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Devo Home:

A double devolution of housing to people and places

by *David Fagleman*

Introduction

Imagine a Britain that has started to really tackle its housing crisis; a nation that places housing at the top of the political agenda and offers the vision and commitment necessary to house people in thriving and well-designed neighbourhoods.

As a nation, we have made spirited attempts to achieve this in the past: the Housing and Planning Act 1919 and David Lloyd George's 'Homes fit for Heroes' campaign made housing a national responsibility, and the 1951 Conservative Government built over 300,000 homes a year. But in recent times we have failed to maintain this ambition and have been left with a shortage of homes and without a vision that inspires hope for the future.

We believe that by evoking and advancing the efforts of the past and creating the right institutional framework, Britain can embark on a housing revolution that can transform our approach to housebuilding; one that not only builds the homes we need but also creates beautiful communities with the necessary infrastructure for people to flourish.

This can only be achieved through the creation of a new local institution that devolves housing to people and places. What we call 'Local Place Partnerships' can dramatically increase the numbers of homes built through bringing together all the

interested parties: private developers, housing associations, residents, civil society and local business, and addressing their concerns and wishes through one decision point. And with the power to instigate Local Place Partnerships devolved to residents, people can take real control of housebuilding and help shape the future of their neighbourhoods, building more to a higher quality in a shorter time frame.

The crisis we face

The housing crisis we face is the result of successive governments' failure to recognise housing as an essential part of British infrastructure and British life. It is generally accepted that we need to build 250,000 new homes a year to meet both population growth and tackle the backlog caused by decades of undersupply.¹ But with housebuilding levels reaching over 200,000 a year just once since 1988, and only 125,110 homes built in England over the past 12 months, the sector remains well short of that target.²

As a result, people at the top and bottom of the housing ladder have been profoundly failed by housing policy. At one end, there are 1.4 million families and individuals on social housing waiting lists³ and around 50,000 households in England are accepted as legally homeless.⁴ For homeowners and renters, at the other end of the ladder, the combination of a rise in



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property prices, constrained mortgage availability and a slow recovery from the recession, has drastically changed the market. Home ownership has fallen to its lowest level for a quarter of a century,⁵ the number of private rented homes has nearly doubled from 2.5 million in 2001 to almost 5 million in 2012,⁶ and the price of rent has reached an all-time average high.⁷

The failure to build has plunged the UK into an affordability crisis, with house prices (particularly in London and the South East) among the highest in the world. Real house prices (but not real incomes) have grown faster in the UK over the last 40 years than in any other OECD country. In addition, new homes are 38% smaller in the UK than in the more densely populated areas in Germany, and 40% smaller than homes in the Netherlands.⁸ For most households, the cost of renting or owning a house is the single largest household expense. 20% of all households now depend on state support to meet the costs of living in a home.⁹ Furthermore, the separation between homeowners and renters is a rising source of tension, entrenching wealth inequality and feeding an intergenerational divide.¹⁰

We are facing not only a crisis in housing supply and affordability, but also rising levels of household debt, lowering levels of asset ownership and increasing pressures on daily family life. As a basic social need, our citizens should have access to affordable and high quality housing in an attractive

