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# Oldham and Rochdale new build research : Overview report

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# **Oldham and Rochdale New Build Research: Overview Report**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Objectives and scope of this report

The Oldham and Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder consists of three broad areas: Oldham, Rochdale and Middleton. In 2007 Oldham and Rochdale Partners in Action commissioned a survey of New Build accommodation in order to 'evaluate the effectiveness of new build in attracting and retaining economically active people in the pathfinder areas of Oldham and Rochdale and to create mixed communities in terms of income, ethnicity and tenure type' (p.1).<sup>1</sup>

The findings from the survey in 2007 opened up questions about the perceptions and motivations of new build purchasers. Many of the findings indicated some negative perceptions amongst respondents within the pathfinder in relation to their area and environment. The survey found that Oldham Pathfinder purchasers tended to feel that their neighbourhood was isolated from the wider area, while purchasers within the Middleton pathfinder tended to feel that their development was adequate, but the rest of the area was poor. Many of the push factors to move amongst residents in the pathfinder were seen as area-based such as 'desire to move to a better area', 'isolated design of estate', 'poor reputation of the area', 'fear of crime' and 'poor local environment'. This suggested that purchasers had chosen their current home based on the *property* rather than the *area*. This is further supported by the reported pull factors instigating a move to their current home which included: 'relatively low property prices', 'property type and size', 'property type and design', 'low maintenance costs of new build' and 'desire for a newly built home'.

Whilst this survey highlighted some of the overarching issues on a broad geographical scale, there was a need to explore, in greater depth, some of the views and perspectives of new build and existing residents from the surrounding and wider area in order to better understand these issues. In addition, the Oldham Rochdale Pathfinder aims to set new standards of design, ensuring that new developments are of a high quality. It is recognised that design issues are multifaceted and include considerations such as the impact of design on community cohesion, physical integration with existing environment, community safety, and mobility. Currently little is known with regards to if, and how, developments within the Oldham Rochdale Pathfinder areas are achieving these standards and if developments are enhancing their local context. Furthermore, little is known about how involved residents were in the (re)development of their area. Developers approached the consultation and engagement of residents in differing ways. To date, such activity has also not been formally evaluated.

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<sup>1</sup> ECOTEC (2008) Oldham and Rochdale New Build Survey 2007, ECOTEC.

## Aim and objectives

The aim of this research was to understand how well new build schemes in Oldham and Rochdale were performing in providing good quality, well designed, cohesive communities where people want to live. Within this there were a number of specific objectives:

- To produce design assessments based on the 'Building for Life' (BfL) criteria of quality and design within the new build offer in Oldham and Rochdale, drawing out any differences between schemes
- To address the questions and issues leading from previous survey work and to provide the residents' voice to the design assessment of schemes
- To evaluate the impact of shared spaces in fostering community cohesion within the identified schemes and to evaluate the potential for shared spaces where these do not currently exist<sup>2</sup>
- To evaluate the consultation and engagement carried out before, during and after development of each of the identified schemes in Oldham and Rochdale

## Research approach

Seven separate schemes were selected by Oldham and Rochdale Partners in Action for the research. These schemes were:

- |                        |         |
|------------------------|---------|
| • Selwyn Street        | OLS 1EG |
| • Stoneleigh           | OL1 4LQ |
| • Devon/Norfolk Street | OL9 7BZ |
| • Block Lane           | OL9 7BP |
| • Gale Street          | OL9 7BP |
| • Langley Brooklands   | M24 5RY |
| • Langley Lowther      | M24 4SN |

Background information for each of these schemes can be found in Appendix 1.

The approach to this study was two-fold: an assessment of the design and quality of new build dwellings; and, primary research and consultation at selected schemes within the Oldham Rochdale Pathfinder areas.

- The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Building for Life (BfL) assessment criteria was used as the basis to assess the design and quality of the above schemes. The findings from this are included in a separate report.
- A qualitative method, adopting a number of techniques, was employed in order to consult with a total of eighty-one people living within or around the above schemes. These methods included:

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'shared space' as used here relates to a broad range of places where people can gather and meet rather than the more narrowly defined concept as used in planning and engineering.

- Semi-structured interviews: a total of sixty-nine interviews were carried out.
- Focus groups: a total of ten people were involved across three focus groups.
- Photo-surveys: where residents were provided with disposable cameras in order to take pictures of what they thought as positive and negative features of their environment. Once developed, a researcher discussed these photos with the person who had taken them. A total of seven photo-surveys were carried out.
- 'Walkabouts': where people accompanied a researcher on a tour around the scheme and neighbouring area in order to get a clearer idea of how residents used their local area and identify aspects of their home environment that were positive or negative in some way. A total of three walkabouts were carried out.

Efforts were made to ensure that the number of people who participated in the consultations was broadly reflective of the size of the schemes. Sampling, however, was constrained by both time and resources, as well as the methodological techniques, namely qualitative, which look in-depth at individual views and accounts rather than taking a survey approach (as in the earlier New Build study). All participants who took part in the research received a £20 shopping voucher as a contribution for their time.

## **This document**

This document brings together the findings from this research. In particular, this report:

- Looks at the findings from the design assessment;
- Presents a summary of the issues arising from research with residents within the identified schemes;
- Examines areas of convergence and polarisation between the design assessment and the views of residents who live in the schemes;
- Explores the processes of consultation that took place in development of the schemes; and
- Looks at the impact of (and potential impact of) shared space.
- Looks at the emerging themes from the research and presents a series of recommendations formulated in partnership with attendees of a dissemination event.

In addition to this overview report there are three further, more in-depth, reports which provide a comprehensive discussion of the issues arising: one provides the findings from the design assessment of the schemes; one details the views of residents living within and alongside the new developments; and the remaining report details issues associated with the consultation and engagement of residents and impacts of shared space across all schemes.

## Structure of the report

This report is intended to help Oldham and Rochdale Partners in Action understand if the intentions and actions of planners, architects and developers are resulting in the creation of dwellings and places that people enjoy living in. Chapter 1 sets out the context to the research followed by:

**Chapter 2** presents the findings from the design assessment of the schemes.

**Chapter 3** presents an overview of the main issues arising from in-depth research with new and existing residents in the schemes. This chapter also looks at areas of convergence and polarisation between the design assessment and the residents who live in the schemes.

**Chapter 4** explores the views of residents around their involvement and perceptions of the consultation and engagement processes that have been undertaken.

**Chapter 5** looks at the impact shared space has had in areas where they exist and examines the potential impact shared space could have had in other areas.

**Chapter 6** looks at the themes arising from the research and outlines a series of recommendations for partners to take forward.

## 2. DESIGN ASSESSMENT – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Introduction

It is now well recognised that good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and quality of life by reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and increasing property values. Based on work commissioned and funded by the Housing Corporation a framework was developed in order to assess excellence in housing design and celebrate best practice. This framework is the Building for Life (BfL) criteria, which is a set of twenty criteria broken down into four main areas: Environment and Community; Character; Roads, Parking and Pedestrianisation; and Design and Construction. These criteria aim to embody the vision of what housing developments should be: functional, attractive and sustainable. New housing developments are scored against the criteria to assess the quality of their design. The assessment of design used in this study was based on the BfL approach.

### Methodology

The design assessments were undertaken on the seven pre-identified schemes across Oldham and Rochdale. The assessments were completed through a combination of site inspections and desk work.<sup>3</sup> The Selwyn Street scheme was used as a pilot to ensure that the assessment approach met the needs and expectations of the Oldham and Rochdale partners. Selwyn Street was visited on 4th December 2008. The remaining site inspections were carried out on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009. The researchers were assisted by staff from Oldham and Rochdale Partners in Action in gathering relevant secondary data and in some cases designers and/or developers were contacted directly for this information. It should be noted that this work was undertaken before CABE established a national programme of training and accreditation and it is possible that some of the assessments may have been scored differently if they were undertaken by an accredited assessor.

