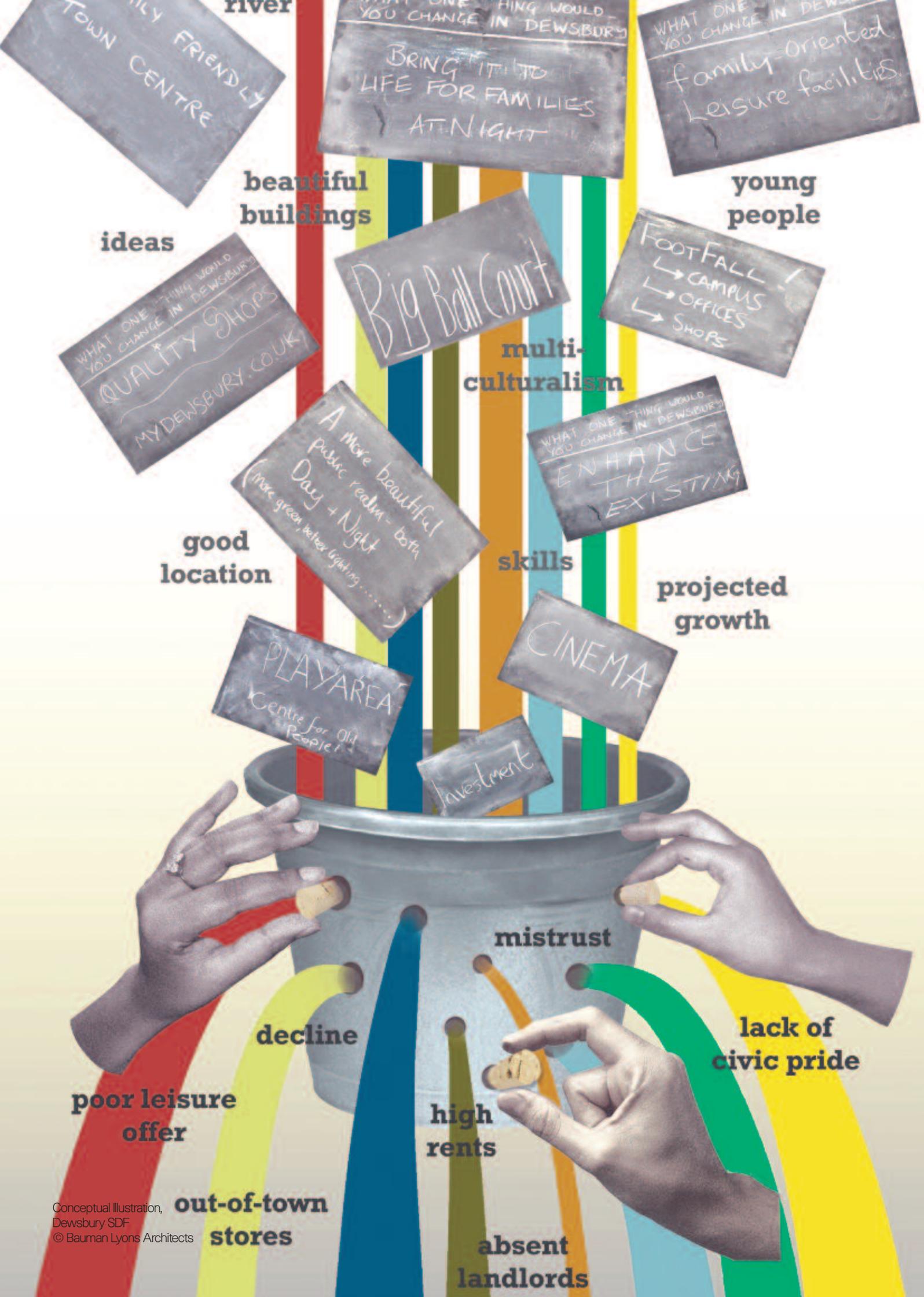


**Guide to Localism**  
**Opportunities for architects**  
Part one: Neighbourhood planning





family friendly  
TOWN CENTRE

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE IN DEWSBURY?  
BRING IT TO LIFE FOR FAMILIES AT NIGHT

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE IN DEWSBURY?  
family-oriented leisure facilities

beautiful buildings

young people

ideas

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE IN DEWSBURY?  
QUALITY SHOPS  
MYDEWSBURY.CO.UK

Big Ball Court

FOOTFALL!  
↳ CAMPUS  
↳ OFFICES  
↳ SHOPS

multi-culturalism

A more beautiful public realm - both Day + Night  
(more green, better lighting...)

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE IN DEWSBURY?  
ENHANCE THE EXISTING

good location

skills

projected growth

PLAY AREA  
Centre for Old People

CINEMA

Investment

mistrust

decline

lack of civic pride

poor leisure offer

high rents

out-of-town stores

absent landlords

# Foreword

**'The skills that architects possess will be vitally needed if neighbourhood planning is to work'**



Angela Brady  
RIBA President 2011–2013

The shift to localism will bring with it profound changes in the way decisions are made, the way that development is planned and on the environment in which architects and other professionals operate.

Neighbourhood planning – the new tier of the planning system – seeks to give communities more control over the future of their area. But planning, design and development are complex and the skills that architects possess – enabling, facilitating, visioning, innovating and stimulating ideas – will be vitally needed if neighbourhood planning is to work.

Localism also provides a powerful opportunity to help change attitudes towards development through genuine, positive and inspiring engagement. Through new processes such as neighbourhood planning, we can highlight and actively demonstrate the positive benefits of new development the power of good design and the value of our profession in shaping better places and helping deliver a better quality of life. We should look to seize the moment, explore the possibilities, and be central to the conversations about the future of our communities.

This document is intended to provide an introduction to the new localism agenda and highlight the opportunities that exist for architects. The profession needs to emerge as a leader in facilitating the process and ensure that communities have the resource and expertise available to make the best long-term decisions for their area.

# Introduction

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Localism is the driving principle underpinning the Government's changes to the policy framework for planning, housing, regeneration and economic growth. The proposals involve a radical devolution of responsibilities to the local level, giving new powers and opportunities to councils and communities to plan and design their places. The aim is to drive change at a local level and empower communities with new rights to have more say in the development process.

