funded by NHBC, and had a lot of the major housebuilders on the working groups, delivered a standard they were happy to deliver. They did not sign up to a standard that was impossible.

Q253 Earl of Lytton: I can relate professionally to everything you have said. There are a couple of things I want to ask. Given the high standards of insulation that are required in a zero-carbon home, first, is construction quality an issue? Secondly, because I come across this quite a lot, is there a problem with the user interface in relation to people not understanding how very efficient and highly insulated homes should work, things like people drying their washing in the living room because they do not have another facility to do it, and condensation arises? Are we getting near to cracking some of these problems? I do not know whether there is a particular problem with construction quality among people who are
members of your organisation, but I have come across some elsewhere. Is that going to be an issue? Technically, this is a legacy that could damage downstream satisfaction on both counts.

Louise Sunderland: In the UK, we need to improve upon construction quality across the board. I find a slightly artificial differentiation between quality of insulation standards, or sustainability standards, versus build quality, full stop. It has been repeatedly said that we need to improve the building control and checking of our homes. For example—not in domestic buildings—at the moment the UK Green Building Council members are coming together to look at delivering designed performance, ensuring that what we deliver actually does what we design it to do. That is in commercial buildings, but the Zero Carbon Hub has done a very similar piece of work for homes. There is work going on specifically to look at, if we measure a building after it has been constructed and, for some reason, its running cost, carbon impact or kilowatt hour per metre squared is higher than we expected, what are the causes? What are the individual elements that we need to address in the construction process? There is a lot of work going on there.

The first thing I would say on the user interface is that I feel a lot of housebuilders—and this is evidenced by the AIMC4 project that I referenced earlier—would rather deliver high standards through fabric efficiency and efficient systems that a householder is relatively familiar with, a very efficient gas boiler, for example, rather than adding a lot of technologies that, as housebuilders, they may feel are not so attractive in the market. That design approach mitigates against a lot of what you are saying. That is not to say there are a lot of technologies that can work blind. Increasingly, design is going the way that the home should provide an environment that is comfortable without the user having to interact too heavily.

One area that potentially we need to continue to look at and change is air quality and ventilation. There is a lot of work going on at the moment to look at what is the best solution to ventilation: is it mechanical ventilation that the user has to interact with, or can we produce for example passive stack ventilation that people do not have to interact with so much? They are all issues that are being addressed and looked at. Along with the overheating issue, I feel they are issues that, as we push for better standards, we will discover and address as an industry. They are not necessarily issues that should be used to get in the way of still pushing for those higher standards.
Q254 Baroness Young of Old Scone: We have talked a lot about zero carbon. Can we move to some of the other sustainable building standards? I was rather fond of the Code for Sustainable Buildings. How far do you think building regulations have now taken account of standards across the board in relation to sustainable building? How far are there holes that are not being filled?

Louise Sunderland: That is an excellent question. I have already noted that the housing standards review, which was part of the mechanism that got rid of the Code for Sustainable Buildings, to which you are referring, is silent on energy, because it expected energy to be dealt with by the zero-carbon standards. There is a big hole in higher energy standards. What is more, we have gone from the Code for Sustainable Homes, which provided quite a holistic framework. It looked at a number of different building elements: energy and carbon, water, materials, waste, pollution, and health and wellbeing - which increasingly is becoming very important. We have had a few of those issues taken into the new building regulations framework, but there are a lot that are now outstanding. We are particularly worried about daylighting. Previously, daylighting was a design consideration that the Code for Sustainable Homes required a design to look at. That is not now included in building regulations. There is very little to encourage daylighting and sunlighting to be considered in the design of our homes. For me, that is a very important factor, as are indoor air quality and the materials used to build homes. Those are huge omissions that could lead to some very disappointing and potentially quite damaging results, particularly in the area of health and wellbeing. A focus on the sourcing of materials – to consider their embodied impacts, as in the carbon that goes into making them - but also as some materials have the potential to “off-gas” in a home, in an environment where families live and work. A failure to consider materials alongside a failure to adequately address indoor quality and potentially look at daylighting and sunlighting - all those things add up to massive oversights in the new framework that we have. This is something that the UK Green Building Council, as we engaged in the housing standards review, highlighted at the time. The comment we made was that we generally supported the move to nationalisation of standards, as long as building regulations were up to the task. Building regulations need to set out the very strong trajectory of ambition for a lot of these issues—as we had with zero-carbon policy, but have no longer—but also a trajectory of trying
to bring in some of these now overlooked issues so that they encourage a more holistic approach to design.

**Q255 Lord Freeman:** The Government seem determined to reach a target of 200,000 houses being built each year. One can understand that pressure but do you believe that can be achieved consistently with meeting the sustainable design standards which you have talked about? Do you think there is a conflict and, if there is, do you think it can be reconciled, and quickly?

**Louise Sunderland:** I do not believe there is a conflict; I do not think there needs to be and I have certainly not seen evidence of a conflict. I will back up that position if I may but, before I do so, let me ask: would we ask the same question about the presence of fire regulations? Would we ask the same question about the presence of structural regulations? Would we compromise on some of the health and safety and other important elements of our building regulations to deliver homes? Of course not—I really hope not, but of course we would not. What that illustrates is that we are still seeing sustainability, and particularly the energy and carbon elements of sustainability, as a “nice to have”—as something we are happy to have as long as it does not impact on delivering homes. It is not optional, particularly in the context of this week, with the COP21 negotiations in Paris opening yesterday with statements from world leaders. I noticed there was a consistent message, which was basically that this is the last chance we have. We have been through something like 15 years of these negotiations and we have not really achieved what we need to. That sounds very emotive, but it is important to frame that question in those terms. The impact of not delivering on our carbon targets may not be felt immediately by the family in a home which does not have a smoke alarm and therefore is terribly affected by a fire, but it will be felt by a much larger number of people and by the natural world.

That is the rather emotive bit, but turning to the evidence for why I take the position that there does not need to be this conflict, first, there is no evidence at all to say that the removal of a zero-carbon standard will help any more homes be built. There is an important misconception that we should level. Higher building standards do not lead to higher home costs; they do not exacerbate the affordability crisis. Housebuilders cannot dictate the price they sell their houses for; that is driven by the market. The potential extra cost of delivering
a home to a higher standard therefore influences the value of the land and the price the housebuilder can afford to pay for the land. The beauty of regulation is that every housebuilder bidding on that land is affected equally, so we get a situation where it is potentially the land market that has shifted but that does not mean more expensive houses. That is a common misconception.

The second point is that, as I said, the extra price for delivering the zero-carbon standard has been falling drastically. Regulation is, once again, one of the most important drivers for reducing the cost of delivery, because it creates volume in the market and therefore the market and the products in it can respond. The bigger, overarching point is that there are a lot of other barriers preventing the number of houses that you have referred to coming forward. Until we see the removal of those barriers, we will never see the much smaller evidence of the impact of the higher standards. Many recent reports have referenced this, including the Lyons review last year, looking across the whole country. Interestingly, the NHBC did a survey last year of smaller housebuilders. The Government is very concerned with supporting small housebuilders, who will be looked at to deliver some of these larger numbers of new homes, new entrants to the market being very important. The NHBC survey asked small housebuilders what the barriers to their business were, and the results revealed obtaining finance, which we have all heard before, availability and cost of land, and the cost of labour. Regulation and red tape was only reported by 4% of respondents. It is slightly ridiculous to use higher standards as a reason for the number of houses we need not being brought forward when we have these other huge barriers, which will still be there.

**The Chairman:** Can I just interject a thought? Part of the reason you cannot understand why everybody is not carbon-free is that the jury still seems to be out among government Ministers in both Houses of Parliament about whether or not we should spend a lot of money on this, when some of the cases have not been proven, and the other side of the coin is we do not create as much of this problem as China and other countries. People do not understand the size of it. It has not been very well or very simply explained. When we are told that we need a zero-carbon house, most men and women in the street would say, “What is the advantage? Why do we have to pay more for it?” There is a psychological problem.
Louise Sunderland: I think your second point about the house buyer perhaps not having been communicated to in the right way in the past is a very pertinent one. Certainly the industry has responded quite quickly, I would say, to the recent changes in the regulatory framework by putting a lot more focus on communicating with house buyers in ways they understand. There are two major initiatives coming at the moment that look to grade homes in line with the priorities people have, which might be costs, or health and wellbeing, but, as you say, carbon is sometimes an esoteric term.

Lord Inglewood: Is there any evidence about whether or not a green house or a zero-carbon house will command a higher price? Has anybody done any work on that?

Louise Sunderland: There is work going on at the moment by the BRE, who used to oversee and provide the assessment background to the Code for Sustainable Homes. That programme having been around for long enough now, they are looking at a piece of research on the resale value of higher-graded homes as opposed to other market homes or lower-graded homes. The research is due to come out very soon on whether those Code for Sustainable Homes accredited, high-standard homes, would command a higher price, and I would certainly recommend that the BRE come to the Committee when they have it.

Q256 Lord Inglewood: I was going to come back to a point in the argument which we left some time ago. On the assumption that we must improve energy efficiency in the buildings we have, what measures do you think are needed from the centre in order to assist bringing that about?

Louise Sunderland: There is a headline answer to that question, which the UK Green Building Council, along with a huge coalition of other organisations, is supporting as one of the most important measures that could be put in centrally, and this is for energy efficiency of the existing stock to be considered as a national infrastructure priority. A lot of research work has been done to look at how viable and effective this might be, and certainly an energy efficiency improvement programme across the existing stock meets the definition of infrastructure as set out by HM Treasury, the European Investment Bank and the International Energy Agency. So, it is possible within the framework we already have. Analysis has been done of the costs and benefits, and it has shown that there are net benefits to the economy and to the Treasury
of £8.7 billion over 10 years from this investment. I can forward to the Committee that research and a shorter briefing paper.

**The Chairman**: That would be really useful.

**Louise Sunderland**: That really would unlock funds and also stability for a programme delivering energy efficiency going forward.

**Q257 Baroness Rawlings**: I wanted to come in on this energy efficiency question. Earlier you mentioned ventilation, not in private homes but in public buildings, and energy efficiency. Why is there a law that requires air conditioning or something that is on all through the winter, and even in the summer, when opening windows would save a fortune? Nobody ever mentions that officially you have to have air conditioning otherwise you cannot take a building—it is mainly commercial; I am not talking about private because anyone can do what they want, but there is a huge amount of waste when even in the winter air conditioning is used.

**Louise Sunderland**: Obviously, what you are pointing to is how buildings are run, and you have pointed to a conflict between people having heating on and opening the windows or air conditioning on in the winter when it is far too cold, and that is very much about how a building is run by its facilities manager—there will normally be one in place in commercial buildings, as you say. This is an area that the industry is aware of, and the group I am working with at the moment on the gap between design and performance is looking at how those facilities managers could be better equipped to understand the buildings and the systems and that they do not come into conflict. That is quite separate from any regulatory drivers; it is literally about practice. For me, it is about making sure that the facilities managers, the people in control of the building systems, have a closer relationship with those building users, and that they get better and more feedback about how they feel and what they want to experience in their building. If you think about commercial offices, it all adds to the desirability of that building, because obviously people are happier and more productive in environments which they find comfortable.

**Q258 Baroness Young of Old Scone**: Coming back to the energy efficiency of the existing building stock to be made a criterion for national infrastructure, if that does not happen, what is the answer?
**Louise Sunderland:** That is a very good question. A big piece of the puzzle is mechanisms to move the market so that the housing market better reflects a more efficient home versus a less efficient home. That would potentially unlock some of that householder capital that is spent on bathrooms and kitchens to make investment, because they will see a return. We are currently doing work, which started through a piece of research with University College London, looking at mortgage lenders making better assessments of the energy bill of a future home in their affordability assessment for the lending. That research showed there could be a huge differential between the lendable amount on an efficient home versus an inefficient one, given that the running costs of that home would be lower and therefore the household budget would be lower than that for a less efficient home. This is a project we are pursuing over the next year or two. Those kinds of mechanism which help the market illustrate difference and illustrate value would be helpful.

However, I do not think we can escape the fact that we need a national programme. The Green Deal provided potential for that but, unfortunately, it was slow to be taken up and there were a number of structural issues with the lack of incentives surrounding the finance mechanism that did not enable it to see its full potential. In the absence of the Green Deal, there is very little at the moment that could lead us to this kind of national programme. Of course, there is the huge issue of fuel poverty; it is a national disgrace that we have people who are choosing between heating and eating, and who obviously cannot access some of the programmes of finance such as the Green Deal because their income is too low and they would be reluctant to take on debt. There needs to be a nationally funded programme of work to help those households.

**The Chairman:** What about smart meters? They have really been kicked into the long grass, have they not? If most consumers and householders knew about the savings they could make on ever increasing energy bills just by knowing and turning things down, they could make sure they do not leave the lights on and all the rest of the things we know about but do not do because we do not even know what the impact is. There have been no friends in high places looking after that issue.

**Louise Sunderland:** I think smart meters could be useful, but I do not think they are a solution in themselves. If the Committee would allow a small anecdote, I had a smart meter installed
in my own house two weeks ago and the installer came in, telling me every smart meter has to be accompanied by an in-home display that tells you what your home is using at the moment in terms of energy, which is the tool that you are pointing to that would allow people to better understand their usage. The installer plugged it in, left it in the kitchen, pressed a few buttons and explained how it works, and then said, “Don’t worry. You can unplug it and leave it in a cupboard”, which obviously is not the point. That is a small illustration of the fact that putting the meter in place as a tool that would potentially better inform householders about how to use their energy is helpful, but on its own it does nothing. If people become better informed about their household energy bills and their energy use, they could make the behavioural changes you are pointing to, but they also need the ability to make the more structural changes that will significantly reduce their bills.

The Chairman: If they are doing nothing at the moment, even that is something, is it not, until you get into a regulatory system where you are going to have to have structural changes? I think there is a lethargy about this section of the market, with people complaining bitterly about high energy bills and doing nothing about it.

Louise Sunderland: I agree with you that certainly smart meters, if rolled out in a more constructive way, with some compulsory time spent explaining how these things work, would be a much more useful tool. There is a fear, however, particularly with very low-income households, that raising awareness of the bill that is to come could add stress to someone’s lifestyle if they live in a home that is very difficult to heat adequately, yet they can see the pennies ticking over. Without giving people the real capacity to actually do something about it, that is a relatively damaging awareness to have.

Q259 Baroness Young of Old Scone: One last question on the private rented sector or the rented sector generally. There are few mechanisms for getting retrofit of energy efficiency into the rental sector, and the economic incentives are the wrong way round. Is there any solution to that?

Louise Sunderland: We obviously have the minimum energy efficiency standards that will come in to address the lowest-performing rented homes and commercial buildings from 2018 if they are in either a G or an F EPC banding, which are the bottom two. That is an incredibly important piece of legislation. There are concerns at the moment about enforcement and
how enabled tenants will be to come forward and have anything done about it if their property does fall into a G or F banding. The better news about that piece of legislation is that in the commercial market we are already seeing a “brown discount”, so in expectation of that legislation coming in in 2018, those offices that are rented out that fall into one of those two lower bands are now starting to be discounted in the market because there is an acknowledgement that in the very near future they will not be market-suitable. That illustrates, quite a long way before the legislation necessarily bites, the power of that kind of tool. Obviously, in the housing sector the importance will then be on enforcement and the capacity of the local authority, which will be charged with enforcement, to make sure those pieces of legislation are brought into effect.

Q260 Baroness Rawlings: Finally, a theme that has been going through all our meetings so far which we have not touched on today is: are the right training and skills programmes in place to support the delivery?

Louise Sunderland: That is a really important question, and I am not surprised it has come into your Committee’s inquiry. I am probably not the best expert to ask on this issue. I can point you to work that is going on in this area. Labour is an issue at the moment, and we need to invest in the right skills, and adequate sustainability skills. Leading on from the local authority point, I have a concern around capacity and skills in local planning authorities, local building control, and in the enforcement of things like the minimum energy efficiency standards, because local authorities have suffered with cuts, they have lost staff, and in some local planning authorities in particular they have lost very experienced staff. That is a key challenge in terms of delivering where we do have good regulation. From the industry’s point of view, another overarching point is that the industry is relatively good at responding in training and development where there are clear signals. The current very wishy-washy regulatory framework—the policy direction that seems to have completely stalled if not gone backwards—is giving the wrong signals to the industry, which will find it more and more difficult to invest in training and skills if it does not see a need and demand for those specific skills, and of course, it is sustainability skills I am thinking of here. There are a couple of organisations doing a lot of work on this. The Green Construction Board has a knowledge and skills working group, and they have a priority action plan which looks at skills development
through a lot of stages—through colleges, further education and all the way through professional development. The main point is that sustainability skills in particular should not be an added extra at this point in the development of the agenda. For every designer, contractor and builder, this should be as essential as any other part of the core curriculum, and we are not quite there yet.

**The Chairman**: Thank you very much indeed, and thank you for taking the time and trouble to give us very detailed answers to our questions. It has been very useful to us. We have not had another green/sustainable witness giving us this sort of information, which we must have, otherwise our final report will be lopsided. Thank you very much indeed.

**Louise Sunderland**: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

*01 December 2015*
UK Health Forum – Written Evidence (BEN0024)

About the UK Health Forum

1. The UK Health Forum (UKHF), a registered charity, is both a UK forum and an international centre for the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and dementia through a focus on up-stream measures targeted at the four shared modifiable risk factors of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, tobacco use and alcohol misuse. UKHF undertakes policy research and advocacy to support action by government, the public sector and commercial operators. As an alliance, the UKHF is uniquely placed to develop and promote consensus-based healthy public policy and to coordinate public health advocacy.

2. UKHF recognises that tackling the risk factors for NCDs demands action to address the wider economic, social and environmental determinants of disease, and that doing so will have potential co-benefits for health inequalities, sustainable development, climate change and social justice.

3. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to this evidence call.

Summary of Submission

3. Our submission focuses on two main points:

- The Government should support the development and re-development of sustainable and resilient local environments that support health and economic growth.

- The use of Health Impact Assessments, and tailored resources and tools, will assist local communities to shape their environments to better support health and wellbeing.

Questions

Q7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should Government play in any such undertaking?

4. UKHF believes the state has the ultimate legal and moral responsibility for the welfare and future prospects of new generations. Health is a public good and defined by the UN’s
Universal Declaration as a human right.\textsuperscript{515} The UKHF believes the UK Government has a responsibility to protect the population from new health threats, promote good health and wellbeing, and prevent disease. This includes the role our built environments have on both climate and human health. All Government departments should routinely consider their impact on the health of the population when developing and appraising social, economic, fiscal, infrastructure and environmental policy.

5. UKHF strongly encourages the Government to use the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guide for cross-Government contributions to creating sustainable communities. While the SDGs are designed for both developing and developed economies, there are a number of key goals pertaining to built environments (i.e. access to green space, air pollution, active travel infrastructure, etc.) and the UK will be expected to lead by example in striving to reach these goals.\textsuperscript{516}

Q11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

6. There is a growing body of evidence which demonstrates that the built environment is one of a range of important factors that influences people’s physical activity, consumption of healthy food and social interaction. These are key socio-environmental determinants, which are in part responsible for the rising rates of preventable, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and widening health inequities in the UK. For example, we know that licensing and planning laws allow (or dis-allow) for adding new fast food and hot food takeaway establishments to areas with already high saturations - a determining factor in local access to healthy food.\textsuperscript{517}

7. Those involved in delivering and managing our built environments have begun to understand and take into consideration the significant role the places where we live and work play in our mental and physical health, but they could be doing more. UKHF suggests the incorporation of Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) into all new local infrastructure projects to ensure the health and wellbeing needs of a given population are taken into


\textsuperscript{516} UK Health Forum. 2015. UKHF response to International Development Committee’s Inquiry: Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: \url{http://nhfshare.heartforum.org.uk/RMAssets/NHF_Consultations/2015/UKHF%20response%20to%20International%20Development%20Committee_090915%20(2).pdf}

\textsuperscript{517} Mitchell C, Cowburn G, Foster C. Report. 2011. Assessing the options for local authorities to use the regulatory environment to reduce obesity. The National Heart Forum. Available at: \url{http://nhfshare.heartforum.org.uk/RMAssets/UKHFreports/Assessingoptionsregulatoryenophysicalactivity.pdf}
account in planning and building projects. UKHF would also encourage those working most closely on local built environments to engage with Public Health England, and its counterparts in the other home nations, along with local public health teams to better understand the needs and public health goals of local populations.

8. To aid in this engagement, UKHF has developed a unique, online, evidence-based resource - Healthy Places - that provides tools to local authorities and public health leads in England for developing healthier and more sustainable neighbourhoods. The site contains innovative regulatory options and explains law often not fully understood, or, not recognised at all as having a potential impact on health in a local area. The resource showcases opportunities to promote local active travel and active communities, access to healthy food and local alcohol control measures, and is developing themes on fuel poverty and air pollution.

30 September 2015

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UK Indoor Environments Group – Written Evidence (BEN0112)

Evidence Statement for House of Lords Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

Statement prepared by the UKIEG Chair, on behalf of the UK Indoor Environments Group (UKIEG) Committee, 5th October 2015

1. About the UK Indoor Environments Group (UKIEG; www.ukieg.org)
   1.1. UKIEG was set up in 2003 with the goal of co-ordinating and providing a focus for UK activity concerned with improving indoor environments for people. It has some 250 members from academic, industry, government and practitioner organisations and disciplines, including architects, engineers, environmental scientists, toxicologists and medics.

   1.2. UKIEG works as an unfunded networking group to encourage research and appropriate policy developments to improve health and wellbeing in indoor environments, including homes, schools, hospitals, workplaces and public places.

   1.3. The following statement has been prepared by the UKIEG Chair, on behalf of the UKIEG Committee which includes members with expertise in building design, epidemiology and public health, indoor air quality, toxicology, policy development and implementation. Further details on the UKIEG are available on www.ukieg.org.

2. Questions within the call that this statement is relevant to
   2.1. This statement focuses on the need to explicitly consider the quality of the indoor environment and its impact on the health and wellbeing of occupants in any future policy relating to development of the built environment.

   2.2. The statement is specifically relevant to point 7 (developing sustainable and resilient built environments) and point 11 (how the built environment affects those who live and work within it). More broadly, the statement addresses the lack of coordination at policy level on matters pertaining indoor environments, health and wellbeing, relevant to point 2.

3. Relationships between the indoor environment and health & wellbeing of building occupants
   3.1. There are a number of building-related factors that can have direct and significant effects on human health and wellbeing. These include indoor air quality, temperature and noise levels. There are also a number of other factors including lighting,
ergonomics and visual aesthetics that contribute to occupant wellbeing and satisfaction.

3.2. People typically spend around 90% of their time indoors, with the majority of this in a workplace or in the home. Even if only quality of the air is considered, for many pollutants the indoor environment makes as great if not greater contribution to personal exposure than exposure from the outdoor environment.

3.3. Current legislation recognises the significance of lethal indoor pollutants such as carbon monoxide and mandates specific actions, for example around the installation of appliances and alarms and requirements of landlords to conduct annual checks. There is also a substantial body of evidence that thermal discomfort affects satisfaction and productivity in the workplace (Lan et al 2011). There are also well established relationships both for heat and cold of temperature-related morbidity and mortality, and it is likely the indoor environment plays a major role in determining exposures and health burdens. Thermal comfort is well recognised in guidance (for example, ASHRAE 2013, CIBSE 2013) and has led to actions such as programmes of home insulation, particularly in social housing. However, more needs to be done, and other aspects of indoor environments that affect occupant health are currently poorly considered and are not subject to the same policy actions.

