

sustainable placemaking *forum*

A seminar series linked to www.sustainable-placemaking.org

Thursday 14 March at the University of Dundee, Perth Road, Dundee.

Placemaking through Stock Transfer

Ben Derbyshire, HTA

These seminars are linked to the sustainable placemaking website. Our business is sustainable placemaking, making places with the important characteristics. Affordable, everlasting and sustainable environmentally, socially and economically. We strive to make places where people want to be.

The Sustainable Placemaking Forum is a database of individuals who have attended one or more of these events. You will now be on the circulation list and invited to future events. We aim to expand the understanding for sustainable places and make relationships for future projects. We have two events planned for the coming months. A seminar at the House of Lords on the 29 May on the difficulties of regeneration delivery hosted by Lord Richard Best and an event at the Chartered Institute of Housing conference in Harrogate in June.

Through Stock Transfer we try to experience the lives of people in these places and what it will offer to change their expectations. We have been involved in 10 large scale Stock Transfer schemes, most are long running, the longest for 12 years.

Stock Transfer is an opportunity to create value and build good quality social housing. The main threat to this is inadequate consultation at the early stages and a lack of vision, this brings huge risks when so much time and money is invested in the project.

Bob Millar, Communities Scotland

As a civil servant I can't endorse or advertise HTA, however I would say that I have plagiarised the notion of placemaking since working with Ben in Sheffield. For context, change in the way we deliver regeneration is needed as a means to the end product which is quality of life for the end users. Ardler is one of the few examples of big picture comprehensive development.

There are three big challenges; masterplanning, delivering regeneration and the tools that might be needed. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of working with HTA in Sheffield; developing vision and aspirations and creating a quality of environment.

Masterplan

Financial masterplan; This failed in Sheffield. It must involve public and private cashflow money and create value. A 12-15 year financial plan must be shared between all stakeholders. Sheffield failed because people reverted to type, this was a learning device.

Social and Economic masterplan; clearer and more meaningful outcomes are needed. Environmental masterplan; sustainability forms a large part of this. A clear diagnosis of the area is needed. Duncan McClenan did this for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for £7m. The involvement of residents is important as is managing expectations.

There must be a realistic options appraisal. In this area we are weak on all fronts in Communities Scotland and in Scotland in general.

Delivering Regeneration

I am a fan of Public Private Partnerships which are elegant in their simplicity and harness the complimentary strengths of the public and private sectors. But I'm not a fan of partnerships. There needs to be a new generation of delivery vehicles of secondary importance but not to drive the process. In the longer term Community Regeneration starts at the end of April as a local service delivery. But more local vehicles are needed to sustain area afterwards.

Toolkit

We need to improve what is available to the sector. Egan is now three years old and nothing has been developed (especially in Scotland) on a large scale. It is ineffective for young people, there will be 27,000 new trained employees in the next five years.

However we need to use key Egan principles

Technology – especially in the home. With digital inclusion and the progress of technology what does the resident deserve in the home. Security, energy efficiency, entertainment, connectivity to schools etc. We spend £850,000 on research per year, with organisations such as JRF spending millions, however we are not making the best use of this research. When a consumer buys a house there is an odd relationship between the seller and purchaser with no feedback on the product. We need a demonstration on a big scale about how technology could be used to enhance life.

In the civil service the Financial Minister places money based on the outcomes that are put forward. Our Corporate Plan is still in progress but we are getting good feedback and it is getting better. We need to be smarter about national, regional and local measures. Social Capital is the glue that makes it all work, the infrastructure, however regarding the SCBO, what do we need to do?

We must not miss out; we must recognise that this is a long difficult process and play to our skills and strengths. And this includes local government and the private sector.

Discussion

Ben Derbyshire

Work is seriously underway at Ardler, which is very encouraging, but you mentioned that Fife is some way from starting, what are your observations?

Housing Association

Bob knows them. There are blockages in the framework of policy. Perth has the power to say no or do it slowly. The policy machine controls this and decisions for a wide partnership but we can't get past this blockage.

Consultant

I am associated with the bidding in Fife. One organisation controls what is happening and information is released as and when it is thought appropriate by the council.

Local Authority

In Edinburgh it is not going fast enough. It is problematic in Stock Transfer as value for money and component parts has to play in the bigger picture. Council members want to see mechanism move more effectively. It is hugely complicated and members are frustrated it is taking too long. There is a difference between what members perceive and what they see.

Private sector

Where Ardler's success becomes apparent there will be power for tenants to encourage councils to do this. That will happen and the council will respond to voters.

Ben Derbyshire

Once residents are empowered and know what they can achieve, with a business- and masterplan, they are unstoppable. Waltham Forest residents marched down Marshion Street. This is not comfortable for the politicians.

Housing Association

The relationship between councils and financiers and decision making is a critical one. In the Herald today they were reporting on the Glasgow transfer. But what are the other councils doing, those made the decision not to go for wholesale transfer. Highland said that they were committed but not on finance. But they never consulted residents to ascertain that they didn't want it. It is just about possible for them to retain their stock. Housing as a driver for economic regeneration. Councils can run housing but will it make them bankrupt? Dumfries said that residents had said no to transfer but residents were desperate to go forward and council was holding them back. A long way to go despite quality of the outcomes. The process of doing an option appraisal shows what is not deliverable but doesn't demonstrate what is deliverable. Broad brush theory, not robust but still a plan. It is not the fault of the option process, but the responsibility of the people to determine terms of study.