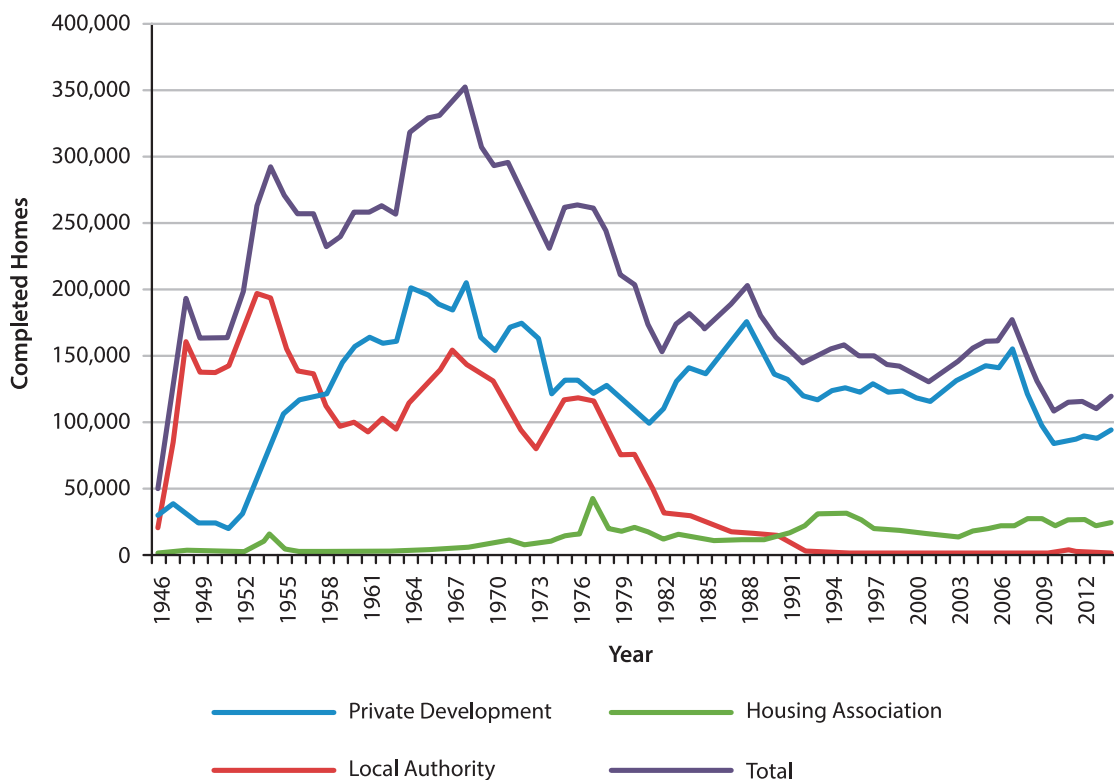
neighbourhood that has the necessary infrastructure for them and their children to flourish. A secure home in a well-designed community can have an enormous impact on individual and family life, providing the necessary stability for a job, a good base for education as well as delivering essential health, well-being and wider social benefits.

How did we get here?

There are two noticeable changes in the dynamics of post-war housebuilding that have led us to today's problems: the declining role of local authorities in housebuilding and the shift in focus towards demand rather than supply side policies.

In post-war Britain local authorities played an invaluable role in housebuilding. Between 1948 and 1978, there were only 8 years in which English local authorities did not build over 100,000 homes a year, with a high of 198,000 in 1953. Their presence enabled the total number of new homes to reach over 250,000 a year for the majority of the 1950s and over 300,000 in the mid to late 1960s (notably 352,000 in 1968). However, since 1979 there has been a sharp decline in their role as housebuilders: local authorities delivered less than 15,000 homes a year from 1989, with a low of 50 in 1999.¹¹

Post-war Housebuilding (England)



"The gap left by the retreat of local authorities remains unplugged, and housebuilding levels have not surpassed the 200,000 mark since 1988. This has not only led to a shortage of homes, but a shortage of affordable homes."

In contrast, housing associations have increased their contribution, building on average 22,000 social homes a year since 1990. Yet as the above graph makes clear, both their and the private market's inability to vastly increase output means the gap left by the retreat of local authorities remains unplugged, and housebuilding levels have not surpassed the 200,000 mark since 1988. We have therefore seen not only led to a shortage of homes, but a shortage of affordable homes.

This has been accompanied by a shift in the direction of public money from building homes to subsidising rent. In the 1970s, during the golden period of local authority housebuilding, 80% of public spending on housing was invested in building new affordable homes, and 20% in benefits to help people pay their rent. Over the last Parliament, the shift from bricks to benefits is evident: 95% of public spending on housing was funnelled through the benefit system, whilst only 5% was invested in new homes. The rising cost of home ownership and private rent has seen housing benefit expenditure sharply rise over the past three decades, and it is projected to cost the public purse £25.4bn a year by 2019 (£8bn a year higher than before the recession).¹²

For too long, housing policy has been controlled by Whitehall, and the lack of local authority involvement has been a primary driver behind the failure to build new homes at the scale needed. Housebuilding has become abstracted from the local at the expense of the local.

