AN ESSAY COLLECTION

Building for renewal:
kickstarting the C19 housing recovery

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Preface

Given the gravity of the situation we find ourselves in, housing's fundamental social and economic role and transformative capacity to drive change and growth assumes even greater significance. What was already a radical and exciting agenda for housing in the aftermath of last December's general election result now becomes a pivotal 'win or lose' moment for national renewal.

This paper sets out - alongside Localis' own suggestions - twenty separate views from individual experts and a wide range of organisations as to how we use the primacy of place to direct a return to housing growth and with it renewal. I am very grateful to each of our contributors for their consideration in finding the time to put pen to paper during the midst of this crisis to map innovative and pragmatic approaches. Especial thanks to Richard Fitzgerald for his technical assistance and mastery of housing statistics.

As such, this is a collection of individual essays which should not be assumed to be the views of any other. Each separate essay should be read and understood in its own light as offering deep understanding and practical solutions to unlocking some of the many complex problems which the COVID-19 response currently poses to housing.

As a collection, however, these essays offer both deep experience and firm understanding of the unprecedented situation we are living through. The essays also present means that are both astute and creative yet rooted in reality for escaping the short to medium term difficulties and improving on what was before - or to take the phrase of the moment 'Build Back Better'.

This paper is divided into four principal parts

- **Part A:** The role of housing in promoting opportunity and prosperity for all
- **Part B:** The role of investment in place in leading renewal
- **Part C:** The role of housing in supporting the most vulnerable and engaging with society
- **Part D:** The role of planning in creating successful and sustainable communities.

Jonathan Werran, Chief Executive, Localis

Localis Analysis: kickstarting housing delivery post-COVID-19

Paul Carter CBE
Chairman, Localis C19 Housebuilding Commission

In recent years, the number of new homes built in the UK has increased dramatically as successive governments have placed a high political priority on "the right to a good home". Nevertheless, we continue to play housing catch-up as numbers of new homes built have not kept up with demand as a consequence of the significant rise in the UK's population, alongside major changes in the country's demography.

As a local government leader/senior councillor for many years, and with a lifelong career as a housebuilder, I have experienced at first hand significant economic recessions: the stockmarket collapse of 1987; the 9/11 tragedy of 2001 and the banking crisis of 2008. All had an immediate impact on the housebuilding industry and saw delivery numbers fall dramatically. We are now undoubtedly facing a worldwide recession post-COVID-19 of greater severity than anything previously experienced. However, the pent-up demand and need for more new homes to be built will not abate.

In the endeavour to support the Government's response to this national challenge and adding to the recent series of Localis papers on housing, as a longstanding Board Member, I commissioned a further report seeking answers to the question:

"What measures could the Government put in place post-lockdown that would create an environment conducive to building more homes, enable the housebuilding industry to get back to work, help deliver the Government's target of one million new homes by 2025 and continue to provide and grow employment for the 2 million people employed in this important part of the national economy?"

I invited leading contributors from all sections of the housebuilding industry representing businesses and organisations big and small to address this question through a series of essays. Each was asked to present their own individual and innovative views on what measures they considered necessary to be put in place by the Government to avoid a housing recession and consequent job losses.

Before drawing out a summary of the key recommendations from the essays, it is important to remind ourselves of some of the fundamental housing data.

The economic impact of housing

The construction industry provides close to 2 million jobs or 7%[1] of the national jobs total. With an output multiplier of 2.049, the third highest of any sector in the UK economy, every £1 invested in the industry generates over £2 in the wider economy[2].

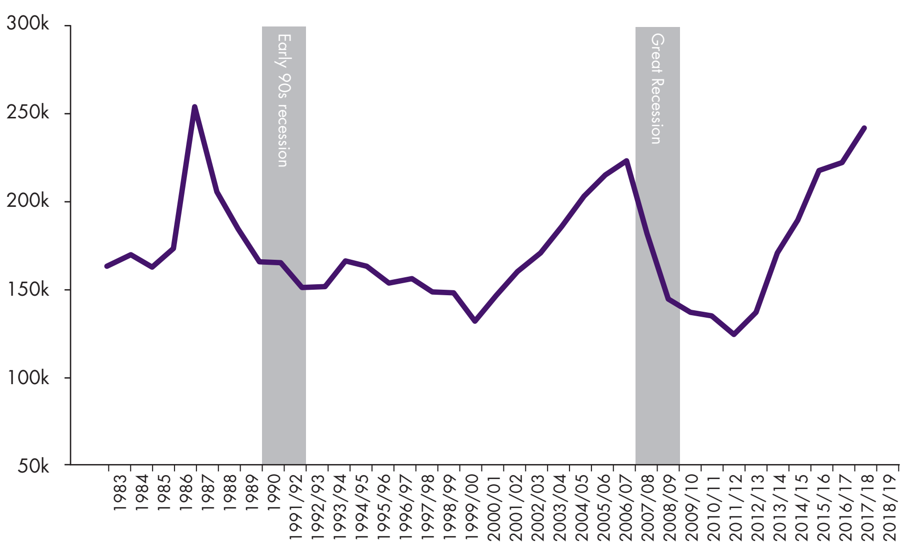
New house building delivered £47bn of output in 2019 of which 60% was delivered by smaller enterprises employing less than 100 people[3]. When the construction industry is building, the country is working.

Recessions hit hard and long

Over several years, the Government has acted in good faith and has increased housebuilding to levels last seen in the 1960s, reaching 241,335 net new dwellings[4] in 2018/19. But recent recessions show the economic impact of COVID-19 could hit hard.

Following the early nineties recession, housebuilding fell to around 150,000 net new dwellings a year and remained at this level for a decade, before construction began to steadily increase - reaching above 200,000 a year by 2006. The "Great Recession" of 2008/09 then brought housebuilding back down to below 150,000 a year in 2010 and it was another eight years before dwelling completions again achieved a level above 200,000 a year.

Figure 1: Recessions and housebuilding: annual increase in England's dwelling stock



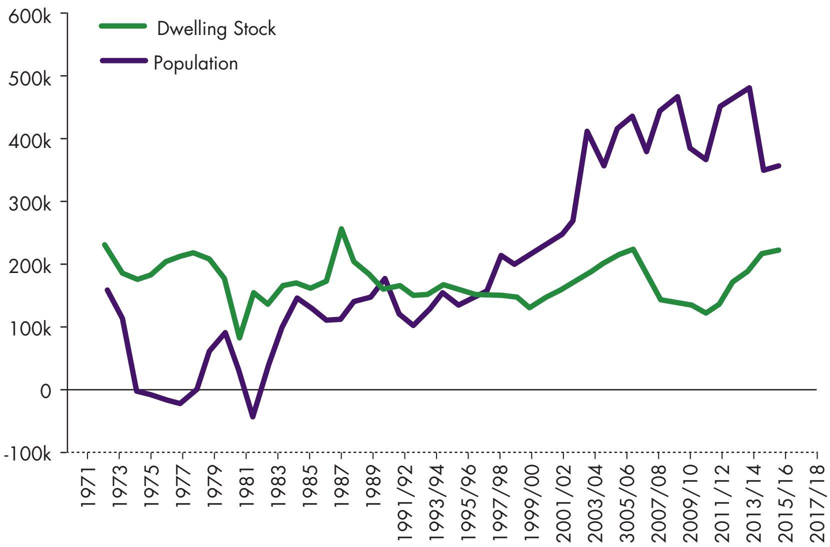
Source: MHCLG Live Tables

1 ONS, Annual Population Survey
2 ONS, Input-output analytical tables
3 ONS, Output in the construction industry
4 MHCLG Live tables, Table 104

Housing demand remains high and national ambitions are still to be delivered

COVID-19 will not affect the underlying figures. Demand based on historic population and household growth simply outstrips supply. Local authority housing lists remain long, and new homelessness responsibilities place further pressure on councils.

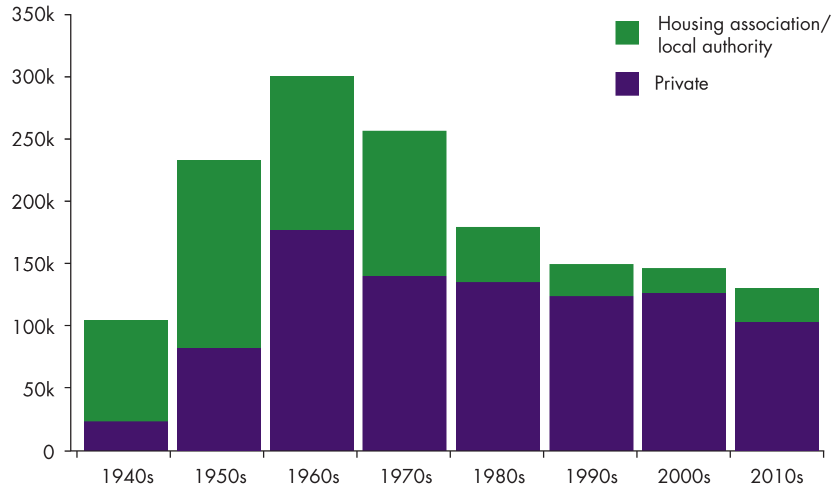
Figure 2: Comparison of dwelling stock and population increase, England 1971-2018



Source: MHCLG Live Tables/ONS mid-year estimates

National ambitions remain high, but an average of 300,000 new dwellings a year was only achieved in the 1960s with a significant public sector contribution. Reliance on the private sector has grown significantly, but it has never been able to maintain an average new build rate above 200,000 a year in any decade since 1945.

Figure 3: Annual average number of new build dwellings per decade, 1945-2019



Source: MHCLG Live Tables

Home ownership has fallen

A direct consequence has been home ownership. Over the last fifteen years, nearly half the gains in home ownership in the period since 1979 have been lost, with home ownership levels now at 63.8%, down from 69.1% in 2004 and compared to 57.3% in 1979. For those aged 20 to 24 the chances of setting up their own household and owning their home are about 2%.

A potential recession brings a further problem. While house prices fell during the last two recessions leading to negative equity for some, at the same time re-possessions peaked as people fell into arrears with mortgage payments.

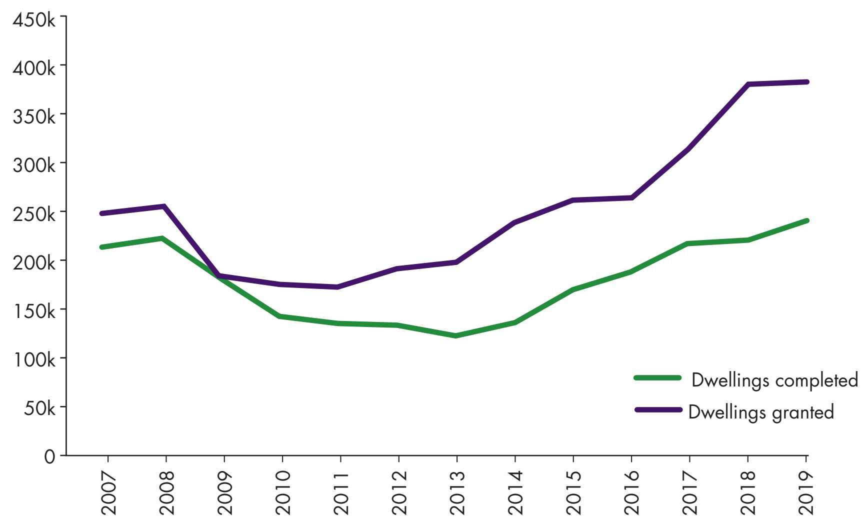
Planning and infrastructure go together

The capital investment in infrastructure in the main lags behind housing delivery on the ground, exacerbated over the last 10 years of austerity. As a consequence, the necessary transport and community facilities have not been provided around new communities.

Elsewhere, planning permissions have been granted, local community and political capital has been spent, but houses stubbornly refuse to come out of the ground. In many cases, the answer again is the need for timely infrastructure investment and viability.

While housebuilding delivery is rising, the gap between the number of units granted planning permission each year and the number of completed dwellings continues to widen.

Figure 4: Dwelling units: planning vs. completions



Source: MHCLG Live Tables and Glenigan dataset

In the last five years the annual number of units with planning permission has increased from 261,900 to 384,700 and yet today annual completions remain below 250,000 units. In the last decade 2.6 million units have had planning permission granted but only 1.7

million have been completed over the same time period.

Viability and development finance continues to be an issue, with infrastructure delayed, viability threatened and housing stalled. With post-COVID-19 house prices forecast to fall this situation will be further exacerbated. However, land values have continued to rise and land owners have enjoyed massive multiples in land values following receipt of residential zoning in Local Plans. The opportunity to raise a significant levy/tax on this gain could potentially harvest in excess of an additional £4bn per year.

Figure 5: Landowner gains calculation

	£ per acre (agricultural)	£ per acre (landowner sells to developer)	Landowner gains (multiple)
North East	9,047	327,424	**40.6**
North West	9,047	447,072	**53.8**
Yorkshire and The Humber	9,047	473,860	**56.8**
East Midlands	9,047	387,480	**47.3**
West Midlands	9,047	510,204	**60.8**
East of England	9,047	1,111,886	**127.3**
London	9,047	10,152,811	**1,126.7**
South East	9,047	1,582,949	**179.4**
South West	9,047	717,419	**83.7**
England	9,047	1,405,068	**159.7**

Note: potential current windfall gains, which landowner may realise, depending on actual price paid by developer. At price shown developer can pay currently required contributions to local authorities for infrastructure, build houses and make profit (VOA estimate of values) and bear the costs of obtaining planning permission. National average agricultural land used, but there is not major variation by region in average agricultural land value.

Building for Britain's Recovery

The figures are thought provoking and the challenge facing the national housebuilding industry is very real. However, in Britain, we have a housing and construction industry to be proud of. With a receptive Government prepared to change and adapt to the new world post-COVID, the

Government's housing target for 2020-2025 can still be achieved.

Summarising the vast array of innovation, ideas and recommendations in the essays is a Herculean task and I apologise for any omissions in the summary.

Government led support: liquidity and spatial planning

- Extend the Help to Buy scheme for a further two years.
- Increase the capital allocations to Homes England to support viability on stalled and brownfield sites. Conditional upon housing delivery to defined timelines. Increase allocations to Homes England for more affordable homes.
- Review CIL/s106 regulations – explore Land Value Capture on all new sites allocated in developing Local Plans.
- Reintroduce Spatial Planning powers across a broader geography setting out infrastructure needs and identify funding sources for delivery. Note the 'Duty to Co-operate' has failed to deliver.
- Incentivize Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) – support demand pipeline.
- Rationalise and speed up the allocation of government grants (e.g. Housing Infrastructure Fund, Single Housing Infrastructure Fund etc) – to streamline the current system which is marked by excessive fragmentation and delay.
- Extend support to SME builders through the expansion of the 'Housing Growth Partnership scheme' supported by Lloyds Bank and Homes England.

Local authorities: freedoms, flexibilities and capacity

- As a result of COVID-19 disruption, extend all existing planning consents for a further year.
- Planning authorities to be flexible on the tenure mix of developments - to meet different demands post-COVID, particularly to promote first homes, extra care housing etc.
- Planning authorities to be flexible on the timing of existing s106 payments and conditions – flexibility conditional on accelerating housing delivery over a defined timeline.
- Infrastructure investment to be provided in advance of housing delivery wherever possible. Strategic authorities to be supported to forward fund or provide gap funding. Government to reintroduce a new local government Capital Supported Borrowing Scheme (intimated to be introduced in the recent fair funding review of local government).
- Higher priority to be given to Key Worker Housing both on housing waiting lists and through the introduction of the First Homes initiative.

- Red tape and bureaucracy to be reduced in both planning and building regulation compliance - utilising digitisation to the full.
- An acceptance that planning departments are underfunded. Could local authorities be allowed to increase planning fees accordingly to deliver a slicker and faster planning service?
- Planning presumption for SMEs in favour of development for sites of less than 50 homes.

Developers and market-makers: certainty, risk-sharing and engagement

- Stronger partnerships to be established between local government, housing associations, housing providers and Homes England, encouraging risk sharing with housing providers of all types with local authority housing companies and Homes England.
- At least five year certainty to be given to housing association agreements over rental levels (Local Housing Allowance) to enable providers to demonstrate a stable and sound business exists to facilitate future funding and housing growth.
- Should property prices fall, loan to value ratios change restricting ability to borrow as banks reduce their appetite to lend to housebuilders and similarly with mortgages for homebuyers. Solutions need to be found.
- Extend mortgage lending period for those under 40-years of age by five years.
- Reduce Stamp Duty paid for a limited period to stimulate sales and demand.
- General support for the Government's 'First Homes' initiative.
- Incentivise institutional and pension fund investment including self-invested personal pensions (SIPPs) in Buy-to-Let on conditional three to four-year assured shorthold tenancies.
- "Master developers" to embrace contract between developer, community and councils, with greater co-creation in plan design to release social value and promote placemaking.
- National conversation to be introduced on the importance of good planning. What is wanted by communities? What good planning can achieve to help influence the society they would like to see created.
- Planning focused on people rather than just houses.

Additional suggestions from Localis

- Government/Treasury to review the taxation/levy on windfall planning gains on greenfield sites.
- Government to review the Land Compensation Act 1961 - no longer fit for purpose.

- To aid and abet land assembly by local authorities specifically for new towns/new villages CPO powers should be reviewed.
- Reboot the 'One Public Estate Initiative', too much redundant public land remains undeveloped which could provide a significant number of new homes, with strict penalties for non-compliance.

I believe these essays and their insightful recommendations are a major and timely contribution on how we can get Britain building again and for which I thank contributors. We must avoid at all possible cost a housing recession. To achieve this innovative funding mechanisms will need to be found. Fundamentally, we need to put the communities first and establish new and stronger relationships between local government, developers and other public agencies working with a Government which puts housing high in its order of priorities as it was so eloquently put by Elizabeth Froude from Platform Housing, '*The fundamental basis of a healthy and successful life is a safe and secure home*'.

Paul Carter, CBE
Localis C19 Housebuilding Commission

PART A

The role of housing in promoting opportunity and prosperity for all

The first part of this collection of essays is from:

- Cllr David Renard, Chairman, Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board, Local Government Association
- Paul Dossett, Head of Local Government, Grant Thornton UK LLP
- Elizabeth Froude, Group Chief Executive, Platform Housing
- Tony Pidgley CBE, Chairman, The Berkeley Group
- Andrew Geldard, Chief Communications Officer, Willmott Dixon
- Lawrence Morris, Policy Officer, National Housing Federation
- Nigel Wilson, Chair, Homes for the North (H4N)

These seven essays explore the role of housing in supporting opportunity and prosperity, for individuals, for families and communities.

Themes include:

- Investment in new generation of social housing and bringing forward council housebuilding investment programmes;
- Provision of key worker housing;
- Risk sharing and flexibility of tenures;
- Renewed spirit of public/private collaboration;
- Leadership in placemaking;
- Investment in communities;
- Levelling up housing and wider access to the new Single Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Creating amazing places that everyone can call home

Cllr David Renard
Chairman, Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board, Local Government Association

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically-led, cross-party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales.

Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils. Our ultimate ambition is to support councils to deliver local solutions to national problems.

We advocate for a local plan-led system that delivers sustainable homes to meet the needs of people in different circumstances and at different stages in their lives - as well as ensuring that they are well supported by the necessary services and infrastructure.

Councils already play a vital role in housing supply as planning and housing authorities, as partners with house builders and registered providers, as direct builders, as providers of homes for the most vulnerable and as local place leaders. However, the planning for the "new normal" provides a unique opportunity for the sector to release its potential to do much more.

In particular, the COVID-19 response by key workers provides a powerful call to action to redouble efforts to scale-up supply of low-cost homes to rent and to buy. Councils want to play their full part in ensuring a generational step-change in the supply of these homes. It is therefore imperative as part of the response to the pandemic that government considers what steps, measures and reforms would support councils to work towards delivering a new generation of 100,000 high quality social homes per year.

With previous research[1] for the LGA and partners showing that investment in a new generation of social housing could return £320bn to the nation over 50 years, the arguments for investment in social housing as an economic stimulus will grow stronger in a post-COVID-19 world. Separate research has also estimated that:

- every £1 invested in a new social home generates £2.84[2] in the wider economy
- each new social home would generate a saving of £780[3] per year in Housing Benefit.