### Findings

CABE give the following gradings to BfL scores and this approach has been used to assess the seven sites:

- **Very good (pass)** – 16 or higher (out of a possible 20)
- **Good (pass)** – 14 or 15 (out of a possible 20)
- **Average (borderline pass or fail)** – 10 – 13 (out of a possible 20)
- **Poor (fail)** – 9 or lower (out of a possible 20)

The findings and key characteristics of the schemes are shown in Table 1 below and the text that follows.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The assessors acted independently to the researchers involved in the fieldwork with residents.

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth exploration of these issues please see the specific design assessment report.



<b>Table 1: Vital statistics of schemes</b>							
	<b>Selwyn St</b>	<b>Stoneleigh</b>	<b>Devon St</b>	<b>Block Lane</b>	<b>Gale St</b>	<b>Langley B'Lands</b>	<b>Langley Lowther</b>
<b>No. of dwellings</b>	18	73	23	81	60	125	60
<b>Location type</b>	Inner urban area	Inner urban area	Inner urban area	Inner urban area	Urban area	Post-war overspill housing estate in urban area	Post-war overspill housing estate in urban area
<b>Criteria and overall scores</b>							
<b>Environment and Community</b>	4.5	4.0	4.5	2.0	3.0	2.5	1.5
<b>Character</b>	5.0	4.5	5.0	0	5.0	0.5	0
<b>Roads, Parking and Pedestrianisation</b>	3.5	4.0	5.0	1.5	4.5	1.5	2.0
<b>Design and Construction</b>	4.0	3.5	3.0	1.5	2.5	1.0	1.0
<b>Total (rank)</b>	<b>17.0 (2)</b>	<b>16.0 (3)</b>	<b>17.5 (1)</b>	<b>5.0 (6)</b>	<b>15.0 (4)</b>	<b>5.5 (5)</b>	<b>4.5 (7)</b>

### The Very Good Schemes

- Devon Street (17.5)
- Selwyn Street (17)

Both schemes are very small (i.e. less than twenty-five dwellings) compared with most of the others in the study. They are both very good quality projects of great character that rework the terrace house concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Both schemes fit well within the urban grain of Oldham, and have an appropriate accommodation and tenure mix. The quality of the design and detailing is high in both schemes and they deploy a number of more advanced environmental features. Devon Street has a slightly better approach to integration of cars and car-parking, as well as being a more pedestrian-friendly scheme, which is why it scored slightly higher.

- Stoneleigh (16)

This is a much larger scheme than the Devon and Selwyn Street schemes (seventy-three dwellings) and shows what can be done with larger infill development on a slightly larger site formerly occupied by a mill building. It generally complies with most of the assessment criteria but the design is a little more restrained than the previous schemes and it does not perform so well in terms of the environmental criteria. Part of this project also has a good approach to stitching new development into the existing grain of terraced housing, but the assessors were less impressed by the large apartment wing adjacent to Vulcan Street. The size is probably necessary to justify the investment in lifts for vertical circulation in this building which is a good feature for disabled access. This contrasts with the deck access approach used in Gale Street, Rochdale. Due to the less successful approach to the design of this part of the development the assessor considered marking down design quality criteria in what is otherwise a successful scheme. If this was done the scheme would score 15.5, which would move it into the “good” category. This is nevertheless still a creditable score.

## **The Good Scheme**

- Gale Street (15)

Gale Street is a small scheme of similar size to the Devon and Selwyn Street schemes in Oldham. In architectural design terms it is equally enterprising, exhibiting good distinctive character, and again showing how the concept of the terrace house can be enlivened for contemporary living. Here the apartment block is much more successful than at Stoneleigh albeit on a much smaller scale, with a well designed deck access approach to the rear elevation. Thus the scheme meets most of the assessment criteria, except in terms of the environmental criteria and the accommodation and tenure mix, where it scores less well.

## **The Poor Schemes**

- Block Lane (5)
- Langley Brooklands (5.5)
- Langley Lowther (4.5)

These three larger schemes, can be discussed together as they have very similar underlying development concepts and failings in terms of the assessment criteria. All three schemes follow the standard suburban commercial development pattern based on an outmoded and possibly misinterpreted understanding of the garden city concept that places a high priority on the needs of the private car and for the private garden. To a large extent this is being challenged by the BfL approach. All three projects have little distinctive character. Similar schemes could be found in most cities in the UK. They fail in the majority of the assessment criteria, in terms of community, character, urban design and environmental issues. Although the design and construction of individual dwellings is functional, fit for purpose, durable, reasonably well proportioned and built, the overall effect of these schemes provides little or no sense of place, and it is questionable that “a significant proportion of home-buyers would have their spirits lifted by what is on offer”.<sup>5</sup> The main criteria in which they all do well concerns adaptability. Generally the provision of private gardens in all three schemes means that it will be easy to adapt and expand the dwellings to meet future needs. None of the three schemes have been designed to address the principles established by BfL and so the assessors raise the question of why the designers appear to have deliberately ignored these matters. Is this because these schemes have not used public funding and so the schemes have gone forward on what the developer considers straight commercial criteria, or were the schemes designed before the BfL criteria became an expected consideration in the design for public funded schemes?

## **Conclusion**

Overall the assessments have indicated a deep contrast in the developments which have been designed with regard to the issues set out by the BfL criteria and those that were not. Since the assessments were carried out the assessors have learned that the schemes that exhibit the best features are, in fact, publicly funded, whilst those that exhibit weak characteristics are those that have been privately funded.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted from the BfL Criteria 17: <http://www.buildingforlife.org/criteria/17> .

This information was not divulged to the assessors prior to the assessments due to concerns, from the HMR team, over bias.

The weaknesses of the privately-funded schemes raises the ongoing debate between some private developers and the design professions over how best to meet householders' needs and the aspiration to improve the quality of urban design and housing that is encapsulated in the BfL criteria.

It should be noted, however, that the assessment of design presents a number challenges, including:

- *The subjective nature of the assessment:* Attitudes to design are notoriously subjective and it must be remembered that the assessor's judgement about what is positive or negative about a particular development, may not converge with what partners or residents think of the development (or indeed the developers themselves). Some of the assessments may have also been scored differently if they were undertaken by an accredited assessor.
- *The size of the development:* : there may be some inherent discrimination in the implementation of the criteria depending upon the size of the development, for example it was difficult to score the criteria for a number of smaller schemes, i.e. criterion 9 (navigation) and criterion 14 (integration). This perhaps highlights that perhaps the BfL assessment criteria is better suited to larger developments and how it should be used for smaller schemes.
- *Proximity issues:* Assessors have to use their own judgement for terms such as proximity and whether the development was 'close to' certain facilities and amenities. In this case, the assessors deemed 'close to' as 5-10 minutes walk from the scheme. However, for the larger schemes it was difficult to determine where to measure this from (i.e. the middle of the scheme or either side).
- *The difficulty of heterogeneity:* All developments are unique however the criteria can be quite rigid. This emphasises subjectivity and raises questions such as: Should small schemes be expected to supply their own community facilities? Similarly, should the score be based on community facilities being close to the scheme rather than part of the development? The assessors used their judgement when such issues occurred and dealt with these on a case by case basis.

