

**BUILDING NEW COMMUNITIES  
IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND:  
CHALLENGING CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

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## CONTENTS

|                                |   |     |
|--------------------------------|---|-----|
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>            | William Leech Research Fellowship in Applied Theology               | 3   |
| <b>STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT</b> |   | 5   |
| <b>CHAPTER 1</b>               | The Housing Challenge   | 6   |
| <b>CHAPTER 2</b>               | Housing in the North East from the 19 <sup>th</sup> century onwards | 19  |
| <b>CHAPTER 3</b>               | Housebuilding after the Second World War                            | 30  |
| <b>CHAPTER 4</b>               | Contrasting developments  | 44  |
| <b>CHAPTER 5</b>               | The Twelve Local Authorities in North East England                  | 55  |
| <b>CHAPTER 6</b>               | Addressing the Issues   | 78  |
| <b>CHAPTER 7</b>               | Moving Forward – Some Innovative Ideas and Developments             | 84  |
| <b>CHAPTER 8</b>               | Questions for the Churches  | 97  |
| <b>CHAPTER 9</b>               | Conclusions   | 115 |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>            |   | 117 |

## INTRODUCTION

### WILLIAM LEECH RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP IN APPLIED THEOLOGY

I hold a William Leech Research Fellowship in Applied Theology, which requires of its researchers that there should be a clear focus on the North East of England and that the research should, in some way, reflect 'Christian Hope' and inform and inspire positive change in Church and society.

As a Research Fellow, I need, therefore, to set out some specific starting points in my own thinking, which colour the questions I ask and the way I interpret what I see and hear about new housing in North East England, the focus of my research. My 15 month project, which started in September 2017, has been to find out about new housing developments across the 12 local authorities of North East of England and explore how new communities are being created.

The Government has stated unequivocally that the housing shortage across the country has now reached crisis levels. But, in the rush to build enough houses for our expanding population, we risk skirting over some important issues – and, if we continue to do so, we may well be creating serious problems in the coming decades. These, with proper care and attention now, could be prevented.

So these are my key starting points:

- Every human has the right to shelter – by which I mean a good, safe, warm, truly affordable home, which enhances human flourishing and, in particular, provides safety, security and a sense of belonging for children and families and for older, disabled and infirm people.
- The economic life of a community needs to be addressed alongside the construction of houses: work, employment and self employment, business, access to new technologies – these are undergoing rapid change at the present time and will continue to do so. The place and future of work is directly relevant to the future of communities.

- The importance of leisure and recreation in human flourishing cannot be underestimated. So good opportunities for making friends, doing things together, exercising and keeping fit and acquiring new interests and skills – all feeding the re-creation of the human spirit – should be built into new communities.
- Education and healthcare provision are essential ingredients of a good community and should be an integral part of a community's life.
- Our relationship with nature and the environment is at last becoming recognised as essential to human health and wellbeing – but too many new residential developments have lots of houses crammed together in the space available, with cars cluttering up streets and inadequate access to public transport, and with limited green spaces or play areas.
- The need for socially balanced communities is under threat as housebuilders construct thousands of homes for sale but fewer units of social or affordable housing or homes suitable for older people.

“To reimagine Britain” writes the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, in *Reimagining Britain. Foundations for Hope*, “we must.. reimagine housing. The first form of reimagining is to reclaim the purpose of housing. Housing exists as a basis for community and community exists for human flourishing. Building new houses without clear community values and aims will lead to the same problems being repeated again in the future... Reimagined core values and practices in any housing development will be linked to health in many forms. Good communities build financial, physical, mental, spiritual and relational health.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Reimagining Britain. Foundations for Hope*. Justin Welby. Bloomsbury 2018. p 128

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

The structure of this report is as follows:

Chapter 1 is a brief summary of the current housing situation across the country and in North East England – and the challenge facing Church and society.

Chapters 2 and 3 survey the history of housing and community developments in the region since the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 4 continues this theme and then looks, in particular, at offsite construction and modular housing.

Chapter 5 summarises the plans for new housing in each of the 12 local authorities across the region – Darlington, County Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar & Cleveland, Stockton, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Chapter 6 addresses some of the key issues and summarises the two workshops held in Newcastle and Darlington on the theme of “A House or a Home?”

Chapter 7 looks at some innovative ideas and developments and asks what makes a good community.

Chapter 8 asks what all this means for the Churches.

Chapter 9 contains my conclusions.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE HOUSING CHALLENGE

“It is in the area of housing that the most far-reaching imagining is needed” writes the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>2</sup> The Archbishop devotes a chapter of his book to housing, naming it as one of the “the principal agents [along with education and health] at all times of national reinvention. They address what Beveridge called the Giant Evils of squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease.”<sup>3</sup>

The British Government has committed to the development of new housing on a scale and at a rate not seen for decades. But, in the rush to tackle the housing crisis by getting thousands of new homes constructed (the goal is over 200,000 per year for the next few years, rising to 300,000 per year by the mid-2020s), little consideration is being given to the development of community life or the emotional and spiritual welfare of the new residents. This study is primarily focused not on yesterday but on today and tomorrow. But the legacy and lessons of history and the failure of so much new housing development in the post-1945 era may well help us to understand our situation today and make better plans for the future, as thousands of new homes are constructed and new communities created.

New housing areas, new communities, offer the possibility of doing new things. New ways of bringing people together. New kinds of education and schooling. New community and leisure facilities. New, safe play areas. New kinds of shops and retail facilities. New, energy-efficient technologies. New ways of supporting and sustaining good health and wellbeing. New kinds of transportation carefully designed for community benefit and accessible to all. And perhaps, at the heart of these features, new ways of designing and developing communities, ensuring safety, accessibility and opportunities to build neighbourliness and friendships, with real respect for nature and environment. I heard an architect once say “Cities need choreographers.” Now we have the chance to do some choreography.

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<sup>2</sup> Welby. Op cit. p139

<sup>3</sup> Welby. Op cit p 11

## CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH

In the larger of these new areas being designed, constructed or planned – often the size of villages or even small towns - only rarely is a Church building to be found. In fact, a cursory examination of almost all Local Plans will reveal no references to Church or faith and slight (usually not detailed) references to community facilities. There are likely to be more references to bats and badgers than how to create ‘good community’ – and this at a time when the Government has appointed a Minister for Loneliness, so serious have the problems of loneliness, isolation and mental health become, especially for older people. Ironically, in most new housing developments, there are few if any bungalows or homes suitable for older people to be able to downsize and remain in their own neighbourhoods.

Isolation is one of the five ‘New Giants’ identified by Ed Cox, Director of Public Services & Communities at the RSA (Royal Society of Arts) in an updated version of Beveridge’s Five Giants: “Inequality, disempowerment, isolation, intolerance and climate change are the five main problems the UK faces today”, Cox states. He goes on to say “Housing lies at the heart of the problem” and speaks about a forthcoming RSA programme to pursue housing equity and the “power of place” and how to create “more healthy and connected neighbourhoods.”<sup>4</sup>

For the British Church, the challenge is this: are past traditions and present practices the best ways through which to engage with the residents of new communities and the issues facing them, as they build their lives in what can feel quite daunting new circumstances? Remember, for the first time in many years, the ‘spiritual’ dimension of life is really not part of today’s conversation. And there is no place, at present, for the Church in the thinking and planning processes of developers and housebuilders – in part because the Church has chosen to absent itself from the public square.

The place of Church, faith and spirituality is no longer seen as essential to the creation of a good, viable community. In fact, community is no longer seen as an essential

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<sup>4</sup> *Britain’s New Giants*. Ed Cox. RSA Journal. Issue 3 2018 pp 32 and 34.

ingredient. I believe this is a fundamental flaw in current policy and practice and needs to be challenged and changed.

## THE HOUSING CRISIS

The British Government stated in 2015 that at least one million new homes would need to be built by 2020, the annual target number being at least 200,000 – rising to 300,000 per year by the mid-2020s. These goals remain at the heart of Government policy, with local authorities being pushed to deliver expansion plans and house builders being pushed to get on with developing sites which already have planning permission.

Achieving this target, however, remains a huge undertaking. The National Housing Federation, which represents housing associations in England - social landlords to five million people - and Crisis, the national charity for homeless people, published research in May 2018 showing that England's total housing need backlog has reached four million homes. The country, they said, needs to build 340,000 homes per year until 2031. This is significantly higher than current Government estimates. But they will need to be the right type of homes. 145,000 of these new homes must be affordable.

The seriousness of the situation was reinforced by the startling predictions of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who, in 2014, "identified a number of ways in which the housing market is likely to change in the coming decades, and how this might affect poverty in the future.

- Private rents in England are forecast to rise by around 90 per cent in real terms between 2008 and 2040 – more than twice as fast as incomes... poverty rates among private renters could be as high as 53 per cent by 2040, compared to 43 per cent in 2008.
- The decline in social renting and rise in private renting is likely to become more pronounced over the next few decades. Private renting is projected to grow to house one in five people in England by 2040, compared to one in six today. Social renting will house just one in ten by 2040, compared to one in seven today.



- Poverty levels in England can only be contained if housing supply nearly doubles to 200,000 homes a year by 2040; if social rents do not move closer to market rates and rises are limited to 1 per cent over inflation; if Housing Benefit meets a similar proportion of rent as in 2008; and if tenure patterns remain unchanged.”<sup>5</sup>

The Government knows there is a big problem with housing supply in the UK and the labour needed to build the homes needed.

“Britain’s construction industry faces ‘inexorable decline’ unless radical steps are taken to address its longstanding problems”, concluded *The Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model*, a review commissioned in 2016 by the Government. Mark Farmer, its author and the Chief Executive of Cast, said: “The construction industry is in dire need of change... carrying on as we are is simply not an option. With digital technology advancements pushing ahead in almost every other industry and with the construction labour pool coming under serious pressure, the time has come for action...”<sup>6</sup>

In July 2018, a comprehensive critique of Government policies for developing new housing was published by The Transport for New Homes Association, which states its purpose as follows:

“New housing should be built so that residents can walk, cycle and use public transport to go about their daily lives. The Transport for New Homes Association brings transport and planning together to make this vision a reality.”<sup>7</sup>

Its fascinating report looks at 22 new housing developments across the country and one in Sweden. It also draws on development models in the Netherlands. In North East England, it looks in particular at Great Park in Newcastle and Wynyard in Hartlepool and Stockton Boroughs.

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<sup>5</sup> *From houses to homes. Faith, power and the housing crisis*. Edited by Angus Ritchie and Sarah Hutt. The Centre for Theology and Community, p 6

<sup>6</sup> *Construction sector must “modernise or die”, says Government commissioned review*. Cast Consultancy press release, 17 October 2016, of *The Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model*. Cast is a real estate and construction consultancy.

<sup>7</sup> The Transport for New Homes Association, funded by the Foundation for Integrated Transport. <http://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/about/>

It explores the following themes:

- Theme 1 Car-based living
- Theme 2 Homes not properly connected for pedestrians, cyclists or buses
- Theme 3 Public transport opportunities missed
- Theme 4 The importance of mixed land use and integrated transport
- Theme 5 The advantages of the new urban quarter
- Theme 6 Insights from the Netherlands

Its conclusions make disturbing reading: “We have seen some good examples of new homes where residents can use a combination of walking, cycling or public transport to go about their daily lives. However, most new developments we have seen, particularly those built on large green field sites on the edges of towns, are designed for travel by cars. They have plentiful car parking, but limited or no access to public transport, limited facilities and services, and a lack of safe pedestrian or cycling routes to town centres or the surrounding area. The new ‘urban extensions’ and ‘garden villages’ by their very location away from large conurbations promote car-based living.”<sup>8</sup>

## PLANNING POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

In late July 2018, the Government produced its latest *National Planning Policy Framework*, setting out the ways in which local authorities should work to increase the number of homes, ensuring a good mix of types and sizes, and also addressing a wide range of other requirements in strategic ways over the next 15 years – healthy and safe communities, town centre revitalisation, transportation, communications, Green Belt and much else.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Transport for New Homes. Project Summary and Recommendations*. The Transport for New Homes Association, July 2018. p24

<sup>9</sup> *National Planning Policy Framework* Cm 9680. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. 24 July 2018

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/740441/National\\_Planning\\_Policy\\_Framework\\_web\\_accessible\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf)

## HELP TO BUY

In August 2018, the Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Treasury released the latest statistics on the takeup of its Help to Buy programme, introduced by the then Chancellor George Osborne in the 2013 budget (described at the time in the Daily Telegraph as "the biggest government intervention in the housing market since the Right to Buy scheme" of the 1980s). The Help to Buy schemes include *Help to Buy: Shared Ownership* and *Help to Buy: Equity Loan*. The *Help to Buy: ISA* pays first-time buyers a government bonus. "For example, save £200 a month and we'll add £50, up to a maximum of £3,000, boosting your ISA savings of £12,000 to £15,000."<sup>10</sup>

"More than 420,000 people have now used the Government's Help to Buy schemes to help them realise their home-owning dreams, new figures show. First-time buyers continue to open new Help to Buy: ISA accounts, with more than 1.2 million accounts now opened, offering government bonuses of up to £3,000 on top of their savings."<sup>11</sup>

Shared Ownership (or Part Buy Part Rent) has been around for a long time, managed by housing associations. In its current form, it is open to applicants earning less than £80,000 per year (£90,000 in London) and can enable the purchase of a newly built home or an existing one through resale programmes from housing associations.

## SOCIAL HOUSING GREEN PAPER

In August 2018, the Government produced a Green Paper on Social Housing, setting out 5 core themes:

- Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities.
- Expanding supply and supporting home ownership.

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<sup>10</sup> Help to Buy <https://www.helptobuy.gov.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> *More than 420,000 people get on the housing ladder with Help to Buy*. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, HM Treasury, John Glen MP, and Kit Malthouse MP, 16 August 2018

- Effective resolution of complaints.
- Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator.
- Ensuring homes are safe and decent.

In September, “the Prime Minister announced £2bn to build new homes in England, in an attempt to remove the ‘stigma’ of social housing. Under the plan, housing associations, councils and other organisations will be able to bid for the money to spend on new projects, starting from 2022.”<sup>12</sup>

Her announcement was not met with universal acclamation, the trade journal *Construction News* pointing out that, by then, a new Government would be in power and, anyway, Government is prone to making promises which are not deliverable. “At the NHF [National Housing Federation] conference in 2015, the then communities minister Greg Clark struck a historic deal with the sector that opened up housing associations to right to buy. This meant Housing Association stock was set to be sold off for the first time... The Government promised that homes sold would be replaced on a one-for-one basis. New figures show this has not happened – in fact, fewer than a third of the 60,000 homes sold by councils since 2012 have been replaced, mainly due to lack of funds.”<sup>13</sup>

## MORE ABOUT SOCIAL HOUSING

The provision of social housing (housing for rent from a housing association or local council), alongside homes for sale, comes through what is known as Section 106 funding, which developers are required to pay to local authorities. That funding, typically supposed to provide 25% of housing stock for people to rent from housing associations or local councils, may also be used for other purposes. The provision of a school or health centre, community or sports facilities or even new transport links may be paid for through Section 106. There is now another, similar provision of wider social benefit, the Community Infrastructure Levy, which allows the local authority greater flexibility than Section 106.

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<sup>12</sup> Report of PM’s address to the National Housing Federation. 19 September 2018 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-45569453>

<sup>13</sup> Tim Clark: *Construction News Briefing*. 19 September 2018 [www.constructionnews.co.uk](http://www.constructionnews.co.uk)

However, not enough social housing for rent, usually available to people on low incomes, is being provided by local authorities and housing associations in many new developments. Good local jobs for unskilled people are increasingly hard to come by and may not be designed into these areas, risking the creation from the outset of divided communities. Moreover, since 2011, new social housing has been redesignated as *affordable* – which, for the resident, is actually more expensive to rent (up to 80% of the local market rents) than *social* housing (typically more like 50% of market rents). In fact, the role of housing associations is even more complicated. They increasingly provide homes for sale on a part-buy/part-rent basis and even for sale outright.

On 3 October 2018, at the Conservative Party Conference, the Prime Minister announced that the cap would be lifted on local authority borrowing against their assets in order to build more homes, much to the delight of many in the construction sector, including the Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders, who commented:

“This is the most exciting, and potentially transformative, announcement on council housing for many years. It is something the house-building sector and local authorities have been crying out for since the last economic downturn as a means by which to increase house building. Indeed, the only times the UK has built sufficient numbers of homes overall is when we’ve had a thriving council house building programme.”<sup>14</sup>

By November, there was a growing sense of injustice among northern local authorities about the way £7 billion of Government housing investment programmes was being allocated, with 80% going towards areas of “highest affordability pressure”, largely in the South and East of England – leaving only 20% for the rest of the country, and none at all for North East England.<sup>15</sup>

And in late November, Government figures were released showing that the number of homes built for *affordable* rent numbered almost 27,200 (up nearly 3,000 from the

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<sup>14</sup> See the report in *Architects Journal* 3 October 2018 <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/pm-we-are-scrapping-borrowing-cap-for-new-council-housing/10035791.article>

<sup>15</sup> Report from **Core Cities UK and the Key Cities Group**, November 2018 <https://www.keycities.co.uk/housing-investment-skewed-favour-south-england-new-report-finds>  
The two bodies represent 30 key urban centres across England, Scotland and Wales including Birmingham, Bournemouth, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Salford, “Local councils have spent recent weeks processing data released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in late-October to support the Housing Infrastructure Fund Forward Fund, the Estates Regeneration Fund, the Home Building Fund, the Small Sites Fund and the Land Assembly Fund.”

previous year), but “just 6,463 homes were built in England for *social* rent in 2017-18, down from almost 30,000 a decade ago.”<sup>16</sup> (my italics).

In January 2019, a report by Shelter’s Cross-Party Commission, *Building for our future: A vision for social housing*, concluded that the solution to the housing crisis is to build 3.1 million new social homes over the next 20 years, costed at £225bn. 1.27 million homes, it says, are needed for those in the greatest need, including homeless people, people with a disability or long-term illness, or those living in very poor conditions. 1.17 million homes are needed for so called ‘trapped renters’ including half of all young people who will never be able to afford to buy their own home. And 690,000 extra homes are needed for older private renters who struggle to afford household costs after retirement.

The Commission also called for a powerful new Ofsted-style regulator to inspect homes, greater influence for tenants over what happens in their buildings, the replacement of any sold-off social housing and a commitment to mix social housing with private homes of indistinguishable design and without separate ‘poor door’ entrances.<sup>17</sup>

#### *INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF BUILD OUT*

The *Independent Review of Build Out*, led by Sir Oliver Letwin and commissioned in January 2018 by the Government, was published on Budget Day in October 2018.<sup>18</sup> It made some clear proposals for action, especially in larger housing developments: to increase diversity on large sites... of 1,500 homes or more [which] should be required to have “a diversity of offerings... This means more shared ownership, more build-to-

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<sup>16</sup> *Construction of homes for social rent drops 80% in a decade*. Richard Partington, The Guardian, 22 November 2018.

<sup>17</sup> *Building for our future: A vision for social housing*. Shelter, 8 January 2019. “31,000 people took part in our Big Conversation. 20 organisations submitted evidence, from the Local Government Association to mental health charity Mind. 13 public housing debates were held across the country. 16 independent commissioners came together from across the political spectrum, and with a diverse range of backgrounds.” [https://england.shelter.org.uk/support\\_us/campaigns/a\\_vision\\_for\\_social\\_housing](https://england.shelter.org.uk/support_us/campaigns/a_vision_for_social_housing)

<sup>18</sup> The *Independent Review of Build Out. Final Report*, Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin MP. October 2018 CM 9720

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/752124/Letwin\\_review\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752124/Letwin_review_web_version.pdf)

rent and more social and affordable rent and a new set of planning rules should be adopted for large sites in “areas of high housing demand.”<sup>19</sup>

## *FUTURE PLACE*

In mid-January 2019, The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Local Government Association (LGA) and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) launched *Future Place*: “a joint, two-phase initiative which will unlock place-making potential at local level through quality in design, future thinking, and knowledge sharing. The programme has been designed to promote best practice and the potential of innovative delivery, design and funding models, cross-sector collaborations capacity building, and knowledge sharing at a local level.”<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, through the period of summer and into autumn and winter of 2018/19 has been a significant period not only for the Government’s housing plans but also for ideas and proposals for real change from many others.

Churches and faith communities need to be aware of the huge changes taking place in the coming years – and the importance of becoming part of these conversations, ideas, plans and programmes.

## NORTH EAST ENGLAND

The National Housing Federation, in its *Home Truths 2017/18* regional analysis, highlighted the following points about the housing crisis in the North East of England:

- While overall house prices are lower than the national average at £157,512, homes cost over six times the average income.

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<sup>19</sup> The *Independent Review of Build Out*, summarised in *Inside Housing*, 1 November 2018.

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/oliver-asks-for-more-a-look-at-the-letwin-review-58836>

<sup>20</sup> *Future Place*. Royal Institute for British Architects, Chartered Institute of Housing, Local Government Association and Royal Town Planning Institute, January 2019. <https://www.architecture.com/-/media/files/future-place/future-place-brochure-v3.pdf>

- Average annual earnings [in North East England] are just over £25,000, which is lower than the national average.
- The unemployment rate is 7.1%, higher than any other region – in Hartlepool, unemployment reaches more than 10%.
- An ageing population in the region is putting pressure on the need for specialist and supported housing: the number of people over 65 is expected to increase by 48% between 2014 and 2039, from 491,000 to 727,000.
- Over 16,000 homes in the region are empty. These are generally concentrated in areas in need of regeneration.<sup>21</sup>

In the North East, as elsewhere, local authorities have been charged with the task of identifying suitable land and locations for the development of new housing. The process of creating a Local Plan is no small undertaking. It requires councils to identify and assess sites to be developed over the next 10-20 years, ensuring that there has been thorough consultation with landowners, local people and organisations, and then obtaining the agreement of Government. The process can take several years to complete, with the need for regular updating and adapting in the light of experience.

So, once again, we are at a point of significant change. Across the North East, as elsewhere, not only are houses being built in ones and twos and small clusters wherever land is available in towns and villages, but there are also large, significant developments being created, of several hundred or even several thousand houses, in specific locations. These are sometimes on brownfield land – former industrial sites, for example – but also on green field sites which require little remedial work, and so are more attractive to developers and housebuilders. Sometimes they are being built on the periphery of existing settlements, with little connection to or involvement with their long established neighbours, but with good access to town and city centres or motorways and railways.

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<sup>21</sup> *Home Truths 2017/18. The Housing Market in the North East.* [http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/doc.housing.org.uk/Hometruths/Home\\_Truths\\_201718\\_North\\_East.pdf](http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/doc.housing.org.uk/Hometruths/Home_Truths_201718_North_East.pdf)



## THE CHURCH'S ENGAGEMENT

For well over a thousand years, the Church's revered place in the life of the nation – whether Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian or any other form - was barely questioned amid the huge changes experienced by people and communities brought about by Viking invasions, or the Norman Conquest after 1066, or Henry VIII's secession from the Church of Rome in 1534, or the Civil War and execution of Charles I in 1649 and the creation of the Commonwealth, or the Glorious Revolution of 1688, or the First and Second World Wars in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Of course the role, the power, the behaviour, the teachings and the corruption of the Church were constantly under scrutiny and its practices (not least in its exercise of power) have too often strayed far from the teachings of that wandering first century Galilean and his early followers.

