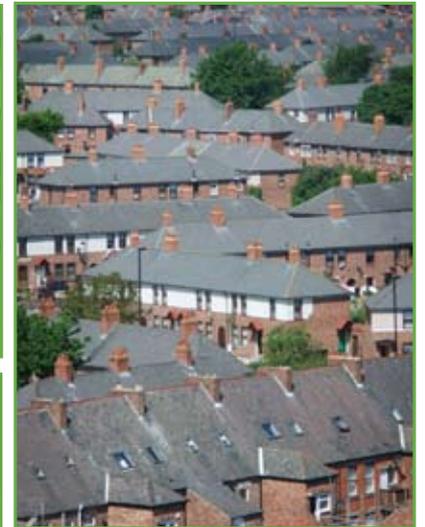


SUSTAINABLE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS NETWORK (SUNN)

LESSONS AND ACTION POINTS FROM WALKER RIVERSIDE, NEWCASTLE





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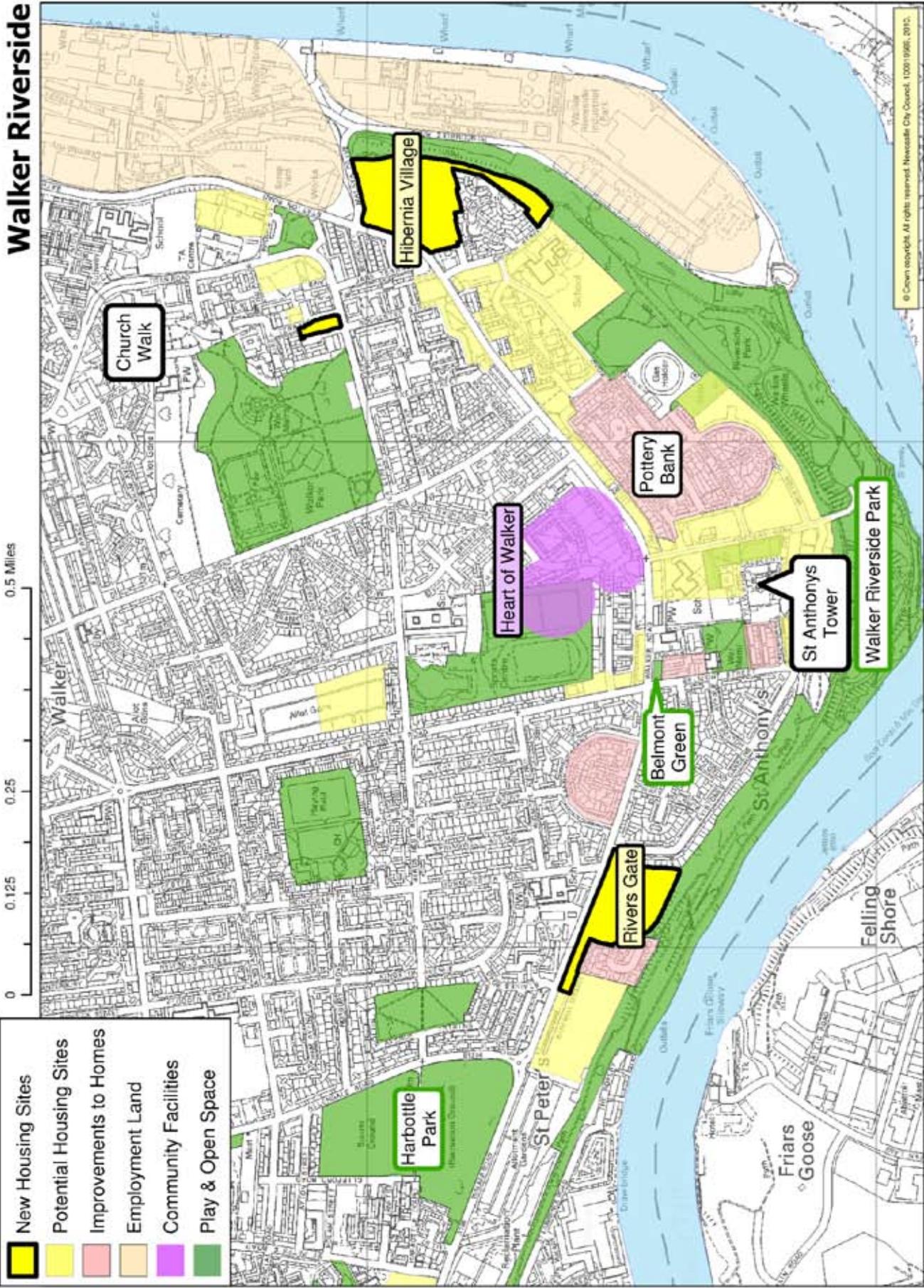
Report of the Walker Riverside, Newcastle Event
21st June 2010

