"Giving communities more power over local housing developments can help to get more homes built…"

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Charlie Cadywould
Duncan O'Leary

DEM☉S

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Foreword

The UK faces a serious and growing housing shortage. Not enough homes are being built and as a result demand outstrips supply, keeping house and rental prices high. This is adversely affecting people on lower incomes who are struggling to access decent homes which they can afford.

The Nationwide Foundation is committed to addressing this challenge and we believe that everyone in the UK should have access to a decent home that they can afford. To have a chance of achieving this, multiple responses to addressing the crisis must be explored. This report explores whether community-led housing can help unlock the supply of new affordable homes by giving local people a greater stake in and deeper commitment to new housing developments.

The report tells a story of a small sector, which faces some challenges but which has some important strengths. At their best, community-led models, such as community land trusts, co-housing and cooperative housing, help bring communities on board with new developments. The dataset generated and analysed in the report is small, but shows that community-led models tend to achieve planning permission more often than the average for all major residential planning applications, albeit at a slower pace.

The report goes beyond statistical analysis to learn lessons from ongoing and successful bids for planning permission by community-led groups. It therefore should hold lessons not just for policy-makers in local and central government, but also for those working on community-led housing projects themselves.

It is our desire for this research into community-led housing to fuel more discussion about ways to overcome the current barriers and to make sure the contribution it can make is more widely understood, ultimately leading to the creation of more affordable housing using these models.

Leigh Pearce
Chief Executive, Nationwide Foundation
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Executive summary

Successive governments have attempted to get to grips with Britain's housing shortage and, in particular, to ensure the provision of enough affordable homes. However, bringing the pace of supply up to meet the levels of new demand has proved a significant challenge; less than half of the new homes many estimate are needed were built in 2014. Housing policy has shot up the political agenda in the last few months, with important reforms to the planning system announced over the summer of 2015 and at the subsequent Conservative Party conference.

While many of the Government's measures since 2010 have focused on helping first-time buyers get onto the housing ladder, it has also sought to liberalise the planning system to promote development.

These measures have been accompanied by devolution: regional spatial strategies have been abolished, with new responsibilities for local authorities and new powers for neighbourhoods, through existing parish councils and new neighbourhood forums. For some, devolving power is an end in itself; power ought to be exercised as close as possible to individuals and communities to increase accountability, improve trust, and maximise the power of people over the decisions that affect them.

However, the theory we explore in this paper is that giving communities more power over local housing developments is not only good for democracy, but can actually help to get more homes built by creating a positive local political environment in favour of development. With greater control, residents might become active supporters for new development, rather than exhibiting the antagonistic behaviour often characterised as 'NIMBYism'. In doing so, we consider the academic debate around NIMBYisms and its causes.

The goal of greater community control can be achieved in two ways. First, the Government can devolve formal planning powers, as it did through the Localism Act. Second, communities can take it for themselves, through a number of different models of ownership and governance. This includes community land trusts, cooperatives, mutuals, co-housing and community self-build. Financial support for such schemes has been supplied through the Affordable Homes Programme, as well as Community Led Project Support Funding that was originally earmarked for communities with permission to build via a community right to build order. This report is divided into five chapters:

· In chapter 1, we provide an overview of the state of housing provision and policy in England.

· In chapter 2, we discuss the academic literature around NIMBYism, picking out key themes and debates.

· In chapter 3, we look at the scale, state and potential of the community-led housing sector, and again review the academic research to date.

· In chapter 4, we present our analysis of planning application data across England, and a new custom dataset of applications from community-led housing groups, which we then compare with all applications from the same local authorities. In both cases, our analysis considers applications for large developments (ten or more dwellings) only.

· In chapter 5, we present five case studies of community-led developments, identifying significant themes that emerged from our interviews with group members, councillors, council officers and other partners, as well as focus groups with local residents.

Key findings

Attitudes to new housing developments

Financial interests play only a limited role in motivating local opposition to new housing developments. Rather, concern for collective, community goods such as local aesthetics, green spaces, community facilities, infrastructure and access to public services is essential.

The question 'who benefits?' is crucial in determining whether local residents will be inclined to support new housing developments. Often, people express scepticism that new homes will address local needs, and instead will be bought up or occupied by outsiders.

Many people think extremely locally. Addressing needs on a local authority-wide basis is often too large for people to feel that local needs are being addressed.

There is a significant lack of trust in the planning process. Many residents feel that developers will say anything to win permission, and that councils deliberately make it difficult for residents to scrutinise proposals, and that residents' concerns are ignored when raised.

Part of this lack of trust derives from an inherent tension between the technocratic and democratic elements of the planning system. On the one hand, residents are encouraged to attend consultations and provide their views, with elected councillors making final decisions. On the other hand, decisions are ultimately made on technical grounds.

Local authorities: who is building?

Urban, metropolitan districts approve the highest proportion of planning applications, with councils in rural areas rejecting more. Councils in urban areas also meet their targets for decision-making more often than those in rural areas.

We found a weak, positive correlation between projected household growth within a local authority, and the percentage of applications approved, and a very weak positive correlation between projected household growth

and speed of decisions. This suggests that local authorities with the most need have a less restrictive approach to building new homes, although they are not necessarily processing applications any faster as a result.

Copeland tops our list as the least restrictive council, having approved all 40 of the applications for large housing developments it received between 2010 and March 2015. Copeland is a mostly rural council; most of the other councils in the top ten were more urban.

Coventry tops our list of quickest decision-making councils, processing 94 per cent of its planning applications within the 13-week target for large housing developments.

Our top all-round performing council is Scarborough, which tops our list of ten councils that are in the top quartile on three key measures: percentage of applications granted, percentage of decisions made within 13 weeks, and total number of decisions. Runners up include Westminster, Barnsley, Birmingham, Newcastle-under-Lime and Plymouth.

Community-led housing

The community-led housing sector is currently very small. We found 32 examples of community-led groups being involved in a proposed large (at least ten homes) development since 2010.

Our analysis shows that planning applications from the community-led housing sector are currently approved more often than other applications.

However, councils fail to make a decision over community-led housing within their target time period more often than for applications from other housing sectors.

Community-led groups can help residents to feel involved and take ownership of a project to develop new housing locally, but the evidence for large numbers of residents getting involved and having their voices heard was limited in most of our case studies.

Despite not getting a large mass of residents involved in the group's internal democratic decision-making, in many cases the group's status as a group of committed volunteers

made up of community members seems to have been sufficient for a widespread perception that they were 'of, by and for' the local community. Ensuring that the group is perceived as representative of the wider community is crucial for gaining and maintaining this trust.

Community-led groups do not automatically achieve community support. Community-led elements of a scheme can be a negative for local residents if they are not perceived to be 'of, by and for' either the local community or a particular group that the community wishes to help.

The best community-led developments use participation and consultation to ensure that developments include the features that local residents would support, and thus make them more likely to support the scheme as a whole.

Community-led groups can be an important link between the community and those in positions of power. They can be uniquely positioned: as development partners, they have credibility among residents where the council, private developers and even housing associations cannot. At the same time, as skilled volunteers perceived to represent the community, they have credibility among those stakeholders in a way that ordinary local residents may not. We found that this dual credibility was particularly strong where groups had already completed a successful project.

With the Government's right to buy scheme due to be extended to housing associations, community-led developments may become one of the last ways to ensure the provision of new homes that will stay available for rent in the long term, although it remains unclear to what extent they will be subject to the same conditions.

Many community-led developments are 'trailblazers' for new types of development and living environments. There are numerous benefits to community-led schemes once they are built, such as lower levels of rent arrears, vacancies, tenant satisfaction and looking after communal areas. Many of these can lead to cost-savings in other areas for local and central government.

Recommendations

1 The Government should mandate that local authorities publish all their planning decisions on data.gov.uk, and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should ensure that data are published which allow for evaluation of the community-led sector.

2 The newly formed community-led housing alliance[1] should share good practice on the provision of collective goods within community-led schemes.

3 The Government should allow local authorities to create hyper-local housing waiting lists, to ensure that people in need in the immediate vicinity can access housing first. Safeguards should be put in place to ensure no areas miss out on access to new housing, and that there are exemptions for those most in need.

4 The Government should evaluate the role of local and neighbourhood plans, with a view to determining whether neighbourhood plans should be set by local authorities following neighbourhood consultation, if no parish council or neighbourhood forum does so.

5 All community-led groups should have some formal open, democratic decision-making apparatus to represent the interests of the wider community, and in turn demonstrate that they exist for the benefit of the wider community, and not just their members. This could be achieved by a community share scheme such as those used by community land trusts, although other methods may work well in different cases.

6 Community-led groups which have gained support among local residents should involve themselves in the planning process, even where more experienced development partners are taking a lead. Their visible participation, such as being formally named as the applicant for planning permission, can help to generate active support among residents.

7 Community-led groups should lead the way and innovate by using new democratic tools, such as online voting and online quizzes, coordinating online campaigns with offline events, and listening to relevant social media conversations. The new community-led alliance should share best practice on governing structures that promote the widest possible engagement.

8 The Government should exempt all community-led schemes from the extension of right to buy.

9 Local authorities with a shortage of affordable homes for rent should monitor Lambeth's partnership with Brixton Green closely, and consider whether such an arrangement would be feasible and desirable in their own area.

10 Councils should ensure they have formal policies that allow officers to consider the wider benefits of community-led schemes in making recommendations to approve planning applications.

11 Ministers and civil servants should not mandate the involvement of community groups on a housing project unless one already exists, ready to take on the responsibilities. They should ensure that the group's role is clearly defined before awarding the tender.

12 The new community-led alliance should explore the reasons why applications from the sector currently take longer to process than other applications.

Introduction

The UK continues to suffer from a chronic shortage of housing, and particularly affordable housing. Figures from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) show that 118,760 homes were completed in England in 2014,[2] less than half of what many estimate is needed for supply to keep pace with demand.[3] Since the May 2015 general election, housing has shot up the list of political priorities. In London, where some of the problems are most acute, the issue is set to play a key role in next year's mayoral election.[4] Housing policy, and particularly the question of home ownership, were given prominence in both the prime minister and the chancellor's speeches to their party conference.[5]

While many of the Government's measures since 2010 have focused on helping first-time buyers get onto the housing ladder, a number of significant reforms to the planning system have also been implemented. These include the presumption in favour of development at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework published in 2012,[6] and further liberalisation moves in the Government's Productivity Plan, announced in July 2015.[7]

This deregulation has been accompanied by devolution: regional spatial strategies have been abolished, with new responsibilities for local authorities and new powers for neighbourhoods, through existing parish councils and new neighbourhood forums. For some, devolving power is an end in itself; power ought to be exercised as close as possible to individuals and communities to increase accountability, improve trust, and maximise the power of people over the decisions that affect them.

For the Government, however, this move was as much about promoting development as it was about democratic principle. While critics referred to the Localism Act

as a 'NIMBY's charter', the architects of the strategy denied that development and devolution was a zero-sum game. The theory – outlined in the Conservative green paper *Open Source Planning* – was that if communities were given more say in the development of their local area, they would recognise local needs, help to ensure development met those needs, and be advocates for new homes rather than opponents.[8]

Greater community control can be achieved in two ways. First, the Government can devolve formal planning powers, as it did through the Localism Act. Second, communities can take it for themselves, through a number of different models of ownership and governance. This includes community land trusts, cooperatives, mutuals, co-housing and community self-build. Financial support for such schemes has been supplied through the Affordable Homes Programme, as well as Community Led Project Support funding that was originally earmarked for communities with permission to build via a community right to build order.[9]

This report

It is the theory underpinning *Open Source Planning* that we seek to explore in this report, with a particular focus on this second, community-led, extra-governmental mechanism for shaping local development. Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey support the theory in principle: in 2013 63 per cent of respondents said they would be more likely to support the development of new homes in their local area if local people were given greater control over what gets built.[10] This report seeks to see whether this stated, hypothetical support translates into real support in real situations.

Our research for this report consisted of three core elements. First, we conducted a comprehensive review of the state of housing provision and policy in England (chapter 1), the academic literature around NIMBYism (chapter 2) and the scale, state and potential of the community-led housing

sector (chapter 3). Next, we examined local-authority-level statistics on planning applications, and compared the relative success of large community-led proposals to all proposals for new large housing developments in gaining planning permission (chapter 4). Finally, we conducted 27 interviews with members of community-led groups, local councillors and council officers, discussing particular community-led developments in five locations: Bristol, Herefordshire, South London, Stroud and the Lake District. Our findings, along with the results of focus groups with residents in the immediate proximity of those developments, are discussed in chapter 5. We conclude our report with recommendations for the Government, local authorities and the community-led housing movement.

1 Background

How many more houses do we need?

In April 2003, the Government commissioned Kate Barker to conduct an independent review of housing supply in the UK. The final report, published in 2004, found that demand was far outstripping supply, leading to declining affordability.[11] Barker found that in order to stop house prices from rising in real terms in the long term, an additional 240,000 new homes would be needed across the UK.

In 2007 the Government had an official target to build 240,000 new homes per year in England, to be achieved by 2016, including 70,000 affordable homes per year by 2010/11, of which 45,000 would be new social rented homes.[12] However, with the onset of the global credit crunch and subsequent financial crash, housing starts in England fell dramatically from 170,440 in 2007/08 to 88,010 in 2008/09. The number of new homes built each year has since picked up to around 140,500, but still well short of the 240,000 required each year.[13]

The DCLG estimates that the number of households in England is projected to grow by 221,000 per year from 2011 to 2021.[14] However, a number of organisations have projected that the amount of new houses needed is even higher than this and the 2007 target. The Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research estimates that 270,000 new homes are needed each year, the Town and Country Planning Association puts the figure at 275,000–280,000, and the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit puts it at 280,000.[15] The Future Homes Commission argued in a 2012 report that 300,000 new homes per year were needed to keep pace with likely demand.[16]

What is the Government doing?

The Government has adopted a series of measures designed to make housing more affordable, though many of these have focused on the demand side, rather than supply. Interventions such as Help to Buy (www.helptobuy.org.uk/) promote home ownership by subsidising first-time buyers' mortgage deposits and underwriting hundreds of billions worth of lending, but they do nothing to address the underlying market failure, particularly now they have been extended to existing homes as well as new-build properties.[17]

A number of schemes have been introduced to help accelerate and unlock stalled developments, including the £500 million Get Britain Building scheme for small sites, the £535 million Builders' Finance Fund for sites of between 15 and 250 units, the Local Growth Fund for developments of between 250 and 1,499 units, and the Large Sites Infrastructure Programme for sites of at least 1,500 units.[18]

More recently, the Government announced a series of measures in its July 2015 Productivity Plan. They included measures to give automatic planning permission on suitable brownfield sites and a further devolution of powers to the mayors of London and Manchester.[19] Also announced were the fulfilment of the Conservatives' manifesto commitment to extend right to buy to housing association tenants. As part of delivering on the party's promise to provide 200,000 new subsidised starter homes for young first-time buyers, the prime minister announced in his speech to conference that starter homes could be classified as part of a developer's affordable housing obligations within Section 106 planning agreements.[20]

Further measures to promote housebuilding were announced in the Chancellor's Spending Review in November 2015. This included a doubling of the housing budget to provide 400,000 new homes by 2020. Alongside £2.3bn to support the delivery of new starter homes to be sold at a 20% discount, the Chancellor announced an expansion of Help to Buy to provide 135,000 shared ownership homes, 10,000 additional homes where tenants can save for a deposit while they rent, and at least 8,000 new specialist homes for older people and people with disabilities.