Local Authority

Options Appraisals are very disappointing, they are broad brush with not a lot of depth. They don't look at the detailed information available. They don't look at demand, trends, integration of an area, and the various options. Fife have done some and in Edinburgh.

Local Authority

But there has been no formal response as to whether these are good or bad.

Ben Derbyshire

We need an Options Appraisal benchmark.

Bob Millar

But we can't have it both ways. We can't give the council responsibility and then check it. It's their responsibility to create framework, we must be clear whose show it is.

Local Authority

Communities Scotland Development Funding Transfer makes it clear that if local authorities don't transfer we want to know that the council have looked in depth that they can afford to keep stock. Highland charge very high rent whilst if Glasgow transfer fails then rent must be increased by 40% because of the huge loan debt. Other councils are in the same position but has thorough analysis been done?

Private sector

Two situations exist. Without political will there is no solution, except with time and tenant pressure. Partnerships exist but not delivering. Special delivery vehicle success to do with a positive partnership wanting something to happen.

Local Authority

Projects moving toward Sustainable Placemaking and mixed tenure. Sometimes two years in masterplanning.

Consultant

The transfer is in December.

Ben Derbyshire

If we can do it at Ardler we can do it anywhere.

Local Authority

Key areas of the city are being planned with a Joint Venture company. Masterplan will only work with funding streams but this is not clearly in their sights. Recreation and Leisure are nowhere to be seen. Transport needs a big deal. A £800m commitment over 10 years but still can't make the masterplan stick. We want a planned place but it's a bottom up process, members commit to schemes but it is not coherent. Loan debt and high rent are problems. There is no reason why tenants would vote for a transfer in Edinburgh (In Glasgow they will see an improvement in five years).

Housing Association

Tenants always voted in favour for transfer in Poulton.

Local Authority

Normally around housetype. On Ardler they are knocking it all down, whereas they were originally not going to do this. Housetypes are a problem and a wider ranged package is required. The housing regeneration problem should not be over complicated.

Housing Association

There is a very clear distinction between wholesale transfer and stock transfer. Most councils general political will is to secure regeneration through stock transfer. Ardler is a positive example of what can be achieved in a local authority area where they don't have a plan for stock transfer. It was a means to an end not wholesale in the local authority. Dundee is very committed to physical regeneration and Ardler Village will economically stimulate the area. Dundee had more difficulty afterwards in letting go. They didn't want to relinquish so much control and it was very difficult for officers. It shows the empowerment of communities and they would be uncomfortable if this happened all over Dundee.

Bob Millar

Central Government is hopeless at co-ordinating departments. There is no requirement to work with anyone else. Locality budgeting is an idea on the table but don't hold your breath. This will not determine what will happen, the right direction but a long way to go.

Ben Derbyshire

Cross cutting could be easier to achieve in Scotland than England.

Bob Millar

There is insufficient evidence. Housing Associations do a fantastic job but this is more the bigger picture.

Local Authority

Ardler has been a success in a large part due to good fortune. Two primary schools, a doctors, shops all in the area and land not subject to stock transfer. They Ringfenced the City Council contribution with funding and with funding only for housing.

Ben Derbyshire

It is very rare to find a local authority sufficiently supportive. The Shoreditch NDC has had it inflicted upon it and was forced to sell all land around the estate. Impossible to get it shifted at all. In Birmingham Castle Vale transferred with land and especially benefits. Ardler has benefited from proactive policy thinking, and also the courage not to take the worst estate first. If they start with the worst they will be big problems and will not get a return.

Housing Association

Ardler is very interesting.

Representing people not so well developed and work with the community and see what is necessary. Not near that yet in Scotland. Was good fortune but council saw that they needed to contribute and co-ordinate to make it work.

Sandy Morrison, HTA Architects Ltd

There was a clear idea of what the solution was, everybody lined up with time to find the solution. There was a solution within the council and this was brought along to create masterplan.

Local Authority

Local government role is strategic but what if Local Authorities don't want to play and co-ordinate. If they say no then nothing happens.

Housing Association

Duty is to obtain best value but this is the formal duty and have to go through discipline to get it right and demonstrate why they should deliver. If they can't they have to have alternatives.

Local Authority

Good community planning exercise becomes useless because it doesn't include housing because of stock transfer. Central Government dictates but Local Authority don't have to follow it through.

Ben Derbyshire

Circumstance must be right. There must be checks.

Bob Millar

Egan tendering is not the best way.

Housing Association

In Challenge Funding Programmes Edinburgh did a good job and got most money out of the process, stimulated creative thinking and engaged people in the processes. However timing is a problem.

Bob Millar

Time Limited Finance, public money and a lever in private. There is £40m in years 8-14 and if they can't pay it back they haven't created a place. Therefore they have failed and missed the point.