



Place, Pace and Productivity: Delivering Garden Communities

Roundtable Discussion Paper



LDĀ DESIGN



Garden Villages Roundtable

17th September, London

The role of UK Business Council for Sustainable Development

Technical innovation, manufacturing, modern methods of construction, renewable energy, smart construction and design... our overriding motivation as an organisation is to pull together the many different industry solutions that collectively deliver sustainable development.

This country needs more attractive, liveable and productive places sustained by resilient infrastructure and technology to achieve this. Doing so sustainably not only makes good economic sense, it is an investment in all of our futures.



This discussion paper follows on from a roundtable hosted by Burges Salmon designed to help shape the garden villages programme, ensuring it becomes an enabler of sustainable development across all sections of the economy. The event was convened by the UK Business Council for Sustainable Development (UKBCSD), a champion of sustainable development with a wider strategy for harnessing industry sector innovation to promote a sustainable Britain.

The Government's latest housing initiative to spark new demand and higher quality design in the housing market attracted colleagues from national and local government, together with representatives from the private sector, to discuss the challenges ahead for delivering something very different from traditional housebuilding programmes.

Opportunities to deliver more than 100,000 new homes over the next decade were showcased by Homes England, Cornwall, Derby City, North Staffordshire and Wychavon Councils, as well as the approaches they would take to encourage local communities to sanction large-scale development on or close to their market towns and villages.

After Brexit, the building of new homes can be considered the government's next strategic investment priority. MHCLG's agency, Homes England's objectives for garden villages revolve around significant increases in money, land, people and power. The Letwin Review identifies a massive undersupply; the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Growth Corridor and the South East, an opportunity.

With £44 billion spend, 8,000 hectares of land and £1 billion budget for new land, the urgency for a new way of enabling housing delivery is aspirational. Chaired by Jackie Sadek of UK Regeneration, challenges arising from this national position ranged from "how do we get the growth we need" to "how should we serve the new communities we are planning for".

The national programmes for delivering infrastructure and growth make more accountable the role of cross-border governance and formalised alliances; the prize of securing devolved capital programmes (money) and freeing up of the regulatory framework (powers), still makes the transition for some local authorities, fresh to the demands of scale and pace warranted in transformational programmes, a challenging one.

Our thanks to the following organisations for contributing to this event:

*Anglian Water
Cornwall Council
Derby City Council
Design Council
Elaine Mellish
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Homes England
LDA Design
North Staffordshire
ProLogis
Town and Country Planning Association
UK Regeneration
Wychavon District Council*

Hosted by:



Executive Summary

Garden communities have captured the imagination of local authorities and developers alike. They promise places where people can thrive. The challenge is to make sure we move forward with common purpose, taking the necessary steps to deliver on this promise.

UKBCSD sees garden communities as a forerunner to the UK's new towns with a vital part to play in the UK's Industrial Strategy. Garden communities are much more than a refreshed housebuilding programme and their focus should not be limited to responding to the needs of the development sector.

UKBCSD seeks to join the dots between national priorities, with a commitment to sustainable delivery. Delivery is rarely talked about through the planning and development process and is often conflated with viability. The aspiration is that garden communities are forward-looking and successful with delivery processes making use of available powers. Achieving this will be challenging for many planners, designers and developers. It is a challenge that has to be met.

We are on a journey. The roundtable discussion confirmed the scale of opportunity for garden communities, the challenges inherent in implementation, and the practical steps towards delivery. It also uncovered elements of the delivery hierarchy, from land promotion to implementation, that stack up against success and the actions necessary to start to do things differently.