What is going wrong?

It is sometimes argued that Britain is 'filling up', and that there is simply not enough available land to house the growing population. However, the 2011 National Ecosystem Assessment calculated that just 6.8 per cent of the UK's land area is classified as urban, which includes rural development and roads. By contrast, 41.3 per cent is enclosed farmland, 18.6 per cent is classified as 'mountains, moorlands and heaths' and 16.4 per cent as 'semi-natural grasslands'.[21] The 'urban' figure for England is slightly higher, at 10.6 per cent. Even within these urban areas, just over half the land in towns and cities is classified as green space, such as parks, allotments and sports pitches.[22] In total, 78.6 per cent of urban areas is designated as natural rather than built, leading to an estimate of just over 2 per cent of England's landscape which is actually built on.[23]

A number of academic studies have instead linked the UK's high house prices and shortage of affordable housing to its planning system. Hilber and Vermeulen, for example, found that average house prices in England would have risen by about 100 per cent less (from £79,000 to £147,000 instead of £226,000) from 1974 to 2008 in the absence of regulatory constraints.[24] By contrast, they estimated that hypothetically removing the scarcity of developable land and uneven topography would have reduced house prices in 2008 by just 15 per cent. Of course, a complete absence of any planning regulations is unrealistic and would be undesirable, but they also found that if the South East, the most restricted part of England, had the level of regulatory barriers of the North East (which they claim is still highly regulated in an international context), house prices would have been roughly 25 per cent lower in 2008.

Two key features of today's planning system can be traced back to the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The first was giving local authorities the power to include green belt proposals in their development plans. Green belts were designed to prevent urban sprawl. Despite periodic calls to roll back the restrictions on building on green belt

land, this system has remained in place and kept development in check for decades. Second, local authorities were placed in charge of development and preservation within their jurisdiction, with all development proposals made subject to local planning permission.

Hilber and Vermeulen describe the post-1947 British planning system as characterised by local planning authorities 'deriving very limited fiscal benefits from permitting development but facing most or all of the development related infrastructure and congestion costs'.[25] They argue that this arrangement can explain part of the long-term shortfall in development:

As a consequence, LPAs [local planning authorities] often side with NIMBYs ('not in my back yard' residents) and hinder or refuse altogether new development projects within their borders – especially larger projects that require costly new infrastructure provisions.[26]

NIMBYism

An important gap in the research to date on housing and planning is that there have been no attempts to quantify the effect that local opposition has on the provision of housing. DCLG planning data tell a largely positive story: 80 per cent of all major residential applications in 2014 that reached a decision were granted, and 73 per cent received a decision within 13 weeks. However, we have no indication of how many proposals were never submitted, or were withdrawn, as a result of local opposition, or indeed of how many of the 20 per cent of refused applications were rejected in the face of public pressure.

While the literature outlined below shows that local opposition is prevalent, we do not know for certain that the campaigns of local people are effective. However, there is evidence that the relevant stakeholders see local opposition as a significant barrier to securing housing developments.

In 2012, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a survey of frontline councillors in England and Wales, showing that 59 per cent of councillors saw local opposition as a barrier to housing developments. This represents a small fall from 61 per cent of councillors who thought local opposition was a barrier when the LGA asked the same question in a 2010 survey. However, there was a significant rise in the percentage of councillors who perceived public opposition as being the single greatest barrier to housing development, from 21 per cent in 2010 to 29 per cent in 2012.[27]

Belief in the effectiveness of local opposition is also reflected in the opinions of other stakeholders, including developers, lenders and professional services firms. Lambert Smith Hampton's 2015 Residential Development Sentiment Survey found that 26 per cent of those involved in development thought local opposition was the biggest factor affecting the delivery of housing development.[28] Similarly, Knight Frank's 2014 housebuilding report surveyed over 100 small, medium and large housebuilders, 82 per cent of whom said local opposition would have a moderate or sizable impact on the market in the coming years.[29]

Devolution and development

Previous government attempts to increase the supply of housing have involved a degree of central and regional planning, such as the regional spatial strategies introduced under the last Labour Government. In 2009, then Shadow Housing Minister Grant Shapps accused Labour of 'creating a generation of NIMBYs' through a top-down, prescriptive approach to planning.[30]

The Government's localist agenda is underpinned by a belief that process and participation levels are important determinants of local opposition to development, and that with a more inclusive planning system, local communities could become active supporters of development.

The 2010 Conservative Green Paper *Open Source Planning* stated:

The planning system can play a major role... bringing communities together, as they formulate a shared vision of sustainable development... If we enable communities to find their own ways of overcoming the tensions between development and conservation, local people can become proponents rather than opponents of local economic growth.[31]

Thus, once in Government after 2010, the Conservatives introduced significant reforms to planning which, alongside local and community financial incentives, were designed to give communities more say in local housing provision, as a route out of the NIMBY dynamic.

While these powers extend beyond housing (such as the Community Right to Bid), the neighbourhood planning agenda as it relates to housing is characterised by three important new tools for local communities.

First, neighbourhood development plans are general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They must pass an independent check, normally run by the local planning authority, which must ensure the draft neighbourhood development plan complements the development plan for the wider local area; they cannot be used simply to block all developments. The plan must then be put to a local referendum, and, if passed, becomes part of the legal framework for planning decisions in the area.[32]

A 2014 analysis of draft neighbourhood development plans by planning consultant Turley suggests that many are primarily aimed at preserving or protecting certain parts of the neighbourhood from development, rather than addressing local need.[33] While they are unlikely actually to block development in the aggregate, they are also unlikely to increase the supply of housing beyond the level identified by the local planning authority.

Second, neighbourhood development orders allow communities to permit development within their area without the need for a formal planning application through the planning authority, which can grant permission for particular major development schemes, or permit developments of a certain type across the whole area. Draft neighbourhood development orders must pass an independent inspection and a referendum to come into effect.[34]

Third, neighbourhoods can make community right to build orders. These give permission for small-scale, site-specific developments by a community group. Like neighbourhood development plans and neighbourhood development orders they must gain the support of more than 50 per cent of voters in the community through a referendum, and be in line with national planning policies and strategic elements of the wider local plan.[35]

As of October 2015, around 1,600 communities had taken the first steps towards producing a neighbourhood development plan, with 100 referendums passed.[36] However, by early 2015, just four neighbourhood development orders had got to the referendum stage,[37] and just three community right to build orders have been put to local referendums.[38]

Within the Housing and Planning Bill currently making its way through Parliament are a number of further provisions relating to localism: the Government intends to simplify and speed up the neighbourhood planning process, to give the secretary of state further powers to intervene if local plans are not delivered effectively, and amendments to the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. These amendments place a duty on planning authorities to give planning permission or permission in principle for enough serviced plots to meet the demand for self and custom-build in their area.[39]

The cause of the UK's housing shortage can be put down to a number of different factors, but key among them is the rigidity of its planning system. Numerous governments have attempted to promote development, but with very limited success. These attempts from central government have often been seen as 'top-down' and 'prescriptive', and have been accused of stoking NIMBY opposition.

The 2010–15 Coalition Government recognised that local opposition from councillors and residents has blocked new development. Rather than seeing housing needs and the wishes of local residents as a zero-sum game, the Government combined deregulation with devolution. It aimed to promote housebuilding by giving local residents more say over developments in their area. These reforms are still in their early stages, yet take-up of new powers so far has not been as high as many would have hoped. In the next chapter, we examine the causes and nature of NIMBYism, both theoretically, and in the context of these reforms.

2　What is NIMBYism?

There is a long academic literature on the concept of NIMBYism. It is a contested term, and the review of this literature set out below provides an overview of the debate on what NIMBYism is, what causes it, how governments have attempted to overcome it, and recommendations arising from the literature. It should be noted that the literature is international in scope, and not limited to housing provision. In fact, much of the literature focuses on the siting of environmental and energy facilities, as these are often the most controversial. Our qualitative research will test the validity of the key themes that emerge from the literature as they apply to housing provision in England.

Financial interests

First, there are those who believe that financial interests underlie NIMBY concerns. As Pennington (2002) put it:

People are placed in a position where they have everything to lose in terms of amenity and property values and nothing to gain in terms of financial compensation when decisions regarding the allocation of housing land and other developments are made.[40]

In their empirical study of the use of environmental concerns in land-use planning, in 1994 Myerson and Rydin argued that 'concern with aesthetic values can readily shade into a concern with property values'.[41] In 2011 the Sunday Times columnist Dominic Lawson explained what many critics of NIMBYism believe underlie the state of mind. If there were proposals to develop on the fields near his home, he would:

*declare that an area of outstanding natural beauty would be wrecked;
I would discover some rare fauna and flora that might be disturbed by
the builders' excavations; I would co-opt every possible environmental
and conservationist pressure group to thwart my neighbour's plans.
What I would not do is admit the truth: that my real battle would
be to preserve not the local ecology but the value of my property.*[42]

Financial self-interest is also perceived in the actions of local
authorities, which as Hilber and Vermeulen suggest, have a
tendency to side with NIMBY concerns as they too do not feel
the financial benefits of development. Niemietz maintains:
'The reason why gains from development are more or less
irrelevant at the local level is that fiscal autonomy of sub-national
levels of government is virtually non-existent in the UK.'

Were financial self-interest at the root of all local opposi-
tion, the neatest solution would be simply to redistribute the
costs and benefits of planning, either by allowing local
authorities or communities to keep hold of some of the
revenues, or through mechanisms to compensate individual
local residents financially.

The Government's New Homes Bonus is an example of
such an approach: £3.4 billion has been allocated since 2011 for
local authorities which increase the number of homes and their
use. The amount paid is based on the amount of extra council
tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-
term empty homes brought back into use.[43]

Similarly, local authorities can choose to charge a com-
munity infrastructure levy on new developments on their area,
which can then be used to support local development by
funding infrastructure that the council wants. In addition,
parishes receive 15 per cent of any levies arising from develop-
ments in their area, rising to 25 per cent for parishes that have
set up a local plan (see below).[44]

Harbouring hidden financial motives is just one aspect of the
common caricature of the NIMBY. Others include snobbery or fear
of 'undesirable' people moving to the area, ignorance of the need
for development, irrational overestimation of the risks involved,
and, above all, prioritising self-interest over the needs of others.

However, the academic literature largely rejects this caricature. As explored in detail below, it cites numerous examples of non-financial interests and concerns at play in local opposition to new developments.[45] Moreover, some academics have questioned the effectiveness of introducing monetary incentives where social norms and a sense of reciprocity could otherwise promote more socially minded behaviour. For example, the political philosopher Michael Sandel cites the example of efforts to store nuclear waste near a Swiss village: without any incentives, a slim majority of villagers supported the facility, though when financial incentives to residents were offered, support dropped to just 25 per cent. Sandel argues: 'Introducing money into a non-market setting can change people's attitudes and crowd out moral and civic commitments.'[46]

The New Homes Bonus and the Community Infrastructure Levy are different from Sandel's example because they provide money to councils, which spend money on the community (thus still potentially playing into 'moral and civic commitments'), rather than to individuals. However, the attitudinal data suggest that even these would have only a limited impact on local levels of support for new housing, compared with giving communities more control: less than half (46 per cent) of respondents to the British Social Attitudes Survey said they would be more likely to support new housing if the local authority was given money in return, compared with the 63 per cent who would be more likely to support new housing if communities were given more control.[47]

Collective goods

Steelman and Carmin emphasise the importance of common property resources and collective interests in local opposition to new developments:

Natural resources, aesthetic features, and quality of life characteristics are forms of common property. Viewing NIMBY behaviour solely as an expression of concern for individual property obscures the importance that communities attach to common property resources.[48]

The Prince's Foundation's 2014 report *Housing Communities: What people want* drew out key themes of people's attitudes to local developments from engagement workshops and consultations it ran from a variety of planning proposals. They found that typical concerns related to collective goods, including local aesthetics: they want development that safeguards and promotes green spaces, supports employment and the local economy, and heterogeous, traditional-style and lower density housing, rather than homogenous, high-rise modern apartment blocks.[49]

This focus on non-financial interests and collective goods as an important source of NIMBY behaviour matches findings from the latest British Social Attitudes Survey. From a list of benefits that might increase support for new homes in a respondent's local area, the most popular were employment opportunities (17 per cent), medical facilities (11 per cent), low cost home ownership (11 per cent), transport links (10 per cent), schools (9 per cent), affordable homes to rent (9 per cent), green spaces (9 per cent) and leisure facilities (8 per cent) (figure 1). By contrast, just 2 per cent said that financial incentives to residents would make them more likely to support new homes in their area.[50]

While individual financial incentives were not popular in the British Social Attitudes Survey, 47 per cent said they would be more likely to support the building of new homes in their local area if 'the government provided local councils with more money to spend on local services for every new home built in their area'. Similarly, 58 per cent said they would be more supportive if local communities could receive extra money to be spent locally.[51] These sentiments imply there is support for the financial incentive elements of the localist agenda: the New Homes Bonus and the rights of parishes to keep a proportion of proceeds from the Community Infrastructure Levy for local use.

Figure 1 **The potential benefits that would increase support for new homes**

Benefit	Percentage
Employment opportunities	
Medical facilities	
Low cost homeownership	
Transport links	
Schools	
Affordable homes to rent	
Green spaces	
Leisure facilities	
Better design of new homes	
Shops	
Financial incentives to residents	
Library	
None of these	

Percentage
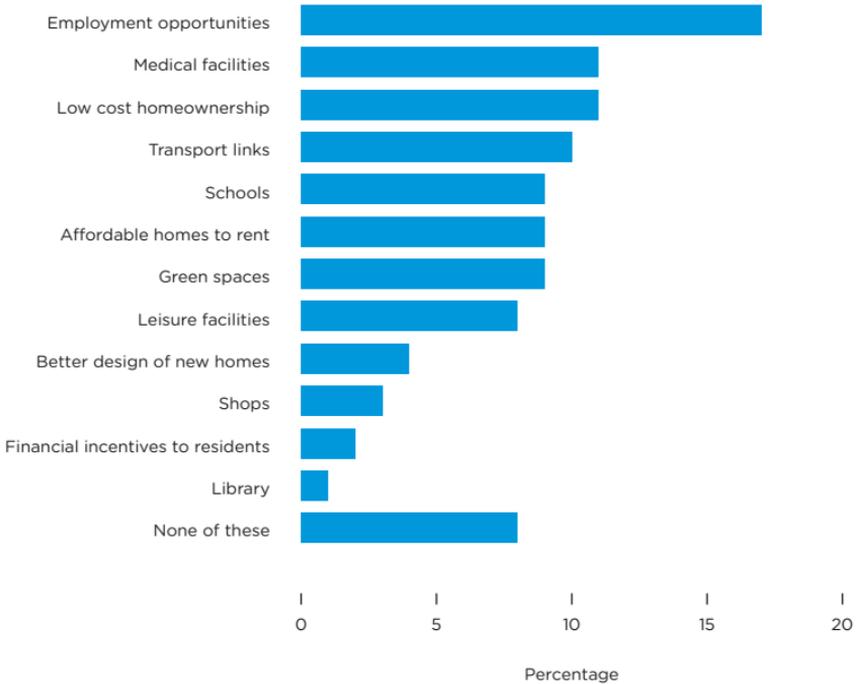
Source: DCLG, *Public Attitudes to New House Building*

Process

In the British Social Attitudes Survey, 63 per cent of respondents said they would be more likely to support the development of new homes in their local area if local people were given greater control over what gets built.[52] However, the literature is relatively sparse on the role of process, particularly as it relates to housing. As the centrality of process in the theory behind *Open Source Planning* and the Government's subsequent localist agenda, this was a key focus of our qualitative research.