This new approach to planning – to managing change in local communities – has profound implications for the working practices of all built environment professionals. Localism requires a shift to partnership approaches with local people, requiring new skills in building effective dialogue and developing a shared understanding of places, their challenges and their potential.

Architects have exceptional opportunities to use their skills within this new context. They can emerge as integral design enablers and facilitators of localised plan-making, helping communities and local authorities to maximise the potential of their places.

Many practitioners are already doing substantial work in this area; others are actively seeking to develop new skills and capacities in response to the emerging policy proposals. Some of their experiences are showcased as examples in this guide. The purpose is to provide a kickstart resource to the sector, explaining the policy changes, exploring the ways architects can get involved in their delivery, and inspiring good practice in neighbourhood working.

Localism needs design professionals to succeed, but the quality of the places created by this new process will be dependent on their ability to appropriately engage with local people and local issues, right from the beginning, designing 'with' rather than 'for' communities.

The format of this document is intended to guide design professionals in this process.

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## Contents

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### Understanding the new policy context

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#### Section 1

Localism: Shaping places locally  
page 3

### Getting involved in neighbourhood planning

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#### Section 2

Getting involved and using your skills  
page 8

### Exploring the opportunities for local communities

---

#### Section 3

Designing places for communities to flourish  
page 15

### Why localism needs design professionals to succeed

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#### Section 4

Localism needs you!  
page 19

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**This guide should be read in conjunction with Part two in this RIBA Guide to Localism: Getting community engagement right which provides useful pointers for implementing the new 'Duty to Consult' alongside tips for effective engagement and consultation approaches.**

This guide has been prepared for the RIBA by Marilyn Taylor Associates and Stephen Hill and edited by James Parkinson with input and assistance from many practising architects and planners who have supplied case study material and examples from their inspiring work with communities. Our thanks go to them all.

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November 2011

# Section 1

## Localism: Shaping places locally

### Planning reforms in England

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The Government is proposing significant changes to the planning system in England. The aim is to achieve a radical reduction in the volume, complexity and prescription of the current system and ensure that communities are better able to benefit from development they welcome, with new homes matched by jobs and investment. The proposals are founded on the principles of localism, with less 'top-down' prescription and more 'bottom up' involvement by both planning authorities themselves, and by local people, businesses, housebuilders and developers.

#### National Planning Policy Framework

Under these reforms the proposed National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will set out the Government's priorities for planning in England<sup>1</sup>. It will replace a plethora of planning policy guidance notes and statements with one comprehensive document. The regional tier of planning is being abolished (except in London), including Regional Spatial Strategies and their associated housing targets.

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#### Planning responsibilities: at a glance

**National** – National Planning Policy Framework

**Regional** – abolished

**City** – currently only London

**Local authorities** – Local Plans have primacy

**Neighbourhood** – new planning rights.

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**The Government's proposed changes to planning aim to ensure that communities can have a more powerful role in determining the shape, location and scale of development in their areas, and can directly benefit from the investment it brings.**

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of publication, the draft NPPF was under consultation and can be accessed at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework)

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## Local Plans

Local Plans (previously known as Core Strategies) are developed by local planning authorities (collaborating under the 'Duty to Co-operate' with each other and with other relevant public bodies, including county councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships).

Local Plans must be based on clear evidence and assessments of critical needs such as new housing provision (except in London where The London Plan, prepared by the Mayor, remains in place as the strategic planning document at the regional tier). In future Local Plans must be compliant with the requirements of the NPPF.

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## Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

Following the Government's decision to close England's nine Regional Development Agencies, local areas have been offered the opportunity to form LEPs with local businesses. These new partnership bodies play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs. They are a key vehicle in delivering the Government's objectives for economic growth and decentralisation, providing local stimulus to economic recovery. Enterprise Zones (areas in which there will be financial incentives and reduced planning restrictions to encourage business location) are being implemented through LEPs.

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**Local Plans are the 'spatial expression' of the economic, social and environmental ambitions of local areas and communities and, as the basis for most planning decisions, lie at the heart of the reformed planning system.**

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## Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Whilst many local planning authorities have a Local Plan in place, or in advanced stages of preparation, the Government will require all authorities to ensure up-to-date compliance with the NPPF. Where there is no up-to-date Local Plan in place, the current proposals are that there will be a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' through which development decisions will be made on the basis of national policy, with the presumption being that development will be allowed to proceed providing the development meets the policy requirements in the NPPF. Some local authorities have called for consideration of appropriate transitional arrangements for the introduction of NPPF requirements.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of publication, transitional arrangements are expected to be put in place but have not yet been confirmed.

# The Localism Bill

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The Localism Bill, currently making its way through Parliament, is founded on the Government's commitment to decentralisation and promoting the 'Big Society'. It proposes wide-ranging reforms which affect local government, including substantial changes to the planning system in England.<sup>3</sup> Those of most relevance to neighbourhoods and local communities are summarised as follows:

## Neighbourhood planning

This represents a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work. The Localism Bill introduces new permissive rights for local communities (residents and businesses) to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, instigate Neighbourhood Development Orders and exercise a Community Right to Build.<sup>4</sup>

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## Neighbourhood planning (proposals)

In areas with a parish or town council, that body will take the lead. In other areas, local people will need to decide which organisation should lead on coordinating the local debate (it must have at least 21 members and be open to new members). In all cases application will need to be made to the local planning authority for approval to proceed.

Proposed neighbourhood plans or orders have to be submitted to an independent examination by a qualified assessor (normally held only by written representations). The examination would lead to a report which would be given to the parish council or forum promoting the plan or order and to the local planning authority. The report would not be binding except in the case of Community Right to Build Orders.

Following the independent examination (and any modifications), as long as the draft plan or order meets certain tests (eg relating to national policy, EU law and the strategic elements of local plans) the local authority concerned will hold a local referendum on whether the draft plan or order should be brought into force.

Where the draft plan or order receives the support of more than 50 per cent of voters at the referendum (subject to compatibility with EU law and Convention rights), the local planning authority would be required to adopt it as part of their local planning framework.

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A **Neighbourhood Plan** can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a defined neighbourhood area. The Plan might specify, for example, where new homes and offices should be built, and what they should look like. The Plan will set a vision for the future, and can be detailed or general depending on what local people want.

