

asc podcast

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Announcer: This podcast is brought to you by the Academy for Sustainable Communities. Peter Hetherington leads this discussion on the potential role for social enterprises in creating new sustainable communities.

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Peter Hetherington: Well, the sustainable community canvas is as wide as we want to paint it. Indeed, the very word "sustainable" is open to debate, let alone sustainable communities.

Let's settle, then, for places which combine cohesion and a sense of belonging with carbon and energy efficiency; good connections, which dramatically reduce car use; good community facilities; and the control of local assets, where appropriate, such as parks, community centers, and maybe community transport, too.

That means crucially good community governance. And surely the Local Government Act, which went on the statute book mid last year, opens a way forward for power to be devolved down to communities themselves.

It is, many people think, a difficult circle to square. Well, maybe. But, hold on a bit, because the government's planning and housing policy pronouncements, and its Eco Challenge initiative - 10 of which will be announced - are all pointing towards new ways of controlling and managing these types of assets, as much to build community cohesion as to provide a long-term, cost-effective solution.

It's also looking to promote social enterprises, community asset transfer, and community empowerment. Many of the three million homes targeted for 2020 will be on large residential or mixed-use schemes. So, will the UK development sector see social enterprises and better forms of community governance as a way of solving long-term management problems? And if so, what barriers might there be to making this happen?

A recent feasibility report, prepared for the Academy for Sustainable Communities, or ASC, by LDA Design, has attempted to tackle this challenge on an emerging master plan for almost 4000 new homes on a Brownfield site in South Yorkshire, just on the outskirts of Rotherham. But, of course, there is much to do nationally and locally.

This podcast, then, seeks to provide some answers to those looking to promote social enterprise ideas and new forms of local governance in the creation of eco-towns in other new communities, and in the task of renewing older communities - and we shouldn't forget about them as well. So, we've brought together practitioners from across the development sector to look at what's driving these ideas, what potential barrier then might be and realizing them, and what the end result might begin to look like.

So, let me introduce our participants. I'm Peter Hetherington, a board member of the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

Paula Hurst: I'm Paula Hurst. I'm the project manager for the Waverley National Action Project at the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

Neil Homer: Hello. I'm Neil Homer, director of regeneration at LDA Design. We're a master-planning consultancy.

Stephen Oakes: And I'm Steve Oakes. I'm a regional director for English Partnerships, but here today as a director of Barking Riverside, a major development in East London.

Dick Moran: I'm Dick Moran. I'm the chief exec of a development trust in Caterham in Surrey, Caterham Barracks Community Trust, and which was an entity created out of a collaboration between a development and a local authority.

Neil Berry: I'm Neil Berry. I'm the regional development manager for Yorks and The Humber for the Development Trusts Association.

Brian Condon: My name is Brian Condon. I am a board member of the Community Broadband Network, which is a social enterprise that supports, promotes, and develops community-based broadband schemes. We work with partners, particularly in our communities, and we have a focus on regeneration and infrastructure decisions.

Peter: Neil Homer, you are a master planner and were fairly instrumental in putting forward various proposals for this proposed new community near Rotherham. Tell me how you went about it.

Neil Homer: We were already engaged by the client, UK Coal, to prepare the master plan for the scheme. The client was interested in looking at new ways of developing the ideas in the master plan before they were submitted to the council as a planning application. And we looked at how the social and green infrastructure on the site could be managed in the long-term, given that the council was looking for alternative options.

It didn't want to do it itself. And that led us to think about how a community trust idea for that purpose could extend into controlling and managing and operating other parts of the infrastructure. The ASC's involvement led us to come forward with a feasibility report as part of the master plan, which is what we've been doing over the last few months.

Peter: Tell me why good community governance is essential to sustain and drive forward the whole sustainable community agenda.

Neil: It's a difficult question to answer, because we don't have a track record in this country of doing it this way. I think, what we can point to is the failures of the alternatives over the last 30 years. Public-sector models have not delivered quality infrastructure in a timely fashion and have failed to sustain the proper management of infrastructure over any length of time. Private-sector models, by definition, have looked to recoup their investments for as little outlay as possible.

