

Summary of the sixth meeting in the third series of TEN at Holden Point, Stratford, on the 7th December 2006

Present

Andrew Armes, Head of Development and Design, Milton Keynes Council
Richard Arthur, Chairman, Renaissance Bedford
John Best, Chief Executive, Milton Keynes Council
Peter Bishop, Director of Culture and Environment, Camden Council
Marc Dorfman, Chief Planning Officer, LB Redbridge
Mr Pat Hayes, Director of Borough Partnerships, Transport for London
David Hennings, Director of Strategic Planning, Haringey Council
Seema Manchanda, Head of Physical Regeneration and Development, Newham Council
Robert Scourfield, Interim Director for Culture and Environment, Camden Council

Nicholas Falk, URBED
Esther Caplin, URBED
Anne Wyatt, URBED

Apologies

Tom Jeffrey, Director of Environment and Leisure, LB Sutton
Paul Evans, Strategic Director of Regeneration, Southwark Council
Chris Donovan, Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning & Regeneration)

The final meeting of the TEN group's Third Series took place at the top of Holden Point, thanks to Seema Manchanda, and included Richard Arthur, former Leader of Camden as Peter Bishop's guest, and John Best, Chief Executive of Milton Keynes, who was one of the founding members.

Briefing was circulated in advance including a recent paper by Nicholas Falk (for the Academy for Sustainable Communities), drawing on URBED's research and experience, it suggests a new approach to building the necessary skills and overcoming barriers to 'place-making'. In addition, excerpts from the local Government White Paper 1) summarising the role of councillors, and 2) steps towards implementation, and finally the 'Egan Wheel' which defines the elements of a sustainable community.

Meeting on the top of a tower block, enabled the group to survey the scale of what was going on in Stratford, as well as to have an inspiring discussion on developing leadership skills, which ended up with a commitment to run a fourth series focussing on making new housing affordable as well as sustainable.

Lessons from Stratford

On a previous visit, the group had seen how Stratford was becoming a new growth point, with one of the best transport interchanges in London. A huge programme of new housing had been planned as part of a mixed use scheme. Newham had played a key role

in getting a new station at the heart of the development, and a masterplan with seven zones had been agreed. The new international station will be connected by a 200 yard walkway to a new Northern entrance for the existing station, and will be served by trains from Kent.

The situation has been transformed by the winning of the Olympic Games, which is paying for the removal of overhead power lines, and has provided an unmissable deadline of 2012. As well as London and Continental Railways, there is now a Development Corporation and an Olympic Delivery Agency, which adds to the complexity, and the problems of recruitment. At the same time, the private developers have changed, with a much larger shopping centre, and a private partner is being sought for the housing. The group was a little concerned about the impact on private confidence of disposing of the 4,000 new units in the Olympic Village in such a short time. We saw major housing schemes underway along the railway line, heard about plans to replace the tower blocks in Canning Town with another 8,000 units. We also learned that there are plans to remove the gyratory to make walking more attractive.

A summary of conclusions follows.

TEN is grateful to Newham Council for organising the meeting and their hospitality.

Leadership Skills for Placemaking

'I don't want a good general, I want a lucky general'
Napoleon quoted by Pat Hayes

Leadership skills

"Think short, see long" Marc Dorfman

The skills of leadership We discussed the skills and steps in successful place-making, and in addition to the list of 20 that had been circulated, identified ten more, (some of which overlap) including:

- Anticipating the choices that will emerge
- Listening and knowing when to intervene
- Securing decisions about options and priorities
- Looking outward as well as inward
- Winning the confidence of investors
- Taking risks and being bold when necessary
- Negotiating agreements on how to move forward in stages
- Building alliances and carrying key people with you
- Telling a good story again and again
- Setting timetable, and committing resources

Barriers to progress The current risk adverse environment in Local Authorities stifles good leaders. The exercise reminded everyone that it was impractical to rely on a single

person, particularly in local government when politicians (and staff) come and go. The process was made more difficult by a series of peculiarities in local government, such as:

- Dealing with Byzantine complexity
- Lack of an overriding purpose (or bottom line)
- Artificial boundaries, with a number of different places
- Distrust of professional officers
- No structure for building political skills
- Shortage of good staff in their 30s and 40s (probably due to the drain to the private sector and drop in those entering the built environment professions)

Role of councillors Lots of schemes will not work without strong political leaders with the power to influence people. The Local Government White Paper was not very helpful. Nor did the list of Councillors' roles tell you how to develop stronger leadership with regard to planning (which needs to be much more satisfying if young people are to be drawn in). The job should therefore include:

1. seeing the big picture (and repositioning the place or service)
2. building consensus where power is divided (John Best uses a Venn diagram to show overlapping areas where people agree, which is usually larger than they imagine)

Officers can help by:

- creating confidence in the local authority's capacity to make things happen e.g. Camden's Boulevard programme
- providing space for developing ideas e.g. meeting other leaders over a weekend, study tours to see other places from which inspiration can be drawn
- involving young people in the political process

Role of local delivery vehicles If good people are to be attracted back to local government, then planning has to have more status. This means not giving all the resources to voluntary bodies, or all the powers to other bodies. It could well include involving young staff and councillors in partnership vehicles to give them both satisfaction and on the job training.

Follow up actions

Once again we tried to think of positive actions, stimulated by Mark's offer to turn the list of place-making leadership skills into a simple framework around, and these covered:

1. Classify the notes and papers so they can be circulated more widely
2. Identify a list of exemplary and inspiring projects
3. Share policies on sustainable development e.g. Central Milton Keynes with 3,500 low energy buildings
4. Set up programmes for joint member visits to exemplary projects
5. Understand different styles of leadership (female as well male!)
6. Find out what support is available e.g. The Leadership Centre
7. Broaden the membership. Possible new members include:
 - Emma Peters, LB Tower Hamlets
 - Sue Foster, LB Hackney
 - John Prior, LB Enfield
 - Peter Andrews, London Thames Gateway
 - Richard Simmons, CABE
 - English Partnerships

Next year's programme

Once again members said how valuable they found the sessions and material. Anne Wyatt will be taking over Esther Caplin's role. It was agreed to the fee being raised to £2000 pa to reflect the time spent organising and running the programme. URBED offered to look at how past material might be disseminated, and to involve anyone who was interested in a new project to develop case studies of successful leadership, using short films.

The subject for next year was agreed as making new housing affordable and sustainable and spreading the benefits of regeneration projects to the wider area. The foreign visit might be to schemes in Germany or Scandinavia (though other suggestions are welcome).

Possible ideas for visits included:

- Docklands Light Railway to Canning Town bus station and City Airport
- New social housing in Limehouse (East Thames)
- Chatham to the Kent Architecture Centre
- A visit to Arup's offices (to save going to China!)
- Paddington Basin high density mixed use scheme

Responses and other ideas would be welcome.