**Neighbourhood Development Orders** will directly grant planning permission for certain specified kinds of developments within the neighbourhood area. Permission could be full or outline, could have conditions attached and could be site specific or grant more generalised development rights across the neighbourhood area. Where people have made clear that they want development of a particular type, it will be easier for that development to go ahead.

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<sup>3</sup> Most of the provisions contained in the Bill extend to England and Wales only, with a small number of provisions extending to Scotland and Northern Ireland; planning reforms are mostly restricted to England.

<sup>4</sup> See *An Introduction to neighbourhood planning* at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/introductionneighbourplanning](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/introductionneighbourplanning) and also *Neighbourhood planning regulations: Consultation* at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningregulationsconsultation](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningregulationsconsultation)

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The **Community Right to Build** will give local communities (in England) the power to decide what is built in their area. Where developments for new houses, community facilities or shops have the agreement of the local area through a 'community referendum', and meet a minimum criterion, communities will not need to go through the normal planning application process. They will be able to decide the type of developments they want to see, secure land and finance, and in the long term ensure the benefits are retained through community ownership and management. Local people may choose to enter into partnerships with developers or housing associations to bring forward or help manage schemes. A **Community Right to Build Order** will be a special kind of Neighbourhood Development Order (see above) and will be subject to similar requirements in respect of independent examination and legal and policy provisions. However, it may be instigated independently of a plan or order being promoted by a neighbourhood forum or parish council. There is currently no special government funding going into the capital financing of homes to be built under the Orders, though there may be some revenue funding to help community organisations through the setting up process of their organisation and the project.

### **Duty to consult**

The Localism Bill also proposes that applicants for planning permission for larger developments will in future have a 'duty to consult'. The size and type of development to which this duty will apply will be set in secondary legislation, but currently residential developments of 200 units or more, or for sites of four hectares or more are suggested (and for non-residential developments, a site area of two hectares or more or providing 10,000 square meters or more of new floor space). The applicant must bring the proposed application to the attention of 'a majority of the persons who live at or otherwise occupy premises in the vicinity of the land' and has a duty to show how the resulting application has taken account of the consultation carried out.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pre-application discussions**

The Localism Bill's proposals will also allow local councillors to engage in pre-application discussions with development proposers without then being prevented from voting or expressing their views on the application.

### **Local benefits from development**

The use of Section 106 planning agreements is being phased out (from 2014) for all matters except the provision of affordable housing. Developer contributions will instead be secured through the mechanism of a tariff called a Community

Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Government has confirmed its intention to continue with CIL (which has been operational since 2010 in England and Wales) but proposes a requirement for charging authorities (with the exception of the Mayor of London) to 'allocate a meaningful proportion of levy revenues raised in each neighbourhood back to that neighbourhood. This will ensure that where a neighbourhood bears the brunt of a new development, it receives sufficient money to help it manage those impacts'.<sup>6</sup> The Government also wants to ensure that a CIL can include revenue contributions to the ongoing costs of management and maintenance of places and facilities.

The Localism Bill includes the necessary legislative proposals to bring these clarifications into law and is in line with other measures being introduced to ensure that local areas can benefit from development that their local inhabitants welcome (such as the New Homes Bonus scheme). Whilst the Government is not proposing to specify the 'meaningful proportion' of CIL receipts that planning authorities should pass back to neighbourhoods, they are proposing a 'per household cap'. Funds would be passed directly to parish or town councils (or community or town councils in Wales). Where none exist, the charging authority would engage with affected communities in determining how funds will be spent.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the 'Duty to Consult' see the RIBA *Guide to Localism: Getting community engagement right*

<sup>6</sup> See *Community Infrastructure Levy: An Overview*, CLG May 2011 at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/communityinfrastructurelevymay11](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/communityinfrastructurelevymay11)

<sup>7</sup> See the consultation on detailed proposals and draft regulations for CIL reforms (including the option for CIL to include for the provision of affordable housing) at [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/cilreformconsultation](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/cilreformconsultation)

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## New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus helps to ensure that the economic benefits of growth are returned to the local authorities and communities where growth takes place. The scheme (which commenced in April 2011) match funds the additional council tax raised for new homes and properties brought back into use, with an additional amount for affordable homes, for the following six years.

The first allocations under the NHB for 2011–12 have been made. Nearly all local authorities benefited, and over 40 authorities received in excess of £1 million.

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## Assets of community value

The *Community Right to Buy* proposals are the Government's response to both community dismay about the loss of amenities and buildings that are of great local importance and social value – the village or housing estate shop or pub or community centre or village hall – and to the growing interest in community ownership of these assets. Their purpose is to assist communities by allowing sufficient time for them to organise a bid once the owner has decided to sell. The Bill proposes to give communities (in England and Wales) a right to identify a building or other land that they believe to be of importance to their community's social well-being. If the nominated asset meets the definition of an 'asset of community value', the local authority will list it and there will be specified 'windows of time' during which communities can express interest in acquiring the asset, and prepare a bid to purchase it.<sup>8</sup>

## Diversify the supply of public services

The Bill proposes the introduction of a *Community Right to Challenge*, seeking to ensure that communities have the right of challenge to run local services (applicable to England only). Bill clauses indicate that relevant bodies entitled to challenge include voluntary and community bodies, charities, parish councils and two or more employees of a relevant authority. The exercise of the right is described as an 'expression

of interest'. Relevant authorities are required to consider how the challenge might improve the social, economic or environmental well-being of the area. If the challenge is accepted, the authority must run a procurement exercise to select a new provider.

These proposals are linked to other important Government proposals for modernising public services.<sup>9</sup> The Government wants to create a more level playing field for charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises that want to bid for public service contracts. 'Free Schools' are another related initiative, allowing charities, universities, businesses, educational groups, teachers and groups of parents to start new schools to improve education in their communities.