Neither option, really, has engaged occupants - of housing developments in particular - in any meaningful way, to take care of their immediate environment. So, we've been looking at how greater ownership, both actual and perceived ownership, by communities of their local environment can lead to a greater sense of community, a sense of belonging - stuff that has been around in academic circles for many years.

Peter: Dick Moran, some might say it's a more than worthy goal - it's very important in the maintenance of strong communities, well-maintained. Is it necessarily as elusive as it need be? You've got good experience on the ground, haven't you?

Dick: Yes. I'm the chief executive of a development trust, Caterham Barracks Community Trust, which is a smaller trust in Surrey, just off the M25. The issue around truly sustainable communities is difficult for local authorities in particular, because it's seen as a potential threat to the autonomy that they have, or the ability to enforce and require and control, in all sorts of ways. So, there are lots of issues that they face. But, coherent communities are ones which essentially define their own needs and deploy their own resources to meet their own aspiration levels.

If you can combine that with some kind of enterprise - some kind of either social enterprise or enterprising activity - what you do is you give the capacity to the community itself to dictate what is generated, what money is spent and where it's spent.

And the problem in terms of sustainability is, if you were looking ahead 20, 30, 40 years, I think, it's unreasonable to expect a local authority to support community endeavor in its changing phases. It's much better if the community has some sense of ownership, has some sense of ability to change things for itself for the better, in the ways that it determines. And the community trust model is quite a useful one from that perspective.

And in the longer term, it gives, potentially, much greater asset control. And you're right: it produces an environment which is well-maintained, well-cared-for, and cohesive. That becomes a socially constructive place to play.

Peter: And Neil Homer lessons learned from Waverly.

Neil: That it's typical, what we are trying to do is to draw round the experience of colleagues and in case Romans embarking and four or five other schemes in this country. To see how far the model can be extended in terms of its coverage. We started with probably the most common asset or liability that communities are now owning the open space in public realm and then looked at community facilities, community development services which will be important on large scale schemes in the future.

I aim to commercial asset management in the sort of way that some caterham is done almost as an [inaudible] to help offset the cost of things that don't make the money. But, then also looked at the opportunity of the same organization taking responsibility for delivering community transport services through the Green Travel plan. That's the developer will be obliged to fund for a significant period of years and then finally into the funding delivery ownership and operation of a series of utility services.

Flyover to the home was won and the potential for combined decent power or other unsure renewable energy. And in those letters to respects we were not able to find any UK example. I'm sorry; in that sense we made our lives more difficult for ourselves in trying to extend the scope of a single organization into a much wider portfolio of activity.

We were able to demonstrate that it could be done, but the financial benefits of spreading risk and achieving the economy of scale across the portfolio of activities could be realized. But, there the problem is that, that it's very innovative. The sector is a difficult sector to innovate in for many of the reasons that we have already described.

Peter: Brian.

Brian: In looking at the return on investment, we tried to model the impact of different service approaches by the development trust. We built our work on the existing examples that we heard about in this discussion on the Barking Riverside and Milton King's potters' example and in Caterham. And we said OK, if you could extend that service environment, and if the community has more control over that service environment, what services might they offer?

That quite logically led us to thinking about transport services and the utility type services; CHP and Broadband and Telephony services finally took the home. I guess, we will be questioning, if the average UK households spend a £900.00 a year on MG, why shouldn't a proportion of that be spent on locally generated energy. The same is true of communication services; the average UK household spends £1200.00 a year on communication related services.

So, could we somehow, generate a return for the community from some of that spent, not all of it, but just a bit of it that serve local needs. That was the basis on which we started of thinking, if you like about how you structure business plan for development trust.

Based on the work that's been done before, but extending it into new areas, and that's how we got to this particular structure.

Peter: Andrew Neil, accepting that every community is different and once I said it is not fit-all. Is all that practical, achievable?

Andrew: It absolutely is, I think, and where you talking about the larger the more extensive, the more innovative and the more ambitious schemes. That is why you need the right local environment. We have seen that the history of our movements suggests that, organizations grow where there are other organizations around them in adjacent neighborhoods to learn from and to take inspiration from.