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NewcastleGateshead, Newcastle City Council,
Michael Vout, John Hocking and Nicholas Falk

Walker Riverside



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SUSTAINABLE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS NETWORK

LESSONS AND ACTION POINTS FROM WALKER RIVERSIDE, NEWCASTLE



River's Gate – one of the stops on the study tour

The third field visit of SUNN, to the community of Walker Riverside in the East End of Newcastle, provided a stimulating contrast to Cambridge and York - but also some common challenges and useful organisational lessons. The visit drew together 39 practitioners, representing eight new neighbourhoods, on a glorious summer's day. It followed the network format of a brief introduction to supplement the briefing pack, a study tour

to help delegates understand the area and look and learn from innovative projects, followed by facilitated workshop discussions around key themes and questions. Further briefing material was handed out on major projects.

In introducing the event John Hocking of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlighted the opportunity, in a time of major cutbacks in public spending, to rethink the roles of public and private investment, so that quality new communities can be delivered that people really value. He pointed out that even strong housing markets like York had failed to build a fraction of the new housing needed or planned and that even people who are sceptical about redevelopment can change their mind once they have moved into new homes.



The SUNN visit benefited greatly from the effort of the meeting's hosts in providing excellent briefing material and enabling the group to meet a wide range of officers and residents. Discussion took place in the fine neighbourhood office at



Ouseburn Regeneration Centre and the view from the Centre

Ouseburn, overlooking the Tyne and on the new Quaylink electric bus route. It was only possible to see a small part of the city, so a short appreciation of the context may help put the achievements and challenges into perspective, and begin to answer the question which David Slater, Newcastle's Executive Director of Environment and Regeneration posed: *'What is Walker for in the 21st century?'*

CITY CONTEXT

Newcastle, as both regional capital and a major industrial city, has been greatly affected by economic restructuring, which has hit areas like the East End hard. Only three miles from the centre of Newcastle, and looking down to the River Tyne, Walker



was developed to house the workers in the ship-building and engineering industries that once crowded its banks. Like many areas, it ended up with an over-concentration of similar looking inter-war terraced Council housing,



interspaced with tower blocks from the 1960s and 70s.

Views from St Anthony's Tower

Walker's council estates, located within a loop in the Tyne river, have created what at first seems like a mono-cultural island, disconnected from jobs and services as a result of a weak public transport system. The old industrial giants like Swan Hunter, Parsons and Vickers have gone, and with them the expectations for young residents of an apprenticeship and a start on the housing ladder. The challenges of regenerating an area with a strong community spirit, is comparable to those facing the Isle of the Dogs in London Docklands in the 1970s.

In the city centre area, Newcastle faced up to such challenges by drawing up a Concordat to work together with Gateshead, its historic rival across the Tyne. A series of projects have transformed the old Quayside, kick-started by a development corporation. A joint venture between the City, English Partnerships and English Heritage has successfully regenerated the historic

heart of the city around Grainger Town. There is a strong shopping and cultural centre, and the city is renowned for its appeal to young people.

Suburbs like Jesmond and Gosforth are as popular and high priced as anywhere, with some attractive new housing. For example, a quality housing development has replaced the old Proctor and Gamble head office at Grove Park. But the bulk of private housing investment has been in new housing on the edge of the communities that stretch along the Tyneside Metro out to the coast a few miles away, sometimes on sites cleared and decontaminated by the development corporation. These have continued to draw the upwardly mobile out of the city.

Knowledge based jobs have expanded in Newcastle, notably in the University and in new companies like Sage electronics. There are also the prospects of capitalising on the offshore and renewable energy industry, and business services. A major challenge for the City has been to hang on to talented young



people. As one response, the City adopted a *Going for Growth* policy in 1999, and commissioned masterplans for restructuring old inner city areas like Walker. At the same time new private housing schemes were approved on greenfield sites in the direction of the Airport such as at Great Park, where Sage have built their headquarters.