**To conclude, the overall focus of the Government is on reinvigorating the most local forms of government – parish, town and community councils – allowing them to take control of key local processes, assets and services tailored to the needs of local residents. Proposals for neighbourhood planning need to be viewed as part of this broader context for taking forward the Government's localism objectives.**

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<sup>8</sup> For further information about the Government's proposals, see [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/assetscommunityvaluement](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/assetscommunityvaluement)

<sup>9</sup> Proposals are set out in the *Open Public Services White Paper* published July 2011 [www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/](http://www.openpublicservices.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/)

# Section 2

## Getting involved and using your skills

### Enabling communities

Getting involved in neighbourhood planning is about more than making a plan. It is an approach which values and supports community involvement in shaping and making local places; helping people to manage change and have an influential voice in the system as a whole.

**Architects will play a significant role in assisting neighbourhood planning to realise quality development. Their specific skills of analysis, interpretation and visioning of place are vitally needed, especially in a context where many people are suspicious of change and nervous about the type of new housing or development that might be built.**

This section explores the key contributions architects can make to the new localism agenda, including some brief practice examples to illustrate how architects are applying their skills within this context.

Communities may go through several phases of different types of involvement before deciding to prepare a neighbourhood plan, or may decide that other planning approaches would be more appropriate to respond to their needs (for example, a Concept Statement, Design Statement, Masterplan, Village or Area Action Plan).<sup>10</sup> Skills that architects often employ as part of the preparatory work, when initially engaging with a new project, can now be offered as key services in enabling the process of neighbourhood planning, supporting the active engagement of local people and businesses and developing ideas for the way the place might change through growth or development.

**Getting involved in neighbourhood planning is about more than making a plan!**

Many architects and associated professionals have founded their practice on collaboration and partnership with local communities, using their wider skills of listening, engaging and enabling in the ways they approach the design task of visioning new places. However, the experience of communities is still too often that of being ‘told’ what type of development they are going to get. Even consultation events have in reality been centred on ‘presenting’ proposals and designs drawn up in isolation from any real chance or opportunity for local people to say what matters to them about their local area.

Enabling communities entails a different approach. This approach must seek to work incrementally, at a pace appropriate to local communities, and be founded on genuine principles of engagement, to actively encourage collaborative discussions from the start of the process. (For more about community engagement see our separately published guide with case studies showcasing good practice.)<sup>11</sup>

**Keep listening! Understanding local points of view is critical to a successful interpretation.**

<sup>10</sup> For example see the RTPi briefing *Existing Tools for Neighbourhood Planning* at [www.rtpi.org.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=4591&d=pg\\_dtl\\_art\\_news&h=0&f=92](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=4591&d=pg_dtl_art_news&h=0&f=92)

<sup>11</sup> RIBA *Guide to Localism: Getting community engagement right*

# Understanding of place

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Exploring the history of a place, its topography and identity (visual, social, environmental and economic); what works about it and why; what needs to be changed or improved – these are all issues that architects seek to understand when they commence design strategies. They are also issues on which local people have strong views and vital perspectives to contribute. This is the basic starting point for neighbourhood planning.

## Case study

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### **Kent Joint Parishes – Planning Strategy Practice: Feria Urbanism**

This work was commissioned and funded by 12 parish councils around Maidstone in Kent who realised that in order to plan locally, they first needed to join together to understand the wider planning context of the area and influence the Local Plan from the bottom up.

Our brief was to act on local people's behalf, guide them through the planning process and challenge received wisdom (both theirs and the Borough Council's). We simply had a facilitation role, bringing together a wide variety of views and making sense of them in a way that could have influence on the planning system.

A key message from us was that 'all places are growing or declining; so which way do you want to go?' We were keen to ask the parishes to be willing partners in the process, rather than just objectors.

If they had an alternative to the plans being proposed, they were asked to develop it further and present it. This took time, but they soon felt able to come up with other options for housing sites and different ways of doing things that could still meet Maidstone Borough Council's objectives.

Our team needed to understand local perspectives and spent a lot of time listening, not talking. This gave us a better insight into the ways residents were thinking, but also developed a bond of trust between the team (us) and the parishes (them).

Towards the end of the process, the groups had a real sense of 'working together' and the boundaries between client and consultant had really started to blur in a positive way.

[www.feria-urbanism.eu/  
kent\\_parishes.html](http://www.feria-urbanism.eu/kent_parishes.html)

Photo: Feria Urbanism

## Case study

### Chelsea Barracks Site Practice: Soundings

This residential-led, mixed-use development of the Chelsea Barracks site sits in an established neighbourhood bounded by a Belgravia conservation area, a high street, Wren's Royal Hospital and a second residential neighbourhood of mixed private and social housing. Soundings was commissioned by Jeremy Titchen, Paul Bak and Peter Amato of Qatari Diar in late 2009 to help define a neighbourhood plan through extensive local dialogue and exchange.

Our ability to communicate clearly and to capture, map out and portray the evolution of discussions, thoughts, ideas and issues in a truly transparent manner was key. This drew on spatial skills and on the ability to focus discussions and creative exchanges toward the establishment of a masterplanning framework for the development of a scheme that would recognise and champion local needs while responding to concerns and fears directly.

A key step in this was a highly participatory series of events at which diagrammatic options were tested against thematic areas that had been identified as being of greatest interest locally. These covered 'transport and movement', 'community facilities', 'height and massing', 'public open space' and so forth. Preferences were established for each of these to define a prototypical set of spatial and social frameworks to help guide the masterplan in a manner that understood local planning issues and commercial realities.

All of the options were 'real' and deliverable, though the selected option for each theme was not always necessarily compatible with all the others, requiring on-going negotiations during the detailed masterplanning which was undertaken by Dixon Jones, Squire and Partners



and Kim Wilkie Associates. To build the initial frameworks, a clear understanding of urban design, planning policy and deliverability was required – again drawing heavily on the architect's core skills.

Knowledge of the design process from outline planning to detailed design was also fairly critical to successful discussions and creative exchange sessions, to ensure the decisions arrived at were well informed.

From the outset, the design process was geared to deal with local issues and everything associated with local identity. For instance, in terms of 'issues' – the nature and location of retail outlets, health services and a sports complex were all established in dialogue. In terms of 'identity', the arrangement of public spaces and gardens were designed to reflect the long rectangular forms prevalent in Belgravia, the historic presence of 'physic gardens' and an axial link with Wren's hospital. At a finer scale, guidance for architectural attributes was set out in a design code that accompanied the planning application, all in agreement with the liaison groups. Instead of the design being produced in a remote office by architects with a passing interest in the site, they were co-produced with the dedicated and generous contribution of local thinking and knowledge.