The Church of England and many of its dioceses and organisations have been, until recently, using as a strapline *A Christian presence in every community*,<sup>22</sup> but it is hard to know exactly what that means. There is no obvious physical presence – a Church building, for example - in most new housing developments. So what might such a presence look like? And how can the Church truly be a force for good - inclusive, generous, responsive, relevant?

Perhaps the challenge can be stated like this: *how can Churches, working together, be key partners with others in helping to develop areas of new housing as vibrant, thriving and inclusive communities, places where people love to live?*

The Church has been an active, creative and inspirational force in the North East since the time of the Venerable Bede (672-735). The ecclesiastical parish system in England can be traced back to the seventh century, though effective 'coverage' has always been mixed. But the place of the local Church – a place for gathering, for fellowship, for collective public worship, for welcome, celebration and mourning – seems hardly to have been questioned, though of course not every settlement or community had,

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<sup>22</sup> This was on the Home page of the Church of England website until early January 2019, when it changed to *The Christian life is shaped around loving God and loving our neighbour*.  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

or has, its own Church building. And not every local Church has actually functioned as it should!

It is worth noting the role of the early monastic movement, which was focused not so much on *public worship* as *public service* – the provision of hospitality, education and learning, healthcare, agriculture and horticulture, all underpinned by the regular prayer and worship of the members of the monastic community. This may be a somewhat idealised view, but one which can give a clue as to how best to create new ways today of practising a *Christian presence in every community*. More about this later.

## CHAPTER 2

### HOUSING FROM THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ONWARDS

There have been two major periods of population expansion in North East England over the past two centuries, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as coalmining was expanding rapidly across County Durham and into Northumberland – along with the growth of the steel industry, manufacturing, transport and myriad service industries - and then from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards with the development of the post-War New Towns. Large numbers of houses were constructed and new communities formed.

The third period of major expansion is now underway. In the North East, this may not necessarily result in hugely increased numbers of people, but there are certainly growing numbers of households in new locations.

The terms of my research require me to identify significant recent and planned new housing developments in the 12 local authorities of North East England and to ask two important questions:

- How is “good community” being created (and not just lots of new houses being constructed)? and
- How are the Churches engaging with these new communities?

The first of these questions would probably not have bothered most Victorians (apart from Quaker philanthropists like Joseph Rowntree of York and George Cadbury of Birmingham or co-operative visionaries like Robert Owen of New Lanark). The market determined, to a great extent, the requirement for and quantity of labour, skilled and unskilled, and many of the new industrial settlements were crowded, poorly built and unhygienic. New communities grew around particular industries (such as coal, steel, shipbuilding and manufacturing). The bonds of friendship and support which people forged with each other – and in which the Churches sometimes played a significant role – were subservient to the economic imperatives of work and production.

As new communities across the region have come into being over the past two centuries – whether, for example, the plethora of mining villages which grew with the rapid expansion of the Durham coalfield during the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the new towns created following the 1946 New Towns Act, such as Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe and Washington – there has almost always been a Church presence, in the form of buildings and ministers serving congregations.

This is no longer the case. In fact, the Local Plans for each local authority area in the North East make salutary reading for the Churches. No mention of the need for or desirability of provision for Churches or faith communities and scarcely any substance in references to community buildings – in fact, there will probably be more about bats and badgers and the importance of protecting wildlife habitats.

Of course these matter. But they are hardly enough. Anecdotal evidence abounds of new housing areas with limited local community facilities, populated by families whose breadwinners leave home in the morning to travel to their work in urban centres. In more substantial housing developments, a local school, a children's play area and the provision of sports facilities (usually playing fields and changing rooms) are often the main planned provision for community use, along with some shops, a GP surgery and maybe space designated for employment and small business use. In not a few cases, it is almost as though social isolation has been designed into these communities, not just for older people but for those who remain at home during the day with small children.

## THE CHURCH'S ENGAGEMENT WITH NEW COMMUNITIES IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

In the North East of England, rapid population growth took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, focusing especially on the Durham Coalfield, with new communities growing around pits and, in Durham and elsewhere across the region, new industries developing alongside King Coal – steel, manufacturing and heavy engineering, shipbuilding, ports, railways, chemicals and, in the new and expanding towns and cities, the provision of all kinds of goods and services.

In this period of rapid population growth, Church of England buildings and livings in new communities would in most cases have been provided and financed by (and

therefore to a considerable extent subject to) a local landowner. In the great boom in Church building, mainly from 1860 onwards, such a relationship was all too prevalent.

“The Church had placed itself in the position of appellant and supplicant as it went in search of funding. The *quid pro quo* of fundraising was that benefactors gained an influence over Church location, Church design and Church furnishing; influence over the appointment of the clergy; even influence over the nature and shape of the liturgy. Many Churches thus became physical embodiments of the power of local individuals or companies ... The paradox was that the heavy involvement of elites made Churches less attractive to working people and operated to the overall detriment of the mission.”<sup>23</sup>

On Sunday 31 March 1851, a national Census of Religious Worship was conducted, counting attendance at religious worship in towns and cities, villages and suburban areas across the country. Industrialisation and rapid urbanisation were raising fears that religious provision was failing to keep pace with the growth and changing distribution of population. The 1851 census proved two things: that there were insufficient seats in local Church buildings, especially in urban areas, for the local population; and, more disturbingly, Church attendance was far lower than anyone had realised.

In County Durham, the national census highlighted the weakness of the Church of England – just 8.4% of its population, just under 26,500 worshippers, were in an Anglican Church that Sunday, and 18.2% in non-conformist Churches (just under 57,500 worshippers).<sup>24</sup>

In Newcastle, the census results were also shocking. 57% of those attending Church on census day had gone to non-conformist Churches and chapels. Radical action was needed. The consequence of this was thirty years of competitive expansion, with new Anglican parishes being created and schools set up. By 1881, the number of sittings in Anglican Churches in Newcastle had increased by 46% to 14,500. In the same period, the number of non-conformist sittings had increased by 76%, also to 14,500. But, according to the 1881 census, only 4.3% of Newcastle’s population described themselves as attending an Anglican Church and only 15% attended any Church at all.

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<sup>23</sup> *The Church of England and the Durham Coalfield, 1810 – 1926. Clergymen, capitalists and colliers.* Robert Lee. The Boydell Press 2007, pp181, 182

<sup>24</sup> Lee, op cit pp 45, 46

August 1860 was the decisive point at which the Church of England resolved to change the situation and a huge Church-building programme was undertaken across the country. The historical legacy of the rapid expansion of Church buildings in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is all too apparent today, with large Victorian Churches and Methodist and other non-conformist Churches and chapels - many now converted or disused - situated in areas where populations have shrunk as industry has changed and disappeared.

## THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE DURHAM COALFIELD

The huge social and economic changes which took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in North East England were directly connected to the rapid expansion of coal mining, especially in the Durham coalfield. Between 1810 and 1913 output on the Durham coalfield rose from 2 million to 41.5 million tons, the population increasing from 165,293 in 1811 to 1,479,033 in 1921 (an increase of 795%, while across England and Wales, it increased by 273%).<sup>25</sup>

“In 1850, *The Times* described Durham as ‘a very little more than one huge colliery ... the cities, the villages, the nobility, the clergy, the tradesmen, the labourers and ... the farmers ... all derive their wealth or their competence from Coal.’”<sup>26</sup>

New communities were springing up all across the region to mine the coal, transport it on the new railways to cities, towns and ports - Durham exported most of its coal to the Baltic – and heat the furnaces and ovens for steelmaking, which in turn spawned shipbuilding and heavy engineering along the great rivers of the North East, the Tyne, Wear and Tees, forging goods for industrial and commercial development and imperial expansion across the British Empire.

Workers were brought in from all over the United Kingdom – well illustrated by the development of mines in Trimdon parish near Sedgefield, with Trimdon Village bringing in Irish quarrymen, Trimdon Grange Welsh miners and Trimdon Colliery Lancashire miners. Nearby Wingate Colliery was manned by Cornish miners, 44 of whom, with their

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<sup>25</sup> See Lee, op cit p 5

<sup>26</sup> Lee, op cit p 5

families, were recruited and brought to the North East between 1860 and 1870, joining 37 Cornish families already in the area.<sup>27</sup>

Life was tough for those living in the new mining communities. “The population (of County Durham) was swollen beyond recognition by the immigrants from all parts of the British Isles who were attracted by the prospects of employment. The conditions under which they lived and worked were appalling. Not only were the pits dangerous and poorly ventilated but the miners had yearly to sign away their freedom with the ‘bond’ – an agreement which shackled them lawfully to their employers without the employers incurring reciprocal duties towards their men. The villages themselves were jerry built under contract by developers..”<sup>28</sup>

It took time for the Established Church, the Church of England, to understand the significance of what was happening and respond. A diocese of 86 parishes (covering County Durham and Northumberland) in 1800 became a diocese of 262 parishes by 1920, half of which had been created since 1860.<sup>29</sup> But despite this growth – and, from the 1860s, the appointment of working class clergy to serve many of the new communities forming around the pits – the Church of England continued to retain a sense of aloofness and privilege, rooted in three central assumptions, first that “the social order was ordained by God and that progress towards equality was therefore not only economically unviable but also contrary to God’s will. Secondly, that wealth and station had a corollary of Christian care and that charitable giving – however much it antagonised radicals and trade unionists – was also part of the divine plan. Thirdly, rank had an obligation to control and reform the ignorant, weak and sinful masses, and that its authority was God-given and divinely approved.”<sup>30</sup>

The Anglican Bishops of Durham had hoped that the recruitment and ordination of men from working class backgrounds might help the Church reach the working class inhabitants of the new mining and industrial communities. In some places, this may have met with some success, but generally the impact made was rather less than that of the Methodists, especially the Primitive Methodists. Anglican bishops and clergy were often

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<sup>27</sup> Lee, op cit p 209

<sup>28</sup> *Mining and Social Change*, ed Martin Bulmer. Croom Helm London 1978, p 219.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, op cit p 2

<sup>30</sup> Lee, op cit p 11

opposed to trade unions, while many of the early trade union leaders came from Methodist backgrounds, though they were almost always Liberals (the Liberal tradition was closely associated with non-conformity). Their personal faith and inspiration compelled them to work for justice and fair remuneration and working conditions for their fellow workers, but they would always seek consensus and co-operation with mine owners where possible. They were not in the main supportive of the radical workers' organisations coming into being with the labour movement and Independent Labour Party, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some – Methodists and Anglicans - were willing to identify with the Christian Socialism of FD Maurice and others, though they tended to be middle class rather than working class socialists.

The Great War (1914-18) had a profound impact on the hopes and expectations of people. Young men endured the living hell of the trenches and were being injured and slaughtered in huge numbers. But, coming from poverty and hardship, these young soldiers were comparatively well clothed and fed. For those who survived and returned to Lloyd George's "land fit for heroes", the old order could no longer prevail. During 1919, 2.4 million British workers were involved in strike action. And the housing being constructed to replace the slums and house these heroes was sometimes put up "as cheaply as possible, on the meanest lines... In an effort to see that houses did not deteriorate, residents were forbidden from doing their own decoration... The net result was an affirmation of the class divide, between owner-occupiers and those who were 'a burden on the rates.'"<sup>31</sup> Things had to change.

In the Diocese of Durham, by the 1920s, there was deep dissatisfaction and disillusionment. The Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson, was receiving "regular reports from parish clergymen that indicated their profound dissatisfaction with his episcopacy [and] the cumulative evidence from the mid 1920s begins to suggest that Durham's internal diocesan mission had failed. Whatever else had been intended by the Anglican grandees at their 1860 meeting, an angry mob bearing placards that proclaimed 'To Hell

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<sup>31</sup> *A Theology of the Built Environment. Justice, Power, Redemption.* TJ Gorrington, Cambridge University Press 2002. p31.



with Bishops and Deans', and a discomfited, politically confined and dissident clergy cannot have been on their agenda."<sup>32</sup>

### *PITMEN, POLITICS AND PREACHERS*

*Pitmen, Politics and Preachers*, Robert Moore's 1974 sociological study of four small and relatively isolated mining communities in the Deerness Valley, just outside Durham City, has long been acknowledged as a classic study of faith interacting with working life from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century boom when deeper pits were being dug with shafts and more extensive haulage equipment.

Moore states that "the first half of the nineteenth century is, for the miners, a history of defeat. The miners fought the owners with the strike weapon in 1832, 1844 and 1863-4 and had been beaten, forced back to work with their union broken and funds depleted. The new union, the DMA [Durham Miners' Association] ... was committed to advancing the men's cause by negotiation rather than industrial action."<sup>33</sup> This meant negotiating with the owners using moral force "exerted through reason, at the table, in the conciliation process."<sup>34</sup> The leaders of the Durham, Northumberland and South Wales miners used this approach from the 1870s onwards, but actually went further, instituting a system whereby wages were tied to the selling price of coal – fine when coal was selling well, disastrous by the end of the century when prices were falling.

For the new, growing Methodist congregations, personal faith, strong community and charity took precedence over economic and social justice. But there were Methodists who went further than this and saw active involvement in economic and political affairs as being part of their discipleship.

Craig Marshall, in his MA Thesis *Levels of industrial militancy and the political radicalisation of the Durham miners 1885-1914*<sup>35</sup> describes the Methodist influence on some of the key Trade Union leaders in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>32</sup> Lee, op cit p 274

<sup>33</sup> *Pitmen, Preachers & Politics. The effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community.* Robert Moore. Cambridge University Press 1974, p 36

<sup>34</sup> Moore op cit p 37

<sup>35</sup> *Levels of industrial militancy and the political radicalisation of the Durham miners 1885-1914* Craig Marshall. MA Thesis. Department of Economic History, October 1976.

“The Methodists did however make spectacular advances in the DMA, where they held a complete domination of the top DMA positions between 1885 and 1914. Of the associations' leaders Crawford, Patterson, Wilson, Johnson and House were all Primitive Methodist preachers, and Samuel Galbraith was a New Connexion preacher. Inevitably this Methodist domination was reflected in the DMA's industrial policies. The Methodist belief in arbitration and conciliation manifested itself in the creation of the sliding scale agreements and a conciliation board. These policies also added weight to the leaders' desire not to become involved in any strike activity, moderation and negotiation proving more acceptable.”<sup>36</sup>

John Wilson, a committed Liberal and active trade unionist converted to Methodism in 1870, having previously acquired a reputation as a hot headed drinker and gambler with a radical political outlook. He was soon a Methodist lay preacher and became known as an extreme moderate. In 1875 he joined the DMA executive, becoming a trustee in 1876, treasurer in 1882 and an MP in 1885. He was elected head of the TUC Parliamentary Committee in 1891 and became a significant national figure who, in the bitter 1892 Durham miners' strike, argued for reconciliation – ultimately achieved through the intervention of Bishop Westcott of Durham. The mine owners agreed to a smaller cut in wages and Wilson set up a Conciliation Board, but it soon became tarred with the hated system of sliding scale wages – remuneration dependent on the price of coal – and was abolished in 1896.

The Methodist union leadership In the Deerness Valley mining communities followed Wilson's lead and would wherever possible look for conciliation. This was not surprising, given what was being taught and imbibed in Church and Sunday School, that the Christian life is rooted in love of God and neighbour, and direct practical service. So, engagement in the life of the new mining communities should, for the Methodist Christian, be mainly focused on personal faith and discipline, sharing that faith with neighbours and fellow workers and practical Christian service in support of the needy.

A consequence of the disciplined Methodist approach, and the attitudes to learning, responsibility and personal growth inculcated in Methodists, was that young, aspiring members of the congregations would often look to a future outside the pit and

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<sup>36</sup> Marshall, op cit p 271

away from the community of their birth and upbringing. This would inevitably lead, over the decades, to gradual decline. Moreover, the place of the Church at the centre of its members' social and community lives would also weaken their links with the wider village communities and thus opportunities for evangelism.

## CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

Younger activists in the DMA, many of them Methodists, were often more radical than their leaders. Some were inspired by the Christian Socialism of RJ Campbell, whose *New Theology*, published in 1907 provided an intellectual and theological base for them and support for the new Independent Labour Party. Christian Socialism dated back nearly 60 years to 1848, when the term was first used, by the well known Anglican theologian FD Maurice. It was more of a moderating force, seeking for co-operation and reconciliation between the classes.

“The Christian Socialists were inspired by Christian social teaching, French socialism and the Owenite co-operative socialism, but they were hardly socialists in the present meaning of the word. They criticised laissez-faire capitalist competition and proposed profit sharing between capitalists and workers as a way of improving the condition of the working class in a just, Christian society. Christian Socialism meant a co-operative commonwealth to be attained through voluntary effort. The theological foundations of Christian Socialism were formulated in Maurice's work, *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838), which argued that politics and religion cannot be separated and that the church should be committed to social questions.”<sup>37</sup>

It was the Primitive Methodists who, of the many associated with Christian Socialism, actually lived out the principles of Christian Socialism in local communities and workplaces. An outstanding example of this was the miners' leader Peter Lee (1864-1935), after whom the new town of Peterlee would be named. Born in Trimdon Grange, Lee started work in the pit at the age of 10 (in Littleton Colliery, working 10 hours a day for ten old pence a week) and had worked in 15 pits by the time he was 21. He travelled to the USA in 1886 and worked in the mines of Ohio, Pennsylvania and Kentucky before

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<sup>37</sup> Christian Socialism. See <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/socialism/christiansocialism.html>

returning in 1888 to work at Wingate pit where he was elected delegate to the Miners' Conference. In 1896 he travelled to South Africa, returning a very different man. He was now a committed Christian and the Christian ethos was central to all he did. He continued to work in the mines of County Durham, as well as reading, studying and preaching in local chapels and becoming, in 1909, a member of Durham County Council and later the President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.<sup>38</sup>

Probably the best known Christian Socialist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942-44 and, before that, Bishop of Manchester and Archbishop of York. As Bishop of Manchester, he made his maiden speech in the House of Lords in July 1925 in a debate, introduced by the Bishop of Southwark, on the shortage of decent housing for the working classes. A million new houses were needed but the First World War had left the country desperately short of skilled labour and a massive expansion of apprenticeships was called for. Temple noted that "It is not only that the total numbers engaged in the industry have been tending to decline, when we want to see them increase, but the social standing of the industry in many parts of the country seems to be dropping, and that means that it will be increasingly difficult to obtain recruits for it."<sup>39</sup>

Ambitious Government building plans and serious construction skills shortages are as topical today as ever. But the creation of new communities directly related to and dependent on a particular industry (coal, steel, shipbuilding) is somewhat different today – though the significance of university and academia to a city like Durham is in some ways a modern equivalent. While planners seek to ensure the provision of workspace and employment opportunities in their Local Plans, there is no real sense of aiming to create mass employment for a local workforce. The expectation is that new residents will probably already have good, well paying jobs – or they could not have obtained mortgages for their new homes – and local jobs are almost inconsequential.

This is not, in a sense, a new problem. Writing in 1978, Martin Bulmer observed that "In a real sense the economic and social problems of north-east England in the period [to 1978] since the First World War are a result of its past economic success as an

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Lee. See <http://www.peterlee.gov.uk/about-peterlee-town/peter-lee-the-man/>

<sup>39</sup> Hansard. House of Lords Debate 22 July 1925 vol 62 cc224-42

economic growth area in the nineteenth century, with a prosperity founded on coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding and heavy engineering.”<sup>40</sup> But, despite decades of Government efforts (often rather half hearted efforts) to help economically disadvantaged regions like the North East, development was sporadic and piecemeal.

This was not the case in the development of the New Towns after the Second World War.

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<sup>40</sup> Bulmer op cit p 167

## CHAPTER 3

### HOUSEBUILDING AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The second great wave of housebuilding and population expansion in the North East came after the Second World War, with the development of Government-instigated New Towns such as Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee and Washington, and also towns created by Northumberland County Council in partnership with private developers, such as Cramlington and Killingworth. These were carefully planned developments, each of which were expected to grow to over 20,000 people, with provision for employment, commerce and retail, education and healthcare integral to the development process.

Between the World Wars and, more so, after the Second World War many homes, housing estates and new communities were built as populations grew and older housing was replaced. "In 1946, the post-war Labour government tried to meet the housing shortage through the construction of prefabs and repairs to existing structures. Longer-term measures depended on the development of housing by local authorities. The 1946 Housing Act greatly increased the subsidy available to local authorities, and they were allowed to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board. A further Housing Act in 1949 enabled local authorities to build houses for the population generally, rather than only for the needy. Some 1.5 million public homes were constructed by 1951."<sup>41</sup>

### LABOUR'S RESPONSE TO THE POST-WAR HOUSING CRISIS

The New Towns Act (1946) was the Labour Government's response to the post-War housing crisis. Poor and bombed out housing had led to huge shortages of decent homes and, across the UK, many new towns were developed, often near or around small historic villages. A Development Corporation was set up for each new area and, in the North East, two New Towns were designated, Newton Aycliffe in 1947 and Peterlee in 1948, with a third, Washington, designated in 1964. The overall aim of these new towns was to enable

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<sup>41</sup> In the National Archives, *Council Housing after the Second World War*.  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/wartime-housing.htm>

new industrial and other employment to replace the mining jobs being lost and create homes and facilities for the new communities being created.

In addition, other areas across the Region were expanded, with Northumberland County Council creating its own new towns in the early 1960s in declining mining areas, at Killingworth (mainly public sector led) and Cramlington (a public-private partnership with Northumberland County Council and English Estates bringing forward employment, land and buildings and William Leech and Bellway delivering the housing development).

The visionary ideas of Ebenezer Howard, who, in 1898, published *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, had advocated the establishment of garden cities to ease the pressures on the big cities. He argued for carefully designed communities with planned opportunities for work and leisure, combining the benefits of urban and rural life. He set up two private companies to construct Letchworth Garden City (started in 1903) and Welwyn Garden City (1920) and they were to inspire, in time, the visionary post-1945 New Towns.

“Prior to that, legislative intervention had generally been of an ad hoc and piecemeal kind, to tackle specific problems of urban growth, such as sub-standard housing, traffic congestion, ribbon development, lack of open spaces or encroachment of the countryside”, wrote Peter Bowden in his chapter *The Origins of Newton Aycliffe*, in Martin Bulmer’s *Mining and Social Change*.<sup>42</sup>

A start had been made to tackle slum clearance in London and other big cities between the Wars, and this was to be a driving force in addressing the needs of Durham’s mining communities after World War Two, with advocates for the North East New Towns – initially Newton Aycliffe, then Peterlee and later Washington - arguing for fresh opportunities and new homes and jobs for miners and, especially, their children, who were leaving the region in droves in search of work.

