



Land Forum Meeting

15th April, 2013 Meeting Notes

Location: Stephenson Harwood, Finsbury Circus, London

Final

Present:

IH	Ian Heasman (Chair)	Land Forum
RB	Richard Boyle	Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)
MC	Morwenna Carrington	Defra
PC	Phil Crowcroft	Specialist in Land Condition Register (SiLC)
TH	Trevor Howard	Environment Agency
AH	Andy Howe	Environment Agency
SL	Seamus Lefroy-Brooks	Association of Geotechnical Specialists (AGS)
NP	Neil Parry	Association of Geotechnical Specialists (AGS)
SM	Stephen Moreby	Gloucester City Council
JS	John Slaughter	House Builders Federation (HBF)
PW	Peter Witherington	House Builders Federation (HBF)
FE	Frank Evans	Soil & Groundwater Tech. Association (SAGTA)
EH	Euan Hall	The Land Trust
AW	Andrew Wiseman	Env. Protection UK / UK Env. Law Association
RB	Rob Bailey	Welsh Government
PS	Paul Sheehan	Environmental Industries Commission (EIC)
DH	David Hall	Society of Brownfield Risk Assessors (SoBRA)
CT	Chris Taylor	Brent Council
HP	Howard Price	Chartered Inst. of Environmental Health (CIEH)



KH	Kate Henderson	Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA)
KG	Keith George	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd
JL	James Lloyd	National Trust
IG	Ian Grant	Newzeeye
JR	Jon Reeds	Newzeeye
PN	Paul Nathanail	CABERNET / HOMBRE
PB	Peter Braithwaite	Birmingham University / Independent
PS	Peter Storey	Derbyshire County Council
NW	Nicholas Willenbrock	CL:AIRE

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Apologies

2. Introduction: Ian Heasman (Land Forum Chair)

3. PANEL SESSION 1

Session Chair: Euan Hall (Land Trust)

Speakers

Kate Henderson - CEO – Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA).

James Lloyd - Senior external affairs officer – The National Trust.

Keith George - Head of Planning - Taylor Wimpey.

Jon Rees - Brownfield Briefing - The Smart Growth Approach.



4. PANEL SESSION 2

Session Chair: Ian Heasman (Land Forum)

Speakers

Paul Nathanail - CABERNET & HOMBRE Brownfield Networks.

Peter Braithwaite - Birmingham University & Independent Sustainability Advisor - 'A Place to Live'.

Peter Storey - Head of Markham Vale - Derbyshire CC – A local authority perspective.

Richard Boyle – HCA - Sustainable Remediation SuRF UK.

5. BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Divide into three break-out groups to discuss the issues arising from the panel; sessions from the triple bottom line perspectives.

Breakout 1: Social Aspects – Leader Steve Moreby

Breakout 2: Environmental Aspects – Leader Phil Crowcroft

Breakout 3: Economic Aspects – Leader Peter Witherington



Meeting Notes

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from David Middleton (Defra); Dianne Cooper (Harlow Council) - representing the Planning Officers Society.

IH extended a special welcome to Howard Price from CIEH attending his first meeting. Introductions and thanks were also extended to the sessions guest speakers - Kate Henderson - CEO TCPA; James Lloyd - Senior external affairs officer, The National Trust; Keith George - Head of Planning, Taylor Wimpey; Jon Rees Brownfield Briefing; Paul Nathanail – CABERNET/HOMBRE; Peter Braithwaite - Birmingham Uni. & Independent Sustainability Advisor; Peter Storey - Head of Markham Vale - Derbyshire CC; Richard Boyle SuRF UK

2. Introduction: Ian Heasman (Land Forum Chair)

IH gave a review of the role of the Land Forum, including its goal to promote the sustainable use of land, its public and private sector membership, and its strategic view. He referenced previous work by the Sustainable Land Use working group, specifically the emerging themes around sustainable land use. He explained the different format and the panel sessions (Panel Session 1 - We need 230,000 new houses a year to meet societal needs - where should we build them?; Panel Session 2. How can we ensure that whatever Land Use change is needed is sustainable?).