There are two possible reasons why process might matter. The first is instrumental: if communities are given more say, development proposals might be more likely to include and safeguard the kinds of public goods and other features that communities support. The second reason is inherent: the literature on energy and environmental sitings suggests that lack of effective consultation can breed resentment among local residents.[53]

Ensuring there is an effective, consultative, decision-making process is not the sole responsibility of the decision-making body. Developers may also stoke NIMBY opposition through a tendency to make initial decisions before announcing plans to the public, and then defending those plans vigorously, rather than bringing the public into the initial conversations. Wolsink considers that the 'decide-announce-defend model pre-empts the public's role as a critical one' in the case of wind turbine siting, although this could be ascribed to the approach of many housing developers.[54]

Qualified support

The idea that NIMBY opposition is always a result of selfishness, hypocrisy or ignorance is also dismissed in much of the academic literature. Most obviously, most people would not support development under any circumstances, and so it is not necessarily inconsistent to support more housing in general, but then to oppose the detail at a local level. As Bell et al argue, it can be difficult to differentiate between people motivated by self-interest and those who genuinely hold a general principle of qualified support, since the arguments used in public debate are rarely cast in terms of self-interest.[55] However, the British Social Attitudes Survey data, which demonstrate that a number of different benefits to the local community make residents more likely to support a proposal, suggests that local development can gain the support of the community if their desires are met.

Trust – in developers, local authorities and other stakeholders – is an important variable in determining whether this qualified support results in oppositional behaviour. If trust in sources of information about the proposed development is lacking among local residents, concerns will not be adequately addressed, and opposition is likely to arise. Sturzaker believes that this distrust is often rooted in the perceived motives of those involved; developers, local authorities and local residents know that they have divergent potential gains and losses from the outcome of planning processes, leading to scepticism about each other's claims.[56] Using the example of siting wind farms, Bell et al contend:

In sum, an 'education' or 'information provision' strategy designed to show qualified supporters of wind energy that their concerns are – in a particular case – unfounded can only succeed if it is grounded in an existing relationship of trust built through a participatory process.[57]

Social attitudes

Social attitudes have also been revealed to be important in influencing NIMBY opposition. In 2005 Hubbard examined community opposition to asylum centres in rural Nottinghamshire and Oxfordshire, finding that many believed that asylum seekers were better suited to urban settings than the countryside.[58]

The Prince's Foundation found that social factors are an important source of concern about new developments: people were worried about their town or village losing its sense of identity, and about too many outsiders coming into the town. Local residents were particularly amenable to developments they felt would promote local integration.

Matthews, Bramley and Hastings' 2015 analysis of British Social Attitudes Survey data also suggest that social attitudes are an important cause of NIMBY behaviour. They suggest that the Government's localism agenda incorrectly conceives of the typical NIMBY as a demonstration of 'homo

economicus' – rational and self-interested. They see neighbourhood planning simply as an attempt to shift the costs and benefits to create local financial incentives to build, when in fact planning should view individuals 'within broader socio-political structures operating as 'homo democraticus'. They conclude that 'the "offer" from the planning system to overcome opposition needs to be sufficiently rich to support a sense of local and self-identity; financial compensation will always be insufficient'.[59] The importance of one's home and its location is particularly important for the sense of status for affluent, middle-class residents, because for these groups:

Much of the economic capital invested in housing is converted into symbolic capital – a statement of the self and one's socio-economic position... new development is not seen as a threat to people's investment in their homes, but a threat to their social identity. The neighbourhood would stop being for people like them.[60]

These groups are found to be most likely to oppose new developments, which can in part explain why financial incentives have such a limited effect on overcoming local opposition. In addition, much of the literature on NIMBYism highlights the fact that middle-class groups are more likely to have the local political power necessary to oppose development successfully. As Matthews et al argue:

The evidence shows that these groups who are most opposed are more likely to have the social capital to oppose development... they are more likely to be members of parish councils, statutory consultees in the planning system, and more likely to have contacts to planners and lawyers who can assist them in making an appropriate opposition.[61]

This creates the sense of a 'democratic deficit' between a vocal, powerful minority who oppose new developments, and a passive majority, many of whom might stand to gain from new housing provision.[62] As Wolsink observes, 'People generally do not come forward with positive responses to planners.'[63]

Matthews et al argue that the Government's reforms designed to give communities more of a say in fact will lead to the more vocal and politically savvy members of communities exerting even more influence, and these are the very groups most likely to present NIMBY opposition in the pre-reform planning system.[64] Holman and Rydin echo these concerns, suggesting that the 'greater burden of participation' that the localist agenda envisages is likely to constrain participation to only the most committed of local activists.[65]

Social capital

If different groups within a single community or local area hold different attitudes towards development, and if there is a 'silent majority' in favour of development and a democratic deficit, there is a collective action problem. The cost of fully engaging with the debate about local developments can easily outweigh the potential and uncertain benefits that might arise if one's input causes one's desired outcome.

Holman and Rydin draw from the literature on social capital in discussing how this collective action problem can be overcome:

The key idea is that building social capital within a local community... will create links between people that are imbued with certain key norms. It is these norms that build commitment and encourage people to reframe their incentive structure so as to participate in an activity that otherwise would fall foul of the collective action problem.[66]

Holman and Rydin believe strong social bonds are important as the shared norms that accompany them encourage people to reframe their incentive structure so as to participate in activities that would otherwise fall foul of the collective action problem. Strong social bonds create a sense of mutual interests, trust and soft sanctions of blame and shame that promote participation.[67] However, they believe that strong social bonds can also be exclusionary to outsiders, and typically occur among homogeneous groups, while real neighbourhoods are usually diverse.

This can lead to more, not less, NIMBYism, as groups fail to consider the needs of others or hear other points of view, either from parts of the neighbourhood outside a strongly bonded group, or those outside the immediate geographic vicinity. Aldrich's study of siting decisions for new power plants, airports and dams in Japan, for example, found that measures of low civil society activity were the best predictors of approved developments.[68] Thus, for localism to work,

It will be necessary to build linkages… across these diverse groups and… to imbue them with common norms. On its own [strong] bonding social capital can entrench insular pockets of community activism.[69]

Holman and Rydin suggest that non-local interests need to be taken into account; they call for a mechanism whereby those engaged in neighbourhood planning encounter actors who speak for other interests, so that those in strongly bonded groups are confronted with the needs of outsiders.

Conclusion

This review of the literature and evidence provides several key lessons for overcoming NIMBY opposition. First, it indicates that the Government's general goal of promoting local participation in local planning decisions is worthwhile, as the evidence suggests that local residents are more likely to support local proposals if the community is given more say. However, given the absence of in-depth research into why this is the case with housing developments, this finding was tested as part of our qualitative research. This is not just about access to the formal planning approval process, but also the extent to which communities are involved in the formation of developers' proposals. Trust in these developers and their decision-making process is just as important as trust in the formal political process.

Second, concern for collective goods such as local aesthetics, green spaces, community facilities and local employment opportunities are important factors driving NIMBYism. Financial incentives are less likely to bring opponents round. Where such financial incentives can be used to provide community benefits, these may be somewhat effective in 'compensating' communities for development. However, developments that accommodate these concerns within the proposal itself are particularly likely to win support.

Finally, social relationships on the ground matter. Numerous studies have shown that the planning process can be exclusionary, with certain sections of the community more adept than others at getting their voices heard. These groups are often the affluent, politically active members of society most likely to oppose new developments, and they are less likely to be won around by financial incentives. Giving neighbourhood bodies more power to shape development in their area may help to dampen opposition from these groups. However, this hope has not been realised with neighbourhood planning as currently constituted, with few plans coming into force. Many of the draft plans only meet the targets set for the area by local authorities, rather than exceeding them. A more effective way to promote active local support for new developments would be to promote early dialogue, both across the wider local community (beyond the usual suspects), and between local residents and other stakeholders, particularly developers.

3   Community-led housing

Government attempts to give communities more control over local housing have mainly focused on the planning system, and have been implemented by creating – and giving greater powers to – lower levels of formal political institutions. However, for a number of years local communities have been organising themselves to build homes to address local need. Our research into the sector, which draws primarily on academic literature, is timely given the creation of a new community-led housing alliance, to be delivered by the Building and Social Housing Foundation.[70]

There is no single accepted definition of community-led housing; it normally encompasses a number of different ownership and development models. Locality defines community-led housing as:

housing designed and managed by local people, and intended to meet the needs of the community. Community-led housing projects are run by local communities for local communities – they are built where local people decide and to standards which they specify.[71]

The emerging community-led housing alliance has worked with Anthony Collins Solicitors to develop a proposed legal definition for a community-led housing provider.[72] The proposed criteria include:

· The body includes within its constitution the purpose of providing accommodation to the local community and/or for the members of the body.

· The local community has the opportunity to become members of the body (whether or not others can also become members).

- The local community must provide the majority vote on resolutions at general meetings and decisions at management board meetings.

- Any profits or surplus from its activities will be used to benefit the local community or other activities of the body as set out in its constitution (otherwise than being paid directly to members).

- The accommodation let to individuals is owned by the body.

- The number of properties owned by the body does not exceed 1,000.

History and scale

Community-led housing has its roots in the cooperative movement. Beginning with the Rochdale Pioneer Land and Building Company (later the Nationwide Building Society), which built the first cooperative housing in the 1860s, much of the UK's existing collectively owned housing stock was built or acquired before the 1980s, with over 40,000 co-ownership homes built in the wave of cooperative housing development in the 1960s and 1970s.[73]

The lack of a single definition has led to varying estimates of the scale of community-led housing in the UK. In 2011, the Human City Institute estimated there were 838 'resident-controlled' housing organisations in the UK managing 169,000 homes. This figure represented just 0.6 per cent of the UK's housing stock at the time. Of these, 575 were cooperatively owned organisations, owning 92,000 homes.[74] In 2012, an international comparison report was published by the European Federation of Public, Co-operative & Social Housing (CECODHAS Housing Europe) and ICA Housing, part of the International Co-operative Alliance. They estimated that there were 677 mutual housing organisations across the UK, with around 45,000 units (less than 0.2 per cent of the total housing stock), of which 35,000 are owned by cooperatives or mutuals.[75] In 2013, the Human City

Institute produced a new estimation of the scale of the 'mutual and cooperative housing' sector in the UK, putting it at 974 organisations, broken down as shown in table 1.[76]

Table 1 **Estimated number of organisations in the mutual and cooperative housing sector in 2013**

Waves of creation	Predominant ownership/ management model	Number
1960s	Co-ownership housing	3
1970s to 1980s	Housing ownership co-operatives	575
1980s to 1990s	Tenant management organisations	231
Late 1990s onwards	Co-housing projects	54
2000s onwards	Community housing mutuals and gateways	11
Mid-2000s onwards	Community land trusts	100
	Total remaining in 2013	**974**

Source: Gulliver, Handy and Morris, *More than Markets*[77]

In recent years, new models of community-led development have been adopted, including community land trusts, co-housing, mutual home ownership, community self-build, collective custom-build and self-help housing. While the development and ownership models of these groups differ significantly, they share a collective and self-help approach to meeting local housing needs.

Community-led models

The concept of community-led housing is made up of a number of different models. They have overlapping definitions, and many developments draw from more than one model. For example, some community land trusts lease their property to cooperative societies. Mutual home ownership can combine cooperative ownership with the community land trust model, collective custom-builders might set up a co-housing community, and co-housing communities might set up a community land trust to ensure their housing remains affordable in the long term.[78]

Cooperatives are managed and controlled by a membership organisation, which usually includes all the cooperative's tenants. The membership organisation normally owns the property too, although in some cases tenants are part-owners. A tenant management organisation is a non-ownership co-operative model formed by tenants to manage their homes, subject to an agreement with the landlord.[79] While there are hundreds of cooperatives operating in the UK, most are managing existing stock, with very few, if any, new cooperative homes being built in England in recent years. However, new cooperative housing schemes are being developed in Wales with the support of the Welsh Government, the Confederation of Co-operative Housing and the Wales Co-operative Centre.[80]

Co-housing communities are comprised of a cluster of private homes alongside communal facilities. The housing is typically intentionally designed – either from the ground up or by taking over unused buildings – to foster a sense of community. The initial residents in the group often contribute significantly to this design. There is joint, consensual decision-making on the division of labour to keep up communal facilities, running the finances, and using shared resources.[81] Most co-housing communities are registered either as companies limited by guarantee, or industrial and provident societies. Britain's first co-housing scheme was set up in 1980, and the UK Cohousing Network now has 19 active member groups, with over 50 groups in development.[82]

Self-help housing brings members of a local community together to bring empty properties back into use. They are

normally groups that cannot afford to buy their own housing, and cannot get a permanent home from the local authority or a housing association.

Community self-build involves local people who need housing building their own homes. In doing so, residents gain both a home and new skills. The end product is usually a self-build housing association or a housing cooperative. The homes can be either for rent, outright ownership or shared ownership. Self-builders normally purchase an equity stake of 50 per cent and pay rent on the other 50 per cent.[83]

Collective custom-build is another form of self-provided housing, where groups work closely with a developer who either builds the homes to a custom design or oversees the process, managing supply chains and facilitating access to financial advice and other professional support. However, sometimes group custom-builders choose to manage their own project, known as 'independent group custom-build'.[84]

Community land trusts are non-profit organisations controlled by their members through a democratic governance structure. Membership is open to anyone who lives in a defined local area, including occupiers of the properties provided by the community land trust. While it may provide homes for sale as well as for rent, a key feature of a community land trust is that homes it provides are kept permanently affordable. This can be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including equity loans, pre-emption rights for the community land trust to buy the property back, and resale price covenants, where the property is sold at a percentage of its open market value with a covenant on the buyer only to resell at the same percentage. Proceeds from any homes sold by a community land trust are protected by an asset lock, and must be re-invested into something else that benefits the local community. A second important feature is that a stated primary responsibility of the community land trust is the common good of the community and the development of the local area, not just the tenants or members.[85] According to the National Community Land Trust Network, there are now over 170 community land trusts across England and Wales.