Not everyone supported these ideas. Rather than break up existing communities and create new towns, why not strengthen the existing, well established mining communities with their highly developed social networks but inadequate local provision for education, health, leisure and recreation and, crucially, employment? The Minister for Town and Country Planning in the Attlee Labour Government, Lewis Silkin, was a strong

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<sup>42</sup> *Mining and Social Change* , Bulmer, op cit p 208

advocate for New Towns and welcomed the proposals for Newton Aycliffe. He was also persuaded that a new town in Easington District, which would become Peterlee, should be built to provide homes and jobs for the ex-miners of East Durham and their children.

In his Introduction to *“Farewell Squalor”*, the original 1946 proposal for what would become Peterlee (the report was subtitled *A New Town and proposals for the re-development of the Easington Rural District*), Durham County Council Planning Officer Arthur Bates described in almost poetic language the context in which a new town, now urgently needed, was to be created:

“For almost 100 years, the economy of the East of Durham has been founded on the exploitation of the great mineral wealth of the earth. Upon the ‘black diamonds’ hewn from the seams of coal many hundreds of feet below the surface has rested almost the whole economy of the generations who have lived, worked and died in the mining villages. Until the war of 1914-18 the villages were almost untouched by progress.. It is now generally accepted that a full social, cultural and educational life cannot be achieved with the village as a unit.. In our industrial areas we *must* plan in units larger than the village if our economy is to survive and if we are to give our people that way of life they deserve..”<sup>43</sup>

Silkin was keen to create what he called social balance in New Towns; “he thought that it was definitely anti-social that they should have people of one income group and one type of occupation all segregated together.. It was, therefore, most important that they should provide opportunities there for the mining community to mix with other classes of the community and each would enrich the life and experience of the other.”<sup>44</sup>

Two particular New Towns, Newton Aycliffe, one of the Government’s post-war initiatives, and Cramlington, a public-private partnership between Northumberland County Council and housebuilders William Leech and Bellway, are now examined below. I met with local residents in each town to find out how they felt about the original vision and development of their community, how things had progressed and what the future might hold for them.

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<sup>43</sup> *“Farewell Squalor”*. *A New Town and proposals for the re-development of the Easington Rural Council*. Prepared for the Council by CW Clarke, Engineer & Surveyor. Easington Rural District Council 1946 pp4 and 5.

<sup>44</sup> Bulmer, op cit p229



## NEWTON AYCLIFFE

Lewis Silkin agreed with Durham County Council and Darlington District Council that a new community should be created, to provide labour for the expanding industries located in the large industrial estate developing on the site of the former Ordnance Factory bordering Aycliffe Village. The Barlow Commission of 1940 had asserted the strategic need for a 'reasonable balance of industrial development' across the country, and the Distribution of Industry Act of 1945 focused on the need for diversifying the industrial base in regions like the North East and promoting mobility of labour to fill the opportunities for professional, skilled and unskilled jobs. The new town could also offer decent housing and local jobs for people living in mining communities whose pits were closed – known as Category D villages.

Looking back, the early vision for Newton Aycliffe was astounding. Lord William Beveridge, the architect of the Welfare State now being developed by the Attlee Government, became the first chairman of the Aycliffe Development Corporation.

Newton Aycliffe was to be “the place to realise his vision of a Welfare State where poverty, unemployment and squalor would be no more. He even came to live in one of the houses – though he did not find ‘life among the people’ quite as easy as he had expected. The Master Plan for the new town envisaged a class-less society, where managers and men would live side-by-side in high-quality council houses.”<sup>45</sup>

Newton Aycliffe was to be “a paradise for housewives” with houses grouped around greens, so children could play safely away from the roads. “There would be nurseries (to look after children while their mothers went shopping), a sports stadium, a park, and a ‘district heating system’, so that dirty coal fires would not be necessary. The pubs were going to be state-run and would sell nationalised beer! The town centre was to include a luxury hotel, a college and community centre, a people’s theatre, a dance hall and a cinema. There were even plans to use the Port Clarence railway to give townspeople a link to the seaside. The estimated cost of the town was £10 million.”<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>45</sup> *The Newton Aycliffe Story*, Great Aycliffe Town Council - <http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk/about/history-of-aycliffe>

<sup>46</sup> *The Newton Aycliffe Story* op cit

target population was quite small initially. It should become, in due course, 45,000 - though that has never been considered to be achievable or even desirable.

Beveridge told people that this ambitious vision would take time to realise. The first Anglican priest, Tom Drewette, arrived in 1950 and an old farmhouse was used for the first 13 years as a meeting place for worship before St Clare's Church was built in 1963. A community centre, primary school and library were opened in the early 1950s and by June 1953, 1,000 homes had been constructed and businesses, shops, sports clubs, societies and children and young people's groups were all developing. Methodist, Catholic and Mormon churches were opened and the population was steadily increasing towards the early target number of 20,000.

These were still the 'pioneering' days, but there were financial issues and a continuing need for Government support, granted reluctantly. The Government believed that economic viability depended on expanding the size of the town and promoting economic activity in the region, but this did not materialise for many years.

In the early days, the opportunity to live in Newton Aycliffe was based on a rigorous process of vetting and approval by the formidable Miss Hamilton, the New Town Housing Manager. New residents had to have jobs and demonstrate their commitment to making the new community work – for example through involvement in sport and leisure activities.

"When we came here, we all got inspected by Miss Hamilton. There was a sense of hope and aspiration – a shared sense of New Town possibilities. Post-War optimism was strong, nice new housing and greenery were powerful incentives... We were mainly working class and prepared to work hard. Many of the early residents have prospered over the years" said one of those early residents, Councillor Bob Fleming.<sup>47</sup>

Sustaining the vision and spirit of the new community was not easy, though it continued through the 1970s and into the early 1980s. In 1978, the local MP, Derek Foster, had described the town as "the jewel in the constituency's crown" and said that the Development Corporation seemed to be succeeding in its stated aim, to create "a self-contained, close-knit community, enjoying good housing and ample amenities."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Chris Beales had meetings with Cllr Fleming and Town Council officers in May 2018 and with a group of local residents, including Cllr Fleming and four other Councillors in July 2018.

<sup>48</sup> *The Newton Aycliffe Story* op cit

But the economic downturn of the early 1980s hit the town hard and job losses led to widespread problems. By 1986, the number employed on the Industrial Estate had fallen to less than 8,000 and the population had dropped from 26,000 to 25,000.

“Even the character of the townspeople came under attack. When Burt’s Carpets closed down, the manager claimed that most of his business was DHSS cheques, and labelled Newton Aycliffe ‘Giro city’. A Health Authority survey found that Newton Aycliffe had the highest incidences in the District of solvent and alcohol abuse and marital breakdown.. ADC [Aycliffe District Council] had handed over its housing assets to the then Sedgefield District Council (since abolished in the local government reorganisation of 2009) in 1978. It sold the Industrial Estate (to Helical Bar) in 1987 and was dissolved in 1988.”<sup>49</sup>

From the 1990s onwards, things began again to improve – helped by the change of Government and election of the town’s Sedgefield Member of Parliament Tony Blair as Prime Minister, making the area a focus of international attention and beneficiary of significant new investment. Things continued to grow and improve up to the economic downturn of 2008 onwards, which hit the town hard and only began to change significantly with the arrival of Hitachi in 2011.

The industrial estate has continued to develop and has over 10,000 jobs, with Hitachi, Gestamp and other significant companies and, since 2016, the North East region’s first University Technical College for 14-19 year olds, sponsored by Sunderland University, Hitachi, Gestamp and others with the ambitious goal of raising a new generation of young engineers and scientists.

Opposite South Durham UTC is a new Church, the Xcel Centre, providing state-of-the-art conference facilities for up to 750 people, with a café and nursery on site and an active congregation. It is working at combating isolation and also helping people with special needs. St Clare’s (Church of England) has lots of community activities, including Shine, a popular children’s choir. Other Churches are active and generally well attended, higher than the national average. There is a large Polish (Catholic) community. The town

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<sup>49</sup> *The Newton Aycliffe Story* op cit

is taking in Syrian refugees (“we’re all immigrants in Newton Aycliffe” one person said at my meeting with local people).

## FUTURE PROSPECTS

With the latest push for new housing in the area, Newton Aycliffe is once again growing, though not everyone is enamoured by the prospect.

“The A167 is a natural boundary, but development on the other (east) side is happening (and could expand significantly). Currently there are 600-900 houses on the east side. If the population increases by 50%, we’re in danger of losing the New Town feel. We can cater for 30,000, but beyond that... There’s nowhere left in Newton Aycliffe to build except on the green corridors.”<sup>50</sup>

There remains a sense of hope among many people in the town, though that New Town feel, so powerfully experienced by the first generation of residents, will not easily be sustained into the future. An important recent development (2017) has been creating a Neighbourhood Plan, through an extensive consultation process with the public, businesses and residents. It has produced this vision statement: “To make Great Aycliffe a vibrant community, the Neighbourhood Plan will seek to enhance the natural environment, support and encourage high quality housing, local jobs and improved retail and leisure facilities in a healthy, green and attractive town.” The Housing theme was spelt out as follows:

“All future developments will meet the needs of residents, be well designed and aim to:

- Ensure that developments include a suitable mix of housing to meet local needs and provide a range of dwelling sizes to help foster a balanced community with homes in all sections of the market. □
- Provide adequate parking according to house type. □
- Be of the highest quality design. □

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<sup>50</sup> Chris Beales’ meeting with a group of local residents and Councillors in July 2018.

- Support the redevelopment of brownfield sites to housing where appropriate with due regard to ensuring the availability of employment for local people.
- Provide appropriate public and private spaces around buildings in line with Garden City criteria. □
- Be energy efficient using energy saving technologies (BREEAM excellence level).
- Be flood resilient.”<sup>51</sup>

Writing in 2009, the author of *The Newton Aycliffe Story* should have the final word:

“At the start of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – with the 1940s world of the ‘pioneers’ transformed into the high-tech, private enterprise, e-network world of today – our town stares with some trepidation into an uncertain future, amidst national news of economic and environmental crises, government cutbacks and social tensions. But Aycliffe’s treasures are not, and never have been, in its state-provided facilities; they lie in the character and efforts of its citizens. And we remain committed to the original vision: to create ‘a town where everyone will want to live’.”<sup>52</sup>

## CRAMLINGTON

The idea of a new town development in Cramlington was first envisaged in 1958 and, three years later, draft plans were agreed to establish what it hoped would be ‘Britain’s first enterprise town’. Sponsored by Northumberland County Council and a consortium led by William Leech, which had acquired the land, it was predicted to take 20 years and eventually house 40,000 inhabitants across a four square mile site that also included an industrial zone.

When the plan received final approval by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, in January 1963, the target population had grown to 48,000. This was not a Government-backed development corporation like Newton Aycliffe, but a local public-private partnership.

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<sup>51</sup> *Vision and Themes*. Great Aycliffe Town Council. [http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Vision\\_and\\_Themes1.pdf](http://www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Vision_and_Themes1.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> *The Newton Aycliffe Story* op cit

“Cramlington, once home to one of the richest seams of coal in the United Kingdom, had to reinvent itself when the mining industry declined in the North-East. Thus Cramlington new town was born and developed in the 1960s and 1970s and provided a fine example of how a community could prosper.”<sup>53</sup>

In order to get a fuller picture of the town and how it has developed over the past 50 years, I visited the Town Council for a fascinating meeting with the Town Clerk, Bob Baker, Administration Manager Adam Harvey and part time Finance Officer and local long term resident, John Harvey.<sup>54</sup> They described the town as follows:

The town has a population of 30,000-35,000, the biggest growth having come in the late 1960s / early 1970s. William Leech, the main builder, and Bellway were the main private developers. From late 1960s, residents and future generations really began to think of themselves as being from Cramlington.

I was told that “the bulk of the town is middle class and Cramlington has the highest house prices, after Morpeth, in SE Northumberland. You get lots of house for your money. Cramlington doesn’t have the stigma of places like Blyth and Ashington.” In fact, it is a cross between being a dormitory town and a market town. It has good transport links to Newcastle, including a railway station, though the Newcastle-Edinburgh trains do not there. As many people commute out of Cramlington as come in for work.

Housing areas tend to have one road in and out. But the Council is working hard to create a sense of Cramlington as a strong and united community. There are lots of clubs and societies and lots of inter-mixing, but the question is how to network them effectively. There is a shortage of bungalows, which often sell at higher prices than 3 or 4 bed houses. And there is an increasing elderly population wanting to downsize.

New high-tech companies in the industrial estate are doing well, as are pharmaceuticals and alternative energy companies - very different companies to the ones who originally came to the town, such as Wilkinson Sword, whose site is now housing. Retail is currently doing well. The popular shopping centre (which includes M & S, Currys

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<sup>53</sup> See Cramlington’s *Wikipedia* website entry for more information

<sup>54</sup> Meeting of Chris Beales at Cramlington Town Council office with Bob Baker (Town Clerk), John Harvey (Finance Officer) and Adam Harvey (Administration Manager), Tuesday 30 January 2018

and other national retail chains) attracts local shoppers and people from Blyth and the surrounding areas. Its free parking is a real help and national retailers want to come. There are only two charity shops in the whole town. There are now proposals for major redevelopment of the shopping centre. This incidentally, is in stark contrast to Newton Aycliffe's shopping centre, which struggles greatly.

To the south west of Cramlington, land owned by Persimmon (who took over Beazer Homes in 2001, Beazer having taken over William Leech PLC in 1985) has planning permission for housing (though there has been talk of development there since the mid-1980s). A bridge over the A1 at the north end is needed, because otherwise there is a long and circuitous route round to the Town Centre.

Executive housing adjoining Arnot Golf Club is very desirable. And, to north of the town, West Hertford site has been designated for 500 homes. But houses nowadays are crammed in with smaller gardens and little space in between and social housing, I was told, can get squeezed out.

The recently elected Tory administration in Northumberland County Council and Cramlington Town Council are keen to preserve green spaces and reduce plans for housing in some areas and there is an active group, SOS (Save our Spaces), keeping a watchful eye on development plans.

An interesting comment was made by the Town Clerk: there is hardly any burial space available in the town and new space needs to be designated. Could closed churchyards be reopened?

Bob Baker kindly agreed to convene a meeting of local people, which took place at the Concordia Sports Centre in Cramlington in the afternoon on 26 March 2018, with 14 local people, Chris Brown (a friend and former senior Tesco executive with long experience of commerce and retail) and myself.

Before it, Chris Brown and I had visited St Peter and St Paul Catholic Primary School, the aim being to hear the perspective of some local children on life in Cramlington. The inspirational head, Felicity Penny, introduced us to several staff members and two articulate children. They all spoke warmly of Cramlington's sense of community and illustrated it with descriptions of how Syrian refugee families had been welcomed and how the children, pupils at the school, were being integrated. They also said that the cost of

living in Cramlington is higher than the surrounding areas, in terms of rental charges and the price of housing.

The Concordia Sports Centre discussion that afternoon was carefully structured to elicit responses from the residents to specific questions, which are summarised below:

*1. WHAT MAKES CRAMLINGTON FEEL LIKE HOME, A PLACE TO BRING UP A FAMILY AND GROW OLD GRACEFULLY?*

1. It's a safe place – coming to live in Cramlington, main attractions were safety, easy access to schools and shops, green spaces, cycle paths.
2. Friendship, sense of community.
3. Quality of life, access to coast and countryside.
4. Schools – good information available about them in the library.
5. Good community organisations (Women's Institute, Rotary, sports clubs etc) and children's/youth organisations (uniformed organisations, youth club, new Youth Council. Cramlington has a progressive youth policy.
6. Economic opportunities – many people originally moved here for work.

*2. LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A NEW TOWN (AND FROM MORE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS), WHAT ARE THE VITAL INGREDIENTS FOR BUILDING A GOOD COMMUNITY?*

1. Community facilities and infrastructure.
2. Information: there are a number of community centres, but people don't find it easy to access information as to what is going .. services need co-ordinating.
3. With growing housing and population, more cars means more parking needed.
4. Public transport – but it's a bit patchy. Good at rush hour, not so good later. The rail link needs improving.
5. Shopping centre attracts people from a wider area but needs now (with population increasing) to have more quality shops (because at present people will go to Newcastle or Metro Centre).
6. Police presence could be stronger – but the town still feels "safe".



7. Hospital: caters for a much wider area. There are 6 GP practices and 5 dental practices.
8. Cramlington has a sense of “place” and civic pride.

### 3. *WHAT MORE CAN OR SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE CRAMLINGTON?*

1. Housing for over 55s, retirement homes, affordable housing, social housing, apartments, accommodation for singles (of all ages).
2. Housing in Cramlington: issue of legacy leasehold potentially needs to be addressed.
3. Housing: need to explore modular construction.
4. Infrastructure of roads, cycleways, pathways – include new housing and town centre and adequate parking.
5. Future proofing the town – need to ensure a continuing good future, eg electric charging points for cars. Need for scaleable new technologies.
6. Business start-ups – are there enough opportunities?
7. Economic development – but parts of industrial estates are being sold for housing (eg British Gas site – prior notification means not subject to planning permission)
8. Comparison drawn with Ashington: a rich town up to 1970s (based on mining) but really struggling now. Cramlington (also an ex-mining area) is trying hard to look forward.
9. St Nicholas Church – 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. With Cragside School, a time capsule will be placed in the building, to be opened in 50 years.<sup>55</sup>

## CRAMLINGTON'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cramlington Town Council produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan for consultation in September 2018. The Town Council identified a wide range of issues to cover in the Neighbourhood Plan, including affordable housing, social inclusion and the growing elderly population. It stressed the need for continuous improvement of the fabric and

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<sup>55</sup> Meeting of Chris Beales and Chris Brown with 14 local residents at the Concordia Sports Centre, Cramlington on 26 March 2018

infrastructure of the town, for more community spaces and for more employment opportunities, especially for low-skilled and young people. It recognised the need for sustainable development of the town and its economy.<sup>56</sup>

## REFLECTIONS ON CRAMLINGTON'S DEVELOPMENT

Cramlington's expansion is at the heart of Northumberland's housing growth, based on the Government's standardised formula assessing housing need. The latest draft County Plan (June 2018) "sets out the proposed housing requirement for the period 2016 to 2036. Following significant analysis, it is considered that an ambitious jobs-led growth scenario should be taken forward as the preferred growth scenario for the County. As a result, a minimum of 17,700 net additional dwellings, at an average 885 per annum, is required over the Plan period to 2036.

In terms of specific planned development on a large scale, Cramlington is a significant example. At this moment in time around c.2,500 homes now have planning consent across the wider 'South West Sector' site, with more likely to follow in due course. Development of the site is just starting to get underway but, given the size of the scheme, the build-out is likely to take 20+ years to complete. The scale of development obviously means that significant supporting infrastructure, services and facilities are necessary to support this level of population growth. Four major national housebuilders are involved in delivering the scheme – Barratt, Bellway, Keepmoat and Persimmon."<sup>57</sup>

This expansive housing growth in Cramlington raises important questions for the Churches in terms of the deployment of staff and the resourcing of work in new communities and housing developments. Much is to be learned from Cramlington's early vision and how it has been realised over the past half a century. It is interesting to note that, like Newton Aycliffe, the importance of maintaining green spaces and local facilities has been preserved and people have worked very hard to build the sense of being an

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<sup>56</sup> *The key issues for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan in Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan: Pre-Submission Draft (September 2018)*. See p10 <https://www.cramlingtontowncouncil.gov.uk/about-us/neighbourhood-planning/#1536745987860-7efd4a57-ba87>

<sup>57</sup> From an email sent to Chris Beales by Northumberland County Council Planning Officer (Housing Policy), David Hall, on 7 September 2018.

inclusive community – particularly noticeable, for example, in the welcome to Syrian refugees settling in the town. The early emphasis on investment, jobs and diverse work opportunities has also been helpful in ensuring local employment. And, of course, good access to Newcastle by road and rail has been a significant factor.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONTRASTING DEVELOPMENTS

As well as the Government-sponsored new towns built after the Second World War and those developed by Northumberland County Council with William Leech and other builders, there were, of course, many new communities which had been built, pre- and post-war, across the North East. The sprawling former Council housing estates in the bigger cities and towns bear witness to the amount of building which took place.

One particular area I know well, the Sherburn Road Estate in Gilesgate, on the edge of Durham City, was built in the late 1930s to rehouse residents from the slums of Framwellgate in the centre of Durham and, in February 1939, was visited by King George V and Queen Elizabeth. But by the 1970s, it had become severely run down and was seen by local people as the City's dumping ground. As a Durham University student, I got to know the estate and its residents well and actually dropped out of theological college for a year to work on the estate as a community worker, supported by Social Services. The experience was deeply formative and has helped shape my faith and theological perspectives, pointing to a God who is actively concerned about and thoroughly engaged in the everyday lives, experiences and challenges of people everywhere.

### NEWTON HALL, DURHAM

An estate of 3,500 homes on the northern edge of the City of Durham, Newton Hall was originally described as Europe's largest private housing estate. Built by a consortium of housebuilders led by William Leech (who sold land to Barratt and Bell), its first homes were occupied in the mid-1960s, many of them by prison officers serving in the three local Durham prisons. The homes are more spacious than equivalent modern designs but there is a scarcity of available bungalows or homes for residents living in three- and four-bedroom houses to downsize into – perhaps reflecting the shorter lifespan of people in the 1960s and '70s.

“Leech was a big leasehold man”, I was told when I met with two local councillors and a resident who moved onto the estate in its very early years.<sup>58</sup> All the houses were originally sold with leases of 99 years. Many people bought them when they were cheap but now the lease costs £17,000-£20,000. There are many little strips of land left undeveloped on the estate, but there is an issue with some householders taking them over and using them. There has never been a shortage of school places in the area (there was a bit of a surplus some years ago) and they are full now. The infrastructure is good, with parks and open spaces and big fields at the bottom of the estate which the Council maintains. I was told that “We have the best bus service in the County, but it only goes round the perimeter of the estate. And parts of the estate are quite hilly.” Loneliness and mental health problems are perhaps the main concerns in the estate.

Leech donated a sizeable plot of land to the Methodist and Anglican Churches, who chose to work together and create a joint building which, in 2017, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Church has moveable seats rather than fixed pews and a well designed kitchen, allowing it to be in constant use during the week by groups in the community.

## INGLEBY BARWICK

Ingleby Barwick, in the Borough of Stockton on Tees, has more recently been called the largest private housing estate in Europe (twice the size of Newton Hall). There are six ‘villages’, Lowfields, Beckfields, Broom Hill, Round Hill, Sober Hall and The Rings. Two Church buildings, Anglican and Catholic, stand adjacent to each other in a fairly central location. There are two Church primary schools (Anglican and Catholic) out of six primaries, and, at secondary level, a Church of England Academy and a Free School with a Sixth Form.