3.4. There is growing evidence that ventilation rates in many buildings are below the levels required for occupants. Recent evidence from controlled chamber studies shows a direct relationship between ventilation rate (and hence CO₂ concentration from exhaled breath) and decision making performance (Satish et al 2012). There might be a correlation between poor indoor environments in offices and increased absenteeism (Milton et al 2000), and calculations for American offices have suggested that poor ventilation may have a substantial economic cost through reduced productivity (Fisk et al 2011). Workplace design can affect workers performance in many ways (Clements-Croome, 2015). Several studies carried out in schools have shown that many have very low ventilation rates which directly result in excessive CO₂ concentrations, increased illness absence and symptoms (Mendell et al 2015, Chatzidiakou et al 2015) and reduced learning capability and performance (Shaughnessy et al 2006, Haverinen-Shaughnessy et al 2011). There is also some evidence that poor ventilation is associated with increased risk of disease transmission (Menzies et al 2000, Sun et al 2011) resulting from less effective dilution of pathogens (Gilkeson et at 2013).

3.5. A review conducted by some of the world’s leading experts in indoor air quality recommended current building ventilation rates in many cases were too low (Sundell
et al. 2011). This was followed by the more recent HealthVent project in Europe (HeathVent, 2104) which recommended the “health-based reference minimum ventilation rate” of 4 l/s/person, when WHO indoor air quality (IAQ) guidelines are fully respected and the only pollutants are human bio-effluents (CO₂) – both situations that rarely arise in reality. This project also proposed that the lowest ventilation rate for schools should be 8 l/s/person.

3.6. Whilst further research is needed on the dose-response relationships between exposure to a range of indoor factors and health outcomes, WHO has developed guidance for selected indoor pollutants (WHO, 2009 and 2010), but this is rarely translated into practice within the UK. This is for various reasons, including lack of awareness in the construction industry, and difficulties associated with translating threshold levels of exposure into design parameters/solutions, which in turn require assumptions on factors such as ventilation levels, emission rates, and behavioural aspects. Greater collaboration is required between the construction industry, public health professionals, researchers and policy makers on how to design and manage buildings which are supportive of occupants’ health and wellbeing.

3.7. Of particular concern is the relationship between energy efficiency and indoor environmental quality. A growing number of studies show that increasing the air tightness of buildings to improve energy efficiency, particularly in homes, can result in very poor environmental quality measured by a number of different indicators. Key UK studies set out these unintended consequences of energy saving measures and the potential impact on human health - including for example potential increases in radon concentrations and associated lung cancer risk (Milner et al, 2014; Shrubsole et al 2014, Zero Carbon Hub 2013, Hamilton et al 2015).

3.8. A potentially significant area is the wider relationship between the design and management of workplaces and employee health and wellbeing. This includes, for example, the influence of design on activity levels and hence the contribution that workplace design – and more broadly the indoor environment - can make to facilitate physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviours. ‘Active Design’ is an emerging field that is the focus of several research studies (Marmot and Ucci, 2015; Center for Active Design, 2010), but should be considered when making future policy decisions.

3.9. Personal exposure also needs to be considered both in terms of exposure to pollutants in the domestic environment coupled with those in the workplace. Consideration of the additive effects of exposure within each environment should be taken into
account (Myers and Maynard, 2005; Ashmore and Dimitroulopoulou, 2009; Terry et al., 2014).

4. Need for a coordinated approach

4.1. Many critical aspects relating to the quality of the indoor environment, while acknowledged in guidance, are often given little attention in built environment development projects. This may result from a desire to reduce costs, a narrow focus on energy efficiency or poor knowledge among design teams. There is a strong possibility that the lack of consideration for indoor environmental quality has a substantial consequence for health of the UK population and hence economy and society.

4.2. There is at present in the UK a lack of a coordinated approach to the indoor environment, health and wellbeing, especially with regard to policy development. This is particularly important because of the pulls and pushes of different, sometimes conflicting, government policy imperatives that address, for example, energy efficiency, building design and construction, product emission standards, ventilation standards and air pollution guidelines/limit values. Moreover, there is no one particular department or agency that has overall responsibility for issues relating to the indoor environment, or even specifically to indoor pollution.

4.3. We propose that there is a clear need to establish a process or mechanism by which it will be possible to develop coordinated policy on issues pertaining to the indoor environment and human health and wellbeing; this should result, amongst other things, in the ability to provide information and guidance - to public and professionals alike - that leads to a better understanding and management of the health risks and benefits associated with the design, construction and use of buildings and other internal environments.

4.4. We suggest that there are three necessary elements:

- The naming of a specific government department (or agency) to take lead responsibility for issues relating to the indoor environment and public health.
- The establishment of a forum of representatives of government departments and agencies with interests and responsibilities in the indoor environment, including Defra, DH, DCLG, DECC, DfT, BIS, PHE and HSE, and other interested parties/organisations such as CIBSE, RSPH, RIBA, CIEH and GHA as well as the UKIEG.
- The establishment of a process by which scientific questions pertaining to the indoor environment can be addressed by independent scientists – this may
involve existing committees (such as COMEAP, COT, HSAC, BRAC) and/or the establishment of a new committee or new sub-groups in existing committees.

Some of these points were addressed in a statement produced by the UKIEG and submitted to COMEAP (Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution). The statement was discussed at the COMEAP Strategy meeting in May 2015. COMEAP’s response, and the original UKIEG Statement, are available on the UKIEG website (www.ukieg.org, News page).

5. Some Specific Current Needs

5.1. We suggest that the following topics should be given priority when developing future policy relating to housing development:

- Ventilation control of dwellings and the health risk-benefit trade-offs of reducing air exchange for the purpose of improving energy efficiency in housing;
- The role of housing/building policy in preventing summer and winter-related mortality and morbidity;
- The role of housing/building policy in adapting appropriately to climate change;
- The health risks associated with specific pollutants of the indoor air, and the potential cost-benefit of different forms of remediation;
- Overcrowding in dwellings and the principles for establishing health-based standards of adequate space;
- Design aspects relevant to the positive promotion of health and wellbeing through such measures as the selection of low-emitting materials, improved natural lighting, noise control, improved outlook, sound insulation and provision of private space.

5.2. There are additional important issues concerning other indoor spaces, including workplaces, schools and hospitals. Whilst these environments have more detailed design guidance available, there is still a lack of correlation between the rationale for design parameters and the resulting environmental quality. Schools are a clear example of this, where the design ventilation rate regularly leads to poor quality indoor environments (Bako-Biro et al., 2011; Montazami et al., 2015). There is therefore a need for a recognised source of information for public and professionals on health risks and benefits linked with the quality of the indoor environment.

5.3. It is worth noting that the health effects of PM$_{2.5}$, NO$_2$ and O$_3$ are among the current priorities for COMEAP, due to pressing needs from Defra (see COMEAP’s response to UKIEG statement, www.ukieg.org). Whilst much of the focus around these pollutants relates to outdoor air, exposure is also highly dependent on time spent in the indoor environment, the characteristics of buildings, people’s activities and indoor sources.
This highlights the importance of taking an integrated approach that takes account of indoor environments when assessing the health impact of outdoor pollutants. UKIEG contends that this aspect requires greater attention than presently demonstrated by government departments with responsibility for pollution and public health.

5.4 The UKIEG note that the lack of a government department lead for the indoor environment (which is also acknowledged in the COMEAP’s response, see earlier), highlights the fact that there is no government department with the responsibility to: create leading national policies and legislation on the indoor environment and account to Parliament; support the provision of funding, innovation and research; encourage those committed to working in this arena. More broadly, a strategy addressing indoor environments, health and wellbeing is needed, to lead and coordinate activity in the UK.

6. **UKIEG’s Role**

6.1. The UKIEG acts as a hub for expertise in indoor environments in the UK and hence a catalyst for action. UKIEG have no central funds, but would be willing and able to produce a range of pertinent and evidence based ‘position statements’ for consideration by government departments, agencies and expert committees, as appropriate. These documents would discuss concepts and points of principle with reference to published scientific literature to develop thinking, action and assist in the prioritisation of policy development.

6.2. UKIEG is also able to undertake the organisation of relevant fora, meetings and workshops with key researchers and other stakeholders, to facilitate discussion of the available evidence, to develop strategic research questions and encourage funding of research to aid future policy development.

Dr Marcella Ucci, Chair of UKIEG.

**References**


UK Indoor Environments Group – Written Evidence (BEN0112)


Page 1848 of 1964

http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/128169/e94535.pdf

06 October 2015
Call for Written Evidence

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. The Counties should be the prime strategic decision makers as they can see the big picture for infrastructure needs and problems and rural protection. Individual LPAs do not have this overall view.

2. Short term financial and economic gain for developers, LPAs etc seem to be the criteria. A house is for ever, and blighting the countryside is permanent. There needs to be an overall criterion of preserving the precious value of unspoilt countryside and unspoilt views for future generations to enjoy. This is also good for tourism today.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Brownfield sites should be the priority. There should be a presumption that the countryside is off limits to development unless the parish councils affected also agree. Too little weight is given to parish councils who know their area. Too often decisions are made by people who know nothing of the areas involved.

4. A spatial element in national policy might be more effective in directing attention to towns and cities and the thousands of acres of brownfield derelict land within towns and cities. This reduces the pressure on building roads, commuter trains etc. if development is kept within towns and cities.

5. It would help if we didn’t have to accommodate an increasing population to the equivalent of a new Birmingham every two years. The only solution to be consistent with the above answers, is to build more high rise flats in existing cities, as was done to accommodate an influx of millions of refugees in Hong Kong after the war. It is easier to build infrastructure (overhead trains etc) in a city than in the countryside.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. A fluid housing market is required once development zoning in existing town/city boundaries is agreed. This means scrapping stamp duty and capital gains tax, both of which inhibit the purchase and sale of properties. Most of the 2 million buy to let landlords are from class C1, not A & B) who are trying to boost their pensions. They want to sell on retirement but prevented from doing so by a 28% capital gains tax. Old people wanting to downsize are prevented by stamp duty charges if buying a smaller home. By reducing taxation, the market can then better satisfy demand. Activity brings revenue to the government through VAT on all goods and services involved in people moving house. This
should more than compensate for the loss of stamp duty and capital gains tax revenue, neither of which are large revenue earners.

7. Better to give tax breaks to refurbish terraced houses in northern cities in particular, many of which are empty.

8. Tourism is an important industry and our historic assets and the character of historic village and towns needs protection. The state sponsored vandalism of the 1960s destroyed the historic 16th/17th century hearts of towns like Worcester, and Gloucester and it was fortunate that the 1970s recession stopped even more damage. Parish Councils should be much more involved when it comes to local development, and the Counties should also be involved much more than now as they can see the overall value of tourism and preserving historic areas for future generations.

Skills and design

9. There should perhaps be in every county, a “culture tsar" whose role is to advise government departments, direct LPAs, liaise with parish councils and with those bodies involved in the protection of landscape and historic buildings and assets. Many of the professionals usually involved are only interested in their own sphere of expertise, and are often motivated more by the short term financial and economic outcomes than the concept of preserving the well-being of the countryside for present and future generations. Such a tsar would need to have the power of veto and referral to an Inspectorate whose mission would be to give weight to protecting the countryside and its historic assets and who would then adjudicate.

10. The only national input should be to lay down guidelines for the culture tsar and inspectorate in “9" above, that local character should be preserved. In other words, Cotswold stone in Cotswold villages etc.

Community involvement and community impact

11. There is little consideration given to the rural environment. As said above, more development on brownfield sites in towns and cities will reduce the traffic chaos in the countryside, and the consequent reduction in the quality of life for those living in the country, those wanting to live in the country, and tourists.

12. Local authorities do not give sufficient attention to parish councils or local groups involved in protecting the countryside and historic assets. Parish Councils need the right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against unwelcome decisions made by LPAs.
Financial measures
13. Market forces should not be inhibited by stamp duty and capital gains tax. The majority of affordable housing needs to be in towns and cities rather than in the countryside because that is where the jobs tend to be, and for people of limited means, living in the country is more expensive because two cars are often needed per household. Developers need to contribute to build infrastructure needs, whether roads, schools, medical facilities etc.

06 October 2015
Professor Vincent Goodstadt, Professor Cecilia Wong and Dr. Mark Baker
Centre for Urban Policy Studies (CUPS), the University of Manchester

We have set out below our responses in relation to questions 1-5 of the Committee’s call for evidence:

Policymaking, integration and coordination

**Question 1a:** Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level?

**Response:**

To answer this question, it needs to be recognised that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is not currently a planning framework that sets out the policies (and therefore decisions) that ‘shape England’s built environment’. Rather, it is essentially a collection of policies that has to be applied locally to ensure a consistent approach to local planning at the local level. However desirable these policies are, they do not shape the future of England’s built environment. They are necessary but not sufficient to secure the future quality and condition of England’s built environment. The following notes amplify this fundamental issue.

The effectiveness of our national planning process can be judged by its outcomes in terms of the scale, distribution and impact of development change in our towns, cities and countryside. By any measure we are failing as a nation in this respect. This failure is demonstrated by the following:

- The scales and range of new housing developments are totally inadequate;
- Traffic conditions are becoming unacceptable in many areas and the capacity of our strategic transport networks is exceeded throughout the country;
- Our core infrastructure provision (e.g. water, energy) is similarly at risk;
- The indigenous economic potential is not being harnessed (e.g. the potential of the Higher Education sector);
- Our ecosystem services upon which our urban areas (i.e. the built environment) are dependent are at increasing risk.

Herein lies the central conundrum facing the future well-being of this country. Despite having a sophisticated planning system, the question that needs to be asked is “Why are the resulting patterns of development less than those aspired to in the visions set out in the NPPF nationally or in local plans?”
The key to answering this question lies in recognising that our system assumes that making decisions at a local level by local councils or neighbourhood fora (where necessary acting jointly at the local level) will, when aggregated, produce the right scale of development in the right locations to meet the long term needs of England, in full, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The reality is that they do not. Local decision making based local perspectives of needs alone is inevitably sub-optimal because it lacks context (see below). The cumulative effect of these development decisions is to under-achieve development targets, create stress on core infrastructure and have cumulative adverse environmental impacts.

Despite the current commitment to localism and decentralisation there are key areas of decision making that must be taken at regional and national levels of governance. The nature of the problems, the functional areas of interdependency and the stakeholders that need to be involved mean that certain decisions have to be taken at a national of mega-regional level (i.e. wider than current regional units). It is therefore not so much whether decisions are taken at the right level but whether the decisions that have to be taken to secure the stated objectives and goals for the future of England are being taken at all. Such decisions fall into the following categories:

- **a) National requirements** in terms of economic growth (e.g. the directions of change and sources of growth clusters); national ‘social’ targets (e.g. housing; renewal; and health); the environmental framework (e.g. ecological footprint; renewed capital; spatial units); the national and international core networks in terms of capacity and constraints (e.g. airports; ports; IT, Energy).

- **b) Inter-regional balances** which set out broad scales & directions of change in terms of labour (numbers & source/migration), housing (numbers & quality) and environmental action (e.g. renewable energy, forestry) and based on a broad impact assessment in terms of additionality, displacement and diversion.

- **c) Border Issues** arising from such factors as inappropriate Standard Regions (e.g. South East/London/East of England), national boundaries (e.g. Severn Estuary, Scottish Links and N & S Ireland) and issues related to inter-regional Interdependence (e.g. North West and South Yorkshire).

- **d) National Flagship Priorities** in terms of the Economic Growth Poles which are linked to financial instruments (e.g. Enterprise Zones); Social Priorities (e.g. former Pathfinder Areas); Environmental Action (e.g. Community Forests, Flooding, Renewables); and infrastructure (e.g. short term - long term programming).
In effect there are limits on applying the ‘Principle of Subsidiarity’. The problem is that the decisions that should be being taken at the regional or national level suffer from an endemic fragmentation:

- Fragmentation of area, since the administrative areas at a regional and local level often have no relationship with the true functional geography within which people make choices in terms of such matters as housing and labour markets, and natural ecosystems;
- Fragmentation of functions between the silos of government their agencies;
- Fragmentation of policy objectives, e.g. areas being promoted for large-scale housing development within regions vulnerable to water shortages; and
- Fragmentation of analytical understanding, e.g. the aspirations for the Northern powerhouse and the ONS based forecasts used for planning.

As a result, many of the key decisions that have to be taken at a regional or national level are either sub-optimal or they are not being taken at all.

**Question 1b: What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment?**

**Response:**

**An Approach to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Three principles, in particular, underpin the Government’s agenda for the planning system – a strengthened *local input* into planning decisions, clearer *national policies* and a true commitment to *sustainable development*. The integrity and coherence of the system depends upon the delivery of all three. Without *national spatial planning*, local decisions will be without context and potentially in conflict not only with that of their neighbours but also with national interests. Similarly, sustainable development will remain mere rhetoric unless *national spatial planning* pins down the sustainability tests that need to be applied at local and national level.

**The Purpose**

The overall national planning goals are therefore to promote the balanced and sustainable development of England by setting out a framework for sustainable development; and of the priorities for economic, social and environmental regeneration; and for maintaining and

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enhancing the quality of the natural heritage and built environment. The challenge is how this can be operationalised.

Experience shows that national spatial planning has greatest added value if it is underpinned by one or more over-riding concept which creates real synergy between the necessary separate strands of government and helps deliver the priorities of the Government. In the current context ‘Economic Growth’ is the immediate priority and ‘Security’ is the longer-term need and therefore ‘Securing the Growth of the Nation’ or its equivalent could form the focus for national spatial planning. The key point is that this is to see national spatial planning as more than a mere administrative document (which, in essence, the current NPPF is) but to be a tool for re-engineering the nation.

The National Balance Sheet

Linked to this, national spatial planning could set out the ‘balance sheet’ and ‘future business plan’ for the development of the nation, which would summarise the key components of UK plc, for example:

a. A State of the Nation Report setting out:
   i. The aggregate capacity for development;
   ii. The underused capacities in our national stock (e.g. housing) and infrastructure systems;
   iii. The pinch points in our national infrastructure;
   iv. The scale and any identified priorities for urban regeneration;
   v. The ‘condition’ of the natural environment (e.g. level of risk).

b. The ‘Shifts’ in the Nation setting out:
   i. The economic, social and environmental trends; and
   ii. The national flows and goods, services and people; and
   iii. The external relationships.

c. The national Perspectives on:
   i. The directions and distributions of change; and
   ii. The potential ‘futures’ that national spatial planning seeks to accommodate and enable.

National Development Priorities

Therefore in addition to the guiding principles of sustainable development and the framework of nationally applied planning policies in the NPPF, national spatial planning should set out the national development priorities required to safeguard and deliver the economic, social and environmental future of England. These should include:
(i) The **National Hubs** which drive and secure the economic and social future of Britain. These would include amongst other things
- Airports
- Ports
- Inland freight terminals
- Knowledge/research centres of excellence
- Power supply
- Water Supply

(ii) The **National Networks** upon which all communities are dependent for accessing the national hubs and Major metropolitan areas, including, inter alia:
- Rail (passenger and freight)
- Road
- Canals/river systems
- Power grids
- Telecommunications
- The Water Catchment / Ecosystem Framework of England
- Green Grid, including Green Belts, National Park Systems, protected habitats and AONBs

(iii) The **National Flagship Projects** to transform the competitiveness and quality of life of England which are recognised as national economic, social and environmental priorities, and could include for example:
- Internationally important projects (e.g. The Olympics/Commonwealth Games)
- Transport Projects of National Significance (e.g. HS2, Cross-rail)
- Blue-Brown Priorities, i.e. Regeneration Priorities (e.g. UDCs) or New Town or equivalent projects
- Blue-Green Priorities (e.g. new Green Belts, New national parks or National Forestry Projects)

**Safeguarding the National Interest**

It is also important that national planning goals are safeguarded. If this is to be achieved within the context of Localism (and thereby minimise the need for national intervention in local decision making), we need to move from the current reactive approach to a more proactive open planning model whereby local communities have confidence because of the clarity about where there is a national interest that has to be taken into account locally. **National spatial planning** therefore needs to be clear about where the direct, cumulative and indirect wider impacts of development may raise national concerns, based around a presumption that the supply of development land should ensure that the national need for development is met in full, is deliverable and avoids blight, in particular to deliver the national planning priorities.
**Question 1c: How does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?**

**Response:**

The relationship between national and local policy making is critical because of the need in policy terms to square the circle between the apparently conflicting positions of Localism and UK plc. The nature of this conflict is that the localism agenda (by whatever name it is called) gives priority to local interests even when they are in conflict with national interests. This is reflected, for example, in the institutionalised nymbyism that is practiced by many local authorities and communities which seeks to minimise the scale of new housing developments in the locality and therefore has cumulatively contributed to the underachievement of housing targets nationally.

Similarly, national constraints have inhibited locally sensitive policy making or local entrepreneurship. This is typified in the capacity of councils to promote sustainable transport and public transport investment, in contrast to municipalities abroad who have much greater control of their own finances and tax raising powers. The net effect is that local aspirations far exceed resource availability. Historically, it was estimated that this could be in the order of threefold over bidding for new investment. The consequence is that such local plans become mere bidding documents and not a clear framework for programming development. More effective spatial planning, as indicated in the answer to the previous question, therefore has a two-fold benefit:

1. It gives confidence to local decision makers that their decisions will not be undermined and encourages joint working because of the clear framework;
2. It gives confidence nationally that local decisions will have the aggregate impact that is needed, for example, in terms of job growth and housing provision or in terms of the investment required.

**Question 2a: How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage?**

**Response:**

As indicated in the responses to the preceding questions, the answer is that policy is not well coordinated across government departments. The silo based approach is generally accepted. The work of C. Wong et al. for the Royal Town Planning Institute (refer: *A Map for England: Spatial Expression of Government Policies and Programmes*) is a very clear demonstration of this.
Question 2b: How could integration and coordination be improved (between departments)?

Response:
The related work by C. Wong et al ‘A Compendium of Spatial Maps for England’ demonstrates that it is highly feasible to draw existing policies and programmes of government together in terms of their spatial implications (i.e. their implications for specific areas /regions / localities). It should therefore be a requirement for all policies and programmes to be expressed spatially as a form of audit (comparable to other forms of audits of policy). In addition, it is also possible to require policies, and especially programmes, to be funded on the basis that they have demonstrated their spatial implications for different parts of the country. This is comparable to the policy approach advocated by the Royal Town Planning Institute in its paper on strategic planning. ‘Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries’.

National policy for planning and the built environment

Question 3a: Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment?

Response:
As indicated in our answers to Question 1 above, the policies in the NPPF merely ensure local decisions are taken on a consistent basis in accordance with agreed national policies. They are essentially reactive and not creative. They do not set out an overall vision of the scale and direction of change for the country, nor do they indicate the relative national role that they should perform (e.g. in terms of jobs and housing growth). What is required is a much more proactive spatial framework, as described earlier.

Question 3b: Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

Response:
All the factors in the NPPF are relevant to the practice of good planning. The essence of planning is to take an integrated approach to all factors. In any particular situation, the balance, synergies and trade-offs between factors will be different. The NPPF should not therefore seek to prioritise the range of factors it lists, but rather give greater guidance in terms of how decisions should be taken when these factors are in conflict. For example, there
are inherent potential conflicts between the short term economic goals and long term sustainable approaches to sustainable development, or between people’s aspirations to a ‘better life’ in terms of material well-being (e.g. mobility provided by cars) and the impact of climate change. However such guidance cannot be effectively given without a clear spatial framework against which to assess relative impacts.