3. PANEL SESSION 1

EH provided some opening remarks. The housing numbers were reiterated; the impact and importance of media messages was stressed. An introduction to Panel 1 speakers was provided.

Kate Henderson - CEO – Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)

Presented the idea of re-imagining garden cities but stressed the importance of considering all solutions to achieving housing targets.

A background to the TCPA was provided with its roots in the Garden Cities Movement (having been originally founded as the Garden Cities Association), and the question was posed as to whether regulatory changes to planning will deliver high quality outcomes?

Recent predictions were highlighted indicating the number of households in England is projected to grow to 27.5 million over the next 20 years, meaning we need over 230,000 new homes each year with figures varying across the country and in the housing types needed, especially the need for social and residential facilities for an ageing population. There is also evidence of an extra cost of some £600m/annum to the NHS from poor housing conditions and overcrowding. Over half a million households are now living in overcrowded conditions in England. In addition 100,000 new homes = 1% GDP.

Homes are known to be a significant source for greenhouse gas emissions. The difficulty of undoing incorrect decisions taken now was stressed.



Garden cities were presented as part of an overall solution because: a plot by plot approach will not achieve the targets; there isn't enough brownfield land; there are greater gains to be made from planning at scale; garden cities can offer the best of town and the best of the countryside; if properly managed and underwritten by land value capture there are significant benefits for the economy, business and society.

Vision, leadership and community engagement are all crucial. Local residents must take owner- and stewardship. The importance of cultural and historical elements and underpinning with strong integrated and accessible transport links were emphasised. High quality design and architecture must stand the test of time. The importance of mixed tenure, jobs, local food and green spaces were all stressed.

Councils could be in the driving seat to lead such developments; the TCPA has recently launched guidance to support their vision. A cross party consensus would strengthen the concept as well as long term thinking, good governance, and new funding schemes with the government underwriting the risk.

Planning is never more important than under localism; now is the time to be innovative and ambitious and create world class communities. Finally, we should consider the sustainability impacts of not embracing this agenda; namely overcrowding, underinvestment, pressure on public services and other socio-environmental problems.



James Lloyd - Senior external affairs officer – The National Trust

Referenced Octavia Hill as one of the first housing campaigners who identified the lack of green-space in poorer areas of London, and fought for the protection of Clissold Park and Parliament Hill. JL provided a brief background of the National Trust (NT), often mistakenly seen as just a country house organisation. Green-space is at the top end of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Suggested that early versions of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) could have undermined protection to greenfield because of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The final version of the NPPF is considered by the NT to be an improvement and the NT support the need for local views and plans to be in place. However it is believed most local plans – 51% - have not yet been created.

There is evidence to suggest greenfield sites are getting planning application approval even where brownfield sites exist with planning already granted. Suggested brownfield development tends to occur during economic boom periods but with the triple bottom line rarely fully considered.

The NT sometimes acts as a developer and understands the need for new homes. However the lack of a regional plan should not be used as a driver for greenfield development. Where regional plans are being produced brownfield sites should be included first but there seems to be limited evidence that this is happening.



The NT welcomes this discussion and is supporting the development of tools for assessing the sustainability of their own land use.

Called for the need to look for areas of consensus as at present it has become a polarised debate.

Keith George - Head of Planning at Taylor Wimpey - A Developer's Perspective

Began by drawing attention to the cyclical nature of development and suggested planning needs greater consistency, perhaps over ~20 year period.

The current development market is subdued, but house builders have refinanced and have experienced an increase in share value and liquidity. Output is still sluggish with sales rates approximately 60% of previous highs.

There are ongoing challenges surrounding return on investment. Many companies have shut down and there are few new start up companies filling the void. For example in 2007 there were 20 major house builders, today there are eight. Many companies are focusing on paying down debts, and are now looking forward towards growth. Slower mortgage approvals has lowered the demand for new homes. Since 2007 approximately 50% fewer homes have been built per year.

Figures show only 50% of previous house building targets were ever met. Big changes in the planning system have made it harder to get planning approval. Judicial reviews are now easier to call in at multiple stages.