Despite the renewed interest in community-led housing, the scale of the sector remains small compared with many other countries. The Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing reported in *Bringing Democracy Home* that the resident-controlled sector makes up 18 per cent of all housing in Sweden, 15 per cent in Norway, 8 per cent in Austria and 6 per cent in Germany – all far higher than the UK's 0.6 per cent.[86] CECODHAS and ICA Housing's international comparison provides estimates the percentage of total housing stock that is owned by housing co-operatives: 8 per cent for Austria, 5 per cent for Germany, 7 per cent in Hungary, 19 per cent in Poland and 22 per cent in Sweden, compared with the UK's <0.2 per cent.[87]

Theoretical implications

Community-led developments in England currently have little impact on the overall level of housebuilding. However, there are good theoretical reasons to believe that community-led approaches – with sufficient public and political awareness of the possibilities – could help to unlock housing supply that the planning system currently blocks. Our review of the literature on NIMBYism highlighted three key lessons for understanding and overcoming local opposition, all of which could be addressed to an extent by scaling up the community-led sector.

First, the evidence suggests that local residents are more likely to support local proposals if the community is given more say. Community groups that engage the wider community effectively, and are deemed by all parties to be representative – 'of, by and for' the community – may be effective at improving both trust in the process, and ultimately the support of residents. In particular, the literature review suggests that 'horizontal' relationships across different parts of the community are important, particularly bringing in voices beyond the 'usual suspects'.

This, of course, is not an inevitable outcome of community-led proposals. With the exception of community land trusts, which have as their primary mission the benefit of the wider community, most community-led models are not intrinsically outward-looking and accessible to the wider public (although individual groups may choose to be). However, the fact that community land trusts are not controlled by its beneficiaries may limit their claim to address local needs. Since potential tenants are less likely to be the 'usual suspects' blocking development identified by Matthews et al,[88] other models of community-led development may also succeed in avoiding the pitfalls of neighbourhood planning. Both community land trusts and other models have a reasonable claim to engaging the right groups of people to bring together local support in favour of development.

Second, we found that concern for collective goods was an important driver of local opposition. The protection of collective goods is a more effective way to gain local support for a project than providing compensation for the loss of such goods. By taking the lead in developing their own proposals for development in their local area, community members should be well placed to protect the things they most value about their local area.

We also found that the (vertical) connection of various parts of the community to those in positions of power was an important factor in determining residents' attitudes towards new developments. Their perceived representivity may help to persuade local authorities that a scheme has public support. Where partners are involved, if groups can gain the respect of partners (such as local authorities, housing associations, investors, developers or contractors), they may well succeed in influencing the detail of proposal to include the kinds of collective goods that will win public support.

Research to date

The DCLG collects data from all English local authorities on the number of new housing starts and completions, but does not collect separate data for new community-led developments. The severely limited amount of data available, particularly on the scale of recent projects, has constrained the ability of researchers to assess community-led housing at a macro level. Thus, there is little prior research to draw on to determine whether community-led housing could or does help to overcome NIMBYism.

In his 2015 study of community land trusts in Somerset, Dorset and Devon, Tom Moore found that community land trusts mobilised 'deep-seated emotional attachments to place', which were channelled into leadership and advocacy where they might normally express themselves as fear of change or opposition to development.[89] He cited the importance of informal communication between community land trust members and the wider community, and the power and importance of volunteerism with technical expertise. These themes are echoed in our own qualitative research findings, presented in chapter 5.

Most of the academic research to date has focused on the supposed benefits of the various models once they are up and running. For example, in *More than Markets* the Human City Institute cited the lower levels of rent arrears, vacancies, re-let times and 'indecency' among homes under some form of cooperative ownership, compared with national social housing norms. The report also cited higher performance on tenant satisfaction, customer service, repairs and maintenance, dealing with complaints, looking after communal areas and neighbourhood safety.[90]

Besides the Human City Institute's work, most of the recent literature focuses on two of the models: community land trusts and co-housing. Tummers' international review of co-housing studies highlights the lack of quantitative data on the sector, but discusses many of the impacts of co-housing communities, such as environmental sustainability, breaking traditional gender roles, alleviating solitude of the

elderly, and encouraging social interaction more broadly.[91] Similarly, Moore examines the wider benefits community land trusts can bring to the local community through the acquisition of other community assets such as local pubs and bakeries, and their ability to promote community activism.[92]

Locality's recent report *Understanding the Potential of Small Scale Community Led Housing* echoes our finding that there is a lack of data on the sector. Similarly to the earlier Human City Institute report, it examines the performance of small-scale community-led housing. The authors believe that ownership of the housing asset is important as it enables the group to raise investment, and manage quality outcomes and tenancy allocation. They found that management costs were not extensive and management issues were readily solved, contrary to some claims that small providers would struggle to deal with such issues alone.[93]

As discussed above, the formal goals and typical governance structure of a community land trust implies attention is paid to wider local goals. However, Moore and McKee argue that while American and Scottish community land trusts have a fairly rigid, tri-partite governance structure split between community land trust residents and members, representatives of the wider community and local officials, some English community land trusts have emerged without recruiting from the wider community initially. These have focused on a small, core group of volunteers to get their scheme off the ground, aiming to engage the community later on in the project.[94]

There is a broad consensus that community-led groups need to make an active effort to ensure they have the necessary skills, and should work in cooperation with local authorities and other local stakeholders, such as housing authorities.[95] However, there is a tension between this imperative, and the desire to have a membership that reflects the broader community:

The ability to participate in local community projects presumes time, education and skill, not all of which are equally distributed in society, which provokes concern that participation in… CLTs may not be the democratic panacea it is claimed.[96]

Some authors have questioned the ability of community-led developments to address genuine need in their local area, although no systematic analysis of the affordability of community-led housing in England has yet been conducted. A US study analysing the resale of community land trust homes between 1984 and 2008 found that properties became more affordable over time, suggesting that the model was successful in suppressing property prices.[97] However, an audit of US community land trust activity in 2007 found that some community land trusts were providing housing at prices higher than could be afforded by those earning median household incomes.[98] Bresson and Denèfle found that co-housing inhabitants in France are 'predominantly well-educated, middle-income households'.[99] Similarly, Chatterton's study of Lilac, a co-housing community in Leeds, found that 'due to the minimum net incomes needed to live in the project most members are in employment and there is an identifiable trend towards work in public sector, care and health professions'.[100]

Finally, whether or not community-led approaches can succeed in addressing local affordable housing needs, others have questioned the legitimacy of prioritising local needs at all, arguing that doing so at the expense of outsiders is exclusionary. Local allocation has been justified on the basis that 'low-income households in rural areas lack the economic capital to compete with affluent "outsiders" for housing stock, typified by low supply due to planning constraint and high demand'.[101] However, such policies have been criticised for potentially excluding minority groups and non-indigenous people from rural areas.[102]

The data on the success of community-led housing groups in the planning process are limited, and there is little academic research on the subject. However, there are theoretical reasons to suggest that community-led housing groups may be successful in overcoming local opposition from both residents and councillors. In the next section, we look at regional disparities in the planning system as it relates to new large housing developments, and compare the relative success of the community-led housing sector.

4 Analysis of planning data

Local authority comparisons

We examined planning data from the DCLG to see which councils were allowing developers of all kinds to build, and which were the most restrictive and slowest to act. The data analysed comprised 23,862 decisions on applications for major residential (ten homes or more) developments between January 2010 and March 2015.

These data do not tell the whole story. Restrictive councils may deter applicants, and planning departments cannot take all of the blame for receiving applications that do not address local need, or risk environmental damage or excessive noise pollution. External factors, such as market forces, are also important: areas where the potential gains are high (for example due to high local rents) might encourage more risky applications that have a higher chance of being turned down. On the other hand, areas with high potential rewards for development may allow developers to absorb the costs of additional demands of local officials and politicians, thus increasing approval rates. Furthermore, low approval rates could be caused by poorly performing planning departments (perhaps because of lack of resource or poor organisation) or particularly anti-development planning committees, or a combination of the two.

Official 'speed of decision' data may not tell the whole story, as many applications go through a lengthy pre-application process with council officers. However, given that there are official targets for making decisions set by central government, a failure to meet the target does indicate that something is going wrong, whether it is a flawed pre-application process, a poorly put-together application, an inefficient or under-resourced planning department, or political wrangling. While it is not possible

to disaggregate all of these factors, application numbers, approval rates and speed of decisions can provide some indication of councils' relative efficiency at helping applications through the planning process.

Finally, it should be noted that the granting of full planning permission for major developments is not the only way of delivering new homes. As well as smaller developments, there are schemes that bring empty properties back into use (such as self-help housing) and other changes to existing properties that increase the number of homes they provide.

Local authorities in the north grant a higher proportion of applications for large residential developments than those in the south. Between January 2010 and March 2015, 75 per cent of applications in the South East were granted compared with 89 per cent in the North East. In the same period the total figure of applications granted in England as a whole was also 81 per cent, as it was for London. Local authorities in the North East (68 per cent of major decisions), Yorkshire and the Humber (65 per cent) and the West Midlands (65 per cent) met the 13 week target for decisions most often, while the figures for South West (57 per cent) and South East (59 per cent) were below average. London (58 per cent) and the North West (57 per cent) were also below the national rate of 60 per cent (figure 2).

Among local authority types, metropolitan districts approved a far higher percentage of major residential applications (90 per cent) than shire districts (78 per cent). Interestingly, though, national parks, which one might expect to be the most restrictive, approved a higher proportion of applications (82 per cent) than either unitary authorities (80 per cent) or London boroughs (81 per cent). On the other hand, national parks were by far the slowest to process applications, with just 45 per cent of decisions being made within the 13 week target. This compares with 66 per cent of metropolitan districts, with figures for shire districts (59 per cent), unitary authorities (59 per cent) and London boroughs (58 per cent) being more typical.

Figure 2 **Applications for large residential developments approved, by region, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

■ % applications granted

■ % applications decided within 13 week target
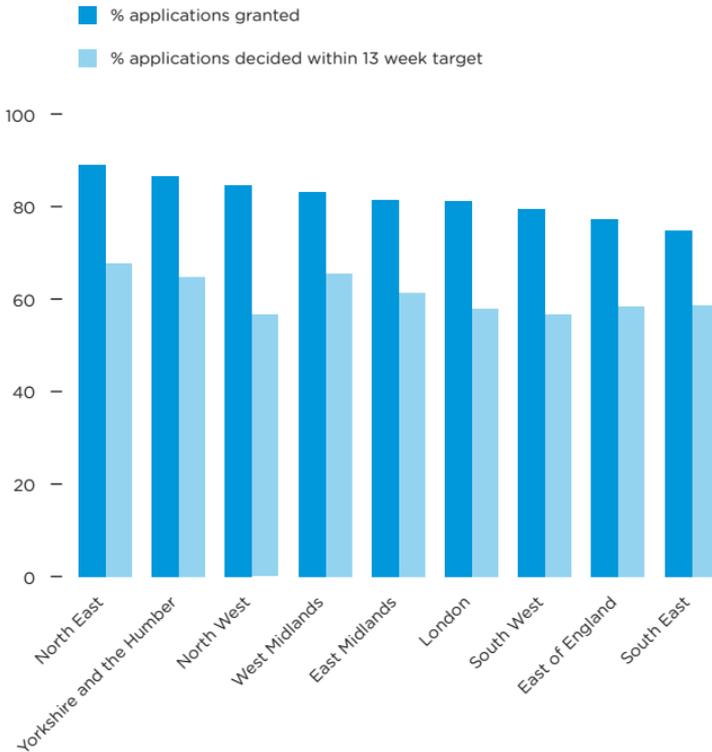
Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[103]

Following a similar pattern, the degree of urbanisation in a local authority also appears to make a difference (it should be noted there is significant overlap between this and some of the categories of local authority). Major urban areas were the most likely to approve applications (86 per cent), with the most rural local authorities (those with at least 80 per cent of their population in rural settlements and market towns) least likely to approve (75 per cent). While the same broad pattern appears with speed of decision, the range is smaller, from 62 per cent and 64 per cent of decisions made within 13

weeks for major and large urban areas respectively, and 56 per cent and 59 per cent for Rural-50[104] and Rural-80[105] local authorities (figure 3). A full explanation of these categories can be found in the technical appendix.

Next, we examined the relationship between projected growth in the number of households in each local authority between 2010 and 2015 (as a measure of the likely increase in demand in that period) and these data on decisions for major residential planning applications. We found a moderate positive correlation between higher levels of projected growth in the number of households and the number of decisions made[107] and number of applications approved.[108] However, this is unsurprising as we would expect developers to try to build where the greatest demand exists.

There is a weak correlation between projected household growth and the percentage of major applications approved,[109] and a very weak correlation with the percentage of decisions made within 13 weeks.[110] While it is not possible to quantify the extent to which planning authorities are most helping to meet rising demand for housing in their areas, this indicates that local authorities with the most need have a less restrictive approach than other authorities to building new homes, although they are not necessarily processing applications any faster as a result.

We also looked at the best and worst performing individual planning authorities in terms according to these criteria.

Five planning authorities approved every single major residential application they received between 2010 and March 2015: Copeland, the City of London,[111] Exmoor National Park, The Broads Authority and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. However, the latter three only received ten applications between them in the entire period. In fact, those that dealt with tiny numbers of applications dominate the extreme ends of several of these measures. Thus, tables 1–6 comprise data only from planning authorities where at least 15 decisions were made over the period in question (January 2010 to March 2015).

Figure 3 · Applications for large residential developments by local authority urban-rural category
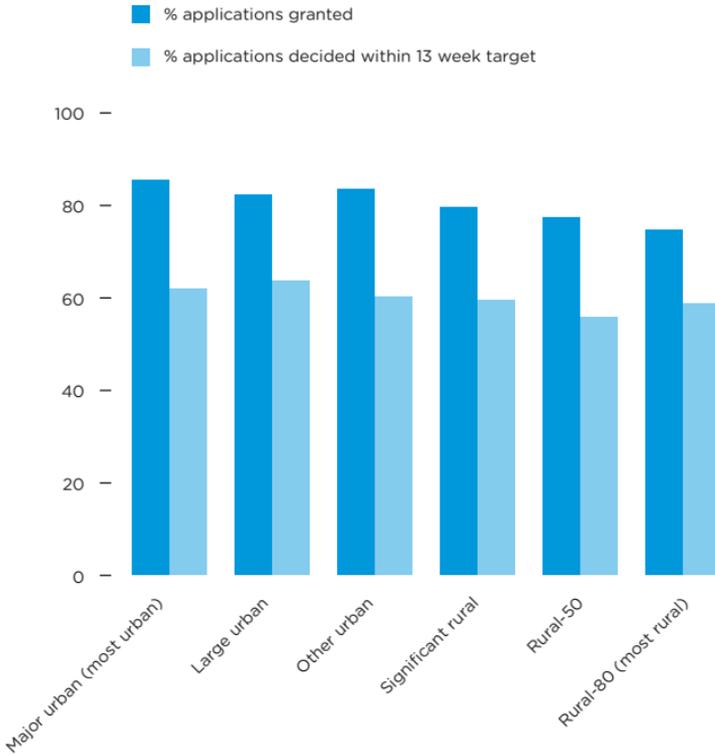
Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[106]

Tables 2–3 show the top ten and bottom ten planning authorities to grant major residential planning applications, and tables 4–5 show the fastest and slowest authorities to make the decisions.