It is therefore considered that a more integrated approach might be more useful to get away from the checklist approach that the current NPPF encourages. An initial assessment would suggest that these could be encapsulated in a concise Framework of Policies based on three key themes, as illustrated below, all of which are capable of being interpreted without needing major explanation (i.e. documentation):

(a) Support and promote sustainable development by:

- Promoting urban renewal and regeneration in preference to further urban expansion;
- Providing a co-ordinated approach to rural areas, reflecting the varying needs within them;
- Maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres;
- Locating new development where it is linked to sustainable transport;
- Identifying opportunities for the development of renewable energy.
- The strategic management and development of the national transport network;
- Designating long term Green Networks including Green Belts.

(b) Identify opportunities to meet the local need for development by providing:

- A settlement strategy which has a 20 year horizon;
- A related supply of land for industrial and business development, and the safeguarding of national economic development priorities identified in the NPPF;
- A minimum 5 year effective housing land supply in each Housing Market Area, giving priority to the use of brownfield land;
- A land bank for aggregate minerals of at least 10 years and the safeguarding of mineral deposits for future extraction;
- A spatial strategy for dealing with waste management and disposal;
- A zero-carbon society;
- A framework for the development of sports and recreational facilities, and open space;

(c) Protect, enhance and create environmental resources & ecosystems including:

- Habitats and species of national and international significance;
- Prime land and other important agricultural land;
- Landscapes of international, national and local importance;
- The historic environment, including archaeology;
• Coastal areas;
• Other areas subject to significant change from climate change;
• Woodland and forest resources; and
• River catchments and watersheds, including areas liable to flooding.

**Question 4a: Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective?**

**Response:**

Yes. There is no spatial perspective in the NPPF or NPGs. Nevertheless, as illustrated by the work of Professor C. Wong et al and other authors, all government policy has implicit, if not explicit, spatial implications (refer: ‘A Map for England : Spatial Expression of Government Policies and Programmes’ and ‘A Compendium of Spatial Maps for England’). The issue is that, in most cases, they have not been prepared with that spatial perspective in mind (i.e. a perspective of the desired impact on different parts/communities throughout England) nor any assessment of the differential impacts on the various component regions/areas of the country that would arise as a result of national planning policies, nor the relationship to their interaction with other policies of other Government departments in terms of their spatial impacts.

**Question 4b: What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

**Response:**

The effect of introducing a spatial element to national policy would be beneficial in the following terms:

a) local planning would have a clearer understanding of the contribution to national objectives;
b) there would be reduced potential conflict between sectoral policies (e.g. housing and transport);
c) there would be a more joined up approach to government whereby departmental policies and programmes would be synergistic and not competing;
d) there would be more effective use of and targeting of resources nationally;
e) less wasted time and effort in resolving conflicts, especially between national local concerns, through the litigious processes; and
f) there would be more confidence for investors to press ahead with their projects.

**Question 5: Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**
Response:

A spatial framework should be generational in its timescale, for example to 2050. The precise horizon is not critical but it should relate to the timescale within which the national goals will be met. It is not just about the time horizon within which we can make confident forecasts because, by its very nature, a national planning process should be based upon a *scenario* approach and not just trend projections. Currently approaches are based on extrapolated trends which by their very nature are inaccurate and tend to lock-in historic spatial patterns of decision making (e.g. where housing consents have been granted historically) which may often be sub-optimal, and sometimes wholly inappropriate for longer term horizons, and preserve the status quo rather than encourage more innovative approaches.

At present the Government has long term goals (e.g. a fairer society or a better balance between the north and south of the country) but only short term policies and programmes. There is little link between these in the sense there is no real measure of the degree of change required in society and within what timescale. This means it is not currently possible to have any confidence that these long term goals will be met.

Vincent Goodstadt, Cecilia Wong & Mark Baker, CUPS, University of Manchester

29 September 2015
How Development Viability is Undermining the English Planning System

This submission addresses Question 3 in the scope of the Select Committee concerning National Planning Policy and the NPPF.

It draws attention to the profound community and environmental implications of “viability assessment” introduced in the NPPF 2012. It calls on the Committee to urge withdrawal of this part of the NPPF, and in the meantime, to recommend full public disclosure of viability assessments, and the introduction of a consistent and fair methodology.

This submission draws on my experience as a senior local government planning officer for over 20 years and as an academic housing researcher. I have recently completed with the Open University a two year ESRC funded study of housebuilding in Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes. I have written a number of articles on viability and planning, and gave an invited presentation on “Viability Assessment and Freedom of Information” to the Information Commissioners Office in February 2015.

In 2014 I appeared as an expert witness on viability assessment on behalf of local community organisations at Information Commissioner Tribunals into the Greenwich Peninsula development, and the Heygate, Southwark development.

Viability Assessment Guidance

Paragraph 173 of the NPPF and subsequent guidance introduced the requirement that Local Plans and Planning obligations (Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy) should be subject of development viability assessment.

It stipulates that Local Plans and planning decisions will need to consider the manner in which viability impacts upon the deliverability of housing schemes, taking into account the cumulative effects of local planning policies and standards. “Plans should be deliverable ..... To ensure viability, the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to development should, when taking account the normal costs of the development and mitigation, provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable” (para 173).

In 2012, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) invited planning applicants to request amendments to planning conditions made prior to 2010 on the grounds of changed economic circumstances. The Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 permits the review of previously agreed Section 106 conditions for affordable housing - subsequently
filled out by DCLG guidance issued in April 2013 to explain how this should happen. This guidance gives applicants until 2016 the right to apply to a local authority to modify a Section 106 Agreement where it is being argued that the terms of the Agreement now render the development economically unviable.

This new emphasis on viability throughout the planning system makes it essential that viability assessment is fair, transparent and reliable. It is our contention that it is none of these things.

Viability assessment is causing distortion and injustice in the planning system in the following ways:

(a) Viability assessments are open to manipulation by developers and landowners because there is no agreed methodology for viability assessment (see LBI Draft Development Viability SPD, 2015). With multiple variables and many different ways to measure construction costs, development values, profitability and fees, development viability assessment is highly contested, with little basis for consensus.

(b) There is now in my view a bias in the assessment system because the development industry can employ significantly more resources than other stakeholders in making development data fit their case for reductions in affordable housing. There is a viability industry of consultants is generating “deliberately pessimistic” viability assessment to escape planning obligations particularly for affordable housing.

(c) In other words, completed developments are often systematically undervalued to reduce viability and planning obligations for affordable housing. In the case of the Greenwich Peninsula, the developers viability assessment led to a loss of 527 affordable units. But when this assessment was interrogated by myself and other local experts it was clear that the reduction in affordable housing was due to a highly unreliable viability assessment which the Council had not investigated thoroughly. If the viability reports had been available to the local community (in full) at the time of submitting the planning application, this needless loss of affordable housing could perhaps have been avoided. (http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/Jun/25/london-developers-viability-planning-affordable-social-housing-regeneration-oliver-wainwright)

(d) It has been estimated that undervaluation of development schemes in viability assessments has led to a significant reduction in the amount of affordable housing (20-30%) below plan targets, which is obviously going to have implications for addressing the housing situation;

(e) Viability is having a damaging effect on the credibility of the plan-led system. Statutory plans, created after extensive public consultation and examination, are...
being undermined because viability assessment is being used as a “trump card”
to reduce or remove plan requirements (John Wacher, “Viability: what does it
mean for the plan led system?”; RTPI, 18th September 2015))

(f) Although viability assessment was initially justified by Government as a recession
measure to encourage development the policy remains in place in spite of
booming housing markets and large increases in developer profits. While the
review of affordable housing obligations has a sunset clause (ending in April
2016), the NPPF guidance on viability does not.

(g) Viability assessments are very often not made publically available on the grounds
of “commercial confidentiality” i.e. developers in the Greenwich and Heygate
cases claimed there would be “commercial damage” if the detailed modelling
data were shown to the public. The Information Commissioner Tribunal decision
on Greenwich Peninsula in 2014 overturned these arguments saying that the
claims of commercial damage were unfounded and unproven

(h) Viability assessment is causing delays and increasing the costs of processing
planning applications because local authorities have to undertake innumerable
viability assessments employing consultants, sometimes at considerable public
expense. It is hard to see how the Government can achieve its objective of 1
million new homes by 2020 if the current approach to viability is not radically
changed.

The fundamental issue that I ask the Committee to address is this:

- The NPPF has changed the planning system from one based on land use
  considerations, to one based on financial viability. It has become no longer an
  examination of the planning merits of land uses in particular locations, or the
  environmental impact of schemes, but is a highly contested debate about the
  viability of individual proposals as promoted by individual developers or landowners.
  Turning the planning system upside down in this way is neither fair nor just for local
  communities.

What should be done?

It is my contention, shared by many others in the planning professions and in the
community, that viability is so susceptible to unreliable measurement and manipulation, it
should be withdrawn from guidance on Local Plans, planning applications and planning
obligations.
Viability assessment may have a place in preparing Community Infrastructure Levy tariffs, where strategic infrastructure funding is at stake, but it does not have a place in individual site development.

In the meantime, all viability assessments should be fully disclosed to the general public before planning decisions are made by the local authority. This means they should be un-redacted, and made available in good time to enable proper public scrutiny. It is not sufficient in our view to say that the local authority has seen the un-redacted VA.

30 September 2015
Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Policy across both Central Government and local authorities has been poorly co-ordinated under all government administrations. This has been invariably due to silo thinking and departmental responsibilities and reporting lines. There is a fundamental need to collaborate across departments. This can result in a more efficient and effective allocation of resources. The Urban Design Group has been campaigning on health and urban design focusing on the links between transport, planning, health and design. The publication of design guidance that operates across service areas can bring a new dimension to policy making. By promoting walkable neighbourhoods and mixed use living creates a more sustainable form of development. People living in car dependent suburbs are reckoned to be less healthy than those which are served by high frequency rail transport. Encouraging more children to walk and cycle to school helps to reduce obesity levels and hence reduces the demand for National Health Service appointments. The New York Active Design Guidance is a valuable tool in promoting cross departmental collaboration.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

The guidance on the preparation of Local Plans encourages a more policy orientated plan with little evidence of spatial content. Moreover, the preparation of Local Plans goes in parallel with the preparation of transport plans. The development of cities and its infrastructure needs to be integrated and it is suggested that a single spatial plan be prepared, which will avoid some duplication of resources as there is a transport input to Local Plans but will lead to improved collaboration across policy areas.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?
There is currently no national spatial planning framework in England. This is in contrast with Scotland and Wales which have national spatial plans. In England, national planning guidance is in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework. It lacks any spatial dimension on where new infrastructure should be planned in relation to city expansion and the protection of the countryside. Whilst there is a National Infrastructure Plan this is not related to the vision for our towns and cities. The new National Infrastructure Commission outlined at today’s Conservative Party Conference could be given this role to prepare a National Spatial Framework for England.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Urban Design has been recognised for its role in bringing together a range of skills in design and this pan-professional skill set is so fundamental in understanding our cities and the complex processes of change. There is a concern that many students studying urban design are from overseas rather than from the UK and there this may result in a deficiency of skills in this important area.

The Institute of Historic Buildings Research note 2013/1 indicates that Conservation staff in England fell by 6% in 2011 and anecdotal evidence suggests that further falls have occurred since then. A high proportion of Conservation staff also work as design advisers and care multi-skilled professionals with qualifications in architecture, urban design, planning and conservation. These reductions come at a time when the development industry has seen an upsurge in building activity. A number of local authorities do not have specialist advisers in place yet the NPPF requires local authorities to put in place arrangements for design review. Whilst a number of design review panels have become established the picture across the UK appears to be rather patchy.

Local authorities are now focussed on development management and have put less resources into quality spatial planning that seeks to provide frameworks giving developers clear guidance on where and how to develop sites within and around our cities. The Urban Design Group calls on the Government to place more emphasis on place-based proactive urban design.
10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

There are tools and techniques that we could use that are employed in European cities such as local authorities identifying land for development and selling it on with clear guidance on design. The use of plot based urbanism can facilitate development for self-build entrepreneurs.

06 October 2015
Transcript to be found under The Edge

Transcript to be found under Independent Transport Commission
Urban Vision Enterprise – Written Evidence (BEN0026)

Introduction

Urban Vision Enterprise is a community interest company providing professional services in town planning and urban regeneration at national and local levels. Urban Vision North Staffordshire is a partner organisation and a charity, operating in North Staffordshire (The Centre for Sustainable Regeneration and Design).

The Urban Vision organisations specialise in planning policy, neighbourhood planning, heritage-led regeneration and conservation, urban design, independent design review, community engagement and consultation, community projects, third sector organisational development, training and education.

Clients include UK and national professional and membership organisations, local authorities, local councils, neighbourhood forums and local community groups.

Urban Vision Enterprise is a partner in delivering the Government’s Neighbourhood Planning national support programme.

Questions

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

We support the localism agenda and especially the introduction of neighbourhood planning. We believe that neighbourhood planning has rejuvenated the planning process, bringing in a much wider range of skills and knowledge.

However, we are concerned that the neighbourhood and local levels are too close together, leaving a large gap between national and local. This has resulted in a strategic vacuum in governance and policy across England. An obvious solution is to lift the local level to city-region. Thus there would be 3 tiers: national, city-region, and neighbourhood. Consideration should be given to formalising the neighbourhood tier of governance by introducing town/parish councils in urban areas. City regions should be defined through cooperative working between clusters of local authorities, as has happened in Greater Manchester.

In addition, we are concerned that some decisions are being imposed from national level, undermining localism. This is especially the case with permitted development rights, which have been introduced without any apparent analysis of economic outcomes, including negative effects. An example is permitted development rights to change the use of commercial premises to residential, which is clearly based on London and south-east
assumptions. In many areas of the country, the challenge is in attracting employment and commercial investment and development. Such development triggers demand for housing, as people move to the area to take advantage of new jobs. The loss of commercial capacity in urban centres can undermine economic and physical regeneration.

Poorly thought-out permitted development rights can undermine neighbourhood plans which have an economic development focus, and run counter to aims to create a Northern Powerhouse. We can’t emphasise enough the importance of national policy being based on proper evidence.

We accept that there is a justification for calling in planning applications, where they have significant implications. There is also a need for national government to set out more clearly the skills requirements required by local authorities to deal with planning applications in a competent manner. We are especially concerned that some LPAs do not have adequate skills in urban design, building conservation and other built environment matters. This can result in poor decisions, poor development or excessively onerous requirements being placed on developers.

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

The separation of heritage from the planning ministry that occurred in 1990 has been very damaging. Shifting heritage to the Culture ministry means that it is viewed in very narrow cultural terms, rather than emphasising the social, economic and environmental values of historic buildings and areas.

Our recommendation would be to reintegrate heritage with planning and regeneration. This would ensure that heritage is considered not just for its cultural value, but also as part of the infrastructure of modern places and as a powerful driver for economic and physical transformation.

In particular, we would like to see more emphasis on heritage in economic development. This includes:

- Ways in which historic areas can underpin physical and economic transformations (heritage-led regeneration).
- The role of older areas in supporting enterprise, small businesses and social enterprises
- The utility value of heritage, as part of the infrastructure of our towns, cities and rural areas
- The importance of refurbishment to the construction industry and as a means to creating more skilled and higher paid local jobs
- The role of heritage in supporting choice and diversity
- Historic areas as a basis for sustainable development
National policy for planning and the built environment

3. Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

In general, we support the simplification of planning policy, brought in by the NPPF. However, we do have certain reservations.

- There should be a much stronger emphasis on the role of robust planning in creating investor and business confidence.
- Stronger policies are required to ensure that new retail development is located in existing town and city centres. We are concerned over the level of out-of-town consents being obtained under current policy. Existing town centres must receive a higher priority when planning for retail, cultural and recreational facilities.
- We would like to see a greater recognition of the neighbourhood level of planning, including advice that Local Plans should focus on strategic matters and strategic level site allocations.
- There is an incompatibility in heritage policy between the term ‘significance’ used in the NPPF and the terminology used in legislation (‘special architectural or historic interest’ and ‘setting’). This confusion is exacerbated by English Heritage’s (now Historic England) Conservation Principles, which do not mesh with the legislation.
- We would like to see a stronger recognition of the link between quality of place and an area’s ability to attract jobs, investment, visitors and residents.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

We are firmly of the view that policy-making reflects a strong London-centric bias, often based on assumptions of the economic conditions of the south-east. Notwithstanding the current debate around the ‘Northern Powerhouse’, there is a lack of coherent urban policy to incentivise development in the north of the country.

The key aim of policy should be geographical rebalancing of the economy. Land and housing inflation is a serious problem in some parts of the country, especially London and the south-east. At the same time, there are many parts of the country, including many areas in the north, where the development sector has yet to recover. In other parts of the country, there is an imbalance between costs of housing and the strength of the local economy, fueled by a
range of factors like second home ownership and commuters (for example Cornwall and rural Norfolk). In many rural areas, high house prices exclude those working in the rural economy. The severe imbalance in the rates of growth in different parts of the country represents a serious threat to the recovery.

The London-centric focus of policy-making damages not just the Northern economy, but the national economy and London’s interests too. London is a global city and we recognise that the solution to the imbalance is not about restricting development in high growth areas, but in incentivising development in under-performing areas.

To achieve rebalancing, a wider review of Government initiatives is necessary. For example, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and New Homes Bonus generate money for areas where there is high growth and inflationary pressures, but do nothing to stimulate growth in under-performing areas where development land is available, but not viable. An assessment should be made of the economic impact of recent changes to permitted development, in particular looking at whether changes of use from commercial to residential is reducing employment capacity in northern towns and cities.

A national spatial plan may lay the foundations for a more robust urban policy, to incentivise development in areas with land capacity, but underperforming and marginal land economies. This could address issues like land reclamation and infrastructure deficiencies. This is an absolute key requirement and is as important as improving transport infrastructure in terms of delivering sustainable growth across the country and delivering the Government’s aspirations for a Northern Powerhouse.

Clearly, meeting social and economic objectives will require the plan to address infrastructure. Transformational infrastructure projects should be reviewed to make sure they are accompanied by wider activities to create benefits to the North. A spatial plan could highlight the need to address the gross imbalance in public expenditure per head of population between London and elsewhere in the country. This includes expenditure on transport and activities which develop social capital like the arts and culture.

The delays to upgrading rail infrastructure across the north of the country, recently announced, are at odds with the rhetoric on the Northern Powerhouse.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?

Plans need to put in place long-term goals, recognising that it often takes decades to address ingrained economic, social and environmental issues. At the same time there is a need for plans to be reviewed on a fairly short-term basis, responding to a fast changing world, whilst maintaining long-term goals.

Effective planning requires up-to-date plans which are regularly subject to review. This is
only possible if local planning authorities are properly resourced to ensure the necessary skills and capacity are available.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

There is unlikely to be significant progress in increasing housing supply unless three key factors are understood:

- ‘Investor developers’ have fundamentally different needs than ‘trader’ developers. The latter have a short-term outlook. The former, with their longer-term outlook, rely on certainty, provided by the planning system. This includes effective development management and up-to-date local plans and neighbourhood plans.
- The current housing market is self-regulating. Increasing the rate of supply significantly would result in lower prices, reducing profit margins and, in some areas, making sites unviable.
- The construction sector has limited capacity. This is not just about overall capacity, but also skills gaps.

Neighbourhood plans are sometimes proving to be an effective means of increasing the level of housing site allocations, especially as local communities become more aware of gaps in housing provision, such as smaller accommodation for the elderly and first time buyers.

One issue with the Government’s current approach is the narrow focus on new-build. A widening of focus is necessary, encompassing the regeneration of existing housing and neighbourhoods. This could include removing VAT on house renovation. There are many low demand areas and poor neighbourhoods that need direct intervention and support (for example in Stoke-on-Trent). Building new houses alone will not renew these places.

More emphasis needs to be placed on community-led housing, both as a means to increasing supply and to stimulate development activity in under-performing areas. The use of publicly owned property and land could be a key component in facilitating community-led housing. Additional support should be provided to self-build schemes too. This includes consideration of affordable borrowing which is designed for the realities of self-build.

As the banking crisis demonstrated, there is a fundamental relationship between national economic performance and the rate of delivery of new housing.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How
can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

The towns and cities that have undergone the most dramatic economic and physical transformations over the past couple of decades have understood the importance of quality of environment in attracting investment, transforming perceptions, creating confidence and delivering growth. A key theme of Government should be delivering high quality in new development, as a means to fostering confidence, improving image, attracting investment and creating quality of life.

Similarly, many towns and cities have understood the economic importance of heritage, especially in supporting enterprise. Heritage-led regeneration is a key element in the delivery of sustainable development and regeneration. Throughout the country there are examples of historic buildings and areas, including former manufacturing areas, that have provided flexible and affordable accommodation, essential for business start-ups, micro-businesses, creative industries and social enterprises. This has created investor confidence, sometimes leading to dramatic economic and physical transformations. In addition, tourism and visitor economies are often based on historic town and city centres (for example, Chester, York and Liverpool).

We are concerned that there is a lack of appreciation of the role played by older areas and buildings in helping places to transform and modernise, physically, economically and culturally. There needs to be wider recognition of the value and attraction of heritage assets, adapted for new uses by contemporary interventions, in contributing to economic vitality.

Much of the focus on sustainability and carbon use has been on building performance and micro-generation. These are important, but there is a need to discern between high impact issues and green bling. Most importantly, more focus needs to be made at the level of local places, which brings in issues of land use and travel. This requires a focus on good urban design, place-making, mixed-use and integration and re-use of heritage and existing housing. Again, we would emphasise the relationship between the quality of an area’s environment and its economic performance.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

As stated above, responsibility for heritage should be shifted from DCMS to DCLG. This is essential to change the current narrow cultural focus on heritage and to ensure that wider economic, social and environmental values are considered.

National policy and programmes should take full account of the role of heritage in delivering economic development. This includes support for:

- Using historic areas to deliver physical and economic regeneration, including the
creation of enterprise hubs.

- Ensuring that historic buildings and places are in productive use, fulfilling their economic potential, especially in under-performing areas
- Promoting heritage skills training in the construction industry
- Promoting the visitor economy and use of culture as a means to economic development.

**Skills and design**

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

We recognise the good work done previously by the former Government design adviser, CABE, and through the network of architecture centres in delivering training and awareness raising for local authority officers, elected members, the professions and developers, as well as the general public.

However, there has been a noticeable drop in the level of skills and expertise in local authorities over the past few years and this is undermining the growth potential of many areas. This includes a loss of specialist skills and staffing capacity in things like economic development, regeneration, heritage, urban design and community engagement. In some local authorities, there are now real questions over whether they are able to deliver basic statutory planning functions in a satisfactory manner.

There is a need to develop skills in the development sector, both private and not-for-profit. Delays in the planning process are not only a consequence of inadequately resourced planning teams, but also professional teams working for developers, but lack the skills to formulate viable proposals.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

The decision to cut funding to the former national adviser on design (CABE) was a mistake. We believe that this is due to a failure to appreciate the relationship between quality of place and an areas ability to attract investment, employment, population, and visitors.