To reverse this trend we need to create a new role for local authorities as coordinators of housing and development in their localities. We need a new locally-led model for collaboration that draws together local authorities, housebuilders, civil society and residents that not only delivers homes but places in which people can thrive.

Why we need institutional change

The fragmented terrain that is the current housebuilding process prevents ambitious action from becoming a reality. We need a long-term transparent approach that is able to bring all the actors in the housebuilding process to work for the same aim and overcome the barriers faced in the delivery, funding and planning of new homes.

There is an increasing acknowledgement amongst policy-makers and industry of the necessity to switch from a command and control model to one in which housing policy is directed strategically at a local level. Housing Zones, introduced by the Greater London Authority and the 20 Zones announced for England outside London, is recognition of the benefits of this approach. The Greater Manchester Deal and upcoming City and Local Authority Devolution Bill offer the devolution of strategic planning and housing powers (amongst others) to newly elected Mayors, demonstrating the long-overdue policy move towards city devolution and is a clear sign of the shift towards local control and decision making.¹³

Local authorities are ideal agents to lead the housebuilding push. They know how many homes are needed, how many should be affordable, and where essential infrastructure, such as schools, roads and hospitals should be located. Their suitability has been recognised by recent reviews. The Elphicke-House Review (2015) stated that local authorities 'have primary responsibility to assess and meet the housing needs of their local population' and called for them to become 'Housing Delivery Enablers'.¹⁴ Similarly, the Lyons Review (2014) called for local authorities to be able to request the creation of locally-led New Homes Corporations that could bring together partners and respond to local need.¹⁵

The role for local authorities as coordinators of housebuilding at the centre of local strategy is one which we wholeheartedly agree with. But they can't do it alone and there is a danger that these approaches can lead to fragmentation if local authorities do not act in tandem with each other, housebuilders and local partners on the scale that is necessary. Furthermore, they fail to offer the institutional change and long-term vision that can support local authorities to coordinate homes and communities for generations to come.

The role we envisage for local authorities is not of the past. Whilst invaluable in their contribution to output, the homes they built were at times ugly, cheap and utilitarian (that is, simply functional with no consideration for good design and beauty). The only way that we will mitigate the Whitehall 'command and control' model, and an old local authority led model, is by introducing an intermediary institution that draws a wide range of partners together to coordinate the building of genuinely affordable and aesthetically pleasing homes, and provide the infrastructure needed for communities to thrive.



"We propose building on and improving the UDC and Housing Zone model for the structure and scope of LPPs."

Local Place Partnerships

We propose the creation of 'Local Place Partnerships' – a set of new locally-led bodies that can offer the ecosystem of support needed to overcome the barriers faced in the delivery, funding and planning of the scale of new homes and infrastructure we need. This dedicated institution can recast local authorities as coordinators of development in their localities, orchestrate the different actors in the housebuilding process and offer a single point of decision making that can ensure swift delivery.

Led by local authorities, Local Place Partnerships (LPPs) would act as forums within which the competing and often opposing interests of the parties in the development process could be resolved, engineering the political will and private sector confidence to expand supply by circumventing the disjunction of the parties involved. Cross-boundary in reach and with a focus on place-making, they would possess certain legislative powers to accelerate delivery and encourage diversity within the housebuilding market, and with strong civic representation would be able ensure outcomes that each locality and region needs.

With this structure and purpose, LPPs offer a new option to deliver the scale of homes we need, and take inspiration from and offer improvements to Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) and the recently announced Housing Zones.

Established in the 1980s, UDCs bring together the expertise and mandate to regenerate areas over a time period usually of 10 years. At the 2014 Budget, the Chancellor set out plans for a new UDC to deliver a Garden City settlement of up to 15,000 homes at Ebbsfleet in Kent. Cutting across Kent County Council, Dartford Borough Council and Gravesham Borough Council, the UDC's objective is to 'secure the regeneration of its area' and broadly speaking enjoys all of the powers already available to local authorities. The theory is that UDCs, managed and directed by a Board on which the local authorities are represented, can focus on taking forward the regeneration and development of a particular area, and devote substantial resources towards that objective, without attention being diverted by the broad range of activities that a local authority needs to manage on a day to day basis.¹⁶