The Government's efforts to stimulate the market through the New Buy scheme and shared equity are encouraging although the latter won't come in until 2014.

There are some opportunities. Economic cycles usually occur about every 7 years, we are 5-6 years into this particular downturn. Making development plans and choosing locations should be based on effective, provable demand e.g. housing types, employment and transport links.

Personal experience was given that brownfield sites are considered on their own merits; the solution must lie in an appropriate mix of brown and green field. The problem with brownfield sites is not one in terms of making fit-for-purpose, but the length of time to complete them through the planning system.

Jon Reeds - Smart Growth

Household growth projections have dominated the argument; they should be treated with caution as they rarely come true and depend on how much stock there is and how it is used. Further, they give no indication of the need for social housing, which post world war two stood at 50% of all housing built.

Some statistics were provided on the types of homes needed and their expected use. The statistics show two-thirds of new households will be single-person and no less than 79% will be over-55s, yet the concentration is on providing "family homes". The fact there are more elderly people and childless households should change what's being built.



The need for low density / car dependent greenfield developments which tends to dominate was questioned. Is this what's really needed? In a small country this could be a waste of land; the US provides many examples of how not to do it.

Reference was given to Jane Jacobs' urbanism, the transit-oriented-development movement, anti-sprawl campaigns and town-centre-first work. Supporters of these came together and developed Smart Growth in the 1990s to set out the principles to attack sprawl. The arguments focus on a strong investment in sustainable transport and encouraging people to move back into the cities. With ever increasing energy and oil prices, will we really remain a nation of car drivers and food importers?

There is currently an initiative to develop the Smart Growth UK group and a set of principles was recently made public.

EH - provided an overview of the presentations given and opened the Q&A session.

JS - If more brownfield development is wanted, isn't it all about providing incentives rather than being controlling? Might this result in a need for increased public investment?

KG - referenced historical grants offered under Michael Heseltine and how they helped remove the financial risk. The key for developers will always be how quickly a development can become cash positive.



KH - unfortunately the money behind the New Homes Bonus was not ring-fenced and didn't always reach the communities it was designed to help. It often just went to areas of high demand. Incentives have to be carefully thought through and get to the right people.

JL - suggested there are parallels between the developer and energy markets in terms of dominant organisations. The energy market was asked to do more on environmental issues which have been brought to the market. However they are rarely taken up by consumers with lower incomes. The decision to build Southwick station shows how investment in transport can significantly increase market value.

JR - suggested incentives must create the right homes in the right places but the question remains - do you spend money in new homes where there is demand, or spend money creating new jobs where the homes already are?

PS - Questioned how the figures for housing need were arrived at and suggests they might be to maintain current high house prices.

KH - the 230k figure is an indication of the likely number of households forming and is based on the last census data. The recession could make this an underestimate as fewer people get divorced during periods of recession or move home.

PN - Is sprawl something the land forum should encourage, stay silent on, or oppose?

EH - called for a new, wider debate.



KH - doesn't believe anyone is arguing for sprawl.

PW - Proposed there is a greater social change occurring where children can no longer buy a house, will this become the new norm?

JL - Stressed the ever increasing importance of the community especially as the cost of power and food could continue to increase.

PC - Raised the empty stock of housing. Asked whether or not it could play an important part in solving the problem if brought back into use?

JR - Separate intergenerational housing is a 20th century concept. Stressed the importance of using the current stock as effectively as possible.

KH - highlighted spare rooms and under-occupancy. Incentives could be used to change this but these should not miss our most neglected towns and cities.

JL - Asked how we are bringing old buildings back and where are the incentives to do this or support the borrowing necessary to do the work?



4. PANEL SESSION 2

IH provided a brief introduction to the session on how we make what's needed more sustainable?

Paul Nathanail - CABERNET & HOMBRE Brownfield Networks - 'Home Sweet Home'

A review of the appearance of certain cities over recent time shows - London has shrunk and increased its amount of green space; Sydney has remained relatively static in appearance and Beijing has grown very significantly but suggested there is no reason it couldn't fail in a similar way to Detroit.