We would suggest that there is a need for a national adviser (Place/Design England?). The remit of such a body should include promoting good design as a means to delivering effective and sustainable growth.
We would emphasise the importance of effective community engagement at an early stage of the design and development process. This allows the knowledge and aspirations to inform the brief for development. Too often, communities are engaged at a late stage, with a focus on tweaking aesthetics, rather than informing the fundamentals.

**Community involvement and community impact**

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

This is a fundamental principle of the planning system. Planning should ensure that the wider impacts of development are considered. Such impacts can affect communities, local environments, towns, and wider local economies.

Developers vary hugely. Whilst ‘investor’ developers tend to take an interest in the wider social, economic and environmental context, this is less so with ‘trader’ developers. In this way, the activities of trader developers can harm the interests of investor developers, unless the planning system creates a level playing field.

A fundamental aim should be to create a sustainable, supportive human habitat. This means a physical environment which promotes and facilitates social interaction and meets our cultural and physical needs. Clearly, this will be achieved only through close working with local communities. Neighbourhood plans are an example of how local communities can lead in the planning of their local places, drawing on a range of local knowledge and skills.

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Our experience of working with communities on neighbourhood planning and community projects suggests that communities are not only able to engage in the planning of their areas, but to take on a lead role.

With regard to local authority-led planning, there is a very mixed picture. Many local authorities engage effectively with communities and understand the value of this in formulating realistic and deliverable plans. However, there are also examples of very poor practice. This can include:

- Hostility and resistance by officers and/or elected members to neighbourhood planning.
- Consultation occurring too late in the process.
- Lack of in-house skills in community engagement.
Our experience suggests that neighbourhood planning is helping to deliver culture change in local government, by demonstrating the benefits of more participatory forms of planning.

**Financial measures**

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Practical measures to deliver housing and land supply include:

- **Community-led Housing and Enterprise**: Grants to allow community organisations to acquire land and buildings for the purposes of delivering community-led housing and enterprise schemes. Such funding should cover things like land-remediation, project design, professional support, business planning and capital costs where there are local viability issues.

- **Neighbourhood area schemes**: Area grant schemes to help deliver growth in neighbourhood areas where there is a neighbourhood plan (or emerging plan). These could fund things like land remediation, bringing floorspace back into use, public realm works and environmental improvements.

Practical measures to deliver better design and place-making by private developers include:

- **National Design Advisory Body**: Creating a new design advisory body. This should focus on guidance, training, advice, research and national design policy. There may be merit in considering an integrated national place-making body, dealing with design and heritage.

- **Design Review**: Funding independent local design review panels. These should be at a fairly local level to allow site visits for all schemes.

- **Public Bodies and Programmes**: There is a clear need for public bodies, local authorities, LEPs, RSLs, and others to embrace high quality design as an essential element for achieving effective and sustainable outcomes.

30 September 2015
URBED – Written Evidence (BEN0032)

BREAKING THE BARRIERS TO QUALITY GROWTH

As the founder Director of URBED, which this year celebrates our 40th anniversary, I welcome the initiative you have taken, and the excellent questions you have raised. Having tackled most of the issues, I am focussing my response on two which hold the key to breaking the barriers to quality growth, and I have backed up my suggestions with a couple of research reports you may find useful.

URBED’s experience

Founded in 1976 to offer ‘practical solutions to the problems of regenerating run-down urban areas’, URBED has worked in most parts of the UK on issues as diverse as reusing old buildings, revitalising town centres, and increasingly on building the new homes the country desperately needs. We work with community groups, local authorities and increasingly for major private developers, and our work has been recognised in a number of awards, as well as in winning the 2014 Wolfson Economic Essay prize for our Uxcester Garden City submission.

Our experience is set out in a book by David Rudlin and Nicholas Falk Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood: building the 21st century home, which was republished by Routledge in 2009, and more recently I helped Sir Peter Hall produce his final book Good Cities Better Lives: how Europe discovered the lost art of urbanism. We therefore know a great many good projects, but are also well aware of how far the UK has lagged behind much of the rest of Europe, especially in the last two decades.

Good advice is therefore not enough. Some radical changes are needed in the way we plan and deliver major or strategic housing schemes, and these form the subject of this evidence.

Building Places New and Old

If we are to double housing output, as all political parties seem to agree, then we have to go beyond redeveloping brownfield sites. Our work on Tapping the Potential for the Department of Communities and Local Government established the need for to identify appropriate sites, with some 40% on undeveloped land, if only to cope with household growth. Yet fragmented local authorities, short-sighted landowners, and the abolition of any kind of regional planning machinery has left England at least incapable of breaking the fundamental barrier, which is the availability of land in the right place and right price.

There are some promising exceptions, such as the Southern Fringe of Cambridge, where the local authorities and landowners have subscribed to a Quality Charter for Growth, or the
centre of Manchester, where URBED helped produce the Design Guide. But in general we are failing to produce enough of the kinds of homes needed to overcome well-organised opposition by groups such as the Campaign for Protection of Rural England, and the natural tendency of those who are adequately housed to resist further development.

Consultations with leading developers and case studies of good projects, for example published last year in the Housing Forum’s The ABC of Housing Growth and Infrastructure confirm the need for radical changes to the way development sites are identified, plans are prepared, and land is brought forward. Local authorities need to play a more proactive role, and ways found of stopping land owners sitting on sites waiting for values to rise.

Having undertaken a major research study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to share experience between innovative housing schemes, those involved concluded that we had most to learn from what has been built in the Netherlands. This is not just about design, but about pooling land and installing the infrastructure required for a host of builders to meet different needs, as our report Learning from the Netherlands illustrates. Encouragement can be taken from the positive responses to what is being built in Cambridge’s Southern Fringe and also on University land in North West Cambridge, where the lessons from Europe are being applied.

Fiscal Measures

David Rudlin and Nicholas Falk won the 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize against 276 other competitors because URBED’s submission showed how to build garden cities that were visionary, popular and above all viable. We provided the financial calculations to prove that major extensions to places where people want to live and work, such as Oxford or York, could fund the necessary infrastructure to deal with congestion and flooding, which are top priorities for existing residents.

Subsequently the five shortlisted teams agreed on a paper aimed at the new government on what needed to be done to overcome the barriers, and go to scale. (extract attached) While opinions may differ on how best to avoid speculation, we believe that the German model for land assembly is readily replicable, and similar approaches are used throughout Northern Europe. There is potentially enough private finance to back good projects without adding to the national public deficit. But nothing will change without some concerted changes as spelt out in the attached paper.

URBED would go further not only in calling for the increased use of Development Corporations to resolve conflicts and lack of capacity in growth situations such as Oxford, but also for a Municipal Investment Corporation on the lines of the Dutch investment bank BNG in order to scrutinise major projects and encourage collaboration. All of these ideas are
developed at length in various reports, which we would willingly share. Indeed the House of Lords would be admirably placed to call for the Royal Commission we believe is needed to agree the best places for growth, and the necessary powers to deliver quality places on the scale required.

Dr Nicholas Falk, founder director URBED www.urbed.coop

September 30th 2015

Priority Actions to Start the Delivery Process

To put the principles into action, and overcome the practical barriers to delivering New Garden Cities over the next parliament, there are three clear steps that the next government must take to make New Garden Cities a reality.

1 Set up an independent Royal Commission to identify broad locations for New Garden Cities

The next government should establish a Royal Commission to identify the broad locations for New Garden Cities within 18 months where a combination of existing and planned infrastructure, economic drivers and a lack of significant environmental constraints combine to create a climate for growth. The Commission should encourage local authorities, landowners and others to put forward potential sites for consideration, but should not be limited to these as the right locations may not be supported by the right stakeholders (and vice versa). Garden City principles can be applied to a variety of types of development, from new villages to in-fill sites and urban extensions, so the commission should not be constrained to identifying locations for free standing new settlements only.

Once broad locations have been identified, the process of specifying individual site boundaries needs to be locally driven, championed by local political, business and community leaders working with the local authority and willing landowners. New Garden Cities should be rooted in partnerships and should not be undemocratically imposed on unwilling communities – but it must also be recognised that all communities contain multiple and diverse voices, and that the views of those in need of homes and jobs must be heard alongside those who are well provided for, potentially via local referendums.

2 Establish special purpose delivery vehicles

Appropriate delivery vehicles, with the right powers and governance mechanisms, are needed for Garden Cities to be delivered at the scale and pace required. As New Garden Cities will suit a variety of development typologies and locations, different delivery vehicles will be appropriate – including private companies, trusts, public-private partnerships or public sector development corporations.

Whatever vehicle is chosen for each location, it must enshrine the principle of retaining value in the place for the benefit of the local community; without this, New Garden Cities will not thrive and will be victim to the same economic, social and political vulnerabilities as conventional development schemes. This means that delivery vehicles must have planning and compulsory purchase powers, or at the least ready recourse to these through their
public sector partners. Combining these powers in focused delivery agencies is vital to making New Garden Cities a reality.

Development corporations with these powers can be created using existing or amended legislation, to remove planning risk, allow easier access to long term funding and co-ordinate infrastructure provision and community benefits. The government should urge the Homes & Communities Agency (plus the Greater London Authority and any new devolved structures that take on the HCA’s role in city-regions) to use its existing powers under Section 13 of the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008 to create development corporations to deliver New Garden Cities in the locations identified. Where traditional development corporations are not deemed appropriate, new delivery vehicles could operate on a joint venture partnership basis, bringing together landowners, local authorities, developers and the local communities to share in the success of the development. Any private sector/partnership bodies to be granted Garden City status must make an explicit commitment to sharing development value more equitably among all the stakeholders in the Garden City.

3 Reform CPO legislation

Acquiring land at reasonable costs is critical to the Garden City concept. Compulsory purchase should always be a last resort - but New Garden City delivery vehicles need the powers to strengthen their negotiating position. Small legislative changes are required to make this process work efficiently.

The existence of strong CPO powers incentivises landowners to negotiate reasonable prices rather than to hold out for the additional ‘unearned increment’. Ironically, if CPO powers are strong enough they rarely need to be used. The New Town Development Corporations used CPOs to acquire land at existing use value, then granted planning permission and used the uplift in value created to fund the infrastructure and affordable housing needed for the new towns. The legislation to create New Towns Corporations and use CPOs is still in force today, but its efficacy has been reduced by case law and its strategic function has fallen into disuse.

Credible CPO powers are also essential to prevent landowners from holding out and encouraging land speculation. This is particularly the case if landowners are unwilling to engage, if a ‘ransom’ situation arises, or if a multiplicity of landownerships need to be amalgamated.

The Treasury is currently conducting a review of CPO processes which it is hoped will result in the legislative change necessary to revive the strategic use of CPOs. The easiest way to achieve this is probably to amend the Land Compensation Act 1961 to remove, explicitly, the consideration of ‘hope value’ from the compensation offered to landowners, and to require the price to be defined in relation to existing use value. The amount of compensation that landowners could expect under CPO could be capped as a proportion above existing use value, with a higher rate for greenfield than brownfield.
Comment:

Wappenham Parish Council considers that it is able to effectively engage with the local planning authority (South Northants Council) and that there are no barriers which prevent it from doing so. In general the planning authority has due regard for comments submitted to it, either referring to them directly in officers’ reports or by referencing the Parish Council’s Village Design Statement which was adopted by the planning authority several years ago. The planning authority effectively communicates consultations and any noteworthy changes to the system.

03 October 2015
Introduction

- This evidence focuses on matters falling within the ambit of Questions 3 and 10 of the Call for Written Evidence, i.e.

**Q3:** “Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?”

and,

**Q10:** “Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?”

- The specific matters raised here (relating to either/both of the two questions identified above) are:

  ◆ whether the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as presently worded, sufficiently empowers local planning authorities (“LPAs”) to develop detailed, innovative and effective design codes – in particular, codes that are fit to combat the problem of excessively ‘bland’, featureless design; and

  ◆ whether lessons can be learned from the approach to planning taken in other countries.

The NPPF and the focus of planning intervention in design

- Paragraphs 56 to 68 of the NPPF (“Requiring good design”) contains the core provisions of the Framework that relate to the architectural design of buildings.

- A key theme of this set of provisions is that local planning policies should address questions of building design at a high level. Design codes that contain prescriptive, detailed rules are, according to the NPPF, to be avoided. Paragraph 59, in particular, states:

  ◆ “…design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.”
The philosophy that (presumably) lies behind this injunction is easy to appreciate. If LPAs set down detailed, prescriptive design codes this might involve usurping the role of developers in determining how private development is designed. In other words, architects and not planning authorities should design buildings. The NPPF acknowledges that important high level aspects of design – in particular, the overall size, and even the layout, of the development may be controlled by design policies. But surely (so the philosophy goes) matters of *detail* – things like the sizing, spacing and shape of entrances and windows – must be, in the first instance, matters for the developer? Indeed, otherwise, what will be left for the project’s design team to design?

**The problem of “under-design”**

Such a philosophy – matters of detail should be within the jurisdiction of the planning applicant – is premised on the idea that a typical developer comes brimming with positive ideas for a whole raft of detailed elements that they wish to include in their design. The LPA’s role is, then, that of a neutral, dispassionate gatekeeper, making sure that none of these proposed elements cause positive harm by, say, affecting the character of the area or leaving inaccessible areas of open space. So in the imagined paradigm case, the developer comes along wishing to implement ideas ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’, ‘E’, … ‘etc.’. Local planning guidance or decision-making may mean, for instance, that idea ‘D’ must be dropped, e.g. because it means that it means the building will exceed local guidance on height limits, but the remainder of the raft of ideas (‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘E’, etc.) can be implemented. Where this model applies, the developer will, indeed, be the author of most of the design detail.

This premise, and the accompanying model, breaks down, however, if developers, on the whole routinely seek permission for designs that incorporate very low levels of detail – that is, if, in other words, there is *no* set of individuated ideas ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’, ‘E’ etc as to detailing and, instead, the design involves little more than an undifferentiated box, or series of boxes, meeting the high-level local planning rules regarding size, massing, height and overall scale. Bland, featureless design, whatever its other merits or demerits, poses a challenge to the model described above. For where an application with such characteristics is made it may be hard to say that the developer rather than the planning authority is truly the author of the design, since most of the salient aspects of the building will have been determined by the planning guidance even though such guidance remains restricted to the sort of high level matters envisaged by paragraph 59 of the NPPF. If such applications are routinely made, then:-

- The primary justification for LPAs to be discouraged from producing guidance on matters of “detail” logically falls away, since developers are, anyway, in effect, abdicating design responsibility by producing designs that do little more than adhere to the broad, outline limits placed by the LPA’s planning rules.
The only tool that local planning officers can use to combat bland, unstimulating design is ad-hoc decision-making – or negotiation with developers – to the extent that such strategies is permitted under the LPA's planning rules and the NPPF. If LPAs have to routinely make such interventions, this would seem to raise the question of whether it might be more efficient (both for developers and LPAs) for there to guidance which descends to levels of detail so as to provide developers with an adequate 'steer'. This issue is discussed further below.

**Evidence for the problem of under-design**

- Anecdotal evidence for the prevalence of the problem of under-design comes from the apparent frequency with which objections are made by public interest organisations, critics and members of the public to proposed developments on the grounds that the external appearance of the designed building will be 'bland', excessively regular or predictable.

- A recent example is provided by the (ultimately successful) campaign to prevent a proposal by King’s College to build a new extension on the Strand involving the demolition of a historic row of buildings. Telling, although the campaign focused, naturally-enough, on the destruction of heritage that the plans entailed, much was made of the suggestion that replacement building would, in the words of one campaign group, be “terrifically bland” (source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-32681126); a public petition opposed to the development which attracted over 10,000 signatures reflected this sentiment, noting that the plan “replaces [the original buildings] with something bland” (source: https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-demolish-152-158-the-strand-london?source=facebook-share-button&time=1430315541)

- Looking at the matter from a different angle, the research of Colin Ellard, an environmental neuroscientist at the University of Waterloo in Ontario provides evidence as to the psychological consequences of 'bland', low-detail architecture. The
Committee is urged, if time permits, to consider an article by Ellard published in *Aeon* magazine (http://aeon.co/magazine/culture/why-boring-cities-make-for-stressed-citizens/) explaining the relevant research and the lessons he urges people to draw from it. In summary, though, Ellard makes the following points:

- The results of his 2011 study into the psychological effects of different types of urban environment indicate that outside of blank, 'impermeable', low-detail façades, people have worse emotional states (ie they are less happy and less alert) and show higher levels of physiological stress than they do outside variegated, complex, permeable façades.

- Ellard suggests these negative psychological and physiological consequences stem from boredom: low-complexity environments are under-stimulating. He notes that such under-stimulation may plausibly have long-term health effects, given that there is a well-established link between boredom and physiological stress.

- Earlier research (2006) carried out by Danish urban designer Jan Gehl demonstrated that people walk more quickly in front of a blank, impermeable façade than they do in front of other types of façade. The implication is that this aspect of design affects behaviour. People pause, absorb and want to engage with their environment when it is visually interesting.

- Internationally, there are, it is said several cities that have taken account of such findings by implementing building codes that prevent excessively bland façades from being built (Ellard cites Stockholm, Melbourne and Amsterdam). Under such codes there are, notably, said to be prescriptions such as:-
  - “... a hard lower limit on the number of doorways per unit of sidewalk length, and there are specifications for transparency between the building and street in the form of clear windows with two-way views”

The rationale for such prescriptions, it will be appreciated, is to make for more engaging, more interesting urban environment.

- Ellard speculates that the prevalence of “featureless” buildings in modern towns and cities is down to a combination of economics, architectural theory and other cultural factors.

Concern that paragraph 59 of the NPPF is too restrictive as to LPA’s powers to implement detailed design codes

- It is instructive to consider the example, referred to at paragraph 10.d above, of design policies (adopted by cities in other countries) that make relatively detailed prescriptions as to the organisation of building façades to combat the tide of ‘featureless' buildings.
One has to ask, would, in the UK, such an approach pass muster under paragraph 59 of the NPPF which, one will recall, demands that local design codes “avoid unnecessary prescription or detail” and “concentrate on guiding the overall scale [etc] … of new development”?

Or, to put this another way, would a local authority otherwise tempted to deal with the problem of under-design in this sort of way – say, by incorporating a rule in a particular area that should normally be at least 1 doorway on any façade for every 5 metres of pavement distance – be confident that such a rule would, in light of paragraph 59, be safe from challenge? Perhaps such a rule would qualify as guiding “overall … massing” or “layout”. But equally plausibly the reverse can be argued: a LPA might conclude that laying down such detailed guidance goes against the overall tenor of the relevant paragraph, which again, cautions against “unnecessary prescription or detail”.

Going further, would the NPPF endorse, or would it, conversely, weigh against, the promulgation of a local building code that specified, say (to imagine some more contentious examples):

- ‘… where brick is used as a primary construction material, at least a portion of the brickwork should be laid to incorporate a decorative pattern’;

or that

- ‘… sculpted relief in the form of moulding bands around apertures such as windows and doors, pilasters and columns (which do not have to be in any conventional style) is encouraged’?

General problems with planning policies that control high-level aspects

As noted above, the overall tenor of UK planning policy, as exemplified by the NPPF, is that planning authorities should be empowered to control high-level aspects of the design of new development (ie the envelope of space taken up by buildings), but all matters of detail are, in essence, within the jurisdiction of the individual developer.

The problems with this approach are as follows:

- LPAs lack, it can be argued, effective tools to combat the problem of design ‘featurelessness’, since their powers are, it would seem, understood to be limited to promulgating guidance limited to high-level aspects of the design which by, definition, excludes matters of detail.

- It is true that LPAs may be able to combat dull, featureless design by way of ad hoc decision-making, eg via their jurisdiction to refuse permission in respect of “… poor
design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area” per paragraph of 64 of the NFFP. But ad hoc decision-making has drawbacks:

- If planners are routinely having to intervene in this way against featurelessness (and the trends identified by Ellard suggest that the problem is indeed routine), then this involves expense and delay all round. Permission for otherwise viable developments may be refused on the grounds that they fail to meet a standard of visual interest that developers do not instinctively seem to understand and yet planners are disabled (by the taboo against guidance on matters of detail) from properly articulating in the guidance they provide.
- If planners and developers become engaged in a form of horse-trading in which planners demand that submitted plans be revised to incorporate more visual interest, one has arguably reached the stage where planners are intimately involved in the details of the architectural design. As earlier pointed out, if this Rubicon is routinely crossed, the justification for the presumption that design codes abstain from making detailed or prescriptive detail falls away.
- More detailed design codes – ones which descend to questions of whether or not brickwork should incorporate decorative pattern or not – may actually be a genuine help to developers by providing useful guidance. They can help in setting expectations, and focus minds. Developers no longer have to second-guess what planners are looking for.

- A serious argument can be made that a 'high-level' approach to planning control may actually be aggravating the problem of bland, featureless design:

  - All the efforts of the developer and the design team in putting together a planning application are focused on making sure that the design fits within the 'outline' guidance. Questions of overall height, dimension and whether the development is 'broadly in keeping' with existing development assume an arguably disproportionate importance compared to questions of articulation and original decorative detail.

  - Developers/architects may, not unreasonably, feel that under the existing regime they can only incur a penalty in planning terms (in terms of increasing the chances of refusal) by including a raft of specific decorative details (eg intricate column designs), because, on the one hand, any one of those details may risk offend vaguely defined notions that the design should eg “respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and material” (NPPF, paragraph 60), but on the other hand, there are no positive requirements requiring the inclusion of such elements.

  - Closer guidance, perhaps applicable to a particular area, on the number of doorways, the inclusion and spacing of bays or columns, the shape of windows, etc, might actually give architects the confidence to express creativity at lower
levels of design detail. Indeed, under a more prescriptive regime, there is less chance of the overall design approach being rejected (because this has already been determined by the LPA's guidance) and the time spent considering these details consequently being thrown away.

◆ Standing back, it seems we have a situation where all parties are abdicating responsibility for the problem of detailing. Developers are, as a whole, showing no will to design lively, decorative façades, whilst planners are reluctant to intervene or issue guidance in this area because the prevailing philosophy is that such matters are for the individual developer/architect. There is, thus, a 'detail vacuum' in the design process.

Counter-concerns

◆ A concern in the other direction, as it were, that comes to mind is that any change to national planning policy that would increase the powers of local authorities to implement more prescriptive design codes (eg, perhaps, by re-wording paragraph 59 of the NPPF) might have the concern of restricting or holding up needed development. It is submitted that such a concern is more apparent than real for the following reasons:-

◆ Any attempt by an LPA to deliberately obstruct development by imposing unfeasibly tight restrictions on the design of new buildings would, presumably, be legally challenge-able for being ultra vires/an abuse of the relevant power.

◆ Flexibility could be required by the NPPF—for instance, prescriptive codes should allow developers to show good reason why the requirements of the code should not apply.

◆ As noted at paragraph 17.c above, more prescriptive local design codes may actually be a help, rather than a hindrance, to prospective developers, by guiding expectations more effectively than vague, high-level desiderata.