LDA Design has summarised these as:

- * **Ending short-termism:** Better aligning infrastructure planning with land use planning, and bringing utility companies and relevant government departments together to shape proposals will ensure the production of efficient and effective plans, giving certainty to the direction and nature of growth over 20 years, and reducing the impact of short termism;
- * **Clear policies from the outset:** Writing effective policy that is clear about the infrastructure, place-making and community investment required for garden community development from the outset, and where possible before land option agreements and land value aspirations have been set. Land value should reflect these requirements;
- * **New powers:** Being prepared to use 'new' powers such as the potential for locally led new towns under the regulations to the 1981 New Towns act, backed up by compulsory purchase order (CPO) where speculative land promotion processes are unlikely to lead to the type and quality of garden community sought through policy;
- * **Good planning:** Having the 'right plan', fully thought through in terms of place-making, cash flow and viability, at the outset will make the best use of available funds to ensure place-delivery is achieved;
- * **Partnerships:** Moving from polarised regulator and developer relations to genuine delivery partnerships which are focussed on place-delivery in which planning becomes a means to an end rather than an end in itself;

- * **Specialist skills:** Introducing specialist place-delivery capacity and skills into the development process with an emphasis on ensuring that the initial stages of implementation create a sense of place and build momentum.

Starting the debate

Following the roundtable, LDA Design has developed three practical propositions to deliver on place, pace and productivity:

1. Infrastructure First Planning - transforming how land is allocated, traded and valued

Infrastructure is the key to unlocking sites and servicing land for development in both urban and brownfield contexts. Infrastructure First would see the long-term planning for the growth of our urban and rural communities based on the simple idea that development should be located where it is most likely to achieve place-making and other success factors efficiently and cost effectively, maximising the value that can be used to invest locally.

An Infrastructure First Planning Pilot supported and promoted by the government would show how, under the NPPF, we can align infrastructure and land use planning activities to enhance delivery in terms of place, pace and productivity.

2. Bringing garden communities into the 21st century

The pace of technological change and the impact of so called 'disruptive technologies' is accelerating. New technologies have the potential to transform how we respond to and meet the challenge of sustainable development. Garden communities have the potential to have a catalytic effect as the UK makes its way post-Brexit.

A cross-departmental developer competition could result in a transformative model for garden community development and subsequent delivery, taking into account changes in infrastructure, technology, living and working norms. Proposals would need to be deliverable under the NPPF, financially viable and have multi-stakeholder support. Such a pilot would need to clearly show how communities would benefit from the value created by development.

Housing delivery and UK Industrial Strategy objectives would be integrated to promote the creation of 'places that work'. This would demonstrate best practice in sustainability and showcase how when vision and delivery is aligned it can have a meaningful impact upon liveability of

the places public-led investment is creating. To give weight to this, the Government would commit to supporting the delivery of the first phase of a winning entry.

3. Delivery action plans

Under the NPPF and the forthcoming housing delivery test, the Government has proposed that local authorities delivering homes at under 95% of their target should prepare housing delivery action plans. It is the failure to consider fully issues associated with delivery on a strategic level that leads to land allocations and development proposals that fail to deliver.

All local plans and land allocations should be accompanied by an action plan that considers, from the outset, barriers to delivery in terms of place, pace and productivity, highlighting solutions by which these can be overcome. Housing Implementation Teams (HIT) tied to capacity funding would support the development and delivery of action plans.

Action plans offer the opportunity to bridge the gap between planning and implementation, shifting the discussion away from often polarised planning debate to the positive and creative challenge of responding to place, pace and productivity through the development process. All parties to an action plan would need to be willing partners and open to a transformation of the developer / LPA relationship through a focus on delivery.

The NPPF puts design quality, place-making and sustainability at the heart of the planning system. As a delivery objective, these factors should be given the same weight as housing numbers.

Next steps

These three propositions offer practical ways to shake up the planning and development culture that could so easily fall into the trap of delivering more of the same. Drawn out of lively discussion, they aim to kick-start further debate to ensure that garden communities live up to their promise.

So, what now needs to be done to ensure progress is made? Next steps could include an Infrastructure First roundtable, mediating joined up policy and priorities across departments; and linking capacity support and delivery through action plans and specialist support. More will emerge as the discussion continues.