New housing at Grove Park (top) and Great Park (above)

Generating housing market demand in Walker is more difficult than ever. The Council is no longer Labour controlled, and policies related to *Going for Growth* have changed, but so many planning permissions have been given for better locations (said to be about 15 years supply worth) that developers will act on these first - if and when the market recovers. Furthermore there are competing pressures for public investment in three priority areas including the West End, where there are cleared sites large enough for several thousand homes. There are other housing estates in need of renewal, like Byker, which is on the Metro Line and which maybe transferred to a trust at a nominal price to help in raising funds for the refurbishment of its listed buildings.

LESSONS FROM WALKER

Presentation

David Slater brought out some uncomfortable truths about Walker's regeneration, which need to be addressed directly now that budgetary cuts are starting to bite:

- Despite significant public investment, around £45 million to date, not enough of the hoped-for transformation has taken place.



- There is widespread frustration among residents at failure to deliver social, as well as physical change.

- While the City Council has reaffirmed its agreement with Places for People, one of the largest property management, development and regeneration companies in the UK, to act as lead developer for the next 15 years, they will not have enough resources to turn the area around on their own.

- Hence there may be a need to rethink policies and priorities, and to resolve 'what Walker is really for?'

Regeneration disappeared from Party Manifestos at the election, and the New Localism does not offer any obvious solutions to areas like Walker, other than Ian Duncan-Smith's idea of moving populations to where there is work. Guy Currey, who only took over as Area Programme Director East a year ago, presented a frank assessment of the current situation, (which affects a number of other local authorities involved in SUNN):

- The area is one of the previous government's Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders and has some of the highest levels of deprivation.
- The area suffered a 40% population loss between 1971 and 2001 (that is before the current programme began).
- 18% of residents are unemployed, which is over twice the regional average, 56% have no qualification, which is almost thrice the city average, and there are some deep-rooted problems.

- There is lack of housing choice, and few quality services (for example, the number of shops in Church Walk shopping centre has fallen from 40 in 1962 to 6).
- The population profile tends to be skewed towards families with young children and the elderly.
- Despite this, population loss means 420 places are empty in the area's four primary schools.
- The area suffers from being relatively unknown rather than from having a bad reputation.

To counter these problems, there has been a strong partnership through Bridging NewcastleGateshead, and a number of related bodies, around a strategy which involves:

- Engaging the community in the planning process
- Clearing the worst houses and improving the rest
- Developing some award winning green spaces
- Creating a new community focus in the heart (planning underway)
- Changing perceptions (or post code stigma)

The objectives for Walker are now seen as much wider than just building new housing:

- Successes include two innovative schemes that have been designed with the community – Rivers Gate and Hibernia Village and clearing the worst of the housing.
- The optimistic targets of originally building some 3,000 new homes to replace the existing stock have been revised downwards several times, with the 2009 Business Plan setting a target of 1,200 homes.
- Bridging NewcastleGateshead involves a number of partners, including the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), One North East, Places for People, Bellway and ISOS, and the ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) Your Home Newcastle.



- Consideration is now being given to interim uses for the green spaces that may take years to develop, and to measures aimed at *Keeping Residents With Us*.

Study Tour

Members were particularly impressed by Belmont Green and the River's Gate scheme, as well as by the scale of the challenges facing Walker Riverside in maintaining the momentum. Like other major housing schemes, there is a difficult issue of how to provide a proper heart to the different community(ies), which were visible when we looked out from the top of St Anthony's Tower. While some upmarket development has occurred overlooking the river, the general impression along Walker Road is of a well-maintained, but largely abandoned area, that feels very isolated. Much of the green space is in fact land cleared for new housing.

Belmont Green is an example of a small neighbourhood 'green' that has been designed in conjunction with the local community as a space everyone can enjoy, and which could be a model for other areas. Features include:

- Involvement of local artists who then worked with members of the community using unfired cobbles that could be carved.
- Well-designed seats and litter bins.
- High standard of maintenance (and no vandalism).
- Natural feeling and a place for events.



River's Gate is an example of a contemporary looking housing scheme that could have much wider appeal. It has been developed by Places for People to a plan that largely reflects local people's preferences using Enquiry by Design techniques. Phase one has 68 units on a 1.4 hectare site (48 units to the hectare). It has sold well, largely to people with local connections (90%), but has required a heavy subsidy. Features include:



- Spacious layout thanks to the inclusion of two three storey apartment blocks.
- Inclusion of a Home Zone with shared surfaces.
- Parking out front (and with no fears for security).
- Varied housing design with some seven different types of home in 68 units, and some flats.
- Variety of tenure types including shared ownership, try before you buy, and with a package that includes extras
- Blind tenure making it impossible to tell which homes are rented, and with controls to prevent 'buy to let'.