1 Building new social rent homes: an updated economic appraisal
2 Building new social rent homes
3 Setting social rent

Increasing construction would not only help boost the economy very quickly, it would also provide much needed affordable homes for people across the country reeling from the economic impact of the pandemic. Expansion of the development programmes of councils would:

- offer a pathway out of expensive and insecure private renting, and on towards ownership;
- over time, reduce the cost of the housing benefit bill;
- make a major contribution to the Government's ambition of 300,000 new homes a year;
- help address pressure on public services, notably health and social care, driven by poor housing conditions;
- support the re-purposing of town and city centres as well as enabling people to remain in rural areas in which they grew up;
- support the Government's ambition to provide 6,000 new supported homes for vulnerable rough sleepers taken off the streets during the pandemic and address the housing needs of more than 88,000 households living in temporary accommodation;
- support a climate smart recovery.

Through a proactive response in the wake of the pandemic, government can be instrumental in delivering to councils the tools, powers and flexibilities that they need to deliver homes for their communities. This would also support the maintenance of capacity and confidence in the housing market.

Below are a number of interventions that the LGA would consider to have a positive impact in stimulating an increase in the supply of council housing and more broadly, ensure that new homes are built in the right places, for all those that need them. These concentrate on measures that would enable councils to actively intervene at greater scale and with increased impact.

Locally led planning which delivers vibrant, resilient communities where people want to live, work and play

A local, plan-led system is vital to ensure that councils and the communities they represent have a say over the way places develop. This also supports the delivery of homes that are built to a high standard, with the necessary infrastructure to create sustainable, resilient places, and ensures that affordable housing is provided. Councils are working hard to use planning effectively to deliver the right kind of homes for their communities, approving nine in ten applications and granting permission for almost 372,000[4] homes in the year to December 2019.

However, despite the hard work of councils, planning departments are severely underfunded, with taxpayers currently subsidising the cost of processing planning applications by nearly £180m a year. Enabling councils to set their own planning fees, would bolster their capacity to proactively enable the delivery of new housing supply.

4 MHCLG Planning Application Statistics October to December 2019

The LGA also continues to call for greater attention to be given to increase the build out rates of sites that have been granted planning permission and for councils to have greater powers to act where housebuilding has stalled. Recent analysis[5] shows that 2,564,600 units have been granted planning permission by councils since 2009/10 while only 1,530,680 have been completed.

This could be achieved in a number of ways including: councils having more powers to direct developers to diversify the homes constructed on sites to cater to different markets; a streamlined Compulsory Purchase Order process and the introduction of financial penalties in cases where developers do not build out to the rate agreed with a local planning authority.

The current crisis, which has required a large proportion of the population to stay at home for extended periods of time has brought into sharp focus the relationship between health and housing quality. In order to ensure that developers build high quality homes in the locations that people need them, permitted development rules enabling buildings to be converted to homes without going through the planning system need to be revoked permanently. These rules continue to create a vast range of issues for local places and communities because there is no way to ensure developers meet high quality standards, provide any affordable homes or ensure that supporting infrastructure such as roads, schools and health services are in place. LGA analysis[6] earlier this year estimated that permitted development rights allowing offices to be converted into homes have led to the loss of more than 13,500 affordable homes since 2015.

There is also a potential prospect of a downturn in housebuilding and therefore planning applications which will negatively impact councils who have been acting positively to ensure supply. Whilst many construction sites across the country have now reopened, many remain closed or are operating at reduced capacity, which will inevitably result in a fall in delivery rates over the coming months, and potentially beyond.

This could put councils and their communities at risk of being subject to the national presumption in favour penalty because they cannot meet national Housing Delivery Test requirements and/or their 5-year housing land supply is compromised, for example, if anticipated delivery rates fall on 'deliverable' sites. This leaves them exposed to speculative planning applications for development outside of the Local Plan. This could potentially result in homes that do not meet local needs, in places where they are not needed and undermine community trust in the planning system. To ensure this does not happen, the presumption in favour sanctions in relation to 5-year housing land supply and the Housing Delivery Test need to be suspended.

Rules around the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should also be changed to allow councils to provide upfront investment for vital infrastructure to unlock housing growth. This would require a change to the CIL regulations to enable councils to borrow against future CIL receipts. This could then subsequently be clawed-back from associated developments.

5 LGA press release – February 2020

6 LGA press release – January 2020

Ensuring the right mix of rental and home ownership options

It is vital that new government initiatives do not have the unintended consequence of reducing the general provision of social and affordable rented homes. This will ensure that councils can ensure the right mix of homes – to rent and buy – are available and affordable to people that need them. For example, government proposals for First Homes could make a valuable contribution to the mix of housing options, but local planning authorities must maintain the levers to deliver them alongside other housing products in a way that addresses housing need identified locally as part of the planning process.

Bringing forward council housebuilding investment programmes

As we emerge from the emergency measures into recovery, there is a real opportunity for councils to prime the local economy through bringing public investment projects, including housing, forward. In the short to medium term councils will need funding flexibilities to pump prime recovery. To do this the Government should expedite payment of outstanding Housing Infrastructure Fund allocations and other outstanding grants which support housing delivery; relax conditions so that councils can focus on delivery; enable cross virement to support delivery and extend deadlines and flexibilities on completion timescales.

The Government should also bring forward the £10bn Single Housing Infrastructure Fund[7] set out in the Conservative manifesto for public sector related schemes, especially those that include significant levels of affordable housing and key worker accommodation. In addition, the confirmed £12bn extension of the Affordable Homes Programme should be increased and brought forward quickly, with an increased focus on homes for social rent. Increasing the grant levels per home would also help to maximise the number of schemes that are viable.

Government investment in a further phase of the One Public Estate[8] programme, to include a further round of the Land Release Fund would also help to quickly combat barriers which would otherwise make land unusable for development.

Reducing the timescales involved in the administering of grants would provide delivery certainty and consideration should also be given to ensuring that allocations support climate smart recovery e.g. enable delivery of zero carbon homes.

Whilst these measures would provide a short-term immediate boost to housing and infrastructure delivery, going forward there needs to be a general consolidation of grants going to local government and their partners to give greater control of existing budgets, reverse the trajectory of smaller competitive and fragmented funds, reduce administrative overhead and support local innovation to tackle cross-sector priority issues.

Right to Buy reform

The Right to Buy (RTB) policy gives tenants the right to buy their home at a

7 MHCLG: Planning for the Future

8 One Public Estate

discount, with the amount of discount dependent upon the length of time as a social tenant. Whilst RTB has helped many families get on the housing ladder, the current policy including the restrictions around the use of Right to Buy 1-4-1 receipts are a barrier to the delivery of replacement homes sold under the scheme.

LGA research[9] showed that between 2012/13 and 2018/19 there were 79,119 homes sold and only around a quarter, 21,270, were replaced in the same period.

Councils urgently need reform of the RTB scheme to enable the delivery of new homes. In addition to being able to set discounts locally and retain 100 per cent of sales receipts, councils need flexibility to increase the proportion of RTB receipts that can be used for a replacement home and combine them with Homes England and other government funding streams. Further, the deadline for spending Right to Buy receipts should be extended to at least five years.

Ensuring the right mix of rental and home ownership options

It is vital that new government initiatives do not have the unintended consequence of reducing the general provision of social and affordable rented homes. This will ensure that councils can ensure the right mix of homes – to rent and buy – are available and affordable to people that need them. For example, government proposals for First Homes[10] could make a valuable contribution to the mix of housing options, but local planning authorities must maintain the levers to deliver them alongside other housing products in a way that addresses housing needs identified locally as part of the planning process.

Decarbonisation of housing

Increasing the quality and carbon neutrality of both new build and existing housing stock will be integral to the wider transition necessary to achieve net zero carbon. This should include giving councils the flexibility they require, to set standards above the building regulations to ensure they can meet their own ambitions to achieve net zero carbon, support better quality housing, and develop and grow a skills base in the newly emerging green economy.

Councils should also have the tools to become exemplars for using new smart technologies and sustainable construction methods. This should be supported by appropriate investment. As part of this the Government should urgently bring forward its commitment to a £3.8bn capital Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund[11].

Cllr David Renard is Chairman of the Local Government Association's Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board

9 LGA press release – March 2020

10 LGA response to MHCLG First Homes consultation

11 Conservative Manifesto 2019 – costings document

A country fit for heroes (reprise)?

Paul Dossett
Head of Local Government, Grant Thornton UK LLP

It is no coincidence that the two most consistent and successful phases of house building (with strong political consensus) in this country have come in the aftermath of the cataclysmic events of World War I and World War II[1].

The upheaval brought about by war uncovered many things about Britain but most particularly the deep inequalities in society, brutally exposed through the lack of basic provision of education, healthcare and good housing. The devastation wreaked by wartime bombing between 1940-44 also meant that there was a basic rebuild needed in many of our towns and cities.

The coronavirus pandemic has already strongly shocked our economy and exposed glaring health inequalities with early data suggesting that COVID-19 takes a particularly hard toll on the more deprived communities in our society. The notion of 'key workers' and the collective recognition of the huge, and underappreciated value they add to our nation has been perhaps one of the defining themes of the past two months. The contributions of health workers, care workers, refuse collectors, delivery drivers, transport and food retail workers are now trumpeted in many quarters. Whilst recognising that stereotyping is not helpful and with some obvious exceptions, it is a fact to observe that there are a number of key characteristics that our country's key workers' can often share, which include low pay and living in rented (often poor quality and overcrowded) accommodation.

It was evident that there was a housing crisis before COVID-19 came along. Demand was outstripping supply, there were capacity issues in construction, a lack of public sector building, low affordability and many other issues. Government and the housing sector have clearly recognised this as evidenced by the many initiatives taken forward.

Led by the work of Homes England, this has included:

- the release of government land and improvements in the planning system;
- new schemes for first time buyers;
- the increased use of modern methods of construction alongside mixed tenure development;

1 MHCLG and Construction Products Association house building data.

- expansion of housing association activity;
- innovative use of section 106 monies; and
- the introduction of local authority housing companies to ensure affordable, state subsidised rents.

Though these actions are of value as individual initiatives, the approach does not often feel cohesive. Rather than an overarching and comprehensive strategy, the actions taken instead provide "reactive response" to the latest version of the "housing crisis". By definition, these initiatives reflect the piecemeal and limited policy initiatives that tend to characterise relative periods of economic stability.

COVID-19 has shattered economic stability to a similar degree as the two world wars[2]. The Chancellor is borrowing huge sums to fund businesses and workers as well as responding to the cost of addressing the pandemic. Local councils have seen their income drop significantly as the impact of the lockdown shatters local economic activity, from tourism and leisure to high street retail.

So how do we address "the housing crisis" in the context of an existential threat to the British economy? Just as importantly, how do we ensure our key workers, our new heroes of the Thursday night applause, are front and centre of such a response. The housing response needs to move away from the piecemeal towards a comprehensive and strategic response, with five key pillars with the key worker demographic at its heart.

These should include:

- **Public housebuilding.** This will involve more borrowing, but we need a bold and ambitious target to build at least one million new public sector properties at social rents by 2025. This should involve a comprehensive and deep partnership between Homes England and local authorities and underpinned by a need to minimise the carbon footprint.
- **Private sector housing needs a rocket boost** with significant Government supported investment in modern methods of construction and consideration of required workforce needed to meet capacity. This needs to go hand in hand with a major recruitment drive into all facets of the housing industries. This should include national training initiatives to support workers from other sectors whose employment has been affected by the pandemic.
- **Strategic authorities based on existing local government footprints** across the country to remove the inconsistent patchwork quilt of current arrangements so that there is consistency between local, county and national strategic priorities. They should be legally tasked and funded for development of comprehensive infrastructure plans to support housing initiatives in their areas with a strong remit for improving public transport, supporting green energy initiatives and developing public realms which create a sense of community and belonging.

2 The Bank of England's May 2020 economic forecast indicates that COVID-19 could push the British economy into the fastest and deepest recession in 300 years.

- **Building on existing initiatives to improve security of tenure and quality of accommodation**, a new partnership is needed between landlord and tenants that provides a consistent national/regional footing to ensure that housing is a shared community responsibility. This should, like the response to the pandemic, be part of a shared community narrative based on state, business and local people.
- **Putting key workers at the heart of the Housing strategy**. The country appears to have discovered the importance of key workers. The people that keep the country running and whose contribution is never usually recognised financially or in terms of social esteem. There are several existing key worker accommodation initiatives, but they are local and inconsistent. We need a comprehensive strategy which focuses on key worker needs, including quality of accommodation, affordable mortgages/rents, proximity to workplaces and above all, a sense of priority on the housing ladder for those who keep the country running in good times and bad and are the best of us in every sense.

Housing is a basic need and if key workers feel valued in their place in housing priorities, we will have made a giant step forward. Key workers are not the only group in need of help of course. Utilising the momentum behind key workers that their role in COVID-19 has brought into focus, could help kickstart housing initiatives that help all those in need.

Paul Dossett, Head of Local Government, Grant Thornton UK LLP

More than just the houses

Elizabeth Froude
Group Chief Executive, Platform Housing

Platform Housing is a large Housing Association spread coast to coast across the Midlands. They manage c.47,000 homes and are a strategic partner with Homes England. In the past three years Platform Housing has built 4,600 homes of which roughly 1,000 were for sale as shared ownership, the rest retained as social and affordable rent and some built on behalf of a local authority partner.

Our current plans are that we will continue to add a further 2,000-2,500 homes to our stockholding each year and to achieve this we will build out larger developments and develop strategic relationships with local authorities and housebuilders across our area of operation.

Prior to COVID-19 we were seeing regional differences in the nature of properties, customers and market resilience across England. In the Midlands we continued to see shared ownership selling at solid prices and initial share being sustained. We build mostly family homes for a domestic and local customer base and often find that customer interest can be carried from one development scheme to the next in our geography and so have a customer base which is dependable if you build a quality product. This localised focus means that 30% of the homes we build are bought by key workers, who are integral to their local communities and we keep our pricing at a level which ensures accessibility for moderate household incomes.

This regional variation will, if anything, become even more noticeable as people's working locations, and therefore home locations, change post-COVID-19. The mortality and infection rates will undoubtedly affect people's desire to work, travel and live as much in large cities. There can also be no doubt that as the economy comes under pressure there will be an increased need for affordable rented homes.

The housing association sector is about so much more than just the houses and this was never more visible than the way in which we voluntarily stepped up to support our wider communities in the darkest moments. We shared PPE, delivered food, supported local authorities in delivering services, got homeless people in to safe housing, funded foodbanks and supported residents financially whilst they waited for the benefits system to catch up with payments. All of which is ongoing, in addition to the rent holidays and growing arrears which will continue for some time to come.

All of this means that we have to balance how we maximise our cashflow and minimise cash loss to continue to deliver critical services, at the same time as building houses, improving safety and reducing carbon impact.

Creating a degree of certainty will deliver in the longer term

So the main task is creating as much certainty as possible that we will be building a known product with a known future income stream and have a solid plan B to release capital employed.

When COVID-19 arrived we had 190 sales due in the coming months and like all house builders our initial concern was that the mortgage lenders would contract from the market. What we have seen as things start to settle is that the funders and the levels of mortgage available are still there as well as the buyer commitment. Continued government purview with the banking sector, to ensure this remains the case, will undoubtedly support the shared ownership and sales markets.

As all homes we build are effectively funded by our existing balance sheet and 80-90% or more of the cost has to be raised from funders and investors, it is critical that we are able to demonstrate a stable and sound business exists and that we deliver on our business plans.

The first key element of this is stability of our rental streams and so certainty from the Government that we will not find ourselves building homes based on one level of subsidy and then find a rent cut means we are having to increase the level of subsidy would be the first critical condition needed. This is not a way of simply asking for future rent increases, but about a consistent indexation we can build in to our business planning and fund raising plans. The more we subsidise every property built the fewer houses we can build.

Platform Housing and our board still have a true desire to continue to build and build more. Therefore, the second element of stability is one which would help to maintain a full and strong development pipeline. The agreement to a long-term grant programme for us as a strategic partner would ensure stability of delivery for potentially the next 10 years. The more traditional three-year cycles of grant programmes meant that we lost production due to the uncertainty of what was coming at the end of each programme. The discussion about a long-term framework has been ongoing for some time and one which Homes England understands.

Sharing the risk of schemes hitting the ground in uncertain markets

Our annual development budget is hundreds of millions of pounds and as we start new projects, we are guessing about the valuations of the properties, but want to keep construction working. For us it is not all about the ability to sell, but about being able to use the future value as security for funding.

If the scheme were to take a sizeable impairment before completion it would fundamentally affect the creditworthiness of the sector, as it technically increases our gearing, and as it currently stands the valuation of the grant repayable remains at the same level as it was on first investment. So any downward valuation is borne wholly from the Housing Association share.

Some form of conceptual agreement to share the downward valuation pro-rata would sustain our balance sheet gearing and enable ongoing funding levels to be attained. The alternative being a longer term government funding programme, like the one created during the COVID-19 crisis, which is easily accessible, as supporting debt is always about availability of security and lower security requirements would enable more debt raising to happen.

Just build houses and finalise the tenure closer to completion

To minimise the risk to new development projects starting in the current environment, it is important that we have tenure flexibility on a site. Housing associations have the ability to own and manage a number of different tenures from social and affordable rent, to private rented, shared ownership and outright sales. Not all are supported by grants.

This flexibility would mean that the most in demand type of housing is delivered when the site is concluded and would prevent the stalling of completion as well as ensuring quick occupancy. This would mean a renewed cashflow for building further houses and could be as simple as applying recycled grant to schemes as more grant applicable tenures are put into the mix over time. It does require a wider number of parties to be supportive and local authorities and planning departments to buy in to this, in conjunction with grant flexibility. It would mean houses will just keep being built.

Where bigger places need to be built to support housing need there will continue to be a huge funding bill for the associated infrastructure. As we move forward local authorities and housebuilders will all find their cashflows tighter and feasibilities less viable. How this infrastructure is funded, as it is such a key enabler, could be a further good use of government investment. Even if it were to be repayable during the construction cycle or repaid with completed homes to local authorities, as we often see in large regeneration projects.

Land availability is always a theme as well as the long running discussion about releasing publicly-owned land. In this time of necessity the Government may never again see a better rationale for consolidating land held by many public bodies and mobilising its productivity. There could also be an opportunity to motivate other commercial organisations, like retail chains, to release land with tax breaks if they are supporting house building.

A new norm for building process and administration

The one thing this lockdown has taught us generally, is that where we can apply alternative technology to a process we should. It will enable a quick change of operating models should we get a recurrence and accelerate productivity in the meantime.

- Can building inspectors, planner NABC etc do inspections on video calls?
- We will undoubtedly see disputes about time extensions, LAD's and cost increases. So some sector bodies, e.g CLC and RICS, may want to start thinking about agreeing a "good practice" protocol in advance.
- The biggest issue we had with processing building contracts or sales completions during lockdown was the need to physically sign and seal documents. We were having to ask people to travel to allow this to

happen. In this digital age perhaps the Land Registry could work on a process which aligns with other government departments and allows digital approvals to happen.

My closing gambit is that the Government response to maintaining economic viability during this has been truly impressive, but we have a long way to go to recover from this. The fundamental basis of a healthy and successful life is a safe and secure home.

Elizabeth Froude is Group Chief Executive at Platform Housing

Putting people at the heart of placemaking

Tony Pidgley CBE
Chairman, The Berkeley Group

As the homebuilding industry looks to Government for support in this time of national crisis, it must also look in the mirror, and decide what more it can give back in return.

We have to show politicians and taxpayers they are doing more than just propping up the system. We have to offer them lasting positive change that will benefit local communities, and wider society, for generations to come.

Above all else, homebuilders must become real placemakers, who put people at the very heart of their thinking. This means approaching every site as an opportunity to build good homes and to make life better for the communities around them. When every decision, big or small, is made with this purpose in mind, we create fantastic places and the benefits flow out well beyond the site boundaries.