1.0 Introduction

UKBCSD proposes that the approach to garden communities should not be limited in its focus on a refreshed housebuilding programme and responding to the needs of the development sector. Instead, they should be considered the forerunner to the UK's new towns and the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Growth Corridor, the Midlands Engine and the Northern Powerhouse, with a keenness to release the brake on sustainable growth caused by the short-term, sequential planning and development model currently adopted in Britain.

Taken together, these intentions should be seen as significant components of the Industrial Strategy. The prize of delivering sustainable development complementing the lives and livelihoods of future communities should not be lost in these once-in-a-generation plans.

UKBCSD is seeking to help join the dots between national priorities, focusing upon a comprehensive approach to sustainable delivery. This paper sets out three strategic propositions for further discussion.

The UK Government is promoting the garden communities programme as an opportunity to revolutionise the construction sector. However, very little discussion has taken place outside of the housebuilding sector to deliver anything fundamentally different from the mass housebuilding programmes of the past.

The challenge is less about building houses and more about how new places, jobs and transport can be designed and delivered sustainably to maximise potential for economic growth, productivity and investment beyond the housebuilding sector.

Key questions addressed

Confidence

How achievable are the Garden Communities policy objectives given:

- * a crisis of under-delivery (Policy Exchange) – the UK's unconvincing track record of securing delivery, resources and commitment to longer term vision
- * the emphasis on design as the solution, crowds out debate on what else garden communities are meant to be and how future communities will live and be served by them
- * Opposition to new development from local people will continue if they are not convinced the planning and development model being used best fulfils their needs
- * The 'carrot and stick' relationship, present in the competitive nature of this programme will be perceived to fulfil national rather than local objectives.

Policy into Delivery (at pace)

Where is the capability within local authorities that ensures a race to the bottom of delivering unimaginative and uninspiring development is avoided, whilst maintaining delivery certainty?

Approaches to sustainability

What is going to be different about garden communities that meets the needs of tomorrow's communities, today?



2.0 The Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable discussion confirmed the scale of opportunity presented by the garden communities and villages programme and the challenges inherent in implementation. It also started to identify practical steps towards delivery. The discussion was chaired to cover and address the key questions listed previously, and the following summary of the discussion reflects this. Much warrants further detailed in depth discussion. UKBCSD will consider the focused research needed.

The opportunity to use garden communities to achieve transformational step change in both the pace and quality of housing delivery lies within the broader government commitment to deliver 300,000 units per annum by 2021. This is being driven by MHCLG and its agency Homes England, which is rebranding and recruiting to drive forward housing delivery.

With a £1bn budget next year for new land, 800 people in post and plans to double the size of the organisation in the next two years, Homes England is gearing up to drive forward delivery in a proactive and assertive way.

Garden communities have proved popular and have broad support, building from a timeline which includes Ebbsfleet Garden City in 2014, the first Garden Towns and Villages Prospectus in 2016 which included 14 garden villages and three garden towns.

Further garden village locations were announced subsequently by Lord Matthew Taylor and a current bidding process is underway for a new suite of proposals to be confirmed later in 2018/19. This is seeking larger scale proposals circa 10,000 homes that can be delivered at pace. Support

will be given to local authorities to ensure transformational garden communities address economic growth, infrastructure, and place. The new prospectus will be welcoming of areas with high housing need, but bidders will be expected to spell out the qualities, viability, and deliverability to demonstrate they are worthy of support.

Outside of the formal Homes England sponsored programme, a large number of private sector led proposals are moving forward which are also branded as garden communities. These far exceed the number of proposals which have secured direct support from MHCLG and Homes England.

The aspiration is that garden communities are places for the future; forward looking and successful with delivery processes making use of available powers, including the potential for local authorities to lead New Town Development Corporations using powers arising from 2018 regulations amending the 1981 New Towns Act.