And I think, it needs to be done, it needs to be borne in mind when selecting areas for particular developments and looking at what's feasible. Equally, I think, the local political environment is the key. The larger and more ambitious the development in terms of community governance, the more likely it is that local elected members will see a challenge to their authority and representation from such a manifestation of participative democracy.

And I think, for treating different areas differently in terms also of the political landscape will be crucial. The most ambitious and the most extensive development will require the most forward thinking and flexible local authorities.

Peter: Brian.

Brian: One thing we try to do in looking for a model for this was to try and make it attractive to the local authorities, the local police environment as you describe. But, also trying to make it attractive for the developer, so that it look like a reasonable thing for the developer to do, and I think, as more of these developments take place we'd like to try and argue that it's possible for a developer to differentiate the development.

Other on the basis of the kinds of services that are available in that community or the environmental stamps, the green stamps of the development by involving the developer and thinking about the multitude pitching as a combine TE power based on green energy. That's quite an interesting angle; I haven't seen it pitched like that in developments so far as per perspective, it maybe, and we are trying to look ahead a bit here, I think, aren't we.

Peter: Steve how important is a development trust to underpin a new community?

Stephen: It's extremely important in the sense it's that, the decisions about the community, is we have to look to that, which we are creating these developers. They are a lot more developers now moving that way and understanding, whether the success of development comes to the community.

The issue is I have heard a lot of developers, is that they are not thinking about the issue early enough and the creating which is development trust is so often tagged in at the end of the process, and in fact the whole basis of creating community trust has to start almost from the point that the land is bought. The structure, how it is going to be developed is thought through.

And that is the key, because we decided that the Barking Riverside right from the outset. And we structured the whole development around creating community development trust and that means that we sort even how that community development trust be funded, right from the outset.

And we have structured it so that she can raise funding to support community development trust from the land disposals in the future, future process of rents and income. Because community development trust needs support, and developers have to recognize that.

But, community development trust can't come just from donations it has to be have a structural financial security, to make it successful. Otherwise it becomes lesions, either a burden to the developer or lesions as burden to the local authority.

So, we got to remove that by having proper financial structures and they often go to root of the land.

Peter: Neil Homer.

Neil: In our experience for the reason Stephen pointed out, the traditional master planning process leaves these source of decision until, in some cases, beyond the point which planning consent is obtained. All the challenges we've faced in the Waverly scheme was having to collect information, financial information at a very much earlier points in the process which was a real challenge. And as Stephen said it means that, "at a best opportunity is a mist" in the master plan in the way that the master plan is created to embrace these concepts.

At worst, they can actually undermine the viability of some of the structures that we are talking about and is a challenge that, you are going to do this, and these, these sort of ideas are going to happen more in the future. It is a challenge to the traditional master-planning process.

Peter: And Dick Moran.

Dick: One of the things that Waverley has done, and one of the discussions which came up in the context of Waverley is: how do you create an environment within which people are empowered, they are enabled to be whatever it is they want to be? And that includes every level of ability and disability.

And it's not a counter or an alternative to local democracy. It can actually be a partner of local

democracy. One of the things that I would argue is that a local authority should see a potential development trust in its area as a deliverer of what it wants to achieve. It's a delivery agent. It's actually the community speaking for itself.

Now, some of the things that local authorities may want to achieve are not necessarily the immediate aspirations of local people; their priorities are slightly different. And even in a small local authority, the same would apply.

So, one of the things that the Waverley model supplies is that, effectively, what you're doing is taking private development money and turning it into an investment fund for a community, which, partnered with the local authority, defining what it wants - quite rightly and quite legitimately, through democratic processes - then becomes an enabling sum of money or an asset or a capacity within a community to grow into something quite different.

Now, in my particular case, and it was the one which Neil invited me discuss in relation to Waverley, the actual assets which the community owns - and admittedly, at the moment, with some fairly significant debts - but the debts that it's got are driven by borrowing to achieve things that the community wants to achieve, set against enterprises which make a profit. If you have that sort of model, then the community can choose for itself what it wants to invest in, and it can create an investment for the longer term.

In my case, we've got an art center, which always loses money. But, the investment strategy that we've run down and the business strategy that we've produced for that community will produce an underwriting such that the local authority will never have to fund it.