Table 2 **Top ten planning authorities for granting major residential planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Planning authority	Applications granted (%)	Number of decisions	Urban or rural
1 Copeland	100	40	Rural-80
2 Gloucester	99	74	Other urban
3 Sunderland	98	111	Major urban
=4 Middlesbrough	97	66	Large urban
=4 Oldham	97	38	Major urban
=6 Wigan	96	138	Major urban
=6 Scarborough	96	120	Significant rural
=6 Halton	96	81	Other urban
=6 Corby	96	57	Other urban
10 Westminster	95*	141	Major urban

*Ten other planning authorities granted 95% of applications

Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[112]

Table 3 **Bottom ten planning authorities for granting major residential planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Planning authority	Applications granted (%)	Number of decisions	Urban or rural
1 Maldon	25	64	Rural-80
2 Chiltern	42	48	Significant rural
3 Rossendale*	50	28	Other urban
4 St Albans*	56	105	Significant rural
5 New Forest National Park	57	44	National Park
6 Daventry	58	88	Rural-80
=7 Elmbridge	59	76	Major urban
=7 Chichester*	59	74	Rural-80
9 Castle Point	60	30	Large urban
10 Harborough	61	84	Rural-80

* Some missing data

Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[113]

Table 4 **Quickest planning authorities, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Planning authority	Decision within 13 weeks of application (%)	Number of decisions	Urban or rural
1 Coventry	94	167	Large urban
2 Hyndburn	93	30	Other urban
3 Three Rivers	92	38	Major urban
4 Stockton-On-Tees	90	135	Large urban
5 Rutland*	89	75	Rural-80
6 St Helens	88	97	Major urban
7 Derbyshire Dales	87	52	Rural-80
8 Mid Sussex*	84	102	Rural-80
9 Hinckley and Bosworth	83	17	Significant rural
=10 Chesterfield*	82	67	Rural-50
=10 High Peak	82	16	Other urban

* Some missing data

Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[114]

Table 5 **Slowest planning authorities, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Planning authority	Decision within 13 weeks of application (%)	Number of decisions	Urban or rural
=1 Richmond upon Thames	21	68	Major urban
=1 South Holland	21	43	Rural-80
=3 Northumberland National Park	24	144	National park
=3 St Edmundsbury*	24	41	Rural-50
5 Lake District National Park	25	20	National park
6 West Somerset	26	19	Rural-80
7 North Dorset	27	73	Rural-80
8 Wolverhampton	28	78	Major urban
9 Bromsgrove	29	62	Significant rural
10 Babergh	31	32	Rural-80

* Some missing data

Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[115]

As a composite measure, we picked out the planning authorities that make the top quartile on all three measures: percentage of applications granted, percentage decided within 13 weeks, and total number of decisions (table 6).

Finally, as a negative composite measure, we picked out the planning authorities that were in the top quartile for projected growth in the number of households, but in the bottom quartile for the total number of applications granted, and then ordered these by the percentage of applications that were granted. The councils that fall into this category are listed in table 7.

Table 6 **Composite positive measure of local authority planning decisions, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Planning authority	Applications granted (%)	Decision within 13 weeks of application (%)	Number of decisions	Urban or rural
Scarborough	96	78	120	Significant rural
Westminster	95	71	141	Major urban
Barnsley*	95	80	135	Other urban
Birmingham	94	77	346	Major urban
Newcastle-under-Lyme	93	77	153	Large urban
Plymouth	92	70	125	Other urban
Shepway	91	70	211	Significant rural
Coventry	91	94	167	Large urban
Bolton*	90	76	146	Major urban
Rugby	90	80	127	Significant rural

* Some missing data

Source: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[116]

Table 7   **Composite negative measure of local authority planning decisions, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Planning authority	Applications granted (%)	Number granted	Projected population growth	Urban or rural
Kingston upon Thames	71	24	4709	Major Urban
Portsmouth	73	73	3827	Large Urban
Brighton & Hove	76	37	6183	Large Urban
Newham	77	36	13595	Major Urban
Northampton	78	29	5106	Other Urban
Barking and Dagenham	81	25	6155	Major Urban
North Somerset	90	35	4367	Rural-50

* Some missing data

Sources: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015; DCLG, 'Live tables on planning application statistics'[117]

Community-led housing data

The Government does not currently collect separate data for community-led developments. Thus, so far it has not been possible to compare the success of community-led developments in gaining planning permission and contributing to addressing housing shortages. This report brings together data gratefully received from four umbrella groups involved in the provision of community-led housing to produce comparable estimates for the success of community-led developments in gaining planning permission.

The four umbrella groups that helped us with our research were the National Community Land Trust Network, the UK Cohousing Network, the Community Self Build Agency and the Confederation of Co-operative Housing. Using their data and further desk research to determine the status of applications for community-led developments through publicly available information on planning authorities' websites, we ended with a sample of 32 community-led proposals of ten homes or more that have applied for planning permission in England since 2010. This figure is much smaller than estimates of the size of the sector, which include groups managing existing stock. It is worth noting that some recent schemes gained planning permission before 2010, and many community-led schemes are on a smaller scale than the criteria we set. We chose to exclude these smaller schemes to ensure that when we considered those schemes capable of making the biggest dent in the supply gap, as far as possible, we were comparing similar scales of scheme between community-led and non-community-led schemes.

Using this method we were not able to gather data on developments that do not fall into one of these four categories. Self-help housing, for example, which involves bringing empty homes back into use, is excluded from this analysis: a large proportion of self-help housing projects do not require full planning permission, and it was not possible to disaggregate those that did from those that did not.

The 32 proposals break down as follows: 24 community land trusts, five co-housing groups and three community self builds (figure 4). The Confederation of Co-operative Housing was not aware of any cooperative housing groups that have applied for planning permission since 2010. These 32 proposals were made in 24 separate planning authorities.

Ten of the applications were made in planning authorities classed as urban, of which six were in the biggest 'major urban' category. The rest were rural, including 12 within the 'rural-80' category, which have at least 80 per cent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.

Figure 4 **Planning applications involving community-led groups, by model, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015**

Community Self Build

Cohousing

Community Land Trust
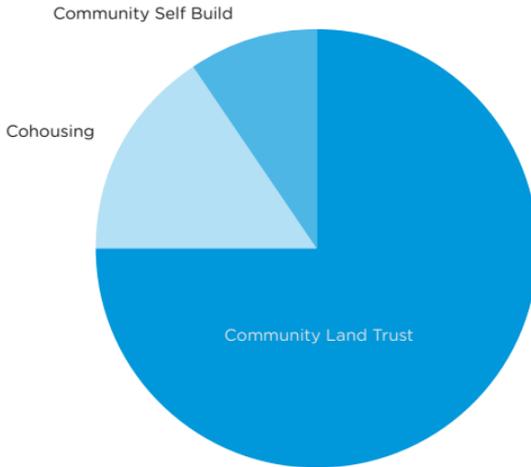
Source: Demos dataset

A high proportion, 29 out of the 32, proposals (91 per cent) were approved. However, just seven (22 per cent) received a decision within the 13 week target.

These figures can be compared with equivalent statistics for all types of applications in the same areas. In order to ensure the final statistics are comparable, these statistics are weighted according to the number of community-led applications in each planning authority. In this instance the weightings do not affect the final results once rounded to the nearest percentage point.

In the 24 planning authorities in question, there were 2,423 major residential applications in the same time period. Of these, the weighted percentage of applications granted was 81 per cent (the unweighted figure was also 81 per cent). The weighted percentage of applications granted within 13 weeks was 58 per cent (also 58 per cent unweighted) (figure 5).

Figure 5 **Applications involving community-led groups, compared with all applications in the same 24 local authorities**
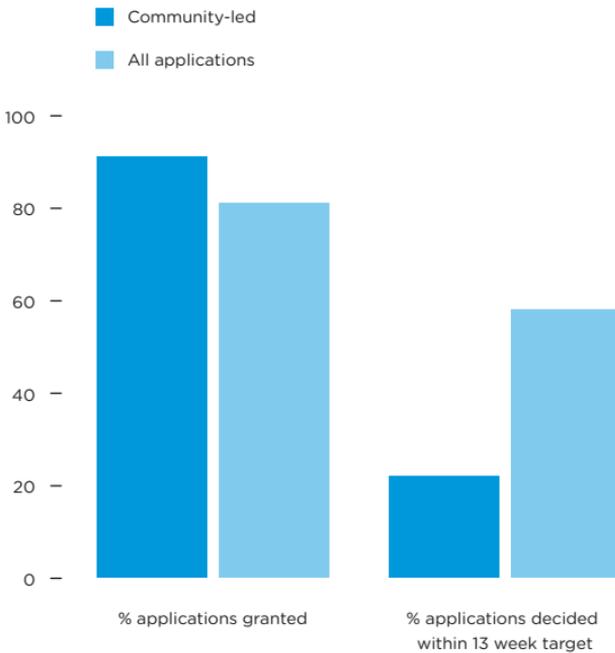
Sources: DCLG planning applications, Jan 2010 to Mar 2015[118] and Demos dataset

Thus, we can see that major residential planning proposals involving community-led groups currently get planning permission more often than proposals from other types of applicant. However, these applications take longer for local authorities to process and make a decision on than proposals from other types of applicant, with far fewer making the 13-week target.

5 Community-led case studies

To gain a deeper understanding of how community-led housing developments get started, how proposals are put together and how homes get built, we took a detailed look at five community-led groups in five different parts of England. The case studies were chosen to reflect the variety of models currently in use within the sector, and to look at both urban and rural cases. Where possible, we chose larger developments, as these are likely to be the trickiest to organise and to navigate through the political process, but are capable of making the largest dent in local housing supply gaps. In four of the five cases, planning permission had been granted (and in some cases the development was complete). In the last case, Brixton, the application was submitted at the end of September 2015, and is pending a decision at the time of writing.

In total, we held 25 one-to-one interviews across the five case study areas with local councillors, council officials and those involved in community-led groups. Most of these were conducted by telephone between August and September 2015. In addition, we held a focus group with nine to ten local residents in each of the five case study areas.

Each case study has its own unique story to tell about people, politics and society. For this reason, in this chapter we take each case study in turn, where possible drawing out common themes. In particular, five key themes stand out from this part of the research:

· Complaints about the planning process were heard in every focus group. Local residents felt that they were not given a proper opportunity to give their input to housing developments, and when they did raise concerns they were ignored.

· A problematic tension between the desire for genuinely affordable housing (with a sense that lots of ordinary local working people could not afford 'affordable' housing), and opposition to homes deemed too small, and too densely packed together.

· Community involvement in the detail of a proposal does help it to win the support of local residents and the local authority. Conversely, developments with a community-led element have struggled where they have failed to demonstrate that community members have had a genuine say.

· It is crucial to address the question 'who benefits' from a development: do local residents feel those they consider to be in *their* community will be able to access new housing, or will developments be filled by outsiders?

· Group membership matters. Those with large amounts of social and political capital, networks and technical knowledge are well placed to succeed in navigating the planning process. However, it is important to have wide 'horizontal' links to the community as a whole, as well as 'vertical' links to those in positions of power.

Case study 1: Keswick Community Housing Trust, Lake District

Keswick Community Housing Trust is a community land trust that was formed in 2009 following a series of meetings put on by Churches Together in Keswick, a membership organisation of a dozen churches. Attendees discussed a number of local issues, with affordable housing emerging as the biggest challenge for the community. As a result of these discussions, a group of attendees decided to set up the trust.

The initial directors of the group came from a wide variety of backgrounds, and many of them held prominent positions in the local community; there was a teacher, church ministers and town councillors. The 12 directors on the board

must include three residents of the group's properties and three stakeholders (members of the town council or other interested groups). The board holds open meetings every two weeks.

Alongside the directors, anyone who shares the group's aims can become a member of the Trust by buying community shares, which entitles them to stand for election to the board of directors at the group's annual general meeting. The sale of community shares, which were advertised as an investment in Keswick rather than for personal financial gain, helped the group's financial situation significantly, enabling them to unlock other sources. Peter Roberts, the Trust's treasurer, said:

The lender we approached was... a local building society who had never done anything like this but were willing to take a risk. We said we would raise £50,000 from the sale of community shares, and they said they wouldn't lend us the money until we had done. Over a period of a couple of months we raised £60,000 so they lent us the money.

Subscriptions through the share scheme ranged from £250 to £5,000, which purchasers could apply to sell back to the trust after three years (funds permitting). No requests for this have been made to date. It was made clear to purchasers that their investment was not a financial one but an investment in the future of the town. Peter Roberts told us that the share scheme was important for raising finance, but in itself was not a crucial factor in getting wider community support for the scheme; the most important factor for achieving this was simply the success of its first project.

The group has completed two developments so far, demonstrating considerable innovation in the process. One of the sites is a former toilet block, bought from Allerdale Borough Council for £1 and converted into four one-bedroom homes.[119]

The focus of our research was a third site, where construction has recently started, having had planning permission granted in March 2015. The site will eventually provide 55 homes; it is being developed in partnership with a housing

association, which will hold 23 of the homes and local building contractors who will sell ten of the homes on a market-led basis with local occupancy clauses. The remaining 22 homes will be held by Keswick Community Housing Trust.

In interviews and focus groups, a number of reasons came up as to why this latest project had succeeded in gaining the almost unanimous support of the community, various local councils and councillors on the Lake District National Park Development Control Committee, which gave the go-ahead for development.

The first reason is the organisational ability, passion and public credibility of all those involved, and genuine admiration for the members of the group among councillors and local residents. Bill Jefferson OBE, former chair of the Lake District National Park authority and a current councillor at Allerdale, observed:

We've been blessed in this area by people who weren't motivated by profit alone and were showing a real concern for their community... The Trust is made up of good people, well connected.

In particular, people liked the fact that the group were made up of local volunteers. This helped our focus group participants to trust that they were not just in it for the money:

Keswick Community Housing Trust is literally working for the people, and keeping costs to a minimum. There's no hidden agenda; any extra money is used for the upkeep of the development. I personally feel I would really trust them over a housing association who have a set rent, set by somebody who doesn't have anything to do with Keswick.

Another said:

They've got Keswick at heart, they really fight for Keswick.