Three north Essex authorities, for example, have come together to create an Urban Development Corporation (UDC) to drive forward strategic growth. Delivery is going to require public sector investment in partnership with the private sector that looks to quality, pace of delivery. The roundtable discussed topics falling under the headings of:

- * Land
- * Infrastructure
- * Planning
- * Place-making
- * Homes
- * Partnership

The discussion under each of these headings was not exhaustive but effectively highlighted the particular issues to be addressed if garden communities are to deliver on their potential. LDA Design has prepared this paper including the summary of the discussion below and the three propositions arising for further debate at the MIPIM dinner.

Land

Two particular issues were identified under the broad heading of ‘land.’

Firstly, the impact of ‘land banking’, in which sites are allocated but do not progress towards to delivery, was raised by some local authority participants. One participant referred to sites allocated for five years with no sign of any homes coming forward with a major impact on delivery rates. Others present raised the impact of speculative land promotion processes and the way these inflated land value with ‘kick back’ to farmers.

Although not discussed in the depth of other topics, participants were clear that the nature of land promotion processes, the deals struck with landowners and subsequent disposal and development strategies have a fundamental effect on both the pace and quality of delivery and impact on funds available for investment in infrastructure, place-making and community.

The potential to use emerging thinking around, for example, the ‘Development Rights Auction’ model was suggested as a means to enable local authorities to have greater control over where they allow development and how they capture value. Government thinking on land value capture and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) were not discussed. However, these factors are central to the debate about how development might fund the growth divided for local communities and the environment that will be the key to successful garden community delivery.

Infrastructure

Roundtable participants were united in stressing the crucial role of utility companies and effective infrastructure planning to the delivery of garden communities. A long-term perspective and planning certainty is crucial to allow major utilities such as Anglia Water, who were represented, to plan investments ahead. However many development planning processes, including those for garden communities, suffer from short termism that make this difficult.

When part of a long-term development programme, as with the garden communities in Essex, utility companies have an opportunity to shape proposals and not simply react or respond. In some locations, major development proposals are coming forward where basic infrastructure is not in place and where the scale of investment needed and timeframe to delivery makes adequate provision difficult and costly to provide. In some areas predicted for major growth, for example, early engagement with utility companies is needed to plan for new reservoirs.

Infrastructure is not just about unlocking the delivery of homes. It is also key to the creation of jobs and economic growth. It needs to address the housing delivery challenge and the UK Industrial Strategy simultaneously. Infrastructure delivery should be a major consideration within the Homes England overall strategy. Department for Transport, Highways England, Network Rail and other agencies associated with infrastructure delivery need to come together rather than work in silos.

Planning for infrastructure and new garden communities should go hand in hand as these are 20-year-plus projects. The Road Investment Strategy (RIS 1) was noted as an area where focus and resource is needed. The A46 was noted as an example, on RIS 2, where 9% of UK GDP is within the A46 corridor. How might infrastructure investment in this corridor unlock delivery against wider housing delivery and industrial strategy objectives?

The location of growth proposals has a major impact on the efficiency of infrastructure provision, costs, and development cash flow. These fundamentally affect viability. Infrastructure unlocks locations but there is no real connection between available infrastructure and where site allocations come forward, including some garden communities being promoted by the private sector.

This lack of alignment, combined with short termism and land speculation, has a major impact on the ability of development proposals to fund and deliver the quality and scale of outcomes sought under the garden communities programme, including quality design, place-making and community infrastructure. Effective infrastructure planning needs to be at the heart of the garden communities agenda.

Planning

Some participants said that the NPPF basically works quite well as a planning framework. It was stressed that in order to deliver a meaningful garden community, planning policy needs to be written right from the very outset of Local Plan preparation, before land value aspirations are set in stone and unrealistic options agreements are signed. In practice, this is difficult to achieve because of the nature of land promotion processes.