The industry already has the skills and resources to deliver sustainable, integrated places like this and to create positive outcomes on a much greater scale. Now is the time to turn that best practice into everyday practice, so each project makes a clear social, environmental and economic contribution and leaves a valuable legacy local people can clearly see.

As a start, the industry must embrace higher standards and commitments that support the common good. My list would include:

- Embrace community engagement - going the extra mile to seek out and listen to local people, then deliver the places and amenities they care about most
- Create inclusive, mixed and tenure blind communities - with homes of all tenures built to the same high design standards, so everyone feels equal and welcome
- 100% compliance with National Space Standards - so every new home offers the generous living spaces people need
- Quality outside space with every home - to support people's health, wellbeing and quality of life
- Higher quality public amenities - shaped in partnership with local people so they meet real needs and bring people and communities together

- Prioritise long term brownfield regeneration - focusing more industry resources on returning wasted sites to community use
- Embrace net biodiversity gain – to give communities beautiful green spaces and to create Nature Recovery Networks where wildlife can thrive
- Deliver Zero Carbon Homes by 2030 – ensuring the homebuilding sector plays its part in tackling climate change
- Deliver electric charging infrastructure – to enhance air quality and enable a more sustainable transport system
- Deliver carbon positive building operations - through driving down energy use, using cleaner power and offsetting more emission than we produce
- Prioritise Modern Methods of Construction – working with the Government to expand the capacity of precision manufacturing and deliver more low carbon, high quality homes.

All of this is deliverable, affordable and will be good for business, as well as society. It would also help the industry to repay public support faster and set the backdrop for a collaborative response to this crisis.

We have already seen the benefits of public–private collaboration in the way site operations have transformed to keep people safe, and to keep sites and businesses open. Government deserves great credit for making this happen and we need to carry that pragmatic, partnership approach forward as we face up to the next challenges.

The mortgage market has a key role to play, so support for remote valuations and action to clear the applications backlog will be important early steps. Then, we need to work closely with the banking sector to ensure a supply of longer term mortgages on terms that ordinary working households can afford.

Restoring demand will be vital after such an unsettling crisis. Suspending Stamp Duty is the most powerful tool to achieve this and would create a compelling reason to buy now, not later. Extending the current version of the Help to Buy scheme would be another valuable demand-side boost, and would keep homeownership within reach for many thousands of people.

Taken together, decisive action to cut Stamp Duty and boost Help to Buy would send a very powerful message about government commitment to housing delivery, helping to lift sentiment and bring buyers back to the marketplace. These are two very big asks, but the cost should be balanced against the benefits of a revived homebuilding sector and supply of new homes.

Another crucial challenge will be around planning and project delivery. Here, we need pragmatism, flexibility, speed and a shared commitment to keep sites moving forward so we can deliver the homes and amenities people need.

If we collaborate, and work in the spirit of partnership, we can speed up decision making, solve problems and overcome any rigid bureaucratic processes which could otherwise slow our momentum. This is already happening, with local authorities acting with urgency to flex CIL and s106 requirements in the wake of the lock down. As the financial challenges become clear, we need to continue in that collaborative spirit and find a balanced approach that enables housing delivery to be maintained.

As a package, these measures have the potential to restore confidence, stimulate demand and overcome barriers within the planning system which could frustrate a rapid recovery. They would help to keep many thousands of people in productive employment, deliver the high quality homes and amenities communities need and play a vital role in leading the national economy back to growth.

But we can't have something for nothing. Public support must trigger lasting change within the industry and a commitment to put people's long term wellbeing at the very heart of every plan.

Tony Pidgley CBE is Chairman of The Berkeley Group

Leadership in placemaking

Andrew Geldard
Chief Communications Officer, Willmott Dixon

We don't have much time to lose. The national lockdown has brought many parts of economic life to the sort of standstill not seen since both world wars and, in living memory, the 1974 three-day week or more recent 2008 financial crisis.

The Office for Budgetary Responsibility predicts an eye-watering 35% quarterly hit to GDP and based on applications for Universal Credit, unemployment is set to rise to levels last seen during the early 1980s.

This will have profound implications for housing. According to forecasts from estate agents Savills, house prices could plummet around 10 – 15% before returning to pre-crisis levels. Added to this is the housing and mortgage market now frozen for the time being.

With no firm exit plan in place, the housing industry must work more than ever with central and local government to implement an urgent case for accelerating delivery of new homes. Last September, research from the National Housing Federation estimated that over 8.4 million people in England are in unaffordable, insecure or unsuitable homes, with over 400,000 people either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This is an even bigger issue than simply building homes to tackle the numbers who need them. As a domestic political issue with great emotive power, housing strikes at our sense of belonging, of identity as both an individual and as part of a wider community.

The answers to local housing are capable of being unlocked within the individual contexts of people and place, and will need a multi-layered and differentiating approach.

One way towards giving clear leadership is consistency, and that means a housing minister who stays in post for a few years not months. This would send a strong message that the Government is serious about making important inroads to working with public and private sectors to solve the supply 'log jam'.

So what changes do we need to see with planning and development to unlock the economic potential of housing for local economies and ensure the desired social outcomes of affordable and decent housing for people are delivered? What should be the role of central government, councils and industry?

Central government response

One good place for Government to start was to delay implementation of Reverse Charge VAT for a twelve month period to October 2021. This frees up important cash flow for SMEs to operate and build, giving them the lifeblood they need in turbulent economic times.

Using its financial muscle, the Government must take the further step to maintain confidence in the market by being prepared to undertake the stock purchase of housing completed by Homes England.

With an eye on the transition of the economy to clean growth and climate change targets, the Government could also embed net zero carbon targets for 2030 to 2050 in planning today for large infrastructure and housing developments.

And working with local government, Whitehall must seize on the burning platform of necessary digital innovation to both streamline and digitise the planning system to make it more efficient and resilient.

Local government response

In their turn, councils should offer to publish revised pipelines of projects and to accelerate the design, development, procurement and business cases for public sector housing projects. Business cases and procurement routes need to take account of constraints and costs created by government guidance.

As placemakers, local government must lead efforts at regeneration and renewal. Principally, this will involve developing the infrastructure chapters of local growth plans and local industrial strategies.

In flexing their planning powers, local authorities must fully implement presumption of offsite, and seek to increase the number of projects making use of these and the pre-manufactured value of these projects.

Council housing building could reach 1970s levels

I believe we could see the biggest programme of council house building in over forty years. Councils built over 100,000 homes a year back then, yet delivered fewer than 3,000 as recently as 2016-17. Now is the time to hit these heights again.

This is important for a number of reasons. It gives councils direct control in meeting the housing needs of their communities and reducing homelessness, while new homes also generate revenues for front line services. Also, mixed-tenure development sales receipts can be used to cross subsidise more council housing, as councils make use of brownfield sites ripe for new homes. It should also be added that in Homes England, authorities have an astute facilitator of new opportunities.

I'm seeing this new era of local authority house building through our work with authorities like Doncaster, Liverpool, Wigan, Bristol, Leeds and Westminster to create a substantial number of homes available for affordable social rent. That's possible as councils take a long-term view for their local tenure needs.

Yet this brings a new challenge; having the skills to meet the demand. After years of sporadic house building, in-house development teams have waned. There are lots of good people delivering homes, but more are needed by councils.

Finding the right resource

One solution is hiring from the private sector, and this has been on the rise as authorities recruit from developers and housing associations. But even this talent pool is not infinite and there is also the issue of salary expectations, with hard pressed budgets not always able to afford the packages required.

Solving this needs bold thinking. I think one sustainable long-term option is to develop mechanisms that encourage the transfer of skills from private sector companies to public bodies. For example if a council chooses a long-term development partner, it should be stipulated that a legacy of this relationship will be equipping the council with an experienced in-house team by the end of the partnership, so they are able to self-deliver in the future.

This is about being imaginative in solving a capacity issue that will only get bigger.

Andrew Geldard is Chief Communications Officer at Willmott Dixon

Building communities – ensuring a positive legacy for those hardest hit by COVID-19

Lawrence Morris
Policy Officer, National Housing Federation

The lockdown has given the country a new found appreciation for what matters in a 'home' and in the places that we live. The need for high quality, affordable homes within strong, supportive communities has never been clearer. Investment in the nation's homes and in our communities should lie at the centre of our response to this crisis – with the aim that communities can emerge stronger than they were before.

We have all experienced this crisis differently but some people and communities have been particularly badly-affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Tragically, those living in more deprived areas and members of minority groups have experienced higher COVID-19 morality rates, shining a light on the inequality that communities across England have been grappling with for many years. There have also been profound social and economic consequences of the lockdown period; older people in unsupported homes, and families stuck in overcrowded conditions. People's businesses and livelihoods have been badly impacted and job losses across the country have already been great and are likely to get much worse. Difficult economic times will invariably bring increased household debt, poverty and homelessness. Where there was already significant demand on social housing waiting lists this pressure is likely to increase further.

COVID-19 has also highlighted previously unsung heroes across the country who have carried on their crucial work, often putting themselves and their loved ones at greater risk. Our research shows that more than two million key workers live in privately rented homes – more than a million of these are on low salaries, meaning that many key workers will struggle with high rents and lack of security.

But people, communities, organisations have also responded in exceptional ways to support each other. During the weeks of lockdown housing associations rolled out unprecedented support, particularly for vulnerable tenants including the elderly and those at greater risk through infection. They have phoned hundreds of thousands of people to offer support and helped with food, medicine and a friendly ear. They worked with national and local government to offer emergency support to rough sleepers. They helped people access government support they were entitled to. Housing associations have played their part in a community response to supporting residents through this difficult time but we know there is more that we can do.

As we look ahead to a Spending Review later this year, those who have been most affected by the crisis will be at the forefront of our minds. With the right support and working with local partners, investment in our homes and communities can ensure we emerge from this crisis socially and economically stronger.

Housing associations are a key motor for housebuilding, last year the sector started building 55,300 homes to rent and own. But housing associations are not just focussed on quantity – we do far more than simply putting a roof over people's heads. We invest long term in the communities that we are part of.

The Government should set out a long-term plan and investment programme to build a new generation of high quality, beautiful and low energy affordable homes to rent and buy. A new package should provide additional grant funding and create a ten-year affordable housing fund to include both strategic partners and continuous market engagement for non-strategic partners. It should provide homes of all tenures including homes for older people and supported housing.

In addition to the enormous social benefit a programme such as this would bring, affordable housing can also deliver a fast acting economic stimulus. Affordable housing delivers high additionality in weak market conditions, and residential construction has a high economic multiplier effect. A long-term programme is important because it allows for a tenure mix over the course of a market cycle, investing more in rented homes now when it is needed but also capturing the benefits of cross-subsidy when the housing market recovers.

It is also important that we do not let the immediate crisis dent our ambition to solve longer term but even greater challenges. Housing decarbonisation will be key to tackling climate change and hitting the net zero carbon emission targets by 2050. Investment in green infrastructure will also be key to stimulating the economy post-crisis. Housing associations, the government and industry can work together to develop and implement the technology and workforce needed to retrofit our existing homes to low carbon standards, paving the way for the improvements in the private residential sector, and boosting local economies across the country.

The Government should also use the Spending Review to double down on 'levelling up'. The economic impacts of COVID-19 will hit marginalised groups hardest - there will be significant place-based variation in the size of economic contraction resulting from the lockdown and minority groups are more likely to be economically vulnerable and exposed to loss of income. Funding should be targeted to support those in greatest need and we should adopt a placed-based approach to renewal in cities, towns and communities across the country.

Housing associations stand ready to play a vital role in the country's social and economic recovery from COVID-19. We don't just build homes - we foster strong supportive communities for those who are already our residents and for those who might be in the future. Working with government we can ensure a positive legacy for those hardest hit by COVID-19.

Lawrence Morris is Policy Officer for the National Housing Federation - the voice for not-for-profit housing associations in England

Building the backbone of an inclusive national recovery

Nigel Wilson
Chair, Homes for the North (H4N)

Everything is changing, but some things remain familiar.

COVID-19 is driving huge changes to how we live and work, how we use our homes and how we do business with each other. Homeowners, tenants, home providers and house builders are all working out what their new normal will look like. For housing associations in particular, there is nowhere to hide from change. We provide many of the homes that people are now largely confined to. We build new homes for sale and rent. We are commercial actors and recipients of public money. As mature institutions with roots in the communities we serve, we are playing a full and active civic role at this time of crisis by contacting isolated tenants, supporting local food banks and helping rough sleepers off the street.

Yet some things remain familiar. Pre-existing government agendas around building more homes, boosting home ownership and levelling-up the country will reassert themselves as we forge the national recovery. This is because the drivers behind them remain in place. There is still a housing crisis in England, fuelled by demand outstripping supply. A Conservative government will continue to see home ownership as a vital aspiration to be supported. Northern towns still need investment and new policies to build a more prosperous future.

A truly inclusive national recovery requires the Government to tackle the housing crisis and deliver real improvements in the lives of those who live and work in the North. The alternative is a recovery that widens the gap between North and South and locks a generation out of homes they feel secure in and often aspire to own.

H4N perceives two key opportunities to update policy for an inclusive national recovery. One of these is about housing investment, the other is about housing land supply. Both are about how housing opportunity is shared across the English regions. If the Government gets this right, it will mean boosting the scope for new partnerships between local government and housing associations to deliver real improvements in the lives of millions. Housing associations are willing their offer their resources, local knowledge and institutional capacity to make a huge difference.

The North must be able to access the new Single Housing Infrastructure Fund

The North needs more homes, many more. Research commissioned by

H4N found that two million new homes are needed in the North by 2050 to support the delivery of the transformative ambitions of the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review, almost double long-term rates of housing delivery. The North currently has a 28% share of English households, but ONS predictions only have it contributing 18% of future demographic growth based on historic trends. In short, the North's share of working age households is falling, and this trend must be reversed if we are to deliver a Northern Powerhouse economy based on attracting and retaining a wide variety of skilled workers. This will require an approach to planning homes that references an ambitious vision of the future, rather than a diminishing echo of what has gone before.

Further research commissioned by H4N shows that the northern share of national housing investment is dropping dramatically as an unintended consequence of the last Government's funding rules. Without a change in policy, soon, economic and social growth in the North could fall further behind other regions, especially if it lacks the right homes to attract and retain skilled workers and their families.

Looking at Treasury data over 20 years, the share of UK public expenditure on housing targeted at the North has reduced from 24% to 18%, much lower than the North's share of the UK population at 23%. Indeed, with about 75% of the new £5.5bn Housing Infrastructure Fund allocated, the proportion of funds heading North is just 12%. This structured and escalating inequality is being driven by two linked policy problems.

First, the Treasury Green Book, used across Government to determine spending decisions, is intended to drive investment to areas that are able to demonstrate that the taxpayer will get a good return. Even if one accepts that this premise should be king, it is far from certain that investment is not often supporting schemes that would happen anyway without Government support. Second, encouraged by Green Book guidance, Homes England channels investment streams to areas where affordability pressures are the highest. Public money is thereby pushed towards overheated housing markets in the South East and away from areas in the North (and elsewhere), thereby entrenching regional disparities.

Following what is called the '80:20 rule', 80% of Homes England funding set aside for five funding programmes is targeted at 'highest affordability pressure' areas, which are identified using median house price to median income ratios. The problem for the North is that just four out of 72 Northern local authorities are in this category and able to qualify for funding. In addition, the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP) allocated to Strategic Partners highlights a similar pattern. The share allocated to the North is calculated at 22.4%, but when allocations to London are taken into account the Northern figure falls to just over 11% of the national allocation.

An unspoken national spatial strategy for housing investment has therefore come into force almost by accident. Driving public investment in housing away from the North, and towards the South East, surely is not sustainable for a government that is committed to rebalancing the economy by levelling up in the North.

The spring announcement by the Chancellor of an intention to review the Green Book to support levelling-up is very welcome. Our view is that the focus of this reform should be to recognise levelling-up as a formal objective in spending decisions, whilst allowing the wider social value of better housing to be recognised. But it is crucial that emerging guidance is reflected in funding decisions made by Homes England. Specifically, the 80:20 rule should be scrapped and replaced with a housing investment strategy that matches economic rebalancing targets. The proposed Single Housing Investment Fund featured in the Spring Budget is a huge opportunity to make sure that northern areas are able to access funding to deliver new homes in the right places.

Levelling up housing land supply in the North

An inclusive national recovery will only be possible if sufficient land for new homes is identified by local councils across all regions of England.

In 2018, the Government put in place a new method for assessing how many homes are needed in local areas in England. The (very sensible) intention was to end technical arguments at Local Plan examinations about which of a number of methods should be used.

However, one upshot of the new housing need assessment method was to slash, overnight, apparent housing need across the North, which fell in Yorkshire and the Humber by 25%, in the North East by 20% and in the North West by 24%. In comparison, housing need assessments in the South East went through the roof. Much like decisions about the distribution of housing investment, the new assessment of housing need relies upon affordability ratios, which inherently disadvantage the North by adopting the crude assessment that housing need can be predicted by what has happened in the past; a logic that would simply not be entertained when planning for economic growth and transport investment, for example.

Government rightly points out that the national method for assessing housing need provides a minimum level of housebuilding that local authorities are encouraged to go beyond. But this fails to address the obvious disadvantage that the North has been put at, as well as the abundant and growing evidence that councils are mostly rewriting their local plans to reflect the lower, minimum assessment and treat it as a target. Recent research commissioned by H4N indicates a reduction of nearly 5,000 homes (per annum) in local plans across the North between 2017 and 2020.

In response to concerns widely held across the home building industry in the North, the secretary of state has confirmed that the method will be reviewed as part of forthcoming planning reforms. This is a golden opportunity for the Government to encourage Northern councils to boost the supply of housing land to support economic and social growth and deliver an inclusive national recovery.

Northern housing associations and the national recovery

These reforms, to the geography of planning housing need and distributing housing funding, would result in more quality homes in the North and more levelling-up. Reform would also provide local government and its partners with more levers to pull in the pursuit of local prosperity.

Housing associations are ideally placed to act as partners to government at all levels in renewing Northern communities and building an inclusive national recovery. Modern housing associations are mature and powerful institutions with deep roots in communities, going back decades and in some cases more than a century. We are simultaneously a safety net for vulnerable people and many on low incomes, as well as a springboard for those who aspire to own a home of their own.

Our institutional weight is often found in areas where local government lacks the financial and human resources to effect the positive changes that politicians envisage. Housing associations are among the most engaged and adept organisations when it comes to delivering and measuring social value in communities.

Housing associations are therefore ideally positioned to help. There is an opportunity in the months ahead to invent new democratic partnerships with local government to deliver more homes, better places and more resilient communities. With the right policy initiatives from national government, around planning and funding new homes, as well as on devolution of powers to local and regional government, tangible improvements to millions of lives across the North are within reach, even in these most testing of times.

Nigel Wilson (Chief Executive, Gentoo) is the Chair of Homes for the North (H4N)

PART B

The role of investment in place in leading renewal

The second part of this collection of essays is from:

- Darren Carter, Investment Director, Social Property, Cheyne Capital
- Jackie Sadek, Chief Operating Officer, UK Regeneration
- Nick Fenton, Kent Developers Group; Jonathan Buckwell, Developers East Sussex and Mark Curle, Essex Developers Group are all members of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's Housing and Development Group
- Mark Quinn, CEO/Chairman, Quinn Estates

These essays explore how sound investment can help unlock latent place potential and lead the way to renewal in our localities.

Themes include:

- Protecting social investment and new partnership models for investment.
- Extending the role of Homes England as housing accelerator with new powers over surplus public sector land and support of spatial plan delivery.
- Why supporting SMEs can accelerate growth and the role of garden settlements.
- Finding new forms of funding to inject new liquidity into the housing market – including the use of SIPPs for residential property investment, greater deployment of patient capital for social investment and pension fund investment.

Protecting social investment

Darren Carter
Investment Director, Social Property, Cheyne Capital

To set the scene, the Cheyne Impact Real Estate Trust is the second social impact investment fund, newly launched in 2020 by Cheyne Capital, a leading European Asset Manager. The Trust aims to work with councils, housing associations and charities from across the UK to provide affordable and keyworker housing as well as supported living facilities, care provision and mixed tenure developments. The objective of the Trust is to balance a positive social outcome, with a sustainable financial return for its socially motivated investors.

