

SUNN

JOSEPH ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION

Sustainable
Urban
Neighbourhoods
Network

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has established the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Network (SUNN) to share best practice in building new neighbourhoods in cities and towns. It is based on the principle that it is not enough just to build houses, when sustainability and good community life are required to create genuine communities. The two-year 'learning network' was launched in November 2009 and brings together community-building practitioners for open and frank discussion about what has worked and what hasn't in recent new communities.

SUNN is based on a feasibility study carried out for JRF by Dr Nicholas Falk and Dr Michael Carley, who interviewed 30 professionals. This found that the need to build more housing in better communities is as strong as ever and that new communities reinforce positive social patterns to counter exclusion and encourage more sustainable forms of behaviour.

The report proposed a 'learning network' to provide space and time for creative thinking and build capacity to develop and manage new sustainable urban neighbourhoods.



Members

1. Orchard Park, Cambridge

2. Grand Union Village,
Northolt, London

1.	2.
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3. Ironstone and Lightmoor,
Telford, Shropshire

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4. Dickens Heath Village in
Solihull

5.	6.
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5. Ancoats Urban Village and
New Islington, Manchester

6. Walker Riverside, Newcastle

Members also attend from: Derwenthorpe in York, Graylingwell in Chichester, Newhall in Harlow, Upton in Northampton and Yours South Lynn, King's Lynn in Norfolk

The feasibility study argued that the slow down in house building provides an excellent opportunity to foster innovation. All the interviewees felt this was an ideal time to share good practice, points of inspiration and guidance for achieving sustainable new neighbourhoods. These aspects can then be put into practice when there is uplift in the market.

SUNN focuses on modest sized new neighbourhoods within towns and cities, mostly 'urban extensions', rather than on large, free-standing settlements. Urban extensions, it argues, are the most practical means for the UK to achieve additional new housing and communities in a sustainable manner. A focus on urban extensions is also consistent with JRF's combined experience of housing management as a social landlord and its national research role in the field of community building.

SUNN brings together practitioners from new communities around England, including land owners, house builders, housing associations, architects, planners, local councillors and community representatives. Its strength is the commitment of the members and the inspiration and learning provided by demonstration projects, including both where they have succeeded and failed. SUNN is managed by URBED (a not-for-profit research and consultancy firm, founded in 1976) and Dr Michael Carley.

Network meetings rotate around the members' communities. The research team prepare pre-meeting briefings and post-meeting summaries of learning for network members and, with JRF, a full report at the end of the initiative.

A final event in London in late 2011 will highlight overarching network learning from each participating community, with lessons for national policy.

Aims of SUNN

- Enable JRF to contribute to community building, as a hands-on housing manager and as a foremost funder of research on new communities.
- Showcase innovation in modest size but leading-edge new communities
- Foster learning about what does and does not work for dissemination
- Identify (and influence) aspects of national policy
- Identify financial barriers to developing sustainable communities, and ways to overcome them
- Share good practice in areas such as managing mixed tenure communities, providing long-term stewardship, integrating new and existing communities, and reducing car dependency.



New Earswick launch event