Sharing evidence of international practice in the development of design codes

◆ Any discussion of UK planning policy, it is submitted, should take account of the approach to planning in other jurisdictions around the world. Other countries, in formulating planning policy, are generally addressing the same set of concerns that we are in the UK, in particular how development, which is invariably undertaken either by private bodies and individuals for narrow goals of private economic gain or public bodies with public-orientated but often equally narrow remits, is channelled to promote sustainability, preservation of the natural environment and heritage, and well-designed buildings and communities. If there are lessons to be learned from how other countries are tackling these problems, we should seek to learn them.
The author of these submissions can offer only limited observations on the subject of planning policy abroad; a proper study of the matter, perhaps taking evidence from an expert in the field of comparative planning, is recommended. However, the small glimpse provided by the research referred to a paragraph 10.d above indicates that such study might well reveal that:

- other planning systems take, in some respects, a quite different approach to that of the UK;
- the practical and philosophical assumptions that underpin those approaches may be at variance from the assumptions that underpin the UK approach. This is something which ought, at least, make us pause to consider whether the prevailing assumptions in this country are indeed sound or whether these need to be revisited.

Consideration might also be given as to whether adequate mechanisms exist for the sharing of information about international planning practice at the local level, where planning policies are ultimately formulated.

26 September 2015
Weedon Bec Parish Council

Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment consultation

Response from: Weedon Bec Parish Council

Response Date: 6th October 2015

Reponse to:

Community involvement and community impact

Question 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

We have recently had direct experience of a large scale housing proposal in our local community and had an opportunity to witness local 'engagement' first hand. Weedon Bec Parish Council were active in ensuring the village was informed of the plans and set up a series of public meetings to gain an understanding of public opinion and to help inform a response.

Weedon Bec Parish Council worked closely with local people and with the Weedon Action Group in formulating a response to the application which resulted in a very large number of objections to the proposal (537 letters plus a technical objection report from Action Group). Daventry District Council listened to these objections and unanimously rejected the proposal. On this basis we must conclude that local engagement is alive and well.

The efforts of the council and action group was a necessity as information from the applicant was minimal if non-existent i.e. a leaflet was only delivered to a few houses in the village and they did not approach the Parish to discuss prior to submission. The applicant actions or lack of, has caused much upset and heartache for many of our residents and the outcome is still uncertain and could still have a drastic effect on our community.

Unfortunately, all efforts of local people and communities to play an active part in the decision making process was rendered mute when the decision was overturned at a national level (Planning Inspectorate) with apparent disregard for local opinion and disregard for the fact that our district are meeting their responsibilities in terms of housing supply.

It is this disconnect between local and national decision making that we believe threatens the future of local engagement. Unless the ability to overrule local sentiment is more carefully controlled, the feeling of 'what's the point, they will win eventually' will persevere and local engagement will dwindle.
As two Planning appeals were running concurrently earlier this year, when the outcome of both were announced within a couple of weeks of each other, it left our residents completely dumbfounded and questioning the role of the Planning Inspector. They could not understand why one outcome upheld the appeal and one refused the appeal when both were being considered at the same time thus against same policies and criteria. It brought to the forefront of all our minds the role of inspector; that we should witness conflicting decisions, interpretation of policy, subjective versus objective decisions. This instils no confidence or trust in these decision makers and the process. (Planning Applications subject to appeal at same time: DA/2014/0455 as APP/Y2810/A/14/2228921 and DA/2014/0369 as APP/Y2810/W/14/3001704)

A Neighbourhood Plan is currently being produced for Weedon Bec at parish level. The lack of support, advice and recurring delays at local authority level has been hugely disappointing and has caused much frustration and delays to producing the plan. Creation of Neighbourhood Plans have been advised by government however the necessary support from local authority has not been in place. Equally the cost in terms of volunteer effort and financial overheads are also, to some degree, under-valued by the local authority.

7 October 2015
**Welton Parish Council Written Evidence (BEN0050)**

**Policy making, integration and coordination**

1. Parish Councils should be given more power to make and appeal against decisions concerning the built environment. For instance they have the statutory right to be notified of planning applications in their local area but lack the statutory right to appeal on the same basis as developers. This system seems weighted against local communities.

   National policy makers should revise the National Planning Policy Framework with particular reference to the five year land supply issue which is the ‘major factor in deciding planning applications’ (CPRE Fieldwork Winter 2014). Weighting towards this factor clearly impacts on Local Authority decision making to the detriment of other key factors in the NPPF.

2. The Implementation Task Force chaired by the Secretary of State for DCLG could pull together these components whilst driving efforts to increase the supply of additional housing.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

3. Amendments to the NPPF need to be made. Careful consideration of the CPRE’s recent paper ‘Targeting the Countryside’ is urged. For instance CPRE argue in the case of paragraph 14 that housing demand should not have greater weight than environmental and social sustainability when planning decisions are made, for the sake of future generations. This paper also recommends a more flexible approach to the five year land supply issue, a recommendation which we support, and raises major concerns about the 20% buffer. A rebalancing of factors is essential whilst acknowledging the urgent need for more houses.

4. Planning and built environment policies need to be projected for at least a generation. The local master plan for our district extends to 2040, which is positive.

**Buildings and places; new and old**

5. The Government should implement a ‘brownfield first’ rule as a priority, building on its promises regarding such sites. Effective identification of smaller brownfield sites which could be developed more quickly to meet demand is also important. This strategy would also enable smaller scale builders to become more involved. Strategic land banking by large developers may require Government intervention. Compulsory registration of land ownership and sales with the Land Registry is also required.
6. Government should take the lead role in consultation with local government, including local councils, NGOs/charities and community groups. Clearly the impact of an ageing society, the need to ensure affordable homes for young people, decisions about energy use, health, education, transport, amongst other issues, should be given careful consideration in the planning process.

7. The National Trust, English Heritage, et al, would be in a better position to provide relevant information here.

Skills and design

8. Higher Education should be a key stage in addressing this holistic approach to the built environment. Government should make strenuous efforts to bring national associations of architects, engineers, planners, etcetera together to pursue this issue. National/local shortages of experienced planners in the public sector remain a major concern. Improved terms and conditions including professional development and career routes making planning a highly desirable profession, are essential.

9. Ensure that Chapter 7 of the NPPF ‘Requiring good design’ is given the appropriate weighting by Government.

Community involvement and community impact

10. Decision-makers: again a holistic approach is essential. In addition to factors mentioned in response 7, careful consideration needs to be given by planners and politicians to the availability of open spaces, the mix and density of housing, and light reduction measures.

Improving consideration of the impacts of the built environment: this can best achieved by acting on the views and recommendations of local communities as well as organisations such as the NHS and Police.

11. Neighbourhood Plans are enabling communities to engage. Consultations on Strategic Local Plans have also been widespread. However in the case of the latter completion times have been slow which can affect further public engagement. More consultative and decision-making powers should be given to local parish and town councils re existing built environment issues and future developments affecting them. For example Parish Councillors could be involved in attending Planning Committee meetings and giving their decisions on applications relevant to their parish.

Financial measures

12. Changes in the tax system so that better financial incentives could be offered to developers who take on brownfield sites should be investigated. Good design and
place-making should be amongst the decisive factors affecting decisions by Local Planning Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate.

Geoffrey Smith
Parish Councillor, on behalf of Welton Parish Council, Welton, Northamptonshire

04 October 2015
SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Call for Written Evidence

The House of Lords has established a Select Committee to consider ‘the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment’.

**Policymaking, integration and coordination**

**Question 1.** Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

Paragraph 1: Westbere Parish Council feels it is insufficiently qualified to comment.

**Question 2.** How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

Paragraph 2: Westbere Parish Council feels it is insufficiently qualified to comment.

**National policy for planning and the built environment**

**Question 3.** Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

Paragraph 3: Westbere Parish Council feels it is insufficiently qualified to comment.

**Question 4.** Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

Paragraph 4: Westbere Parish Council has grave concerns regarding the current lack of a spatial perspective, and considers the introduction of a spatial element to be beneficial. Currently each local authority considers its housing land supply in isolation, without communicating with neighbouring local authorities. For example, Manston airport has the
potential for development of thousands of new homes, but is being considered without consultation throughout east Kent.

Paragraph 5: Westbere Parish Council believes that a better approach to achieving new housing numbers is to design and establish new towns in clear open environments. This would be far superior to adding uncoordinated development to existing built up areas with the resulting congested urban sprawl. These new towns could be designed specifically for those people who live and work in them. They would include the infrastructure necessary for their population and include school(s), medical services, businesses, shops and leisure facilities. They could be designed with parks surrounding them for easy access and leisure activities and would become attractive places in which to move to and live. As successful living and working environments there would be far less opposition from the current population as they would be purpose built.

**Question 5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment need and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

Paragraph 6: Westbere Parish Council considers this a very difficult question to answer as circumstances can change rapidly – who could have foreseen the current migrant crisis adding enormous additional pressure to the housing number requirement.

**Buildings and places: New and old**

**Question 6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?**

Paragraph 7: Westbere Parish Council agrees there is a clearly identified local and national need for new homes. This is becoming more and more acute. Central co-ordination is critical.

**Question 7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?**

Paragraph 8: Westbere Parish Council would like to see more action taken in respect of empty homes and second homes to make better use of the existing housing stock.

**Question 8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?**
Paragraph 9: Westbere Parish Council firmly believes that the country’s national assets should be protected, and conservation areas enhanced and protected. For example, Canterbury is a medieval town that is crippled by traffic congestion and its major ancient monuments – the Cathedral, the Norman Castle and the Westgate Towers – are being ruined by traffic pollution.

One solution could be to build ring roads around ancient towns like Canterbury to protect the historical centre and improve traffic flow, then the narrow streets could be pedestrianised.

Paragraph 10: For place making???, for new development, take design cues from the heritage assets and ensure that the new development is respectful and subservient to them.

**Skills and design**

**Question 9.** Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

Paragraph 11: Westbere Parish Council feels it is insufficiently qualified to comment.

**Question 10.** Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

Paragraph 12: Westbere Parish Council feels it is insufficiently qualified to comment.

**Community involvement and community impact**

**Question 11.** Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it?

Paragraph 13: Westbere Parish Council believes it is the responsibility of the designers/architects to take account of the people who will live and work in their schemes.

**How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?**

Paragraph 14: Westbere Parish Council believes in the introduction of a ‘local connection criteria’ for affordable housing allocations.

Within sizeable developments there is a statutory requirement to provide an element of affordable housing. Westbere Parish Council welcomes affordable homes as there is an identified local need but would want a ‘local connection criteria’ (see example of criteria
below) for tenants of the affordable housing. This would ensure that the local need is met and that the homes remain for local people in perpetuity.

The Canterbury district has examples of such schemes in the district being allocated but they are all rural exception sites. Currently, such a criteria cannot be applied to a normal development site. This means that, where the affordable level kicks in, the allocations would not be under any local control.

Canterbury City Council does not currently have a housing allocation policy that allows a local connection to be included. Several local parish councils are currently lobbying Canterbury City Council to introduce a local connection criteria in new development sites with a sizeable element of affordable housing. This would ensure that at least a percentage of these homes could be allocated to tenants with a local connection to the area in any consent of that development where there is a desire for this to be introduced.

Wording along the following lines for prospective tenants could be used:

“All applicants shall meet at least one of the following Criteria (and in the case of joint applicants where at least one of them meets at least one of the criteria).

(a) Shall currently be resident in the parish of xxx having been so for a minimum of 10 years

(b) Shall have been previously resident in the parish of xxx for a minimum of 10 years but have moved away from the parish to secure affordable and/or appropriate accommodation as there was not such accommodation in the parish at the time

(c) Is the mother or father, son or daughter, the brother or sister of a Family which meets the criteria set out in (a) and (b) above and whose application is evidenced by proof that continuing care to or for members of the family is necessary.

Applicants who having resided away from the parish of xxx for a period exceeding 20 years shall not be considered eligible unless the application meets the criteria set out in paragraph (c) above

If there are insufficient applicants who fulfil the 10 year and other requirements as set out in clauses (a) to (c) then endeavour to allocate to persons who currently live in the xxx Parish - in considering such applications preference shall be given to persons who have resided in xxx for the longest periods and who still reside there.”

This criteria could of course be expanded or changed perhaps for individual schemes, for example, to expand the relatives in (c) could perhaps include grandchildren.
Question 12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

Paragraph 15: Westbere Parish Council engages in consultations such as the district Local Plan but are concerned that their representations are not carefully considered and actioned. They feel that the local plan creation process is very difficult for individual involvement and that the majority of individuals lack the knowledge and capacity to comment. Equally Canterbury City Council (like any other local authority) struggles to engage individuals. It is easier for collective bodies like parish councils, CPRE, Natural England etc to give constructive considerations.

Financial measures

Question 13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

Paragraph 16: Westbere Parish Council feels it is insufficiently qualified to comment.

Eofs.

05 October 2015
To whom it may concern,

RE: Select committee on national policy for the built environment

The following comments are offered on behalf of the West of England Nature Partnership, the Local Nature Partnership for the West of England, which covers the area of the Unitary Authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Local Nature Partnerships, are prescribed bodies detailed in section 33A(9) of the Localism Act (2011) and were established to embed the value of nature into decision making, and for the purpose of this response, we have concentrated on the importance of effectively integrating the value of the natural environment into the built environment, through good quality design, and integration of green infrastructure (GI). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines GI as ‘a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities’. Green space is taken to include rivers, standing waters, coastal waters and estuaries.

Yours sincerely,

Shelly Dewhurst (Coordinator)
on behalf of The West of England Nature Partnership
SUMMARY

1) POLICYMAKING, INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION
The national policy framework through which green infrastructure is supposed to be embedded within the built environment feels too weak at present (and falls short of what is envisaged in the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy). Whilst it is appropriate for much of the decision making process around the built environment to be made locally, there are frameworks within which that decision making process has to take place. National policy could do much more to direct that decision making process. There is no mechanism we are aware of which ensures that the aspirations of the White Paper are reflected in approaches to planning.

Responsibilities are divided across departments, and some departments with a strong interest are not currently engaged in this process, for example Public Health. We would encourage better integration and coordination across departments, to ensure that GI is recognised as a ‘win-win’ opportunity and fully embedded into place making plans. It would be easy to recommend a ‘green infrastructure commission’, or similar: what is really required, though, is policy at the national level that establishes mechanisms through which the value of GI is to be realised at the local level, so enabling Government to deliver on its aspirations in the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP 2011).

2) NATIONAL POLICY FOR PLANNING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
The challenges indicate that horizons for planning urgently need to be stretched in time. There is a need to visualise the future, and to ‘plan’, in the true sense of the word, for the future that we want to inhabit. The horizons, and tools, that policy makers need to consider will have to be adapted accordingly, with potentially significant ramifications for landowners and would-be developers. The role of the policymaker, should not be underestimated here, ensuring that the strategies designed to safeguard the natural environment are fully embedded into planning policy are critical to delivering a truly sustainable built environment.

3) SKILLS AND DESIGN, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT
Communities should not be excluded from the decision making process, as they are the ones who will live, work and ultimately benefit from that environment. Early engagement can result for a win-win for both community and planner, if well designed and delivered.

4) BUILDINGS AND PLACES: NEW AND OLD
Often it is not the case that one size fits all when it comes to housing supply and we would encourage a cautious approach that considers a combination of different factors and priorities, alongside purely economic and growth drivers.
5) FINANCIAL MEASURES

Clearly the benefits of good quality GI merit the cost of creating and maintaining it. Who bears this expense should be given consideration. With regards to the built environment, it would seem pertinent for developers to pay for any environmental loss or damage, and for creation of new GI, through suitable compensatory mechanisms, whilst the other beneficiaries could also contribute, recognising the multi-beneficial outcomes derived for good quality GI.

POLICYMAKING, INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION

1) Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

a. A fundamental decision relating to the built environment should be how the natural environment is effectively integrated into the built environment for the benefit of people and wildlife. We believe decisions around GI should be well informed, and made with the most up to date information. In addition to this, decisions regarding GI should be made across the building life cycle as examples of GI “have the potential, when integrated properly into the built environment to provide vast arrays of functions and benefits to all stakeholders” (UK Green Building Council, 2015)520

b. There is a growing body of European and national policy that supports the need to conserve and enhance the natural environment, with GI being cited as a practical, cost effective way to deliver this. Appropriate integration of GI within urban and rural landscapes, and maintenance and enhancement thereof, can bring a range of benefits generally captured under the heading of ‘ecosystem services’: these relate to provision of marketed goods and services, but more importantly, to those which are generally not traded in markets, including improved health (through recreational access and removal of air pollutants), improved water quality, reduced susceptibility to flood risk and climate regulation. In the context of buildings, temperature regulation and diminishing stress levels are also likely to be important.

520 UK Green Building Council, Demystifying Green Infrastructure
http://www.ukgbc.org/resources/publication/uk-gbc-task-group-report-demystifying-green-infrastructure
c. At the **European level**, the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy was adopted in May 2013 to *promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in urban and rural areas*. The EU strongly recommends that GI should be integrated into other policies at a national level with special focus on spatial planning\(^{521}\). In addition to their recommendations on GI, they are also promoting ‘nature-based solutions’ in the built environment, recognising the strong role the environment can play in mitigation and adaptation to climate change, enhanced resilience, safeguarding water and air quality and protecting biodiversity\(^{522}\).

d. At a **National Level**, the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) recognises the importance of GI in meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, and in conserving and enhancing the natural environment as stated in para 114 which states local planning authorities should *plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure*. However, as far as we are aware, there is no national strategy on green infrastructure, something which was foreseen by the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Natural Capital Committee has proposed a 25 year plan to protect and improve natural capital, which the Government has committed to in its response. There are National Policy Statements for different types of infrastructure, but it is worth noting, there is no NPS for green infrastructure, nor any equivalent.

e. **Local and Neighbourhood Plans** enable national policies to be expressed locally, whilst ensuring they complement and make links to other local strategies and priorities, such as Local Transport Plans, Open Space Strategies and Catchment Flood Management Plans.

Local Plans have to have regard to national policy: in this respect, it is important to note the relevance of the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP 2011), which made clear the desire of Government to ensure that the state of the natural environment would be left in a better condition for the next generation. Even so, other than through having regard to this, those tasked with planning policy might not feel responsible for its delivery: indeed, it is less than clear that there is *any* delivery landscape for this, let alone, any framework for measuring progress. By what process, for example, is the aspiration as stated in the white paper to be delivered on the ground? If land use planning has no role here, then what are the alternative mechanisms? More plausibly,

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\(^{521}\) An EU-wide strategy on Green Infrastructure: Enhancing Europe’s Natural Capital
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm
land use planning does have a role here, but there has been no attempt to cascade the over-arching objective down to the local level.

2) How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

f. Our response focuses on green infrastructure, of which responsibility is in effect, split between different Government departments. Whilst Defra is responsible for landscape and countryside, DCLG is responsible for urban green spaces and planning policies. Where major infrastructure projects are concerned, National Policy Statements have a vital role to play, and the Planning Inspectorate is effectively charged with making decisions. The content of the different NPSs is highly variable where GI is concerned – there is, it seems pertinent to point out, no NPS for GI.

g. It is of interest to us that there is no mention of the Department of Health. It is increasingly well-recognised that the built environment, because it shapes the places in which we live, has an effect on the health of citizens. The importance of embedding green infrastructure within the public realm, and in reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases, including obesity, diabetes, stress and depression, suggests that health professionals and health commissioning bodies might have a strong interest in supporting the case for green infrastructure provision: the preventive role played by GI in relation to health matters indicates that there are potentially significant savings to health budgets to be gained from appropriate place shaping.

h. Given the multi-functional benefits provided by GI, we would like to see more integration between the departments, bringing together the social, economic and environmental strands, along with consideration of policies for public health, transport and climate change. The Natural Capital Committee found that carefully planned investments in natural capital, targeted at the best locations, will deliver significant net benefits for society, with respectable benefit to cost ratios523. There also exists evidence that high quality environment can contribute to an uplift in property values, with a study in the North West reporting up to 20% rental uplifts as a result of GI524.

524 Mersey Forest http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/BE_group_green_infrastructure.pdf
In Summary: Policy Making, Integration and Coordination.

The national policy framework through which green infrastructure is supposed to be embedded within the built environment feels too weak at present (and falls short of what is envisaged in the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy). Whilst it is appropriate for much of the decision making process around the built environment to be made locally, there are frameworks within which that decision making process has to take place. National policy could do much more to direct that decision making process. There is no mechanism we are aware of which ensures that the aspirations of the White Paper are reflected in approaches to planning.

Responsibilities are divided across departments, and some departments with a strong interest are not currently engaged in this process, though enlightened Directors of Public Health in local authorities have a commendable appreciation of the relevance of this issue. It would be easy to recommend a ‘green infrastructure commission’, or similar: what is really required, though, is policy at the national level that establishes mechanisms through which the value of GI is to be realised at the local level, so enabling Government to deliver on its aspirations in the White Paper.

NATIONAL POLICY FOR PLANNING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3) Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?

a. At the core of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In particular we support the principles set out in paragraphs 110 - 118 which are concerned with minimising the impact the built environment has upon biodiversity, whilst conserving and enhancing the natural environment. We also support paragraph 109 which calls for recognition of the wider benefits of ecosystem service. Given the importance of services ecosystems provide, we would like to see them considered and accounted for more generally in the decision making process for the built environment, both strategically and locally. Whilst we feel there is sufficient guidance within the NPPF, it leaves too much to interpretation in how this can be translated into action and operationalised on the ground.

b. The NPPF remains the only mechanism through which local decision makers can consider the appropriate means to integrate green infrastructure within their spatial plans. The extent to which the NPPF gives clear direction on this would need to be
judged through reference to the empirical evidence in respect of how local planning authorities are giving substance to the NPPF. It might be foolish to imagine, however, that the NPPF is sufficient, in this regard, to deliver appropriate quality development, in which the value of nature is fully recognised in the shaping of the built environment.

4) **Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?**

c. The planning system in England has undergone fundamental change through the Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework, which have shifted power to the local and neighbourhood levels while continuing to emphasise the importance of sustainable development in supporting the objectives of the Natural Environment White Paper. We feel these changes, coupled with the devolution debate, are leading us towards a more localised approach to decision making. Introducing a spatial element at the national level might not be entirely productive from this perspective. The role of national policy should be, as per our response to question 1, to establish the framework within which local decision making takes place. An appropriate national level response might be to outline how local planning authorities should incorporate a spatial element within their plans.

d. For Local Nature Partnerships, such as ourselves, having local autonomy means we can shape their own agendas based on local needs and priorities. As LNPs are still relatively in their infancy, and some are more developed than others, we would hope that they are given more time to fully establish to enable them time to deliver tangible results.

e. We support the National Capital Committees recommendation for a 25 year plan for the environment, and recognise the value of setting the plan nationally. This will require local knowledge and expertise for delivery, for example within the West of England we have developed a 'State of Environment Assessment' which has analysed local data to help determine where restoration effort would be best placed. This local setting of priorities will help strengthen any national plan.

5) **Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and built environment policy be looking?**

f. There are a number of challenges which confront those involved in planning and in the built environment as we look forward. Some of these challenges that we have never had to confront in the past; the potential consequences of climate change, and the need to
provide an adaptive response to this, is a critical matter. In our region, there are enterprise areas that have been, and potentially, will be, identified which are at significant risk of flooding. To the credit of some, the potential threats from sea level rise, and the inundation which would result, are being recognised, though somewhat after the fact. Furthermore, the nature of the response to the threat is still being considered. Of course, this issue does not only affect these areas.

g. The houses and other infrastructure that we do build will also reflect choices that we make: what type of places do we want citizens to inhabit in the future? Understanding the role that developing green infrastructure has to play in this, then it seems reasonable to believe that trees will be part of that infrastructure. How long will it take to grow the trees in the developments of the future.