### **3. RESIDENTS RESEARCH – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter looks at the key findings emerging from interviews with both new and established residents from each of the developments. A brief overview of the participants is included, followed by a summary of the key issues arising. It should be noted that the report detailing the views of residents explores these issues in greater depth. This chapter however does look at how the experiences and views of residents relate to the design assessment (discussed in the previous chapter) and highlights particular areas of compatibility and polarisation. This chapter does not examine issues relating to the process of consultation or the development of shared space as these are explored in later chapters.

#### **Selwyn Street**

A total of eight people were involved in the research. Five people were from the existing area (some for a long time e.g. twenty-five years). The remaining three people were new build residents (living in the scheme for between two and three years). There was a mixture of ages involved with the youngest being eighteen years old and the oldest sixty-two years old. All participants were female. No one reported having a disability. Two people were White British, four were Bangladeshi, and two were Pakistani.

- New build residents tended to be positive about the design of the scheme while existing residents tended to be ambivalent or negative in their view on the design.
- There were mixed views on how the designs of the new and existing properties had integrated. A number of new build residents thought integration had worked well. Other new residents indicating that they thought the new build was better than the existing stock and that more needed to be done to bring the surrounding area in line with the new standard of design. On the other hand, existing residents tended to view the design of the development negatively either as design in its own right or with regards to how it fits within the design of the existing area.

The design assessors graded the design aspects of the development highly, as did, we assume, the previous design assessment on the scheme. This perhaps serves to highlight the discrepancies between the views of the assessor and the resident and helps to illustrate the subjective nature of the assessment process.

- New build residents tended to perceive that eco-measures were not working or suggested that they had not altered their behaviour. New build residents tended to feel that their properties were 'cold' and that in spite of the provision of wind-turbines and solar panels they were spending more on fuel costs.

- Neighbourhood relations appeared good, both within the new build and beyond. Positive, but passive, interactions were often mentioned. Interaction between members of different ethnic groups (Bangladeshi-Pakistani; Bangladeshi/Pakistani-White British) appeared limited. There was significant support for greater ethnic integration (Asian-White British) within the scheme and area from both Asian and White British respondents. A number of people noted that they would have liked to live in a more ethnically diverse development.
- There was some concern amongst residents around vehicles. Car parking in particular had caused concerns, with a number of residents not using their individual car ports but rather opting to keep their car on the road for convenience. This was an issue also highlighted by the assessment of design. Some of these cars were often parked across driveways, which tended to lead to some minor neighbour confrontations. A number of residents also raised concerns about cars, driven by young people, speeding along the adjacent roads. Residents tended to want some traffic calming measures in order to reduce this. Similarly, the design assessment also highlighted the need for improved pedestrianisation of the development and the need for traffic calming measures.
- There were some instances of anti-social behaviour and one example of racial abuse (directed at a White woman) mentioned by a number of residents. The development of the new build accommodation, however, appeared to have had some positive impact on perceptions of safety in the area as the previous land use had led to people 'hanging around' and some reported drug use.
- Overall, all residents appeared content in the area and no resident, established or new, reported wanting to leave their property or the area. Within this scheme there was a strong correlation between the assessment of design, based on the BfL criteria, and the views and voices of the residents who lived in and around the development.

## Stoneleigh

A total of fourteen people were involved in the consultations. Seven people were from the existing area and the remaining seven people were new build residents. There were a mixture of people from the new build properties including those who were renting, those who were in shared ownership arrangements and owner occupiers. There were also a mixture of people from apartments and houses. Similarly, there was a range of ages involved with the youngest being eighteen years old and the oldest eighty-five years old. Eight participants were male, six were female. Three people reported having a disability all of which involved difficulty walking. Twelve people were White British, two people were Black African.

- The interviews with established residents tended to be dominated by feelings of resentment and mistrust of the regeneration of the area and the HMR programme. There were specific issues raised including: the programme of regeneration had made the area more unsafe due to thefts from houses left empty or in disrepair; financial compensation for properties

ear marked for clearance was not adequate or 'fair'; feelings of 'community' had been destroyed, not created; and, the new houses were of an inferior quality to the existing older stock. A number of new build residents had sensed disquiet within the area and this seemed to impact on their affiliation to their properties and the area in general.

- New build residents tended to be attracted to the scheme as a result of affordability, in terms of the affordable prices of the properties or the ability to enter into a shared ownership arrangement.
- Similar to the findings from the design assessment, integration in design styles, between the new and the existing, appeared to have succeeded in the eyes of most residents interviewed.
- Within the new build development social relations were friendly, but not close. There was no evidence of established and new build residents mixing socially or casually.
- Established residents appeared to perceive the area as becoming increasingly isolated as a number of local shops had closed down or were near to closing. Similarly, the design assessment provided a mediocre (0.5) score on access and provision of facilities to the development.
- The presence and behaviour of a number of individuals and gangs within the development was impacting negatively on feelings of safety. Both new build and established residents reported experiencing incidents of violent or threatening behaviour. While street lighting was reported as 'OK' on the new build development, there were parts of the existing area, particularly those that were derelict, which were seen as less well lit and less safe.
- In terms of tenure mix, while this appeared largely unproblematic for new build residents, established residents viewed the presence of a high number of tenants as undermining social cohesion due to their, perceived comparative, short-stay in the area. There appeared a divide between the existing and the new residents and there was little evidence of any inclination from either to meet and mix. In comparison, the design assessment scored this criteria highly; this illustrates, as does many of the criteria Vs residents' views conflict between simply providing something (i.e. mixed tenure) and it working to a positive effect (i.e. integration between tenure). Clearly simply providing mixed tenure opportunities is a positive thing, in terms of social inclusion, but it does not automatically follow that sustainable communities will be the result. Although this is something shared by other schemes within this research, within Stoneleigh specifically there is clearly a need to work towards retaining those in the rented sector and develop ways in which to bridge people from different tenure.
- Mobility within the new build area was seen as adequate although there were some concerns over car parking arrangements. This was not identified as an issue as part of the assessment of design.

- There was some significant dissatisfaction from new build residents with regards to the area and/or the standard of the properties. As a result, a significant proportion of new build residents were considering moving out of the properties. It appears for the most it was the area that was the motivating factor behind people wanting to migrate out of the development, although some people had experienced problems with the properties. From looking at the accounts of residents within this development it seems as though no matter how satisfied an individual is with their home if the area does not connect with that person (or vice versa), in some way, it is likely that that person will want to move. This is also illustrated by the intentions of people (i.e. established residents) who had lived in the area for a long time who were expecting to move as a result of clearance, who all wanted to remain within the Derker area. A sense of connection and affiliation to the area is seemingly crucial for Stoneleigh in particular.

## **Devon/Norfolk Street**

A total of nine people were involved in the research. Five people were from the existing area with the remaining four people new build residents. There was a mixture of ages involved with the youngest being twenty-nine years old and the oldest seventy-seven years old. Eight participants were female, one was male. One person reported having a disability. Three people were White British, four were Pakistani, one was Bangladeshi, and one was North African.

- New build residents appeared content with their properties and the scheme as a whole. However, there was some small indication that the layout of the dwelling and the size of the rooms were not entirely conducive to Asian families. In general, similar to the findings from the design assessment, residents tended to think the integration in design styles (between the existing and the new) worked well, although one resident thought that there was a lack of 'flow' between streets adjacent to the development.
- Neighbourhood relations within the scheme were friendly, but not particularly close. A number of people reported that they often made visits to one another's homes, while other people reported limited contact with their neighbours. Mixing between neighbours appeared constrained along ethnic or linguistic lines where Bangladeshi residents and Pakistani residents only mixed with people from their own 'communities'.
- Mobility within the scheme was seen as good by new build residents, although a number of residents reported preferring a pavement as opposed to having a road and walkway on a single level for safety reasons. Car parking was cited as one of the main areas of concern at the scheme as people were not seen to be parking correctly, or maximising available parking space. There was also congestion in the surrounding area when the mosque was in use.
- The scheme was deemed to enhance notions of safety for new build residents. Street lighting and the gated rear of properties in particular were highlighted as welcome features of the development.