The scale of the business interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequential restrictions on the free movement of people, and the ensuing recession, will be determined by the effectiveness of the measures the Government put in place during the pandemic and how it acts when lockdown restrictions are eased.

Substantial fiscal response is required from the Government to stem rampant unemployment and promote a faster recovery. The fiscal response needs to be coupled with monetary injections from central banks to ensure an orderly functioning of the financial markets to avoid a severe liquidity crunch. The effectiveness of this response will determine the impact of the operating fundamentals on the housing market and investment values.

As an acquirer and developer of property to rent for social purposes, the Trust is less impacted by the general housing market given that it focuses predominantly on a rental model reliant on LHA, affordable and key worker rental demand. Given that there was already a high demand for rented accommodation pre COVID-19 and in particular accommodation for social uses, the Trust doesn't foresee any drop in demand for these types of uses and actually expects the opposite. We have unfortunately already seen a large number of businesses cease trading during the lockdown resulting in thousands of job loses which will only add to the local authority pressures to find quality, suitable accommodation for those families that now find themselves in need.

The Trust acquires restricted and unrestricted property from developers and therefore the developers need to be well capitalised or have access to funding to enable new schemes to be built out. Banks are already showing they are reducing their appetite to lend, not only by reducing valuations but also removing some mortgage types which will impact on the ability for residential buyers to acquire property.

The Trust is therefore particularly emotive against this backdrop; only a small percentage of the properties the Trust develops will be sold in the open market so the Trust is less reliant on a buyer confidence, a buoyant housing market and availability of mortgage providers. Virtually all of the units the Trust will develop or acquire will be rented, on an affordable basis, to individuals in need of good quality housing.

As well as banks reducing their appetite for residential mortgages, they are more likely to be wary of their commercial lending to developers. This is an area into which Homes England or the local authority could step in and provide loans to developers, at normal commercial lending rates, thus providing these organisations with an additional income stream and enabling the developers to build out their sites.

Contractors historically work on tight margins but are a necessity to build out schemes. There could be opportunities for recapitalisation finance to be provided by Homes England to ensure contractors have the liquidity to stay trading and enable schemes to be completed.

The planning process has been widely criticised over the years as being too slow and with too much red tape, which has greatly slowed down the time large housing schemes take to receive planning permission. Local authorities should review their planning processes to find efficiencies that allow developers and contractors to deliver development projects quicker, thus benefiting the whole economy. The Government has recently increased Local Housing Allowance Rates which increases the viability of affordable housing allowing more units to be acquired or developed for affordable rents.

Taking all the above into account, we believe the Trust is well positioned to continue to assist social organisations in a post-COVID-19 environment. Nevertheless, there are some recommendations we would like to see implemented to ensure availability of stock to provide to social organisations. These recommendations include:

- Homes England / local government to provide commercial loans to developers and contractors to fill the lending gap where banks have pared back.
- Reduce red tape in the planning process to speed up the delivery of new sites.

Darren Carter is Investment Director, Social Property, at Cheyne Capital

Brave new partnerships

Jackie Sadek
COO, UK Regeneration

Just a few weeks into the lockdown the Government held urgent talks with housebuilders about extending the Help to Buy scheme. Part of the effort to get the industry building again, just as soon as is practicable. No surprises there. If the economy is indeed to shrink by more than a third, then it is wholly right and proper that the powers-that-be are rebooting their most popular housing policy of recent times - even if that policy is "economically illiterate", as was claimed in open session at last year's Conservative Party Conference. Everyone must do all they can.

However, the hard fact remains that Help to Buy is still a demand side measure. And we are in desperate need of things to stimulate the supply side. It is a harsh fact that, once the COVID-19 crisis subsides, the housing crisis will still be with us. It's been several decades in the making.

One thing we can predict with confidence is that there will be massive Government intervention into stimulating the economy as we come out of this. The big question of the last decade has been: just *how* do you stimulate housing supply? After all, if there had been any silver bullets, wouldn't they have been fired before?

One hint can be found in the words of the indefatigable Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of Homes England, in their end of year statement (issued in early April, a few weeks into lockdown) saying "Our ability to overcome difficulties as a sector has been hugely evident in the last few weeks. Thanks to the hard work, creativity and determination of our partners right across the industry, we have managed to do some significant business. Continuing to build a development pipeline becomes even more important at a time like this."

This was followed in short order by a statement from Homes England, straight after the early May bank holiday, declaring that it is to step up as "master developer" to create development opportunities and provide a pipeline of sites for housebuilders of all sizes. They'd acquired 19 sites in the last financial year worth £180m, with the land having the capacity for 5,000 new homes across the country. It sends a clear signal of how the Government intend its housing agency to take a long-term view of housing demand in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, going forward, Homes England is looking to acquire challenging or stalled sites, unable to progress without public sector intervention, and use its resources and expertise to unlock them for development and bring them back to the market, ultimately resulting in much-needed new homes. Presumably there will be a steady supply of such sites, post-pandemic. On all the sites, Homes England will deliver the infrastructure before marketing the site to developers in parcels, accelerating the delivery of new homes. Simon Dudley, interim Homes England Chair, said: "I want to reassure the sector that Homes England is... investing in a long-term pipeline of development opportunities to support market recovery. The need for new housing will remain a priority." By acquiring difficult sites and addressing the barriers which have previously stopped them moving into production, Homes England is making sure they can deliver their mission to accelerate the construction of new homes while addressing the short-term disruption caused by the impact of coronavirus.

Therefore, Homes England are leading the charge back on the re-emergence of a "master developer" or even a "benevolent stewardship" type model. It is no accident that they are custodians of the new Garden Communities programme, the ethos of which only serves to build this narrative. But who will join in from the private sector? Let's not look to the volume of house builders. Not because they are the villains of the piece, but because they are further down the supply chain, with formulaic business models, which only really work for serviced plots for 200 homes at a time (and a maintenance of Help to Buy of course). Instead we need to look to the models pursued by the likes of Urban & Civic, Harworth Estates and Grosvenor, and now unashamedly being emulated by my own company, UK Regeneration. We take our inspiration from way before we had council housing; going back in history to seek for good models of high quality, popular and locally affordable homes, many of which were provided by the private sector; "model villages" built to house workers in places like Port Sunlight, Bourneville, New Lanark and Saltaire. Another touchstone was the old estates built by the likes of Guinness and Peabody. There is nothing new under the sun. It has been done before.

There is a band of newish, far less cynical, "strat-land" operators in the housing market springing up. And there are signs that this market is expanding, with firms like Cloud Wing in Bedford, who want to buy land outright, keep it for the long term, put out serviced plots to the market, whilst retaining overall control of the estate - a million miles away from the old "flipping land" brigade. And - for those, like the inestimable George Clarke, who are calling for a return to council housing - it can be tended by either the public or the private sector.

So there is a new band of partnerships emerging, whether it is Homes England directly with housebuilders, or private sector master developers, or old land-owing families, or local authority land owners supported by Homes England - or any permutation or combination therein. But at every one of these strategic sites there will be a powerful boost provided to the local economy by people working together in partnership to rebuild. It will be Brave New World stuff. It will be a series of very local place-based Marshall Plans. All indications are that the Government will be more and more transactional, coming out of the crisis, supporting those places that have stopped fighting among themselves, and have moved decisively to steer their own economic development and community regeneration.

Long termism and resilience will be the order of the day. The message is clear: Homes England is stewarding the national movement. And there is plenty of room in this market for people who wish to step up and play fair. It is a moment of reset.

Jackie Sadek is Chief Operating Officer of UK Regeneration, which is bringing forward a Garden Community in Bedfordshire, with consent for 1500 homes in the first instance. She is co-author, with Peter Bill, of "Broken Homes" an analysis of the housing crisis, to be published in September.

SMEs hold solution to national challenge

Nick Fenton, Kent Developers Group (KDG); **Jonathan Buckwell,** Developers East Sussex (DES) and **Mark Curle**, Essex Developers Group (EDG) are all members of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership's (SELEP) Housing and Development Group.

With one third of all Garden Settlements planned to be in the SELEP area, the national challenge to get Britain back building is also acutely local.

Chairing the local groups representing developers of residential, commercial and mixed-use schemes (together with landowners, property owners and planning professions), we are seeing at first hand the devastating impact that the COVID-19 emergency has had on the industry. Initially with no new starts, builders furloughed and supply chain difficulties, development was simply grinding to a halt.

As we begin to emerge from the crisis, central and local government interventions have been timely and helpful. Building has begun again. But to get to the housebuilding levels previously – and the levels the country still needs – further action is required. Major developers will play a huge role in delivering these numbers over time, but for an immediate acceleration it is to the SME sector that we must look.

Fiscal measures focussing primarily on SMEs could help to drive the recovery. This is because the SME business model requires a faster pace of activity to meet their specific requirements and a wider range of housebuilders will inevitably accelerate the rate of delivery through a greater number of outlets.

However, a first and immediate priority is an extension to the Planning Consent period for all outline and full planning permissions for residential and commercial development by 12 months. This recognises the growing anxiety and frustration within the industry that existing consents may otherwise simply slip away, with homes and jobs being lost. As in the last recession, temporary legislation is needed by way of automatic re-introduction or preferably an automatic extension (at any time over a 12 month period without having to return to planning) as has been achieved in Scotland. Flexibility is also required for Environmental Impact Assessments and other documentation that requires physical access to complete.

In addition, measures will be needed to boost confidence, defer immediate costs and stimulate demand.

Clarity, confidence and communication

Clarity, confidence and communication from the Government remains essential to emphasise the importance of the sector in building the economic recovery with guidance and clarity around current working arrangements.

We recognize the Herculean efforts already underway by local councils to ensure that planning processes continue: delays now will delay the recovery. Through delegated decision-making and prioritisation, continued government support for local councils is required to ensure that development is not stalled. Local planning authorities need clarity on site visits and on public consultation on planning applications and local plans, with councils concerned about going through the processes and then facing judicial review.

At the same time, all activity to support construction should be continued. Signals to the affordable housing sector that PWLB/HRA rates will remain low - and that now is the time to accelerate investment with debt caps removed - would all encourage planning for local growth.

Legislative/guidance changes to support the sector

As the Government's housing accelerator, the role of Homes England is going to be critical in driving positive change, recovery and building market confidence. Through targeted investment, the release of public sector land and as a guarantor - both as purchaser of last resort and within the materials supply chain - vital support could be provided to get Britain building again.

This includes clear guidance on the extension of time and costs and the legal status of undertakings (e.g. damage clauses, development finance) should they be in danger of default. With potential delays of six months plus in the completion of sites – and the potential of disputes or claims against operators - existing undertakings may make completion unviable and there is a real danger that developers may simply have to walk away. Where this is necessary, Homes England should be prepared to provide bridging finance.

There must also be an understanding that SMEs could bear the brunt of supply chain delays. There is recognition from SMEs that larger, Tier 1 housebuilders and commercial developers, will be treated as a priority when supplies return, with evidence that trade merchants are currently making their own decisions around prioritisation. While the situation is improving, we are being advised of a significant shortage on some items e.g. plasterboard, where production plants have been closed for several weeks with potential delays of up to 12 weeks before SMEs can be supplied and Tier 1 forward orders taking priority due to their existing trading agreements. This may further delay the commencement of SME works with associated default issues – a real concern that we continue to raise.

More broadly, starter homes could help stimulate the market, with purchasers able to move into new (or empty) properties. More expensive, larger homes may have chains with the danger to sales and housebuilders potentially stopping building until re-sold. At the same time, for designated Garden Settlements and brownland development, there should be proactive engagement on planning pre-conditions – some of which could potentially be waived - to accelerate delivery or surveys to enable development to begin (ie traffic, archaeology, etc).

Strategic planning for growth and infrastructure also remains critical – recognising new powers in Mayoral Combined Authorities, new local spatial planning powers should be reintroduced outside of cities to drive high quality development.

Fiscal/investment measures

Our respective Developer Group memberships includes businesses of all sizes. We support Tier 1 developers and housebuilders as much as SMEs and our recommendations reflect this. However, specific fiscal measures will be vital to accelerate development by SMEs.

In the short term, demand measures will be needed to support the market for sales. A clear decision to extend Help to Buy would be welcomed together with a Stamp Duty holiday to support first and vacant home purchases. Homes England should also support development finance extensions, recognising the risk exposure to SMEs and the need to stimulate the housing market.

At no risk to councils, - with interim relief funding provided from Homes England - s106 and CIL payments should be deferred where necessary to support SME cashflow through repayable bridging grants to ensure completion of critical community infrastructure (eg schools, NHS facilities). Dependent on this funding, local authorities should introduce a policy to delay s106 triggers, hence deferring and supporting s106 and CIL, rather than removing it. Planning approvals also need to be linked to events and housing numbers and not to dates.

Where government, Homes England and LEPs have financed residential and commercial schemes, these should be extended by 6 months automatically, potentially a year where circumstances require further flexibility (e.g. environmental survey windows missed, etc).

Critically, Homes England should act as guarantor on production of key construction materials to support supply chains, including brick production. Brick representative bodies have indicated specific concerns, with huge implications for partially-built homes and extensions where a lack of brick match could mean demolition. Similarly, import delays may cause further difficulties.

In the medium term, social housing should lead the way. Implementing findings from the Independent Review of Build Out around different markets for different tenures, social housing can provide a lead and give confidence to developers of immediate future occupation, thereby also supporting contractors and sub-contractors. Through investment in social housing, as a counter-cyclical measure to get housebuilding going, there are additional and immediate social and fiscal benefits, including cutting the ballooning housing benefit bill and Universal Credit in the longer term.

Good design and construction quality remains essential in all new buildings, residential or commercial. Registered providers have particular advantages in accessing capital at lower rates and recycled grant money for land purchases which private sector developers do not. Regardless of the status of developer, in applying the principles of "Living with Beauty", Government must encourage the very best design and quality to build new homes and places to leave a legacy for future generations.

The Homes England work programme should be prioritised explicitly to support SME businesses, recognising their dependency on time-limited development finance.

With a focus on brownland and garden settlements, the £10bn Single Housing Growth Fund should be earmarked for an immediate post-crisis stimulus for oven-ready, high employment, schemes. Joint public/private partnership working should be further explored to give confidence to the market, sharing the risk, on both housing and commercial development.

Government has already taken some bold steps to support recovery and local county and borough councils have shown themselves highly supportive and innovative.

We share an overriding commitment to create places where people want to live and work – homes, community infrastructure, businesses. We now need further policy action to accelerate economic recovery through support of construction and to deliver "good growth" in our counties and towns.

Nick Fenton, Kent Developers Group, Jonathan Buckwell, Developers East Sussex, Mark Curle, Essex Developers Group are all members of South East Local Enterprise Partnership's Housing and Development Group.

Supporting and supportive investment

Mark Quinn
CEO/Chairman, Quinn Estates

Post-COVID-19, the housing and construction markets need to provide a catalyst for the economy to regain momentum, with an estimated 373,000 sale agreements worth circa £82bn stalled during this period[1]. Unemployment and uncertainty will further reduce consumer confidence, which left unchecked, will lead to a significant drop in property values, potentially leading to many households experiencing negative equity further inhibiting construction activity with reduced sales values making building unsustainable.

Quinn Estates is actively involved in this market, employing circa 430 individuals/contractors and contributing in excess of £100m to the Kent economy. Below we outline opportunities to stimulate the property market and ensure maximum contribution to the wider economy of the construction industry by enhancing the demand for housing to support continued employment opportunities and bolster opportunities.

1. SDLT reduction on second-home ownership and foreign investment

Overseas buyers are subject to an additional 2% Stamp Duty from April-21, estimated to affect up to 70,000 transactions per year[2]. Additionally, since 2016 additional properties attract a further 3% to SDLT. Property wealth in Britain from second homes has risen more than 50% in the last two decades to nearly £1tn from around £610bn in 2001 to £941bn for UK residents (second homes, buy-to-let investments, overseas property), with 5.5 million British adults deriving wealth from second properties[3].

Representing a sizable proportion of the UK property market, stimulus to this area would have a significant positive impact. Deferring introduction of the additional 2% charge, whilst providing a two-year holiday from the 3% second-home charge would encourage and stimulate both responsible overseas and domestic investment growth, providing a much needed capital injection across the UK, directly focused on an area where there is clearly already significant demand to be unleashed, boosting employment, opportunities and the forward funding of future housing developments.

1 The Times 27th April 2020

2 Financial Times 22nd November 2019

3 The Guardian 14th June 2019

2. Residential property investment allowed within SIPPS for a period of time

For some time, commercial property has benefitted from the flexibility afforded by self-invested personal pensions ("SIPPS") allowing individuals to invest directly in commercial property within a pension wrapper.

These benefits are currently restricted to commercial property, however, relaxing the rules relating to these schemes, for example allowing a two-year period in which SIPPS can directly invest in residential property, would provide a further significant stimulus to the housing industry. Creating a significant residential market stimulus where very little may exist post-COVID-19 whilst costing central government virtually nothing, as all this would require would be a regulation change.

In 2019 it was estimated that savers owned circa two million such pension products containing approximately £180bn[4] with SIPPS expected to grow further by £1.9bn yearly to 2020[5]. Should just 10% of this capital be available to invest, this alone would represent an £18bn investment opportunity into the residential sector.

Furthermore, SIPPS can borrow up to 50% of their asset value, increasing the potential £18bn to £32bn, allowing investors to utilise borrowing to expand their portfolio rapidly, at a rate far in excess of that by which SIPPS are currently expected to grow. This will significantly boost demand for residential property, providing much needed liquidity to keep prices stable and investment levels strong.

This approach is supported by the trend investors have shown for purchasing alternative investment types within SIPPs over the last three years, a market of 800,000 investors which has been growing at a rate of 20-30% per year[6]. Recent stock market shocks will further drive investors to tangible asset classes, such as property. The transfer of more traditional pension products into SIPPs creates significant liquidity, underlining the ability of this approach to drive significant support for the housing and in turn construction industries when it is most needed.

3. More support for buy-to-let market

At its peak in 2007 the buy-to-let ("BTL") market saw circa 183,000 mortgages approved annually to landlords but by 2018 this had fallen to under 70,000[7] following a range of measures making the sector less attractive. This market creates significant investment and helps address the fundamental issue of lack of housing supply to meet the demand from an ever-increasing population.

Rental demand is increasing generally amid declining levels of home ownership. This arises not only as a result of a reduction in the availability of finance, but also from lifestyle changes and a desire to retain flexibility. In 1991, 67% of 25-34 year olds owned their own home; by 2014, this had reduced to just 36%. The future lack of consumer confidence and of job security is likely to reduce this further. The government's recent policies have been focused on supporting first time buyers, which remains key, but

4 Which? April 2020
5 This is Money 24th Jan 2019
6 Financial Times July 2018
7 Intelligent Partnership 27th Jan 2020

the industry now requires further support from investors at a time when recent policies have led to dwindling appetite to ensure rental demand is met.

As of April 2020, landlords who own property directly are unable to deduct any mortgage interest or expenses from rental income, thereby restricting tax relief for higher-rate taxpayers, a change phased in incrementally since April 2017. Providing mortgage interest relief would boost demand from small-scale private investors who require mortgage lending to raise the required levels of capital. Investors will then be able to exploit the current low-interest-rate environment. Small-scale individual landlords would be more likely to benefit rather than incorporated entities, which already benefit from mortgage interest relief.

Prior to the 2008 recession, BTL was rampant, but this was in an environment of ubiquitous bank lending. With recent increased solvency regulation of financial services, along with affordability hurdles that now have to be met, the industry is more tightly regulated, and the above taxation schemes to disincentivise widespread investment purchasing are no longer required to the current extent.

4. Private Investment into Public Infrastructure

A further demand and industry stimulus would be for central government to support significant strategic infrastructure development sites delivering wide-ranging public benefits whilst funded privately from land value capture. An example of such a project is such out below.