With the construction of Ebbsfleet taking place over the next 10 years, UDCs and other vehicles for housing delivery are on the political agenda and will most likely be used for further developments. The model has been praised as an important

instrument to achieve urban regeneration and can be most effective when the challenge is complex and specialised in nature. However, it has received criticism for its lack of democratic accountability and the significant amount of time dedicated to local relationship management. Furthermore, given that they are created by a Statutory Instrument laid in Parliament and Board members appointed by the Secretary of State, it is ultimately a top-down Westminster structure that inevitably removes powers from local government. Furthermore, UDCs have not been overly successful in building new homes and communities and are more suited to regeneration.¹⁷

Housing Zones, as introduced by the Coalition Government, provide an example of the shift in housing policy towards local authority responsibility. Through this approach, local authorities identify and package brownfield land and remove unnecessary planning restrictions to enable their partnered developer to build new homes. Supported by central government with loans for infrastructure and remedial work on the site, the zones intend to significantly accelerate construction.¹⁸ The 20 set for London and 20 across England hope to deliver a combined 95,000 homes and have been welcomed by industry for the commitment to building and focus on brownfield land.¹⁹

Housing Zones are to be commended and provide an encouraging signal that local authorities are to play a greater role in coordinating new housing and infrastructure in their area. However, they remain a quick-fix to our housing woes; their intent to develop brownfield sites, limited geographical reach and lack of community involvement, means that in their current guise they fail to provide the long-term vision, and therefore option, required to build the homes and communities we need.

We propose building on and improving the UDC and Housing Zone model for the structure and scope of LPPs. Acting as local agents of integration, LPPs will cover geographical areas of a similar size to Ebbsfleet, crossing local authority boundaries and offering development for a time period of 10-20 years. With local authorities taking the lead role as coordinators, and holding places on the board, they will be joined by the developer(s) and housing association(s) involved in the process, who can provide the expertise to deliver homes. Local representatives from small business groups or civil society will also feature, to ensure that the new framework holds legitimacy within the eyes of communities.



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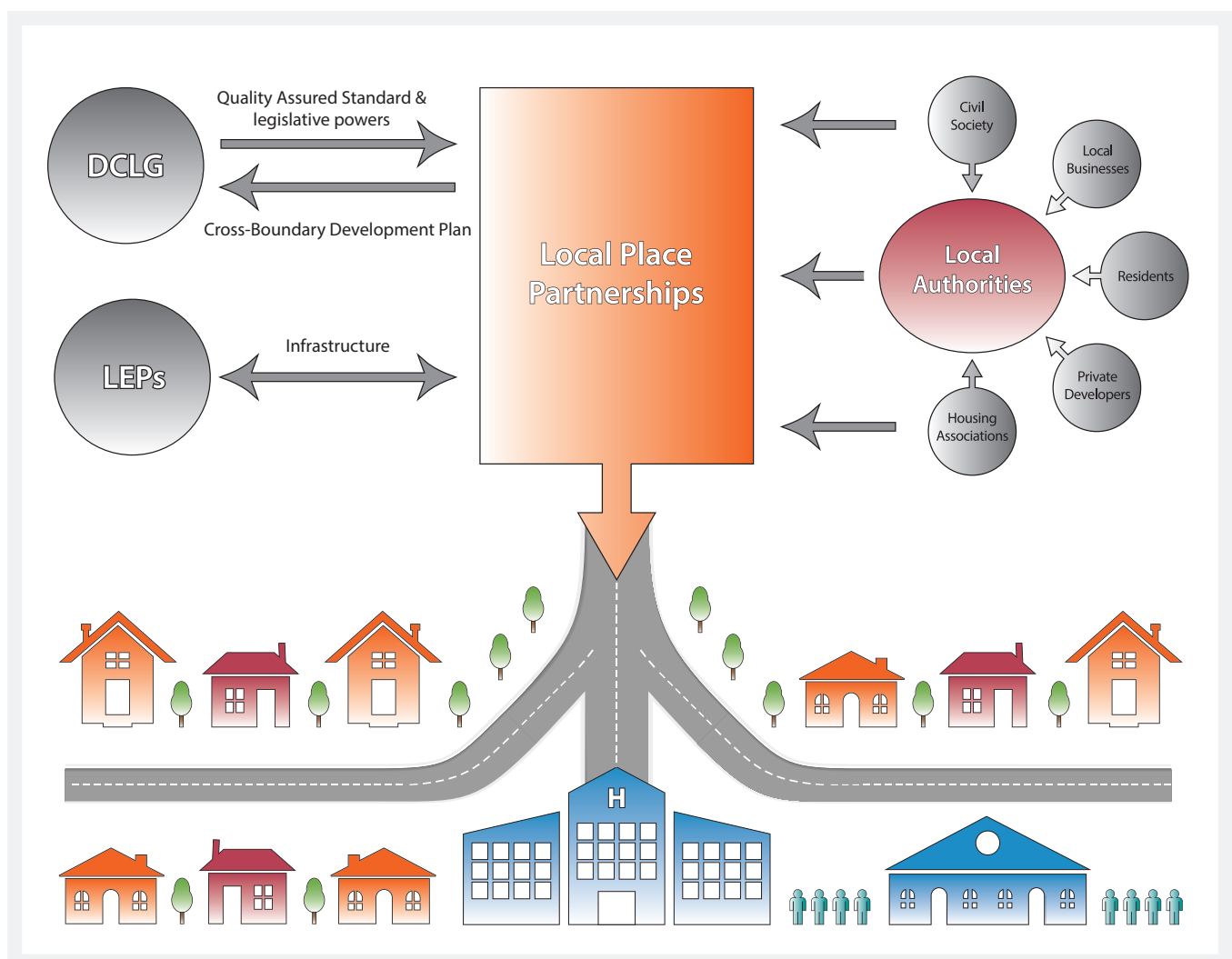
We believe LPPs can streamline development by serving as forums within which the competing interests of conflicting parties can be resolved, enabling the creation of long-term partnerships between the multitude of actors in the housebuilding process. At their heart, they will be place-making institutions, ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is funded and built alongside new homes: homes that are both well placed and hold beauty at the core of design. This, combined with the local representation on the board, will make new development popular and combat nimbyism. Of course, a one-size-fits-all approach is bound to fail and LPPs must have the flexibility in structure and reach to understand and work to local idiosyncrasies and challenges.