Now, it's not that I want to take it away from the local authority; I want to provide what it can't and which are beyond its financial capacities and resources.

Peter: Stephen Oakes, we've been referring to the private sector of social enterprises, local authorities, and indeed other community-based enterprises, as if they're in opposing camps to the private sector, when, in truth, in the best communities, in the best regeneration areas, there's a fusion of interest, isn't there, between these respective partners, if you like, or organizations.

Stephen: Yeah. I think, there is. I mean, I've heard there were some discussions about some issues that the drivers behind developers start to look much in earnest at community development trusts, or whatever names you want to describe them, because there are lots of descriptions of these trusts.

And for a simple situation we had, like in Barking Riverside. It's a major site in East London. Its 150 hectares. And because of certain restraints on the site, we were going to end up in a situation with 40 hectares of open space. Now, I'll be honest: that was the first issue that started to come to

us at Barking Riverside was this large area of open space that had to be looked after. And I recognized, quite early on, that the community and town's approach was just not going to work. So, that was really the embryo of the community development trust.

And that kind of structure that we looked at right from the start of the community development trust - and the development side was very keen to evolve that. And one would say, from the beginning, it was from a cost approach, but really, then you started to realize that you could grow this community development trust, for what really is going to be a small down of 25,000 people, can start to develop into much more than just something looking after open space. So, you can, from there on, start to broaden on what that community development trust could do and perform in the final scheme.

Peter: Self-interest on the part of a developer, i.e. making profit - there's nothing wrong with that at all - needn't necessarily collide with community interests, need it? In fact, you could argue, I guess, that strong local engagement, good community enterprises could very much sustain and drive forward the development process.

Stephen: Yes, Peter, I think, it's true. There are an increasing number of reasons why developers are having to think this way, in the way that Dick described earlier, in Caterham Barracks. Development schemes are getting more complicated. They're certainly getting larger. So, we're now talking of developments of thousands rather than hundreds of houses.

And we think that one of the key learning points of this process was that the developers need to have more of a vision for how to position their offer, if you like, in the marketplace, the housing marketplace of over 20 years. Think through the prospect of trying to sell houses to people who could be living on a building site for the best part of 10 to 15 years, understanding how infrastructure, quality infrastructure and the timely provision of that infrastructure, will have a significant impact on their ability to sell houses.

And at the same time, the government, through the Code for Sustainable Homes, is increasing the specification for environmental performance, which is adding a complexity to some elements of the infrastructure.

Peter: Paula Hurst, to deliver that wider agenda, you do need the skills on the ground, don't you? And we, I suppose, have been short of the professionals on the ground to deliver the kind of ideal that we'd all quite like. Tell me what ASC is doing.

Paula: Well, I think that the experience at Waverley has highlighted the need for professionals from across the development sector and the environment sector to have a strong skill set - not just generic skills, but also technical skills.

Peter: And ASC's agenda is very much trying to persuade professionals to think outside the box, to look at community-building and place-shaping very much in the round, isn't it?

Paula: Yeah. I think, it's building the capacity of the community. But, it's also breaking down the silo-working and working cross-professionally. So, rather than a developer working in isolation and the master planner working in isolation, everybody needs to be working together and collaboratively to a shared vision.

Peter: And the various initiatives of ASC - I mean, the foundation degree, of course, the new generic module in sustainable communities - all point to our commitment, I guess, to deliver those essential people who are skilled in place-making, doesn't it?

Paula: Yeah. I think, it's to build the skills of those professionals to encourage cross-occupational learning, and also to encourage more people into the sustainability community sector. Because we know that there will be labor shortages, and there are skills gaps, and I think, the academy's role is really to plug that gap and to encourage more people into this profession.

Peter: And it's working with the private sector, with local authorities, and with communities themselves. All have a very important role to play.

Cultural change, Dick. Is that quite an obstacle to overcome?

Dick: It is. I speak as an ex-local-authority member, and it is extremely difficult to supply, with any consistency, any kind of project which requires either cross-party collaboration or cross-boundary collaboration, whatever that might be. But, the nature and scale of the cultural shift we're talking about is it has to be delivered, because there are three million homes that have to be built, and those communities have to be structured in ways which make them sustainable for the long term.