Highsted Park, Sittingbourne proposes the first privately funded motorway junction, Jct 5a, onto the Strategic Road Network (SRN) the M2, the long-anticipated Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road, and connection to partially-completed Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road. This strategic infrastructure relieves chronic congestion along the A2/A249 corridors along with pressure on Air Quality Management Areas along the A2, one of the worst roads for Air Quality in Kent. It creates a second junction for Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppy onto the SRN, the only large town with a single access point in Kent, facilitating a secondary route for traffic from Euro-Link, one of Kent's largest industrial estates and Kent Science Park, avoiding travel through Sittingbourne Town Centre and other AQMAs along the A2.

The proposal further delivers circa 9,250 new homes in an area with high demand for new homes, evidenced by rapid increases in house prices, coupled with persistent under delivery of housing numbers along with significant commercial space to enhance the existing Kent Science Park, already supporting in excess of 90 companies and 2,000 jobs. The project additionally creates in the order of 1,800 jobs during the construction phase at a critical time for the country and in the long term circa 7,000 direct and indirect jobs.

With Homes England support, a loan would be put in place post-planning and prior to implementation, providing the funding for the infrastructure works upfront, secured via a legal charge on land with outline consent for residential development. As land is disposed of, funding goes back to Homes England to pay-down this loan coupled with the release of the charge on the relevant land.

Legal contracts are already in place for the land required for the proposal which crucially, enshrines the land value capture principles required to facilitate the infrastructure delivery. In principle, board level approval has also been secured from five national housebuilders for circa 6,000 units and contracts would be put in place on a subject-to-planning basis providing certainty of payback to Homes England before the loan is released, and creating certainty of delivery. Furthermore, significant funds have been invested upfront at risk with infrastructure partner Volker FitzPatrick, creating further certainty of delivery of the key infrastructure.

The result is a major strategic infrastructure project delivered at no cost to the public purse, addressing air quality and congestion in an area of need, and accelerating housing delivery in an area historically saddled with under delivery and persistent house price inflation. Additionally, the private sector delivers a public infrastructure benefit with certainty of delivery whilst the public sector supports delivery via secure, low-cost funding for the project. Supporting this type of approach will facilitate massive job creation, much-needed housing and deliver a faster recovery of the economy through job creation, housing delivery and infrastructure provision.

Mark Quinn is CEO/Chairman, Quinn Estates

PART C

The role of housing in supporting the most vulnerable and engaging with society

The fourth part of this collection of essays is from:

- Erin Walsh Director of Built Environment and Bin Guan, Built Environment Researcher, Connected Places Catapult
- Professor Samer Bagaeen, University of Kent
- Emma Waterfall, Managing Director, Cascade Communications

These three essays explore some challenges of meeting the needs of vulnerable people, including the elderly in care home settings and the opportunities of engaging with young people and involving wider communities in planning for sustainable growth.

Themes include:

- Innovative approaches to tackling the challenges of an ageing society;
- Reaching younger people and those from diverse background to contribute to planning for a green future;
- Use of digital engagement in building trust and embedding social value in development.

Homes for Healthy Ageing: the role of innovation

Erin Walsh
Director of Built Environment supported by Bin Guan, Built Environment Researcher, Connected Places Catapult

The social and economic impact of COVID-19 across the UK (and indeed the whole world) is truly unprecedented. It has also been hard-hitting demographically, not least for our elderly population, whose vulnerability to the pandemic has been exposed in the starkest terms. Not only are they at greater risk of harm from the coronavirus itself, but they are also more profoundly affected by the stricter social-distancing rules put in place to protect them against it.

The home – once considered an Englishman's castle – can under the current conditions increasingly feel more like a prison. Whilst the challenges presented by an ageing society have been discussed in the UK for a long time, this pandemic throws into sharp relief the scale, significance and urgency of the challenges we are facing – both now and into any future that might emerge from the lockdown. And given the likely enduring nature and impact of the pandemic, it is that urgency with which we need examine the issues facing our ageing society that is increasing – especially when it comes to thinking about what can be done to make homes feel like safe places of refuge once more.

The scale and significance of the challenges

A recent ONS figure (8th May) shows that nearly 90% of COVID-19-related deaths registered in England and Wales have been among people aged 65 and over[1]. But this disproportionately high death rate is not simply due to the heightened vulnerability of the elderly to the virus – it is also indicative of the expansion of the UK's elderly demographic: today, nearly one in five British people are aged 65 years or over, and this proportion is on course to reach one quarter of the population by 2050[2].

As people get older, their health can deteriorate significantly. With time spent increasingly indoors, the quality of their homes has a pivotal role to play in health and wellbeing. However, the majority of older people are living in mainstream housing, which is often not fit for their needs. Below are just some of the key issues most likely to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Lack of care** – Based on a study by the Local Government

1 Office for National Statistics (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) roundup. 2020.
2 Local Government Association (2017). Housing our Ageing Population.

Association, less than 1% of over 65s are living in housing with care[3], and many others do not receive the care and support they need for basic living functions. The pandemic has made this situation worse: as well as the higher risks of dying from COVID-19 itself, elderly people are also at increased risk of morbidity and mortality from other acute and chronic diseases due to reduced non-COVID-19 care[4]. We have all seen the devastating impact of the pandemic on care homes – but even looking beyond the acute phase of the pandemic, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate the current care-related challenges. Future care arrangements will need to accommodate strict hygiene regimes and the threat of regular lockdown will disrupt the ability of suppliers to provide regular in-home care support.

- **Digital exclusion** – A report from Centre for Ageing Better shows that people aged over 55 make up 94% of those who have never been online within the UK[5]. This digital divide becomes more worrying in the COVID-19 context as more services such as shopping or interacting with local authorities move online. The issue is particularly acute among the poorest who rely on 'pay as you go' services and struggle to afford data[6].
- **Social isolation** – According to Age UK, nearly a third of people aged 65 and over live alone in the UK, and 1.4 million older people regard themselves as 'often lonely'[7]. Confronted with higher risk of becoming severely unwell with COVID-19, elderly people are also required to follow even stricter social-distancing guidance and avoid gathering with friends and family. Those who have been living alone are literally forced into a state of social isolation for the duration of the pandemic. This would inevitably have a very negative impact on their mental health and may lead to a range of other poor health outcomes. For example, insufficient exercise due to self isolation could result in health deterioration with subsequent fragility and falls, whilst a decrease in cognitive stimulation due to lack of contact with the outside world could aggravate cognitive and behavioural symptoms associated with dementia[8]. In particular, social isolation will disproportionately affect single seniors whose only usual social contact is outside their homes, such as at churches, community centres and day-care facilities[9].

Other issues often affecting older people's quality of life at home include dementia, a lack of accessibility and safety issues. All these are challenging enough on their own, but in reality they are usually combined and compounded by other issues such as underlying health conditions and poor-quality housing stock. As is now widely recognised, the UK still has

3 Local Government Association (2017). Housing our Ageing Population

4 Steinman MA, Perry L, Perissinotto CM. (2020).Meeting the Care Needs of Older Adults Isolated at Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Intern Med.*

5 Centre for Ageing Better (2018). The digital age: new approaches to supporting people in later life get online

6 The Guardian (2020). Digital divide 'isolates and endangers' millions of UK's poorest.

7 Age UK (2019). Briefing: Health and Care of Older People in England 2019.

8 Steinman, MA., Perry, L., Perissinotto, CM. (2020). Meeting the Care Needs of Older Adults Isolated at Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Intern Med.*

9 Armitage, R. and Nellums, L. (2020). COVID-19 and the consequences of isolating the elderly. Lancet Public Health.

some way to go in enabling its older citizens to live healthily for longer in their own homes.

Innovative approaches to tackling the challenges

Looking again at the three challenges outlined above, a variety of innovative solutions already exist:

- When it comes to the **provision of care**, there are various approaches to delivering complementary or alternative care. The most common are telecare services, which make use of environmental and personal sensors to monitor the safety and wellbeing of the elderly, thus enabling rapid response to concerns or incidents. There are also initiatives exploring how robots could be used to provide preventative and supportive care for elderly people at home. For instance, in an Innovate UK-funded project, engineers worked with elderly people and care providers to develop a prototype robotic system that could support older people with basic movements at home. The technology responds to voice, gestures or touchscreen commands, and has the potential to work with other smart devices to track users' health and wellbeing, in order to reassure authorised third parties, e.g. relatives or carers.
- **Digital inclusion** initiatives for the elderly include nationwide digital training programmes, such as NHS Widening Digital Participation and One Digital, both of which provide digital training and support to help create 'silver surfers'. There are also initiatives to install smart home devices or create bespoke applications to demonstrate how digital technology could support independent living for longer. For example, in a DCMS funded initiative in West Essex, some digital-savvy elderly people opened up their homes to be kitted out with new technologies, and the homeowners themselves were trained as 'digital boomers' to help other older people improve their digital skills. Another Liverpool-based initiative saw a tech company develop an age-friendly shopping app called 'Helping Hand', which connects directly to a major supermarket via a user-friendly interface, thus enabling elderly people to shop online more easily.
- Approaches to **reducing social isolation** include smart communication technologies that enable elderly people to be better connected with their family, friends and the wider community. New living models such as senior co-housing or intergenerational living allow elderly people to live in self-reliant but socially inclusive and diverse communities. A good example of this is the Older Women's Cohousing Community in North London – a senior community created and managed by like-minded females, with the aim of reducing loneliness and enriching later life in a collective way.

Gaps, opportunities and the way forward

As illustrated above, a range of approaches have the potential to help older people live and thrive in their homes and help mitigate problems that COVID-19 has exacerbated. Nonetheless, challenges remain. There are various reasons for this.

1. The market for smart home based solutions is nascent and often, the products have been **developed for general-needs** rather than specifically for the elderly. And of course, none of them accounted for the impact of COVID-19. A user-centred design approach to re-purposing these tools would help drive adoption and impact.
2. There are also **market co-ordination barriers**. Whilst no one council working in isolation would offer a big enough market for the development of an ideal solution, collectively the market is huge. Similarly, the savings that preventative-technology-driven approaches could deliver to the NHS are substantial – but it remains unclear by what mechanism the NHS could subsidise such approaches in order to realise the benefits.
3. In the business to consumer market, the challenge is that the **technology solution alone is often not enough**. It would need to be bundled with a service package to be effective – but the big technology companies who can achieve scaled production are typically not interested in the service business.

The latent potential in this space is evident. The ageing population represent a large and growing market and the needs they have are clear enough in calmer times, and become ever more pressing in the era of COVID-19 and whatever comes next. To unlock the opportunity, we need to deconstruct the systemic barriers referenced earlier and bring together different parts of the ecosystem to create value propositions that are attractive to all parties. Sometimes all that is needed is for someone to take the difficult first step. After all, the best business to be in is that of the 'fast follower'.

With this in mind, Connected Places Catapult are bringing together stakeholders from across relevant sectors to take action and move the ecosystem forward. We are inviting key players from across industries to work with us on a series of healthy-ageing housing pilots across different parts of the UK to test and refine new ideas.

For each pilot, we will:

- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to deepen our understanding of the specific challenges facing the local areas.
- Bring together technology suppliers, local authorities, housing providers and health and care professionals to develop solutions.
- Open up the opportunity space to a wide range of solution providers through a challenge-based open call process.
- Focus on solutions with the potential to scale and map out next steps to achieve this.
- Build validated business cases to allow the wider roll out of these solutions. We are agnostic to the route to market at this stage: there may be viable business to consumer propositions, but we are also interested in exploring models which involve a range of stakeholders from local NHS trusts to large corporates through to smaller community organisations.

As a neutral party in the ecosystem, part funded by government but independent from it, and with strong connections to academia, start-ups and place leaders, Connected Places Catapult is ideally placed to help overcome the system level challenges which are holding back the wider uptake of innovation in the healthy ageing space.

If you would like to get involved, then please do get in touch (email info@cp.catapult.org.uk). We will be focusing on areas of the UK with large and growing populations of elderly people; where the need is greatest – we're ready and waiting to hear from you.

Erin Walsh is Director of Built Environment and Bin Guan is Built Environment Researcher for the Connected Places Catapult

Our participatory future

Cllr. Professor Samer Bagaeen

These are interesting times: people keeping at least two metres from each other; a substantial number of schools closed; all public gatherings cancelled; the UK Government and those around the world putting together ever-increasing stimulus packages; landlords not collecting rent; the homeless being told to stay put in hotels free of charge; and workers furloughed on full pay in some cases.

In more than one city, in England, local authorities went on the hunt for innovative solutions to seek ideas from their residents about the path for a green future. This was before the increasingly louder and louder calls for a green future in the post-COVID-19 world began to take hold. With pollution in some cities halving on account of the lockdown – lower vehicle emissions as people ditch their car, attention has also shifted to the carbon emissions caused by our built environment and what can be done to reduce these.

As a forum for sharing ideas, citizens' climate assemblies have gained traction in cities like Oxford and Brighton and Hove. These assemblies bring together a small number of residents (50 in the case of Brighton and Hove), randomly selected to reflect local demographics, alongside a panel of advisors to help shape how a city could address the climate crisis and prioritise actions to take forward.

Oxford was one of the first cities to hold a climate assembly focusing on three themes: How do we use less energy? (buildings, transport); How do we make more energy? (transform our energy system); How do we improve environmental quality on the journey to net zero? (waste, offsetting). Biodiversity was considered within each of these areas.

With the pandemic still playing a major role in how we live our daily lives, the idea of the assembly in Brighton and Hove has gone back to being an idea. It has been pushed back into the autumn of 2020 allowing some thinking time into whether this was a good means of engaging residents in the first place, and, second, whether other digital forms could also be considered.

With the overnight shift to remote meetings using digital technologies and, in some cases, allowing for smaller and more personal virtual breakout rooms, could the conventional future, which the city political leadership had imagined only a few weeks ago, be changed already? As some of us, including our school children, are seeing this conventional future merged with a digital one, perhaps we can also imagine more than 50 players from our communities getting involved. Could we take our citizens' assembly onto a digital platform? And if we did, could we ensure representativeness and effectiveness? There are problems with this and digital literacy remains a huge problem in the UK. The Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index report launched in May 2020 noted that an estimated 9 million UK residents (16%) are unable to use the Internet and their device by themselves. A further 16% of the UK population cannot undertake simple digital activities such as turning on a device, connecting to wi-fi or opening an app by themselves.

A recent report by Nesta in the UK published in March 2020 suggested involving citizens through dry and traditional techniques such as surveys, town hall meetings, and citizens' assemblies could be seen as tokenistic rather than leading to real change. Nesta imagined a future beyond citizens' assemblies involving play, immersion, sensing, creating and deliberating. Can we? And can we as urban agents be the leaders for real change? This is the challenge to all of our politicians, especially to the city's leadership, and to cities across the country.

If we go back to the matter of buildings and the decarbonisation agenda, and consider new government supported actors such as the Green Finance Institute, we see a renewed focus on innovative finance solutions and instruments, possibly green bonds. We also see a reference to engaging with communities.

That engagement, especially with the younger generation, remains a huge challenge. Developing the market for financing net-zero and resilient homes, after we legislate for this of course, is the easy part. It is the third step, that's the hardest one: getting owners and occupiers, across all tenures to buy into this. We also need valuation models of property to reflect this.

What we know for sure is that the proportion of sustainable property in the total building stock remains small. We are certainly not doing enough, in England at least. Latest government data shows that new houses produce 1.66 tonnes of CO_2 per year, and new flats produce 1.31 tonnes. From 2016, both figures should have been zero (they are not) and from 2025, we have to build more of these.

Is there a relationship then between sustainability and value? A cursory look at the property sector tells us that the financial added value resulting from sustainability is not sufficiently considered in property valuation, making it difficult for owners and residents to quantify the benefits from upgrading things such as energy performance.

There is no doubt that we must shift capital and investments towards transition activities and we should really look at the way that the building industry, and construction in particular, could shift towards zero emissions as quickly as possible.

The labour-intensive view of construction is a fragile model versus construction sites reliant on offsite and modular construction. The latter requires a similarly huge investment push as part of a decarbonisation agenda. MMC (Modern Methods of Construction) generally struggles to compete with traditional construction on capex prices. For both, there is a greater need to overcome the fragmented supply chains in construction - all procured on lowest price resulting in lower than anticipated outputs and a significant level of disputes. Putting value and social value first, creating loyalty in supply chains, and localising supply chains will no doubt maintain supply and innovation during crises.

All of this is important in shaping our green future. Quite possibly though, the greatest challenge remains to reach local people and provide a feed of information to prioritise decisions and inform the master planning, the legislating, the building and the recovery. Within our towns and cities, reaching young people and those from more diverse backgrounds is a particular challenge.

Samer Bagaeen is the Conservative Councillor for Hove Park in Brighton and Hove. He is Professor of Planning at the University of Kent.

Building trust and reaching parts others can't: how better communications can help get the house building market back on track

Emma Waterfall
Managing Director, Cascade Communications

As the UK emerges from the lockdown and grapples with the after effects of COVID-19, now is the time to discuss the importance of communities in overcoming adversity. We've seen local volunteers assisting those most vulnerable, helping shielded neighbours, family and friends. Volunteer groups, coordinating thousands of calls for help, sprung up almost overnight to ensure that those in need are supported. The UK at its very best.

From a policy perspective, it highlights the notion that ideas only really come alive when local communities are involved. The key is to create a 'buy-in' so that communities are able to see tangible changes that policy will bring to their lives. Whilst local authorities were beginning to grasp the opportunity on public and private partnerships now is the time to accelerate conversations and engagement with communities using new technology, methods and partnerships. It's the very definition of meaningful engagement.

The naughty step

Some local authorities moved at lightning speed to up-skill members on technology so it was business as usual as quickly as normal. In London, and generally speaking the South East that is the case. Others moved at a far more pedestrian pace. What does this mean for housing? Well for those that moved quickly it means we are likely to see housing targets reached quicker, and an adoption of a digital meaningful engagement, and for those that didn't they'll be on the naughty step of MHCLG.

But, does it matter if they are on the naughty step? Probably, yes, when it comes to future financial settlements from central government and the new homes bonus. Levelling up can only really happen if you have a willing local authority to drive the agenda on the ground.

It would be remiss of us if we didn't make clear that there is not a "one size fits all" approach differing geographical and demographic factors mean public engagement must be flexible and proportionate.

Accelerated digital engagement

During these uncertain times, and the changes in working and lifestyle that this has brought about, we have seen an acceleration of digital engagement and it is vital to remember that whilst COVID-19 was the occasion, it was not the cause of this.

To be clear, it is wrong to assume that the only solution to reaching out to broader audiences is via digital engagement platforms. For our audiences, traditionally local communities and local authorities, it must sit alongside traditional methods of engagement such as newsletters via post, freephone numbers, taking the time to have one-to-one interaction over the telephone and following up with hard copies of presentations for those who cannot access information online.

The wider adoption of remote technology was already being investigated across the public and private sector, and Local Authorities, as we intimated earlier, have been catching on. In planning and the communication protocols surrounding this, this now means updating their own definitions of 'meaningful engagement' to include digital offerings.

As such, the wider adoption of digital engagement creates the opportunity to reach a wider demographic within communities. Physical public consultations, usually confined to a community hall, held during a select period of time consistently attract the same demographic: retired and those that are not at work. However, the use of digital engagement enables those who are unable to attend a public consultation event in person the opportunity to take part and ensure that their views are considered. This includes groups such as young professionals and those who work during the day.

Digital engagement also allows far greater data capture which in turn means applicants and the local authority can see who has participated and use this data to refine future consultations.

Let's build trust

As we ease the lockdown and can see already construction sites back up and running its worth remembering the Government have not changed their target of 300,000 of new homes.

Only engaging digitally, or virtually, can we reach every corner of the community and hope to build trust between the planning adjudicator, developers, community stakeholders and elected officials. By engaging effectively with the community, we are able to fully understand their views and concerns – to strike a balance between the needs of the community and the local need for new homes.

Enabling Trust

Each planning officer, developer, community stakeholders and elected councillor is a potential 'trust enabler'. They each represent a pillar in the planning process and can either build or knock down trust in a scheme:

- Planning adjudicator – Be they planning officers or the Planning Inspectorate, they have a vital role in ensuring that local authorities meet their local housing needs and that future developments are positioned in the correct locations.
- Developers – As the commercial driver in housing delivery, developers have a key role in establishing trust with the local community and if done correctly, can strike a balance between their commercial aims and the needs of the wider community.