For LPPs to have authority, power will need to be transferred from both central government and from individual local authorities, who will receive more autonomy through cross-boundary collaboration. Therefore, we propose that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

sets out a Quality Assured Standard for LPP applicants. As lead coordinators, local authorities will produce cross-boundary plans for their LPP with developers, local partners and civic society, and submit to DCLG. If they meet the standard, they will be granted approval and limited legislative powers that will ensure development takes place as desired.

Local people should have a real say in the future of their neighbourhoods. Residents should therefore have the right to call upon and petition their council to instigate a LPP in their area, and the council should have a duty to respond with the reasons why an LPP has not been created. If residents feel this response is insufficient and the council is not utilising this new ability to create and shape building, they should be able to appeal to DCLG and put forward a case for the creation of a LPP in their locality.

Structure of Local Place Partnerships



"Working under the LPP framework, housing associations will be able to cluster and collaborate to strengthen their capacity to deliver new social housing and provide essential support services"

How will LPPs respond to the trilemma of delivery, funding and planning?

Delivery

LPPs, by virtue of their long-term vision and partnership between developers and local authorities, will accelerate the supply of new homes. By bringing these actors under one roof, they can set a 10-20 year plan for supply and overcome their differences through a single forum.

Besides the use of UDCs and recent move towards Housing Zones, examples of effective partnerships in the housebuilding process can be found up and down the country.²⁰ The joint venture model, for example, offers local authorities, private developers and housing associations the opportunity to collaborate together and share the risks and benefits of building new and affordable homes. Whilst this co-operative rather than competitive approach has successfully delivered and continues to deliver, there have been calls for the model to advance and enable partners to work more closely in order to deliver more.²¹

Local authorities have also demonstrated cross-boundary collaboration, as exemplified in the pilot London tri-borough initiative linking Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and the City of Westminster. Their collaboration in children's social services could serve as a model for cross-council and cross-party co-operation in housing and planning.²² Cross-boundary collaboration can also be seen working in England's several combined authorities, most notably the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Partnerships can therefore work. But in order to build as we need to, there must be in place a model that goes beyond project specific joint ventures and builds on cross-boundary collaboration, incorporating all actors involved in the process. Progress towards increasing the supply of homes will be slow if discussions between the relevant parties take place on a project-by-project basis and there is a lack of a shared local vision. Local Place Partnerships can offer this vision and act as the central decision-making platform that can incorporate all of the partners and overcome differences of opinion that are often revealed late in the development process. LPPs can therefore advance communication between public and private partners, provide a forum to overcome differences at all stages in the development process, and by working across local authority boundaries, offer the scale and vision needed to meet housing demand.