- The mixed tenure environment was seen as unproblematic by residents.
- No resident, new or existing, reported intentions or a desire to move from the area.
- It was reported that an indirect effect of the scheme had been that established residents surrounding the scheme had made improvements to their own property as a result of the presence of the new build design and standard of finish to the properties.

## Block Lane

A total of fifteen people were involved in the research. Ten people from the new build properties took part, as well as five people from the existing area. There was a mixture of ages involved with the youngest being twenty-two years old and the oldest seventy-seven years old. Nine participants were female, six were male. Two people reported having a disability, one person was in a wheelchair and another person reported having difficulty walking. Nine people were White British, three were Pakistani, two were Bangladeshi, and one was Scandinavian.

- A number of new build residents had moved there as a result of compulsory purchase elsewhere. These residents were able to purchase their properties at a discounted rate. Although one of these residents was happy that they were able to afford a larger house, the other residents who obtained their property this way were all critical of the properties in terms of the layout, design and running costs. A number of people also expressed dissatisfaction with being in close proximity to the railway line; this was something not fully considered at the time of purchase.
- Established residents saw the development of the estate as preferable to the previous land-use of the site.
- Most new build residents thought the integration of housing styles worked well, although a couple of residents did think the estate was more noticeable because some of the surrounding area was in disrepair. One established resident thought that a direct impact of the estate had been to increase the value of the houses in the surrounding area. In turn, a number of established residents reported how they were also expecting some improvement works to their properties over the coming months. This is particularly interesting as the development scored incredibly poorly under 'Character' in the design assessment. The design assessors perceived all aspects of the design and character of the development as very poor (see pp. 33-34 of the design assessment report). However, residents, both new and particularly existing, saw this development in a positive light which had not only improved on the existing land use but also implicitly improved the surrounding properties. As such, this perhaps highlights the relative and subject nature of 'good design' in particular areas and neighbourhoods.



- There was very little evidence of interaction on the estate. Asian residents, however, tended to mix with one another more than other forms of inter and intra ethnic mixing. White British residents, both from the new build and wider area, tended to report difficulties in interacting with Asian neighbours. New build and wider area neighbours tended not to interact or mix and interaction in the area as a whole appears minimal.
- Residents described feeling safe in the immediate area although some parts of the wider area were seen as unsafe.
- New build residents did not appear to be more environmentally aware as a result of their move/property.
- Residents on the new build estate did not appear in any way connected to the estate or surrounding area and some, seemingly as a result, were considering moving away.
- Mobility within the estate was seen as good although there were problems with the wider area reported by wheelchair users. Once again car parking was seen as a concern at times and it was believed by one resident that the designers had not created enough space for resident parking. In contrast, the design assessment asserted that the scheme had been 'designed around the car'. However, it could be argued that the issues around car parking are exacerbated as a result of residents' tendency to use cars rather than take an alternative mode of mobility (as suggested in the design assessment report p.35).
- Access to services and facilities were seen as adequate by residents, although the general area was highlighted as being untidy. Residents mentioned the need for a play area and this was also something highlighted by the design assessment.

## **Gale Street**

A total of ten people were involved in the consultations. Five people were from the existing area with the other five people residents of the new build accommodation. Participants reflected a range of ages with the youngest being twenty-one years old and the oldest sixty-nine years old. Seven participants were female, three were male. Two people reported having a disability, both of which reported difficulty walking. Seven people were White British, the remaining three were Pakistani.

- New build residents cited the proximity to shops and amenities as the main benefits of the development. This was the main reason new build residents had chosen their properties. The design assessment also scored the development highly as a result of its proximity to facilities.
- The integration in design styles, between the new and the existing, appeared to work well for new build residents. For established residents, however, while the houses were seen as acceptable, the flats were viewed overwhelmingly negative. In contrast, the assessment of design scored all properties within the development at the highest level for 'Character'. This

again perhaps highlights the subjectivity of the design assessment and the differing views on what 'design integration' means for different communities.

- Interaction between all residents appeared minimal. A number of people were on 'nodding' terms with neighbours and no one reported negative contact. New build residents tended to agree that summer weather and the length of residence are key issues in whether people interact. There was no evidence of any mixing or interaction between new and existing residents.
- Car parking issues tended to cause problems for established residents as it was reported that the development needed more parking spaces than had been provided. On the other hand, the design assessment implied that the space devoted to car parking was already at its maximum in order to comply with the assessment criteria.
- There were a number of reports, mainly from new build residents, of significant anti-social behaviour and attacks on property. This appeared particularly acute for residents in roadside properties. As a result, a number of residents, established and new, reported feeling unsafe in the area.
- The mix of tenure within the development was not considered an issue by any resident.
- Thermal comfort of the new build properties appeared poor, all new build residents reported that the properties were difficult to heat. Most new build residents reported having their heating turned on constantly during the day, in cold periods, in order to keep their home warm. This is in contrast to the design assessment which saw the insulation and energy retention of the properties as standard.
- It was clear that established residents were more likely to want to move from the area than the new residents. This however perhaps reflects the socio-economic mobility of the residents in the new properties, within the context of the present economic climate, rather than people being satisfied with their property and/or area.

## **Langley Brooklands**

A total of twelve people were involved in the consultations. Three people were from the existing area with the remaining nine people new build residents. There was a mixture of ages involved with the youngest being twenty-three years old and the oldest seventy-six years old. Six people were male, six were female. Three people reported having a disability of some description. Eight people were White British, one was Chinese, one was Malaysian and one was Black African. The remaining person did not indicate their ethnicity.

- New build residents tended to like their properties, but have reservations about the wider area. Many thought the area was a compromise they had to make in order to purchase a property that was 'affordable'.

- In general, people felt that although the scheme did not have a distinctive character, it did stand out from the rest of the estate. Most new build respondents did not think the design of new and existing properties integrated well. In contrast the design assessment judged the design and character of the development to be very poor; once again this perhaps highlights the subjectivity of the process and how 'design' and 'character' is assessed. However, for some residents the 'fit' between the new and existing was less about the design of the properties but the way in which these were maintained by the residents. Where work had been done on older properties these were seen as integrating better than ones in the area that had not been renovated.
- Social relations between new and established residents were basic and restricted to friendly acknowledgements. With the exception of families with children, few residents reported reasons to mix with their neighbours.
- Mobility through the scheme was seen as positive, particularly for pavement users who compared the new build development to the older portions of the estate and saw the new portion as improved. There were problems reported in relation to car parking and the use of the road as a short-cut by vehicles.
- New build residents tended to view Langley, in general, as undesirable and unsafe. However, existing residents reported that the new development had had a positive effect on perceptions of safety and incidents of crime.
- There was no indication that moving into the property had any impact on positive environmental behaviour of new build residents.
- Experiences of living in the new build housing were broadly positive and no resident had any firm intentions to move.

## Langley Lowther

A total of thirteen people were involved in the research. Four people were from the existing area with the remaining nine people new build residents. There was a mixture of ages involved with the youngest being seventeen years old and the oldest seventy-nine years old. Eight participants were female, five were male. Five people reported having particular health problems (arthritis, diabetes, dislocated shoulder, knee problems, including two people who had suffered a heart attack). Twelve people were White British. The remaining person did not indicate their ethnicity.