Contact Steve McAdam:  
[www.soundingsoffice.com](http://www.soundingsoffice.com)

Photo: Soundings

## Scoping opportunities

Taking stock of opportunities is the next stage, and a more complex one for residents and other non-built environment professionals. Firstly, the area's Local Plan and its policies need to be fully understood so that the parameters of what is possible are clear; land availability and ownership needs to be analysed, key assets identified, transport and movement issues explored. Technical expertise will be an important offer that architects can make to local communities needing to scope the opportunities of different places. But perhaps of even more importance is for professionals to offer communities their creativity in seeing the greater potential for change, drawing on knowledge of other places for inspiration, making connections between different sites, or the way the place works as whole.

It is sometimes easier for consultants like architects to ask the tricky questions or raise controversial subjects in a different way. Part of design enabling is about bringing the different stakeholders into the process – including landowners and developers – fostering positive relationships so that all parties are able to understand each others' different objectives and how any proposed development can add different types of value to the place. Beyond the bricks and mortar, a place can have economic, social, environmental and cultural value.

**Start the conversation before you come up with solutions and let the community own the ideas.**

## Spatial vision

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Bringing all this together in a spatial vision that is coherent with an area's boundary and visually representing opportunities and constraints are essential parts of the process.

Architects can use a variety of techniques to make this part of the work interactive and open for co-production with local people and stakeholders. Their visual and presentation skills are an important tool to enable creative dialogue.

**“To build the initial frameworks, a clear understanding of urban design, planning policy and deliverability was required – again drawing heavily on the architect’s core skills.”<sup>12</sup>**

## Design

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The architect's role as visual communicator and enabler of good design decisions is vital to successful neighbourhood planning. The draft NPPF (see Section 1) restates the principle that good design is indivisible from good planning. It goes further to suggest that significant weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs when determining applications and that proposals which can demonstrate good engagement with the community in developing the design response should be looked on more favourably.

Communities can be nervous of change because of its potential impact on heritage, conservation or local assets. By discussing design decisions with local people, architects can help them to envision how appropriate changes can build on the sense of place and local identity in the area, adding new value whilst respecting existing environments. Neighbourhood planning is about managing change well.

## Feasibility

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Last here, but not last in the process of planning, is the critical role architects play in testing scheme feasibility and deliverability, driving cost and carbon reduction solutions through design. Architects, as enablers of good design solutions, can help to ensure that proposals and expectations are appropriate and realistic, whilst being innovative and sustainable. They can make a significant contribution in helping communities to understand and respond to environmental concerns and the management of energy use – both embodied and operational. Efficient cost management will promote the optimum scope and quality of any development ensuring maximum value for the local community.

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<sup>12</sup> Steve McAdam, Soundings

## Case study



### **Rossall Point Observation Building, Wyre Borough Council Practice: Studio Three Architects with BCA Landscape**

This element of the wider Sea Change programme for regenerating coastal towns was to provide a coastal observatory at a key point on the protected coastline in Fleetwood. Our brief was enabling people to interpret the natural environment.

This is a small community and the building's impact would be experienced by the entire town. We therefore set out to engage with the entire town, inviting every household to one of our 'Share Stories' days in Fleetwood. This was intended as a way of people becoming involved in a narrative before designs were developed. Our approach, whilst used here in relation to a specific building, is highly relevant to neighbourhood planning.

This engagement was core to the process – so much so that significant time was spent before putting pen to paper in terms of design. It was about listening – not 'consultation' – and this listening stage is critical to both neighbourhood planning, and to design for specific buildings. By spending time trying to understand where people were coming from, we began to understand a bit more about the place we had been offered the privilege of contributing to. Working with the input of artist Lesley Fallais was also critical to our understanding. She spent some time living in the community, collecting artefacts and images to help us in the design process.

Through these various approaches we soon began to engender trust amongst a community that were rightfully sceptical of change in the built environment – a place where most 'developments' have actually had the reverse effect. There's a real sense of loss in Fleetwood. Being

heard was probably more important than actually getting through all the ideas that were floated – if we had good reasons for not including something we carefully explained why rather than just nod and then omit. The respect we showed people was rewarded by an appreciation of the effort we put in. The true test was at planning committee stage – our scheme was one of the few public schemes that had no objections – there were no surprises.

The people in Fleetwood are warm and welcoming, but they do not take well to being deceived with promises that cannot be delivered. Given the exposed and often un-supervised nature of the building our design approach to ongoing maintenance was critical to final design of the scheme.

Contact: Mushtaq Saleri  
[www.studio-three.co.uk](http://www.studio-three.co.uk)

Images: Studio Three Architects with  
BCA Landscape

## Case study

### Chatsworth Road Neighbourhood Plan Hackney, London

This area is a wonderful example of a planned city suburb and high street from Victorian times, but which has experienced much change and urban decline, particularly the closure of its once famous street market. The area is now again experiencing rapid change. Over a quarter of the 80 (largely independent) shops have changed hands over the last two years, planning applications are made at a rate of at least one a month and many new people are moving into the area. The traders and residents have come together to respond and make the most of these new opportunities; restarting the street market, publishing a guide to the area including its shops and businesses, and working on image and identity.

Euan Mills, an experienced urban designer who is also a local resident, has offered his skills and time to help with taking forward the community's ideas for producing a neighbourhood plan. Reflecting on his involvement, he comments that it has been his ability to take a 'spatial' view of the area and its wider context that has been most helpful. He has also been able to encourage people to take a long view of the place and the speed at which it is changing.

The community have taken an evolving and multi-faceted approach to neighbourhood planning which allows for multiple small projects and initiatives to contribute to the development of a more strategic vision. We have some 20 local people working as 'neighbourhood planning ambassadors', taking a survey out to local groups, running a consultation stall at the market, holding meetings with youth and community groups, and interviewing selected residents as case

studies. Our starting point has been to try and identify a small number of high level aspirations; guiding principles for change. These are:

**Local** – supporting the local economy and independent traders

**Diverse** – embracing a wide range of people and cultures

**Accessible** – safe and easy to get around for everyone

**Sustainable** – minimising their ecological footprint

**Distinctive** – a distinct identity and individual character.

Euan Mills has produced an inspiring video presentation about the community's emerging ideas for a neighbourhood plan – to see it visit [www.chatsworthroade5.co.uk](http://www.chatsworthroade5.co.uk)

Photo: Guilherme Zauith



# Case study

## Dewsbury Town Centre Strategic Development Framework

Practice: Bauman Lyons

The Dewsbury Strategic Development Framework (SDF) was jointly commissioned by Yorkshire Forward and Kirklees Council in 2009. It is a 'new generation strategy' for a sustainable future which intends to inspire civic pride and offer a strong vision for the future of Dewsbury Town Centre.