LPPs could also encourage small developers to play a larger role in delivery. More suited to smaller, isolated and inner-city plots, small developers have an important role to play in increasing the rate of supply and diversifying the housebuilding market (as do the 635,000 empty homes).²³ Just as Enterprise Zones offer discounts on business rates and tax relief for investments in equipment,²⁴ LPPs would be able to match small developers with small sites and use their authority to offer incentives, such as spot relief of VAT or capital gains tax, as well as deferred payment models, to encourage their growth. The Greater London Authority's London Development Panel establishes a framework agreement between developers, enabling public land owners, including London's boroughs and government bodies, to award individual contracts without having to go through a full and expensive procurement process each time.²⁵ This will save time and money, as well as delivering housing and spurring economic growth. LPPs could offer a similar service for small developers.

Housing associations play a crucial role in the housing market, building social housing and adding significantly to the social economy through the provision of skills and education support for residents. Working under the LPP framework, housing associations will be able to cluster and collaborate to strengthen their capacity to deliver new social housing and provide essential support services. With concerns that the Government's new Right to Buy policy and the reduction of the benefit cap will deplete their capacity to build (especially for those in London and the South East), clustering in this way can meet this challenge head on and ensure housing associations continue to play a significant role in the make-up of British housing.

LPPs could also play a huge role in releasing public land to developers. Only 10% of land has been developed in England, and with homes making up only 1.1%, land is one of our greatest assets and should be put to better use in the challenge to build more homes. Building on a fraction more could help a great deal.

The public sector holds around 40% of developable sites and around 27% of brownfield land suitable for housing.²⁶ Over the last Parliament, the Government released surplus public sector land with capacity for over 100,000 homes and pre-election set an ambitious target to release land for 150,000 homes by 2020 through the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).²⁷



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Whilst this has played an important role in meeting housing demand, given the quantity available the speed at which it is released to developers must improve.

This could be achieved if the HCA transferred land directly to the LPPs, who would then incorporate it in their cross-boundary development plan. Delivering development-ready land to a partnership of developers, local authorities and community voices will ensure that is put to its most effective use and with their cross-boundary reach, LPPs will ensure the swifter release of a greater quantity of land. This will also enable LPPs to control land values and place surplus public sector land at the heart of their long-term place-making vision.

Funding

Offering a long-term commitment to new development, LPPs can provide the stability and confidence necessary to attract foreign and local investment in the housing sector at large. Furthermore, they provide a unique opportunity to introduce innovative funding mechanisms that can finance infrastructure projects ensuring new homes are synonymous with thriving communities.

New homes need investment. With the majority of homes built outside the public realm, and local government and housing associations operating in a tight fiscal environment, new development must be able to attract private investment and alternative financing avenues explored. Therefore, private and public partnerships, linking investors and local or central government funding, are essential. In order to attract this kind of international investment, however, local backing and long-term certainty of outcome are crucial in increasing investors' confidence regarding the returns and viability of projects.

Using local government investment to stimulate foreign demand presents a huge and relatively untapped opportunity. The Local Government Association's Municipal Bonds Agency will help to unlock the role of local government in funding, using the sale of bonds of up to £300m to fund development.²⁸ The Local Government Pension scheme represents another potential avenue, as very little of this £178bn is currently invested in housing and it is an ideal investor in new supply.²⁹ Trailblazing councils, such as Islington³⁰ and Manchester City,³¹ have outlined plans to invest part of their pension schemes into building new homes.