- Homes achieve Sustainable Homes Code 4 Very Good standard thanks to heavy insulation, passive stack ventilation, solar water heating, and well-oriented windows.
- The development is located in an area that has been greatly improved, thanks to the upgrading of the adjoining Oval housing estate, and therefore feels safe and welcoming.

Hibernia Village is at a lower density (36 units per hectare) and lower cost development by Bellway that will comprise 143 units. Features include:

- Built in at least three phases, starting with social rent units to enable people whose homes were being demolished to move only once.
- Designed in conjunction with local people, who have been able to move close by where they formerly lived, and including a communal garden developed with Groundwork.



- It includes a number of bungalows as well as two and three storey houses
- The layout is generally more conventional, for example with clear pavements.
- Tenure blind.

Other projects: **Harbottle Park** lies at the centre of Walker, and is being upgraded at its gateways. **St Anthony's Tower** has been made secure with a concierge at the entrance, and a 'social enterprise' runs a café in a new building opposite. Adjoining **Pottery Bank**, which has the highest level of disadvantage, is to be upgraded in ways that will transform the look of the area, for example through new coloured rendered bays.



The **Heart of Walker** will include new retail (and demand has been expressed for a 5,500 sq m superstore) the upgrading of the leisure centre, a new primary school to replace two existing schools, and a multi-use building to provide health and library facilities, and a new civic square (but with community facilities being provided in existing places elsewhere).

WORKSHOP FINDINGS

Points made in the initial discussions included:

- The importance but difficulty of influencing aspirations and social mobility, and the political issue of whether this should even be attempted.
- The extremely long-drawn out process of development, often due to difficulties in buying out property owners and decontaminating land.
- The difficulty of changing the image of 'the Council end of town' so that people from outside would want to live there (Jo Dean and Annette Hastings produced an interesting report on this subject for JRF *Challenging images: Housing estates, stigma and regeneration*, which is available on the SUNN file-sharing site.)
- The difficulty of ensuring that those living in a neighbourhood like Walker would get (or even want to get) any of the jobs that became available.

This raised again the policy issue of whether to create more balanced communities, given the undoubted costs and difficulties. A number of good reasons were put forward in the discussion, including:

- Reversing a declining population and hence improving the quality of services.
- Increasing Council revenue and hence making areas more viable.
- Raising educational standards through including children with higher aspirations.
- Making young people feel part of a wider community (and not isolated).
- Using land better and hence relieving pressures on green spaces.
- Reducing congestion and travel times by people living closer to work
- Making good use of social and physical infrastructure that would be costly to replace.

Further evidence on mixed communities is set out in JRF research reports available to download from the SUNN file-sharing website <https://sunnetwork.basecamphq.com/login> as well as a literature review that URBED undertook for English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation.

Developing a Stronger Role for the Public Sector

How do you make the numbers add up? – Unlike most other SUNN new communities, the limited viability of the local housing market and intense need for social and physical regeneration triggered lively discussion of the appropriate role of public sector finance in a community where demand for housing for sale was weak, and hence where a strong case had to be made for gap finance.

One member felt that public finance had already played too big a role; another noted that River's Gate had to be seen as a loss-leader to restart the housing market. But another suggested that the tenure diversification which brought new families into Walker would have unmeasurable positive benefits such as mixing family backgrounds in school intakes which could aid social mobility through new perspectives and aspirations and encourage parents to support higher educational standards.

A related suggestion was that revitalisation of Walker Riverside ought to be seen as part of the 'jigsaw' of regeneration of Newcastle itself, by a 'public sector investment ripple', which in turn would rebound eventually to benefit households in Walker. Equally important was the continuing need to stem the flow of population from Walker and Newcastle as a whole, or Council tax revenues would continue to be threatened. It was noted that neither the failure

of the housing market nor the current economic crisis triggered by the banking industry was justification for the public sector to turn its back on the people of Walker - which had been the engine of the city's prosperity for so many decades.