Town and county councillor Andrew Lysser noted:

There is no doubt that the word community housing organisation says it all really. They're not a group of developers trying to make money, they're all volunteers, they're doing it for the wellbeing of the community.

Bill Jefferson thought the trust was essential when working with other partners on the project:

The Trust was a vital element. They were well placed to spot issues that affected the area. The housing association have been another key player. They were pretty good and not looking to extract the maximum for themselves... You've got a good developer who are really open-minded... a good landowner not pushing for much profit. You've got a clear understanding among all aspects, all councils, and the community bodies.

Kevin Richards, the case officer for the group's latest site, emphasised the importance of the community group:

From our point of view, the community group aspect of the proposal is important because there's some indication that there's support for them and for what they're trying to do, and that's been borne out in every one of their planning applications. We've been inundated by letters of support, which you don't normally get for housing applications.

Kevin Richards also pointed out that their latest application differed from previous ones by the involvement of partners, and in particular that the contractors had led on the planning application process and were named as the official applicant on planning documents. He said while the community was well aware of the community land trust's involvement, officials did not see much of them during the application process. His comparison of the two methods suggests that the more direct involvement of the community land trust in the planning process was positive:

In the past it's worked better where it's been a site already owned by the land trust and we've been able to communicate with them directly... Some of the [few] objections we got was when the application went out and it showed the builders and not the land trust. The initial reaction was 'oh look there's some people from out of town trying to make a fast buck'. If you have the community land trust up on the application, rightly or wrongly the community view is slightly different.

The second reason for the latest project succeeding in gaining the almost unanimous support of the community was the strong connections of those involved to those in positions of power. For example, town and county councillor Andrew Lysser became a prominent supporter of the group, and was able to claim funding for the group from the county council budget:

Whenever a housing trust starts a new project, it's sort of a catch 22 – it needs the initial cash flow to be able to do the feasibility study and make the right applications before they can then get the grant in to cover the work. I get a bi-annual grant of £10,000 to give out to the community in Keswick. To get this off the ground I donated nine of my ten, and that money was then used as a springboard to apply for other funding.

Kevin Richards, the case officer for the group's latest proposal, said:

I know they have strong links with Keswick Town Council. They have quite a high profile locally. They're well known as individuals and they're well known as a group. A lot of that is to do with the size of the community... the chances of everybody knowing what the group were up to were pretty high.

His decision was justified by the group's impressive results:

I was staggered, actually how successful they were... I thought they'd be bogged down in red tape and protocol and not get very far. So the achievements they've made have been outstanding.

Andrew Lysser also felt that the group's status as outside the formal political process allowed them to move quicker, with a small committee that allowed them to avoid getting bogged down in procedure.

The third reason for the latest project's success in gaining almost unanimous support of the community was the choice of site. It had already been allocated for housing development within the local plan. Our focus group participants, many of whom were politically active citizens who had vocally opposed many other aspects of land allocation in the local plan, unanimously agreed that Sheepdog Field was an excellent site for a large housing development. Andrew Lysser told us: 'It's close to the town, it's close to the recreational parks, it's not crossing any major highway. We just thought it was an excellent site.'

A fourth reason for the project's success is that Keswick is a small town where the need for affordable housing is particularly acute for two related reasons: the limited availability of land because of the requirement to preserve the Lake District's natural beauty, and the trend of outsiders buying second homes that lie empty most of the year or are used for commercial holiday lettings, thus increasing demand and reducing the supply of homes for Keswick residents, driving up house prices. Everyone we spoke to recognised the urgent need for more affordable housing in Keswick, particularly for young people.

Finally, on this latest site, it is clear that the reputation the group had built up through its involvement on its previous projects had an impact. While Andrew Lysser said he had been sceptical about the group's ability to organise and deliver before its first project, its reputation among residents and councillors by the time of its third project was such that those concerns no longer existed.

Case study 2: Cashes Green Community Land Trust, Gloucestershire

Cashes Green Community Land Trust has had a more troubled existence than the other community land trusts we studied. Its origins lie in a pre-existing community-based organisation called Stroud Common Wealth, which since its foundation in 1999 has promoted community ownership of various assets. In 2003/04 it was funded by Gloucestershire County Council to carry out a feasibility study into setting up a community land trust for affordable homes, which resulted in the creation of Gloucestershire Land for People, a social enterprise (or umbrella community land trust), which aims to promote affordable housing development through community land trusts. The idea for a community land trust at Cashes Green was the result of discussions between Stroud District Council, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) (which owned the site) and Gloucestershire Land for People on the future of the site of the former hospital at Cashes Green.

Once outline planning consent for 78 homes had been obtained by the HCA, an invitation to tender was published. The site would be sold to a developer on the basis that a community land trust was to be set up to own the freehold of the completed development, minus a number of homes for freehold sale, the proceeds of which would cross-subsidise the affordable housing. Six development consortia responded to the HCA's advertisement to develop the site, which would eventually become known as Applewood. A partnership of the development firm HAB [Happiness Architecture Beauty], set up by designer and television personality Kevin McCloud, and Greensquare, a housing association provider, won the tender to develop the site. They subsequently contracted Gloucestershire Land for People to work with residents to establish a local community land trust.

The community land trust was not up and running in time for the application for full planning permission. Instead, a local partnership board was setup to oversee the planning process and consultation around it. This was set up by HAB, Greensquare and Gloucestershire Land for People with representatives of the parish council, district council, churches, community centre and interested residents.

We spoke to a planning officer, who felt there may have been political motivations for involving a community land trust:

I've never been really sure in pure development terms what a community land trust can bring to the party that a housing association or registered provider couldn't. That was my question at the time, although from the outset I was aware that there was ministerial support for the involvement of a CLT at the Cashes Green site.

Ian Crawley, who has been involved in the setting up of a number of community land trusts through Gloucestershire Land for People, described Cashes Green community land trust as a 'one-off':

It's probably the only CLT in the country that has been introduced after the development was mooted... every other CLT has come out of a group of local people who wanted to deliver community housing that was owned by local people and for local people.

Phil Bowley, from GreenSquare, the housing association group involved in the site, agreed that this was an unusual case where the community land trust had been imposed from the top-down (it was a condition of the HCA's tender). However, he believes that despite the unusual circumstances, both Gloucestershire Land for People and Cashes Green community land trust in its early stages did play an important role in engaging local community members:

They brought a different perspective, that it wasn't just about the money, but that it was about making it work for the community. While we did consultations as one body, people were happy to talk to the CLT reps, who then put pressure on us over specific details, as they should.

We also spoke to David Warburton from the HCA, who had been involved in the project from an early stage. He argued that the partnership was strong, and that the community engagement and consultation had been widely recognised as exemplary.

However, Lis Parker's experience as a member of the community land trust was not overwhelmingly positive:

We've all had a very, very difficult time being part of the process, and it's a mystery to me why [the other partners wanted us]... Either there was a hidden agenda which... was just to get local people on board... and get us to agree to everything... that's the cynical view. Or, they really had absolutely no idea about community involvement, community building and engagement, and no idea really how to work with a community land trust.

Ian Crawley echoed these sentiments:

Cashes Green as a CLT has always struggled to be part of a genuine working partnership with the housing association, HAB and the HCA. I personally think the truth of the matter is that the HCA went ahead with this pilot reluctantly because government ministers wanted it. And whilst they advertised the opportunity to build this housing scheme with a CLT involved, neither they nor the developer [a consortium of HAB and the housing association] really believed that the CLT would get off the ground or be sustained.

The precise role of the community land trust is still undecided, although the scheme's 78 homes are now built and occupied. The community land trust intends to have the freehold of the land (other than some of the homes which were for freehold sale), and then to have a 125-year lease relationship with the housing association for the management and maintenance of the shared ownership homes, the social rented homes and the common parts of the development.

The confusion over the community land trust's exact role and a possible breakdown in communication between the community land trust and other partners may have led to problems in engaging local people. A council officer cited examples of the community land trust making promises they could not keep due to council restrictions:

They promised there would be a local connection imposed on the site... For people from that immediate parish... that would be very unusual... For a local authority our focus is on meeting need across the board. Things got a little bit fraught because they made that promise without checking with us first.

Our focus group participants felt there was a severe lack of affordable housing in Cashes Green, but were overwhelmingly negative about the development in question. Concerns included pressure on public services and transport infrastructure, and the quality of the housing on the development. Many felt that the houses were too small. There was a strong feeling that local housing had to be for local people. Discussing the Applewood development, one participant said: 'A lot of those houses, you had people from other areas moving in. They weren't Cashes Green people.'

This led some participants to see those living in the development as separate to the existing community: 'It was almost like a little community they built over there, rather than to mix in with the rest' and 'I feel that Applewood have got their own community, they're not part of Cashes Green.'

Focus group participants were also critical of process, suggesting that they were rarely given a chance to scrutinise proposals. Some felt that this development had been dumped on Cashes Green because they did not have the organisation or connections to put up a fight: 'They wouldn't have built this in somewhere like Painswick, but because it's Cashes Green, they think they can get away with doing these things.'

We asked focus group participants specifically about the tension between the fact that many local people could not afford to buy or rent in the area, and the desire for good quality, less densely packed, larger homes. During the discussion, the importance of providing of economic space was raised as a potential part of the solution:

There's no major businesses around Cashes Green, so everyone that has work has got to travel.

It's down to employment. Nowadays you've got to have two of you working to be able to afford... if you're a single person, forget it. Nowadays you can't afford to rent or buy.

Perhaps most importantly, our focus group participants had had very little knowledge of the development before construction started. No one remembered seeing the plans during or before 2012, when it was approved. The only common memory from before construction was that a celebrity – Kevin McCloud – was to be involved. None of the participants had heard of Cashes Green Community Land Trust before attending the focus group.

Thus, while the proposal gained planning permission, and the other partners we spoke to felt largely positive about the partnership and the way the project went, Cashes Green Community Land Trust's experience has been mixed. It played a role of sorts in early engagement with the community, but the members feel that they have struggled to establish themselves within the wider partnership. Despite the involvement of experienced people like Ian Crawley, who has 33 years of experience in local government and works with many communities to help them deliver their own affordable housing, with the role of the community land trust unclear from the start, it has struggled to win the support of local people for the development successfully, and to ensure the voices of local residents were heard during the project planning process.

Case study 3: Bristol community self-build

The Community Self Build Agency is a charity that promotes self-build housing initiatives, particularly by those in housing need. After being contacted by Ken Hames, an ex-major in the Special Air Service and now a documentary presenter, the Agency began a project with ex-service personnel in Bristol who needed housing. Following the success of this project, it became involved in a second project, which is currently in construction.

John Gillespie, National Development Director at the Community Self Build Agency, describes how people are recruited to the schemes:

We go out to the British Legion, the ABF [Army Benevolent Fund], SSAFA [Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association], and anyone else we think would have ex-service personnel as clients – probation officers, social workers, street homeless people, and we promote the project that way.

The requirements for participation in the project are to have served in the armed forces, and to be able to undertake training, preferably to a qualification which would enhance their employability on completion of the project. Typically the participants have had problems with homelessness, alcohol or drug abuse, or mental health problems.

The scheme should be seen as a partnership, rather than any kind of charitable offering to the participants. They are expected to work on site alongside professional contractors, and at the end get a full lifetime tenancy in the property at social rent levels (a housing association owns and manages the properties). If they decide to move out, the property remains in perpetuity for ex-service personnel.

Ken Hames described the positive impact that the scheme has on participants and society more widely:

When they leave the army and are struggling with the transition to civilian life, if they're involved with self-build, while they're building the house they receive training in order to gain qualifications but also to make them good citizens... We're looking at 80 per cent going into full-time employment at the end of this year... They're no longer going to be drawing benefits, they're going to be... reintegrated back into society, and their dependants will also be drawn back to them.

We also spoke to some of the self-builders on the current site about their experiences:

I've loved every minute of it. For the first time since the air force, I've actually found something I'm happy to do work-wise. It's something I can see myself building a career in.

It's helped me through my alcohol issues, dealing with grief... and better coping mechanisms when I could feel myself going off the rails a bit.

Discussing the response from the local community, Ken Hames said:

I can put my hand on my heart and say the support has been fantastic... They can see the long-term benefits... they also see regeneration of brownfield sites within urban areas, and they see infrastructure coming to an area where it's been lacking. I think there's a huge amount of enthusiasm around it.

Ken Hames believed this response was critical in gaining planning permission, and to ensure the reputation of the model for the next project. He says they put a lot of effort into keeping local residents up to date and informed, and to be considerate builders.

One of the self-builders told us about their relationship with local residents:

The local community have helped out. It's simple things like being able to use their parking permit on some days. We've gone over and helped one of the local residents sort some decking... It's give and take between the two, and they're more than happy that the project is ten ex-servicemen. They're aware that we potentially could have laid down our lives for the country.

The community self-build element of the proposal was a boost to its chances of gaining planning permission. Case officer Lewis Cook said there was initially an issue over the lack of family homes in the scheme: the planning department has policies about developing 'mixed and balanced communities', and the area in question had been identified as having a lack

of family housing. Under ordinary circumstances, then, this proposal which comprised single-person flats only, might have struggled to gain permission. Lewis Cook told us:

That was the point at which the self-build element was given weight in the planning process... there aren't many of these types of project within Bristol and they made a reasonably convincing argument. We secured a condition that that was the project that came through, and it wasn't just sold off to a commercial housebuilder once they had permission.

The latest scheme under construction was a delegated decision, and thus was not subject to a planning committee vote. However, the Community Self Build Agency's first project in Bristol did go through the full process. Lewis Cook told us that while the self-build element held sway among officials in that instance, it was the fact that the scheme helped ex-service personnel that held sway with councillors. The councillors we spoke to (the ward councillor and a member of the planning committee that approved the first project) were both strongly supportive.

Our focus group in Bristol revealed the common tension between the desire to ensure there were enough affordable homes for local people, and a concern about building too many small, densely packed homes that did not fit in with the local area. One participant commented:

I think we tend to be building too many flats. It suits business people who can afford to buy them outright, but my son's 17 and the chances of him living in this area are slim... I don't think there's enough houses with gardens and stuff like that. We tend to maximise as much as we can on a small plot of land. It's making North Street a bit of a tunnel.

There were strong concerns about the ability of local facilities, particularly the local school and parking, to cope with more people coming into the area: 'I've got two small children and they go to school here... I know how difficult it is for the people already here [to get their children into the local school].'

There were also several complaints about process. There was a feeling that there was no adequate opportunity to challenge decisions, as well as the sense that even if the opportunity were there, local residents would not have enough influence to change anything:

All you get is a little leaflet on lamp posts. If you don't see it you don't see it. Even if we did see it, would it make any difference? They're going to do it anyway.

Our focus group participants were not opposed to the development in question, and particularly liked the fact that it was helping ex-service personnel to get their lives back on track and gain skills. However, none of them had been aware of the proposal at the time the application went in. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the scheme created a groundswell of pro-development support. However, it was effective in securing planning permission in part because of social goals that appealed to officers and councillors. Once again, the question 'who benefits?' was important, but rather than those benefiting being perceived as an 'in-group' by local residents, they were seen as deserving because of their service background.