The Churches and schools were not part of an original master plan. Housebuilding started in the late 1970s and the six villages were originally intended to be separate settlements but, in a fairly haphazard process over several years, open spaces were filled

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<sup>58</sup> Meeting of Chris Beales with Councillors Amanda Hopgood and Mamie Simmons, and Albert Toal, member of All Saints Newton Hall and a local resident for 45 years. 20 October 2017.

with houses and the Churches and community centres have had to take what land remained available.

Well known national housebuilders are the main companies constructing homes in and around Ingleby Barwick, Barratt Homes, David Wilson, Bellway, Avant Homes, Miller Homes, Charles Church and Persimmon.

## GREAT PARK, NEWCASTLE

Building has been proceeding at a significant rate over the last couple of years on Newcastle Great Park. This is in addition to various additional local estates springing up around the green belt area north of Newcastle. The Great Park itself has extended to the east of the A1 road and the west has become quite established.

The people of the Great Park tend to be young families and there is a good ethnic mix, with one of the highest percentages of ethnic minorities in Newcastle. There is a small proportion, 10-15%, of affordable houses and flats, some in the town centre already occupied above the empty shop units.

Community in the Great Park seems now to be centred around the planned 'town centre area', but so far with only one shop open, in August 2018, a pharmacy. Despite much promotion of the nineteen units, people continue to be unhappy about the lack of shops. An anchor store/supermarket is long awaited. The pharmacy business, offering milk and bread as a community service, has difficulty keeping up with minimum orders and so has stopped stocking them. The pharmacy is hampered by being behind a site compound which has appeared directly in front of their door, stopping the main route to their shop. Recently a small convenience store to the east of the A1 closed due to non-viability and was replaced with an eyelash extension studio. There seems no real incentive and no real evidence that shops or services will be provided in the short term.

However, there are many positive aspects to living in Great Park. There is a fabulous, frequent and well used bus transport link, Q3, to the city and the Quayside. The Community Centre is a hub for the development alongside the first school and private nursery. The Community Centre, open now for over four years, is full to capacity and offers multiple exercise classes, opportunities for local businesses, outdoor sports

including NGP football teams who play on a new 3G pitch, a café and many family friendly activities including a pop up Ofsted-approved playgroup. The Brunton First School has twelve classes with over 360 children and has a very small catchment area on the estate. There is also a thriving physiotherapist.

It seems that healthy living and wellbeing are thriving here; there are myriad dog walkers, cyclists and runners who use the purpose-built network of pathways that criss-cross the estate. Good children's playgrounds offer outdoor socialising for mums and exercise for children. There is a pegasus crossing provided for horse riders to cross the road. This place is also a safe and secure place to live with little crime or unsocial behaviour. Most people are proud and happy to live here.

Homes to the west of the A1 pay a service charge. This is for upkeep of the surrounding area, the landscaping and some for the community centre facility. Aspects of the use of these service charges concern the new community and have even been aired in Parliament.<sup>59</sup> Some of the key issues which people have raised are as follows:

- Poor quality and value for money for the service charge.
- Residents' Management Companies, where they exist, have a hard time gaining control from the developers. There is currently no Right to Manage to assist the owners of 'fake freehold' houses.
- No practical redress when problems occur, because individual legal challenges are financially out of reach for most.
- Lack of accountability. Companies will not justify their costs and instead pursue disputed and withheld charges as a debt in the courts.
- Local Authorities are not enforcing the planning conditions agreed within Section 106 agreements. The result is poor quality preparation and 'un-remedied liability' for the home-owners into the future.
- Covenants or lease clauses written by the developers are heavily imbalanced in favour of the management company. Most often there is no cap on the charges.

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<sup>59</sup> See link [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0\\_9hNzppU8s&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_9hNzppU8s&feature=youtu.be)

- Unjustifiable additional fees for permission to alter, re-mortgage, or move home.
- Delays in moving home as the management company has to participate in the transaction.
- Difficulties in getting a mortgage - banks are increasingly requiring more evidence to show that there is a robust mechanism in place for estate maintenance in the absence of adoption.
- Unadopted estate homeowners may find they have to pay indemnity insurance if they want to sell.
- A high proportion of charges is spent on management rather than service delivery - members' experience is that it is usually about 50%.
- The majority of homeowners are not fully informed at point of purchase, either by the developer or their recommended solicitors.
- As soon as the builders leave the site, maintenance charges rise steeply, but the services provided by their successors deteriorate.
- The common green spaces which homeowner charges are ostensibly paid to maintain are open to the public at large, who do not pay those charges. It would be more appropriate therefore to maintain those spaces out of council tax.
- There are practical difficulties in enforcement of public order on privately owned land. Police require permission from the landowner to act and Local Authorities are unable to enforce traffic regulations even when there are safety concerns. We can provide many examples of this problem.
- Potential major expenses in the future due to inadequate land preparation such as the containment of contamination on brown-field sites.
- concern about long-term reduction in saleability and value as home-buyers and conveyancers become more aware of the issues.

It feels as though both the consortium and Council have only paid lip service to these problems and frustration has ensued. Residents have now formed a new Great Park Neighbourhood Association (GPNA). It is a combined residents' association which is responding more strategically to problems on the estate.



The consortium has replaced a full time director with a part time community worker, and this has resulted in frustration in communication. Currently there are almost 2,000 homes completed - a number which will double in the next decade or so as the estate is completed. A further estate adjoining the Great Park, called Kingston Park Village, with about 800/900 homes, is in the consultation phase nearing planning approval stage.

Plans for the future of the Newcastle Great Park include a secondary school on 22 acres of serviced land beside Sage Headquarters. Persimmon has paid for the school, which will be a £7.5m investment. The new primary school proposed (2 form entry) is a £6m investment. The Council has authorised the relocation of a local school. The trigger point for starting these schools is the building of a spine road, which will give another point of access to the estate: a through road linking west to east.

The Church continues to support the community here. The Ark in the Park, started in a home in 2009, has been and still is a hub for the community. This has been largely superseded by the Community Centre to the west, where a new Church has been planted, Church in the Park. It meets every Sunday and is now a thriving local Christian presence. The Bishop of Newcastle has announced recently that there will be a Bishop's Mission Order for the Great Park. Revd Ruth Hewett is currently the only Church-supported minister in the Newcastle Great Park development, as a part time non-stipendiary minister, living at the Ark in the Park since 2009.<sup>60</sup>

## MORE REFLECTIONS

The examples of Ingleby Barwick, Newton Hall and Great Park are of mainly private housing developments. The Government has been keen to encourage people to buy their own home and some of the incentives and assistance programmes have been described above. It is interesting to note that, back in 1981, William Leech was offering all kinds of incentives to buyers: Leech Helping Hand, Leech Chainbreaker; £250 Move-In Scheme; Leech Redundancy Beaters; Leech Loyalty Bonus and Leech Deposit Saving Plan.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Section on Great Park drafted by Revd Ruth Hewett, December 2018

<sup>61</sup> William Leech, according to the company's 1981 annual report, provided not just homes for people to live in, but community and leisure facilities and a number of programmes to help people get onto the housing ladder.

The vast majority of new homes being constructed nowadays are for private sale. The need for housing for rent which is decent, attractive and affordable (a word with connotations which are explored below) - and adjacent to places of employment, education, healthcare, retail and leisure - seems to have slipped perilously down the Government's list of priorities. Though larger housing associations are building, in substantial numbers, both social/affordable housing and homes to part-buy/part-rent, responsibility for delivering the homes needed lies mainly with private housebuilders. And the market may not be the best judge of need. In fact, private housebuilders have never exceeded the construction of 200,000 new homes per year. Even with the Government's encouragement of Councils to get back to housebuilding, there are still two crucial factors to take into account – a severe shortage of skilled labour; and the availability of building materials.

## OFFSITE CONSTRUCTION AND MODULAR HOUSING

A disturbing statistical table in the Farmer Review, referred to above in Chapter 1, illustrates the desperate shortage of construction labour for housebuilding, as it is forecast to shrink from 180,000 in 2016 to 125,000 by 2025 – whilst demand remains constant at just under 350,000 throughout the decade. And remember, this review was completed soon after the Brexit vote in June 2016, since when the construction labour shortage has been exacerbated as Eastern Europeans return home.

The Farmer Review is warmly supportive of the idea of driving forward the large scale use of pre-manufactured construction through off-site built or modular housing. In order to build the houses needed, Farmer believes there really is no alternative – in fact he cites the use of modular construction techniques in Japan, where more homes per year are produced for Tokyo alone than for the whole of the UK.

“The current pace and nature of technological change and innovation in wider society is such that, unless the industry embraces this trend at scale, it will miss the greatest single opportunity to improve productivity and offset workforce shrinkage. Failing

to embrace change will also further marginalise the industry by reducing its attractiveness to a new generation of workers who will have grown up in a digital world.”<sup>62</sup>

Farmer also says, in an interview in *Designing Buildings Wiki*, “If you buy a new car, you expect it to have been built in a factory to exacting standards, to be delivered on time, to an agreed price and to a predetermined quality. This needs to happen more in construction, so that the investors, developers or building owners hiring construction firms increasingly dictate the use of modern methods of delivery and invest appropriately in the skills agenda to grow this part of the industry. There are more similarities between manufacturing and construction than many people are led to believe and this perception needs to change, starting in the housing market.”<sup>63</sup>

The same point is powerfully made by James Pickard, Director at Cartwright Pickard Architects, a long-time champion of offsite construction: “The elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about is that the volume house builders will never ever solve the housing crisis – it’s not in their interests financially. But one way would be to be to unleash the potential of the offsite and custom-build market. Every other European country has a massive amount of self-build and we’re missing a trick.”<sup>64</sup>

The Government is increasingly recognising this. In his 2017 Autumn Budget, Chancellor Philip Hammond said that Government purchasing power will be used to drive this technology in the coming years, offering new ways of building more quickly, to higher standards, not only in relation to housing but schools, hospitals and prisons.<sup>65</sup>

This commitment was further explored by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, whose report, published in July 2018, *Off-site manufacture for construction: Building for change*.<sup>66</sup> It states that there are clear and tangible benefits from

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<sup>62</sup> *Modernise or Die. Time to decide the industry’s future. The Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model*. Mark Farmer, Founding Director and CEO, Cast Consultancy. Published by the Construction Leadership Council (CLC). [www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk](http://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk) October 2016. p48

<sup>63</sup> *Designing Buildings Wiki*  
[https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Farmer\\_Review\\_2016:\\_Modernise\\_or\\_die](https://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Farmer_Review_2016:_Modernise_or_die)

<sup>64</sup> James Pickard, Cartwright Pickard Architects  
[http://www.cisgroup.co.uk/news/latest\\_news/modular\\_housing/](http://www.cisgroup.co.uk/news/latest_news/modular_housing/)

<sup>65</sup> Autumn Budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer, November 2017, p53  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-2017-documents/autumn-budget-2017>

<sup>66</sup> *Off-site manufacture for construction: Building for change*. House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee, 2nd Report of Session 2017-19 - published 19 July 2018 - HL Paper 169

off-site manufacture for construction which make a compelling case for its widespread use.

These include:

- Better quality buildings and infrastructure;
- Enhanced client experience and faster delivery;
- Fewer labourers and increased productivity;
- Creating more regional jobs away from large conurbations;
- Improved health and safety for workers;
- Offering building safety advantages—making it easier to ensure buildings meet quality assurance standards;
- Improved sustainability of buildings and infrastructure; and
- Reduced disruption to the local community during construction.

The Government has a ‘presumption in favour’ of off-site manufacture and has affirmed its commitment to investing in off-site in the Construction Sector Deal; we strongly support this direction of travel.”<sup>67</sup>

The number of off-site manufacturers of housing is growing across the UK and Legal and General’s new modular housing factory in Leeds is a recent, significant addition and plans to build 3500 homes a year.<sup>68</sup> The Swedish construction giant, Skanska, in partnership with IKEA, builds affordable modular housing in Sweden<sup>69</sup> and is planning a move into the UK.

In mid-November, at the opening of the new Knaresborough factory of Ilke Housing, which aims to produce 2,000 houses a year, rising eventually to 5,000, the Chief Executive, Bjorn Conway, said: “We are just scratching the surface of what’s possible. We took a licence on this factory just 12 months ago and have already delivered the first

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<sup>67</sup> HL Paper 169 Op cit. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations. *The case for off-site manufacture for construction.*

<sup>68</sup> Legal and General <https://www.legalandgeneral.com/modular/>

<sup>69</sup> Skanska/Ikea <https://www.boklok.com/about-the-BoKlok-concept/>

homes. We are deconstructing construction, and driving productivity improvements, without relying on hard-to-find construction skills.”<sup>70</sup>

In Gateshead, Home Group is conducting a live research project comparing different building methods in the Gateshead Innovation Village – described in more detail in Chapter 6.

One of the most intriguing ideas I have come across is the idea of a ‘factory in a box’. Birmingham-based Totally Modular are advocating this approach, the aim being “to create local skilled jobs alongside the supply of its homes. TM developed its system and documentation from the start to provide a complete manufacturing, compliance and supply chain/procurement process to enable local assembly plants to be established. We believe in the concept of Local Homes, For Local People Employing Local Labour and benefiting the local economy.”<sup>71</sup>

Another unique approach is being developed by Vivahouse, a modular housing system designed by Design Haus Liberty, to turn vacant commercial properties into co-living environments, initially in London. Vivahouse has been installed as “a short-term pop-up” in an empty shopping centre, Whiteleys, in Bayswater. The company’s plan is to repurpose unused commercial units, including vacant hospitality and office spaces to create new homes.<sup>72</sup>

I was told about Tophat, a modular housing company based in Dove Valley Park, Derby, by John Weir, Head of Strategic Land Investment at the Church Commissioners. The Tophat concept of timber framed modular housing is an interesting and dynamic entrant into the UK housing market. “Houses will be constructed... and then shipped to site and installed on prepared plots of land that already have foundations in place. A house is capable of being erected on site in one day! Whereas this may already exist for one-off houses, the aim here is volume production. This will go some way to meeting government targets on housing provision.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>UK housebuilding revolution: £65,000 prefab homes go into production Patrick Collinson, The Guardian 30 November 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/30/uk-housebuilding-revolution-65000-prefab-homes-go-into-production>

<sup>71</sup> Totally Modular <http://totallymodular.co.uk/>

<sup>72</sup> Vivahouse <https://www.dezeen.com/2018/11/16/vivahouse-prefabricated-co-living-modular-london/>

<sup>73</sup> Paul Shanley, Conder Managing Director. <http://www.salloway.com/in-the-market/dvp-to-house-leader-in-sustainable-homes/>

If modular is to become the next big thing in housing, it will be important not to sacrifice quality in order to increase housing numbers – which, according to the President of RIBA, Ben Derbyshire, “is an unsustainable solution that will create long term problems that need addressing further down the line. Good design is central to delivering sustainable homes and communities that will last into the future.”<sup>74</sup>

To conclude this section, here is an outlandish idea. Given the struggle in many rural parishes to sustain a Church building, might it be possible to explore how to convert the nave into accommodation for, say, elderly people, by installing modular housing units – causing minimal damage to the structure of the building but providing both much needed accommodation (potentially two homes on floor level and two on top) and a much needed income for the building. The chancel area could be sealed off by a screen to provide space for worship, fellowship and other uses. And the south facing roof could have solar panels in order to provide energy to heat and light the building and homes. There are already precedents for putting solar panels on medieval Church roofs and the technology is constantly improving and becoming far less obtrusive, so being easier to blend in tastefully.

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<sup>74</sup> Design Matters *RIBA Award winning homes*. RIBA Architecture.com

## CHAPTER 5

### PLANS FOR NEW HOUSING IN THE 12 NORTH EAST LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Archbishop of Canterbury has written: “It should be the responsibility of democratically elected local governments to ensure that communities are created as well as houses built in the areas for which they have responsibility.”<sup>75</sup>

This is a huge responsibility, significantly impacted by severe cuts to local authority budgets and a sense that the roles of planning, developing and sustaining homes and communities have been rather downgraded in the estimation of Government and people in recent years.

In the course of my research, I visited or spoke to planners in the twelve local authorities in North East England. I was particularly interested in their longer term plans for new housing developments, up to the early-mid 2030s. Each local authority is required to publish a Local Plan after extensive consultation. The draft Local Plan is assessed by a Government appointed Inspector before being finally published.

The process is detailed in the Government’s *Procedural Practice in the Examination of Local Plans*, which is “aimed at all those involved in the process and concerned with the procedural aspects of examining a local plan.”<sup>76</sup> The three stages are as follows:

- Stage 1 – Preparation/Initial Examination and Commencement of Hearing Sessions (10 weeks)
- Stage 2 – Main Modifications and Reporting (timing dependent on main modifications)
- Stage 3 – Quality Assurance (QA) and Fact Check (6 weeks)

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<sup>75</sup> Welby. Op cit p135

<sup>76</sup> *Procedural Practice in the Examination of Local Plans*, UK Government Planning Inspectorate, May 2014, updated June 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examining-local-plans-procedural-practice>

Much of the language is technical and not always easily understood by the general public, though, reading the material made available on local authority websites in relation to Local Plans, I was impressed with the efforts made to make the information and proposals accessible.

The consultation process seems to produce limited, though interesting, responses. There are, of course, those who object to development in their neighbourhood, sometimes because it is a green field site and they wish to preserve the farmland, golf course or copse. There are responses from developers and housebuilders, often stating, for example, why they think the volume of social housing required under Section 106 is excessive and undeliverable. More below on Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Royal Institute of British Architects has published *Ten Characteristics of places where people want to live*, and lists as the necessary conditions for successful placemaking:

- An approved Local Plan.
- An ambitious housing-supply target.
- A clear set of holistic policy ambitions.
- Well-connected transport offering a choice of modes.
- Early provision of social infrastructure.
- Cross-authority working.
- Affordable housing and realistic viability assessments in response to local housing need.
- Spatial modelling tools.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Ten Characteristics of places where people want to live*. RIBA response to the *Independent Review of Build Out Rates* by Sir Oliver Letwin MP, October 2018 p6. <https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/ten-characteristics-of-places-where-people-want-to-live>



It goes further in setting out how this can be achieved, with the following requirements:

- Plan-led approach.
- Provision for long-term public or enlightened private stewardship.
- Commitment to management arrangements and stewardship in perpetuity embedded in planning conditions.
- Appropriately demanding development agreements.
- Land vesting and stakeholder engagement (use of CPO as a last resort).
- More innovative ways of bringing land forward and incentivising the use of small plots.
- Innovation in valuation practice; embracing a longer-term approach to investment in placemaking focused on best value rather than best price (accounting for sustainability).
- Using a land stewardship model – selling groups of plots strategically – in a way that appeals to smaller builders and breaks up the dominance of major housebuilders.<sup>78</sup>

As well as the Local Plan, there are also Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood planning is a much underused but potentially very significant aspect of local democracy and can help to shape neighbourhoods in positive ways. I was particularly impressed with the Newton Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan, which will sit within the Durham County Plan currently being prepared.

“Neighbourhood planning enables communities to play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and in supporting new development proposals. This is because unlike the parish, village or town plans that communities may have prepared, a neighbourhood plan forms part of the development plan and sits alongside the Local Plan prepared by the local planning authority. Decisions on planning

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<sup>78</sup> *Ten Characteristics of places where people want to live.* Op cit p 10.

applications will be made using both the Local Plan and the neighbourhood plan, and any other material considerations.”<sup>79</sup>

By the end of December 2018, most of the North East local authorities had not yet completed their Local Plans, which should be published during 2019. Those with adopted Local Plans include Gateshead (2015), North Tyneside (2017) and Hartlepool (2018); Gateshead and Newcastle together adopted *Planning for the Future - Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2010-2030* in March 2015.<sup>80</sup>

## THE TWELVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND

### *DARLINGTON*

A new development plan for long term investment and growth for Darlington is being prepared for the next 20 years, up to 2036, setting out where significant new development should go and including policies to protect valued environments and heritage and ensure liveable places.

Darlington Council’s Local Plan Consultation Draft says: “We need to ensure our population’s needs for housing, a thriving economy, community facilities and infrastructure are met, as well as safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design. By 2036, there could be at least 10,000 new homes, supporting the creation of at least 7000 new jobs and helping to sustain a vibrant town centre and high quality sports and recreation facilities and spaces. The Local Plan will be a framework of policies and guidance that will make growth happen in a well thought out, sustainable way.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> From the UK Government’s Guidance on *Neighbourhood Planning*. “The guidance explains the neighbourhood planning system introduced by the Localism Act, including key stages and considerations required.” <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

<sup>80</sup> *Planning for the Future - Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2010-2030* in March 2015. <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/3001/Local-Plan>

<sup>81</sup> Darlington Borough Council, Local Plan 2016–2036 Consultation Draft, June 2018. <https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/local-plan/>

There are some existing areas already identified for development (and underway) to the east and west of the town and in the centre, with more strategically designated growth areas around the town, mainly to the north and also in some of the outlying areas, including Heighington, Middleton St George and Hurworth. Darlington is anxious to maintain its identity as a market town and developers must take this into account. One of the problems Darlington faces is that it actually does not itself own a lot of land which could be brought forward for development.

One planner told me that he thought Councils need greater Compulsory Purchase Powers (CPOs) to be able to progress plans. This chimes with the view of the Letwin *Independent Review of Build Out*: “I believe that it would also make sense to consider the possibility of giving local authorities ... CPO powers in relation to large sites that have been allocated in their local plan in the past but which have not obtained outline permission after a long period has elapsed..”<sup>82</sup>

Maybe there is a third way – to develop a levy system (like Ground Rent). The trouble is, I was told, “the focus is on the minimum of what we have to provide. And all good ideas get eroded by viability considerations.”

The town’s Healthy New Town status, described in more detail below in Chapter 6, has given a particular focus to developments on the east side of the town in and around the Red Hall Estate, but is also very pertinent to plans for the new Garden Village to the north (see Chapter 5, the report of the workshop held on 4 December 2018, *A House or a Home?*).

## COUNTY DURHAM

The County Durham Plan sets out a vision for housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and healthcare to support it. It sets the planning framework to support the development of a thriving economy and identifies a number of sites for new employment, new housing and new infrastructure to accommodate the

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<sup>82</sup> *Independent Review of Build Out*. Op cit, Para 4.16, p18.

growth needed to achieve these ambitions. The Plan includes an interactive policies map which shows where these sites are located.<sup>83</sup>

The Plan is still at the draft stage and consultation continues, but the main housing growth areas have been identified; these are in Peterlee (900 homes), Sniperley (1900 homes) and Sherburn Road (420 homes) on the edge of Durham City – in addition, of course, to the new student accommodation halls already built and still being constructed in the City, as the student population expands to over 20,000. These student blocks are privately owned and run and are having a significant effect on existing rented housing in the City and outside – the question being who will fill them if students do not need them.

A recent plan has been announced for a Garden Community in South Seaham, being progressed by Gateshead-based developer Tolent and the housing association Home Group. The plan is for 2000 homes, half of them affordable.