The point was also made that Walker Riverside was well positioned close to the city centre and the need for sustainable transport suggested that, compared to far-flung suburban destinations, it was still an excellent place to promote living close to sources of employment and thus reducing the need to travel and CO₂ emissions. This suggests the importance of viewing the future of Walker Riverside in a city-wide and sub-regional context with a long range vision of the future of land use and transport in the area. As will be discussed below, although Walker faces serious problems in terms of its need for regeneration, it is also emerging as a riverside, inner city neighbourhood with substantial - if long-term - potential for delivering high quality of life to existing and new residents.

Time frame for development and regeneration – The evidence from Walker Riverside and other SUNN neighbourhoods, is that the development of new communities is at minimum a 10 - 15 year project but in regeneration areas can be a 20 - 30 year project. This does not sit well with the requirements of volume house builders, who want quick returns. It therefore requires a longer-term perspective of the public good, which can only be provided by the public sector and third sector organisations such as RSLs, working in partnership, which is the organisational arrangement for Walker Riverside. Discussion compared organisational approaches for Walker with a new urban regeneration vehicle for the west of Newcastle – a 50/50 public and private partnership.

This is not to suggest that the private sector does not play an important role but only that the most productive development processes occur when public, private and voluntary sectors work in partnership, each playing a role appropriate to the task and in manner, with interactions according to a discussant *'based on trust and dialogue between all parties'*.

The role of the planning system – An important role of the public sector is to manage the planning system so that it supports the vital role of new communities in providing housing in good neighbourhoods in sustainably appropriate locations. There was a strong feeling in discussion that the current planning system is based on conflict and antipathy to new communities rather than consensus around what is good for the nation and the city.

Planning needs to begin with a clear vision of what a place should aim to be like, and the steps needed to move in that direction. This visioning process is not a technical exercise but a political process of council leaders consulting with communities and matching and brokering their needs with the long term, strategic objectives for city development. Then spatial and transport planning can provide the support needed for community building and also the certainty the private sector prefers for its investment decision making.

Thus both sub-regional and city-wide strategic planning is needed to set the context for site masterplans and development frameworks. At the Walker level, the development partnership is producing a 'local investment plan' to establish priorities for public investment and to link housing development to the provision of infrastructure at the appropriate time.

Achieving Balanced Communities

Is a balanced community important? - The workshop kicked off by noting the underlying complexity of the issues embodied in the term 'balanced'. On the one hand, attempting to devise some optimum mix of tenures and related household incomes, and then assuming a healthy community would result, seems to smack of social engineering. On the other hand, decades of attempting to regenerate 'unbalanced', i.e. mono-tenure communities dominated by residualised households in social housing, alerts us to the dangers of not addressing the issue of managing a mixed community from the beginning. These 'unbalanced' communities are often stigmatised in the local press with residents suffering 'postcode discrimination' in the labour market, thus perpetuating social exclusion.

Like Newcastle as a whole, Walker Riverside has seen an out-migration of the most able households, not least as people in work found they were able to move up and out in the housing market. Also prior to regeneration, none of the types of housing they might aspire to could be found locally. Further, those who can afford to buy may prefer to go to other developments, where they can predict better long term returns on their investment in the future, rather than take on the uncertainties of regeneration areas, as reported by one of those accompanying the walking tour, without sufficient incentives.

A key conclusion of discussion is to move away from the notion of 'balanced' which implies some optimum range of tenures and household income levels and instead to focus on providing 'quality neighbourhoods'. These include improvement of the physical environment, including housing, public space,

decent shops, educational and other facilities. They also require 'social development' which is people-oriented, attempting to raise local aspirations and ability to participate in the labour market, for example training schemes and apprenticeships. The larger and inescapable issue for Walker is that unemployment and lack of economic activity is around two and a half times the Newcastle average, so the tasks here in community building are not just around design but also significant challenges of regeneration, and the re-introduction of a culture of work.

Citizen participation in community-building - Achieving positive participation of existing and potential new residents in community-building is a contentious and difficult challenge. Many SUNN member neighbourhoods are building on brown-field land and have involved residents of surrounding neighbourhoods in planning for the new community. In Walker Riverside, the issue is sharpened by the fact that new housing is being built within an existing community, to diversify tenure options. As a Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (HMRP), resources have been available to demolish existing occupied housing and provide residents with new housing in the same locality and even on the same site.