- New build residents were happy about their property but thought that living next to the existing estate, and in Langley, was a distinct compromise.
- Most residents tended to comment that the integration in design had worked well. For some new build residents the new properties were juxtaposed to a number of surrounding properties that were seen as being in disrepair, which elevated the appearance of the new stock. A number of established residents also tended to think the new build properties had improved the

appearance of the area. Once again, similar to Langley Brooklands, although both new and established residents liked the new build properties the design assessment scored the design and 'Character' aspects of the development as very poor.

- In general, new build residents tended to interact with one another, but there was not much interaction between new residents and established residents.
- Residents generally had positive views on mobility within the new build scheme; however, a number of people talked about access through the rest of the estate being very difficult. One person had noticed that the existing properties did not have parking facilities and that people had to park on the street. The number of cars parked on the street was seen to make it difficult to negotiate through the estate.
- In terms of the new scheme itself, there were a couple of issues that people highlighted in relation to the design of the scheme. One new resident felt safe overall, but made reference to the fence at the back of the house being quite low and therefore easy for people to climb over. Another new resident made reference to their particular part of the scheme not being very well lit.
- There was some indication that new build residents had adopted positive environmental behaviour since moving into the properties, particularly with regards to thermal comfort and use of water.
- Overall, there was satisfaction from new build residents about their properties. Residents who wanted to move tended to cite the area as the main reason.

# 4. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

## Introduction

This chapter looks specifically at the consultation and engagement process that were undertaken as part of the development of the new build in the identified areas.

## Findings

Out of the seven developments included in this research, consultation activity took place, to a greater or lesser extent, within five of the developments: Selwyn Street, Devon Street, Stoneleigh and Langley Brooklands and Lowther. It is understood that the process of consultation and engagement at both Block Lane and Gale Street did not extend beyond that which is a statutory requirement of the land-use planning system. There was differing levels of 'intensity' in each of these developments, 'intensity' being assessed by the level of involvement residents (potential and/or established) appeared to have, efforts made by those responsible for communication of the development, and the diversity of approaches used to consult and engage. The ranking of these can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: Level of intensity of consultation and engagement activity**

Level of intensity	Rank	Scheme
Most intensive	1	Devon Street
	2	Stoneleigh
	3	Selwyn Street
Least intensive	=4	Langley Brooklands & Lowther
Statutory obligation	NA	Gale Street & Block Lane

For all schemes the consultation and engagement activity was directed at, and generally only involved, existing residents from the areas affected. As the developments concerned were new build it was difficult to engage with potential new residents in any of the schemes.

With regards to **Devon/Norfolk Street**, a high proportion of the existing community reportedly engaged, in some way, with the consultation and design process of the Home Zone. All the existing residents spoken to as part of the research had attended the consultation events. No new build resident had attended the events.

The development known as **Stoneleigh** reportedly involved around 450 people in viewing exhibitions about the development and others attended trips to view previous developments by the contracted developer. Existing residents reported differing levels of involvement in the consultation process. Some indicated that efforts at consultation via meetings had been delivered well at first and been well attended, although residents suggested that the process of regeneration within the area had appeared to result in greater apathy towards consultation activity. Again, no new build resident had been involved in any consultation activity. Most residents were aware of awareness raising, with regards to the HMR programme, in the form of a local newsletter.

For **Selwyn Street**, consultation activity was aimed at the tenant association groups of the Registered Social Landlord (RSL). No more than two of the existing residents interviewed during the course of this research had been involved in the process of consultation on the development. One of these residents, however, described herself as being 'heavily involved' in the process of consultation. Similar to other schemes, no new build resident had any involvement in consultation activity.

For the development of **Langley Brooklands and Lowther** it is not clear how many people were involved in the process of consultation. From the interviews with residents (established or new), very few people around the development recognised that any consultation had taken place. The only example provided was the receipt of a 'pamphlet' detailing the process of regeneration in the area. New build residents in Langley tended to associate consultation with the ability to choose between a number of options for the interior design of their new home.

### **The impacts of consultation activity on cohesion within the schemes**

The most 'successful' scheme, in terms of consultation activity and how this produced positive cohesive effects, was **Devon/Norfolk Street**. This was particularly evident in the interviews with existing residents. All the existing residents that were interviewed tended to attend the consultation events. One of these residents attended a consultation event in Manchester and viewed the event as positive and liked what was planned for the area. Another resident indicated that the events were 'clear' and had provided interpreters, as well as having a party. Furthermore, for some residents the consultation process appeared to have been a vehicle for links between established residents to be made in order to ignite positive community relations. Although one resident did not think their participation in the consultation events had influenced the end product, Devon/Norfolk Street was the only scheme within the study that formed the backdrop for any real and meaningful mixing between residents. Although there may be a number of factors specific to this development which encourages such mixing - including the spatial orientation of the homes and the relatively small size of the development - the way in which consultation activity was managed appears to have positively affected both the social networks of residents and notions of empowerment for those concerned. However, it is uncertain how much emphasis was placed upon consulting residents about the properties themselves. It was noted that the open-plan layout of the properties were not always seen to be culturally appropriate for Asian residents. This is compared to Selwyn Street where such issues formed the focus of some consultation activity and has since appeared to yield a more appropriate design for the residents.

**Selwyn Street** was interesting because there was very little consultation activity with residents from the surrounding area; however, the interviews revealed a wish for greater involvement, engagement and mixing within the development and between new and established residents. This was something particularly welcomed by residents who wanted a greater 'ethnic' mix, which in this case related to a more equal mix of White and Asian residents as the development and area around the development is predominantly Asian.

**Gale Street** offers a useful comparison to the Devon/Norfolk Street scheme, as this is of a similar size and was completed at a similar time. Little or no consultation activity took place at this development and there exists little or no interaction and mixing either within or between new and established residents. A number of residents, both new and established, indicated in the interviews that they wanted to know more people in the area but that the opportunities for mixing were limited. People tended to look towards the 'summer months' as potentially providing opportunities for mixing as people would be outside more (a view also shared by residents of Devon/Norfolk Street). While new build residents were hopeful of more interaction, established residents tended to lament the passing of more 'neighbourly' times. There was no sense that the development of the new build accommodation had impacted on cohesion either positively or negatively.

Although consultation activity within **Stoneleigh** can be seen as having a reasonably high level of intensity, this has not directly resulted in encouraging social cohesion between new and established residents. It could be argued that a by-product of the consultation activity and regeneration process in the area has resulted in greater cohesion between established residents; however, this seems to have grown out of holding a shared 'anti-HMR' view. This perception was prevalent in many of the accounts from the residents involved in the research.

There were no reports of any real engagement from residents in the consultation activity undertaken within the two **Langley** developments. No resident reported having attended an event or being subject to any proactive consultation attempts, with the exception of a number of residents who had received a newsletter. The research with new build and established residents found no meaningful engagement or relationships between any resident (new or established), with a number of people being merely on 'nodding' terms with their neighbours.

No consultation activity took place at **Block Lane** or **Gale Street** and there appeared to be little or no cohesion (in terms of interaction or exchanges) between residents, both new and established.

It is impossible to identify a causal link between engaging in consultation around the development of new build accommodation, or regeneration activity more widely, and positive social cohesion within and between new and established residents. There may be a myriad of factors that can encourage or inhibit the mixing and interaction between residents. No one scheme/development exhibited overwhelming cohesion and neighbourly relations. Although relations and social networks at Devon/Norfolk Street were positive, they were still arguably limited, with many people waiting for the summer in order to see if mixing would happen more frequently.