With a vision and purpose to streamline and up-scale the housebuilding process, LPPs can offer an attractive long-term

option to international and local investment alike. Along with their role in public sector land, LPPs will take on two key responsibilities of the HCA. This will be the case for areas that become LPPs but the HCA will continue as before in non-LPP areas and can play a crucial role in supporting LPPs in their infancy.

Creating Places

Whilst accelerating and increasing the supply of new homes is a central component to solving the housing crisis, it is but one part of the puzzle. The real challenge lies in creating place: delivering new and affordable homes in places where people want to live, where they will flourish, and promote ongoing investment and community engagement.

When embarking on development, developers must commit to long-term place-making: regenerating areas and delivering public spaces and communities in which people want to live, thus building well designed homes in better places. It is just as crucial to build social and economic infrastructure (such as schools, hospitals, and transport links), and create an environment to attract employment and business, as it is to build homes. However, just like new homes, this needs financial support and in the fiscal environment outlined above, innovative finance mechanisms must be explored. As house prices have increased, the investment value of a home has risen whilst its utility in functional terms has fallen, leading to what can be characterised as a disjoint between the investment and utility value of property. A mechanism is needed to ensure that the profit and benefits accrued by developers can be reinvested into the local area and support new infrastructure.

However, finding one suitable to achieve this has proven difficult. The current mechanisms in places, Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), both have drawbacks; councils that have introduced the CIL have seen a 49% drop in planning applications of new homes³² and Section 106 has been criticised for failing to provide infrastructure investment and social housing proportionate to levels of private development.³³ These agreements can also produce a clash between the aims of local authorities and developers, with the former keen to secure a level of affordable homes and the latter keen to maximise return (generally speaking), and with stretched budgets it is the local authorities that usually cede ground.³⁴ Furthermore, the lack of transparency in the deal making process, and the ultimate failure to deliver affordable



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housing and the investment needed in the right type of infrastructure, is leading councils to take legal action.^{35 36 37}

To put this right, we must seek a new approach. Land value capture (LVC) is a general mechanism that captures the uplift in land and property prices gained through development and reinvests for the benefit of the wider community by supporting projects such as infrastructure and affordable housing. Whilst there are examples of successful land levies of this sort (e.g. London Crossrail), there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem as all developments and areas have their own unique requirements.

ResPublica believes that a new mechanism of land value capture can be led by local authorities through the use of Local Development Orders (LDOs). Through LDOs, local authorities can unlock sites and support developers in securing planning consent by establishing the parameters for housing on brownfield sites. They can relate to the size and numbers needed, as well as the design and the provision of infrastructure, thus helping developers work up suitable schemes to get work started in brownfield sites quicker. LDOs also enable local planning authorities to work with local communities to develop workable solutions to determine the development in their areas, thereby providing a means for the planning system to incentivise development in a way that meets a whole range of locally specific policy objectives.³⁸

Local authorities know how many affordable homes are needed, as well as the location of new schools, roads, hospitals and other essential infrastructure services. They know, therefore, the potential value of new development. If they were to introduce LDOs on specific sites that require infrastructure or a specific level of affordable housing, they would be able to capture the value of that site and set a bespoke levy, paid by the landowner, which would contribute to the cost. A major issue with Section 106 and the CIL is that they can create an atmosphere of uncertainty between those involved as the terms of the agreement are not laid out at the start of the process. By empowering local authorities through LDOs, which can form part of their cross-boundary development plans, the costs and requirements will be clear for all to see upfront.

Offering a bespoke and flexible alternative to Section 106 and the CIL, local authorities could enact this new mechanism together through LPPs. As the parties involved would already be working under the same roof, local authorities could work with their fellow LPP members to formulate cross-boundary

development plans and raise funds in a more sophisticated, clear and flexible model than is currently available. With a vision that crosses local authority boundaries, this approach can ensure that a more strategic approach to infrastructure planning is taken.

Planning

With a vision for housing that crosses local authority boundaries, LPPs can offer the ‘larger than local’ picture and resources necessary to plan for the scale of housing development needed. Providing a forum for discussion and action, LPPs could streamline the planning process, as any disagreements between partners would be ironed out early on and the benefits of development adequately communicated with the local community.