Our entire approach to the strategy was built on community engagement, aiming to build long-term capacity recognising that local residents themselves, and their networks, were a key asset of the place – its social capital – alongside its physical assets, local traders and local economies.

We developed several different stages of communication, aiming to get beyond the 'usual suspects' and especially to get access into different, close-knit ethnic communities. This approach led to the formation of the 'Town Team' who, alongside the 25-year vision for Dewsbury's future, are taking forward a number of 'stepping stone' projects, raising money for these community-led initiatives which have included:

- Demonstrating the potential of the market place by holding various events and festivals
- Building a night-time economy, kickstarted by events like the candle-lit dinner
- Finding 'meanwhile' uses for empty shops

Many people in Dewsbury have contributed to the development of this complex, place-specific and aspirational strategy for the future of their town centre. The strategy is based on the belief that Dewsbury can be regenerated by the community themselves, working in partnership with the local council and other stakeholders. See [www.batleyanddewsbury.co.uk/dewsbury-town-team/](http://www.batleyanddewsbury.co.uk/dewsbury-town-team/)

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Images: Bauman Lyons



# Section 3

## Designing places for communities to flourish

The goal of localism in planning is good place-making – not just a well-designed building or specific development, but viable and sustainable neighbourhoods, integrating economic, social, environmental and physical needs. Neighbourhood planning requires a holistic approach to all these issues, working proactively with local people to articulate their future vision for a place.

Over the past decade an emerging focus on sustainable development and sustainable communities has built a body of knowledge about good place design, masterplanning, design codes and design review which it is not our purpose to repeat here (see the Appendix on page 20 for the main sources of useful reports and documents about good place design for sustainable neighbourhoods).

The focus of this guide is to inspire engagement with neighbourhood planning and place design that enables communities to flourish, be associational, come together and contribute to their own wellbeing and sustainability. These are the objectives of the Government's 'Big Society' vision which underpin the Localism Bill's proposals (as outlined in Section 1). This section is a brief introduction to some of the key issues within neighbourhood planning that need to be understood in this broader 'Big Society' context.

**Design professionals will need to think creatively about how neighbourhood planning offers opportunities for very different futures.** There is scope for a much more creative approach to the role of amenities and the community ownership of housing and other assets as part of neighbourhood planning. We should be planning from the outset for resourced, empowered communities, enabling citizens to be more active and engaged in how their local areas are both shaped and run. This approach embodies the underpinning goals of localism within neighbourhood planning, which can be summarised as:

**Empowerment** – increasing the confidence and involvement of local residents in local affairs and strengthening community life

**Community development** – supporting the growth and development of community organisations and encouraging volunteering and social action

**Stewardship** – enabling local people to be involved in how the place, and its facilities, are managed and appropriate services provided.

**The Government's commitment to build the 'Big Society' is based on the three principles of community empowerment, opening up opportunities for service delivery by voluntary organisations and social enterprises, and encouraging social action.**

# Community housing: Co-producing good places

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The proposed 'Community Right to Build' (CRtB) contained within the Localism Bill offers opportunities for the further development of housing choices that communities were increasingly already making for themselves. For over a decade, communities have been promoting new housing forms that mainstream housebuilders and housing associations either couldn't or wouldn't provide; co-housing for owner occupation, co-operatives for social renting, and Community Land Trusts (CLTs) for permanently affordable intermediate sale and renting (and, increasingly, creative hybrids of these three main types).

There are examples of all sector types from which to learn. Many of these have been rural schemes. Growth in the Community Land Trust sector has been the most pronounced, over the last five years, with over 100 schemes now in the pipeline. Interest is also growing in applying these approaches in urban areas, alongside other alternative forms of self-commissioning. The Appendix on page 20 provides suggested sources of further information and examples.

The main challenges have not been planning – most of the projects already delivered have been done with full local authority support – but finding land at a sensible price, and sourcing development finance to secure the site continues to be very difficult. In rural areas, local landowners will often sell land at low cost to support permanently affordable housing for their community. Elsewhere, particularly in tight land markets, community groups will probably need to work with mainstream providers, and with local authorities and other public landowners willing to support communities.

As a result of the recent financial crisis, community housing groups have been working more closely with mainstream housing providers to piggyback development finance, which is extremely difficult for new and undercapitalised community housing bodies to obtain. Providers are also looking for pre-sale and co-financing opportunities with community groups. The professional adviser should ensure that the aims of the community group are sustained in negotiations with an enabling partner.

In design terms, residents may make different choices from mainstream housing projects on issues like the use of the spaces between the buildings, and car ownership and use. These characteristics often give community housing its unique qualities, which evolve and improve over time through the stewardship of residents.

**The challenge for designers is not to design a finite scheme based on assumptions about future user behaviour, but to provide a foundation from which residents carry on designing through living in the place as an intentional community.**

The Government will launch an advisory resource for communities using the CRtB powers. This is likely to draw on the existing community sector support organisations and their national networks. They all work together through a coordinating Mutual Housing Group, which includes the Homes and Communities Agency with its programme of grant-aided community housing projects.

The Government's support for a review of self-building, published in July 2011,<sup>13</sup> has resulted in the draft National Planning Policy Framework recognising the community and self-build housing sectors more explicitly in planning policy. Further research is being done on setting up a national development finance revolving fund for community housing and self-build projects.