I actually think that part of the sale, as well as persuading developers that it's a good thing to do, is to persuade politicians that it will improve their capacities as a politician, because they'll take credit for it rather than simply see it as a threat to their own power base and their own influence.

And part of that process is what Paula described, about collaborative-partnership working. Everybody has the mantra of partnership, but relatively few people will actually treat it as an equal relationship with equal parties so that the community is an equal partner in the conversation, and that it's not just the local authority which is the expression of the community.

The problem, in cultural terms, is that the local authority and its members - and I speak from experience - see themselves as "the" local community. They don't understand necessarily that, actually, the fabric of society is made up of lots and lots of small groups, and they're collaborative underneath the local authority, many of which they don't even come across, let alone know about. So, I think, the culture change agenda is the big one. In broad terms, the government is committed to that cultural change agenda, but it's inconsistent across government

departments. The Office of the Third Sector and the Department for Communities and Local Government don't necessarily agree on what it is they're trying to achieve.

Peter: Stephen Oakes, inconsistency?

Stephen: To start here, I would like to talk about Paula's point about the skills and training and investment into the community, because I think, these are in the end quite complex vehicles to operate and to suddenly to force it upon a local community to rally itself and it goes back to my point about having proper financial structures to make sure these community trusts aren't operating hand-to-mouth on an annual cycle of funding, which has seen a lot of failures in certain community trusts. There has got to be the financial structure and actually sometimes the developer has more knowledge on how to do those financial structures.

If you can get the developer working in partnership with you, and their financial backers, to actually think about proper structural funding, then you can do the right type of training, because these have to be professional organizations, and run very professionally. You can't do that from a charitable basis. They can be charitable organizations, if you so wish, but they have to have proper expertise and professionals running them, because in the end they can be handling quite large sums of money. That's key to good financial management and good qualified people to help run these communities.

Peter: We've talked about professional skills, but in truth, there are latent skills in communities themselves, which in many ways are untapped. ASC recently produced a video and it ended with the words, "And don't forget people in communities are the greatest skill of all." We forget that, at our peril perhaps, don't we?

Dick: I think, we do. I think, the presumption amongst professionals sometimes is that they know best. It's very difficult for communities then to respond constructively in that environment. But, when they're invited to, it is surprising what they can produce. We shouldn't underestimate what a community can bring to the table. There are in some cases, examples certainly within my experience, of - a surprise to a number of other development trusts - where the community has conditioned development in such a way, which is not in the remit of the developer or anything the sort, which has actually made it substantially better.

I think, also when you look at the way in which community conversations take place. If we go down the master-planning route, which engages a community properly, and most don't, if you go down that route and really engage the community, what you'll find is that there are champions that appear out of the woodwork on specific subject areas where they have both expertise and understanding and frequently a set of skills which are not present in the professional groups. So, it may be environmental in character; it may be specific to thing with that locale.

What happens in practice is when they become champions of a component, they become members of a potential board. It doesn't matter that they haven't got professional-level skills. What matters is that they care about the community in which they work and they want to

improve it. Frequently, provided they can sign up to a shared vision, they are able to deliver very tangible benefits for their community. They may not want to do that over the longer term, and they may not be permanent members, but they are contributors in a big way to community cohesion.

Peter: Neil Homer.

Neil: It's a little chicken and egg. In order for these ideas to come to fruition, not only does the master planning process need to be tuned to that effect, but also the design team that's chosen to put these ideas in practice, needs to be the right team. The team that we brought together for the Waverly project was very unusual in that colleagues, like Brian from a social enterprise background, were brought in to look at business planning, implementation strategy, at very early part in the process.

Design teams, in our experience, comprise engineers, master planners, designers, landscape architects, property surveyors, but don't comprise those from a business background looking at implementation. The language is different. The cultural dynamics are different. These ideas are contingent on the design team having the skills and the internal dynamic to be able to work this out and that's not easy.

Peter: Brian.