What has emerged from this research is that consultation activity is not simply about arranging events in order to elicit views or a general agreement about the aesthetic design of new build accommodation or renovation works in an area. Consultation activity poses opportunities to foster and encourage social networks to grow, individual and community empowerment to take place and local engagement with statutory and non-statutory agencies to be created or renewed. It was clear from the small number of residents who reported a positive and life-enhancing experience from consultation activity that this was successful because developers and those responsible for regeneration had provided opportunities for people to express their views, had listened and then demonstrated that they had actually heard.

Similarly, where consultation was successful it was not a one-off event, but rather a process of listening and feedback throughout the stages of the development. Where cohesion appears most minimal it is possible this may have been improved if developers and stakeholders had been more proactive and provided opportunities to listen and feedback to community members on how their views had, or had not, been taken into consideration. In developments where little or no consultation activity had taken place (for example Gale Street and Langley), there was a sense of apathy towards engaging in any consultation activity. Such apathy was explained as either the reluctance of those responsible for developing schemes to listen to the views of others and/or the belief that individuals within communities were disempowered from the process of development and regeneration.



## 5. IMPACT OF SHARED SPACE

### Introduction

This chapter looks specifically at the issue of shared space across the schemes. In particular, this focuses on the impact shared space has had in schemes as well as exploring how the development of shared space could have aided cohesion in areas where they had not been developed.

### Findings

Out of the seven developments evaluated as part of this study three had developed shared space. These are as follows:

- 1 Devon Street** As part of the development of the scheme a Home Zone area was created to replace traditional roads and pavements. This runs between the new build and existing housing stock on two streets (Devon Street and Norfolk Street). It provides space on one level for car parking and use by pedestrians. It also provides the potential to be gated for street parties and other communal events.
- 2 Stoneleigh** Similar to the development at Devon Street a Home Zone area was developed. This is situated in a courtyard setting on the development.
- 3 Selwyn Street** A communal park area was developed called 'Coppice Park'. This rests at one end of the development and provides a hard surface, open grass and planted area.

The developments known as Langley Brooklands, Langley Lowther, Block Lane and Gale Street did not have shared space developed as part of the new build development work.

### The impact of shared space upon local residents

Two of the three schemes (Devon Street and Selwyn Street) with shared space appeared to have impacted upon local residents to differing degrees. When **Devon Street** residents were asked about the use of the Home Zone, they tended to cite examples of using it as a means of access and parking rather than a place to assist with community and 'neighbourly' mixing. However, it was mentioned a number of times that people did greet one another across this space and that this might be encouraged further in summer, as well as when all properties on the scheme were occupied.

It did appear from the accounts of all residents that children were the main users and beneficiaries of this space. There were some concerns raised around the safety of children and pedestrians when using the Home Zone due to the difficulties car users appeared to have when driving and the lack of security pedestrians had due to not having a pavement. However, while a number of people raised this as a concern other people saw the Home Zone as a positive step in the way it had reduced the speed and flow of traffic.

For **Selwyn Street**, and surrounding residents, in terms of the use of Coppice Park, most people had positive comments about the park and how this was being used. However, similar to the Home Zone in Devon Street, it was apparently used more by children and teenagers, in order to meet and play, than by other sections of the community. Generally, further improvements were thought to be needed including: the provision of a play area for small children, greater safety features and a shelter when it rained. A number of residents did not view the park positively with some residents not seeing it as a 'proper' park and having no more purpose than the previous use of the land. From a number of the accounts it was clear that neighbourhood interaction tended to either occur at the local schools, via children, or at the shops within the neighbourhood rather than at Coppice Park.

With regards to the remaining scheme (**Stoneleigh**) no resident discussed or raised issues, positive or otherwise, about the Home Zone at the scheme.

### **The cohesion potential for shared space within the schemes**

All residents, regardless of whether they already had 'shared space' or not, were asked about what could be provided in order to encourage and foster more mixing and cohesion between residents. Residents tended to cite a number of examples of what they would like to see and how this could improve the quality of life of local residents. There was, however, a common theme running through each scheme surrounding the need for more play facilities for children. Each scheme had residents who asserted the need for play facilities or a park for younger and/or older children. It was not clear from the accounts whether residents thought that the development of play facilities would encourage cohesion directly. Most residents tended to cite the need for play areas in order to 'give something for children to do', 'keep them out of mischief', or give them a safe area in which to play; as opposed to play areas working within a framework of cohesion. However, the accounts from residents support the notion that children are an important ingredient in mixing and interaction with people, particularly families, from the local area. Therefore this could suggest a broad need for play facilities. In order to encourage interaction between residents of new build and existing dwellings, these would have to be incorporated within the development area rather than further afield.

Similarly, a number of residents across the schemes pointed to the need for community facilities in the form of a venue that could be used for mixing. Residents on Devon Street, Stoneleigh, and Gale Street specifically mentioned this – although Gale Street was already in close proximity to an existing Sure Start centre. A number of residents on the Gale Street development were already aware of this centre. One resident talked about how she used the local community centre (this was assumed to be the Sure Start centre) in order to attend events and meet people, which helped her '*feel part of the community*' (retired, female, 60s). This resident also talked about how she would welcome the introduction of a 'pop-in shop' where local residents could meet and chat. This resident made reference to such a facility in the vicinity of her last accommodation and found this a valuable way in which people from the area could get to know one another. Furthermore, a number of new build residents on the Gale Street development said that if there was an internet café or a café in the area it would be somewhere they would use to meet people.

For most developments there already seemed to be some amenities in place that residents thought of as 'shared space' in a broad sense. Some people were already using places like community centres, Sure Start centres, gyms, etc. However, it was noted by a number of residents that although there were activities planned and places to mix there seemed little awareness of these within the local areas. This perhaps points to a need for greater awareness raising/marketing about existing facilities.

There appeared to be a paradox when residents were asked about what shared space was missing from their areas. Residents from schemes where some interaction was taking place, or potential was there for interaction (i.e. Devon Street and Selwyn Street) appeared more likely to offer suggestions for further developments to encourage mixing, compared to residents where little interaction was taking place (i.e. Langley and Stoneleigh). Therefore, the more residents are mixing, or perceive that there is potential for mixing, the more help they want to mix; the developments where no mixing is taking place, or not likely to in the near future, the less likely they are to want help to interact.

In summary, a number of suggestions for potential shared space were made with a view to helping people living in the areas (both new and established) to mix and engage more with one another. Facilities for children and more general community settings (i.e. community centres) were particularly favoured. However, in order for these to be used by the majority and not just the few, and in order for them to assist in encouraging meaningful interaction, such facilities would need significant thought by designers and meaningful consultation with those they were aimed at. Moreover, play areas and community centres are perhaps the most obvious suggestions people offer (i.e. a 'stock response') when asked what facilities/space are missing from local areas.

What has emerged from the research is that in many respects it is not the 'space' itself which encourages interaction, but rather the process of developing the space. Looking at Devon Street, although the Home Zone is arguably simple in its design, the intensity of consultation and engagement gave a number of people a sense of ownership as well as access to new social networks. In comparison, looking at Selwyn Street, there appeared little evidence of consultation and engagement around the development of the space (Coppice Park). Such engagement could have potentially created a more usable space and a sense of connection between those involved. On a practical level this research seems to demonstrate that people tend not to use a space if they do not see this as relevant to their needs or have a sense of ownership over it. When developing any shared space there is a need to deploy a significant level of market testing via scenario building with the people likely to use it and engage local people in all stages of its development. In this sense the space is not only an 'add on' to a development but the symbol of how local involvement can be mobilised to create an attachment to a place and people.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

This final chapter draws some general conclusions about the findings from the study and looks to make some recommendations about how to take this forward.