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<sup>13</sup> Stevens, T and others *An Action Plan to promote the growth of self build housing* [2011] NASBA Swindon <http://www.nasba.org.uk/Media/NASBA2011%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

## Amenities, assets and energy

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The community infrastructure and amenities of a place are important contributors to quality of life and are highly valued by local communities. Concerns about development are often centred around the effects on amenities and services – that these might be insufficient, or inaccessible. Neighbourhood planning offers significant new opportunities for local people to be involved in analysing and assessing impacts and needs. In future, the Government proposes that a ‘meaningful proportion’ of Community Infrastructure Levy funds will be allocated directly to communities where development and growth take place, helping to ensure that local people can secure the amenities and infrastructure they believe necessary to accommodate its impact (see Section 1).

It is important to use development opportunities to both integrate new and existing residents through public realm and other community infrastructure proposals (schools, health facilities, community meeting places etc) and to plan to ensure that existing places gain real benefit from new housing or other major changes. This is very much the Government’s intention – that local communities should benefit from development they welcome.

Many communities are also responding to concerns about the loss of important local amenities, or seeking viable community uses for valued buildings now no longer required for their original purpose. The proposals in the Localism Bill for local authorities to list ‘assets of community value’ and to encourage the transfer of valued amenities to collective community ownership provide further impetus for approaches to neighbourhood planning. Local communities may be galvanised into action by concerns about the future of a specific building, but develop an appreciation of the need to plan for the wider neighbourhood as their ideas develop.

Most community groups have a strong interest in environmental sustainability, and also have the social organisation through which to support more sustainable ways of living. The potential for community ownership of renewable energy production should be considered here. Localised zero-carbon energy generation opportunities within new developments, coupled with the wider potential for mitigation measures to existing places, are of great interest to many local people. There is growing interest in ‘community share’ approaches to raising capital and developing local ownership solutions (see the Appendix on page 20 for sources of information about these).

## Community governance and stewardship

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‘Who will run this place?’ is an important question to incorporate within neighbourhood planning. As explored above, new facilities and services may be involved, or existing buildings brought back into life. In smaller towns and villages, it may be the parish or town council that takes responsibilities for these, and it is important that issues of ongoing financial viability are addressed from the outset. Revenue-hungry assets might be more imaginatively combined with income-producing assets to better effect through proposals for shared service buildings or flexible use. The potential roles of community-based organisations (such as Community Land Trusts, Development Trusts, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises) need to be planned in from the start if local people are to be properly supported to grow effective and participative governance and service delivery arrangements. Places that are well run, with good amenities and which promote active community life add ‘social value’ which is often reflected in economic value.

**These are just some of the emerging challenges and opportunities in which architects as design enablers can have a significant impact on the quality of placemaking within the new models of neighbourhood planning.**

## Case study

### **Caterham Barracks, Surrey** **Practice: John Thompson & Partners** **Developer: Linden Homes**

This award-winning schemes illustrates the potential for communities to play a major role in both planning and delivering successful new development. In 1990 the army declared its barracks in Caterham redundant, leaving a set of attractive and well-constructed buildings on a large site in the middle of the small village of Caterham-on-the-Hill in a rural area within London commuting distance. The site was declared a conservation area in 1995 after active lobbying by local residents to preserve the buildings and stimulate more sympathetic development that could provide wider benefits for the existing community (including one of the area's most deprived wards).

The site developer agreed to work closely with the community on how to redevelop the site. John Thompson & Partners led a planning weekend with over 1,000 people to develop an initial vision, and local people were closely involved throughout the masterplanning process through seven different working groups on specific issues. Their active involvement has helped to ensure careful integration of old and new and an impressive mix of uses (housing, offices, social and community facilities) all designed to support the long-term sustainability of the expanded community.

[www.jtjp.co.uk/public/uploads/pdfs/the\\_village\\_at\\_caterham\\_surrey.pdf](http://www.jtjp.co.uk/public/uploads/pdfs/the_village_at_caterham_surrey.pdf)



Equally significant has been the emphasis on enabling the local community to be actively involved in managing and caring for the place and its refurbished buildings through the formation of the Caterham Barracks Community Trust. The buildings passed over to community ownership constitute important elements of the heritage which has been bequeathed by the developer. Many of the people who attended the original planning weekend are still closely involved in stewardship and community activities. The new community is thriving and cared-for and has helped produce value – both economic and social – for the developer. See [www.caterhambarracks.org.uk](http://www.caterhambarracks.org.uk)

Developing activities for young people has been an important objective for the Trust. A Skate Park has been opened and running for over 10 years in a redundant chapel providing safe, affordable activities to many hundreds of young people a week: see [www.skaterham.com](http://www.skaterham.com). Similarly the former gymnasiums have been transformed into a creative arts and children's space: see [www.the-arc-caterham.co.uk](http://www.the-arc-caterham.co.uk)

Photos: John Thompson & Partners

# Section 4

## Localism needs you!

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**This short guide has explored the new landscape for local planning in partnership with communities. The RIBA believes that the shift to localism poses some important challenges and responsibilities for our profession. We have a unique opportunity to respond, using our skills and expertise to help local communities create great places through sustainable development: socially, environmentally and economically.**

As neighbourhood planning moves into implementation, clients for architectural services will increasingly be communities themselves. The profession must now use their design skills to engage the wider public to add value to the new processes through which our towns and neighbourhoods are set to develop. By working closely together, the profession can enable local people to realise their aspirations whilst fostering new relationships between both parties that consolidate the architect as a key player in the planning and production of our places, spaces and communities of the future.

**Enabling** – The skills of architects are offered in enabling the process of neighbourhood planning, ensuring that communities have the opportunity to access the expertise they need to articulate an appropriate vision for their place with reference to sound principles of sustainable architecture, urban design and placemaking.

**Responding** – There are invariably multiple issues and concerns across a community, and with the local authority and key stakeholders, that all need to be reconciled and brought together. Architectural skills can vision appropriate design solutions that respond to this complexity, reflecting it back whilst moving towards deliverable and realistic schemes that make the most of opportunities and manage change well.

**Inspiring** – Architects can inspire and guide communities to be ambitious and demanding in their proposals, articulating innovative design strategies that go above and beyond current experiences or expectations whilst remaining realistic and achievable. Their skills can help local people to understand how specific local issues and concerns manifest within the wider spatial fabric and what can be done to address these, whilst simultaneously consolidating and developing local identity.