- Community stakeholders – Whether a local residents association or charity, community stakeholders are key to understanding the concerns and views of local residents and the wider community.
- Elected officials – These can include the local ward Councillors, Council Leader or Member of Parliament. Effective engagement is key to ensuring that they do not each become a galvanising force against the prospective development.

Social Value

Social value is the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives. For example what worth might we place from living next to a community park? We know these things are important to us but are not commonly expressed or measured in the same way that financial value is. However, they have the potential to significantly add investment value to projects through the use of targeted engagement and an understanding of what communities want the most.

We have outlined below two simple potential policy initiatives that in themselves could help, but we believe, if taken together, could be transformative.

Policy Initiative 1: a new social value contract between the developer, community and local authority

This social value contract would create a commitment not just between the community and developer but also the local authority. In doing so, there would be a commitment between all three to enable the delivery of a set goal(s) that would run in tandem with the development of the site. Furthermore, it would facilitate a wider discussion during the consultation stage surrounding the local needs of residents and the wider community.

Accompanying the social value contract would be a social value charter. Every development over a certain sq ft should be publishing a social value charter as part of their planning application.

Policy Initiative 2: Formally include digital consultations into the National Planning Policy Framework to enable engagement to reach every corner of the community, unlocking the silent majority.

In doing so, digital consultation will encourage those who wouldn't normally have an opportunity to take part in the consultation, such as those that work unsociable hours, to share their views. This in turn will ensure the resulting data that is collected through surveys and polling will be more representative of the overall views of the community.

The government have recently updated their guidance, but going the extra mile will produce better planning results.

What's next?

As the lockdown eases we have a golden opportunity to think more creatively about how to engage the areas with the areas we live in, and how to create meaningful, long lasting partnerships. Lots of companies already do this, far too many don't.

If anything, we have learnt that we must maintain the essence of adaptability, so we can reach more people and better understand what they want for their areas and how we can build new communities for the future. This will ensure that the provision of new homes in an area is simply not just transactional between developers, the community and political leaders.

Emma Waterfall is Founder and Managing Director, Cascade Communications

PART D

The role of planning in creating successful and sustainable communities

The third part of this collection of essays is from:

- Richard Blyth, Head of Policy, Royal Town Planning Institute
- Catriona Riddell, National Strategic Planning Specialist for the Planning Officers' Society
- Andrew Taylor, Head of Planning for Countryside
- Nick Ireland, Planning Director, Iceni Projects Limited
- Iain Painting, Senior Partner and Robin Shepherd, Partner at Barton Willmore
- Mark Bewsey, Planning Director, DHA Planning

These essays explore the role of the planning system in creating successful and sustainable communities.

Themes include:

- Extending planning permissions for a further 12 months and making build-out a pre-requisite of Government funding or planning permissions.
- Granting short-term planning freedoms including an extension of permitted development rights as part of a programme to deliver long-term housing growth.
- Implications of local authorities offering tenure blind planning and development and whether homes for older people should be included in housebuilding delivery figures.
- Case for demanding spatial plans be produced by infrastructure authorities to support "good growth" and as a pre-requisite for additional Government funding.
- The digital transformation of planning and empowerment of local authorities to plan pro-actively.

Priorities for Planning

Richard Blyth
Head of Policy, Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

Housing costs across all tenures have risen dramatically in recent decades leading to a wide lack of affordability. Average house prices are now more than eight times average incomes in England[1]. Home ownership rates have been declining since 2003[2]. Private renters now pay an average of 41% of household income on housing[3]. There is no silver bullet solution.

However, the Government sees urban planning as an important way to tackle this and we agree.

The impacts of COVID-19 may provide new challenges for sustainable housing growth. The economic uncertainty brought about by the virus has major potential impacts on the viability of private sector housing development as well as any development by housing associations and councils which depends on private sales to form part of mixed market developments. Any potential loss of developer contributions to infrastructure may also have a major knock on impact on sustainable placemaking.

The two most recent difficult periods faced by the housing sector were 1990-1992 and 2008-2012. Responses by government varied, but in the most recent global financial crisis, the response was to redouble dependence on a private sector delivery model, at the same time as considerably reducing the contribution of the private sector to other tenures through developer contributions. This response will not tackle the affordability crisis and it will not help us rise to other challenges such as improving housing design and sustainability.

How is the government approaching the housing question?

The Government published a document alongside the March 2020 Budget called *Planning for the Future*. Through this paper, the Government seeks to help those "*trapped paying high rents and struggling to save for a deposit*" and to "*ensure security for those who do not own their own homes*". We welcome a number of the proposals for achieving this. However, we observe two competing visions of how to achieve these

1 ONS (2019) Housing affordability in England and Wales: 2018. ONS Statistical Bulletin

2 MHCLG (2018) English Housing Survey 2016 to 2017: home ownership, English Housing Survey Collection

3 Department for Work and Pensions (2019) Households below average income, 1994/95-2017/18. 13th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 5828

objectives. The government prioritises "*creating beautiful, sustainable places*". It proposes strengthening policy on design through revising the NPPF to further prioritise design and a new National Model Design Code. However, this approach seems to conflict with calls to weaken the influence of planning through greater permitted development rights and zoning. The former view assumes that stronger planning can do more to promote good design. The latter stems from the opinion that deregulation would improve development by enabling more organic design and settlement patterns, and freeing up resources to invest in design.

More generally we are concerned about solving housing affordability through the primary focus on facilitating the building of more market homes. Two assumptions influence this approach, first that increasing the supply of new build market homes is the best way to make housing more affordable, and second that planning restricts new development by artificially rationing the supply of housing land. This can lead to a conclusion that the solution is to deregulate planning in order to deliver more planning permissions. However, the evidence does not support this conclusion.

Our analysis of the housing affordability crisis

Analysis from the Bank of England[4] and others[5] suggests that the supply of new housing is only a small part of the affordability crisis. Meanwhile, while the planning system has delivered a greatly increased number of permissions in recent years, there have not been directly corresponding increases in starts or completions[6]. Furthermore, the increases we have seen in new homes delivered have had little discernible impact on prices over a 10 year period or on improving the existing housing stock. So if the housing crisis is not rooted in a lack of planning permissions, where should we instead be looking for solutions?

The RTPI has long argued that better planning can be an important way of solving the housing affordability crisis, and the solutions proposed below reflect this[7]. For example, our research on local authority direct delivery of housing showed strong foundations for local authorities and planning officers to play a role in direct delivery[8]. However, it's also crucial to acknowledge what planning cannot do. First, planning permissions are not the same as new homes – planning has few powers to force permissions to be enacted or to be built out more quickly. Second, the biggest impact on house prices is the number of people financially able to buy a home, and this is largely determined by the availability of credit[9]. Third, public investment decisions play a crucial role, with policies like Help to Buy keeping prices high by stimulating demand, and decisions like the withdrawal of grant for social housing forcing more people into the private rented sector and driving up housing benefit spending.

4 Miles, D. & Monro, V. (2019) UK house prices and three decades of decline in the risk-free real interest rate, Bank of England Staff Working Paper No. 837

5 See for example, Hudson, N. (2015) Housing Market Note, New Build Research, A Panacea? Savills: London

6 RTPI (2017) Better Planning for Housing Affordability

7 RTPI (2017) Better Planning for Housing Affordability

8 Morphet, J. & Clifford, B. (2017, 2019) Local authority direct delivery of housing. RTPI

9 Hudson, N. (2015) Housing Market Note, New Build Research, A Panacea? Savills: London

Recommendations for reforms to ensure sustainable, affordable, safe and secure housing for all

In April 2020 we published five recommendations for planning reform which would help deliver sustainable, affordable, safe and secure housing for all and in so doing kick start a green recovery in the local (and thereby the national) economy[10]. We call for:

- **Investment in place:** We need better resourcing for planning as well as investment in infrastructure, new social housing, and regeneration and retrofit of the existing housing stock. Increasing the supply of social housing would provide secure, affordable housing for those on lower incomes as well as supporting the housebuilding sector through counter-cyclical investment. Investment in infrastructure would stimulate development and regeneration. Proper resourcing of planning would support local authorities to plan proactively and assemble sites. Investment in regeneration and retrofit would support levelling up and decarbonisation.
- **A refocus on 21st century issues:** we need planning to focus on people rather than housing units, and to look at issues such as climate change and public health more closely. To tackle an affordability crisis the government should explore how to integrate metrics like the average proportion of household income spent on housing costs.
- **A clear direction for strategic planning,** by which we mean planning over both larger territories, and over a larger range of public policy areas than housing alone. By doing this we can enable housing delivery to be aligned with the infrastructure and environmental improvements needed to make development sustainable and resilient. This reduces the cost of transport and energy for residents, supports access to key services and quality green spaces, and helps to build local support for development. Through alignment towards a shared vision, strategic planning provides a stronger platform for directing the investment that will be required to support the economic recovery, including by identifying strategic sites which support local plan delivery, reducing the risk of unsustainable development.
- **A strong, plan-led system.** If the correct resourcing and structures are in place, we can deliver an efficient, high-performing plan-led system which provides certainty to developers and secures community engagement and buy in. Plans must commit to clearly expressed place-based visions that have design quality and beauty, economic recovery, sustainable transport, infrastructure, health and wellbeing, climate change, resilience, and the environment integrated from the start. They should use robust scenario testing to ensure site allocations are viable and deliverable in terms of meeting these targets. This applies to plans at whichever level they operate – we note the government's indication that single authority local plans may not be the most suitable approach in some areas.
- **The digital transformation of planning:** this would make the system more efficient and accessible and improve the data guiding

10 RTPI (2020) Priorities for Planning in England

decision making. Benefits would be the diversification of housebuilding and improvement of the sustainability of new housing. It would also help free up planners time for engaging in proactive planning to deliver sustainable places.

We also proposed a few additional changes aimed at sustainable housing growth in particular:

- **Empower local authorities to plan proactively for housing**. We welcomed the government's calls for local authorities to take a stronger role in infrastructure delivery and land assembly, and further support for Compulsory Purchase Orders and resourcing to facilitate this. Local authorities should be encouraged to use their local plans as delivery documents for their housing strategies[11].
- **Diversify the housebuilding market**. Local authorities could assemble sites and offer them to SME builders including planning permissions. The government's plans to improve transparency of ownership information, including land options, will also help to democratise the market. These steps are especially important given the pressures SMEs will likely experience due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the economy. It's important to remember that housing associations will play a key role in the recovery, as they have in the past. The recovery from the 1990 pause in the market was assisted by a counter-cyclical investment in the work of housing associations, and as a result sites were unlocked and construction work got under way.

Conclusion

Last year, the RTPI and Routledge published *A Future for Planning* by Dr Michael Harris, in which he called for society to take responsibility for 21st century challenges through proactive planning. The current pandemic presents an opportunity to look again at, as Harris puts it, "what we can do together".

Planning was established as a social movement as much as a profession, and can only survive with public support. Yet despite the obvious need for planning, we "*don't find ourselves in the midst of a new planning renaissance*". Instead, we often as a nation seem to step back from a full-bodied commitment to planning for housing. We think it's time for that to change.

Richard Blyth is Head of Policy, Royal Town Planning Institute RTPI)

11 As recommended in Morphet, J. & Clifford, B. (2019) Local authority direct delivery of housing: continuation research. RTPI

The role of spatial planning

Catriona Riddell
National Strategic Planning Specialist for the Planning Officers' Society

The current COVID-19 crisis has made us all think differently about the places where we live and work. Cities may no longer offer the same level of attraction as before, especially the large cities. Businesses are reassessing the need for space as a result of the investment they have made to allow more flexible working arrangements, which is likely to have a major impact on our already beleaguered town centres. Active travel has become essential for many, not just an option. New models for supporting the needs of the ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, will be required. All of this will necessitate a different and more focused approach to public sector investment decisions and will fundamentally change how we plan for places in the future.

It is fortuitous, therefore, that the Government is currently looking to undertake a radical reform of the spatial planning system[1]. This offers a real opportunity to refocus the role planning plays to support growth as well as the significant challenges already faced in relation to climate change and health and wellbeing. But it also offers an opportunity to place spatial planning at the heart of the post-COVID-19 recovery, helping to deliver a more integrated and sustainable approach to growth now and in the longer term.

Key to this will be addressing the strategic planning void which the Duty to Cooperate has failed to fill since the abolition of regional planning in 2011[2]. Effective strategic planning can provide a high level framework for integrating spatial, economic and environmental policies, and for infrastructure investment prioritisation. If done properly, strategic planning can affect structural change in response to national policy and priorities, especially to deliver the Government's green growth ambition; can help secure long-term transformation across an area where a different investment model or spatial strategy is needed; can provide collective clarity about the long-term vision/ambition for a place to deliver sustainable growth; and can facilitate stronger leadership around shared priorities, helping to build investor confidence through credibility of the

1 Proposals for reforming the planning system were announced in the March Budget. These are for England only as the devolved nations have responsibility for their own spatial planning systems. The recommendations in this paper are therefore for the English system only.

2 Regional Spatial Strategies provided the strategic planning tier of the statutory system until they were formally abolished and replaced by the Duty to Cooperate in the 2011 Localism Act. Various government led reviews have concluded that a more effective strategic planning mechanism is needed but minor changes to the system have not delivered this.

partnership and the decisions it makes.

Re-introducing formal strategic planning back into the system is therefore an essential part of any long term recovery plan but it will take time, especially if it is to be enshrined in legislation. There is an existing model, however, that could be adapted to support recovery in the shorter term and allow spatial planning at the strategic level to play its part.

The statutory plan-making system does not respond quickly to global impacts, as we already know from the post 2008 recession experience and local plans can take years to prepare, despite repeated threats of government intervention[3]. Even high-level statutory Spatial Development Strategies being prepared by some Mayoral Combined Authorities are taking longer than expected. Furthermore, the current system does not support long-term vision-based plans where transformation is needed to support sustainable growth, as has recently been evidenced by the unsuccessful attempts in the West of England and North Essex[4].

Whilst some others are bravely battling on with attempts to plan strategically through the statutory plan-making system[5], many have turned their backs on it and are developing a more flexible and responsive approach through voluntary collaboration and the preparation of non-statutory strategic spatial frameworks. These are all unique to the area they cover[6] but are built around the same principle of supporting an integrated approach to growth through stronger, more proactive leadership.

This model can be delivered much quicker than through the heavily regulated planning system and could also evolve to provide a more robust approach to strategic planning in the future, helping to sustain long term growth. The frameworks have largely emerged as a result of challenges around housing delivery; the need to have a more effective approach to infrastructure prioritisation and alignment of investment strategies (especially in the context of ever-decreasing public sector funding and complexity of bodies involved); and the inflexibility of the local planning process to deliver a place-based approach to growth which ignores artificial local planning boundaries. Many have been prepared in two-tier areas to ensure that county council responsibilities, particularly around infrastructure and public health, are better integrated with spatial strategies set out in the districts' local plans.

In the absence of any immediate changes on the horizon for the planning system and in advance of any potential longer-term changes to local government, more widespread preparation of non-statutory strategic spatial frameworks could make a significant contribution to the recovery process. They could help to refocus development and infrastructure investment to the areas that offer the greatest opportunity to deliver sustainable growth and to where the greatest help is needed. Critically, the frameworks could help provide clarity for developers around where the

3 The Government has a number of potential mechanisms to intervene in local plans that are taking too long to prepare but has been reluctant to use them. All local plans are now expected to be adopted at the latest, by 2023.

4 Both joint plans/ aligned strategies were found 'unsound' by the Planning Inspectors at Examination – see Colchester Borough Council on this

5 Authorities in Oxfordshire, South West Hertfordshire and South Essex are all preparing joint strategic plans within the statutory planning system (Section 28 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act).

6 The strategic frameworks cover different geographies but the majority are being prepared in two-tier areas where the county councils have no spatial planning responsibilities e.g. the Surrey 2050 Place Ambition, Leicester and Leicestershire Growth Plan, Suffolk Growth Plan.

public sector interventions (fiscal, policy and political) will be focused and therefore, where they can expect the greatest level of support. This will be particularly important in relation to the future role of town centres.

So what is needed for the successful preparation and delivery of an integrated strategic spatial framework and how can it be done quickly? Current experience suggests that there are four main ingredients:

1. **Robust governance arrangements:** Strong collective leadership helps to build investor confidence and ensure more effective risk management. Strategic partnerships should involve all the key players around the decision-making table on an equal basis, where possible. Formally constituted 'growth boards' have already emerged or are currently being established in a number of areas (outside combined authority areas), bringing together local authorities and other public sector bodies that have a role in delivering place-based growth. Where these have clear terms of reference and agreements on where they can and cannot have influence over decision-making, they offer a strong model for aligning strategic spatial and investment priorities through a joint framework[7].
2. **Government support:** Proactive and visible support from government in terms of both funding and to ensure that the non-statutory frameworks have traction on planning decisions is essential. Preparation of integrated strategic spatial frameworks should therefore be a pre-requisite for any future growth deal or other multi-area contract between local and central government. This model should also be highlighted in government planning policy and guidance as a material factor in plan-making and other planning related decision-making.
3. **More efficient use of resources, skills and expertise:** The most successful strategic partnerships have used shared, multi-disciplined teams to prepare and deliver strategic spatial frameworks. In two-tier areas, county councils are playing an increasingly important role given the number of different responsibilities they have which impact on growth but they are not currently funded to support spatial planning functions[8]. With increasing constraints on county council resources, especially as a result of the COVID-19 impact, significant, additional government funding should be directed to county councils (and growth boards) to facilitate joint working.
4. **Stronger partnership arrangements:** Strategic planning often requires decisions to be made in the interests of the greater good and this is likely to be the case even more in the months and years ahead as we deal with the impact of COVID-19 on public expenditure. The strategic spatial frameworks will help provide clarity around what the short, medium and long-term priorities are and, therefore, facilitate a more productive relationship with the development industry, building on the existing successful

7 e.g. Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire Growth Board, Suffolk.

8 Apart from the minerals and waste planning functions.

partnerships[9] that offer a potential model for other areas to follow. Spatial planning could make a significant, positive contribution to the recovery process and does not have to be done through a highly-regulated system which takes years to have any impact. With the right leadership and vision and the right support from central government, non-statutory spatial frameworks could be developed quickly and could play a key role in both the country's immediate recovery and in supporting long term, resilient 'good' growth.

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9 Some local authorities already have mature strategic partnerships with developers that offer a model for other areas e.g. the Kent Developers Group and the Essex Developers Group.

Kickstarting the housing industry – a masterdeveloper and housebuilder view

Andrew Taylor
Head of Planning for Countryside

This essay focuses on the various changes needed within the planning sphere to kickstart the housing industry. The current crisis gives us the opportunity to rethink the established approach, simplify processes and reform the planning system and make it suitable for the modern world. Ultimately, the public sector, private sector and local communities have the same aims - when delivering development they want to see the right type of well-designed housing, creation of new amenities, transport links, and retail and leisure space to serve the new development as well as existing communities.

It's essential for developers and local councils to be allies

The planning process is often complex and emotive, partly because developers and local councils tend to treat each other with suspicion. The temptation of both parties to hold each other at arm's length makes a meaningful conversation difficult, and this does little to help speed up the process and create a scheme that meets everyone's needs. Talk, listen, be open to discussion and agreement.

Investment in local planning departments is vital in solving the housing crisis

Research by The Guardian found that, between 2010 and 2015, net local authority budgets for planning and development in London alone were cut by a larger proportion than any other council service, falling by over £100m.

The effects of these cuts are now very clear: not enough planners are being trained; there is a missing layer of middle-ranking officers; and too little is being done to retain senior staff, with many moving into the private sector or retiring. The result is a workforce that often lacks experience, is overstretched and slow to respond.

This is not a criticism of the teams themselves, but rather of the lack of investment in an area that is critical to housing delivery. It is also something most councils would freely admit: in a survey by the GLA in 2016, 96% of London boroughs said they required more delivery skills in their planning departments – nothing significant has changed since then.