The County Council had to refocus its work on the new County Plan in the light of the Government's Housing White Paper (February 2017). In response to the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018), it highlighted a key consideration - the housing needs of older people, who, it believes, are "a key driver of demographic change... Otherwise, we are concerned that there will be a significant risk that the scale of their existing and growing needs will not be given the importance that is warranted and there will be limited scope to achieve mix and choice to meet their needs."<sup>84</sup> Consultation on the emerging County Plan is currently underway

## *GATESHEAD*

Gateshead and Newcastle adopted, in March 2015, a joint Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUSP). The CSUCP sets out the scale, distribution and mix of new homes to be delivered in the city by 2030. It identifies the need to plan for 19,000 new homes in Gateshead and 21,000 new homes in Newcastle and urges the promotion of sustainable neighbourhoods, supporting Gateshead and Newcastle's diverse population.

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<sup>83</sup> County Durham draft Plan <http://www.durham.gov.uk/cdp> and <http://durhamccc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/preferredoptions>

<sup>84</sup> *Response to draft National Planning Policy Framework*. Durham County Council 2018. <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/7444/Documents-and-evidence-used>

“Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a high quality, well designed home in sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. To deliver a wide choice of homes, increase opportunities for home ownership, support job growth, minimise commuting and promote sustainable inclusive neighbourhoods, the Plan needs to provide sufficient homes.”<sup>85</sup>

There are over 200 brownfield sites in Gateshead and 2500 homes have been built on green belt land in recent years. The Council has released small sites for up to 500 homes (usually c 200) around some villages, such as Crawcrook, with two sites, one at each end. New areas adjoining Ryton are 10 minutes from the village centre. New housing in Kibblesworth is capped at 90.

The Dunston Staiths Development in Gateshead is one of the most interesting developments. Wayne Hemingway, the fashion designer, worked with Taylor Wimpey to work to develop the site, by the river near the Metro Centre. Work started early in the new century and the 635 homes were finally completed in 2016.<sup>86</sup>

Gateshead Regeneration Partnership – a joint venture between Gateshead Council, Home Housing Group and Galliford Try, are to build 2000 homes, with 19 sites identified across the borough. Viable sites are bundled together with others to support the less viable ones and 3 sites have been developed, with over 200 homes. The Council values this kind of partnership as it enables affordable, good quality housing to be constructed. In this partnership model, the Council owns the sites and partners build homes.

*Making Spaces for Growing Places (MSGP)*<sup>87</sup> is a key aspect of Gateshead’s draft Local Plan and is the next stage on from the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle. MSGP will set out detailed policies and inform decisions made on planning applications; it will allocate land for particular types of development, taking particular account of its use or quality (including, for example, conservation areas, retail

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<sup>85</sup> *Planning for the Future Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle upon Tyne 2010-2030*. Op cit. Paragraph 10.1, p74

<sup>86</sup> The Dunston Staiths Development in Gateshead <https://www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk/blog/the-staiths-southbank-gateshead-13-years-on/> and <http://idpartnership.com/portfolio/housing/staiths-south-bank/>

<sup>87</sup> *Making Spaces for Growing Places* Gateshead Council <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/8386/Making-Spaces-for-Growing-Places->

centres and local wildlife sites), and any limitations on development. One area under consideration is around the Metro Centre, where the Church Commissioners own land.

The North East Community-led Network is involved in two good examples of community housing – the Stocksfield Community Association Trading Arm (SCATA) in Stocksfield<sup>88</sup> and the Glendale Trust in Wooller.<sup>89</sup>

Uniquely in the North East, Gateshead has a significant population of Hasidic Jews and the Gateshead Talmudical College, the largest yeshiva (education centre) in Europe. Housing is a real issue, especially for larger families, and the development of Adler Housing has been an important initiative.

## *HARTLEPOOL*

Hartlepool's Local Plan was adopted in May 2018 for the period April 2016 to March 2031.<sup>90</sup> The population of Hartlepool is expected to increase from 92,600 in 2014 to 97,100 by 2031. The proportion of residents aged 65 and over is expected to increase by about 50% over the Local Plan period.

Over this period, the number of homes to be provided is 2037 in the urban areas of the town and 3,952 in urban edge and villages sites. The largest sites to be developed are the South West Extension to the town (1200 homes), Quarry Farm (220 homes) and High Tunstall (1,260 homes). Wynyard Park North and South are, together, likely to have a further 632 homes.

The Local Plan notes “a comparative oversupply of terraced houses and semi-detached properties and a relative undersupply of detached houses, apartments and bungalows in the Borough... The future housing need is for a full range of house types, with a specific emphasis on family homes and elderly person's accommodation, including bungalows.”<sup>91</sup>

The Council states boldly that it will seek to create sustainable residential communities and will seek to control the future supply of apartments (given the ageing

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<sup>88</sup> Stocksfield Community Association Trading Arm (SCATA) <https://www.scatacommunity.co.uk/>

<sup>89</sup> The Glendale Trust in Wooller <https://www.wooler.org.uk/glendale-gateway-trust>

<sup>90</sup> Hartlepool Local Plan, May 2018 [https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20209/local\\_plan/312/local\\_plan](https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20209/local_plan/312/local_plan)

<sup>91</sup> Hartlepool Local Plan. Op cit, paras 10.30 and 10.31, p93.

population, mean apartments have low demand) and increase the provision of family homes, bungalows, elderly person's accommodation and executive houses in the Borough.

The South West Extension, the strategic housing site within the south of the Borough, will benefit from significant infrastructure works, "including a new access onto the A689, new interconnecting roads, cycleways and footpaths, utilities and services... [and] will offer a broad mix of housing types and tenure. A local centre is likely to provide retail provision and health facilities, primary education provision and leisure facilities that meet the local needs... a multifunctional strategic green wedge will be created... [and] will incorporate recreation, leisure, biodiversity and flood mitigation features..."<sup>92</sup>

On the western edge of the town, the High Tunstall development is a sustainable scheme incorporating a new primary school and playing fields, a green wedge, sustainable drainage provision, a local centre, health facilities, leisure and play facilities, a pub and other community needs. The Quarry Farm development (a mix of house types) "will be expected to contribute in financial terms towards the delivery of the primary school on the High Tunstall development as, given the existing lack of capacity within existing schools, both sites require additional education spaces to be made available."<sup>93</sup>

Over recent years Wynyard, to the south of Hartlepool, has seen significant employment and housing development located in Hartlepool and Stockton Boroughs though quite a distance from the two towns. Recent housing developments on both sides of the A689 have been rather piecemeal and the Local Plan will now ensure that the Wynyard development creates a sustainable community.

Both local authorities are keen to develop Wynyard as a sustainable settlement, including affordable housing (it is mainly private housing at present), green infrastructure, cycling links, sports and community provision. A temporary Church of England primary school has provided for local children and a permanent two form entry primary school is being constructed on land at Wynyard Village, to the south of the A189. There is also an

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<sup>92</sup> Hartlepool Local Plan. Op cit, paras 10.37ff, pp 96ff.

<sup>93</sup> Hartlepool Local Plan. Op cit, paras 10.40ff, pp 101ff.

identified need for a one form entry primary school to the north of the A689 on the Wynyard Park site. A local centre is still to be put in place.<sup>94</sup>

## *MIDDLESBROUGH*

The Middlesbrough Local Plan is out for consultation until December 2018. The Council states clearly and unequivocally that “Housing is at the heart of our plans. In line with the Mayor’s 2025 Vision, our ambition is to ensure we have quality homes for all means, whether to buy or rent. We have big ambitions for the town, and will continue to work with our partners in order to:

- Support the development of new neighbourhoods across Middlesbrough - the biggest house-building programme in the town’s history is already under way.
- Provide targeted support to priority neighbourhoods, supporting those that live within them to succeed.
- Address the pressures of an ageing population and support our vulnerable people to live independent lives for as long as possible.”<sup>95</sup>

The latest household projections for the town, released in September 2018, project a decline in Middlesbrough’s population, though there seems at present to be a slight growth in population. But Middlesbrough’s plan is to put good housing in place, in order to retain people in the town (rather than move to, say, North Yorkshire).

However, Middlesbrough, unlike Newcastle or Leeds, does not have a cultural centre, though the town centre is changing and improving. Teesside University has a digital media centre in the town centre and the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), one of the UK’s leading galleries for modern and contemporary art and craft, is located there. Open for just over 10 years, it is run in partnership with the University.

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<sup>94</sup> Hartlepool Local Plan. Op cit, paras 10.45ff, pp 106ff.

<sup>95</sup> *Middlesbrough Housing Strategy 2017 – 2020*. <https://middlesbrough.gov.uk/planning-and-housing/middlesbrough-housing-strategy-2017-2020>



The main new housing developments in Middlesbrough are to the south of the town. Stainsby has been under development since 2013 and 500 homes have now been built, with 1,700-2,000 homes planned over the next 10-15 years. The aim is to create quality places and good communities, using landscaping, urban design and open space. There has not been much emphasis on community facilities. But there is strong (and well organised) opposition to development of land at the top north east corner of the area, which is owned by the Council and is currently open space used for recreation and dog walking. However, the plan is to have a nature park running along the east side, with a café and visitor and education centre and plots of good open space (like Hardwick Hall). There are also proposals to have a local centre – I was told that a Church could locate there.

Other developments along the south of Middlesbrough are to be at Newham Hall, Hemlington and elsewhere – a total of 6,000 homes are projected.

## *NEWCASTLE*

Part 1 of Newcastle's Local Plan, adopted in March 2015, is the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP), prepared jointly with Gateshead (see the Gateshead section above). Part 2 sets out for consultation Newcastle's housing requirements to 2030 and lists housing sites identified in its *Development and Allocations Plan*.<sup>96</sup>

21,000 new homes will be needed in Newcastle. This includes 2,000 purpose-built student accommodation units and 19,000 new homes to meet the forecast housing needs of the city.

One of the largest developments is described in the Callerton Masterplan, supporting the sustainable development of the Lower, Middle and Upper Callerton Neighbourhood Growth Areas in West Newcastle for approximately 3,000 homes, local centres, new primary school provision and associated infrastructure requirements.

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<sup>96</sup> *Development and Allocations Plan*. Newcastle City Council 2017.  
<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning-policy/site-allocations-and-development-management>

Great Park (see above, Chapter 4) and the surrounding areas are also scheduled for significant growth, with land allocated at Kingston Park/Kenton Bank Foot Neighbourhood Growth Area for approximately 800 new homes in the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan.

Full details of Newcastle's detailed plans can be seen in a *Background Paper – Pre-Submission Development and Allocations Plan Evidence Base*, which sets out how 19,591 homes will be delivered from 2018 – 2033.<sup>97</sup>

In the next 15 years, the breakdown of properties needing to be built in particular areas across the city is as follows:

Gosforth is likely to have an additional 4,067 homes in addition to the current number, 16,967. Inner East is forecast to have 1,326 homes in addition to the existing 26,934. Inner West, 4,891 on top of the existing 32,688. North Central, 2,317 on top of the existing 16,319. Outer East 1,632 on top of the existing 18,009. Outer West 5,353 on top of the existing 22,454. The total number of existing homes in these areas is 133,371, with 5,834 planned to be built in the next 5 years, 8,638 in years 6-10 and 5,114 in years 11-15, amounting to 19,586 (and this excludes planned new student bed spaces).<sup>98</sup>

## *NORTH TYNESIDE*

North Tyneside's Local Plan was adopted in July 2017 and states that it will provide for the growth and development of the Borough by developing "at least 16,593 homes from 2011/12 to 2031/32. This overall requirement will be provided through a phased approach, to deliver an average of 790 new homes per annum over the plan period."<sup>99</sup>

In its *Guide to the North Tyneside Local Plan*, the Council says that the overall aims of the Plan are as follows:

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<sup>97</sup> *Background Paper – Pre-Submission Development and Allocations Plan Evidence Base*, Newcastle City Council 2018. [https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wwwfileroot/planning-and-buildings/planning-policy/pre\\_submission\\_evidence\\_base\\_4.pdf](https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wwwfileroot/planning-and-buildings/planning-policy/pre_submission_evidence_base_4.pdf)

<sup>98</sup> Sources: Current Residential Properties (Gazetteer) / Planned New Build Units (HELAA – Sept 2018) – in *Newcastle Local Plan: Education Plan. Impact of Newcastle's Local Plan on Need for School Places. Consultation* October 2018, p36. Note: Excludes planned new student bed spaces.

<sup>99</sup> *North Tyneside Local Plan*, Chapter 7. *Housing*. S4.2(a) Housing Figures. North Tyneside Council and Capita, p74 <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/North%20Tyneside%20Local%20Plan%202017-2032.pdf>

- Protect the Green Belt: 20% of the borough will remain as Green Belt.
- Create new, accessible, open space adding to the 25% which is already open space.
- Regenerate and redevelop brownfield sites and appropriately develop sustainable greenfield land (around 7% of the borough's area).
- Prioritise regeneration in Wallsend, North Shields, the coast and the North West of the borough.
- Ensure development considers the natural, historic and built environment, as well as the social and economic conditions of the area.
- Seek delivery of appropriate infrastructure to support new development and existing needs.<sup>100</sup>

Two major housing developments are being planned – Murton Gap (3,000 homes) and Killingworth Moor (2,000 homes). The draft Masterplans<sup>101</sup> were published and detailed consultations took place in October 2017. The proposals for Murton Gap include:

- Around 3,000 new homes over 15 years – 25 per cent of which will be affordable homes.
- A new local centre with retail provision.
- A bypass road between Monkseaton and Shiremoor.
- A potential new Metro station and new bus services alongside enhanced pedestrian and cyclist routes.
- Sustainable drainage ponds to protect against and prevent any increase in flood risk.

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<sup>100</sup> *North Tyneside Local Plan. Your Guide. July 2017.*  
<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/articles/related-documents/Guide%20to%20the%20Local%20Plan%20Final.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> *Murton Gap Draft Masterplan* - [http://northtyneside-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/murton\\_gap\\_draft\\_masterplan](http://northtyneside-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/murton_gap_draft_masterplan);  
*Killingworth Moor Draft Masterplan* – [http://northtyneside-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/killingworth\\_moor\\_draft\\_masterplan](http://northtyneside-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/killingworth_moor_draft_masterplan)

- Protecting the character and identity of Murton Village and existing communities.
- Green edges at Shiremoor, Monkseaton and New York to create a sense of separation.
- A new primary school and increased capacity for health services and GPs.
- Fifty per cent of the site kept as open space and a variety of new green spaces including two play sites and allotments.

The proposed master plan for Killingworth Moor includes:

- Around 2,000 new homes over 15 years, including 25 per cent affordable.
- A new local centre with retail provision.
- A bypass road for Killingworth Village and an underpass of the A19.
- A potential new Metro station and new bus services alongside enhanced pedestrian and cyclist routes.
- Sustainable drainage basins to protect against and prevent any increase in flood risk.
- Protecting the character and identity of Killingworth Village and existing communities.
- Green edges at Killingworth Lane, A19 and Metro line.
- A new primary school and new secondary school as well as increased capacity for health services and GPs.
- Forty per cent of the site kept as open space and a variety of new green spaces including two new play sites and allotments.<sup>102</sup>

In February 2018, the Town and Country Planning Association published *Securing constructive collaboration and consensus for planning healthy developments*.<sup>103</sup> In it, Murton Gap was featured: “A 240-hectare strategic site to protect the existing village of

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<sup>102</sup> See <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1150/supplementary-planning-documents-and-masterplans>. The master plans were adopted by the Council in December 2017.

<sup>103</sup> *Securing constructive collaboration and consensus for planning healthy developments. A report from the Developers and Wellbeing project*

Murton in the north east of England, the Murton Gap, which was originally developed into a series of connected neighbourhoods, will offer a quality of living environment in a rural setting. Persimmon Homes is the majority landowner, and its group planning director, Peter Jordan, who also sits on its corporate social responsibility committee, is passionate about achieving commitments to creating good places to live.”<sup>104</sup>

## *NORTHUMBERLAND*

The Northumberland draft Local Plan<sup>105</sup> identifies a housing requirement of at least 17,700 dwellings across the County over the plan period 2016-36. It also includes indicative housing numbers for four delivery areas, main towns, service centres and areas outside the larger settlements.<sup>106</sup>

Nationally, the Government has introduced a standardised approach for establishing each local authority’s Local Housing Need over an initial 10-year period, based upon the latest official population and household projections (The National Planning Policy Framework, published in July 2018). This figure takes account of trend-based and predicted natural change in birth and death rates as well as UK internal and international migration patterns and is also adjusted for affordability. The standardised formula suggests that Northumberland currently has an annual average Local Housing Need of 717 dwellings per annum for the initial 10-year period from 2016 to 2026.

The standardised approach establishes the baseline of Local Housing Need and is the starting point for determining the Local Plan requirement; Northumberland’s draft plan (June 2018) sets out the proposed housing requirement for the period 2016 to 2036. Following significant analysis, an ambitious jobs-led growth scenario is envisaged, so a

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<sup>104</sup> Securing constructive collaboration and consensus for planning healthy developments A report from the Developers and Wellbeing project. Murton Gap Connected Village Neighbourhoods, North Tyneside p40 <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/developers-wellbeing>

<sup>105</sup> Northumberland Local Plan Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation <http://northumberland-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/localplan/reg18> Scroll down to *Viewing the consultation document*

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Housing%20Studies/Technical%20Papers%20for%20Housing/NCC-Housing-Distribution-Technical-Paper.pdf>

minimum 17,700 net additional dwellings, at an average 885 per annum, is likely to be required over the plan period to 2036.

This proposed figure of 885 new homes per annum is reduced from the former Core Strategy requirement of 1,216 homes each year. Whilst the plan periods are different, the overall requirement has therefore dropped from 24,320 to the lower figure of 17,700.

In terms of specific planned development on a large scale, Cramlington is a significant example. At this moment in time, around 2,500 homes now have planning consent across the wider 'South West Sector' site, with more likely to follow in due course. Development of the site is just starting to get underway but, given the size of the scheme, the build-out is likely to take 20+ years to complete. The scale of development obviously means that significant supporting infrastructure, services and facilities are necessary to support this level of population growth. Four major national housebuilders are involved in delivering the scheme – Barratt, Bellway, Keepmoat and Persimmon. Further details can be read in Northumberland's SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and 5-Year Housing Land Supply reports, including a breakdown of the latest delivery forecasts.

The other notable example of major strategic development is the proposed garden village development at Dissington, Ponteland. This would be for 2,000 additional homes and a wide variety of supporting infrastructure, services and facilities. The Garden Village was included in the former Core Strategy (now withdrawn); however, it is not included in the new Local Plan as a specific proposal. At the moment, the site is subject to a live planning application, which the Council is 'minded to approve', subject to completion of the necessary legal agreements. The landowner intends to bring this scheme forward over the plan period.

Previous proposals for release of green belt land for residential development around Hexham, Ponteland and Prudhoe have now been withdrawn by the Council. This reflects one of the key reasons for the withdrawal of the Core Strategy. The new draft Local Plan proposes that the existing boundaries of the green belt are maintained and confirmed by new planning policy.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> This summary was provided by Northumberland Planning Officer (Housing Policy), David Hall.

## *REDCAR AND CLEVELAND*

Redcar and Cleveland Council's Local Plan was adopted in May 2018.<sup>108</sup> The Borough has a shrinking population (quite fast at the moment). So no new schools are being planned as there is over capacity and investment will go into existing schools. People have been moving away to find work (especially young people) and the Council's regeneration plan aims to stem the decline in population and encourage young people to stay. More jobs and good facilities are needed and the redevelopment of the steelworks site in Redcar is essential to this strategy. On the Redcar sea front, a regeneration plan is being developed with a cinema and The Hub.

The Local Plan states that "we will need to look primarily towards the private sector to generate jobs to replace those lost in the public sector. With a smaller role for the state, this will require the development of innovative approaches.

Future growth may be less dependent on the retail sector and financial services. It is likely to be driven far more by low carbon technologies and manufacturing, increased social enterprise, tourism, adapting to increased flood risk, energy and food security, a rapid shift in consumption patterns and by efficient use of natural resources. We do know that the future is very uncertain, with the likelihood of rapid technological and social changes, which themselves could drive growth."<sup>109</sup>

Over the past three decades, there has been a growing imbalance between an increasing elderly population reliant on public services, and a diminishing working-age population to service those needs. The Council's Plan sets a corporate objective "to grow our population by approximately 250 people per annum more than the official population projections, with a particular focus on working age households and families... The housing requirement associated with this strategy has been calculated at 234 net

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<sup>108</sup> Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan, May 2018. <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/resident/planning-and-building/strategic%20planning/Documents/Local%20Plan%20Adopted%20May%202018.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan, May 2018. Paras 1.31, 1.32, p11.

additional dwellings per annum.”<sup>110</sup> That adds up to nearly 4,000 new homes between 2016 and 2032.

In the 32ha site in South Bank (Low Grange Farm), where 1,250 homes are to be built (some beyond 2032), the Council is under no obligation to provide more affordable housing as there is already an oversupply. Moreover, a requirement through Section 106 funding for more affordable housing might actually render the whole project unviable for the developers.

Land to the West of Kirkleatham Lane, Redcar (23ha) is allocated for the development of approximately 550 dwellings, significant landscaping and open space uses, to be delivered within the plan period to 2032. 320 homes are to be built in Ormesby. A 12ha site at Kilton Lane, Brotton will have 270 dwellings and a number of other sites identified where between 100 and 300 homes are to be built.

Plans for the development of up to 1,000 homes to the south of Marske have now been submitted to the Council and a decision is likely to be forthcoming early in 2019.

## *SOUTH TYNESIDE*

South Tyneside includes the towns of South Shields, Hebburn and Jarrow and the villages of Boldon, Cleadon and Whitburn. The first draft of the Local Plan is due in the summer of 2019. The National Policy Guidance Framework (published by the Government on 24 July 2018) has significantly lowered the number of homes needed in South Tyneside from 365 homes per year to 214 per year (ie down from 6,205 homes over 17 years to 3,644). But the Government will probably adapt its calculations to increase numbers needed. At present, for South Tyneside it looks as though there will be no need to build on green field sites. South Tyneside’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) dates back to 2012/13 and is currently being updated.