**Designing** – Architects have a professional responsibility to design places that deliver better lives for people, that can foster good use of resources – both physical and social – and contribute to long-term sustainability. They can help to build awareness of the ways in which good design may be used as a tool to add value socially, environmentally, culturally and economically. By helping local people to develop their understanding of design issues, architects can play a key role in empowering communities to get involved in the new opportunities they now have to shape their local areas.

# Appendix:

## Useful resources

### Planning and localism

The **Planning Advisory Service** provides many useful briefings and information about localism and neighbourhood planning, including learning emerging from the front-runner authorities:

[www.pas.gov.uk](http://www.pas.gov.uk)

The **Royal Town Planning Institute** has been active in briefings and responses to the Localism Bill:

[www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)

The **Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors** established an Independent Commission to examine how to equip communities to fully embrace their emerging land and property roles in the context of localism and the Big Society. The report, published in May 2011, makes 24 direct and practical recommendations to Government, policy makers and land and property sector bodies as to how to help empower communities to shape and manage their neighbourhoods.

[www.rics.org/landandsocietycommission](http://www.rics.org/landandsocietycommission)

*Delivering Growth through Localism* is a practitioner's guide to the new policy landscape, bringing together the range of new initiatives and ideas created by the Localism agenda and the Government's Plan for Growth.

Published by the Berkeley Group:

[www.berkeleygroup.co.uk/news/growth-and-localism](http://www.berkeleygroup.co.uk/news/growth-and-localism)

**Design Council CABE** provides a wealth of information about planning and localism, including a useful collection of relevant toolkits and guidance for neighbourhood planning; they are also grant funding 13 community initiatives to help them improve design quality in neighbourhood projects:

[www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/Localism-and-planning/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/Localism-and-planning/)

*Power to the People: The Future of Planning*

*in a Localist Landscape* is a recent report commissioned by think-tank Localis, that offers insights, advice and case studies on collaborative and neighbourhood planning

<http://www.localis.org.uk/article/888/>

[Power-to-the-People.htm](http://www.localis.org.uk/article/888/)

### Support for neighbourhood planning

**Action with Communities in Rural England** has pioneered village plans and plan-making activities:

[www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning](http://www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning)

**Town and Country Planning Association** is a think-tank which has produced a community guide to planning called *Your Place, Your Plan*

<http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/your-place-your-plan-community-guide-to-planning.html>

The Government has provided an initial £3M support programme for communities who are interested in taking forward neighbourhood planning. This programme is being delivered through four organisations with existing knowledge and expertise to help local people with practical understanding of the new opportunities, and each is offering different packages of support:

The **Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment**

[www.princes-foundation.org/content/planning-brighter-future-your-neighbourhood](http://www.princes-foundation.org/content/planning-brighter-future-your-neighbourhood)

**Locality – Building Community Consortium** (Including Glass-House Community Led Design, The Eden Project and communityplanning.net)

[www.buildingcommunity.org.uk](http://www.buildingcommunity.org.uk)

**CPRE in partnership with NALC**

[www.planninghelp.org.uk/what-were-doing/supporting-communities-and-neighbourhoods-in-planning](http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/what-were-doing/supporting-communities-and-neighbourhoods-in-planning)

**RTPI Planning Aid**

[www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid)

### Neighbourhoods and design

**Building for Life** is a valued tool managed by a partnership of Design Council CABE, Home Builders Federation and Design for Homes. The website is still accessible, but is now hosted by the National Archives. No new material will be added here but there is still plenty to explore and use. Design Council CABE is currently working with the partners to develop the future functionality of Building for Life.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110107165544/http://www.buildingforlife.org>

**Design Council CABE** provides many useful publications on various aspects of good place design:

[www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/CABE-publications/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/CABE-publications/) and their National Archives site can still provide access to relevant previous publications and case studies:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk>

The **Young Foundation** has established a web-based resource 'Future Communities' drawing on stories and experiences from the field of regeneration to inform practitioners involved in building new communities:

[www.futurecommunities.net](http://www.futurecommunities.net)

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### Community and selfbuild housing

Confederation of Co-operative Housing:  
[www.cch.coop](http://www.cch.coop)

National Community Land Trusts Network:  
[www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk)

Community Land Trust Fund: [www.cltfund.org.uk](http://www.cltfund.org.uk)

UK Co-housing Network: [www.cohousing.org.uk](http://www.cohousing.org.uk)

National Self-Build Association:  
[www.nasba.org.uk](http://www.nasba.org.uk)

Community Self-Build Agency:  
[www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk](http://www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk)

Projects and programmes supported by the  
Homes and Communities Agency  
[www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/view-document-list/keyword/community-led-housing](http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/view-document-list/keyword/community-led-housing)

German self-commissioned, coop and  
cohousing schemes are reviewed in  
[www.werkstatt-stadt.de/en/concept](http://www.werkstatt-stadt.de/en/concept)

### Renewable energy

Energy4All offers expertise in community-owned  
renewable energy schemes:  
[www.energy4all.co.uk](http://www.energy4all.co.uk)

Zero Carbon Britain is a new energy strategy at:  
[www.zerocarbonbritain.com](http://www.zerocarbonbritain.com)

Repowering Communities showcases examples  
of small-scale local solutions from cities,  
communities and local authorities across Europe  
and North America to reducing energy use through  
small-scale, community level solutions:  
[www.repoweringcommunities.co.uk](http://www.repoweringcommunities.co.uk)

### Assets and stewardship

The **Asset Transfer Unit** is delivered by Locality  
in association with Community Matters and the  
Local Government Association. The Unit is funded  
by Communities and Local Government. It helps  
to empower local people and organisations to  
transform land and buildings into vibrant community  
spaces: [www.atu.org.uk](http://www.atu.org.uk)

*Community Infrastructure in New Residential  
Developments*, Marilyn Taylor for the Joseph  
Rowntree Foundation, February 2011:  
[www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/community-  
assets-taylor.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/community-assets-taylor.pdf)

**Community Shares** is a Government-funded  
action learning research project looking at new  
ways for social enterprises to attract finance. The  
work is funded by the Office of Civil Society, and  
is led by the Department for Communities and  
Local Government. It is delivered by Locality  
in partnership with Co-operatives UK and the  
Social Return on Investment Network:  
[www.communityshares.uk.coop](http://www.communityshares.uk.coop)

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