### **Concluding comments**

This research has endeavoured to cover a wide range of issues pertinent to the development and maintenance of sustainable communities where new build accommodation is introduced within the fabric of established communities and older dwellings. On the one hand, the study found schemes with differing scores, from the very high to the very low, when assessed on criteria based on the Building for Life assessment approach. On the other hand, within the schemes are people who, generally speaking, think of the new properties as positive additions to the local area and as having good design standards. However, the attraction of the new properties appears focussed around three factors, or a combination of these: firstly, being seen as better than the occupants' previous accommodation; secondly, being a better use of land; and finally, simply being 'new'. As the research generally involved new residents (who had lived in the properties for around one year) it is difficult to appreciate how these three factors will hold for the long term. The properties are only new for a finite time and the memory of how things were previously will begin to fade. For people occupying those properties seen to have good design characteristics this might be helpful in maintaining a sense of belonging and attachment to the place people live. However, for those properties that are seen to demonstrate less good design standards more may need to be done to build a sense of place out of community networking and raising the standard of the area as a whole.

Although social relations across the schemes within this study appear minimal there was, without exception, the suggestion that people wanted more interaction with their new and established neighbours. At the moment, except in the case of a small number of individuals, relations were constrained to 'nodding' and short greetings and a number of people hoped this would improve over time. Indeed, members of the Asian, particularly Muslim, populations were envied by a small number of white British residents for their demonstrations of sharedness at times of celebration (i.e. Eid). This was seen by these residents as something white British people had lost and they commented that they would like to have this sense of belonging once more. For many people time, and perhaps being a parent, may well prove to be the main motivator to initiate relations and communication. For these people, although support might be welcomed, relations will probably form quite naturally. For others however, barriers will exist and these will be seen as insurmountable by those subject to them. In such cases there will be a role to play to reduce the effect of such barriers and help facilitate relations and networks where they can play a part in residents' lives.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have arisen out of the consideration of the findings and as a result of a number of workshops held with around 30 key stakeholders in September 2009. These workshops were structured around two broad issues: community cohesion and new build design. There are three underlying assumptions driving these recommendations, these are that:

- People have many routes to interacting and feeling like they belong, such as through work, school, faith groups and interest groups. Where they live is only one source for interaction but it can dramatically affect their perceptions of place and space and their role therein.
- Cohesive neighbourhoods are places where people feel safe, feel they belong and are better able to deal with issues and conflicts when they arise. Such neighbourhoods are more likely to retain a market for the long term.
- In existing neighbourhoods there is likely to have been an incremental growth in connections and networks between residents. In new build these networks tend not to exist. Furthermore in regeneration areas there are potentially issues about a tenure generated mix of household types and new residents wanting to think their development is in some way separate to the existing area.

The recommendations are structured under the following headings:

- Consultation and building cohesion
- Getting people to mix in new build
- Shared space
- Design

### **Consultation and building cohesion**

Consultation has many purposes and these recommendations are focused on how it can be done around new build developments in a way, which promotes cohesion.

1. People have different attitudes to getting involved, a range of approaches is more likely to engage more people, for example the use of creative arts or visits to schemes elsewhere.
2. It may be necessary to identify the barriers to getting involved and try and break some of these down, for example timing of events, holding gender specific events where it is culturally appropriate.
3. Cohesion impacts are more likely when people interact with one another while doing an activity that appears separate from simply getting to know one another – this sort of event should be part of any consultation plan.
4. Consultation can be very literal and it is necessary to get to the real meaning of people's comments and try and get them to think about what they really need and want rather than make decisions from choices presented to them. For example a request for a play area or community centre is likely to have a whole story behind it which can be resolved in a variety of ways.

5. Poor quality consultation can have a negative effect, building resentment of the scheme and therefore the new residents moving in. It is important to see the consultation process as engagement and to think through properly considered plans.
6. The planning of shared space can provide an opportunity to bring people together with a common aim. Whilst existing residents may not always benefit from the new development, they may be losing an existing amenity, such as wasteland, which children play on, and as such their views are relevant. Furthermore their involvement may affect the way they feel about the new development and future residents.
7. It is not often possible to consult new or future residents about a scheme but partners should make more use of the views of new residents of other new developments and pass them on to developers, planners and regeneration teams. This will mean carrying out post occupation research on a regular basis and keeping records of feedback coming out of consultation activity.

### **Getting people to mix in new build**

1. New residents will not have been involved in any pre-development consultations and will need specific activities to bring them together when they move in, such as 'get together' events.
2. Events are easier to organise if there is an RSL partner. In exclusively private developments there may be a need for the developer or regeneration partners to carry out this organisational role initially. Although this might not appear to make good business sense it should be remembered that people do not only look at properties as inanimate objects and these objectively they also look to buy into a sense of community and place. Helping to create this can help to increase the desirability of a place and ultimately influence the local market.
3. In some areas the new build will be relatively small scale infill development and new residents will be part of the neighbourhood. In larger schemes there may be a tendency for new residents to feel like they are an island, in an area with a poor reputation they may even want to feel like this. For the development to remain desirable in the longer term it is likely to be better if residents have a sense of belonging to the wider area. The regeneration partners should look for ways to encourage this, perhaps by preparing packs promoting local facilities or offering trial free offers at these places.
4. The research identified a view amongst some residents that the Council had some areas in mind for particular ethnic groups. Whilst other research suggested that residents viewed the market in racial terms, agencies should not be promoting this. This would mean that properties and areas should not be identified as being for any one ethnic group and a mix of property types and sizes should be provided in all locations.

## Shared space

The research shows that shared space is most used when everybody understands its purpose. The development of shared space is also a good way to bring people together with a common interest.

1. Shared space needs a purpose – when residents understand the purpose it is most likely to be used for residents to interact. In an area where there are existing residents, the purpose of any planned shared space should be explored through meaningful dialogue which aims to get to real concerns, wants and needs.
2. Likewise, the future occupiers of a development should be involved in the design of shared space. RSLs may know who residents are likely to be by pre-allocating tenancies, and purchasers who buy off-plan can also be identified.
3. In situations where there are not any current residents, partners could consider the option of providing a temporary treatment until residents are in place. However the benefits of this would have to be balanced against the potential to lose the certainty of the shared space funding and the potential to cause doubt in potential purchasers' minds.
4. Where there are no existing residents then designers must be relied on to create places that people will use in appropriate ways. However, planners and designers must be prepared to listen to the views of 'people like them' which are gathered through the post occupation new build research.
5. The future maintenance of shared space is an important consideration, especially in regeneration areas where affordability is a serious concern. Designers should aim for as much as possible to be adopted by the local authority rather than rely on maintenance funded by service charges imposed on residents.
6. The HomeZone at Devon St appears to be working well from the perspective of car parking and pedestrian use. However it is recommended that a later review is carried out when residents have settled in and seen a year through, before promoting this as a parking design solution.

## Design

1. The environmental sustainability of homes is not currently recognised by residents as a positive feature. This may be because the financial benefits have been masked by increasing fuel costs. Partners should consider doing some like for like fuel usage research which can be publicised locally and used by developers in promotional materials. E.g. Similar households in existing terraced property, existing semi detached property, new build such as Halifax Rd without any additional features, Selwyn St.
2. There is less variation between residents' views of schemes than arising from the professional assessment. This is likely to be due to the fact that residents were subjective: they had chosen to buy in the scheme they were talking about. We already know that 'newness' is a driver for new build purchasers,

and that households wanting a new-build property will have a limited choice. It is likely that schemes' desirability in the longer term will change, and this will be influenced by the quality of the development. As regeneration partners are primarily concerned with creating sustainable neighbourhoods the quality of design should be of high importance even if lower quality will sell first time. It may be worth undertaking further research into residents' attitudes to these schemes in future years to help understand how attitudes to the developments change over time and what issues arise.