He provided an introduction to CABERNET (Concerted Action on Brownfield and Economic Regeneration Network) the European Expert Network addressing the complex multi-stakeholder issues that are raised by brownfield regeneration. It produced a report in 2007 now adopted by the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

A background was also given on the project Holistic Management of Brownfield Regeneration (HOMBRE), a collaborative project which introduces a paradigm shift in attitudes to land use. HOMBRE seeks to bring about and enable 'zero Brownfields'.

7 key objectives for redevelopment of brownfield sites were presented:

1. create new jobs;
2. protect habitats;



3. provide a return on investment (typically \$4/\$5 for every dollar spent on brownfield land);
4. maintain a respect of culture and history of an area;
5. achieve budget - time and money;
6. meeting planning conditions; and
7. do things safely

Extra consideration should always be required to avoid unintended consequence of decision making.

Great design is needed and this is now embedded in the NPPF. It should include the need to design for the world now and as it will be e.g. £10/litre fuel costs and an ageing population.

Consideration should be given to building to retail prices e.g. x4 the average salary and how help can be given to home-owners to become more self sufficient.

PN described a systems approach to urban land management – intervention has positive and negative consequences of the site and the surrounding area.

Due regard to the demolition process e.g. recovery of materials should also be included. Rooms / spaces which allow for multi-functionality should be provided - how well do we use space at the moment? Reaffirmed the importance of meeting today's new needs without damaging things for future generations, so consideration of power and waste is important. Access to new developments should consider private transport means as the lowest priority.



PN suggested the importance of 're' words including remediation, reclamation, reconnection, redevelopment, reuse and regeneration.

Suggested the Land Forum could produce a statement for the NPPF which highlights a list of what we know is unsustainable. This might be easier than trying to answer and agree on what is sustainable.

Peter Braithwaite - Birmingham University & Independent Sustainability Advisor - 'A Place to Live'

Where should we be building? - Is it time to end the location, location, location mantra. He believes people must be given a reason for living somewhere - historically all towns and cities grew up for a reason, whether it be at a cross-roads, river crossing or marketplace.

Of the planned Eco-towns only five got planning permission and none have progressed. He questioned whether this was because they were located simply where there was available land.

Business usually moves to where its needs are met - he gave an example of Masdar city in the UAE - a zero emissions city planned for high technology businesses but questions whether they would actually relocated there? What reason would professionals and their families have for moving from an established European city to a desert city?



Chobham Manor (Olympic Park) was given as an example of success where 850 terraced homes will be built in an area of housing shortage. He suggested the reason for this is the transport links, and that businesses are already moving into the area. Believes the key was planning for the future and the inclusion of the large park areas which shows how importantly green space is now considered. PB stressed the challenges of different stakeholders thinking within different time scales; political (5-10 years), development (10-30 years) and sustainability (30-100 years plus).

There is a general trend of populations moving back to urban areas. Community decision making will always be important for success. However development plans should seek to put the well being of residents at the heart of decision making.

Richard Boyle – HCA - Sustainable Remediation SuRF UK

(Presentation slides are available on the CL:AIRE website.)

Gave an overview of the history of SuRF-UK and the current framework.

Suggested that although designed for the management of remediation projects, the SuRF UK approach and lessons learnt could be appropriate to the wider world of development.

The drivers for sustainable development are now cross-sectoral whether led from regulations or corporate social responsibility. Sustainable development needs to be embedded across the whole development process. Indicators are important, but must be straightforward and not overlap.



Early planning is critical to success and derives the greatest benefits. In SuRF UK Stage A is the planning stage where opportunities are maximised; Stage B is the action stage where the project is often already largely set.

Peter Storey - Head of Markham Vale - Derbyshire CC – A local authority perspective.

Efforts have been made to effectively manage brownfield land since the 1960s many of which were 'sustainable' before the word in its current usage was invented, for example maximising reuse and minimising disposal. A current example is Grassmoor tar lagoons, where bioremediation will enable retention of material on site.