**In Summary: National Policy for Planning and the Built Environment.**

The challenges indicate that horizons for planning urgently need to be stretched in time. There is a need to visualise the future, and to ‘plan’, in the true sense of the word, for the future that we want to inhabit. The horizons, and tools, that policy makers need to consider will have to be adapted accordingly, with potentially significant ramifications for landowners and would-be developers. The role of the policymaker, should not be underestimated here, ensuring that the strategies designed to safeguard the natural environment are fully embedded into planning policy are critical to delivering a truly sustainable built environment.

**BUILDINGS AND PLACES: NEW AND OLD**

6) What role should Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

a. We recognise that housing supply is a pressing issue for the Government and would assert that sustainable development can and should be the only way to address this demand. Development should never, in our opinion, come at the cost of the natural environment or biodiversity. We believe the built environment can be sympathetic to the natural environment, and advocate well designed, thought out developments that enhance nature, increase biodiversity and recognise the value of ecosystems and the services they provide. We would welcome interventions that support these values. We are also repeatedly told that we are facing a housing crisis, and that we urgently need to build more houses, large numbers of them being affordable homes. At some point, we
might wish to ask the question as to whether there is merit in seeking to shape the nature of demand for housing, unless the intention is to build ever more dwellings.

b. Furthermore, we would want to see any relaxation of planning policy carefully thought out to avoid any undue pressures being placed upon biodiversity and the natural environment. An example of this would be 'the sweeping away of brownfield site rules' (Conservative Party Conference 2015), which often overlooks the high biodiversity value of some of these sites, for example Open Mosaic Habitat on previously developed land (OHM) is home to many rare and endangered invertebrates, birds, and plants.

c. It is well recognised that Green Infrastructure has a significant role to play in building a sustainable and resilient built environment. In meeting the challenge of climate change, GI can help mitigate against the effects of climate change and support adaptation to extreme weather events, through carbon sequestration the use of trees for solar shading, the use of green space, green roofs and walls to alter surface albedo, and reduce the heat island effect, through flood attenuation whilst providing a habitat for wildlife, and so forth. We would hope the Government recognises these benefits and will provide grants and funding, or mechanisms for other payments to ensure GI is considered as key to future proofing our built environment in the face of changing needs and circumstances. Ideally, we would encourage GI to be included in the planning and design phase (RIBA design stage 0 - 4) with consideration of the construction and handover phase (RIBA design stage 5 - 7). Where appropriate retrofitting GI into existing developments should also be considered.

d. Recognising and accounting for ecosystem services will also be vital, acknowledging the services nature provides such as flood mitigation, air and water cleansing, water purification and waste recycling - services that are often hidden, therefore, overlooked and undervalued.

e. We also believe that GI should be promoted on a 'significant scale' and encouraged across our urban and rural landscapes, linking cities and countryside. This could be achieved through the roll out of more Nature Improvement Areas that encourage landscape-scale conservation by establishing large ecological networks, by working with existing and planned land-uses.

7) How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government plan in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?
In Summary: Buildings and Places: new and old

Often it is not the case that one size fits all when it comes to housing supply and we would encourage a cautious approach that considers a combination of different factors and priorities, alongside purely economic drivers.

SKILLS AND DESIGN

8) Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

a. In order to ‘plan positively for Green Infrastructure’, the professions will need to work in a holistic and integrated manner. In line with the principles set by the TCPA on biodiversity and GI, we support the assertion that GI will be successful when the right people come together in partnership – planners, landscape architects, facility managers, ecologists etc. We would also hope to see GI’s value recognised, avoiding the temptation to ‘value engineer’ GI out of plans early on.

9) Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design in ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

b. National standards on GI could provide the legislative support required for a shift change in the way GI is planned, designed and incorporated into the built environment as “GI can be harnessed as a positive ‘place-shaping’ tool, and where appropriate can be used to positively transform local characters”⁵²⁵. DCLG Eco-towns SPD suggests a minimum of 40% of the total land should constitute GI. Whilst we may recognise the benefits, policy ought to help secure the funding support. Measurable standards for GI could be integrated into place making policies, example existing standards include Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT⁵²⁶), Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace

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⁵²⁵ TCPA: Planning for a healthy environment
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

10) Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

a. Good quality, accessible green space and infrastructure can provide many potential health and wellbeing benefits, including increased life expectancy and reduced health inequality; improvements in levels of physical activity and health; and promotion of psychological health and mental well-being.\textsuperscript{533} It has been estimated that the NHS could save £2.1 billion a year if everyone had access to green space\textsuperscript{534}. Despite these proven benefits, GI still is not seen as a must have for new and existing developments.

11) How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?

b. Community participation in the development and maintenance of GI should ideally start at the planning stage. This ensures that communities can take ownership of their own spaces resulting in a long-term commitment to community maintenance (n.b it may be necessary to provide expert ecological and horticultural expertise to ensure GI is appropriately designed for biodiversity). Community ownership has been shown to be

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\textsuperscript{527} www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/gi/accessiblenaturalspacestandardangst.aspx
\textsuperscript{528} http://www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk/html/index.php?page=projects&GreenInfrastructureValuationToolkit=true
\textsuperscript{529} http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100083906/space-for-people.pdf
\textsuperscript{530} http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/design-for-play.aspx
\textsuperscript{531} http://www.heatwalkingcycling.org/
\textsuperscript{532} http://www.naturalcapitalproject.org/InVEST.html
\textsuperscript{534} http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24806994
an effective and low cost way of promoting good quality GI, for example community gardens, meadows, allotments, and networks of private gardens transformed for wildlife, are all good for wildlife, whilst providing countless health & wellbeing benefits and contributing to community cohesion. With this in mind, we feel GI should be prioritised within planning policy, especially in areas of greatest need.

c. For engagement to be effective, consideration must be given to the following; who is the community; how are they being engaged (is it in writing, in person), is the communication method appropriate for that community; how is the consultation being delivered and by whom; what are the timeframes. Community consultation is meaningless without the due consideration being given to some of these questions.

In Summary: Skills and design, community involvement and community impact.

Communities should not be excluded from the decision making process, as they are the ones who will live, work and ultimately benefit from that environment. Early engagement can result for a win-win for both community and planner, if well designed and delivered.

FINANCIAL MEASURES

12) Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

a. It would be sound economics to require developers to make compensation payments to local authorities where they undertake development on land which provides ecosystem services: compensation would be linked to the nature of land being used. Given that, in our experience, local authorities are concerned that too many housing developers are delivering low quality development (both in terms of build, and the quality of place that they engender), then the level of compensation that developers pay could also be linked to the extent to which they gave substance to various matters related to quality, including the extent to which green infrastructure was embedded within the development.

b. The compensation funds so generated could be used to invest in natural capital in a strategic manner within the region, thus moving away from the piecemeal approaches typically considered under Section 106 agreements. The WENP has developed the concept of the Natural Capital Trust to play just such a role. National government would do well to establish principles such as these, thus giving substance to its commitment to
sustainable development, and making it more likely that the objective set out in the White Paper will be met.

c. Alternatively, government could consider the design and implementation of a land-use change levy. The merit of such a levy would be two-fold: it would be another way (in addition to the aforementioned approach) through which to give substance to the principle of compensation (if a developer imposes costs on society by building on land, then there should be compensation for the services lost), but it would also have the potential effect of eliminating, at least in part, the rents which landowners currently gain from the enhancement in land values from consents awarded for development. This is not entirely novel: states in the US have, for example, implemented taxes on areas of hard-standing to reflect the enhanced risk of flooding that hard surfaces represent.

d. An alternative mechanism would be (in line with our view in respect of Q1) to have Government identify clearly minimum standards in respect of new housing developments, both in terms of the build quality, but also, the provision of green infrastructure, active travel routes, and sustainable systems of drainage. Over and above these measures, and in the spirit of payments for ecosystem services models, developers of significant projects could have their plans considered by a committee of beneficiaries, including (for example) directors of public health, health commissioning bodies, water companies, NGOs, local authorities (as lead local flood authorities) and bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency. These potential beneficiaries could offer to fund measures over and above the level of provision of GI in line with potential benefits that alterations to the scheme could provide. This measure would function best against the backdrop of a forward-thinking minimum standard, which itself was considered to provide a benchmark for genuinely sustainable development.

In Summary: Financial Measures.

Clearly the benefits of good quality GI merit the cost of creating and maintaining it. Who bears this expense should be given consideration. With regards to the built environment, it would seem pertinent for developers to pay for any environmental loss or damage, and for creation of new GI, through suitable compensatory mechanisms, whilst the other beneficiaries could also contribute recognising the multi-beneficial outcomes derived for good quality GI.

06 October 2015
Submission of written evidence to the Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment

West Malling is a historic market town of around 3,000 people in the Tonbridge and Malling district of Kent. It has a main line railway station with a journey time of 60 minutes to London as well as easy access to several motorways, including the M25, coastal ferry ports and the Channel Tunnel.

Councillors are very much aware of the need to provide a better environment for future generations and wish to pass on the following comments. Please note that these responses are listed in the same order as the questions on the Call for Written Evidence dated 27 July 2015.

Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. The role of a national policy must be a “light touch framework” which considers the way in which infrastructure and economic development align with energy provision, specialist industry, higher education, demographic change and environmental issues like flooding and the green belt as well as housing growth. While the built environment should be ultimately in the national interest, such a policy would be either too weak to be able to address local issues or too prescriptive and inflexible to deliver well designed and viable communities. A National Policy must be drawn up primarily from the regions upwards and not passed down from central government and the work and role of local authorities should be expanded to give Parish Councils a higher profile in recognition that their input is based on personal knowledge and experience of their parish.

2. Whilst a policy may be common to several Government departments, invariably each one interprets it from their own perspective. To achieve an integrated, properly coordinated and workable policy, the recipient’s perspective must be the guiding principle. The man in the street (and his successors) is the one most affected by poor housing, design, transport etc. By acknowledging this, each department can still offer their own perspective around the guiding principle as well as retaining flexibility to embrace change.

National policy for planning and the built environment
3. The three principle dimensions (economic, social and environmental) in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) require the planning system to administer a number of roles to lead sustainable development. However, allowing a single policy to oversee such a wide range of elements inevitably leads to difficulties in finding the right balance between development and the environment. Decisions can appear to be made by ticking boxes rather than taking time to consider the costs and benefits to the community both existing and future. Sustainability has to be considered a prime factor. Without it, future generations will lose basic day to day rights and freedoms as their choices become non-existent from poor decisions made now.

4. National planning policy no longer has an effective spacial element. By re-introducing it, decisions will have to take into account the effect on neighbouring communities, whether across a number of local authorities or a larger area (e.g. county or region). This must lead to greater discussion of and possible challenge to, planning policies but will ensure that decisions are made with enhanced transparency.

5. Any timescale should include frequent, if not continuous review to allow for changes in the economy, its principle driving force. Thus the targets the policy sets could be arrived at by averaging out good years with bad to provide better management and engagement with the community’s needs. Currently, a 20 year timescale seems reasonable and practical.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. Under occupation is an unsustainable aspect in the present supply of housing and commercial property. Many existing properties are simply the wrong size; larger buildings are uneconomic to upgrade and difficult to convert to current environmental targets. Building sustainable units and maintaining that sustainability by preventing extension and alteration (without a special case being proved) would provide residential property suitable for the modern family or business without the need to seek new areas of building land.

7. Sustainability is achievable by providing smaller, eco-friendly buildings more suitable to the modern family and offering financial help to those who wish to downsize; also smaller start-up type of units to small to medium businesses. The government would need to play a major role as financial incentives would be required to kick start this kind of strategy.
8. The historic environment should remain exactly that; cherished as part of our history, culture and national inheritance and not be subjected to inappropriate development.

Skills and design

9. Most local planning authorities have a good knowledge base of existing legislation but change should drive education while recognising the value of experience.

10. Again, while there is extensive knowledge at all levels, new strategies must be supported by education. This should include investigating existing skills and encouraging development of new approaches to achieve policy aims.

Community involvement and community impact

11. The developers and decision makers of the built environment are driven by different needs to those of the people who live and work in the results. It is these people who will form a viable community and they are the ones who must have a greater say in how and where their homes and workplaces are provided. Mental, physical and behavioural issues within a community are not a new problem but as has been proved in the past, tearing down buildings and providing what is considered “ideal” can make these issues worse. Better results would be achieved by developers and local authorities working in partnership with the community to discover the existing needs before creating further problems with inappropriate decisions.

12. It can be difficult for a community to engage in decisions about its future. Most decisions are currently made by various committees at many levels of government and getting to the right place at the right time to take part in these discussions is not always possible. Increased use of social media and the internet must be investigated and better use made of local district, borough and parish authorities as conduits for information and discussion.

Financial measures

13. Developers should take on the financial burden of providing infrastructure not only within their proposal but also recognise the financial cost to the existing infrastructure e.g. roads, schools and community facilities.
West Malling Parish Council – Written Evidence (BEN0119)

While this is already available to some degree through Section 106 contributions, the opportunity to strengthen and enforce this approach to development afforded by revising national policy for the built environment cannot be missed.

06 October 2015
Summary

WWT invites the Committee to consider the importance of drainage infrastructure within the built environment and the fact that it is struggling to cope.\textsuperscript{535} Sustainable Drainage Systems offer an alternative to hard infrastructure that will help reduce surface water flooding, whilst improving the living environment of urban communities and providing wildlife a valuable urban habitat. We urge the Committee to consider sustainable drainage systems and the need to incorporate sustainable drainage into planning and retrofit within the built environment if we are to address the issue of surface water flooding. Sustainable drainage systems need to be designed and managed to optimise multiple benefits such as health and well being and biodiversity.

We recommend:

- **The Housing and Planning Bill should be amended to require “permission in principle” for brownfield site development to be conditional on no increase in runoff rates or surface water flood risk.** New Starter Home developments should include sustainable drainage options designed to achieve run-off rates equivalent to greenfield sites.

- **The National Infrastructure Commission should consider the need for green and blue infrastructure in its work on transport and energy infrastructure.** The Commission is expected to focus on transport in the north and London and on future-proofing energy infrastructure. Its conclusions will not be robust without consideration of the importance of natural infrastructure options, which can manage risks like flooding and provide important urban habitats for wildlife and corridors between them.

- **The Government should publish guidance for cities and local authorities to produce a sustainable drainage strategy** for retrofitting into both domestic and commercial/public sector buildings and grounds. This would follow the example of the London Sustainable Drainage Action Plan and help to safeguard cities from flooding while improving the urban environment.

\textsuperscript{535} WWT is a leading wetland conservation charity working to protect wetlands, their wildlife, and the services they provide in the UK and globally. We manage nine Wetland Centres across the UK. A million people visit our centres each year to learn about the benefits wetlands bring and to enjoy wetlands and their wildlife. We provide formal learning about wetland wildlife to more than 60,000 school pupils each year. We have much practical experience in using natural processes to improve the built environment. We are submitting evidence as experts in wetland conservation and water management but also representing our 220,000 members.
Main comments

1. To date, the Committee’s oral evidence sessions have focused largely on the UK’s housing needs, the associated costs and practical challenges and social aspects around sense of place. The evidence the Committee has heard has paid less attention to the need to deliver truly sustainable development, delivering high quality housing in communities where people want to live and are resilient to climate change whilst making space for wildlife and nature.

2. One evidence session looked in detail at green infrastructure, but even this session did not cover the fact that our current drainage systems are struggling to cope. Over three million properties are already at risk of surface water flooding and many drainage systems are over-capacity. The impact assessment for the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 estimated current annual damages due to surface water flooding to be between £1,304 million and £2,237 million. It estimated that climate change and increased urbanisation will produce an additional 30% to 110% (over 50 years) increase to current surface water flooding damages.536

3. Sustainable Drainage Systems can help alleviate this risk. They seek to manage rainfall in a way similar to natural processes, by using the landscape to control the flow and volume of surface water, prevent or reduce pollution downstream of development and promote recharging of groundwater. If designed and managed appropriately they can also provide a wealth of additional benefits including water quality, health and wellbeing and wildlife habitat.

4. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Impact Assessment predicted net benefits of £138 to £6,107 million for SuDS in all developments of over 1 dwelling. However, earlier this year the Government decided not to require SuDS to be designed into small developments, or even into large developments if the costs to development did not add up. DEFRA believes that this decision will cause over £100 million of flood damage each year, as new development floods neighbouring homes and businesses. These costs will be borne by the public, in flooded homes and in higher water bills and insurance premiums.

5. This decision seemed to take no account of the benefits to the people living in these developments: reduced flood risk, potentially reduced insurance rates, increased house prices, and amenity value. SuDS have also been shown to reduce the urban heat island effect and provide valuable urban habitat for wildlife.537

6. There is much evidence of the cost benefit of using sustainable drainage systems as opposed to more traditional methods. A report commissioned by the Committee on Climate Change (2012) looked at such evidence and concluded that “SuDS can be significantly cheaper to install than traditional drainage...The maintenance costs for SuDS are also lower than traditional drainage for many schemes. Therefore the whole life costs for SuDS are likely to be less than equivalent traditional drainage systems in the majority of cases”.538

7. It is also hugely important that SuDS are not just installed within new development but that retrofitting is encouraged. WWT retrofitted 10 schools in the Pymmes Brook catchment in London to show the range of SuDS that could be fitted even given some very limited spaces. The additional educational benefits of such projects should not be underestimated. More information can be found at http://sudsforschools.wwt.org.uk/. There are many opportunities for retrofitting SuDS such as those described in the London Sustainable Drainage Action Plan https://beta.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/lsdap_final.pdf.

8. We would also like to draw the Committee’s attention to the need for improved water efficiency in housing. Water efficiency measures should be considered as vital as energy efficiency and should be mandatory in new housing. Worldwide classifications consider the UK to be under medium to high water stress.539 Yet our water usage is around 150 litres per person per day compared with Belgium where it was 110 litres per person per day in 2007.540 Water meters can help people manage their water use more efficiently and save them money on their bills and yet wide roll out of water meters is not currently a consideration in the UK.

9. Rainwater is not waste; it is a valuable resource which, if managed sensitively, could help avoid water scarcity as well as surface water flooding. For example businesses able to use rainwater harvesting and use grey water for use in toilets and potentially for actual business processes not only reduce the overall demand on water but make themselves more resilient to times when water may be more scarce.

10. The creation of a new National Infrastructure Commission is a valuable opportunity to consider innovative, cost-effective ways of developing new infrastructure like housing and transport links in a way that contributes to green infrastructure, rather than damaging it. For example, new trans-Pennine transport links could be accompanied by sustainable drainage technologies. They could also provide wildlife links to join up

538 Royal Haskoning DHV (2012) Costs and Benefits of Sustainable Drainage Systems, Committee on Climate Change.
539 http://www.wri.org/resources/charts-graphs/water-stress-country
important areas of habitat, as recommended by the Lawton Review. Similarly, the new developments proposed in the Housing and Planning Bill should be ecologically designed from the outset, using natural processes to guard against flooding and improve quality of life; this will guard against the need for retrofitting in future and could help to alleviate planning concerns associated with new development.

Submitted on behalf of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

We are grateful for the Committee’s consideration of these issues.

13 November 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1 This submission has been developed by The Wildlife Trusts in response to the Select Committee’s inquiry into National Policy for the Built Environment.

1.2 Wherever you are, there is a Wildlife Trust caring for wildlife and wild places near you. We have a shared mission to create an environment rich in wildlife for everyone and to inspire people to value and take action for nature. We are actively engaged in the planning system, promoting opportunities to improve the natural environment and reviewing more than 60,000 planning applications a year. We have more than 800,000 members including 150,000 members of our junior branch Wildlife Watch. Every year we work with thousands of schools and our nature reserves and visitor centres receive millions of visitors. Each Wildlife Trust is working within its local communities to inspire people about the future of their area: their own Living Landscapes and Living Seas.

1.3 A Living Landscape is a recovery plan for nature championed by The Wildlife Trusts since 2006 to help create a resilient and healthy environment rich in wildlife and to provide ecological security for people. In A Living Landscape habitats are restored and reconnected on a large scale with the local community closely engaged. The vision is a primary objective of The Wildlife Trusts and builds on a groundswell of landscape-scale activity at a county level. The Wildlife Trusts have a long track record of delivering landscape-scale conservation. Across the UK there are now more than 150 Living Landscape schemes covering an area of more than four million hectares. These are being delivered in partnership with many different individuals and organisations, including farmers and landowners, water companies, land-based industries, local authorities, other NGOs, statutory agencies, local communities and volunteers.

1.4 We have an interest in this inquiry because we believe that nature has an important part to play in creating healthier and more attractive places for people to live and work. By integrating nature into policy, design and planning for the built environment, we not only protect and enhance the natural environment but we also help to tackle other ‘people’-related issues through the provision of high quality green spaces. These include health and wellbeing, community cohesion and environmental hazards such as flooding.

1.5 There are many inspiring examples from across England of Wildlife Trusts working with developers to integrate nature into masterplans and designs for new built developments. These are included within Annex 1 (Nature-filled areas: good for wildlife, great for people). However, there are also a number of barriers to achieving such integration, which we have highlighted below, along with recommendations on how these might be addressed.
1.6 This submission answers the questions from the call for evidence that we believe are most relevant for the Committee’s consideration of how national policy for the built environment could be better integrated with natural environment policy and considerations.

1.7 We would be willing to provide oral evidence to the Committee.
2. Executive Summary

2.1 Integrating nature into the design and delivery of high quality built environments enriches people’s lives, protects wildlife and contributes to a wide range of government policy objectives including improving public health and wellbeing, tackling crime and inequality and creating community cohesion.

2.2 However, this integration will only be achieved if joined-up policy making across government departments becomes a reality. The Government’s proposed 25 year plan for nature provides an opportunity to improve the management of the natural environment and deliver multiple benefits for society but the success of this will depend on effective inter-departmental co-ordination and strong leadership from the Government.

2.3 Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework includes some positive policies on ecological networks, it does not provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment. A stronger steer from government is needed if ecological networks are to be fully embraced by the local planning process.

2.4 The current legal and policy framework for the protection of nature has been vital in securing the nature we have left, but it will not be sufficient to bring about the change required to protect nature and secure its recovery in the longer term.

2.5 We believe that legislative change is needed. A Nature and Wellbeing Act will ensure that nature is valued properly and put at the heart of decision-making, nationally and locally, including on decisions on the built environment.

2.6 Creating an ecological network is a “place-making” process, aiming to make every locality one which functions environmentally and which can therefore provide the multitude of benefits that local people need, whether in a rural or urban setting.

2.7 It is of great concern that there is often an inadequate awareness and resourcing of the ecology function within local authorities, with many lacking the capacity and expertise to analyse and evaluate the ecological content of planning applications and monitor and enforce planning conditions on built developments. Adequate resourcing of in-house ecological expertise within local authorities will be essential if local ecological networks are to be consistently developed and integrated with other objectives as part of the local strategic planning process.

2.8 Ensuring a rigorous level of scrutiny and oversight on government policy will also be important, especially on the environmental impact of new policies and spending plans. This could be done by setting up a new Office of Environmental Responsibility or extending the remit and lifetime of the independent Natural Capital Committee.
2.9 The public benefit of maintaining and enhancing green spaces in towns and cities is undeniable and many Wildlife Trusts have been working in partnership with local authorities and others landowners to improve parks and green spaces for wildlife and people. Increasing the extent, accessibility and quality of natural green space in all settlements should be a priority for national and local government, with a requirement to ensure that everyone has a minimum level of access to natural green space.