Case study 4 Mandorla Cohousing

Mandorla Cohousing was set up in 2010 by a small group of volunteers committed to the ideals of co-housing. Susana Piohtee described her motivations for getting involved:

It just seemed to make sense, especially as I'm getting older and living on my own... It offers a degree of social security, a degree of economic security, and a way of working with the environment instead of against it.

The group has a consensus decision-making structure, and through that process decided to join forces with a developer who was well known locally, and has an interest in sustainable development. The scheme as a whole will provide 150 homes to Passivhaus environmental standards. Combining sustainability and affordability was one of the group's key objectives. Susana Piohtee said:

Passivhaus standards are the most energy efficient building standards in the world. Until our developer got involved, it was considered that building Passivhaus was much, much more expensive than an ordinary house. Our developer set out to prove that's not the case.

Mandorla Cohousing will buy 21 of the properties; these will be a mixture of flats and family homes, as well as a common house in which meals, recreation, entertainment and other facilities such as a laundry, library and a store room will be shared. Of those 21, five units will be for affordable rent, two will be sold on a low cost market basis, and the remaining 14 will be owner occupied. Members of the group were heavily involved in the design and layout of the homes they will end up living in.

The site had been identified by Herefordshire council for development. While the council considered ultimately that the village Kingstone had the infrastructure – or would have by the time of completion – to cope with 150 new households, there were significant concerns among local residents about the influx. The parish council estimated that it would represent a 17 per cent increase in the amount of housing in Kingstone, and thus a significant increase in the population size too. Our interviewees agreed that the local response to the proposal had been mixed, with some supporting but a majority opposing.

Most of our focus group participants opposed the development. Typical objections were the pressure on public services such as the doctor's surgery, and infrastructure like the main road into town. There was also a concern about bringing hundreds more people into the village all at the same time – that Kingstone would lose its village feel: 'If they go and plonk 150 houses in the middle, it's going to become a town.'

Process and trust, once again, were fundamental. Our focus group felt strongly that there was a need for new affordable housing in the village, but thought that the developers for this scheme had not been entirely honest with them, and thus did not trust many of their claims:

When I went to the consultation, the doctor sat in front of me. I asked the question, had they [the developer] communicated with the surgery and the schools, and he said oh yes and he's willing to take these [extra patients]. He [the doctor] stood up and said, 'Very sorry, I know nothing about it and I'm [the] senior doctor.'

We don't want wild promises. That first consultation, some of those promises were unrealistic and were never going to happen.

I think if they are honest, people are much more likely to go, 'Yeah, OK, that seems reasonable.'

Interestingly, the developer decided to play down the co-housing element of the scheme. It was known to the council, but not widely communicated to the public. This may have been because of the problems another Herefordshire based co-housing group – Larkrise – has had gaining planning permission. We spoke to Kat La Tzar, Director of Beau Homes, Larkrise's development consultant, who described the problems they had experienced with the local community:

The root of the problem is the fact that they see this as a hippy commune, and they don't want this and are not prepared to listen to any of the reasons why co-housing is not what they think it is... They quickly realised that they couldn't object to it [on those grounds]... so they latched onto highway safety.

Susana Piohtee believed that – although frustrating because they wanted to recruit more people to the group – they had made the right approach:

We finally got planning permission and we wrote a little article for the local newspaper which went in saying who we were, and the responses letter in the paper was 'oh God, weirdos coming in', 'a commune'. So I think our approach was actually quite right.

The co-housing element of the scheme did seem to have the support of the council and some councillors, however. Perry Walker told us that the developer had wanted them included to make the proposal more attractive, alongside the sustainability element. Of the co-housing element of the scheme, Housing Development Officer Hayley Crane told us: 'To be quite honest, we're looking forward to it in the local authority because it's something new, something we haven't got in the county.'

Susana Piohtee described proceedings at the planning committee meeting where the proposal was debated:

It wasn't a huge majority vote... A councillor stood up and made a statement to the effect of, 'Well of course we're not going to pass this are we, because this is a wonderful, innovative initiative, and really looking to the future, and we don't do that.' So he sort of stood up and used that Hereford is a bit backward in all these things, and that really turned things.

Unlike most of the other case study projects, the group members were not local to the immediate area. This, and the lack of publicity for the co-housing element of the development, may have contributed to the fact that our focus group participants knew little about this part of the scheme, felt it was 'a bit weird' and 'like a commune', and were concerned about the co-housing residents shutting themselves off from the rest of the community:

Why can't that shared space be for anybody, rather than just that 21?... Everyone in those 21 houses will be using the rest of the village.

I don't like it, we're a community, we should all work together.

It will isolate them from everyone else.

I can't understand why anyone would want to do it.

> The question 'who benefits?' was once again crucial. In this case, as in others, residents felt that it was impossible to ensure developments in Kingstone benefited Kingstone residents. They were very aware that when the council and developers talked about homes for 'local people', they meant local to Herefordshire, not Kingstone.
>
> The concern about the effect that the co-housing group would have on the village's sense of community shows that the answer to the 'who benefits?' question can be too small, as well as too large. Co-housing groups, unlike community land trusts, exist for the benefit of their members, rather than the wider community. While in reality co-housing members are probably at least as community-minded as anyone else, the perception that such groups might be insular, and might not work for the benefit of the wider community, is a real – but manifestly surmountable – problem.

Case study 5 Brixton Green Community Land Trust

Brixton Green Community Land Trust is involved in plans to build new homes on Somerleyton Road in Brixton. If it goes ahead (planning permission was pending at the time of writing) it will provide over 300 new homes (including 65 extra care homes for the over 55s), far larger than most community-led developments. It is the result of a partnership between Brixton Green, Ovalhouse Theatre, which will have a new theatre built on the site, and Lambeth Council, the current owner. Alongside the homes and the theatre will be a number of other facilities that will be open to the public, including a nursery and children's centre, a chef's school, a creative workspace, retail space, a health facility, play spaces and a new public square.

While Brixton Green describes itself as a community land trust, the trust is just one feature of the scheme alongside many others. As Vice-Chair Dinah Roake told us:

The process is about understanding the objectives and outcomes that people want to achieve, and then finding the most appropriate tools and mechanisms to make that happen... There are aspects of the project, what Brixton Green members want to happen, that fit... within a CLT concept, but there are an awful lot of other things about the project that we've had to find other tools, other delivery mechanisms, to achieve what the community wants to happen.

Unlike Keswick Community Housing Trust, which used a community share scheme primarily to raise funds, Brixton Green has primarily used a share scheme to drive engagement, to establish community ownership over its direction, and to encourage people to come to discussions and elections to the group's board of directors. Brixton Green's £1 share scheme helped the Trust to sign up over 1,000 members.

Through community engagement, the group established key features that the Somerleyton development should have, including a mechanism to ensure continued ownership of the land, by a community body, through a long lease. The community land trust model was ideal for the twin aspirations of wider community voice and benefit, and the asset lock to ensure perpetual affordability.

Although the details are still to be finalised, it seems likely that the group will incorporate some kind of cooperative structure to manage the properties and collect the rent. While the community land trust will take a long lease from Lambeth Council, a separate cooperative will likely take a rolling five-year lease, automatically renewed, for 250 years. Unlike the community land trust, the members of the cooperative will be the residents. The rent collected by the cooperative will be passed on to the community land trust, which will also collect rent from the other activities on the site, and pass it on to the council to cover the costs of construction, for which the council is using its borrowing powers.

The cooperative model was chosen as the best way to ensure the group could fulfil a third and fourth aspiration that came out of initial discussions with community members: making sure all the homes on the site were available for rent,

and ensuring a fully mixed, integrated community made up of all income groups was able to live on the development. This is achieved through the setting of rents: the cooperative model allows the group to set their own rent levels. Rather than the normal council or housing association scheme of social rents subsidised by homes for sale, the cooperative will set several different levels of rent, starting from social rent levels, all the way up to market levels. Brad Carroll, the director and a co-founder of Brixton Green told us:

These kinds of mixed communities are essential to avoid the Paris effect. They must have public amenities on site to avoid it becoming effectively a gated community.

Vice-Chair Dinah Roake commented on people's aspiration to home ownership:

It's just not realistic to stick to the mantra that home ownership is the nirvana in an area where currently over 60 per cent of households are renting, because how on earth are people going to have an income that can afford the values of the homes in this area? There are people living in areas where there isn't any chance that they will be able to afford to buy.

The cooperative model also allows the group to get around the extension of right to buy; despite some recent clarifications, the precise impact of right to buy on the community-led sector is not yet known. Discussing right to buy, Dinah Roake explained:

This is part of the reason we've gone down the cooperative route. Currently, under the legislation, cooperative homes, even if they've received housing grant money, are excluded because they don't have an assured shorthold tenancy, they have a contractual tenancy. Because they're members of the co-op, the co-op owns the home, they're paying the rent to themselves.

The group took a small amount of community right to build funding to produce the business case for the development, run deliberative workshops, and establish needs and objectives. It also gained a few thousand pounds to run the community share scheme as part of a government pilot. However, Dinah Roake told us that at one point Lambeth Council was looking to get an affordable housing grant from the GLA to go towards the construction costs. However, this was no longer the case, primarily because of fears that they could then be subject to right to buy.

From the council's point of view, this kind of partnership is a new venture, and good personal relationships have been essential to keeping the project moving forward. Cllr Jack Hopkins, cabinet member for jobs and growth, told us that having highly informed, very 'professional' volunteers running Brixton Green had been key to the scheme's progress. As an important backer of the project, Cllr Hopkins often sees his role as mediating between the sometimes different visions of Brixton Green and council officers.

Like in Keswick, the community group have an impressive array of professional experience, in this case specifically relating to housing and development. Director Brad Carroll is the owner and manager of a local residential property business, and served on the Community Land Trust Supervisory Board. Chair Stephen Jordan has worked on the King's Cross and Stratford City developments, and Vice-Chair Dinah Roake has 29 years' experience in community architecture, social housing, and advising on social infrastructure provision and long-term stewardship for regeneration and growth projects.

While this experience has proved invaluable in helping to engage stakeholders and put plans together, as a group of successful professionals, representivity is an important challenge when operating in such a diverse area as Brixton. Early community engagement and the community share scheme have no doubt been important. Cllr Hopkins reflected on the importance of class and race:

There's an issue around class and race... Somerleyton is a black, working class neighbourhood, and there have been mainly white professionals who sit on the steering group... The question of whether you look and feel like the people is important... [If not], are you reaching out through your membership, not just to your membership, to the wider community, if you are purporting to be the community representatives? In developing the community body we are now broadening the diversity of community representatives in decision-making roles.

Ward Councillor Matt Parr thought the council should probably have been more explicit

about the good practice we need in doing these regeneration exercises... [such as] inclusivity... We're talking about an area that probably has about 100 different nationalities.

However, having confronted these issues head on, there has been a concerted effort to make sure that the community body (that will eventually take over to hold the long-term lease and collect the rents from the cooperative and other organisations on the site) represents Brixton as well as possible.

For Cllr Hopkins, thinking about these things is important not just for the project's reputation and brand, but because various bodies have to be set up in a way that works for the people who are eventually going to be in charge:

Let's not make a community body or trust... in our own image. Because we're a bunch of middle-class people, agreeing by committee... meetings, minutes, standing orders – formal decision-making... that's great, but if you create a structure that works for you, and not for the people who need to run things, then you're setting it up to fail.

All of this is happening in the context of a febrile debate over gentrification in Brixton. More than a thousand people took part in a 'Reclaim Brixton' rally in April 2015, where the local town hall was stormed by protestors and CS spray gas was used by police.[120] Reflecting on this, Cllr Parr said:

There's a general suspicion about gentrification, a suspicion about anything the council does as far as I can make out, which I don't think is terribly rational, but seems to be a bit of a barrier, and seems to be stirred up deliberately by some groups.

Brixton Green has a good story to tell that speaks to the gentrification debate, with the commitment to affordable rents and mixed communities. However, in this hostile political environment, even this project has come under attack from a very small number of individuals.

Our focus group participants were keenly aware of the housing situation in Brixton, and there was a strong feeling that local people were being squeezed out:

It seems like buildings are built for... not our class.

Youngsters are moving out of Brixton because they can't afford to live here.

This went alongside strong suspicions about developers and the government. Lambeth Council was considered to be impotent against the combined forces of the economic system and the Government's austerity agenda:

I heard that developers got permission from the council saying they would build a certain percentage of affordable housing, and then they built it and none of that has gone to affordable housing.

Lambeth Council have been cut by central government. So they don't have money to actually build any more affordable homes for us anyway.

In Brixton, as in every other case study, the question 'who benefits?' was crucial. There was a sense among focus group participants that rich outsiders benefited from developments, rather than ordinary Brixton residents: 'They're not being built for those people on waiting lists.'

As Ward Councillor Matt Parr pointed out:

People think very, very, very local. We might think in terms of the borough, and most people think much more local than that.

On the Somerleyton project itself, although only one of our focus group participants had bought a community share, the group liked several of the features that had initially been mooted through community consultation. Thus, the community share scheme and consultation workshops probably only achieved limited penetration of the wider community, and indeed most participants were sceptical that a £1 share would buy real influence. However, the group seems to have been successful in ensuring features that would win the support of much of the community, or at the least non-opposition. Popular features included the on-site amenities, the 100 per cent rental structure, the mixed community, the idea of a cooperative and avoiding right to buy.

Conclusion and recommendations

The planning system

First, it is clear that the planning system is currently failing to provide enough new homes to meet rising demand. While this cannot be put solely down to local opposition, it obviously does play a role, at various stages in the planning process. While isolating and measuring the impact of NIMBYism would certainly be a challenge, there is a notable research gap here that should be filled to gain a greater understanding of the dynamics involved in planning processes up and down the country.

Second, there is a lack of planning data available to researchers and government, which makes it difficult to diagnose particular problems, or to evaluate potential solutions. While a few councils publish all their decisions on data.gov, the vast majority do not, and there is no way to filter proposals by type of partners involved, for example. Even though the Government has stated that it wishes to support the community-led sector, and has done so through various funds, quantitative research on the success or otherwise of the community-led sector is particularly difficult.

Recommendation 1

The Government should mandate that local authorities publish all their planning decisions on data.gov.uk, and the DCLG should ensure that data are published which allow for evaluation of the community-led sector.

NIMBYism

While our case studies focused on community-led developments, our review of the literature on NIMBYism, and the sentiments voiced in our focus groups with local residents, allow us to draw certain conclusions about NIMBYism more generally. First, we found that financial interests play only a limited role in motivating NIMBY concerns. Rather, concern about collective, community goods are cited as a key motivating force in the literature, and our focus groups back up this assertion. These concerns were borne both out of a genuine concern for the community, as well as more personal worries about access to those goods, such as whether one's child would get into the local school.