Reduced capacity does not just elongate the planning process, it also erodes planning's ability to serve the public interest, according to a

Royal Town Planning Institute and Newcastle University study. Austerity in England has created a "box-ticking culture that has closed off the space many planners traditionally used for reflection, professional discretion and proactive planning," the report says.

Exacerbating this under-resourcing is an apparent lack of respect for the importance of planning within local government. A separate survey by the RTPI found that 83% of UK councils put planning two or three tiers down from the chief executive, demonstrating once again that, while housing delivery is supposedly top of the agenda for central government, that is not borne out at a local level.

The planning system is not broken, but it is critically under-resourced. If tackling the housing crisis is genuinely important to the Government, and if we want to get housebuilding going, we need to recognise the vital role that planning departments play – and resource them accordingly.

The current planning fee schedule needs refreshing to ensure that *all* application types have a fee set appropriately to cover the costs of determining them. The development industry is prepared to pay for a well-resourced and efficient planning service.

Community engagement is key

Engagement is essential to kickstart the housebuilding industry to deliver housing and support the economy. If councils and communities do not meet with developers before planning applications are submitted, it is difficult to make meaningful changes further down the line. The time to influence the direction of development is while plans are being created.

Councils need to prioritise timely engagement at an early stage which can save time later in the planning process by communicating the council's desires and aspirations clearly upfront. Some councils will refuse to meet altogether, which is unhelpful for everyone: there is everything to gain by being involved in an early and active dialogue.

Local Plans and examinations

I am a strong believer in Local Plans and broader strategic planning. Ensuring a full covering of spatial plans is essential. These plans need to be amazing all singing, all dancing documents to pass the current examination procedures. They need to be visionary but realistic, deliver sustainable, well-designed new homes, affordable housing, schools, employment space, informal and formal sports provision, ensure provision of infrastructure at the appropriate time - all the while being assessed on a detailed basis for their viability.

The current examination processes and tests are not fit for purpose. The last few weeks and months have seen a succession of plans being found unsound by inspectors. While some of these plans have been limited in their aspirations and shaky on some of the legal tests, others have been forward-looking; proposing new settlements, or large-scale new developments supported by the necessary infrastructure. It is not realistic to assess delivery over a 30+ year period and provide the absolute level of certainty which inspectors seem to be seeking.

There are currently a variety of parallel approval processes alongside Local Plan examinations - Garden Community bidding rounds, City Deals, Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF), Homes England (HE) funding. If a draft allocation or infrastructure is supported by City Deal or Garden Community Status, funded by HIF or HE then the allocation and supporting infrastructure must be considered viable and deliverable. This would allow examinations to focus on other elements and allow government-supported proposals to move forward.

Housing numbers

Housing numbers and their delivery is the crux of many contentious planning issues. Whether this is setting the Local Plan housing number, sharing requirements between neighbouring authorities or arguing about housing supply on individual applications – they are the cause of many an argument and much delay.

The Government through the standard methodology (due to be updated) has re-imposed the nationally-set housing numbers. Government needs to go further; concern about top-down targets has gone and everyone in the planning sector (public and private alike) wants certainty. I don't want to have to sit through more Local Plan examinations or appeals where this is argued over. The Government needs to publish formal Strategic Housing Market Areas (SHMA) and publish on an annual basis the housing requirement for those areas. This requirement should be 'Sound' to use for Local Plans for the following two years. All housing allocated to the SHMA area must be planned for and delivered within that area.

No more arguments on housing numbers, no more undersupply of housing – what is not to like?

Housing delivery

Housing delivery though is far more complex than just agreeing the initial requirement. There are many competing issues as to why sites do, and don't come forward and why they come forward at different rates. Countryside's mixed tenure model focusing on affordable housing, private rented and market housing helps to increase certainty and provide a steady flow of new housing.

One of the key issues to kickstarting the housing market and housing supply at the current time will be mortgage availability and loan to value rates. With personal circumstances changing for many people, mortgage companies are applying new checks on affordability and requiring larger deposits. While mortgage affordability is important, and people must be careful not to overreach themselves, the availability of mortgages is something all planners need to be concerned about to ensure housing delivery rates can be maintained. This will be especially important to local authority planners monitoring their five-year land supply.

Digital planning

Over the last months a transformation in the use of technology within planning has occurred. We should capture the good elements and build upon it. Too many planning regulations are based on submissions of paper, paper sites notices, advertising in local papers, paper copies of planning applications or Local Plans or Environmental Statements – not to mentioned the common practice of supplying paper copies to consultees. None of this should be necessary.

When I was in local government as a head of service the cost of advertising in the local papers was the same as employing a full-time senior planning officer. What a waste of resource and missed opportunity.

It is essential that we should aim to build back digital. The default should be digital – digital consultation, digital records, digital commenting and even keeping on-line committees.

Concluding thoughts

I have explored a range of ideas to help housebuilding and planning but there are many more topics which I could have chosen: extending all current permissions by a year, change the default time limit from three to five years, make all Statutory Consultees reply within their 21 days or lose the ability to comment, remove the need for outline consent on all allocated sites (move from allocation, to masterplan, to detailed application), merge all small councils to create organisations large enough to appropriately deliver a functioning planning service.

My simple conclusion is that the private sector, public sector and local communities need to work together to deliver the stimulus needed to kickstart the housebuilding industry, deliver the housing we need and get the country back building again.

Andrew Taylor is Head of Planning for Countryside

Learning and planning for growth

Nick Ireland
Planning Director, Iceni Projects Limited

We have been struggling for many years now to deliver the homes that the country needs, and the current crisis threatens to set us back significantly. Swift action is needed.

Construction has stalled on a range of sites and workers furloughed. There have been some encouraging signs of sites beginning to reopen from late April. But the issues are deeper: mortgage availability has reduced, particularly at higher loan-to-value ratios; however, what is particularly significant is what is happening with the wider economy with the prospect of job losses and reduced earnings both directly affecting households' ability to buy a home (despite low interest rates), and economic uncertainties influencing wider market confidence.

Treasury consensus forecasts in April 2020 point to a V-shaped recession with UK GDP expected to contract by 5.8% in 2020 but recovering relatively quickly with 5.0% growth in 2021. However, there is clearly significant economic uncertainty regarding how things actually pan out, and the effects of Brexit could provide a drag on recovery later in the year and into 2021.

Government's 2017 Housing White Paper found that there was no one 'silver bullet' to solving the housing crisis. The case for a multi-pronged approach remains - one which recognises the role which spending on housing and wider infrastructure (with a particular emphasis on both data and logistics) can have on driving wider economic recovery; but also that what the Government does in other areas to support that recovery will be important for the housing market.

Are there lessons that can be drawn from the last recession?

The last recession was long and deep. Sales volumes of market housing fell dramatically and remained at 45% or more down on the pre-recession average until mid-2013 – almost five years on from the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008.

Housing associations took on stock which housebuilders couldn't sell on the private market. This had a short-term effect in keeping some sites going; and housing associations were also better able to compete for land. But because the dependence on the private market to deliver homes has been so significant, the effect on overall housing delivery of this was modest: housing associations delivered on average 3,800 homes a year over the 2008-13 period relative to the previous five years, but this was significantly overshadowed by a drop in housing delivery by market providers by over 50,000 homes a year.

What in particular supported a market recovery from 2013 was the Bank of England's Funding for Lending Scheme and the Help-to-Buy Programme.

What could be brought forward to support the market, construction jobs and housing delivery?

In our view, the Government needs to look at what it can do to de-risk construction, to shore up market demand, and boost affordable housing delivery. Homes England has a potential key role to play in all three.

In what is potentially a falling market in the short-term, mortgage availability, access to finance (particularly for smaller housebuilders), and the continuation of the Help-to-Buy programme will all be important to sustaining housing delivery.

The Government might also consider how it helps to de-risk construction through guaranteeing sales to keep housebuilders building; putting agreements in place whereby if homes don't sell on the open market, then they would be purchased by Homes England for an agreed benchmark price.

Government investment in infrastructure which supports housing growth will also be important – with potential that the Government puts in stronger controls requiring housebuilders to meet certain build rates (potentially in combination with the above) with a potential fall-back that if not sold, the public sector would acquire units.

Consideration should also be given to broadening who we are building homes for. The long-term trend in recent decades across England has been a growth in house prices, and a decline in home ownership. But the mainstay of housebuilding is still building homes for sale. There is a need to look more carefully at what new-build housing options there are for the many younger households who can't afford this – driving forward the delivery of homes for rent.

If housing associations (or the public sector more widely) are going to have a significant role to play in supporting the housing market in the short-term, the Government would need to make a much more substantial financial commitment to it. But consideration also needs to be given to how money could be directed to triggering the quickest impact. In the short-term the capacity, from project management and workforce to supply chains, rests more with the private sector. Should the Government, therefore, also allow private sector housebuilders to both build and operate affordable housing on a not-for-profit basis, albeit with access to grant funding?

We see potential for an enhanced role for Homes England in acquiring and driving the delivery of stalled sites, and it is important that it is funded to do so. Its role in 'directly commissioning' contractors could play an important role in keeping a range of businesses alive. Local authorities who in recent years have been investing significantly in commercial real estate could play a similar role in acquiring housing sites and driving forward delivery; and those with Local Housing Companies in situ would be well placed to do so.

What contribution could the planning system make?

The planning system has a facilitating role in supporting recovery, but changes to the planning framework could create new opportunities for investment, and in particular, accelerate the pace of delivery.

Legislation should be brought forward to extend the lifespan of planning permissions adding resilience to planning consents in the context of a falling market. The Scottish Government has already added an additional year to planning permissions. A similar approach should be enacted through legislation in England; and this should happen automatically as councils do not need the administrative burden of processing changes.

Developers should be given the potential to defer Section 106 contributions or CIL payments on consented schemes, through negotiation with planning authorities, in order to improve cashflow and viability.

Specific measures should also be brought forward to support SME housebuilders. One way of doing this would be to implement a presumption in favour of sustainable development of sites of less than 50 dwellings for a time-limited period in return for a firm commitment to delivery in the short-term. This could help keep small housebuilders, the numbers of which dropped substantially in the last recession, in business.

The Government set out in March 2020, alongside the Budget, a requirement for all local authorities to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place by December 2023 to avoid Government intervention. However, previous governments have set similar targets which have come and gone, and there remains a strategic issue regarding the slow or ineffective progress with plans in some of the higher-value UK markets, particularly in green belt areas. It is questionable whether the local authorities under the spotlight, and equally the development industry demanding intervention, give any credence to this perceived threat. A more focused interventionist approach to get these areas to make rapid progress should be pursued, targeting those authorities without a post 2012 plan and with an affordability ratio of greater than 10 times earnings.

Options to be considered include whether an accelerated mechanism is introduced to securing housing allocations, or to introduce an 'in principle' support for specified residential sites in advance of a full plan review in the context of a national need to support housing delivery in the short-term; or the provision of additional capacity funding for authorities which agree to accelerate plan production ahead of the 2023 timetable within existing legislation.

Changes to national planning policy and guidance may also be justified to support growth in emerging market segments such as Build-to-Rent, self-build development or retirement living. In these areas developers often have to compete (and are outbid) by mainstream developers. Market circumstances in the short-term may shift this dynamic. However, this could also be supported by a strengthening of national policy requirements for councils to specifically identify land for these forms of development, or amendments to national policy to give enhanced weight in decision-making to the need position where land supply for these specific sectors can be shown to be insufficient.

We should, however, remember that changes to planning should not just be focused on housing; policies and intervention which support economic recovery more widely will support the housing market and help rebuild the nation's economic stability. Social distancing measures are changing the way in which we communicate and shop, and create a strong case for long-term societal change: the delivery of data centres and warehouses as appropriate development as part of the essential infrastructure is an issue that will outlive the short term impact of COVID-19.

In time we will also need to review how COVID-19 affects the nature and geography of housing demand. We may see people prioritise different factors in deciding where to live, placing greater priority on amenity space and gardens or balconies; as well as changing travelling habits. In London where the London Plan is driving numbers and density this could create a significant mismatch between development policies and what people want; and could equally change demand dynamics between cities and larger urban areas and their hinterlands, and better inner-urban locations and suburbs. Do local authorities and developers run the risk of telling home owners and renters what they want instead of what they need? Is a nominal release of green belt land to deliver a more balanced mix of homes and supporting healthy living a price worth paying compared with an increasingly homogenous approach to brownfield redevelopment and the race for ever increasing densities and the equally decreasing provision of living space?

Nick Ireland is Planning Director, Iceni Projects Limited

Earning trust: the big role for planning in society post-COVID-19

Iain Painting
Senior Partner and Robin Shepherd, Partner at Barton Willmore

The need to address our national housing crisis and its impact on society, affordability and quality was top of the agenda before the COVID-19 crisis. We have continually failed, for the last 30 years, to deliver the number of homes we need and now, given housing delivery generally tracks UK GDP, the need for solutions is greater than ever.

The prime minister's reference to 'society' in recent addresses, reflects a shift in attitudes during this crisis. If society has been galvanised to address the underlying housing crisis, what is the role for planning?

In contrast to the 2008-12 recession, house price and wage inflation have been more static in recent years. This may aid our economic recovery, but we can still foresee a drop in the number of dwellings delivered, worsening our housing crisis. New solutions are critical if we are to provide the homes needed.

Big Planning

The Planning Act[1] effectively nationalised the right to develop land in the public interest. Planning is now seen as part of the problem not the solution. This needs to change. As Grosvenor has rightly advocated[2], **planning needs to step up and earn the public's trust**. Just as we have come to appreciate the value of the NHS and all those who work in it, so we need to understand what planning contributes to society.

To earn this trust, we recommend that the Government intervenes through the imminent Planning White Paper by:

1. Conducting a national conversation to help educate people in what planning can achieve and to help influence the society they want to create.
2. Re-evaluating the importance of health and wellbeing in the way we plan for development.
3. Reflecting these community priorities in a strategic National Plan, empowering councils to reflect this in their Local Plans, and encourage communities to create their own Neighbourhood Plans.
4. Reforming the CIL regime to deliver transparency in how we pay for it.

1 Town and Country Planning Act 1947

2 Grosvenor (2019) - Restoring Public Trust in Placemaking and Developers

You Can't Clap with One Hand: We all contribute to society.

We need a more transparent planning system – returning the focus to delivering key, established, and agreed national objectives which communities trust, engage with and understand.

This can only be achieved through a national conversation about the society we want to live in, and recognition of the part development must play - something we called for in our 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize submission[3], and still believe is crucial. We need to help people to realise that positive engagement in the process can address many of the problems faced by society and the environment today.

We also need to reset the process to be more positive. Council decision-making is currently geared to retaining control and minimising impacts of development: proving no demonstrable harm as opposed to positive benefits. We must instead be capturing and celebrating the positive benefits of development and ensuring we deliver on the promise.

By having an open conversation, multiple times, we can keep the sense of civic collaboration and collective spirit, created by COVID-19, to find a solution. Led by councillors, this engagement can also be done in a way which ensures they are fully representing their communities and asking the right questions. As public health authorities, as well as planning authorities, there is political drive to ensure the funding and skills are in place to maximise the benefits, but councils need to get involved early and proactively.

> Recommendation 1
>
> Improve understanding and engagement in planning and what it can deliver for society through a national conversation. Create a more transparent planning system that is better understood by the communities it serves and encourages active, positive engagement.

A Return to Environmental Determinism?

Planning has always been aimed at improving the living conditions of the poor and disadvantaged. COVID-19 is bringing this into sharp focus again today, with evidence that those with the highest mortality rates and lowest access to greenspace are those in disadvantaged and minority aspects of society[4][5]. Planning was invented to tackle these inequalities and needs a reboot.

The opportunity exists for health objectives to be addressed through the planning of our neighbourhoods. We should move from assessing urban green space via space standards, to understanding it's real value - functionality, quality and health role, using tools such as Greenkeeper[6].

We need to understand the science of health in planning our communities and collaborate with health professionals earlier and effectively to address causes and influencers, rather than treat results.

3 Barton Willmore (2014) - Shortlisted Wolfson Economics Prize 2014 Entry

4 "Local Action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces", Public Health England / UCL Institute of Health Equity, 2014

5 ONS (2020) - One in eight British households has no garden

6 Green Keeper UK – Innovate UK funded urban greenspace valuation platform set to be launched imminently.

The extension and development of the Healthy New Towns initiative[7] is essential. Co-creation through collaborative design will ensure common objectives can be maximised, and benefits driven that have far greater reach, such as:

- Parks and streets become jewels - safe spaces that inspire, create healthier lifestyles and better wellbeing for all generations.
- Air quality is enhanced through reduced travel and greener transport.
- Community cohesion is developed through involvement and governance, to create a greater sense of belonging and happiness.
- Grow your own and local produce focus drives emphasis on healthier living.
- Agile working allows for more time for family, friends, exercise and leisure activities.
- Better-designed homes deliver better living conditions and reduce stress.
- Ecological net gain creates a diverse ecosystem that can offer enjoyment, education, and custodianship.
- Diversity of tenure and home provision drives healthy sustainable communities.

Recommendation 2

- Require the genuine co-creation of places, involving health experts, communities, developers/housebuilders and councils in the design process, focussing upon the quality of place – both the public realm and the form / physical appearance of new development.
- Encourage a reset of the 'mitigation' mindset and focus on realising the benefits development brings and funding opportunities it could open up.

Strategic planning on a national level to achieve the society we want

Governments have successively sought to influence the geography of economic activity, i.e. through the relocation of the DVLA and more latterly the BBC. But the housing crisis manifests itself in different ways across the country. Of the 300,000 homes needed, almost half are required in London and the South East. Outside the areas of high demand, we still have a challenging market of supply but also, as a result, a lack of investment in broader benefits, like social and transport infrastructure.

The Government has already committed politically to re-balancing the country following the 2019 General Election. Planning lies at the heart of this, but the Government needs to accept how strategic planning can deliver these benefits. As called for by the UK2070 Commission[8], we need to broaden the geography of demand for housing and the benefits

7 NHS England - Healthy New Towns

8 'Making Change Happen'; UK2070 Commission, February 2020

that come with it, via a debate and national plan for change. UK2070 sets out the reasons for this approach, but the COVID-19 crisis offers the perfect opportunity for the Government to listen and act quickly, to provide certainty and stimulate confidence.

From a national conversation can emerge a national plan, strong leadership, and a clear role for planning and community buy-in.

Using the results of the re-evaluation of health priorities described above, objectives for how healthy places can be created at the local level, taking account of local socio-economic characteristics and trends, can be identified and included within the succinct Local Plan, with bespoke solutions created.

Neighbourhood plans should be encouraged to help communities define how and where to deliver housing. The process needs reforming as momentum is being lost and many neighbourhood plans abandoned or delayed due to the complexity for their delivery[9].

Recommendation 3

Improve strategic planning at a national level, reflected in Local and Neighbourhood Plans

a. Use the results of the national conversation to identify key priorities and objectives in a National Plan

b. Change the roles of councils to become more directly involved in creating and managing changes in their areas, to:

    i. deliver agreed National Plan objectives through more focussed Local Plans

    ii. become actively involved in development process to support supply

    iii. co-create places that deliver change or new homes

    iv. play a primary role in seeding and nurturing the new community

c. Support communities to bring forward simplified Neighbourhood Plans.

It is all about money: transparency on how we pay for it

Since the origins of the modern planning system, we have failed to effectively resolve how to mitigate the impacts of development or fund societal improvements and needs. This has been exasperated by lack of local authority funding to meet aspirations and needs of communities.

Instead, we have moved away from mitigation of impact to indirect taxation, predominantly through CIL where there is a lack of transparency in how the receipts are spent. This breaks the important link between development and the existing community, engenders distrust in the process and is a missed opportunity for development to be recognised as the enabler of positive change.

If we are going to build more, development must continue to pay

9 Planning - Map: neighbourhood plan applications

its fair share and be seen to do so, re-establishing the link between development and public benefit.

The CIL/s106 regime must be simplified, to improve transparency and reduce bureaucracy, and maintain the link between impact and mitigation, development and delivery. The introduction of a system to capture the land value uplift arising from development simply represents another tax. The government needs to be clear which route they wish to pursue and not burden planning.