There was agreement amongst participants that planning takes far too long, at least three-five years with legal resolution around s106 often taking another year. Providing more detail up front can take longer, but a hybrid planning application tells you what a site is going to look like and can be worth it in the long run.

Capacity of both planning and legal officers is lacking, slowing down process. This can mean that fees related to pre-application achieve little value. There is a major skills shortage and some participants called for Homes England capacity funding to be released much more quickly to fund resource and speed decision making. The shortage of skills and capacity is only likely to be exacerbated as more good planners and property professionals are drawn to the private sector and Homes England as the housing market continues to grow.

Planning performance agreements (PPAs) are having a good effect and can be outsourced and recharged back to developer. The increased focus on design set out in the NPPF is to be welcomed as is the emphasis sustaining quality from planning through to implementation. However, again, the skills of both the public and private sector to achieve this outcome is lacking. There is a particular shortage of skills when it comes to the orchestration of the place-delivery process from planning consent to delivery on the ground.

Too often the planning process becomes polarised between regulator and developer and the creative joining of forces necessary to achieve effective place delivery is absent.

Place-making

Achieving good growth requires planned for development be located where it is most likely to achieve outcomes sought by the local authority. However, despite the NPPF commitment to a planned system, the location of land allocations is too often driven by land promotion processes rather than strategic planning, which is aligned with infrastructure requirements, place-making and housing delivery. This fundamental issue tends to create a series of consequences which cascade down into the development process, becoming manifest is a lack of viability which undermines place-making.

Effective place-making cannot be tacked on to the end of the planning process but must be built on firm foundations from the outset. These foundations include the right land in the right place, effective infrastructure provision, a place-led planning process and effective implementation. When it comes to delivering complex and multi-faceted developments such as garden communities, there is a skills shortage in both the public and private sector. In the main, house builders are not place-makers. They also lack the experience and skills needed to orchestrate the process of place-making to achieve the sort of vibrant places to which the garden communities programme aspires.

Homes

Participants highlighted that the housing delivery challenge is not just about the quantity of new homes. Too many three to four-bed homes are being built that are good for shareholders but which don’t meet community needs. We also need bungalows, PRS, starters homes etc. Examples such as Gravenhill in Bicester were cited where Cherwell District Council are bringing forward a major custom-build scheme.

Garden communities are about economies of scale and looking at the community mix from the start. Homes for people, locally led, are crucial. The learning is out there and it is important to find additionality by doing things differently; outcomes create value.

Constructing Excellence best practice case studies were mentioned. Homes England has been developing a Garden City Toolkit that is a living tool available on the Homes England website in a month's time.

Both place-making and delivery at pace depends on different housing products and tenures. Modular housing and 'accelerated construction' will have a role but the market isn't quite there yet. However, long-term garden communities must be designed to accommodate these housing formats, particularly given the push towards modular and accelerated construction under the government's £170m Transforming Construction Challenge backed with £250m private sector investment.

In the push for modular, quality needs to be looked at as well as the need to look at 'Homes for Life'. There is an opportunity for garden communities to develop as catalysts; growing a supply chain, training a workforce, creating employment and delivering.

Partnership

Garden communities are meant to be locally led. This means local authorities and their partners coming together to promote and deliver them with their public and private sector partners. It is going to be vital to look outside of local authority boundaries and build bridges with the LEP and other agencies to develop the rationale and business case for garden community proposals. High-level brokerage and connections with government are important, but the policies on which proposals are based also need to be right from the very beginning.

Garden community proposals need to be clear on their brands and standards set out in a prospectus with the principles well stated, the standards grabbed hold of and maintained. The New Towns Act: there is a campaign for updates, local-led UDCs and stewardship. The government needs to know its destination; the needs and opportunities lead to new communities, and we're not quite there yet.

Working and learning from others is vital; there is a 'New Communities Group', a network from the old eco towns set up from the previous ODFM, consisting of 23 local authorities and Ebbsfleet. Participants stressed that it is important that we think differently about how to do things.