2.10 We encourage the Government to think ambitiously and demonstrate strong leadership on the natural environment, just as it has done on other policy areas.
3. **Policymaking, integration and co-ordination (question 2)**

Policy co-ordination across government departments

3.1 In the current UK central government structure, at least seven departments are of importance to domestic policy-making on the natural and built environment, including DECC, Defra, the Department for Transport, BIS, DCMS, CLG and the Treasury, as well as, of course, the central co-ordinating bodies of the Cabinet Office and Prime Minister’s offices.

3.2 Given this, there is a strong imperative for joint working and activities across government so that policies on the natural and built environment are designed and delivered in a complementary way.

3.3 Co-ordination of policy making for the built and natural environment will result in the creation of better places for people to live and work. The presence of nature in and around our built environment is good for our heath, wellbeing and productivity. The greater the join-up across government departments, the more that nature will be delivered in and around developments and the greater the contribution to the delivery of other policy objectives such as improving public health, reducing crime and preventing flooding.

3.4 The Government agrees with the Natural Capital Committee that getting natural capital into the national accounts by 2020 is a priority. Equipping the Natural Capital Committee with the resources and remit to allow it to exercise oversight of these national natural capital accounts would be one way of holding all of government to account and ensuring that policy co-ordination is taking place.

3.5 The Government has agreed to develop a 25-year plan for nature, which provides an opportunity to improve the management of the natural environment, including the delivery of multiple benefits; the success of this will depend on effective inter-departmental co-ordination.

We would therefore like to see:

- Government adopting a much more integrated approach to the design and development of the built environment to ensure that it delivers inspiring new built developments, created with consideration for the needs of both people and the natural environment and which provide healthy and attractive places for people to live and work;\(^\text{543}\) (R1);

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\(^{542}\) The Government’s response to the Natural Capital Committee’s third State of Natural Capital Report

\(^{543}\) Case studies for developments where The Wildlife Trusts have worked with the developer to design new buildings and settlements with nature at their core
- Joined-up working between government departments which is needed to ensure that the protection, restoration and recovery of the natural environment is integrated into wider policy at the national and local level (R2);

- A strong 25 year plan for nature which adopts the recommendations of Wildlife and Countryside Link (see annex 2, Wildlife and Countryside Link 25 year plan for nature\(^{(544)}\)) (R3).

\(^{(544)}\) http://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Link%2025%20year%20plan%20for%20nature%20Aug%202015.pdf
4. National policy for planning and the built environment (questions 3 and 4)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.1 The benefits of ecological networks were recognised in both the Lawton Review and the Natural Environment White Paper, which identified their potential for fulfilling wider policy objectives such as flood resilience, provision of clean water and creation of attractive and sustainable places to live. The White Paper recognised the need for ecological networks to be delivered via the planning process through “ecologically coherent planning”. This was reflected in the NPPF which makes specific reference to the creation of ecological networks.

4.2 However, the White Paper failed to introduce any sort of national commitment to, or framework for, the creation of ecological networks. This is needed to ensure that local networks are designed and implemented across England to create a network that functions at a national level.

4.3 In partnership with the RSPB, we have commissioned research to assess the extent to which the biodiversity-focused policies of the NPPF have been positively integrated into new Local Plans across England. This assessed 30 English local planning authorities’ plans on their treatment of biodiversity, ecological networks and green infrastructure. Our research found that NPPF policy for biodiversity planning has not been widely embedded in Core Strategies, with less than one third presenting a clear strategic approach to planning for biodiversity and only 20% identifying cross-boundary biodiversity matters that might need to be addressed in co-operation with other local planning authorities.

4.4 The NPPF requires local authorities to identify and provide for the protection of Local Wildlife Sites through local policy. Yet our research also found that locally designated sites are not usually illustrated within Core Strategies and are instead retained as mapped elements of saved plan proposals, which risks out of date data on Local Sites being used in decision-making. A study undertaken by The Wildlife Trusts in 2014 found that 717 out of 6,590 Local Wildlife Sites were reported lost or damaged in the five years between 2009 and 2013, with development cited as a key threat by more than half of England’s Local Wildlife Site partnerships.

4.5 It is clear therefore that the NPPF does not provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment. Despite the inclusion of positive policies in the NPPF, local ecological networks are not being consistently developed or integrated with other objectives as part of the local strategic planning process. Whilst there are other barriers to embedding ecologically coherent

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546 The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, Defra, 2011
547 National Planning Policy Framework, CLG, 2012
planning within local planning documents (for example, a lack of ecological expertise in local authorities, as described in section 5), there is no doubt that a stronger steer from government is needed if ecological networks are to be fully embraced by the local planning process.

4.6 The vast majority of the natural environment is not priority habitat yet it supports considerable levels of our biodiversity. An overly rigid interpretation of priority and non-priority habitats is leading to perverse decision making on habitat protection. The NPPF should be revised to clarify that the biodiversity value of all habitats should be adequately considered in the planning process. Warwickshire for example has developed a Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator which objectively measures the biodiversity value of any given site and assigns it a score measured in ecological units. It then requires that development on the site meets or exceeds this score and provides the mechanisms and funding to achieve no net loss in perpetuity.

We suggest these issues should be addressed through:

- Robust implementation and clarification of the natural environment policies in the NPPF (R4);
- A place-based strategic vision for the protection and restoration of biodiversity (R5);
- Improved access to up to date and robust ecological expertise and information (R6).

The benefits of introducing a spatial element to national policy

4.7 Introducing a spatial element to national policy has many benefits, including the use of visual concepts, such as ecological networks, that people can understand and relate to.

4.8 Spatial plans for local ecological networks would provide a focus for investment in nature. They can be used to target public and private sector funds where they are most needed to help restore ecological degradation, create new links in the landscape between different habitats and green spaces and ensure that investment is targeted in places where nature restoration can also bring the greatest benefits for people.

4.9 This would promote a sense of trust within local communities that the environment is not being sacrificed in the short term in order to address other issues; instead, it is being protected and invested in for the long term. This is particularly critical in urban areas where a high quality natural environment is usually under greater pressure (and vulnerable to other land-use investments) but provides an important range of benefits for local people.

4.10 Spatial plans provide a common vision for nature and can be used as a mechanism to co-ordinate local initiatives, such as Local Nature Partnerships, Local Enterprise Partnerships
and Local Health and Wellbeing Boards, integrating approaches on the design and location of new housing, flood alleviation, preventative health delivery and job creation.

4.11 Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) are a good example of where a spatial element in national policy could have provided a strategic mechanism for targeting effort and resources on areas of nature most in need of improvement and enhancement. They were inspired by The Wildlife Trusts’ Living Landscapes, recommended by the Lawton review (in which they were termed Ecological Restoration Zones) and introduced through the Natural Environment White Paper. However, the approach adopted within the White Paper failed to identify areas in a strategic manner or to provide the political emphasis needed to embed them in planning or other decision-making processes. Despite this, individual NIAs made a difference: in the first year, just £7.5m helped to leverage an additional £40m in both cash and in-kind contributions. As an intervention they were not designed as a nationally strategic tool to focus resources on where nature or people need them most. Government funding for these areas ended in March 2015.

4.12 Creating an ecological network is an evidence-led process, built on a scientific evidence base of what is needed where, and the priorities for delivery. It is also a “place-making” process, concerned primarily with making every locality one which functions environmentally and which can therefore provide the multitude of benefits that local people need, whether in a rural or urban setting: special places to enjoy for recreation, attractive green spaces in cities, towns and villages, a vital element in protection from flooding and drought, important areas for food production, a carbon sink to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a fundamental part of local landscapes, which in turn support tourism and a recreation economy.

We therefore recommend that there should be:

- A requirement for Government to set the policy and legislative framework for the creation of a national ecological network built at the local level, and knitted together across administrative boundaries (R7);

- Guidance for local authorities on how to identify, map and deliver an ecological network, to ensure common principles are applied across England (R8);

- A reporting requirement to ensure that Parliament is kept informed of progress on creating the national network (R9).
5. **Skills and design (question 9)**

5.1 Planning for and managing the built and natural environment in a holistic manner requires local authorities to have ready and sufficient access to skills, data and expertise in ecology, to ensure that biodiversity is factored properly into decisions.

5.2 In practice, there is often an inadequate awareness and resourcing of the ecology function within local authorities, and many lack the capacity and expertise to analyse and evaluate the ecological content of planning applications and monitor and enforce planning conditions on built developments.

5.3 Many local authorities no longer have in-house ecologists. In 2011, about 40% of local authorities had an in-house ecologist and there have been further reductions since then. For example, in Lincolnshire only 2 out of the 9 local authorities have such roles, which are essential in working with and advising their planning colleagues on ecological issues. In Lancashire, the County Council has withdrawn completely from providing ecological expertise to district councils on development management. Whilst a small number of these have contracted external agencies for ecological advice, the majority have no permanent arrangements in place.

5.4 Local Environmental Records Centres, which manage biodiversity records, are important resources, often holding the most comprehensive ecological data within a local authority area, but they are poorly used and resourced by local and central government.

5.5 Natural England no longer routinely provides advice on individual planning cases, instead relying on generic standing advice which, by its very nature, is unable to take account of local issues or circumstances. Its increasing focus primarily on statutory sites inevitably means that the broader ecological infrastructure is often not considered or commented on. As a statutory consultee, the information from Natural England carries weight, so where its advice is either absent or non-specific, a local planning authority will often be making decisions based on incomplete information.

5.6 The result of all of this is that ecological issues are frequently not being adequately considered in planning decisions, resulting in poorer outcomes for biodiversity and missed opportunities to deliver built development that is nature-proofed and integrated with the natural environment.

5.7 Whilst we understand the difficult financial position of local authorities, we are concerned that decisions to further reduce the amount of available ecological expertise would be counter-productive and form a significant barrier to the Government’s target to halt biodiversity decline by 2020.

5.8 This lack of ecological expertise is one of the reasons why local ecological networks are not being consistently developed or integrated with other objectives as part of the local
strategic planning process. The absence of any national commitment to, or framework for, the creation of ecological networks means there is a significant disconnect between plans for ecological networks and local authorities’ plans and strategies.

5.9 The Wildlife Trusts have worked in partnership to develop a range of models and approaches for creating ecological network maps across the country to meet local needs and requirements. All of these have a number of critical ingredients in common, so whilst the map outputs might be different the underlying elements are consistent. The creation of ecological networks and these maps should be extended across England and must be fully embedded in local plans so that they can be given weight in development management decisions.
We therefore recommend that there should be:

- Adequate resourcing of in-house ecological expertise within local authorities (R10);

- Guidance for local authorities on how to identify, map and deliver an ecological network, to ensure common principles are applied across England (R11);

- A duty on local planning authorities to identify, map and embed ecological networks in local plans (R12);

- A duty on all relevant public bodies (including Natural England and the Environment Agency) to contribute to the planning and delivery of local ecological networks (R13).
6. National leadership on high quality design and place-making (question 10)

National leadership

6.1 National leadership from the Government is essential to deliver ecologically coherent planning across England. The Government is about to embark on the preparation of a 25-year plan for nature, which provides an opportunity for it to promote its ambition and vision for the natural environment and articulate how this contributes to place-making and other government commitments such as improving public health and wellbeing and delivering a healthy economy.

6.2 We encourage the Government to think ambitiously on the natural environment as it has done on other policy areas such as housing, where it recently announced an ambition\textsuperscript{549} to build one million homes by 2020.

6.3 Whilst the current legal and policy framework for the protection of nature has been vital in securing the nature we have left, it will not be sufficient to bring about the change required to protect nature and secure its recovery.

6.4 We believe that legislative change is needed. A Nature and Wellbeing Act – as set out in a Green Paper\textsuperscript{550} prepared by The Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB – will ensure that nature is valued properly and put at the heart of decision-making, nationally and locally.

Joining up the activity of public bodies

6.5 The only way that plans for ecological networks will attract the investment and commitment needed to ensure their delivery is to place them at the core of processes and decisions that determine how land is used, public funds are allocated and policy targets are delivered.

6.6 Therefore, plans for the creation of ecological networks must become the concern of all relevant government bodies whose objectives can be delivered locally by a healthy, functioning natural environment. This is particularly relevant for bodies working on built environment policy, as there is significant potential to integrate policy more closely and identify win-win scenarios where multiple outcomes are achieved from single interventions, saving money for the public purse.

6.7 Supporting integration at the strategic local scale (for example, through Local Nature Partnerships) would help to mainstream government policy and strengthen the economic case for investing in the natural environment.

Effective scrutiny

\textsuperscript{549} http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-34209027
\textsuperscript{550} A Nature and Wellbeing Act: A Green Paper from The Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB
6.8 The process of external scrutiny and audit of government policy can lead to more robust decisions. Following a recommendation in the Natural Environment White Paper, the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) was set up to advise government on the state of our natural capital.

6.9 Whilst this is welcome, it does not amount to the effective scrutiny that is needed on the Government’s national leadership on the natural environment. The NCC suffers from being time-limited and under-resourced and will most likely cease to exist at the end of this Parliament, which will curtail the important work it has begun on assessing the state of our natural capital.

6.10 Other areas of government policy benefit from more effective scrutiny, which is provided at a relatively low-cost (for example, the Committee on Climate Change and the Office for Budget Responsibility, which have a secretariat of 30 and 24 respectively).

Greater national leadership is therefore needed through:

- A bold and ambitious government vision for the natural environment that defines its role in place-making and promoting health and wellbeing (R14);
- An overarching legal framework provided by a Nature and Wellbeing Act (R15);
- A requirement on national bodies to work through a shared framework for investment in nature to join up national and local activity and deliver better outcomes (R16);
- Giving legal basis to a cross-government body to scrutinise the environmental impact of new laws and exercise oversight of government spending plans – this could be done by setting up a new Office of Environmental Responsibility or extending the remit and lifetime of the Natural Capital Committee (R17).
7. **Community involvement and community impact (question 11)**

7.1 Nature has immeasurable social, spiritual and emotional value. It is vital for our health and wellbeing and provides multiple benefits for the economy and society. For example, individuals with easy access to nature are three times more likely to participate in physical activity and 40% less likely to become overweight or obese\(^{551}\), and nature near the home reduces the risk of crime, aggression and domestic violence\(^{552}\). Yet the value of nature is routinely overlooked or underestimated in decision-making on the built environment.

7.2 People are increasingly disconnected from nature, which has an impact on their health and wellbeing. This is especially acute for the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. In England, the most deprived communities are 10 times less likely to live in the greenest areas. Income-related inequality in health is related to the extent of exposure to green space\(^{553}\). Those with close access to green space live longer than those with no green space, even when adjusted for other relevant factors such as smoking. Nature-rich green spaces have greater psychological benefits, especially for the most economically deprived communities.

7.3 In urban areas, protecting green spaces should therefore be a priority for local planning authorities in planning or spending decisions, with an emphasis on working to build a mosaic of high quality green infrastructure, achieving benefits for people and wildlife. For example, there is no use having a park if people are separated from it by a dual carriageway

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\(^{553}\) Natural solutions for tackling health inequalities, UCL Institute of Health Inequity, 2014
with no footbridge; nor is “green space” delivering its full benefits if it is just a patch of grass covered in litter and dog mess.

7.4 Local authority spending on open spaces was cut by an average of 10.5% between 2010/11 and 2012/13, but improving access and quality of green space is a low cost way to broaden the benefits of access to nature in cities, including tackling health inequalities and wellbeing. There is a major risk that as local authority budgets are cut further, green space quality and condition will deteriorate, and councils will view open spaces as surplus to requirements, resulting in potential disposals for other land uses such as housing.

7.5 Access and quality are also important in rural areas. In fact, recent research suggested that children and families in urban areas felt more connected to nature. Sometimes, in rural communities, busy roads or private land can separate children from good-quality green space.

7.6 The provision of new or improved natural green space would, of course, overlap with and contribute to the creation of ecological networks in local areas and provide a very important mechanism through which to increase the presence of wildlife in our villages, towns and cities, improving the connection between people and nature.
Many Wildlife Trusts have been working in partnership with local authorities and other landowners to improve parks and green spaces for wildlife and people. For example:

- **Avon’s My Wild Street**[^554] – Avon Wildlife Trust has teamed up with leading UK law firm Burges Salmon to create a community project that will bring natural wildlife to the doorsteps of an urban street in Easton, an inner city area in Bristol;

- **Birmingham and the Black Country NIA**[^555] – the NIA, which was a partnership between the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, local authorities and others, delivered a large number of improved and new habitats such as woodland, grassland and heathland. The NIA project involved 2,000 volunteers, 30 schools and 100 community groups, all of which was achieved within the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation.

To address these issues, we recommend that the Government should commit to:

- Increasing the extent, accessibility and quality of natural green space in all settlements (R18);

- Setting targets for the provision of natural green space to a minimum standard in all settlements, and providing guidance on how these targets should be met (R19);

- Placing a duty on local planning authorities to ensure that every household within their area has a level of access to natural green space that complies with national targets (R20);

- Publishing an annual report to Parliament on progress on meeting natural green space targets (R21).

The Wildlife Trusts, 6 October 2015

[^554]: [http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildstreet](http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/mywildstreet)
[^555]: [http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/NIA](http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/NIA)
Annex 1: Nature-filled areas: good for wildlife, great for people

Trumpington Meadows

Trumpington Meadows is a development of 1,200 homes and forms part of a string of developments on the southern fringe of Cambridge. Respecting Cambridge’s character as a compact city with networks of green space connecting the city to surrounding rural areas, the new developments aim to link into these green corridors.

Trumpington Meadows Land Company wanted to create a high quality development with its own character and sense of place and viewed a new country park as integral to this. It carried out extensive consultation with local communities and stakeholders prior to submitting the planning application, which reduced objections and highlighted concerns at the outset.

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire was selected in advance as the land managing organisation and engaged with the landscape architect on design and creation of the development’s green infrastructure to help secure better outcomes and limit future problems. By overseeing the creation of new habitats, the Wildlife Trust was able to work with trusted local suppliers and contractors resulting in significant financial savings.

Local play areas, swales and tree avenues are included throughout the development and the 58 hectare country park is designed to be both a space for people and a ‘nature reserve’. There are a network of surfaced and grassy paths and other features such as arts & play features, benches and cycle racks. Its staged creation which includes areas of existing arable land, as well as new species-rich meadows, hedgerows, woodlands and restored floodplain meadows, began prior to the building of the first houses to allow the landscaping and habitats time to mature.

The country park was designed to follow the River Cam and include its floodplain. A river restoration scheme was developed by the local authority ecologist to improve the river habitat and reconnect the river with its floodplain meadows, providing a small reduction in flood-risk downstream. New houses were built away from the flood plain to reduce flood risk and the drainage system is engineered to include a balancing pond with overflow area and open ditch (swale) features. All of which provide additional habitat and biodiversity benefits.

Tadpole Garden Village

Tadpole Garden Village is a modern day 21st Century Garden Village located to the north of Swindon, a short distance from the village of Blunsdon and the River Ray. The development,
comprising approximately 143 hectares, will feature 1,695 residential homes as well as a school, shops, a pub, and a community centre. Inspired by the original Garden Cities principles and Crest Nicholson’s own Garden Village Framework, the vision is for a holistically planned, new community with strong character, design, landscaping, and public open spaces. The green infrastructure is supported by a strategy for its long term management and maintenance by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

As former farmland, the site has been designed and developed around many existing natural features, including hedgerows, established woodland, ponds and ditches. In total more than 68 hectares of green space weave through the village landscape, offering open spaces, sports pitches, woodland, play areas, cycle routes, footpaths and a new Nature Park for both people and wildlife. Crest Nicholson is working in partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to create the Nature Park, which will see the conversion of more than 48 hectares of arable land to wildflower species-rich meadows, providing essential habitat for plants, invertebrates, bats, birds and mammals, such as the brown hare. The Nature Park will also provide vital links in the green corridor that runs along the River Ray to the north Wiltshire countryside.

Crest Nicholson is funding the creation of the Nature Park with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust committing to a 125 year lease to assist in its the quality design and implementation, as well as ensure its successful long term management and maintenance. The Trust will also provide 100 days of engagement activities to secure community interest and pride by local residents. The Nature Park is supported by an endowment from Crest Nicholson and an annual service charge payable by residents.

**Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve**

Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve is a condition of the 2,650 dwelling, Port Marine development and the outcome of a unique partnership between North Somerset Council, the developers, the residents and Avon Wildlife Trust.

Located between the town of Portishead to the west and the Royal Portbury and Avonmouth Ports to the east, Portbury Wharf is a gateway to the wildlife-rich Gordano Valley -providing a green link for people and wildlife between the Severn Estuary and the Gordano Valley. It lies next to the foreshore of the Severn Estuary, where the second
highest tidal range in the world is found – making it unique and important for wading birds and wildfowl, and as a feeding ground for migrating birds.

The Reserve comprises 47 hectares of wetland, open water, grazing marsh areas, hay meadows and hedgerows and is home to many rare and endangered species including water voles, brown hares, curlews, skylarks, lapwing, snipe, oystercatchers, greater horseshoe bats and otter/s (spraints have been found).

Persimmon, the developers, were largely responsible for the creation of the Reserve. This involved extensive earth moving and landscaping; the creation of open water in large ponds and scrapes; the construction of footpaths and bridleways; the erection of fencing, gates, footbridges and signposts; the installation of ‘public art’ features and the construction of boardwalks and 3 bird hides.

Avon Wildlife Trust has managed the Reserve since October 2010 and will become the full owners upon completion of the development. The ongoing costs for the reserve are met by the owners of the new houses. The annual charge to residents is fixed each autumn by an intermediary management company. The revenue funding received by the Trust pays for reserve management and community engagement. In return, residents qualify for free membership of the Trust, a regular newsletter, and access to nature on their doorstep.

Cambourne

The new settlement of Cambourne was conceived in the 1990s as a series of three interlinked villages and comprises 4,200 dwellings. The settlement’s design respected the existing landscape character, identifying existing habitat features and using them as the building blocks for the network of green spaces. The green spaces framed, joined and permeated each of the three villages - giving residents and wildlife easy access to the whole network. This consideration to design has made Cambourne a safe and attractive place where people want to live and engage with their local environment and where wildlife can thrive.

Green space makes up 60% of the settlement and includes pre-existing and new woodlands, meadows, lakes, amenity grasslands, playing fields, allotments and formal play areas. There are 12 miles of new footpaths, cycleways and bridleways and 10 miles of new hedgerows.
The new grassland areas are rich in ground nesting birds such as sky larks, meadow pipits and corn buntins which have had great breeding success over the years. The lakes and ponds that serve to prevent flooding also provide great habitat for wildfowl and dragon flies.

Management of the green spaces is undertaken by the new Cambourne Parish Council and The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire. The land will eventually be transferred to each of these organisations. Negotiations between The Wildlife Trust, developers and the local authorities secured an agreement that the Trust would manage the green spaces in return for office premises, initially rent free, with full ownership after ten years. Cambourne is still evolving and The Trust continues to work closely with the developer.
Annex 2 Wildlife and Countryside Link 25 year plan for nature

Introduction

The 11 headlines below represent Link members’ views on the essential components of a 25 year plan for the natural environment as a whole.