> Recommendation 4
>
> Transform the current CIL regime to become less bureaucratic; and a more transparent and collectively owned process aligned to the key national and local planning objectives.

Out of adversity comes opportunity. We have a once in a generation opportunity to reboot how we plan for our communities. COVID-19 has brought into sharp relief many of the issues that we were facing as a society before. Don't hold back on our collective ambition. Let us take that opportunity: big and better planning for a better society.

Iain Painting is Senior Partner and Robin Shepherd is Partner at Barton Willmore

Removing planning barriers to recovery

Mark Bewsey
Planning Director, DHA Planning

The housebuilding industry is a major part of the British economy. Its success generates direct and indirect employment opportunities for the trades, supply chains, self-employed and professional and legal services, and financial benefits to local authorities in the form of New Homes Bonus, increased council tax, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions, notwithstanding its critical role in addressing the country's housing crisis and attempts to deliver 300,000 new homes a year.

The coronavirus pandemic is a major threat to the housebuilding industry and could have devasting impacts on the ongoing sustainability of the industry and wider economy.

Housebuilding is a high-risk business requiring significant upfront expenditure on land, finance and planning plus building and material costs in advance of returns being realised through the sale of residential units. The industry is highly affected by periods of economic downturn, and major crises such as the current coronavirus pandemic will inevitably result in a dramatic reduction in the supply of new homes, affecting a very significant number of people and businesses within the supply chain or seeking a new home. Housebuilding is also one of, if not the most, regulated industries in the country given the complex planning, building regulations and other consents and license regimes in place. This, therefore, places an opportunity on the Government to revise, relax or temporarily remove barriers to recovery, and I set out recommendations below:

Time Limits for Implementation of Planning Permissions

As a matter of urgency, the Government should introduce a measure to automatically extend all planning permission time limits for implementation by a year. This has already been introduced in Scotland, and relates to all planning permissions which are due to expire within an 'emergency period' of six months from 1st April. This will protect many thousands of dwellings which have planning permission but on which work has not yet commenced on site.

At the current point in time it is unclear how long the implications of the coronavirus pandemic will last, and therefore following the six month emergency period, the Government should also consider introducing temporary secondary legislation to allow applications to be made to extend time limits, as previously done in 2009. This should not be conditional on units being delivered but should be a simple process to vary the relevant condition.

Viability

The impact of the pandemic on the economics of development is not yet truly known but it is likely to be significant, threatening the viability of many schemes granted consent and subject to Section 106 agreements entered into in good faith. Nevertheless, such obligations are likely to render many developments unviable, and the Government should therefore allow renegotiations of affordable housing obligations where there is a viability issue, through the temporary reintroduction of the former Section 106 BA which worked successfully after the previous economic downturn.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The CIL regulations are known to be inflexible. Instalment policies require payments within certain time periods following implementation irrespective of progress on site or sale of units. We welcome the Government's recent announcements which allows the deferral of payments where necessary. In addition, given the uncertainty with regard to onward delivery we suggest that Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to set instalment policies by unit completion rather than on a time period basis.

Building Regulations – New Part L

The Government is urged to rethink the draft new Part L of the Building Regulations, as consulted on in late 2019 and early 2020. The industry submitted strong representations to this consultation, and the concerns highlighted are now even more relevant where they relate to viability. Specifically the new Part L would mean that developers will no longer be able to build out entire schemes based on the Building Regulations applicable at the time of registration, instead each individual dwelling must be built in accordance with the regulations applicable at the commencement of that dwelling. In practical terms this will be unworkable and is impossible to account for with potential future changes to Part L unknown. Many developments already face becoming unviable when the new Part L is introduced, so a rethink was required anyway, but given the current crisis this is even more important.

Local Authority Build Quota of New Homes

Local authorities should be encouraged, or forced to build out a quota of new homes, and funding should be made available to them in order to provide this housing. Given the current crisis, not many local authorities will meet the new housing delivery targets unless there is direct intervention in the housing market. Local authorities should also be encouraged to enter the private rental (or sales) sector, assisting competent authorities to be more self-sufficient in longer term, and able to re-invest their returns into further developments. The idea of risk share (joint venture) could work well and would also assist housing developers with cashflow.

Central Government Scheme of Delegation

At present there are vast inconsistencies between LPAs with regard to officer-delegated powers and requirements for applications to be heard at planning committee. Central government should advise on what applications should be taken to planning committee to secure a level of consistency across the UK. A significant amount of time and money is wasted with applications called in to planning committees where the proposals are wholly consistent with adopted development plans. At a time when the Government is pushing for all authorities to have up-to-date plans, it seems somewhat perverse that local authorities can then, themselves choose which applications should be considered at a local level once adopted. We suggest that only 'significant major' applications, or those which depart from the Development Plan need to be heard by planning committee. Where proposals are policy compliant, Parish Council or Ward Member call-ins should be prevented.

Investment in Infrastructure Projects

Infrastructure projects, led by either the public or private sector, can be great catalysts for further growth, investment and development including through Development Consent Orders. Public bodies will no doubt be under pressure to review spending commitments. However, we urge the Government to ensure that investment in infrastructure projects is at the very least maintained. To do otherwise would have devastating direct and indirect economic and environmental consequences, and an ongoing commitment to infrastructure projects will help accelerate development where it is most needed.

Conclusion

To conclude, the housebuilding industry is a vital part of the UK economy. As well supplying much needed new homes, it provides direct and indirect employment and investment opportunities for the trades, supply chains, self-employed and professional and legal services, and a range of financial benefits to local authorities. It is a high-risk industry and is highly susceptible to periods of economic downturns, meaning that the current coronavirus pandemic threatens its ongoing sustainability risking devastating knock-on impacts to those directly or indirectly involved in the industry. Nevertheless, as a highly-regulated industry, I have set out above a range of opportunities open to the Government to help kickstart a post-COVID-19 lockdown recovery for the industry. These recommendations include:

- Extending time limits for the implementation of planning permissions;
- Allowing developers to revisit s106/affordable housing obligations where schemes are no longer viable;

- Allowing restructured or deferred CIL payments;
- Local authorities to build quotas of new homes;
- Central government to advise on which applications should be heard by planning committees; and,
- Ensuring continued investment in infrastructure projects.

By acting now, the Government can help stimulate a rapid recovery for the housebuilding industry post-COVID-19 lockdown.

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List of Contributors

Barton Willmore

Barton Willmore is the UK's largest independent, inter-disciplinary planning and design consultancy. With 13 locations nationwide, and over 85 years of experience in driving strategic development, we offer our clients from across the private and public sector both national influence and local knowledge. We are passionate about creating places that are not only commercially viable but also sustainable, dynamic and progressive. Effective and innovative strategic solutions at every level of the plan-making and design process are crucial to this and we were delighted to lend out voice to this Localis initiative. Town Planning was established to play a key role in public health and placemaking, and we firmly believe this crisis offer us a huge opportunity to tackle endemic issues apparent for some time, and refocus on these objectives.

The Berkeley Group

Berkeley Group builds homes and neighbourhoods across London, Birmingham and the South of England. We revive underused land, creating welcoming, sustainable and nature-rich places where communities thrive and where people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy a great quality of life.

We specialise in long-term brownfield regeneration, focusing on challenging and complex sites that are beyond the scope of conventional homebuilders. We are highly collaborative, working with councils and communities to create a shared vision and to unlock a mix of social, environmental, economic and commercial value that benefits all of our stakeholders.

Our passion for quality and design underpins everything we do. All Berkeley homes are created with care, expertise and relentless attention to detail.

Cascade Communications

Founded in 2011, Cascade is an award winning strategic consultancy specialising in campaigning, advocacy, engagement and communications across the built environment. We advise and support organisations to successfully engage on issues that directly impact local communities, businesses and politics across the UK.

Our team of 15 consultants, based in Soho, have been recruited because of their experience in national and local politics and policy, media, local government, civil service, the development industry and strategic communications.

Emma Waterfall is the Founder and Managing Director of Cascade Communications and is recognised as one of the leading pioneers of strategic communications in the built environment.

Catriona Riddell

Catriona is a chartered town planner with extensive experience working within and with local authorities and their partners. As Director of Catriona Riddell & Associates, she provides support on a wide range of planning issues but specialises in strategic planning, helping local authorities to develop their partnership roles and implement long term integrated strategic planning frameworks. Previous roles include Head of Strategic Planning at Surrey County Council and Director of Planning at the South East England Regional Assembly.

Catriona is the Strategic Planning Specialist for the Planning Officers' Society (POS), Vice-Chair of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and a regular columnist for Planning Magazine.

Cheyne Capital

Founded in 2000, Cheyne Capital is a London-based alternative investment fund manager. Cheyne is known for its innovative approach and has been early and successful at delivering value to investors from important dislocations in the market place. With an investment philosophy grounded in rigorous fundamental analysis, the firm's areas of expertise are Real Estate Debt, Impact Real Estate, Investment-Grade Credit, Strategic Value Credit and Equity-Linked investing.

Cheyne Capital Management (U.K.) LLP is authorised and regulated in the U.K. by the Financial Conduct Authority, and registered as an Investment Adviser in the U.S. by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Cheyne is a signatory to the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), a member of the Alternative Investment Management Association (AIMA), a founding member of the Alternative Credit Council and one of the initial signatories to the Standards Board for Alternative Investments (SBAI).

About Cheyne Impact Real Estate

Alternative investment manager Cheyne Capital launched its first Social Property Impact Fund in November 2014 and second Impact Real Estate Trust in April 2020 in order to help tackle the chronic shortage of housing solutions in the UK. The Funds are socially responsible landlords which deliver property for use as affordable / keyworker housing, supported living and social care facilities to high quality counterparties such as local councils, housing associations and charities. The Funds form part of Cheyne Capital Real Estate which has provided financing solutions since 2009 and which now manages approximately £3bn of assets across social impact equity, direct real estate lending, securitised European real estate debt and selective special situations.

Connected Places Catapult

Connected Places Catapult is the UK Government-backed centre of excellence for innovation in the built environment and mobility. We partner with places to bridge the gap between buyers, suppliers, innovators and industry, helping place leaders and their partners to access innovations which enable new services and unlock wider economic and environmental benefits.

With breakthroughs in digital connectivity, sensing, data analytics, autonomous vehicles and more, there is no shortage of innovative products and services available today for place leaders to harness in delivering better services and outcomes. However, with the pace of technological progress accelerating, staying up to speed with developments can be challenging.

If that feels like a familiar problem, the Connected Places Catapult is here to help. Whether you are looking to level up or stay ahead, we offer impartial advice and practical support to help you harness the power of innovation. Find out more at: cp.catapult.org.uk.

Countryside

Countryside is the UK's leading mixed-tenure developer, specialising in place making and regeneration, through its two divisions, Partnerships and Housebuilding. Founded more than 60 years ago, Countryside has an exemplary history of building places people love. In April 2020, it was awarded the 5 Star Rating by the Home Builders Federation following the latest home building industry's Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Countryside's Partnerships division was established over 30 years ago, specialising in estate regeneration, with operations in London, the South East, the North West, the Midlands and Yorkshire. It works mainly on public sector owned and brownfield land, in partnership with local authorities and housing associations to develop private, affordable and PRS homes. Countryside's Housebuilding division benefits from an industry leading strategic land bank which is focused around outer London and the Home Counties. It builds family homes, with a focus on placemaking and selling to local owner occupiers.

DHA Planning

DHA Planning is made-up of five specialist technical consulting teams providing Planning & Development, Transport, Design, Environmental Impact and Infrastructure advice from its offices in Maidstone and Crawley. Through the Town Planning division of the group, DHA are leading providers of town planning and development consultancy services. The Practice offers a fully integrated planning and development service across the UK.

DHA has a wide-ranging client base, acting for developers and landowners, public sector corporations, governmental departments, local authorities, registered social landlords, international companies and individuals, banks, financial institutions, and private companies.

The company offers a full range of planning services and prides itself in offering sound and honest planning advice in a clear but comprehensive manner.

Grant Thornton UK LLP

Grant Thornton UK LLP is part of one of the world's leading organisations of independent advisory, tax and audit. We believe that by supporting organisations to unlock the potential for growth in our communities, we can help shape economies where businesses and people flourish and no one gets left behind. We work with 50% of the local government sector – helping our clients in these challenging times.

Working directly with councils and local leaders we help them in their ambitions to create sustainable places – exploring and creating new ways of collaborating to deliver their goals, alongside the long-term sustainability of service provision.

Homes for the North

Homes for the North is an alliance of 17 housing associations who want to see more quality homes delivered across the North of England. Collectively we provide homes for almost one million Northerners and add £2.5bn per year to the Northern economy, alongside other direct work in the communities we serve. We passionately believe that improving the supply and quality of homes in the North will support economic growth, higher living standards, better tenant rights, increased home ownership and stronger communities where people can meet their aspirations. However, we also believe that not enough good homes are being built across the North.

Iceni Projects

Iceni Projects is a strategic advisor with a diverse set of skills that considers development from different perspectives.

We bring a passion and in-depth understanding to all our work. Our commercially-minded advice and influence is built upon the breadth, depth and calibre of our people, who are experienced, personable, thorough and attentive – and that in turn fully represents Iceni's approach to consultancy. We are an independent company and we will always maintain our commitment to our clients and our principles.

Our credibility comes from our proven track record of delivering large, complex development schemes. We have the resources and the technical capabilities to lead on large multi-disciplinary projects, managing teams of consultants to drive forward the development programme.

We are able to provide specialist advice in the fields of archaeology; delivery; design; EIA management; engagement; heritage; placemaking; planning; sustainable development; townscape and transport.

Jackie Sadek

Jackie Sadek is Chief Operating Officer of UK Regeneration, which is bringing forward a Garden Community in Bedfordshire, with consent for 1500 homes in the first instance. She is co-author, with Peter Bill, of "Broken Homes" an analysis of the housing crisis, to be published in September.

Local Government Association

The Local Government Association are a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils, so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

The National Housing Federation

With almost 800 housing association members, providing homes for around six million people, we are at the forefront of tackling the nation's housing crisis. Our vision is for a country where everyone can live in a good quality home they can afford. We work with our members to make this vision a reality – delivering ambitious programmes that lead to lasting, positive change.

Platform Housing Group

Platform Housing Group was formed following a merger in 2018, although the history of the group goes back to 1967. Platform are the largest social landlord in the Midlands and cover 82 local authority areas. They have built 4,600 new homes in the past 3 years and are aiming to increase this to 2,000 per year by 2023.These homes cover all tenures and a third of their programme is sold as Shared ownership, with over 30% of those to key workers

They bring employment opportunities and wellbeing support to those areas in which they operate and very much focused on delivering quality affordable homes and building strong communities.

Their Group Chief Executive joined the Housing sector 15 years ago and has worked across a wide geography from the south west to central London an now the Midlands and before that spent 20 years working for listed corporates across the UK, Europe and the USA, in a variety of sectors.

As they consolidate their merger Platform aim to bring a customer focused and modern style landlord to life and build on the financial strength of the group.

Quinn Estates

Quinn Estates is one of the South East's foremost mixed-use developer, with an exceptionally strong track record for delivery. We own or control land upon which we are actively involved in planning for circa 22,500 residential plots and an additional 4m sq.ft of commercial space to create over 20,000 long-term jobs, spread across 48 sites in the South East of England.

In every scheme we aim to do something positive for the communities in which we develop and for this reason we are developing a reputation amongst landowners, parish councils, local councils and county councils for honesty, integrity and delivering what we say we will. In the past three years we have committed to over £50m of community projects, including a new state of the art facility for the Pilgrim's Hospice, and apprenticeship centre for Canterbury College and a sporting super hub for the people of Herne Bay.

Royal Town Planning Institute

The Royal Town Planning Institute champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. As a learned society, the RTPI uses its expertise and research to bring evidence and thought leadership to help shape planning policies and thinking. As a professional body, the Institute has over 25,000 members across all sectors, and is responsible for setting formal standards for planning practice and education.

Cllr. Prof. Samer Bagaeen

Cllr. Prof. Samer Bagaeen is a thought leader, expert politician and a practising academic. He is a Jordanian & a British national, and an elected city councillor in Brighton and Hove (England). Samer is a polyglot (English, Arabic, Spanish & Italian), urban resilience practitioner, city diplomat and educator. He works internationally alongside & in partnership with ministers, mayors and elected officials, equipping forward-thinking communities & civil society with the tools to ask the right questions, forge alternative futures, deliver growth, manage complex projects & think and act resiliently.

Samer holds a BA in Architecture from University College London (UCL), a Masters of Urban Design in Developing Countries from UCL, and a Diploma in International Cooperation for Development from the Universidad Politecnica de Madrid. He also holds a Ph.D. in Planning Studies from UCL and an MBA from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland.

Kent Developers Group (KDG), Essex Developers Group (EDG and Developers East Sussex (DES)

Kent Developers Group (KDG) is a group of organisations actively involved with the delivery of quality sustainable development in Kent and Medway. KDG aims to represent all developers in Kent: commercial and residential, large and small, private companies, housing associations, public sector bodies and landowners, agents, planners, construction companies, etc. Essex Developers Group (EDG) is a unique association of councils, owners, enablers and developers in Essex. EDG works with the Government, Homes England and South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to accelerate housing delivery, including the supply of much needed affordable homes. The group aims to encourage and support smaller house builders. Developers East Sussex (DES) is a group of organisations actively involved in the delivery of quality sustainable development in East Sussex. DES aims to represent all developers in East Sussex: commercial and residential, large and small, private companies, housing associations, public bodies and owners, planners, construction companies, etc. DES is readily accepted as a respected and proactive body, providing advice, direction and solutions to Team East Sussex (TES), East Sussex County Council (ESCC), the Boroughs and Districts, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), the Government and associated bodies.

Willmott Dixon

Headquartered in Letchworth Garden City, Willmott Dixon is a privately-owned contracting and interior fit-out group. Founded in 1852, we are dedicated to leaving a positive legacy in our communities and environment and in 2018 were one of only six companies to receive a Queen's Award for Enterprise in the promoting opportunity through social mobility category. In 2019 Willmott Dixon was the highest placed UK company, at number 3, in the FT's first ever Diversity Leaders list which ranked 600 companies across Europe for their approach to diversity, inclusion and equality.

About Localis

Who we are

We are a leading, independent think tank that was established in 2001. Our work promotes neo-localist ideas through research, events and commentary, covering a range of local and national domestic policy issues.

Neo-localism

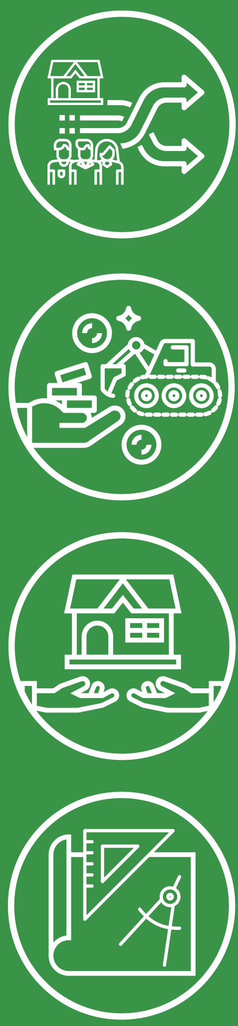
Our research and policy programme is guided by the concept of neo-localism. Neo-localism is about giving places and people more control over the effects of globalisation. It is positive about promoting economic prosperity, but also enhancing other aspects of people's lives such as family and culture. It is not anti-globalisation, but wants to bend the mainstream of social and economic policy so that place is put at the centre of political thinking.

In particular our work is focused on four areas:

- **Decentralising political economy.** Developing and differentiating regional economies and an accompanying devolution of democratic leadership.
- **Empowering local leadership.** Elevating the role and responsibilities of local leaders in shaping and directing their place.
- **Extending local civil capacity.** The mission of the strategic authority as a convener of civil society; from private to charity sector, household to community.
- **Reforming public services.** Ideas to help save the public services and institutions upon which many in society depend.

What we do

We publish research throughout the year, from extensive reports to shorter pamphlets, on a diverse range of policy areas. We run a broad events programme, including roundtable discussions, panel events and an extensive party conference programme. We also run a membership network of local authorities and corporate fellows.



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