A consultant currently working for Homes England was cited, making the organisation think differently about Smart Cities and Digital Futures, rather than just being caught up in planning.

Synthesis

The opportunity associated with garden communities programme is clear. The UKBCSD view that they must be seen as the forerunners to new towns is absolutely right. They have the potential to become catalysts for the type of thinking by which the huge growth potential of areas such as the Ox-Cambridge Growth Corridor, Midlands Engine and the Northern Powerhouse might be realised.

Whilst the roundtable discussion tended to focus on the challenges, there will be successes, especially where they are driven forward by proactive local authorities, Homes England and enlightened developers. However, there is a real likelihood that these successes will be in the minority given the sequential planning and development model we currently utilise in Britain. The roundtable highlighted that many characteristics of the delivery hierarchy, from land promotion to implementation, are stacked against successful delivery of garden communities that will deliver on the promise of transformational growth and quality placemaking.

In the field of psychological statistics there is a well-known phenomenon called optimism bias which broadly corresponds to the human tendency to believe that 'it will be different this time'. The evidence is that mistakes are generally repeated and optimism is often misplaced; difficult issues that lead to failure do not get the analysis that one might expect.

The belief that, with respect to garden communities, it will be different this time is comforting but is likely to be a classic case of optimism bias. It will only be different this time if we do things notably differently. The discussion identified challenges to the successful delivery of the programme and started to define the actions necessary to do things differently – starting now.

The actions required are not unachievable and nor do they require a major rewriting of planning law or policy. They can be summarised as:

- * Better aligning infrastructure planning with land use planning, bringing utility companies on board early in the process to shape proposals and ensure the production of efficient and effective plans that give certainty as to the direction and nature of growth over 20 years plus to reduce the impact of short term land speculation;
- * Writing effective policy that is clear about the infrastructure, place-making and community investment that is required for garden community development from the outset, where possible before land option agreements land value aspirations have been set. Land value should reflect the value that is left once these requirements have been met;
- * Being prepared to use 'new' powers such as the potential for locally led New Towns under the regulations to the 1981 New Towns act, backed up by CPO where speculative land promotion processes are unlikely to lead to the type and nature Garden Community development sought;
- * Having the 'right plan' which has been thought through in terms of place-making, cash flow and viability from the outset to make the best use of available funds and ensure place-delivery is achieved;
- * Moving from polarised regulator – developer relations to genuine delivery partnerships which are focussed on place-delivery in which planning becomes a means to an end rather than an end in itself;
- * Introducing specialist place-delivery capacity and skills into the development process at the earliest possible opportunity with a particular emphasis on ensure that the initial stages of place creation create community, sense of place and momentum.

These actions correspond with the experience LDA Design has had when working on large-scale garden village planning, design and delivery. Success requires an enlightened delivery mindset from the outset combined with a ruthless focus on overcoming those issues that are most likely to derail a positive outcome.

When asked recently to advise on how best to achieve a step change in quality, pace and place-making around a successful regional City through the Garden Communities programme, LDA Design found that the solution looked very different to what would have been achieved through a business as normal development process.

Indeed, we found that the normal land promotion, allocation and development process was set up to fail when judged against the success factors defined by our client. In addition, documents intended to guide place-making, including design codes and other mechanisms, are often overly complex for standard housebuilders to adhere to and as a result built outcomes tend not to live up to what is described in design and access statements.

We believe that it is possible to achieve the step change necessary to deliver forward thinking garden communities. Following on from the discussion, LDA Design has developed three practical propositions to address the issues listed.



3.0 Propositions

1. Infrastructure First Planning - transforming how land is allocated, traded and valued.

Infrastructure is key to unlocking sites and servicing land for development in both urban and brownfield contexts. In this context, we take infrastructure to mean the streets, spaces, green infrastructure and community facilities on which successful places are built, not just the transport and utilities.