There has been some failure to reinvest in buildings and infrastructure using incomes from small business start-up facilities due to conflicting spending priorities in local government. Degraded buildings do not attract good rents, and in Derbyshire some sites are now being offloaded to the private sector as portfolios are rationalised. Regeneration remains a key target despite the recession. The creation of industrial estates continues but the key is keeping them sustainable.

Sites kept for public open spaces often suffer from revenue funding problems and there is the added difficulty of managing the public expectations.

The Chesterfield Canal Regeneration was provided as a case study. Once complete, the majority of financial benefits of regeneration went to the adjoining properties and land owners. While this is positive it isn't financially sustainable



long term when no money comes back to the local authority. Later the council acquired some of the adjoining land which they were able to sell on for a profit after regeneration of the canal. However there was no guarantee that the money from the capital receipt would go back into funding the ongoing maintenance of the canal. The solution was the inclusion of a canal management clause in the contract of sale; this resulted in a long term return on the investment.

Markham Vale was also provided as a case study - this is the largest regeneration in Derbyshire (360 hectare with 85 hectares being sold for industrial use). The key is managing the significant amount of land remaining, especially as what remains has contamination issues including dioxins and phenols from a coke works. An estate management company has been established, funded by the firms occupying the industrial estate. This covers site security, landscaping, drainage etc. Questions still remain as to future proofing the site once all development is completed. An important question is how you manage the public's expectations of access to open space without their willingness to pay for it? Specific challenges at Markham Vale include the willow coppicing for bio-energy, and that the proposed route of the HS2 passes through the site.

IH provided a summary of the presentations.

Q&A session

PC - Asked which should come first, homes or the reason to move? As the case studies show a good environment can have a big effect.



PS - house prices next to the canal were 20/30% higher but again they didn't contribute any extra funding back into the canals maintenance.

PB - what comes first is an ongoing debate. A new development model is needed. Public and private sector must be more closely linked. New financial models to get open spaces in first are needed; these help an area create its identity.

RB - The HCA are trying to make site developers - to include green space areas.

PN - Questioned whether the environment should take priority if no-one is willing to pay for it? Asked why those who are financially benefiting should not be taxed? Suggested the public sector now invests money rather than just spending it so such measures could be appropriate.

FE - asked what can the Land Forum do to help with this overall problem?

PN - reiterated it's easier to state what is unsustainable. A clear statement on when greenfield plans should be rejected by the Secretary of State could be prepared.

PB - reminded the forum that sustainability involves many subjects and experts and therefore a compromise will be needed.

PW - pointed out that we can't pick where brownfield sites are. The Victorians never thought about 'what next'; the Olympics are an example that we do now consider this but it must become an even stronger consideration.



PB - Recommends a value be developed for environmental and societal factors, and asked whether the Land Forum could help derive these?

PN - Suggested Barcelona as another success story based on successful forward planning post the Olympic games. Believes it is now a 1st rate city because of its vision and strategy. It is difficult to achieve this from Whitehall with changes every 5 years, therefore recommends local leadership is needed not UKPLC.

PB - Reminded the forum that brownfield land is everywhere so some top level strategy is still required.

JR - Asked whether a greenfield land development levy to cover the cost of brownfield land regeneration could be possible?

PB - recommended it would have to be a transparent and fair system. There has never been such a system in this country but suggested that might be irrelevant.

PC - gave the Land Trust dowry system as an example, whereby it is back-funded by those who benefit in the longer term. Asked if this could be done by local authorities?

EH - reported there are some examples of this already and the use of section 106 payments to secure future sites.



PS - cautioned that the absence of a fund upfront would make this approach difficult.

PC - asked whether the government could help council ring-fence a fund of money?

IG - Drew attention to Sustainable Skyscrapers as they were not mentioned in the discussions; the introduction of an integrated approach to work and living. These have especially focused on areas around universities. Also pointed out that IT infrastructure has not been mentioned; the current and future generations think and work very differently.

PN - pointed out the poor gender and racial representation at the meeting should be noted. Warned there are less than 18 months remaining to inform political manifestos.

AW - clarified that in-fact the manifesto processes are well under way
Closing remarks and thanks from IH. No date of next meeting set.

Due to an overrun in the schedule there was not time for the planned break out sessions.