Currently, a great deal of council time is taken up defending planning decisions against appeals, reducing local authority resources available for new plan-making. In addition, the interlocking and overlapping institutional responsibilities contained within the planning system represent a major cause of such uncertainty for all involved. As the board of the LPPs will contain developer representation, they will be able to offer industry expertise to local authorities and support them in incorporating planning backlogs into their cross-boundary development plans.

This can be achieved by transferring the planning powers from local authorities to LPPs for the area covering their geographical reach. However, as leaders of the partnerships they will retain overall control and steer the direction of development. The planning process will thus be streamlined and not act as a hindrance to development.

A major inhibitor to housebuilding is not central or local government (in)action but the fact that as a nation we stop development. This cannot just be ascribed to nimbysism; it is also a legitimate reaction to the often negative impact of new developments on communities, infrastructure and places. Desperate for new homes, we cannot afford to let this continue. That is why we believe that LPPs should have local representation that goes beyond that provided by local authorities. Community leaders or representatives of local small businesses should also be included, to ensure that the voices of those affected by development are heard at the highest level during the planning process.



Local Place Partnerships

Why Local Place Partnerships offer more than Urban Development Corporations & Housing Zones

Attributes	Urban Development Corporations	Housing Zones	Local Place Partnerships
Requires Parliamentary approval to establish	√	X	X*
Quality Assured by DCLG	X	(Approved but not in this way)	√
Recasts the role for Local Authorities in housebuilding	X	X	√
Cross-boundary reach	√	(Limited)	√
Develops beyond brownfield land	(Not always)	X	√
10-20 year development	√	X	√
Allows housing associations to cluster and collaborate	X	X	√
Introduces Local Development Orders to finance infrastructure and affordable homes	X	X	√
Enables the development of 'cross-boundary development plans'	X	X	√
Encourages small builders to develop	X	X	√
Receives public sector land direct from Home and Communities Agency	X	X	√
Offers whole sector investment opportunity	X	X	√
Encourages local government investment	X	X	√
Includes and strengthens civic and local representation	X	X	√
Prioritises the importance of people and places	X	X	√
Trailblazer for new technology to empower communities in the planning process	X	X	√

* Legislative approval would be required to the transfer of some of the powers to LPPs



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To ensure plans receive local consent they must be well designed. While the quantity of new housing built is clearly crucial to meet demand, this should not blind us to the importance of its quality and beauty, not only in terms of the design of homes themselves, but also the communities that surround them (much of the opposition from communities is due to design which does not meet their aesthetic criteria).³⁹ Making use of digital innovations that make local participation in the consultation process easy and inclusive,⁴⁰ the nimby opposition can be overcome. LPPs could act as trailblazers for the use of new technology and methods to engage communities and give them real power over the shape and direction of their areas.

The introduction of neighbourhood planning has allowed local people to engage with the planning process and put forward their own plans for development. As of April 2014, around 1,000 communities took the first formal steps towards producing a neighbourhood development plan, 80 full draft plans have been produced for consultation and 13 have been passed at community referendums.⁴¹ Whilst progress has been slow it represents a new way to plan and a significant step in the ongoing battle to involve communities in the future of their neighbourhoods. LPPs can encourage the growth of neighbourhood planning and offer the financial and technical support necessary to ensure that the right is not exclusive to affluent communities.

Addressing the housing crisis should be an urgent government priority, and we need action that goes beyond piecemeal reform. We need a new approach that returns housing to the local, builds the homes to the quality and look that we need, and creates thereby sustainable communities with the necessary infrastructure for people to flourish.

The double devolution to people and place offered by Local Place Partnerships has the potential to achieve this and engineer a more positive attitude from central government, placing housing at the centre of UK infrastructure and constituting a vital element of local authority responsibility. Through this new institution, local authorities will be recast as the coordinators and placemakers of the new housebuilding revolution, enabling residents to play a central part in the development of their neighbourhoods into beautiful sustainable areas.

Conclusion

We live off the inheritance of Victorian and post-war mass housebuilding schemes, and given the extent of our current housing woes, must take the responsibility both for ourselves and for future generations. The social and economic cost of our housing crisis means that all actors in the housebuilding process must create and support a new vision and narrative, and create a new dedicated institution that can legitimise and deliver a new era of mass housebuilding.



Local Place Partnerships

Endnotes

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