Infrastructure First planning would involve long-term planning for the growth of our urban and rural communities based on the simple idea that development should be located where it is most likely to achieve place-making and other success factors efficiently and cost effectively, thereby maximising the value that can be used to invest locally.

Infrastructure First planning would be an assertive activity involving local authorities, utility companies, landowners and developers. It would have a primary focus on servicing land and creating a set of specific conditions that will allow for effective place-making. Housing delivery and industrial strategy imperatives would be dealt with in an equitable way, creating the conditions for mixed communities in which homes and jobs are integrated and productivity is enhanced.

Infrastructure First planning would be a departure from our current 'land first' approach to the allocation and development of land where the impact of land deals and expensive land servicing costs reduce the scope to invest in place-making and quality.

Proposition: An Infrastructure First Planning pilot

Infrastructure First Planning can be achieved under the provisions of the NPPF and can be used to underpin a visionary and place-led approach to delivery at pace. Changes in planning culture and practice are necessary to achieve this.

An Infrastructure First Planning pilot supported and promoted by the UK government would show how, under the NPPF, it is possible to enhance delivery in terms of place, pace and productivity by:

- * Extending the time horizon for the allocation, release and servicing of land, integrating place-making and infrastructure planning objectives to promote the right sort of growth in the right place over a 20 year timeframe, reducing the impact of short-term speculative land promotion on land value;
- * Plan for the delivery of infrastructure that meets the objectives of both housing delivery and Local Industrial Strategy objectives;
- * Give place-making, community and environmental infrastructure the same weight as 'grey' infrastructure when planning for new communities and ensure that the requirements for these elements are clearly articulated in policy from the outset;
- * Develop Action Plans (see proposition 3) and business cases to support Infrastructure First proposals to underpin public sector risk sharing through land acquisition and infrastructure delivery, and to ensure that efficient use of is made of finite funds;

- * Infrastructure First planning could be backed by a public sector-led land acquisition mechanism, backed by CPO, to ensure that that land owners receive the value of the land once policy requirements have been met to ensure sustainable and equitable growth;
- * Promote the use of powers for the creation of locally led New Town Corporations under the 2018 Regulations to the 1981 New Towns Act.

2. Bringing Garden Communities into the 21st Century

The pace of technological change and the impact of so called ‘disruptive technologies’ is accelerating. New technologies have the potential to transform how we respond to and meet the challenge of sustainable development. The UK Industrial Strategy is seeking to respond to the opportunities and challenges through the four ‘Grand Challenges’ and the 2018 Clean Growth Strategy. Garden villages have the potential to be an integral part of these wider strategies.

The way people live and work is also changing. Millennials and so-called Generation Z have expectations that are different in important ways to previous generations. Retirees are also increasingly expecting different living and leisure environments, placing a greater emphasis on quality of life and active leisure.

Innovation in infrastructure, from decentralised energy to the new generation of electric bicycles through to mobility solutions, the ‘Internet of Things’ and 5G (to name a few) is starting to challenge the assumptions on which we currently plan major development. Through its Transforming Construction Programme and other mechanisms, the UK Government is seeking to push through a major shift to modular and offsite construction and advanced manufacturing.

New housing products are coming on the market responding to changes in the pattern of household formation changing the relationship between people and property. There is a need to design new places which can integrate a mosaic of tenures and housing typologies including PRS, Rent to Buy, custom-build, self-build, modular and so on. This mosaic approach may also provide the means to increase the pace of delivery.

The TCPA has played a major role in promoting garden cities principles and the Wolfson Prize initiated some creative thinking which has been helpful in moving the agenda forward. It is time now to translate policy and ideas into practice at scale. There is an urgent need for new exemplars and successes where genuinely new thinking has been implemented. Alignment with the Industrial Strategy and the Clean Growth Strategy should be achieved.