Brian: Just following from what Neil said, there are two things I learned from that process. The first thing was that we were asking questions and a lot of the time the responses were, "Well we don't think about that yet. We don't think about that part yet. We don't think about the transport plan. We don't think about the choice of infrastructure for broadband. We don't do that yet. We wait until much later in the process." That was quite interesting because I haven't come across that before.

The second thing, which I think, is important, is you need to start thinking about the infrastructure choices much earlier in the process, rather than assuming they're just going to be there. I think, that's particularly important when you start thinking about combined heat and power and how you going to generate it, where you going to put the energy centers, and how you are going to get the fuel to drive them. Again I think, that puts a lot of stress on the team early on in terms of thinking about this.

Peter: It does, but this isn't academic anymore. We're talking about three million new homes by 2020. We're talking about ten new eco-towns. We're talking about renewing older neighborhoods in towns and cities in the north and the midlands and beyond. We're talking about smaller communities as well. This is a real live issue, which we've got to address, isn't it?

Brian: Well it is, when one of the things I was surprised about, because I don't come from a development background, is how slowly developments roll out. From a technology perspective, you're going to build three hundred units a year? Wow. In consumer electronics markets, you don't even think in numbers that small. If you think about delivering large-scale infrastructure, you need much bigger numbers. Three million sounds like a good number from an infrastructure

provider point of view. But, if you're thinking about releasing a hundred and twenty properties, two hundred properties, a year in that market, it's very difficult to think in that scale. We do need to accelerate I think.

Peter: And Paula, back to Waverly, because that did lead, I guess, in that direction, with some success.

Paula: Any approach like this is not without its difficulties. Lessons from Waverly highlight the barriers to implementing the model such as this, cultural and skills related rather than financial or legal. That's an interesting point. As a sector, we need to be a lot smarter about working in partnership, and not just cross-professionally, but cross-sector - across the private, the public, and the third sectors. We need to be better at sharing experiences, best practice and knowledge. We've seen so many examples today from Caterham to Barking Riverside and Waverly. We need to continue to share these experiences if we're going to do things better.

Peter: And the lesson for the Academy for Sustainable Communities which will shortly be joining English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation and the new Homes and Communities Agency is how we can contribute to this whole agenda and how we can make those cultural differences less pronounced, perhaps.

Paula: I think, we need to continue to break down the silos that we talked about before and to encourage people to learn from one another, and continue to work together towards a shared vision of sustainable communities. And not to be scared of issues like governance, but to learn from one another and to approach them, to tackle them and give people the correct skills to do this job effectively.

Peter: I think, crucially to persuade councilors that they needn't be, and look authoritatively, that they needn't be threatened by this. That partnership work is a wonderful thing and participative democracy, as well as representative democracy, should go hand and glove.

Paula: Absolutely. We need to nurture a collaborative approach to this, and not just be seen to be scared of it and to run away from something like this. This has been done elsewhere in Europe and it's been done successfully, so there's no reason I see why we can't do this in the UK.

Peter: We started off this discussion with what some might have thought was an element of 'blue sky' thinking, trying to envision the ideal, sustainable community - the kind of place we'd all like to see. As the discussion has progressed, my impression is that we've become very practical. The various participants around the table have addressed, not simply the art of the possible, but what they are, in many ways, delivering on the ground from Caterham to Barking Riverside, to the emerging Waverley Project just outside Rotherham.

This is really important as the country embarks on, arguably, the biggest house-building program since the early 1960s. So, we are very much addressing the here and now, and how to do things much better, rather than creating a bland, soulless, anonymous estate, and houses seemingly miles from anywhere, disconnected from just about anything.

We are about addressing the need for truly sustainable, well-connected communities. And, I think, it would be helpful, from my perspective, just to go around the table and ask our participants what they have gained from the discussion, and how they think the case for sustainable communities can be achieved. Where do we go from here? Paula?

Paula: I think that at the Academy for Sustainable Communities, we talk about cross-occupational learning, cross-occupational working, sharing experiences and improving skills. And, I think, the discussion today has been a prime example of that where everybody's come together and shared their experience about sustainable communities, and learned from one another. And, I think, if we continue to do things like this, and we continue to share our experiences and work collaboratively, then we're taking a good step forward.

Peter: Neil, the 'art of the possible'.