Recommendation 2

The newly formed community-led alliance should share good practice on the provision of collective goods within community-led schemes

Second, we found that the question 'who benefits?' was crucial for local residents. Do they feel that those they consider to be in *their* community, or who they strongly feel deserve it, will be able to access new housing? The provision of new social housing that takes people from the housing waiting list on the basis of need (within the local authority) rather than proximity means that often residents feel that new housing developments are not for local people. This led to many people complaining about the shortage of affordable housing in the area, especially for local young people, while at the same time being sceptical about new social housing being built. While it is difficult in individual cases for a council to prioritise on the basis of geographical proximity if there are individuals in another part of the borough in particular need, if councils could prioritise the most local people, more homes might get built overall, and aggregate need would be addressed more effectively.

Recommendation 3

The Government should allow local authorities to create hyper-local housing waiting lists, to ensure that people in need in the immediate vicinity can access housing first. Safeguards should be put in place to ensure no areas miss out on gaining access to new housing, and that there are exemptions for those most in need.

Third, we found a lack of trust in the planning process among participants in all of our focus groups. Many felt that developers would say anything to win permission, that the council deliberately made it difficult for residents to scrutinise proposals, and that even when residents did raise concerns, they were ignored. Few residents were opposed to the provision of additional housing in all circumstances – most would support it in the right circumstances. However, it is probably impossible to please everyone all of the time. In several focus groups, there was a problematic tension between the desire for genuinely affordable housing (with a sense that lots of ordinary local working people could not afford 'affordable' housing), and opposition to homes deemed too small, and too densely packed together. Proper consultation with a genuine dialogue (rather than a perceived 'listen and then ignore' approach) that explains the limits of what can be achieved will help to restore trust.

The lack of trust in the planning process highlighted a tension between its democratic and technocratic elements. On the one hand, residents are encouraged to attend consultations and give their views, and elected councillors make the final decision on applications. On the other hand, decisions are ultimately made on technical grounds; the force of public opinion cannot be formally taken into account. However, local and neighbourhood plans, which set some of the conditions for which applications will be approved or rejected through, for example, establishing needs, do allow more of a democratic input. Neighbourhood plans, despite a very limited take-up so far, also allow communities to consider a much more immediate area, which our research shows people are much more concerned with than council areas.

Recommendation 4

The Government should evaluate the role of local and neighbourhood plans, with a view to determining whether neighbourhood plans should be set by local authorities following neighbourhood consultation, if no parish council or neighbourhood forum does so.

Engagement by the community-led sector

Our quantitative analysis showed that planning applications from the community-led sector are approved more often than other applications. This could be for a number of reasons. Our qualitative research explored some of the positive effects the involvement of a community group can have on a planning proposal, as well as some of the difficulties they may face.

Our qualitative research showed that community-led groups can help residents to feel involved and take ownership of a project. However, the evidence for large numbers of residents getting involved and having their voice heard was limited in most of our case studies, Brixton being a notable exception. On the other hand, in other cases (such as Keswick), despite not getting a large mass of residents involved in the group's democratic decision-making, the group's status as a collection of committed volunteers made up of community members seems to have been sufficient for a widespread perception that they were 'of, by and for' the local community.

However, community-led developments do not achieve wider community engagement by definition. The community-led element of a scheme can be a negative for local residents (as in Herefordshire). The theoretical suggestion that community-led schemes might engage those beyond the 'usual suspects' by having the potential to benefit those most in need and often the most marginalised was not a prominent feature across our case studies. Conversely, as Tom Moore's study also suggests, we found that community-led groups helped to channel care and concern for the community into leadership and advocacy among those with technical expertise and political nous, the very

groups that are often behind NIMBY campaigns. Thus, while the wider public's engagement with the group is important, the activities of the 'usual suspects' remain essential.

We also suggested that through participation and consultation within a community-led group, wider support could be generated if the result of that participation leads the development to include features that local residents would support. Our qualitative research suggests this does happen; the most prominent example of this working well is the Brixton Green Community Land Trust, where key features of the scheme can be traced back to community consultation.

Recommendation 5

All community-led groups should have some formal open, democratic decision-making apparatus to represent the interests of the wider community, and in turn demonstrate that they exist for the benefit of the wider community, and not just their members. This could be achieved by a community share scheme such as those used by community land trusts, although other methods may work well in different cases.

Third, we suggested that community-led groups could be an important link between the community and those in positions of power. As the literature on NIMBYism demonstrates, those with large amounts of social and political capital, networks and technical knowledge are well placed to succeed in navigating the planning process.

We found that those involved in community-led groups often have these skills, as well as the respect and backing of local residents, whether local residents are given a genuine say or not. Even in cases where we were unable to verify that local residents had been given a genuine say through the democratic structures of a community-led group, councillors and council officers did seem to like the fact that a community group was involved, and felt that this strengthened their application; enthusiasm for a community-led group often came more from councillors and council officers than our focus groups with

local residents. Thus, community-led groups can be uniquely positioned: as development partners, they have credibility among residents where the council, private developers and even housing associations cannot. At the same time, as skilled volunteers perceived to represent the community, they have credibility among those stakeholders in a way that ordinary local residents may not. We found that this dual credibility was particularly strong where groups had already completed a successful project. This built-up experience and reputation should be exploited wherever possible.

Recommendation 6

Community-led groups which have gained support among local residents should involve themselves in the planning process, even where more experienced development partners are taking a lead. Their visible participation, such as being formally named as the applicant for planning permission, can help to generate active support among residents.

On the other hand, perceived representivity can be a real challenge for community-led groups, particularly in diverse areas. This underlines the importance of having open, democratic structures, and of ensuring that these structures promote wide participation. There is a risk that community-led groups work for affluent members of a community with the time and political understanding to influence those structures (to navigate minutes, standing orders, motions and amendments), and that those groups come to dominate them, as they often do in parish councils and other civil society groups. In our 2014 report *Like Share Vote,*[121] Demos set out some of the key principles and techniques that third sector organisations could employ to increase engagement and promote participation through new digital technologies. Groups should use all means at their disposal, including new digital tools, to make sure all parts of the community are able to make their voices heard.

Community-led groups should lead the way and innovate by using new democratic tools, such as online voting and online quizzes, coordinating online campaigns with offline events, and listening to relevant social media conversations. The new community-led alliance should share best practice on governing structures that promote the widest possible engagement.

Prospects for community-led development

The community-led sector is currently very small, particularly if one includes only those recently involved in new home-building. However, a number of our research findings have implications for the possibility of scaling up the sector.

The community-led sector provides homes both for rent and for sale, and in some cases groups have gone into partnership with a council or housing association to provide social rented accommodation. In instances where members of the local community perceive a particular shortage of affordable rented accommodation, there are many examples of community-led groups providing genuinely affordable homes. It is important that they are able to continue to do so. With the Government's right to buy scheme due to be extended to housing associations, community-led developments may become one of the last ways to ensure the provision of new homes that will stay available for rent in the long term, although it remains unclear to what extent they will be subject to the same conditions. Moreover, the right to buy policy is at odds with the community land trust principle of perpetual affordability, and mechanisms such as asset locks, to ensure that land continues to be used for the provision of affordable housing, rather than speculation.

MPs have also come out in favour of exempting community land trusts from right to buy.[122] Catherine Harrington, Director of the National Community Land Trust Network recently said:

The right to buy threatens the ability of a CLT to meet their basic aim of keeping homes affordable in perpetuity, it poses a significant threat to the current supply of CLT homes and is already having a dramatically chilling effect on the future growth of the CLT movement.[123]

In the Government's agreement with the National Housing Federation, right to buy is due to be discretionary in certain circumstances, including for cooperatives and community land trusts,[124] although the National Community Land Trust Network continues to press for the strongest possible protection for community land trusts.

Recommendation 8
The Government should exempt all community-led schemes from the extension of right to buy.

Regardless of the eventual position of central government, community-led schemes could avoid being subjected to right to buy through using a cooperative structure for residents of their developments. Fully mutual cooperatives are currently exempt from right to buy, and it would be difficult to overturn this as membership of a cooperative is a form of part-ownership already.

This means that community-led developments could become an alternative route for councils to ensure perpetually affordable rented accommodation in the locality. In Brixton, the council has partnered with a community land trust to build on council-owned land. The homes will take people from the council's housing waiting list, but those people will become members of a cooperative. This gives the council more certainty of future revenue than if they had built the homes themselves, in which case they would be subject to right to buy.

Recommendation 9
Local authorities with a shortage of affordable homes for rent should monitor Lambeth's partnership with Brixton Green closely, and consider whether such an arrangement would be feasible and desirable in their own area.

While we have focused primarily on resident engagement and the NIMBY problem, there are other reasons why councils might favour community-led schemes. As the recent Locality report argues, many community-led developments are 'trailblazers'.[125] As the literature shows, there are numer-ous benefits to the schemes once they are built, such as lower levels of rent arrears, vacancies, tenant satisfaction and looking after communal areas. Co-housing schemes typically include a strong emphasis on care for the elderly and environmental sustainability. For example, the scheme in Herefordshire is pioneering the construction of affordable homes built to the highest possible environ-mental standards. Community self-build schemes provide skills as well as homes to the self-builders. Many of these benefits can lead to cost-savings in other areas to local and central government.

Recommendation 10

Councils should ensure they have formal policies that allow officers to consider the wider benefits of community-led schemes in making recommendations to approve planning applications.

While this report outlines many reasons that the community-led sector should be supported and nurtured, the Government should be careful in its approach. The evidence from Stroud suggests that it is important for community land trusts to be created organically, and from the bottom-up, rather than imposed from the top. While the volunteers involved in Cashes Green Community Land Trust are as committed as any others, because of their late arrival, and being imposed as a condition of the development tender, they have always struggled to define their role, with other partners not always clear what exactly a community land trust could bring to the project.

Recommendation 11

Ministers and civil servants should not mandate the involvement of community groups on a housing project unless one already exists, ready to take on the responsibilities. They should ensure that the group's role is clearly defined before awarding the tender.

Finally, it is important to note that despite the success of the community-led sector in getting planning approval, councils fail to make a decision within its targeted time period more often than with all applications. This could be due to planning officers not knowing how to deal effectively with volunteers and help them through the process, when they normally deal with experienced private developers (especially with regard to large developments). It could also be due to community-led groups lacking a proper understanding of the planning system, or lacking the capacity to put in a high-quality application.

Recommendation 12

The new community-led alliance should explore the reasons why applications from the sector currently take longer to process than other applications.

Community-led housing is not a panacea for Britain's affordable housing shortage. However, it can be a part of the solution. By engaging the community, by being democratic and acting as a credible, representative voice, community-led groups can help local residents become supporters, rather than opponents of local development. Through their status as representatives of the community, alongside professional skills and political knowledge they can influence development partners to shape developments more in line with local needs and desires. Not only can this help to generate local support behind an application, the resulting developments could be more suitable as a result.

However, the sector faces challenges, including balancing professional expertise with its voluntary spirit and aspiring to greater representivity of the local community. In outlining the current strengths and weaknesses of the sector, it serves as a baseline from which it can build through self-promotion, advocacy and sharing best practice. With the right approach and understanding from central and local government, along with the continued hard work of the volunteers of its heart, the sector can grow, and play its part in meeting Britain's housing objectives.

Technical appendix

The research for this report was conducted in four stages:

1 We carried out a desk-based review of policy and existing evidence, primarily using government websites, keyword web searches and Google Scholar academic searches and references.

2 We analysed publicly available planning data from the DCLG, and compared them with data from the community-led sector. Planning data from the sector were obtained with the help of four umbrella groups: the National Community Land Trust Network, the UK Cohousing Network, the Community Self Build Agency and the Confederation of Cooperative Housing. They include decisions for large proposed developments (of ten dwellings or more). These are referred to as 'community-led applications' as a shorthand, even though in some cases the community-led group did not take the lead on the planning application itself.

   The DCLG dataset shows summary planning data for each planning authority, including the number of decisions, number and percentage approved, and the percentage approved within the target time-frame. Our analysis used only decisions for new large housing developments (of ten dwellings or more). In both instances (community-led applications and all applications), the time period for analysis was January 2010 to March 2015.

   The urban–rural categories of each local authority are defined as follows:

- *major urban*: districts with either 100,000 people or 50 per cent of their population in urban areas with a population of more than 750,000

- *large urban*: districts with either 50,000 people or 50 per cent of their population in one of 17 urban areas with a population between 250,000 and 750,000

- *other urban*: districts with fewer than 37,000 people or less than 26 per cent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns

- *significant rural*: districts with more than 37,000 people or more than 26 per cent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns

- *Rural-50*: districts with at least 50 per cent but less than 80 per cent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns

- *Rural-80*: districts with at least 80 per cent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns[126]

We directly compared community-led applications and all applications in the 24 local authorities where there had been community-led applications. To ensure we were comparing comparable statistics, local-authority-level statistics within the DCLG data were weighted according to the number of community-led applications in that area.

For example, Bristol, where there were three large community-led applications between January 2010 and March 2015, contributes three times as much to the overall figures for community-led performance as Carlisle, where there was only one large community-led application. Thus, the overall DCLG figures for Bristol (number of decisions, number granted, number decided within 13 weeks) are also multiplied by three, to amplify their contribution to the overall figures for all large developments.

As the results show, however, the weighted results are no different from the unweighted results, once rounded to the nearest percentage point.

3 We held 27 interviews with members of community-led groups, councillors, council officers and other stakeholders involved in five case studies of recent or planned developments involving a community-led group. The five case studies chosen were designed to provide a mix of urban and rural developments, regional diversity, and different community-led models (broadly in proportion to the scale of each model indicated by our quantitative research). We tried to avoid including only those cases that have already received a great deal of attention from researchers, to ensure our contribution to the debate was novel. We also sought out the larger developments, as those providing more homes are the most capable individually of addressing housing needs, and are often the most controversial for local residents and councillors.

4 We organised five focus groups, each with nine to ten residents local to the five case study developments. Participants were found using a professional recruitment service, according to three criteria:

- They lived within a set distance of the development in question (between half a mile and five miles depending on how urban or rural the area was).

- They had lived there for at least two years (four years for the less recent developments).

- They were aware of the development in question. The recruiters were also asked to ensure there was a gender and age mix within each group. Participants were provided with an incentive of £50 for their attendance.

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Over the last five years, deregulation of the planning system has been accompanied by devolution, with new responsibilities for local authorities and new powers for neighbourhoods. However, some have argued that the goals of devolving power and building more homes necessarily run into conflict with one another.

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These findings provide a contribution to the debate around NIMBYism, its causes, and how it can be overcome. The report has implications for central government, local authorities, and the community-led housing sector itself. Ultimately, it argues, if political power is distributed in the right way and is accessible across communities, those communities can become advocates for development that will address local needs. That is the best way to overcome the NIMBY problem and get Britain building.

Charlie Cadywould is a Researcher in the Citizenship and Political Participation programme at Demos. Duncan O'Leary is Research Director at Demos.