*We recommend that the 25 year plan be:*

- Developed and delivered through an integrated approach, coordinating input and resources from all Government departments
- Subject to a broad, open consultation, including the public, business and civil society
- Scrutinised by a Select Committee of the House
- Published within 12 months, giving time for consultation, but allowing for the early action necessary to achieve the targets already established in *Biodiversity 2020*
- Supported by an effective framework of monitoring and reporting on agreed outcomes

The architecture of a plan

*We recommend that the 25 year plan:*

1. **Sets out a new vision for a thriving natural environment**

   Developed in consultation with the public and stakeholders, this vision for nature should illustrate the importance of the protection and recovery of biodiversity, landscape character and natural capital, as well as improving public access to green spaces for the UK’s economy, society and well-being. By connecting people with nature, and increasing our natural wealth, it should set the UK on a course where protecting and enhancing nature and our landscapes are the cornerstones of our long-term economic plan and the transition to a sustainable, resource efficient and low-carbon economy.

2. **Establishes overarching goals for government for the protection and recovery of nature**

   To realise the vision, the protection and recovery of nature should be a high-order objective of all Government policy. Clear objectives should be established for a full range of natural assets including species, habitats, water, air, land, seas and minerals. These should apply across Government and overall responsibility should rest with the Prime Minister.

3. **Contains clear objectives and five year milestones with accountability to Parliament**

   To ensure the necessary effort is invested now to take us to our long-term goal, the plan should set out clear objectives and five-yearly milestones against which government can monitor progress and be held publicly to account, informed and updated by independent scientific advice.

4. **Sets the right institutional framework and aligns resources, for meeting environmental goals across Government**
This should include a stronger Natural Capital Committee, with responsibility for setting and reviewing milestones, as well as the impact of new law and policy on their achievement. The development of the plan should be based upon the recommendations already made by the Natural Capital Committee. The plan should identify essential national and local Government functions (including statutory agencies), and areas of spending that can be used to protect and enhance natural capital.

5. **Builds on existing policy and legislation**

The plan should include a review of policy affecting nature, such as planning, economic and fiscal policy, to ensure they contribute to the achievement of the natural environment goals. It should include a timetable for full implementation of vital European Directives. New mechanisms will be required to mainstream nature into decision-making, stimulate innovation in the way we capture the value of our environment in public policy and consumer decision-making, facilitate new markets to generate funding and income for the countryside and to drive private sector innovation and investment in areas such as infrastructure development, planning policy and macroeconomic management.

6. **Ensures the terrestrial and marine planning systems enhance landscapes and nature, delivering an ecological network**

The plan must enhance protection and management of special places, both rural and urban, linked within a wider landscape that makes room for people and nature - an ecologically coherent network on land and at sea. Regulators will need access to high quality ecological expertise and information to enable them to plan and manage nature-positive development, infrastructure and other activities, including the provision of natural and green spaces.

7. **Delivers for our seas as well as land**

Our seas are under threat and still need considerable action to reverse their decline. The plan must include measures to deliver an ecologically coherent network of well managed marine protected areas to protect biodiversity and deliver ecosystem services. A suite of measures to tackle fisheries, pollution and wider biodiversity issues are also needed if our seas are to achieve Good Environmental Status by 2020.

8. **Supports people working together for nature**

The engagement and contribution of communities is essential for conservation. The plan must enable people to benefit from and contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural world—including businesses, local communities and the health sector—through civil society cooperation, improved Local Nature Partnerships and local involvement in strategic planning. It should set out how learning from, and connection to, nature can be improved for our children.

9. **Sets out stronger safeguards for threatened species and habitats**

As well as protecting and restoring nature in the wider landscape, the plan should include stronger safeguards for protected species, habitats and landscapes that are at risk, so that our wildlife and habitats are protected and restored across the UK.

10. **Includes the UK Overseas Territories and our impact on natural capital abroad**
The plan should improve natural capital in our Overseas Territories, meet international commitments and set an example of responsible governance. It should incorporate metrics to measure UK impacts and dependence on key commodities such as carbon, forests and fish in other countries.

**11. Has a statutory basis**
To ensure the plan is viable beyond the life of this Parliament, to give certainty to businesses and landowners, and to create the goals and implementing powers needed to give the plan a strong backbone, key elements of the plan should be underpinned by legislation and/or by regulatory mechanisms.

**Wildlife and Countryside Link**

06 October 2015
**Woodland Trust – Written Evidence (BEN0130)**

1.0 THE WOODLAND TRUST

1.1 The Woodland Trust is the UK’s leading woodland conservation charity. We have three aims: to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future; to enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees; and to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees. We own over 1,250 sites (around 23,000ha) and have over 500,000 members and supporters across the United Kingdom.

2.0 POLICYMAKING, INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION

2.1 (Question 2) Coordination across government departments

2.2 The Woodland Trust (The Trust) works across a number of governmental departments and regularly sees a lack of coordination between and within them. For example Highways England in delivering the Government’s Roads Investment Strategy of new and upgraded roads has a commitment to deliver net-gain to biodiversity by 2040\(^{556}\). Yet Network Rail (government owned) and High Speed 2 Ltd (HS2) are making a weaker commitment to no net loss of biodiversity. It seems that there should be a common governmental standard across all departments and schemes. Furthermore Government should be proving to private developers and local authorities that major infrastructure projects can be delivered with environmental gains.

2.3 A key practical example of how coordination could be improved is through the implementation of cross department plans. The Conservative manifesto set out the very welcome ambition to develop a “25-year plan to restore the UK’s biodiversity”, stating that they would work with the recommendations of the Natural Capital Committee “to ensure that both public and private investment in the environment is directed where we need it most”. The Trust warmly welcomed this commitment and saw it as an opportunity for cross-departmental working to really embed biodiversity aspirations across government. In more recent conversations with DEFRA it is unclear what shape the plan will take but that it is likely to be internal, relating only to DEFRA. This would be a missed opportunity.

3.0 NATIONAL POLICY FOR PLANNING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

3.1 (Question 3) Does the NPPF provide sufficient guidance?

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3.2 Whilst the NPPF provides some warm words on protecting the built and natural environment these are seriously undermined by the overall tone of the document which when read as a whole puts economic growth above the protection of our most important natural and built assets.

3.3 A key example of this is the definition of sustainable development. On Page 2 the NPPF sets out the definition of sustainable development citing the UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future and referencing environmental limits. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out the balance between economic, social and environmental factors, yet in paragraph 6 sets out:

The policies in paragraphs 18-219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

3.4 This creates ambiguity as it appears that the NPPF informs the definition rather than the definition leading the NPPF. The Trust would like paragraph 6 to be removed to create a much clearer picture of sustainable development within the NPPF to enable better and more balanced decision making.

3.5 Whilst the Select Committee’s title only references the built environment this question also mentions the natural environment. The Trust would like to take the opportunity to highlight the disparity between protection of natural and built heritage assets.

Paragraph 132: .......Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Paragraph 118: ......planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss;........

3.6 Ancient woodland is defined as an irreplaceable natural resource that has remained constantly wooded since AD1600. The length at which ancient woodland takes to develop and evolve (centuries, even millennia), coupled with the vital links it creates between plants, animals and soils accentuate its irreplaceable status. The varied and unique habitats ancient woodland sites provide for many of the UK’s most important and threatened fauna and flora species cannot be re-created and cannot afford to be lost. Approximately one quarter of priority UK BAP species are associated with woodland habitats. Forests, woods, and trees make a significant contribution to biodiversity, and ancient sites are recognised as being of particular value. Due to
their longevity, ancient woodlands are more species rich, and are often refuges for specialist woodland species that struggle to colonise new areas.

3.7 Yet in this wording the NPPF shows a clear bias in favour of the protection of built heritage assets over natural irreplaceable habitats. The Trusts urges the Committee to recognise that our natural and historic assets are of equal value and should be treated as such in planning policy terms.

3.8 It must also be recognised that the NPPF is increasingly sitting in a policy vacuum as supporting policy is being stripped away, leading to increasing ambiguity and uncertainty. We would bring to your attention the current standing advice on Ancient Woodland. Initially published in 2011 the current version is dated August 2015. There have been many different amended versions between the publication of these two documents. The guidance has been consistently watered down and amended, undermining the certainty that planners and the development industry are known to seek. The Trust would ask the Committee to consider the guidance that sits alongside the NPPF as part of its considerations.

4.0 BUILDINGS AND PLACES: NEW AND OLD

4.1 (Question 7) Creating built environments that are sustainable and resilient.

4.2 The Trust believes that the natural environment should be at the heart of all decision making. The current language surrounding the housing crisis focuses on numbers rather than building high quality communities that people will want to live in for generations to come.

4.3 We have produced a guidance document on how best to incorporate woods and trees into new developments. With over 80 per cent of the population now living in towns and cities, it is critical that Local Planning Authorities and developers step forward to ensure they are healthy, happy and productive places to be. These communities need to be multi-faceted and resilient to the challenges posed by climate change, an ageing population, the obesity crisis and increasing budgetary constraints. The importance of trees and green space in delivering high quality places to live, work and spend leisure time is now widely recognised. These vital spaces can be taken for granted but add significant value to developments in terms of social, economic and environmental benefits. Integrating trees and green spaces into developments early on in the design process minimises costs and maximises the benefits they can provide.

4.4 The Government has a role to push for higher standards to create high quality homes. The Government’s decision not to proceed with Zero Carbon Allowable Solutions is very disappointing, particularly as this mechanism could have funded the

Woodland Trust, Residential Developments and Trees, July 2015

Page 1953 of 1964
creation of new woodland, which would provide multiple additional benefits to society as described in the Third Report of the Natural Capital Committee. The house building sector had been preparing for the introduction of the regulations for nine years, and the previous administration’s own final impact assessment stated that the Allowable Solutions mechanism could be introduced at no cost to the house building sector yet generate revenues in excess of £2 billion annually. Certainty has been shown to speed up the development process, but the plan sets out that the approach to energy efficient standards is ‘under review’. The Trust asks the Committee to examine the value of this decision.

5.0 SKILLS AND DESIGN

5.5 (Question 9) Skills issues

5.6 Planners are generalists by nature who need technical support from numerous specialists including ecologists.

5.7 From research undertaken by ALGE in 2014, it is known that only one third of planning authorities in England have access to their own ‘in-house’ ecologist. A large number of planning authorities (c.65%) have no or only limited (i.e. part-time or shared with another authority) access to any ‘in-house’ ecological expertise. When considered in the context of District Authorities across the country considering more than 400,000 application per annum this figure is very worrying. This lack of expertise can lead to delays and confusion and as the cuts deepen many Local Planning Authorities are failing to fulfil statutory duties. This not only poses the problem of biodiversity loss and damage but increased risk of legal challenge.

06 October 2015
Policymaking, integration and coordination

1. Are the decisions that shape England’s built environment taken at the right administrative level? What role should national policymakers play in shaping our built environment, and how does this relate to the work and role of local authorities and their partners?

1.1 It is very important that decisions at the national level are designed to enable work at the local level. Some of the current decisions made at national level seem not to promote good practice when it comes to development. Withdrawing the Code for Sustainable Homes appears to have sent a signal to developers that sustainability measures are less important than before, meaning that councils wishing to promote better environmental performance in new development will struggle to deliver higher standards. For example, Local Plan policy promoting sustainable building practices has had to be compromised by these changes and lower standards are now seen to be acceptable.

1.2 The revocation of Regional Strategies has left a policy vacuum that Local Plans, through the duty to co-operate, are struggling to fill. Where growth pressures require development and infrastructure (both grey and green) that crosses administrative boundaries, there is no simple mechanism for agreeing its scale and location. These issues create significant uncertainty and delay. These problems are not easily solved by the new geographies of the LEPs which, although they may – to an extent – represent functioning economic geographies, do not necessarily represent the natural geographies of cross-boundary development.

1.3 There is a need for national policy on green infrastructure. Guidance and leadership from Government is essential in delivering high quality outcomes and a national spatial approach can only be effectively delivered by national (and perhaps UK-wide) policy frameworks with the requisite promotion and leadership at the highest levels (see below for further comments on this).

2. How well is policy coordinated across those Government departments that have a role to play in matters such as housing, design, transport, infrastructure, sustainability and heritage? How could integration and coordination be improved?

2.1 There are some concerns over how well policy is coordinated across built environment related Government departments, with a range of policy arrangements from different departments which do not always seem to co-ordinate or relate one
to another. For example, the Department for Business Innovation & Skills provided announcements on re-use of brownfield land without reference to planning, flooding, or the health agenda, which appears to indicate that they have not consulted with other departments.

2.2 Many brownfield sites will already include valuable green infrastructure resources which can be incorporated into the development and provide ecosystem services for the new communities. These can be linked to flood management measures and health improvements, to assist in creating a sense of place. None of this has been recognised in recent policy announcements which have focused on a single message of building more homes as opposed to building quality new homes and sustainable communities.

2.3 Mixed messages on renewable energy from national government can undermine progress; the scale of proposed cuts to the feed-in tariff will render many schemes unviable, and increasingly stringent planning tests for renewable energy will hamper scheme delivery. The impression given is that DECC’s policy-making is being driven by the Treasury, and this undermines confidence in the government’s commitment to a more sustainable approach to energy and local efforts to promote decentralisation of energy generation and potential for renewable heat networks.

National policy for planning and the built environment

3. **Does the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide sufficient policy guidance for those involved in planning, developing and protecting the built and natural environment? Are some factors within the NPPF more important than others? If so, what should be prioritised and why?**

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework includes many valuable policies, including on the natural environment and green infrastructure. Indeed the wording, tenor and tone of paragraphs such as 9, 109 and 118 provide welcome guidance on implementing sustainable development that recognises environmental limits and delivers net gains for nature. The NPPF recognises the importance of environmental, economic and social considerations, but in practice it appears that some issues — particularly viability and the five year housing land supply - take precedence over others, such as protection of the environment.

3.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), being an online tool, is not very user-friendly; it is difficult to navigate and disjointed, and the inability to look at the full guidance as a whole is a major concern as this promotes "silo" thinking. Whilst the PPG provides some high-level guidance on issues such as green infrastructure, additional information and guidance that was formerly available has been removed from the government webpages. This makes it extremely difficult to interpret some of the national policies and more importantly to deliver aspirations for multifunctional green infrastructure networks. For example, the removal of the Planning Policy Statement 1 Eco-Towns Supplement - which contained guidance on green
infrastructure - made it difficult for the Local Authorities and other partners to interpret policies and plan positively for GI through both Local Plans and planning decision making.

3.3 Similarly, the recommendations of the Pitt Review in relation to water and flood management have been weakened under the current Government, with a move from rigorous and independent assessment of surface water management to merely including this within the planning process, where is it only one of a number of material considerations.

4. Is national planning policy in England lacking a spatial perspective? What would be the effects of introducing a spatial element to national policy?

4.1 Yes it is and the problems caused by this - for example a disjointed approach to GI and general infrastructure provision, a reliance on the rather poorly defined duty-to-cooperate and inconsistencies in cross-border working - may be compounding the difficulties felt with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and delivery of high volumes of housing in the right locations at the right time. We feel that it is very important that national planning policy contains a spatial element. It would provide more clarity and allow for integration of various planning policy areas, in particular in relation to historic environment, ecology, green infrastructure and wider infrastructure work. There are various examples of infrastructure projects offering opportunities for integration and creation of multifunctional green infrastructure networks; however, the lack of a spatial approach at the national level makes implementation of these projects difficult.

4.2 Cross-boundary housing need is currently considered through the Duty-to-Cooperate. The result of this is that development and its associated infrastructure requirements are being planned in a piecemeal way. A strong spatial framework at a greater than local level would enable better planning for housing based on sustainable criteria and for infrastructure to be considered and developed in parallel.

5. Is there an optimum timescale for planning our future built environment needs and requirements? How far ahead should those involved in the development of planning and environment policy be looking?

5.1 There is no optimum timescale for planning future built environment needs and requirements. Timescales will vary depending on the type of environment and planning work involved, and the planning system should have an element of flexibility embedded within it. For example, it is impossible to exactly predict when flooding events are going to occur – therefore common timescales such as "1 in 100 years" flood events should be used with caution. Similarly, Local Plans currently use 10-15 year timescales, however local circumstances change more often which is why Plans are often due for review sooner than the planned timescales.
5.2 It feels that planning should be led more by outcomes than timescales, and should embed risk management within the process.

5.3 At the national level there should be a stronger focus on continuation of policies rather than changing them under the pretext of making them better. The delivery and implementation of policy at the local planning authority level is constrained due to national guidance and policy changes adding confusion and putting strain on planning resources.

Buildings and places: New and old

6. What role should the Government play in seeking to address current issues of housing supply? Are further interventions, properly coordinated at central Government level, required? What will be the likely effect upon housing supply of recent reforms proposed for the planning system?

6.1 It appears that Government policies addressing housing supply issues are a continuous flux of moving targets, changes and reforms. As stated above, it would be useful to have some continuity in planning for housing stock and new developments. This "no intervention" approach would allow local authorities to develop appropriate processes to address housing issues rather than constantly catching up with the changes.

7. How do we develop built environments which are sustainable and resilient, and what role should the Government play in any such undertaking? Will existing buildings and places be able to adapt to changing needs and circumstances in the years to come? How can the best use of existing housing stock and built environment assets be made?

7.1 The introduction of a national policy on green infrastructure, supported by comprehensive and consistent guidance, would be a positive step to delivering sustainable and resilient built environments in the UK. Making green infrastructure a statutory requirement for new development would allow the costs of providing such infrastructure to inform development viability from the outset, and therefore prevent subsequent viability concerns eroding development quality. Unless green infrastructure becomes a compulsory requirement, we will continue to deliver tick-box, unsustainable and uninspiring developments.

7.2 National policy should enable statutory agencies to promote a partnership approach to working towards delivery of green infrastructure on development sites. Over the last five years, Worcestershire’s GI Partnership of statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, local authorities and developers, has successfully worked to ensure that new strategic development in Worcestershire delivers high-quality and multifunctional GI networks. The Partnership prepares GI 'Concept Plans' which contain high-level priorities for networks of green infrastructure assets on and outside these strategic sites, agreed by multidisciplinary panels including landscape, biodiversity, historic
environment, water management and flooding, and access and recreation representatives. The Partnership then works closely with developers to ensure these priorities are correctly embedded within their masterplanning, implementation and future management of the sites.

7.3 This partnership way of working is successful in Worcestershire and greater promotion of such an approach should be encouraged through stronger national policy. Statutory agencies are key members of the Worcestershire GI Partnership, but their ability to engage in detailed work is constrained by resource issues. Adequately resourcing the statutory agencies would allow them to better support partners in the efficient delivery of GI across the country.

8. To what extent do we make optimum use of the historic environment in terms of future planning, regeneration and place-making? How can more be made of these national assets?

8.1 Nationally, planning for the historic environment has a strong focus on designated assets. Designated assets are important, but they should not be the only consideration. There is a need to look at the wider landscape character of an area and better integrate the historic environment with other work areas to achieve improved environments. A stronger focus on the multifunctionality of historic assets and landscape character should be encouraged. The historic environment should not be looked at in isolation, and the way in which these environments interact with people should be a consideration in planning for the historic environment.

Skills and design

9. Do the professions involved in this area (e.g. planners, surveyors, architects, engineers etc.) have the skills adequately to consider the built environment in a holistic manner? How could we begin to address any skills issues? Do local authorities have access to the skills and resources required to plan, shape and manage the built environment in their areas?

9.1 Generally, there is a shortage of skilled professionals in the above work areas. This is due to financial and procedural constraints put on statutory agencies. Natural England’s resource constraints mean it can only become directly involved in the largest developments and unfortunately are not able to offer advice on complex and difficult matters, even if this would assist in the planning process. The Environment Agency is restricted to commenting on main river matters, and the Forestry Commission has no powers of objection to developments affecting woodland or trees.

9.2 Local authorities are unable to bridge this skills gap, primarily as a result of financial constraint, and so there is a lack of a holistic approach to issues faced when planning for the built environment.
9.3 The Government should ensure that statutory agencies are resourced to take on a leadership role in the built environment, including on green infrastructure and flood management. They should be enabled to take on a pro-active role in championing good practice in development and supporting delivery at the local level.

10. Are we using the right tools and techniques to promote high quality design and ‘place-making’ at the national level? How could national leadership on these matters be enhanced?

10.1 There needs to be an increased dialogue between various players on the design and place-making agenda. This cross-sectoral working should be championed at the national level. In particular there is a need for more clarity on the role and status of the Local Nature Partnerships in relation to planning and development. Furthermore, there should be a stronger emphasis on the Local Enterprise Partnerships working with other partners, including those with environmental interests, in particular Local Nature Partnerships.

10.2 There is a significant body of good practice guidance available from a range of organisations including the Wildlife Trust, Town and Country Planning Association, Natural England, CIRIA, etc. It would be helpful if Government could provide strong leadership in embedding these current tools and instruments in place-making. The wording in the NPPF provides key hooks and agenda-setting commentary on this (for example para 109 on ecological networks and 165 on the need to base decisions on up-to-date information) but all too often the excellent strategic guidance in the framework is not backed up by the detailed ‘how-to’ commentary required for developers and LPAs to deliver the best results. By sign-posting, championing and providing guidance in these areas the Government could develop a truly sustainable approach to place-making and help to deliver better places, of higher quality for future communities. This needs to be coupled with better resourcing of local authorities and other partners, and would, we anticipate, deliver higher quality and more timely results than implementing further reforms and policy changes.

Community involvement and community impact

11. Do those involved in delivering and managing our built environment, including decision-makers and developers, take sufficient account of the way in which the built environment affects those who live and work within it? How could we improve consideration of the impacts of the built environment upon the mental and physical health of users, and upon behaviours within communities?

No comment

12. How effectively are communities able to engage with the process of decision making that shapes the built environment in which they live and work? Are there any barriers to effective public engagement and, if so, how might they be addressed?
12.1 The current planning process is not very successful in engaging with local communities. The complexity of and continuing changes to the planning system make it extremely difficult for the wider community to understand how and when to get involved in planning, in particular the development of Local Plans. As a result community involvement tends to be focused on planning applications and development control decision making processes.

12.2 The Neighbourhood Planning process was supposed to enable local communities to influence decisions about their local areas. Whilst this true for some communities, only those communities which have people willing to take action - very often in rural and affluent areas – tend to be successful in this process. This creates a very patchy distribution of Neighbourhood Plans, with areas of higher need and urban areas often left out of the process.

12.3 Whilst local authorities are willing to support the Neighbourhood Planning process, their ability to do so is constrained by limited resources. For example, whilst the Worcestershire GI Partnership tends to share appropriate evidence on green infrastructure with Neighbourhood Plan groups in the county, it has no capacity to interpret this information at the local level.

Financial measures

13. Are there fiscal or financial measures potentially available which would help to address current issues of housing and land supply? Are there financial or other mechanisms that would encourage better design and place-making by private sector developers?

13.1 More clarity on the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 would help to address current issues around housing and land supply. Continuous changes to these instruments create general confusion around what financial support is available for what type of projects or work areas. The Government should allow the CIL mechanisms in their existing form to settle and allow for efficient delivery. Lessons learnt from the process could then be used to further refine these mechanisms.

Prepared by:
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06 October 2015
Transcript to be found under Dr Matt Egan
Lords Select Committee

Dear Sirs,

Re: Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment - submit written evidence

We are writing in response to your consultation and we would like to state that local residents are the ones who know their area best yet our views are never taken into account.

Yours sincerely

S Haywood
Samantha Haywood

Clerk to Yelvertoft Parish Council

03 October 2015