In its Strategy for 2017-20, the Council states that “we have made Housing Integration and Growth a priority. We know that getting our housing interventions right also helps us to address priorities in social health, education and economic growth. We will demonstrate real leadership by building new homes for sale and rent that will support

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<sup>110</sup> Redcar and Cleveland Local Plan, Op cit, para 6.5, 6.10, pp114, 115



our economic growth and regeneration ambitions and provide a return on investment. Ultimately this will provide more homes and jobs for local people. We will work with partners across all sectors to provide greater access to housing and specialist support services for our vulnerable residents. This will provide better community-based services and provision for our residents. It should also reduce the need for more expensive critical health and social care.”<sup>111</sup>

## STOCKTON

Stockton’s draft Local Plan was published in 2017 and consultations were held that autumn. The previous year, in November 2016, an Executive Summary of the draft was published for consultation. In it, the borough’s housing need was stated as follows:

“Government policy requires us to produce evidence to understand how many homes are needed in the Borough to accommodate the growing and ageing population. Our evidence identifies that there is a need for over 11,000 dwellings by 2032. The majority of new homes will be delivered on sites where planning permission has already been granted.”<sup>112</sup>

The draft Local Plan, published and consulted on during 2017, stated that the demand for affordable housing should be 40% of the overall total number of houses – revised down slightly to 10,150 - but the Council’s evidence had established that it would only be viable to deliver 20% of affordable housing units on each site. The draft then went to the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Inspector issued his report in December 2018, affirming these targets, 600 of the 10,150 homes being for older people. The final Local Plan is due for publication in January 2019. Key areas for new housing have been identified as follows:

- Various sites within the Regenerated River Tees Corridor: c2,600 homes. The biggest site is Queens Park North (400 homes). There is also a desire to redevelop

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<sup>111</sup> *South Tyneside Council Strategy. 2017-20. p30.*

<sup>112</sup> *Stockton on Tees. Draft Local Plan. Executive Summary. Regulation 18 Consultation, November 2016, p10*

for housing the Tees Marshalling Yard, which has numerous issues associated with remediation and infrastructure delivery. The site is not required by the Council to meet its housing requirements over the plan period, but the Council “will also support residential-led regeneration proposals for approximately 1,100 dwellings at Tees Marshalling Yard (34ha).”<sup>113</sup>

- Various sites within the conurbation (the settlements of Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Yarm and Eaglescliffe). Note: Ingleby Barwick: c.1,850 homes and Allens West: 845 homes.
- West Stockton Sustainable Urban Extension: “The western extension to Stockton will provide approximately 2,500 new homes in an accessible location close to existing shops, services and public transport.”<sup>114</sup>
- Wynyard Sustainable Settlement: 1,100 homes, in addition to 544 homes in Wynyard Village and the 1,000 homes in the Hartlepool part of Wynyard.

“So far developments at Wynyard have delivered mainly executive housing with limited shops, services and facilities, no public transport other than a temporary shuttle bus service and poor internet connectivity. However, by defining Wynyard as a new settlement and allocating sites to promote growth, the Plan seeks to create the critical mass of development necessary to support new facilities. It also ensures that future development can be planned in a coherent manner, including the provision of new infrastructure.”<sup>115</sup>

## *SUNDERLAND*

Sunderland has 5 area regeneration frameworks –

- North Sunderland: student blocks are springing up. A site by St Peter’s campus is being developed for 360 students with gym, bars, restaurants and other facilities

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<sup>113</sup> Birkinshaw Op cit p77.

<sup>114</sup> *Report to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council* by Matthew Birkinshaw BA(Hons) Msc MRTPI, an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. 17 December 2018 Para 47, p11,

<sup>115</sup> Birkinshaw, Op cit Para 49, p11.

on the ground floor and 40 professional units on the top. Sunderland's Stadium Village, with a range of leisure facilities, including the old Sheepfolds industrial estate, is to become a leisure-led housing development.

- The urban core is residential with offices and commercial space. Regeneration plans are in place to develop the Sunnyside area as a niche business and residential area, but this is progressing slower than anticipated. Regenerating the urban core and developing SMEs linked to university are essential for future development. Echo 24 (apartments) on the riverside was a showcase for residential city centre living, but a lot of units have been bought by external investors and sublet to students. Students are being encouraged to live in the city centre. The Vaux site, which has stood empty for two decades, was originally planned to have around 1,000 housing units, though this has been substantially modified and new development ideas are now emerging.
- Sunderland South: the most extensive area of expansion – 3,000 new houses within the South Sunderland Growth Area, with a primary school and local retail centre, are planned. The Master Plan and Supplementary Planning Document for the area designate housing which will be constructed by Bellway, Miller, Barratt, Persimmon, Taylor Wimpey and Story Homes. The Church Commissioners own land in the south east part of the area being developed. The Groves site (on the south side) will have 700 new homes by the river, with a local centre and new primary school.
- Washington: there is not much opportunity for expansion due to green belt constraints. However, the current draft local plan proposes a number of green belt release sites to assist with achieving housing numbers. Springwell Village is one of these areas where green belt sites are proposed to be utilised. The Galleries Shopping Centre has free parking (this has greatly helped). Washington has much of the city's larger industry. Near Nissan is the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP), being developed jointly with South Tyneside. The IAMP is linked with Nissan's supply chain.
- Coalfield: Houghton/Hetton/Easington Lane –This area has been the focus for housing development for a number of years now and most available brownfield

sites have now been built on, so green field land is being significantly developed. Section 106 funds are being used for education (expanding school facilities) and a new school/extension will be provided in Houghton - but there are still gaps in the infrastructure. Houghton town centre has been growing and is a popular shopping destination (with a new supermarket proposed).

The National Planning Policy Framework (published July 2018) and National Planning Policy Guidance set out the methodology for the number of houses per year likely to be needed. Using the standard methodology, Sunderland's base line housing requirement would be 570 dwellings per year, however updated household projections have recently been released which would mean that Sunderland annual base line housing requirement goes down to 251 dwellings per year.

However, Sunderland's evidence base indicates housing need above the standard methodology and as such their proposed target requirement is 745 dwellings per year until 2033.

Gentoo is a Sunderland-based housing association that owns and manages more than 28,000 homes, which it took over from the Council. It is one of the biggest employers in Sunderland and largest landlords in the North East. Over recent years, Gentoo has been regenerating its housing stock, which has resulted in some loss to the affordable housing stock. Most of this regeneration is now complete, however one large scheme, Pennywell, remains, where a proposal to rebuild 500 units is currently under consideration.

Sunderland's policy for the provision of affordable housing is currently 10% of new developments, though this will be rising to 15%.

The Core Strategy and Development Plan sets out the Council's long-term plan for development across the city to 2033. It will ensure that the right type of development is focused in the right places to meet the needs for local people and businesses.

Following consultation, the final version of the Plan, known as the Publication Draft, has been amended and is to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2018. The *Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033 Publication Draft* includes

development policies, strategic site allocations and development management policies.<sup>116</sup> An interactive version of the *Policies Proposals Map* is also available.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> *Sunderland's Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033 Publication Draft*  
[https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/20509/Core-Strategy-and-Development-Plan-2015-2033-Publication-Draft/pdf/Core\\_Strategy\\_and\\_Development\\_Plan\\_2015-2033\\_Publication\\_Draft.pdf?m=636673520179700000](https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/20509/Core-Strategy-and-Development-Plan-2015-2033-Publication-Draft/pdf/Core_Strategy_and_Development_Plan_2015-2033_Publication_Draft.pdf?m=636673520179700000)

<sup>117</sup> Interactive *Policies Proposals Map*  
<http://sunderlandcc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=db50dbc317b544bfb13753b8bfa987b2>

## CHAPTER 6

### ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

An essential part of my research has been to meet a wide range of people – local residents in places I have visited, Church leaders and members, planners in the local authorities, architects, owners and developers of land, housebuilders, people interested in education, healthcare, transport and those concerned about the environment.

A multitude of issues have been highlighted through these meetings and conversations and through what I have read and heard over the past 15 months. Many of the issues are identified and summarised in the reports of two workshops, held in the Holy Biscuit, Shieldfield, Newcastle on 18 June 2018 and in the Hullabaloo Theatre, Darlington on 4 December 2018. The workshops were designed to enable as much participation as possible, so people were seated in groups of 6–8 around tables and, after two brief addresses from the front, were asked to discuss what they had heard and identify together the key issues arising. These were then fed back (briefly and succinctly) and written up for all to see, allowing for a few minutes of plenary discussion and final comments from the speakers.

A summary of the two workshops now follows.

#### WORKSHOP HELD AT THE HOLY BISCUIT, SHIELDFIELD, NEWCASTLE

June 18 2018. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.<sup>118</sup>

The aim of the workshop was to stimulate discussion and generate ideas about how to develop “healthy placemaking”, in the words of Tim Bailey, Chair of the North East Region of RIBA (the Royal Institute of British Architects) in his introduction to the evening - reinforced by Dr Anne Allen, Acting Principal of St John’s College, Durham, as she spoke about the College’s interest in the theme and described the issues being raised in Durham

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<sup>118</sup> *A House or a Home?* Executive Summary of a Workshop held at the Holy Biscuit, Shieldfield, Newcastle, June 18 2018

City with the significant expansion of university accommodation and what that means for local residents and communities.

Tim then introduced Chris Beales, William Leech Research Fellow in Applied Theology. His project is to map new housing developments across the North East of England and explore how new communities are being created. Chris listed some specific starting points in his own thinking:

- Everyone should have the right to a good, truly affordable home, providing safety, security and a sense of belonging.
- Communities need good local economic development and employment opportunities and carefully planned community and leisure provision (which are not just an afterthought).
- Communities should be well designed, mixed and socially balanced, with accessible local education and healthcare provision.

He highlighted the importance (often ignored in new developments) of “future-proofing” – ensuring good provision for older people now and in the future - and asked whether landowners selling their land for development could play a more socially responsible role in ensuring good, diversified housing and community provision.

Chris concluded: Are we content with just building lots of houses - or are we in the business of creating communities of hope?

David Roberts, Director of igloo Regeneration, then spoke. David has worked in construction development for 30 years and the nearby Malings project is igloo’s award-winning development. He spoke of a renewed emphasis on Housing Design Quality and cited igloo’s Malings development in Ouseburn, Newcastle and Urban Splash’s development in North Shields as examples of good practice. He set out a three point plan for better housing:

- Delivery – a significant step forward will be for the planning system to enable local people to become more involved in planning.

- Challenge existing practice – think progressively, with local residents helping to shape developments.
- Inform more fully those involved in housing development – They need to know the benefits of better research, better engagement and better briefing of teams. Good examples need to be celebrated.

So how do you build?

- Think progressively and apply good practice.
- Organise and design inclusivity into projects.
- Have as your mission homes people can fall in love with.

The question, he concluded, is: What is Home?

Participants in their round-table groups then discussed the key issues arising, feeding them back in plenary for further discussion and comment. The following broad themes emerged:

- Policy issues: how can local people and communities really participate in the development of new housing so that their opinions are heard?
- Community: new housing areas, often on the edge of existing communities, are hard to integrate, especially if many of their residents travel elsewhere for work and leisure. How can this be addressed?
- Redevelopment: is gentrification a curse or a blessing? And will town centres now have to change, with homes being developed to replace empty shops?
- Work and education: What will work look like for new areas? How can we model good practice? How can schools and developers interact? These discussions must be had with young people.

After discussion in plenary, it was agreed that the issues raised should be further explored and developed and participants were invited to remain involved. Examples of good



development practice should be identified and opportunities to raise the issues highlighted among other groups, networks and publications should be created.

## WORKSHOP HELD AT THE HULLABALOO THEATRE, DARLINGTON

December 4 2018. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.<sup>119</sup>

Dr Anne Allen, Deputy Principal of St John's College, University of Durham chaired the evening and welcomed all those present. This workshop, she said, aims to bring together people who live and work in new housing communities with those who design and develop them. She quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury: "To reimagine Britain we must.. reimagine housing... Housing exists as a basis for community and community exists for human flourishing."<sup>120</sup>

She introduced the two speakers, Chris Harrison, Managing Director of Theakston Land, developing sites across the North East, and Maggie Gjessing, Director of Regeneration at Home Group, whose responsibilities include estate regeneration and new supply specialist housing (including housing for older people).

Chris Harrison outlined the huge challenge facing the country in building enough homes and went on to describe the planning and development of several new Garden Communities across the country, a Government priority strongly supported by the Town & Country Planning Association and others. They must be more than just a housing estate – requiring well designed, mixed housing and integrated services such as health, education, retail and transportation. But there is a significant omission in the programme: there are no Garden Communities in the North East (yet).

He then described plans for the Garden Community to be built in Skerningham, just north of Darlington. The Skerningham Masterplan Framework sets out what is being envisioned – 2,500 homes over the next 15 years - and includes substantial (45%) open space and land for recreation (shown across the top). There are to be two primary schools and a secondary school and other community, health, retail and recreational facilities

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<sup>119</sup> *A House or a Home?* Executive Summary of a Workshop held at the Hullabaloo Theatre, Darlington, 4 December 2018

<sup>120</sup> Welby, Op cit p

(including a golf course) and the development will draw on what has been learned from Darlington's Healthy New Towns programme.

Maggie Gjessing described the work of the housing association Home Group. With a turnover of over £350m, Home Group is one of the UK's largest providers of high quality housing and integrated housing, health and social care. Home Group is a Strategic Partner of Homes England and provides social and affordable housing, specialist housing for older people and people with special needs and also housing for sale through its sales arm, Persona.

Home Group's strategic priorities are to build 10,000 new homes, to become market leaders in new Models of Care, to provide 90% of customer services digitally and to become 10% more efficient.

She described plans being developed by Home Housing and Tolent for a Garden Community south of the Durham coastal town of Seaham, with 1,500 homes (50% of them affordable), specialist housing for older people, a new village hub and local employment.

Participants then discussed what they had heard in 6 groups and were asked to identify key issues arising, which were then fed back in plenary. These focused mainly on the following themes:

- Garden Communities.
- Planning and consultation processes.
- Design quality.
- Building communities.
- Offsite construction.

Important points were made and issues raised, including the opportunities Garden Communities can offer for well planned and integrated communities with good local facilities (education, health, retail, community) and employment opportunities. The problems with achieving effective consultation about new developments were highlighted and felt to be urgently in need of improvement. The quality of housing was raised, and the need for a particular focus to be given to 'building communities' and not just hoping

community will happen. There was some interesting discussion about offsite construction and modular housing - and the current mismatch between the way planners and builders operate (building and selling before moving onto the next phase of more building) and the requirements of manufacturers of modular components who need orders requiring a clear number of component parts in a given timescale.

This workshop and the previous one held in June 2018 in Newcastle have generated a great deal of interest. The plan now is to hold future events to move forward the debate and action.

## CHAPTER 7

### MOVING FORWARD – SOME INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Some innovative ideas and developments I have discovered include the following examples:

#### HEALTHY NEW TOWNS PILOT: DARLINGTON

“In the *NHS Five Year Forward View*, a clear commitment was made to dramatically improve population health, and integrate health and care services, as new places are built and take shape. ... [The] objectives are to develop best practice, case studies and guidance to help ensure all new housing developments embed certain principles, promoting health and wellbeing and securing high quality health and care services. Nationally, we have developed strong links across government, planning and housing and will collate learning from the demonstrator sites to show how new housing developments can implement these principles.”<sup>121</sup>

Ten housing developments were chosen (out of over 100 applications) from across England.<sup>122</sup> One of those ten towns is Darlington. The town has created its own Healthy New Town design principles to guide its review of planning applications within the context

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<sup>121</sup> *Healthy New Towns* NHS England 2018. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/>

<sup>122</sup> The ten Healthy New Towns demonstrator sites are:

- Whitehill and Bordon, Hampshire – 3,350 new homes on former Ministry of Defence land.
- Cranbrook, Devon – 8,000 new residential units.
- Darlington, County Durham – 2,500 residential units across three linked sites in the Eastern Growth Zone.
- Barking Riverside, London – 10,800 residential units on London’s largest brownfield site.
- Whyndyke Garden Village, Fylde, Lancashire – 1,400 residential units.
- Halton Lea, Runcorn – 800 residential units.
- Bicester, Oxfordshire – 6,000 homes in North West Bicester, 13,000 for Bicester in total.
- Northstowe, Cambridgeshire – 10,000 homes on former Ministry of Defence land.
- Ebbfleet Garden City, Kent – up to 15,000 new homes in the first garden city for 100 years
- Barton, Oxford – 885 residential units.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/>

of the developing Local Plan – the draft Local Plan was put out for consultation in the summer [of 2018] and will be published in 2019.<sup>123</sup>

The ideas developing through this work are clearly being taken into account in the plans for the new Garden Community in Skertingham, described above in Chapter 6, the Executive Summary of the Darlington workshop held on 4 December.

### SOUTH SEAHAM GARDEN VILLAGE

In early November 2018, the Newcastle Chronicle reported plans for a £175m Garden Village in Seaham, County Durham, with around 4,500 homes, shops, bases for businesses and leisure facilities. The South Seaham project is being driven forward in a partnership between Gateshead developer Tolent, the owner of the land, and Home Group, the housing association based in Gosforth Park, Newcastle.

The vision is to create a sustainable, mixed community. “We are proposing to build 1,500 new homes, 300 of which will be for over 55s” said Tolent chairman John Wood. Land for 750 of the houses will be sold to the private sector house builders and the profits from the sale will be used to subsidise the construction of a school and other community facilities in the village centre. We have an agreement in place with Home Group to build 750 good quality affordable houses... to provide homes for a wide range of incomes from starter homes for young people to the retired miner... At the heart of the garden village will be its centre with shops and cafe, a primary school with sports facilities, a park and village square, housing for the elderly and a community hub with space for health and well-being, to include a gym. The village centre will also include a new innovation hub for business space.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Healthy New Towns Darlington*. September 2018 <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/healthy-new-towns/>

<sup>124</sup> *Plans approved for £175m North East garden village which will create 800 jobs* Chronicle Live. 6 November 2018 <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/business/business-news/plans-approved-175m-north-east-15379031>

## THE DWELLBEING PROJECT IN SHIELDSFIELD

Alison Merritt Smith of The Holy Biscuit, with Dr Julia Heslop (Newcastle APL) and Hannah Marsden (PGR Newcastle Culture, Media and Heritage), are using Participatory Action Research and social arts practice to look at issues of land, gentrification and long term community-led resilience and action.

One of the current sub-projects is the beginnings of research on a long term co-designed and co-build project which will explore some of these issues, as well as creating a 'social hub' where this can be further developed.

They are also currently working on a commission and mini-research project with an arts organisation exploring the connections between Local authorities, communities and developers and things around Section 106 agreements.

As was discussed in the workshop report (*A House or a Home*, Newcastle, June 2018) there are certainly issues around 'healthy placemaking' (and also what Stephen Pritchard has called 'placeguarding') and the dangers of gentrification and 'social cleansing' of certain areas - and what kind of ethical frameworks are used in these contexts.

## COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

The national organisations representing the community-led housing sector have agreed on what constitutes a community-led housing scheme. It can be summarised as follows:

- A requirement that meaningful community engagement and consent occurs throughout the process. The community does not necessarily have to initiate and manage the development process, or build the homes themselves, though some may do.
- The local community group or organisation owns, manages or stewards the homes and in a manner of their choosing.
- A requirement that the benefits to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity eg through an asset lock.

Most community-led housing has five main features:

- It is often small scale – in rural areas, most schemes are under 20/25 homes and some are smaller; in urban areas some much larger schemes are now being promoted and delivered.
- Schemes are usually set up and run by local people in their own communities, often with external support from housing associations, local authorities or regional and national support organisations.
- It provides genuinely affordable homes for rent, shared ownership or sale on sites that are often difficult for mainstream housing providers to develop.
- Schemes meet long-term local housing needs, by the community retaining a legal and/or financial interest in the homes provided and ensuring they are always available to local people who need them.
- Community-led housing is not for profit, involving considerable voluntary effort.

Having said that, some community-led housing schemes are based around groups of people coming together to foster community living and these may not require subsidy, meet local housing needs or be not-for-profit.

Community-led housing comes in many different forms – there are no standard, off-the-shelf approaches, but they can include the following:

- Community Land Trusts provide affordable homes for local people in need – for rent or shared ownership - by acquiring land and holding it as a community asset in perpetuity.
- Housing Co-operatives involve groups of people who provide and collectively manage, on a democratic membership basis, affordable homes for themselves as tenants or shared owners.
- Cohousing schemes involve groups of like-minded people who come together to provide self-contained, private homes for themselves, but manage their scheme together and share activities, often in a communal space.

- Tenant management organisations provide social housing tenants with collective responsibility for managing and maintaining the homes through an agreement with their council or housing association landlord.
- Self-help housing projects involve small, community-based organisations bringing empty properties back into use, often without mainstream funding and with a strong emphasis on construction skills training and support.
- Community self-build schemes involve groups of local people in housing need building homes for themselves with external support and managing the process collectively. Individual self-build is not widely regarded as community-led housing. The National Custom and Self Build Association is the national voice for self-builders. It has a Right to Build Toolkit for self-builders.<sup>125</sup>
- Community development trusts and community ‘anchors’ are independent, often well-established community-led organisations operating in a local area. They are focused on a range of economic, social and environmental issues; some are now involved in community-led housing provision.

There are overlaps between these different approaches; for example, some cohousing schemes operate as co-operatives and some community land trusts include self-build in their schemes.

In Newcastle, Cohousing upon Tyne (CoHUT) has produced a prospectus setting out an exciting vision: “Cohousing is a type of community in which residents shape and manage their living environment together.. Cohousing upon Tyne (CoHUT) is a group of like-minded Tyneside residents who want to build a cohousing community of 20-30 affordable, environmentally sustainable homes on Tyneside... CoHUT wants to build a diverse, multigenerational community in which neighbourliness can thrive and which acts as a model for low-impact, high-quality community-led housing in Tyneside.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Right to Build Toolkit*. The National Custom and Self Build Association <http://righttobuild.org.uk>

<sup>126</sup> *Cohousing upon Tyne: A prospectus*. [www.cohousing.org.uk/co-housing-upon-tyne-cohut](http://www.cohousing.org.uk/co-housing-upon-tyne-cohut) and [www.wearetown.co.uk](http://www.wearetown.co.uk). TOWN is developing Marmalade Lane, Cambridge’s first cohousing community, an exemplar for cohousing in an urban setting. This is being developed with Swedish sustainable timber housing manufacturer Trivselhus.



The prospectus goes on to emphasise the importance of affordability, mixed-income, mixed-tenure community with privately owned, rented and shared-ownership properties customised to residents' wishes. The design and construction of the properties will be environmentally low-impact and easy and attractive to walk, cycle and use public transport. There will be shared facilities – a common house, laundry and guest rooms. And these will make for a high-quality, sustainable and neighbourly environment.

“Cohousing communities tend to be socially engaged and politically active... Cohousing... can catalyse or diversify regeneration and act as a testbed for future housing in an urban environment, from sustainable construction methods to community governance.”<sup>127</sup>

### GATESHEAD INNOVATION VILLAGE (GIV)

Gateshead Innovation Village (GIV) is a live research project led by Home Group and supported by Homes England and development partner ENGIE. At GIV, Home Group is looking at new ways to disrupt the ways we do things and build the homes that are so desperately needed.

The project will identify dynamic new construction solutions, whilst the research results (conducted by BRE) will offer the sector greater confidence in utilising modern methods of construction at scale, challenging public perceptions of modular homes and enabling housing which is affordable, to be delivered at pace.

The project creates 41 homes – 16 modular houses and 19 modern methods of construction houses, alongside 6 traditional houses. It is referred to as a village for the strong identity and new community concept at the heart of the scheme. Three different housetype styles will be built, all sharing a clear language, using a range of traditional and modular construction methods to robustly compare and contrast the performance of traditional construction against different modular methods.