3. The schemes that scored the lowest under the professional assessment were all built by private housebuilders who do not have to meet design standards that are required by public sector funders. This highlights the need for the planning process to be used to promote and ensure good design if the additional controls available via public funding are not available.



## **APPENDICIES: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SCHEMES**

### **SELWYN STREET**

The scheme know as Selwyn Street is an area of new housing built by Great Places Housing Group on an infill site which was previously occupied by a large block of derelict flats which had degraded over a number of years. The surrounding area is reportedly popular with members of the South Asian community as a residential area.

The scheme comprises of eighteen new build dwellings which include a mixture of four, five and seven bedroom houses for rent, Newbuild Homebuy and outright sale. The scheme is surrounded by a number of existing residential and commercial properties.

The Selwyn Street project was designed in close consultation with the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) core team. The aspirations for the development were to achieve an award winning, exemplar project that would act as a beacon of regeneration for Oldham, but also set a benchmark for other developers working across the pathfinder area to improve the quality of housing. Specific funding for design and eco enhancements was received from the HMR.

The scheme has received an EcoHomes rating of Excellent. All properties were fitted with solar thermal panels and nine of the houses were also fitted with wind turbines. Measurement of the energy performance of the dwellings remains ongoing; however, it is predicted by the HMR core team that the properties with both solar panels and wind turbines could be saving up to 30% on their annual fuel bills. In addition, the scheme has also already received a CABE Building for Life (BfL) Gold award.

As part of the development, Great Places project managed the development of an urban pocket park on a piece of unused land adjacent to the development. The park is used each year to host a 'Friends of Coppice park' event.

Great Places consulted with members of its tenant association groups at the design stage in order to ensure the properties would be usable by families and serve any potential cultural needs, as it was envisaged that the majority of residents would come from a South Asian background. It is understood that none of the new home occupiers were involved in the consultation process as the design work took place before the new homes were finished.

### **STONELEIGH**

The Stoneleigh development is situated in Derker on the site of a former cotton mill. The Stoneleigh development consists of seventy-three new build homes, including two-bedroom apartments, and two, three and four bedroom houses. The developer and owners of the site were McInerney Homes (formerly known as Hargreaves Homes) and they worked in conjunction with the Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder to design a scheme in order to best fulfil the housing needs of local residents within the area.

Northern Counties housing association purchased twenty-seven units from the developer – eighteen for shared ownership and nine for rent – aided by grant funding from the Housing Corporation. These units were earmarked for Derker residents affected by the clearance. The communal management of the stock was completed by Encore.

Local residents reportedly played a key role in shaping the plans for this development. More than 450 people attended exhibitions to discuss the designs of the Stoneleigh development. In addition, a coach trip to another McInerney development in Bury took place for local residents to see the quality and style of homes that were being built elsewhere.

There is a central Home Zone area designed to give priority to pedestrians, with recreational space and safe parking for cars on this development.

## **DEVON/NORFOLK STREET**

Devon Street is an area of new housing built by Great Places Housing Group on an infill site, which is surrounded by existing residential properties. Two streets (Devon Street and Norfolk Street) have been converted from the traditional street to 'Home Zones'; both streets are bordered by existing homes and new homes. Through the creation of the Home Zone the development of the streets has aimed to create a space in which social interaction can take place.

There are fifty-three existing houses, twenty-two new homes and one house for young people leaving care surrounding the Home Zone area. The new homes are of mixed tenure but predominantly social rented; there are a mixture of houses and apartments.

The Devon Street scheme involved a comprehensive process of consultation with residents and members of the local mosque. The consultation process involved bringing residents together to discuss their concerns and to work on producing designs for the Home Zones. This took place during February to May 2006 through a series of open meetings, visits to other Home Zones, and questionnaires and design workshops. Ian Finlay Architects facilitated the design workshops in partnership with Manchester Methodist Housing Association. In total, four design workshops took place at 79 Devon Street during the period of 13<sup>th</sup> February to 27<sup>th</sup> March. Initially, sessions focused on providing an introduction to the concept of Home Zones and giving examples of the benefits of similar schemes being operated in other places. Subsequently, a group visit was arranged to the Northmoor Home Zone in South Manchester and the strengths and weaknesses of this scheme were discussed at the following workshop at which residents shared their aspirations, as well as their views, about the development of potential Home Zone layouts. The mid-March session gave residents the opportunity to consider whether the proposed layouts were in line with their aspirations, whereas the final workshop centred on the presentation of an indicative layout for each street and a discussion of further objectives.

A high proportion of the existing community reportedly engaged, in some way, with the consultation and design process. None of the new home occupiers were involved in this process due to the design work taking place before the new homes were completed.

## **BLOCK LANE**

Block Lane is an area of housing built by Persimmion Homes and is a suburban housing estate within Werneth. The development consists of eighty-one houses consisting of two, three, four bedroom properties. All housing is privately owned. It is thought that the extent of consultation that went into the development was limited to that which is a part of the statutory planning process.

## **GALE STREET**

The development at the corner of Gale Street and Whitworth Road is an area of new housing developed by Ashiana Housing. Land which was previously used by a pub has been redeveloped and now consists of a mixture of housing and apartments providing a total of sixty dwellings. All homes are currently socially rented accommodation. Aside from the statutory minimum, it is thought that no consultation took place with existing residents.

## **LANGLEY BROOKLANDS**

Langley is a large housing estate (originally over 5,000 properties) in the Middleton Township of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council. The Estate was developed during the 1950's on garden city principles and with predominantly three bedroom houses for rent.

3,200 properties were transferred from Manchester City Council to Riverside Pennine Housing in November 2002, of which 2,200 properties were improved to meet the decent home standards. At the same time, Riverside Pennine entered into a development agreement with housing developer Lovell, in order to replace over 500 void properties with around 800 new homes for sale, over a ten year period.

There have been a variety of regeneration interventions on Langley ranging from Estate Action in the late 1980's, through to Housing Market Renewal (HMR), who have invested over £6 million on Langley, including demolishing derelict pubs and flats, providing new front boundaries to properties, as well as new parking solutions to ease congestion on the estate, and creating a link corridor from Langley to Bowlee Community Park.

The HMR Pathfinder is working towards transforming Langley from an isolated estate with low demand housing into a thriving and attractive area. Consultation has been carried out over revised Master plans to demolish a further 190 homes and replace with 500 new properties for sale and rent, improve local shopping facilities, create high quality green spaces, provide a pedestrian/cycle link from Langley Lane to the central core and improve links from the west of the estate to the centre, and create an improved central core with new homes, shopping, leisure and health facilities.

Langley Brooklands is situated on an existing housing estate in the Middleton area of Rochdale. The homes were built by Lovell Developments as part of the existing development agreement with the main RSL for Langley – Bowlee Park Housing Association (BPHA). There are 125 dwellings with a mixture of housing types. These dwellings have been integrated within existing housing stock on the site.

This area originally housed around 400 homes although many were void and in a state of disrepair. Those tenants and residents who were moved from the area (around forty to fifty) were re-housed on a like for like basis and were able to choose from existing empty stock on the estate.

In terms of consultation, Riverside Pennine carried out consultation with tenants/residents who needed to move from the area. Lovell displayed final plans at events around the estate.

## **LANGLEY LOWTHER**

See Langley Brooklands for a detailed background to the development. Langley Lowther is situated on an existing housing estate in the Middleton area of Rochdale. There are sixty dwellings with a mixture of housing types. The new housing stock was development on a combination of disused and unmanaged open land. The process of consultation followed that which took place for Langley Lowther.