Neil: Yes, it is. I think, from a master planner's perspective, many colleagues of mine across our sector are really keen to hear these ideas. They're not ideas that we would have been exposed to very often before. But, as designers, we can respond to these ideas, not just in terms of process, but in terms of the product as well, and we can help create environments that can take advantage of this kind of thinking.

But, it's not going to be easy. I think, the Academy can help a great deal in spreading skills around the sector. And, the government too, I think, can bring together the social enterprise and the sustainable communities' agendas probably more effectively than has been the case so far.

Peter: And Stephen, I was going to say the 'art of the practical' because you are delivering the practical on the ground, aren't you in Barking Riverside?

Stephen: Well, we are. My message is that I'm pleased to see that there are so many other areas of the country, where these models are starting to develop development community trusts. What I would say is they are possible, and they will occur because the imperative is there with all the amount of house building we've got to do, and we've got to think much more broadly about how we deliver these sustainable communities.

But, I think, it needs early thinking right from the outset, as Neil said, right at the master planning stage thinking about how that community trust will operate. You've got to think about its boundaries and what it can really do. But, those boundaries are flexible, and you will know how flexible those boundaries are by working with a developer, working with the community, but almost more importantly, working with the local authority, so you can understand how that trust will fit within that locality.

Peter: And Dick, the community on the ground has to be the building block.

Dick: Always. These are not things that are coming in from outer space. These are places that people will live and work and function, and they are surrounded by existing places where people live and work and function collaboratively. The thing for me about this whole exercise is that it's not that difficult to do to imagine what a place might look like if you wanted to live there from

birth to death, and what its components should be. It's not difficult to do.

The examples that have been used so far in discussing this are examples, which in some measure, have gotten there because of an element of luck. That's not good enough for the future because you can't rely on luck as the basis for delivering sustainable communities in the longer term.

So, let's take the luck element out and anticipate it and plan for it, and to the best of our ability, do as Paula is suggesting, and bring in the other collaborative teams of people, who actually bring something to the table, so that you reduce the luck element. And, the big issue for me is how do you get those different dimensions, with legitimate and different perspectives, to actually share a common vision, which they will sign up to, and then end up delivering?

Peter: And Neil, of course, development trusts aren't built on the back of luck. We're talking about hard, commercial enterprises, if not-for-profit in the traditional sense, aren't we?

Neil: Indeed. Absolutely. I think, it's been a great discussion. I think, we're possibly in a situation where we've got a once in a generation opportunity here. And, I've been really heartened to hear about the breadth and the depth of the creativity within the private sector in thinking about this area. It's clear that if we're going to make this happen, we need a number of things. I think, we need a clearer steer, and a more consistent steer from government that will give heart to those people in communities, to developers and to local authorities that want to pursue this course.

And then, we need close collaboration and partnership to make it happen. It's a team game, and it's not going to happen unless everyone remembers that it's a team game. And certainly, I think that in any development like this, in any proposal like this, the development trust association would like to see itself as part of that team.

Peter: And Brian, you have alerted us to the vast potential of communities tapping into facilities' utilities, which they might have thought were frankly out of bounds.

Brian: Yeah, I think, one area of learning for me from this process we've been through, and from the conversation today is really to question the notion that strategic community assets, such as services and utility, should necessarily, automatically be ceded. Therefore, maybe they could be used for generating both social and financial value for the communities, which use those services. And again, it has to be a negotiation. It has to be done a partnering basis. But, I think, there's some really interesting thing that we can do there that would enable communities to have much more control of their destiny.

Peter: And, is being done the same way in Germany and Sweden.

Brian: And Holland.

Peter: Thanks to all the participants, and thank you for listening to this podcast. We hope it sparked new ideas for realizing opportunities to create new sustainable communities, and

hopefully, sustain old ones as well by exploring previously unexplored areas, if you like, and looking at new social and community forms of governance and enterprise.

It's an incredibly broad agenda, but I hope you'll agree with me that it is achievable. And, we have heard today the intensely practical, as well as, I guess, thoughts for the ideal communities in a few year's time. But, most of all, our discussion, I think, has been based on a practical way forward.

[music]

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