The catalytic effect of garden communities as the UK makes its way in the post-Brexit world needs consideration. A public debate around the density and urban typologies appropriate to garden villages is needed to avoid the creation of ‘more of the same’ which increasingly does not meet the needs of households.

This debate is crucial, not only to ensure that we build places that are fit for the future and underpin the UK’s place in the world as an innovator at the forefront of technology, but also to ensure that finite funds are invested wisely; many of the challenges around viability, infrastructure delivery and quality are driven by the costs and challenges associated with providing traditional grey infrastructure to greenfield development. Garden villages should support and align with Industrial Strategy objectives to achieve place, pace and productivity. Our aim should be to ‘create places that work’.

Proposition: Developer Competition

A cross-departmental developer competition for a pilot to develop a transformative model for garden communities and their delivery taking into account changes in infrastructure, technology and living and working aspirations set out above. Ideas would need to be deliverable under the NPPF, financially viable with development partners in place and with multi-stakeholder support.

Such a pilot would need to clearly show how communities would benefit from investment and would demonstrate an integration of the housing delivery initiatives with the UK Industrial Strategy. To give weight to this, the government would commit to supporting the delivery of the first phase of a winning entry.

From a sustainability position, the reason for doing this would be demonstration of good practice and evidence that the vision and delivery, when aligned have a meaningful impact upon liveability of the places that public-led investment is committing for future generations.

3. Delivery Action Plans

Under the NPPF and the forthcoming housing delivery test, the government has proposed that local authorities that are delivering homes at under 95% of their target should prepare action plans to address issues of under delivery.

The relevant Planning Policy Guidance note sets out what such action plans may address, including factors such as barriers to early commencement post planning consent, whether the mix of sites allocated is proving effective to deliver at the anticipated rate, whether infrastructure or transport could be addressed at a strategic level and so on. Many of these delivery factors would be better considered in advance of allocation of land or adoption of local plan.

It is the failure to consider properly issues associated with delivery on a strategic level that leads to land allocations and development proposals that fail to deliver in terms of place, pace and productivity. Successful delivery tends to be judged in terms of house numbers rather than in terms of quality and sustainability.

However, the NPPF puts design quality, place-making and sustainability at the heart of the planning system. Housebuilders are rarely town-makers and action plans need to address this reality by setting out a clear approach to strategic place-making, quality and sustainability whilst allowing housebuilders to focus on what they do best.

Proposition: Capacity for Action

All local plans and land allocations should be accompanied by an action plan which considers from the outset the barriers to delivery in terms of place, pace and productivity and highlight solutions by which these can be overcome. Most planning authorities have not delivered ‘place’ at the scale of a garden community.

The place-making and delivery perspective is lacking and tends to promote a polarised approach. Capacity funding unlocks resource, but is it the right resource? A key proposition to support delivery is the formation of Housing Implementation Teams (HIT) tied to capacity funding to support the development and delivery of action plans.

The purpose of these HIT teams would be to bridge the relationship between planning authority and developer. Both parties would need to be willing partners and open to a transformation of the developer / LPA relationship through a focus on delivery.

Delivery is rarely talked about through the planning and development process and is conflated with viability. Action plans offer the opportunity to bridge the gap between planning and implementation shift the discussion away from often polarised planning debate to the positive and creative challenge of responding to place, pace and productivity through the development process.



4.0 Next Steps

How can we now facilitate further action and debate to achieve the transformational potential of the garden communities programme?

Garden communities have captured the imagination of local authorities and developers alike.

There is a pressing need now to agree what will be done differently in order to ensure they delivery on their promise.

The three propositions kick-start this debate and offer practical changes to a planning and development culture that addresses the issues which might otherwise lead to more of the same. Comment is invited from stakeholders and VIP representatives from the public and private sectors.

Next steps will emerge following on from this report. These may include:

- * An Infrastructure First planning roundtable;
- * Mediating joined up policy and priorities across departments;
- * Demonstrating success;
- * Linking capacity support and delivery through action plans and specialist support.

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