Home Group undertook a market assessment using three key criteria: design flexibility, affordability and ‘mortgageability’. “Five suppliers were selected from this process:

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<sup>127</sup> *Cohousing upon Tyne: A prospectus*. Op cit: *Why cohousing?*

- Premier are delivering a modular timber frame – selected due to good design flexibility for modular, and significant experience delivering;
- Simply Modular are delivering a modular timber frame – has good design flexibility and smaller modules which make for easier transportation;
- Ilke are delivering a modular light gauge steel frame – selected as it provides good affordability for modular;
- Icarus are delivering a panelised light gauge steel frame – selected as it has complete design freedom and has fewer constraints and logistical challenges than modular;
- Xella aerated concreted panelised system. This is an ACC lightweight concrete house and the components of the structure (wall panels/floors/lintels) are delivered cut to size as a modular element and need only site assembly.

The project aligns with Home Group's Design Standards which are around providing light, volume and design quality – good design drives value in Home Group developments, generating interest and increasing demand. The design quality at GIV is representative of Home Group's ambitious design approach and crucially Home Group wasn't looking for units which were overtly contemporary just because they are modular, but wanted to create homes people love to live in. We know that sustainable energy and eco-friendly housing developments are cleaner and greener for the environment, but they also play a significant role in the wellbeing of our customers. Energy services can challenge 'fuel poverty' and the misery that brings... At Gateshead Innovation Village we're uniquely positioned to test the energy performance of five different types of modular houses, versus traditional built homes, alongside energy efficient services and eco-friendly landscaping...

As part of this research project we'll look at:

- The gap between predicted and actual CO2 emissions for different types of modular homes and traditionally built houses;
- The impact that modular home off-site construction, in a controlled factory environment, can have on emission performance;

- The performance of different sustainable heating solutions, with a focus on heat storage solutions;
- The impact of landscaping on the environmental impact of housing developments;
- The contribution of zero carbon technologies like photovoltaic solar panels and their actual performance in converting solar radiation into electricity for heating and hot water.

We're developing a gas boiler-free site which will be much greener.. than the norm... We think future construction regulations will reflect this by favouring electric heating solutions, which is why we've chosen to develop our first all-electric development."<sup>128</sup>

*INVESTAGE - ETHICAL INVESTMENT AND ACTION FOR LATER LIFE.*<sup>129</sup>

*InvestAge* is currently a project under development by Age UK North Tyneside. The intention is to reach proof-of-concept stage at which point *InvestAge* will continue to grow as an independent public interest organisation.

*InvestAge* will be a unique approach to tackling and solving one of our biggest contemporary social issues – how to ensure older people have a decent later life. It will tackle fundamental social and personal issues by meeting the need for large scale accessible loan finance for later life programmes whilst building a body of voluntary expertise, resources and support for socially beneficial and innovative projects. It will achieve membership of 100,000 within five years, with an investment pool of £65 million. It will enable people to become stakeholders in a wide range of programmes that support and extend independent living and tackle problems of loneliness and isolation. It will provide low cost, shared-risk finance to housing, community, health and technology programmes as well as mobilise, at a local and national level, the skills and resources of

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<sup>128</sup> *Gateshead Innovation Village*, Home Group, 2018. For more information, please contact Simon Williams, Senior Development Manager. <https://www.homegroup.org.uk/Corporate/Development-Partners/Gateshead-Innovation-Village>

<sup>129</sup> *Investage - ethical investment and action for later life*. Summary by Richard Adams, initiator of the proposal, which is currently at an early stage of development. November 2018

those in later life. *InvestAge* will be an organisation where self-interest and the public interest converge.

*InvestAge* will tackle two particular needs in relation to later life. Firstly, the provision of loans and credit facilities at a significant scale to public interest organisations and projects which support and enrich the lives of older people. Secondly, providing a focus for older people themselves to take more control of their future and act as catalysts for engagement in later life issues.

*InvestAge*, established in the form of a multi-stakeholder cooperative under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act, will provide a route to rapidly establish a substantial pool of loan capital, democratically controlled by its investor members, to support and service certain types of later-life 'projects'. In essence, members will make investments in *InvestAge*, which in turn lends funds to programmes and projects meeting its loan criteria. There will be a commitment to a degree of risk sharing with the borrower and a non-exploitative level of interest charged on the loan. Investors will receive a modest rate of return on their investment, to be determined annually according to performance, or can opt to take zero interest. Coupled with this the Society will build up an expertise in project assessment, information exchange and business advice to support borrowers. Membership will also provide a way of offering skills and services to the sector, build an active and committed community of interest and the development of local initiatives.

*InvestAge* will be modelled in part on the Newcastle-based Shared Interest Society, a cooperative in which its 11,000 members have invested £40 million. Each year it lends to hundreds of projects around the world. In 2017 it provided £60m of credit facilities to support the Fair Trade movement. The model is simple. Investor members accept a very low rate of interest – currently 0.5% - though many waive their interest income. Borrowers pay interest somewhat below commercial rates and there is a degree of risk sharing.

In the UK there is no dedicated fund which seeks to support innovation, efficiency and best practice in programmes and projects which enrich the lives of older people. Paradoxically, the over 50s themselves constitute a disproportionately high percentage of ethical investors - the average age of the Shared Interest investor is 63. *InvestAge* will

therefore provide older people themselves with a vehicle for directing resources towards an issue which will, inevitably, be of growing importance to them. However, this will not just be an investment for older people. In 2017 over £1 billion was placed in traded funds with environmental or social goals. In March 2018 investors bought £132 million in ethical funds compared with £32 million at the same point in 2017, yet there is no dedicated ethical fund for later life issues. *InvestAge* will provide the means to build such a fund, at a scale which is commensurate with the challenge and provide people of all ages with a way of directing resources towards an issue which will, inevitably, be of increasing importance to them and their generation.

The basic financial model is relatively straightforward and has been tested over 25 years of operation in Shared Interest. Income from credit charges and bank deposit interest on funds need to exceed operating costs and provision for doubtful debts. An annual interest payment on members' investment can be declared taking into account the need to build reserves. Members can withdraw their investment on demand. The core is an accumulating, revolving loan fund managed within clearly defined lending policies which assess and limit exposure to risk and ensure that funds are always available for those wishing to withdraw their investment. Further research on the public appetite for this initiative is planned and prior to triggering the investment and loan programme, to ensure adequate support and capacity, a substantial investment threshold of – say - £5 million would need to be reached. The initial business model suggests that a fund of £25 million should be achievable within three years of launch with a ten year objective of at least £250 million.

An initial portfolio of categories of potential lending opportunities is now being identified as part of the *InvestAge* launch prospectus, probably in the first instance to projects in the North East due to the extensive range of contacts in this region. The mix of borrowers would need to demonstrate a balance of security, innovation and social need. Lending would be to projects (usually with some type of incorporated, not-for-profit structure – a charity, CIC, or RSL) with clearly defined, equitable, social benefits for older people. General categories of lending are seen as housing, social care service extension, leisure, communities, health and technology. A portfolio of varied lending programmes would be developed ranging from short-term loans (for example to support development

finance to implement an accelerated hospital-to-home service) to longer term investment in extra care or intergenerational housing projects.

The development of *InvestAge* is being fostered by Age UK North Tyneside, itself Tyneside's largest later life charity delivering a wide range of services across the area. Its planning is being managed by an experienced Steering Group comprising individuals with strong records in the later life sector and substantial achievements in local and national social entrepreneurship. The initial focus, for practical reasons, will be in the North East but with a national remit.

*InvestAge* will take a realistic approach to scaling-up but have an ambition that matches the challenge of the social problem it is seeking to address – mobilising intergenerational resources to meet the needs of a better old age for all. In addition to close association with the key statutory bodies, the NHS and local authorities, *InvestAge* will foster a close association with the major later-life charities and those strengthening community cohesion.

The feasibility of the proposed legal and administrative framework set out above has been confirmed from an independent legal adviser and from the umbrella body, Coops UK. A comprehensive proposal for review by key stakeholders is under development with a view to obtaining development funding for the necessary research and planning period, which could extend for up to 12 months. As with any financial institution building credibility and confidence is essential. Therefore, it is important that the founding members and the initial board (which is appointed by the founding members) carries weight, expertise and public confidence. Ideally, the founding members will represent institutional stakeholders in the sector and professional expertise.

### REIMAGINING RENT

In September 2018, The Young Foundation issued a press release outlining “seven new projects to the Reimagining Rent accelerator — the UK's only innovation programme

focussed on tackling issues of affordability, quality and security for vulnerable renters and those on low incomes within the private rented sector (PRS).”<sup>130</sup>

The press release described the UK’s housing market as dysfunctional and highlighted the acute problems facing the five million UK households reliant on the PRS. The seven projects are as follows, some with a particular focus, for example in London, others with wider application:

- *Ethical Rental Sector* aims to provide a reliably affordable, quality rental experience for London’s “City Makers”... where employees are routinely paid insufficiently to meet rental affordability standards. It aims to do this by growing a permanent portfolio of ‘Smart HMOs’ [houses in multiple occupation], sustainably using the capital’s large resource of under-occupied family homes...
- *GetRentr* monitors and aggregates all UK property licensing regulations, creating a live dataset covering the entire UK. The platform automatically reconciles users’ portfolios with the UK’s property licensing framework... *GetRentr* is on a mission to raise compliance and ensure that no tenant has to live in unsafe unsuitable accommodation ever again.
- *Homeshare UK* brings together people with spare rooms with people who are happy to chat and lend a hand around the house in return for affordable, sociable accommodation. ...There are 23 UK *Homeshare* delivery organisations, supporting 400 *Homeshare* matches and benefitting 800 people.
- *The Kohab* is a new intergenerational later-living company bringing old and young adults together under one roof to live in mutual support. The model works by offering younger residents discounted rent to live in The *Kohab*’s retirement schemes where they can support their older neighbours. Its mission is to create a solution to the loneliness epidemic faced by both young and old adults in the UK, as well as the age ghettos created by the approach to retirement living today.

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<sup>130</sup> *Reimagining rent*. [https://youngfoundation.org/?press\\_releases=seven-innovations-ready-to-tackle-uks-dysfunctional-housing-market](https://youngfoundation.org/?press_releases=seven-innovations-ready-to-tackle-uks-dysfunctional-housing-market)

- *Sharing Solutions* is a partnership between Crisis and the London Borough of Lewisham, working to create a model of how affordable shared housing can be provided to younger people on low incomes as part of a new mixed-tenure housing development.
- *Smart Renter* is a web app created by Housing Rights that provides renters with clear, straightforward advice and support on renting in the private sector in Northern Ireland...
- *Your Own Place CIC* is a social enterprise committed to finding new solutions to old problems and preventing youth homelessness. Its project will focus on developing the tools and methodologies needed in order to begin conversations with private landlords, exploring with them what their needs are in relation to their younger, more vulnerable and benefit claiming tenants...



## CHAPTER 8

### QUESTIONS FOR THE CHURCHES

Why should Churches be interested in new housing developments? There are two ways of answering this question: with a “because..” – because they should, because these developments are there, because Churches are in the business of love and service, because.. Or with an “in order to..” – in order to love and serve people, in order to help shape a new community, in order to help build the Kingdom of heaven on earth..

New housing developments offer their residents, their local authorities, their local communities, their Churches and faith-based organisations a unique opportunity to be different, to make a fresh start and model new, creative, inclusive ways of being and doing, living and working and re-creating.

So, is there a place for the Church in this new community-building? Sam Wells, in his recent book *Incarnational Mission. Being with the world*, summarises seven reasons identified by US community organiser Ed Chambers about the value of the Church in community – “why Churches make promising bases for broad-based organising:

- They invariably own their own building with a presentation area and dialogue area, breakout spaces and kitchen facilities.
- They have at least one full- or part-time person trained in leadership development, in governance, oversight and practical ministry roles.
- They have a fundraising system for internal expenses and external donations.
- They have a network of volunteers who offer their time, experience, skills and personal connections.
- They have grassroots membership and deep knowledge of, and respect from, their communities. They are among the very few places where different socioeconomic groups regularly and enthusiastically interact.
- They are concerned for and talk about the wellbeing of their communities.

- And they are comfortable with (at least their own language of) values, visions and goals.”<sup>131</sup>

The reference to Chambers’ ideas relates primarily to the USA, though clearly some of the seven reasons fit well with British Churches.

## RESILIENCE IN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Paul Bickley of Theos, in his study of the resilience of local communities in the North East (also supported by the William Leech Research Fellowship) *People, Place and Purpose: Churches and Neighbourhood Resilience in the North East*, emphasises the importance of physical places of gathering “for neighbourhood resilience. There is concern that many deprived areas are losing such spaces.”<sup>132</sup> Bickley goes further, stating that “One of the key contributions Churches can make to neighbourhood resilience is a public space. Simply having buildings is not enough, however; they have to be ‘enacted’ in the right way.”<sup>133</sup>

At the launch of Theos’ resilience report in November 2018, one of the speakers, Julia Unwin, former Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, spoke of the howl of rage and despair in the North East and other deprived communities in the UK so graphically expressed by the vote in favour of Brexit. She compared “If only..” – if only we could get back to the good old days of mining and manufacturing and full employment - with “What if?” – what if things really could be different, and if we could help shape that

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<sup>131</sup> *Incarnational Mission. Being with the world.* Sam Wells. Canterbury Press 2018, pp 206, 207. Ed Chambers was one of the early community organisers in the US, following Saul Alinsky. “He did not invent community organizing as we know it in America—that was Alinsky’s achievement—but he made it professional and permanent, a purposeful career rather than a sacrificial calling. Under Chambers’ leadership, the I.A.F. not only grew throughout the United States—taking on issues of housing, public education, environmental racism, living wages, and gun violence—but also opened branches in England, Germany, and South Africa. Chambers lived long enough to see a community organizer be elected President.” See <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/edward-chambers-community-organizing-unforgiving-hero>

<sup>132</sup> *People, Place and Purpose: Churches and Neighbourhood Resilience in the North East.* Paul Bickley, Theos 2018, p11.

<sup>133</sup> Bickley. Op cit p 73.

difference for good? She, like Sam Wells, emphasised the importance of connecting people. “Friendship”, she said, “is the key to social capital.”

Bickley’s study looks at the importance of social, physical and spiritual capital and focuses on existing communities in the North East (looking in depth at three places, Byker, Shildon and North Ormesby), all places with important signs of hope but all suffering from long term problems of poverty, deprivation, unemployment, poor health, crime, vandalism and low aspiration (“If aspiration was a belief in the future with purpose, there was also a sense that people couldn’t make a difference in the present.”<sup>134</sup>)

Byker, an inner city ward in Newcastle, was substantially redeveloped in the 1960s but has become an area facing many daunting challenges. Shildon is a town with a proud history as a pioneering railway town – but the railway works closed in 1984. And North Ormesby, in Middlesbrough, is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘new town’ close to the steel and manufacturing industries along the Tees, which are no longer there.

Bickley quotes theologian David Ford, for whom “death and resurrection are the paradigmatic example of this multiple overwhelming in the Christian faith – and determinative of Christian mission and action... Churches in our neighbourhoods are consciously opposing pessimism, hopelessness, powerlessness and exclusion, weaving celebration and gratitude into the life of their community. They are helping people hope.”<sup>135</sup>

Tim Gorringer, in *A Theology of the Built Environment*, describes the post-War New Towns as “planted communities” – “unlike ‘organic communities’ which sprang up to meet particular needs, whether of trade, railway building, mining, fishing, or farming. These needs gave people common tasks and purposes which generated intense pride and commitment. The problem of the New Towns is the problem of the suburb – leisure, refuge, escape is the purpose, and this is inadequate to generate community”.<sup>136</sup>

Is it ‘space’ (which can mean freedom – or isolation) that we long for, or ‘place’ (with which we can identify and where we belong)? Jill Shook, in her Bakke Graduate University dissertation on *A Theology of Housing*, refers to ‘space’ and ‘place’ in Walter

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<sup>134</sup> Bickley. Op cit p 89

<sup>135</sup> Bickley Op cit pp 96, 97

<sup>136</sup> Gorringer. Op cit p 186.

Breuggemann's *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. For Breuggemann she says, the land is the central motif of the Old Testament, "land, a specific real estate invested with powerful promises and with strategic arrangements for God's presence in that place. Once Breuggemann saw this, he saw Israel moving from landlessness (wilderness and exile) to yearning for and obtaining landed-ness, 'either as possession of the land, an anticipation of the land or grief about loss of the land.'"<sup>137</sup>

So my question is this: how can these ideas of resilience and hope and yearning for identity and belonging apply to new housing developments? And, further, what constitutes good news for residents moving into and living in new areas?

As I said above, new housing areas offer a unique opportunity to be different, to make a fresh start and model new, creative, inclusive ways of being and doing, living and working and re-creating.

## A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN EVERY COMMUNITY

I referred in Chapter 1 to the bold statement on the home page (till the second week of January 2019) of The Church of England's website, *A Christian presence in every community*,<sup>138</sup> but it is hard to know exactly what that means. It could be a rather broad but vacuous statement that everywhere comes within the physical boundaries of an Anglican parish – handy for being married or buried. Or it could be aspirational – our vision is for a Christian presence to be manifested in every community. I think it is probably just a rather catchy slogan. But it does raise important questions. How is such a presence to be grown and nurtured? And what might it actually look like in new housing developments?

I have been doing some work for the last three years in Houghton Regis, a small town in Central Bedfordshire whose population will more than double in the next 15 years as nearly 10,000 homes are built just below a new link road from the A5 to the M1. The developing thinking of a group of people from the Churches – about how to engage with

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<sup>137</sup> *A Theology of Housing as stewardship and mission, based on making housing happen: faith based affordable housing models*. Jill Shook, Bakke Graduate University, Dallas, Texas, June 2007, p 32. She quotes Walter Breuggemann's *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Fortress Press (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) 2002, p xi

<sup>138</sup> Church of England website. Op cit <https://www.churchofengland.org>

the new residents as they move into the homes being built – has focused on two specific aspects: the appointment, by the Churches, of a pioneer community worker who will live in one of the new houses, and the possibility of building and running a community centre on one of the two main sites being developed.

It is envisaged that, in the early days, a small group of practising Christians will gather around the pioneer and become an embryonic *missional community* - defined as a group of people, about the size of an extended family, who are united through Christian community around a common service and witness in and to a particular neighbourhood. While not initially living in the area, some are likely to want to move into the new community as homes become available.

This is how we have been modelling our thinking and developing our vision in Houghton Regis. We envisage the pioneer as being someone who will build relationships and nurture friendships, keeping an ear close to the ground, listening for issues as they emerge and looking for signs of God's Kingdom in the new community. There is no template for this work – it is risky, demanding, exciting and insecure, and the pioneer should be under no illusions about this. This work is about *Good News* – fresh, relevant, meaningful and challenging.

He or she will want to undergird everything being done in prayer and will encourage the missional community of people living in or near the new housing to meet for fellowship and support. They will be encouraged to play an active role in befriending their new neighbours and helping to create a viable and cohesive community.

Another model which may be helpful to draw on is the medieval *monastic community*, through which much of Europe was evangelised in the Middle Ages. At their best, the Benedictines, the Cistercians, the Franciscans and other religious orders existed to love and to serve – providing hospitality, education, work, refreshment, nurture, counselling and care. The lives of the members of these communities were based around a framework of prayer, study and labour, founded on their commitment to God and service of people of all ages and conditions.

Translating the model into today's context of a new housing development, a small team of paid staff and local volunteers could evolve, providing a welcoming presence and, if possible and appropriate, opening and running a community space – it could initially be

in one of the houses just built or in a portacabin - which can respond to some of the social and other needs of the new residents. It will, however, be essential not to become 'place-bound'. The pioneer will need to be around and about, frequently visible in the developing neighbourhoods and bumping into people in the streets, the shops and other places. If there is to be a school, the pioneer should quickly become involved.

The pioneer is there from the beginning in the name of Jesus Christ and the local Churches, with the task of helping to build *a vibrant, thriving and inclusive community* (see above, Chapter 1). Both the missional and monastic models mean in this context that, at the heart of all that is being offered, a Christian community is living out a life of love and service, within a disciplined framework of prayer and fellowship. Around the paid staff will begin to cluster other local people whose vocation is to become part of this community, with varying degrees of commitment in terms of what they are able to offer. In due course, an emerging group of volunteers will increasingly share in the developing work – whose primary focus is love and service of their new neighbours.

So, the first phase of the work will be about *being around*, meeting, greeting, befriending, working with and responding to needs which people identify and articulate, perhaps organising opportunities for coming together - a welcoming presence for the new housing area which facilitates the building of community for all residents, service providers and developers.

In the case of this work in Houghton Regis, considerable progress has been made in securing funding from the Churches for the pioneer community worker post. The next phase will have a specific focus on developing a community centre in or beside the retail area. The Churches have been working with the local authority and others for the past four years to take forward this idea of a community centre which will become, it is hoped, a real focal point – a 'centre of community'.

A powerful inspiration for our Houghton Regis work has been the Finchampstead Baptist Church in the Borough of Wokingham. This is a Church whose congregation went from 25, when the vision for a new community centre was first conceived, to over 400 a decade later. Of the 3,500 people per week who come to the centre (which has a full size sports hall, a library, a Children's Centre, a community café, meeting space, play areas and other facilities), those who gather for Church on Sundays are, more than any of the

other groups, drawn mainly from the local community. The vision for its community centre - encapsulated in the simple but powerful statement: *The primary purpose of the building is to enable God to show love to the community* - is quite different to what people might normally expect of a Church. What Finchampstead Baptist Church provides has grown directly out of extensive community consultation undertaken by the Church, building on good relationships established over many years. And, of course, a huge vision and long term commitment.<sup>139</sup>

The challenge, then, in larger areas of new housing is not just to set up another Church, however welcoming, but to create a community for whom building the Kingdom of God, manifested through love and service, is the ultimate purpose. It goes without saying, therefore, that this will need extensive resourcing. It will not be able to pay for itself in the first few years. But the emerging Christian community will be one which authentically reflects a new, diverse, indigenous community.

Sam Wells describes four gifts that congregations can bring to local communities: “a sense that all are connected and called to serve one another (leading to volunteering); rituals which help communities process change, notably coming of age and grieving; a sense of coherence or meaning that enables communities to hope; and a perception of a wider spectrum of wealth than simply money, commodities and educated people.”<sup>140</sup>

Wells goes on to suggest “Asset Mapping” as a way of “enabling a community to establish its often unarticulated resources so as to perceive patterns and connect initiatives and thus release power. It recognises that innovation largely arises from making connections between elements not previously linked..”

He uses as an example an American congregation who put together young oil workers seeking accommodation with seniors who had space in their homes, leading to a Home Share Program.<sup>141</sup>

This raises, for Church and society in the UK, an issue of critical significance – the imbalance between the generations in terms of housing and home ownership, the baby Boomers versus Generation Rent. As I have said earlier, the reluctance of housebuilders

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<sup>139</sup> *Houghton Regis Strategy Report*, Chris Beales. July 2016. p15

<sup>140</sup> Wells. Op cit p207

<sup>141</sup> Wells. Op cit p210

to construct bungalows, smaller homes or suitable accommodation into which older people can downsize is exacerbating a problem which everyone knows is growing all the time.

The Letwin Review has recommended greater diversity in new housing developments, highlighting particular groups for whom far more adequate provision must be made: "Housing diversity includes housing of differing type, size and style, design and tenure mix. It also includes housing sold or let to specific groups, such as older people's housing..."<sup>142</sup>

## SO WHAT FOR THE CHURCH?

Churches and faith communities have long played a significant role in addressing housing and homelessness and in the provision of accommodation, for example through Methodist Homes for the Aged, ancient establishments like Greatham Hospital and Sherburn Hospital in the North East, boarding schools, children's homes (the Children's Society was originally the Church of England Children's Society), the Catholic Housing Aid Society and the work of St Martin in the Fields with homeless people, not only in London but around the country.<sup>143</sup>

These institutions and programmes have always recognised the essential human need not just for a roof over our heads but for the basic right to a safe, secure and supportive place to live.

But the Christian imperative goes further. "Justice is essential to community, as the prophets of Israel always maintained. Justice... was what ensured that all Israelites had their rightful share in the land which was gifted to all."<sup>144</sup> Justice demands the pursuit of equality for all, so "a society which contains within it sharp inequalities in life chances

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<sup>142</sup> Letwin Op cit p13

<sup>143</sup> St Martin in the Fields, London. <https://www.smitfc.org> The Vicar's Relief Fund helps homeless and vulnerably housed people through small-sum, rapid response grants to prevent eviction, access accommodation or set up home. Grants are given to individuals across the UK through frontline workers. The Frontline Network exists to harness the ideas, energy and experience of those at the frontline working with homeless and vulnerably housed people, by building relationships, sharing best practice, developing solutions and communicating the experience and views of the frontline.

<sup>144</sup> Gorringe. Op cit pp 188, 189.



and outcomes will be unstable.”<sup>145</sup> Gorringer refers to Jurgen Moltmann’s view that “the protected life of gated communities is pleasant but inhuman whilst the unprotected life of the slums is unpleasant but has more potential for human closeness and community.”<sup>146</sup>

Gorringer also discusses what he calls “the aesthetic of community”, stating that people “ensoul not only their houses but the settlements in which they dwell. At the same time, their settlements shape their souls.”<sup>147</sup>

One of the words which seems to crop up so often in conversations with people living in an area of new housing is that the place feels a bit “soulless”. In the past, great efforts were made to create opportunities for people to meet each other and foster a sense of belonging. Newton Aycliffe and Cramlington, described above in Chapter 3, demonstrate such efforts. The problem facing many people today is that both partners in a family are out at work and their workplace is often a car ride or train journey away from their home. So what does this mean in relation to ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ – surely a concern which people of faith care deeply about?

Perhaps more than any other institutions or organisations in society, Churches and faith groups bring together a rich mix of people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnic groups and interests. This may not be true in every congregation or local group and divisions and distinctions remain in many places. But the possibility of creating and sustaining intergenerational, inclusive groups has been amply proved in many situations. Having said that, Church congregations are, without doubt, communities to which older people belong and feel valued, often playing significant roles as leaders and volunteers, with a strong ethos of service and sacrifice. This is of immense significance, not only to them but to thousands of groups and millions of people across the country.

In terms of community involvement, the Cinnamon Faith Action Audit 2016 provides evidence that the value of the time given by Church and faith groups to their communities each year in the UK “is worth £3 billion, which means 47 million times a year someone is being helped.” The Cinnamon research is the most comprehensive of its kind ever undertaken. It approached 6,537 churches and faith groups in 87 villages, towns and

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<sup>145</sup> Gorringer. Op cit p189.

<sup>146</sup> Gorringer. Op cit p189.

<sup>147</sup> Gorringer. Op cit p216.

cities across the UK and received a 46% respondent rate. Cinnamon expects this research will “boost the confidence of both the Church about what it is already doing and also civic organisations such as the local authority and police who can see the value of what the Church and other faith groups contribute to community.”<sup>148</sup>

*Abide in Me* is a recent report which “offers a national framework for new and renewed Catholic social action, in relation to housing, planning and land in England and Wales, over the next 10-12 years... The holding of land, the making of homes, and the sacred duty of hospitality, have ancient antecedents as pastoral and prophetic concerns.”<sup>149</sup>

Angus Ritchie, one of the contributors, refers to the teaching of the Catholic Church about the powers of the State, which should be organised “so as to ensure ‘the provision of essential services to all, some of which are at the same time human rights: food, housing, work, education and access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression and the protection of religious freedom.’”<sup>150</sup>

I warm to the conclusions of the report, especially this paragraph, which describes how the Catholic Church, alongside other religious traditions, can play a major role in public education about housing, planning and land.

“Churches can offer membership in a meaningful community, engender a responsibility towards family and others, promote positive beliefs and behaviour and form sustainable aspirations for housing. The Church can play a positive role in encouraging young people, families and communities to prepare earlier for longer life expectancy and a good quality of later life. The Church’s understanding of human ecology and development can shape truly effective policy making.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Cinnamon Faith Action Audit* 2016. <https://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/cinnamon-faith-action-audit/>

<sup>149</sup> *Abide in Me. Catholic Social Thought and Action on Housing Challenges in England and Wales, 2018 to 2030*. Caritas and The Centre for Theology and Community, November 2018. “This report summarises the results of collaboration between Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) and the Centre for Theology and Community (CTC). The Catholic and Anglican traditions have, at different periods in English and Welsh history, been central in developing land and settlements. Our two organisations’ work together is another example of hopeful witness to a deeper ecclesial union for which many long.” p4

<sup>150</sup> *Abide in Me*. Op cit p11, quoting from *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 166

<sup>151</sup> *Abide in Me*. Op cit p45

And, finally, another Catholic perspective: “The uplift in land values when planning permission is given should facilitate imaginative solutions. A different planning framework might allow developers to engage with local communities... and require the former to compensate the latter for any loss of environmental amenities. That in itself could lead to a process of constructive engagement, rather than the conflict our current systems promote, leading to developments that would be more environmentally friendly – for example by the creation of endowed nature reserves... The costs of self-interested opposition to development should be understood. They manifest themselves in problems that have long been the focus of Catholic Social Teaching: homelessness, poverty, and increased inequality of income and wealth.

High housing costs prevent families from building up savings and they force many people to rely on charity and welfare benefits. High housing costs also prevent families from ever having a place of their own, and putting down roots in the local community.”<sup>152</sup>

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION & CHURCH SCHOOLS

In February 2018, I was asked to facilitate a two day residential in York of the Anglican Association of Directors of Education (AADE) – responsible for a quarter of the nation’s schools. I wrote up my reflections afterwards – at the AADE’s request – and commented as follows on the Government’s SIAMS Evaluation Schedule, which sets out the expectations for the conduct of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican, Methodist and Ecumenical Schools (SIAMS) under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005:<sup>153</sup>

“..we should expect Church schools, as *distinctively and recognisably Christian institutions*, to exhibit the very characteristics of Church, but with some distinctive and recognisable features –

- they are lay led;

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<sup>152</sup> *How to solve the British housing crisis*. Philip Booth, The Tablet. 17 January 2019

<sup>153</sup> The SIAMS Evaluation Schedule sets out the expectations for the conduct of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican, Methodist and Ecumenical Schools under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and provides a process for evaluating the extent to which Church schools are '*distinctively and recognisably Christian institutions*' (Dearing 2001).

- they believe in the need for continuous, high quality staff development and training and require (without exception) the participation of all staff;
- they are generous, inclusive, patient and forgiving. Now, more than ever before, they are becoming open to people of all backgrounds and faiths;
- they are not dogmatic, sectarian or divisive in terms of theology and churchmanship – in fact they are not allowed to be. In this sense, they epitomise Christian Unity in ways many parishes, clergy and congregations do not;
- they respect the New Testament exhortations (in Romans 13 and Titus 3, for example) to behave responsibly and respect the Law, whilst also being clear that they are called to nurture young people in habits and characteristics which will be of benefit not only to themselves but to their communities and the whole of society (Romans 12:2 “be not conformed.. be transformed..”);
- they aim for the highest standards and are rigorously monitored and called to account by Church and Government;
- they are not afraid to take tough decisions – in fact they have to do so. Poor teaching has to be addressed or the whole school is put at risk;
- young people outnumber adults – and, as they learn about and practise their faith, they are demonstrably applying Jesus’ insistence that adults need to become more childlike to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18).

There is something important about this childlike-ness. In Church schools, RE is, by definition, taken very seriously. It is a core legal requirement and distinctive feature. Good RE is not propaganda but rigorously theological. Its purpose is to enable young people to grasp the essence, meaning and purpose of religion and faith. Religions and faiths, actually. For a proper and generous understanding of the great world religions is part of the development of a rounded character and a mature approach to faith and life.

Contrast this with the lack of theological rigour and understanding to be found in so many congregations, whose members have been ill-served with short sermons, too often barely prepared, for much of their lives – this being the only theological teaching they receive.

There is another striking difference in the kind of theological education Church schools provide – through assemblies, RE and teacher-taught classes - compared with what people receive in many of our Churches. Church of England schools are obliged, to a considerable degree, to provide theological content which is not subjected to the filters or controls of ecclesiastical party or tradition.”<sup>154</sup>

I believe that the importance of a new school in a new housing development cannot be under-estimated. A school provides the glue to building a good community, with children quickly making friends and parents meeting one another at the school gates and through their children. So the strategic contribution of the Churches in education needs to be reinforced.

In the Anglican Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle, this is exactly the approach being adopted – and, furthermore, Anglican Church schools in the North East are no longer reserving places for the children of Churchgoing families, a practice which has in some cases, reinforced the idea that, if you attend Church for six months (and make sure you sign the form to prove it), your child will be entitled to a place. There is also a growing policy of developing schools which can provide facilities for wider community use. This is very positive and encouraging.

Anglican schools are mainly primaries (nearly 4,500 across England and Wales), though there are 200 secondary schools. Catholic Schools (over 2,300 primary and secondary schools) operate on a different basis, with baptized Catholic children having priority though other children are still welcome. There are many more Catholic secondary schools, over 420, than there are Anglican secondaries.

Faith schools, therefore, are well placed to make a real and lasting contribution to the wellbeing of society, with particular opportunities in relation to new housing developments. With integrated, affordable, sustainable community facilities, they can become pivotal to the building of welcoming, supportive neighbourhoods where people love to live.

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<sup>154</sup> *One Body or a Room Full of Elbows?* Anglican Association of Directors of Education (AADE) Residential, February 2018. Chris Beales, June 2018. *Unpublished*.

## THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

“The Church Commissioners exist to support the work and mission of the Church of England today and for future generations, helping it to remain a Christian presence in every community. We manage an £8.3bn investment fund in a responsible and ethical way, using the money we make from our investments to contribute towards the cost of mission projects, dioceses in low-income areas, bishops, cathedrals, and pensions.”<sup>155</sup>

The Church Commissioners are one of the country’s biggest landowners, with 100,000 acres of largely tenanted land, plus a mixture of residential and commercial property. With regard to their land and mineral holdings, at any one time, 6,000 acres have strategic or development potential – 97% of it for residential use. Interestingly, half the land owned has been purchased in the last 50 years.

The Church Commissioners also invest in renewables and holds considerable overseas investments. They have 30 working quarries and over 500,000 acres of minerals. Much of their land and mineral holdings are in the North East.

In discussion with senior staff, I was interested to learn that most dioceses nowadays do not want a new Church building but are often keen to be able to have a community facility (which may also be used for worship). In Hereford, for example, 1,200 homes are being developed on Church Commissioners’ land and the Church Commissioners will help facilitate a community centre which can also be used by the Church.

In Ashford, Kent, where planning permission has been obtained for 1,100 homes, the local authority proposed a place of worship and community centre, but the Diocese of Rochester preferred a different approach. The Church Commissioners agreed to purchase a house jointly with the Diocese, to provide accommodation for a priest (with the Church Commissioners leasing its half at a peppercorn rate to the Diocese). The Church Commissioners also assisted the Diocese in bidding for a Primary Free School, though in the end another Academy Trust was the successful bidder.

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<sup>155</sup> The Church Commissioners. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/church-commissioners>

In the North East, the Church Commissioners own a significant amount of land (9,000 acres in a portfolio across the country of 100,000 acres). In South Tyneside, for example, over 80 acres are owned. The Church Commissioners are currently in discussion with the Council about the need for flood relief on the coast at Cleadon. There are various other sites in the region where land owned by the Church Commissioners is being developed for housing, for example:

- Bishop Auckland, Brack Farm: Keepmoat are building 300 homes;
- Land at Sherburn Village: Persimmon are building 120 homes;
- Coxhoe: a small site is being developed;
- Newton Aycliffe – a joint venture with Durham County Council is being discussed regarding land in the area;
- Ryhope: 450 homes are being built;
- Stockton: land near Wynyard Hall is being developed.

The Church Commissioners acknowledge that their reputation in the North East has not always been positive. But they recognise the huge economic challenges in the region and want to play a positive role. They will often do the planning application and then sell a site on to a developer. For larger sites of over 1,000 homes, they will sometimes enter into joint ventures with developers.

The issue that keeps arising is to do with their charitable objects, which are very tightly drawn legally. They are required to get best value for their assets in order to benefit their beneficiaries – and this has been a bone of contention for many years.

In 1991 the then Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, challenged the Church Commissioners in court over their investment policy, arguing that the Church Commissioners “in exercising their investment powers were obliged to have regard to the object of promoting the Christian faith and thus to apply ethical consideration to their choice of investment.”

The Vice-Chancellor considering that case summed up the responsibilities of charities with regard to investment very succinctly: “Most charities need money; and the more of it there is available the more the trustees can seek to accomplish.”<sup>156</sup>

The author of the Charity Commission’s 2014 review of the case, Stephen Roberts, concluded a brief article about it by observing the move towards encouraging more social responsibility generally. He referred to the Companies Act 2006 and highlighted its requirement on company and charity directors and trustees to have regard to “the impact of the company’s operations on the community and the environment” and “the desirability of the company maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct”.<sup>157</sup>

So is there any room for movement? The Bishop of Oxford’s challenge concerned the witness of the Church in society. In the original judgment, there was a degree of indecisiveness which meant that the status quo would persist:

“In bringing these proceedings the Bishop of Oxford and his colleagues are actuated by the highest moral concern. But, as I have sought to show, the approach they wish the Commissioners to adopt to investment decisions would involve a departure by the Commissioners from their legal obligations. Whether such a departure would or would not be desirable is, of course, not an issue in these proceedings. That is a matter to be pursued, if at all, elsewhere than in this court.”<sup>158</sup>

With regard to the North East, where the Church Commissioners have such substantial land and mineral holdings, an important dialogue has started between the Church Commissioners’ Head of Strategic Land Investment, John Weir, and senior directors of some of the country’s volume housebuilders, local authority planners, landowners, Church representatives from the Anglican Dioceses of Newcastle, Durham and York, Durham Cathedral (who own land in the North East), RIBA and others – at a meeting on 11 January 2019 which I organised. Discussion was frank and wide-ranging and it became clear that such a gathering had not happened before and needed repeating. Also, all present, coming from their different perspectives and pressures, really

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<sup>156</sup> *Changing attitudes to ethical investment?* Stephen Roberts, Head of Legal Policy and Litigation at the Charity Commission. May 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/changing-attitudes-to-ethical-investment>

<sup>157</sup> Roberts. Op cit <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/changing-attitudes-to-ethical-investment>

<sup>158</sup> *Bishop of Oxford and others –v- Church Commissioners for England 1991*. Text of the Judgment. The Vice-Chancellor. 1991. p10



did want to build good quality housing and create viable, attractive communities where people want to live. A second gathering will be held in the spring.

As stated above, there is limited scope for the Church Commissioners to do more than what they are legally required to do. However, the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England is able to advise the Church Commissioners on the way in which their income and assets are distributed. Currently, the new thrust of what the Church of England calls *Strategic Development Funding*<sup>159</sup> is supported very substantially by the Church Commissioners.

In the North East, Durham Diocese was awarded three years' funding of £800,000 in 2016 for *Equipping Key Leaders for Mission* – “The diocese has identified a need for intentional investment in leadership development for clergy and laity in order to address its three strategic priority areas: growth, children and young people, and poverty. A major programme, *Missional Leadership for Growth*, will be delivered.”

Newcastle Diocese's programme (The total cost of the project is £4.659m towards which £2.557m of *Strategic Development Funding* was awarded in June 2018) is called *Revitalising ministry in the heart of the city* and focuses on developing a Resource Church in the heart of Newcastle revitalising mission by engaging primarily with students and city workers. The Diocese of York has yet to submit an application for funding.

The *Strategic Development Funding* submissions from across the country all spell out in detail the growth targets Dioceses aspire to. The emphasis is very much on discipleship and Church growth (as measured by the number, size and impact of worshipping communities). This is fine. But it is not enough to establish a meaningful Christian presence in every community, at least not the kind of presence which makes a real impact in the lives of people and their communities.

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<sup>159</sup> *Strategic Development Funding Summary of projects funded*. July 2018. See *Transformational Work Programmes* - <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/diocesan-resources/funding-mission-and-growth/strategic-development-funding>

## INCARNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

With regard to new housing developments, my own view is that there must be a clear emphasis on serving new residents in ways which are helpful and meaningful (what they perceive to be 'Good News'). From the Church's perspective, the deployment of personnel is an essential aspect of the work to be done.

Some excellent work in new housing areas has been described by Baptist ministers Penny Marsh (about her work in the Royal Docks in London) and Ali Boulton (working in Swindon). Their Grove Book, *Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas*, begins with an overview of the new housing agenda and quotes research into the value of having a pioneer minister when trying to create community. The underlying mission principles are listed, including an incarnational approach, being a 'blessing to the community' and being open to *not* having an agenda.<sup>160</sup>

A Christian leader, with strong relationships with both the historic denominations and the new Churches, has commented that "most Church planting initiatives have been carried out without the kind of in-depth research or relationships with local authorities which lie at the heart of Chris' research. This has been a major weakness of recent Church planting work. Churches are well aware of the daunting task they face in addressing how they can play a significant role in creating and sustaining new communities. Relationships with planners and developers have been built and they are now beginning to see what the Churches can offer in terms of 'community-building.'"<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Pioneer Ministry in New Housing Areas. Personal Reflections and a Practical Guide*. Grove Books, Ev 113, 2016. See also Churches Together in England's *New Housing Areas* group, which helps Churches understand and engage effectively with the challenge of new housing areas.

[https://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/44993/Home/Resources/New\\_Housing\\_Areas/New\\_Housing\\_Areas.aspx](https://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/44993/Home/Resources/New_Housing_Areas/New_Housing_Areas.aspx)

<sup>161</sup> Unnamed commentator on the research being conducted by Chris Beales

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSIONS

Given the volatility of Government and our nation's future in relation to the European Union, the policies and programmes described in earlier chapters may not work out quite as might have been hoped for or expected. But, whoever may be in Government in the coming years, the supply of housing will remain, without doubt, a core issue for our country and the construction of new homes will continue to be a national priority.

I recognise that there are some areas of huge relevance and concern which I have not addressed – for example the whole question of land ownership, or the fragility of the eco-system and how houses can and should be designed to maximise energy efficiency and minimise our carbon footprint.

The focus of my research has been very specific – new housing developments. I have not looked in depth at issues of homelessness or urban and suburban life, or rural housing, or existing former Council housing estates, or the large numbers of empty houses in some localities. I have not addressed the ethical issues arising from the sale of Council housing and housing association properties.

But my focus on new housing developments has, of course, required a wider look at housing policies and practices. And I have become convinced that there is a unique opportunity in many of these new housing developments to create new, viable, integrated, functioning neighbourhoods and communities – if only we can work together, across the political divides, across the different perceptions and perspectives of community, council and corporate, across the gaps between public (planners), private (developers) and local residents to find viable, affordable, sustainable ways forward.

My report is an attempt to highlight some of the current issues facing us in building new homes and communities. Many of the people and organisations I have referred to, including Government, have policies, programmes and priorities to address these issues.

There is no simple way forward to which all can subscribe. In my introduction, I quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury's ideas about re-imagining housing – and his

conviction that “Housing exists as a basis for community and community exists for human flourishing.”<sup>162</sup>

So there are some key principles which I wish to emphasise – and their application in larger new housing developments (of 500+ homes) could begin to move us in the right direction, creating not just houses but homes and good, welcoming communities for the next century.

- In each new community, a mixed, integrated, diversified approach to housing should be a basic starting point.
- But to make the mix really work, there needs to be purposeful community-building (with the deployment of community workers to help make this a reality) and the provision of spaces for people to meet, share and celebrate together.
- Where a new school is to be built, it should be started at an early stage of the development and facilities for community use should be an integral part of the design. Church schools, open to all, should be in the forefront of new, imaginative forms of teaching, learning and community-building.
- Local, easily accessed health facilities should be provided and GPs and their colleagues involved in providing programmes of preventative healthcare in schools and local centres.
- Opportunities for local training, employment and business development should be a core part of community design, with particular emphasis on the development and application of new technologies.
- Community and voluntary organisations should be nurtured and encouraged, with Churches and faith communities playing a full part in the process of community building. Their considerable resources, human, financial, buildings and services, should be purposefully deployed to love and serve their neighbours and neighbourhoods.

With hundreds of years of engagement in the villages, towns and cities of the country, with human, financial and physical resources within easy reach of every new development

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<sup>162</sup> Welby. Op cit p 128

– the nearest we can get to a Christian presence in every community – the Churches are ideally placed to provide a transformational service in new housing developments across the nation. This will require a new kind of voluntarism, a redeployment of resources and a new commitment to training not just of clergy but of lay pioneers, ministers, community workers and activists with a vocation to live and serve in these new communities.

It will require the hard work of building relationships with disparate groups and encouraging them to share the big vision needed, which is not just about accommodating people in houses, but purposefully planning for and enacting the building of ‘good community’. The challenge to Church and society was stated boldly in William Blake’s famous poem, composed just over 200 years ago and described by many people as England’s unofficial national anthem:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand:  
Till we have built Jerusalem,  
In England’s green & pleasant Land.<sup>163</sup>

The Churches, their organisations, their agencies and networks are significant landowners and developers not just of ‘things’ but of people and communities. If ‘Christian Hope’ is to have real meaning and substance in relation to housing and community – and especially new housing developments - it must be rooted, earthed, realised, incarnated in practical, purposeful action. The time has come to put community development (in all its meanings) at the heart of Christian life and witness.

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<sup>163</sup> *And did those feet in ancient time* is a poem by William Blake from the preface to his epic *Milton: A Poem in Two Books*, composed in 1804. The poem is better known as the hymn *Jerusalem*, with music written by Sir Hubert Parry in 1916.

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