But a number of the assumptions which underpin the HMRP programme and the demolition programme have proved wrong. The workshop discussion group included two local residents (involved in the process since 1997) who were critical of the community building process (including both community consultation and choosing the developer), for two reasons. First, they felt that in agreeing to a substantial demolition process, they were promised a range of benefits which have not materialised – in part because the severe housing market downturn undermined many of the assumptions built into early planning. Because the risk of market downturn was not built into early planning, the community representatives felt that 'false promises' had been made, as well as 'disinformation' being given and decisions having been made prior to consultation on the scale of change that was to be worked towards (minor, medium and major proposals).

Second, community representatives felt that the situation undermined the quality of their participation and that their mounting concerns about a community suffering the consequences of 'mass' demolition were not taken seriously (there had been demolition of 500 homes even before the consultation programme had started). Rather they felt the consultation process was manipulated to foster tenure diversification over the interests of residents, and the extent to which the consultation was meaningful open to question.

Underpinning the problem was the assumption of the HMRP that demolition was preferable to refurbishment of existing housing, and that a market existed for a 'balanced community' in terms of tenure diversification, which has not materialised. These were said to be the 'top-down' assumptions of the central government funding programme which seem to assume that adjusting housing market conditions and changing perceptions through demolition and new build would also lead to community regeneration in an area which had suffered decades of the impact of deindustrialisation, particularly the loss of the ship-building industry and full time male employment.

A further fear of local residents is that, having hitched Walker regeneration to the assumptions of the HMRP, the current severe downturn in the housing market will cause the regeneration programme to falter - which will further undermine local morale. However it is important to note that whatever the community's perspective on demolition, the regeneration team argues that they have refurbished more homes than taken down, and that many people re-housed are happy with the out-turn of events, although they were less likely to attend meetings.

They also pointed that no one predicted the banking crisis which now suggests that the regeneration of Walker Riverside might be a twenty year rather than a ten year programme, which is entirely true of many attempts to regenerate Britain's most deprived neighbourhoods.

In conclusion, community representatives suggested that participation ought to be characterised by honesty about benefits and costs of development, transparency in provision of information to residents, good communication and, above all, respect for residents' views. Taking into account the need for social cohesion – decanting and breaking up what was described as 'a tightly knit community' may be seen as wasteful. A broad conclusion relevant to tenure diversification is that while bringing higher income households into a hitherto deprived neighbourhood might be a helpful means of introducing social diversity, no bad thing, it would hardly be sufficient to address the needs of deprived households.

Fostering Connectivity and Good Design

Is retailing the heart of the community? - An important design and planning issue to emerge from the Walker Riverside is around the question of retail provision in new communities. The contrast between Church Walk, which had 40 shops when built in the 1970's and now has six –is a typical story of

neighbourhood retail decline. To reposition the area, a new “Heart of Walker” is proposed about ½ mile from the existing centre which “may attract a major food retailer and thus help put Walker on the map” and in the process help change perceptions. But, against a background of continuing neighbourhood retail decline, there are significant risks in any strategy which involves moving or closing existing provision.

In terms of retail provision generally, the evidence is that many people in Britain spatially define the ‘heart’ of their urban neighbourhood by the location of local shops and community facilities, like the library, in a high street or estate precinct. On the other hand, superstore provision has decimated local shopping and, as in Walker, many local shopping areas are a shadow of their former selves. In the current economic downturn, more and more shops are being boarded up, many of which will never see retail use again. This is an important issue which is now flagged for future discussion in SUNN.

Changing perceptions of neighbourhoods - There is also a larger issue, relevant in Walker Riverside and many other run-down communities, which is how to change both local and broader perceptions of these neighbourhoods as good places to live and invest, and thus counter ‘postcode discrimination’ against residents in and near the area. Prejudices are easily formed, for example by shops being boarded up, but hard to change, as people fail to notice improvements. An intention in Walker is for provision of new, high quality modern housing, such as at River’s Gate, along with a new school (no approved) and quality retail to change such perceptions. There is anecdotal evidence that it is doing so, both for local residents and people living elsewhere in Newcastle. But it is still on a small scale and clearly much more will need to be done to overcome long-held prejudices.

Linking new and old - An important message to emerge from Walker Riverside is that when well-designed newly built housing is provided, refurbishment of existing housing is also important so existing tenants don’t feel disadvantaged in comparing new with old. The refurbishment of the Oval area in Walker was cited as a good example of addressing needs of existing stock and new-build simultaneously, with housing demand increasing and crime rates decreasing.

There is also some tension between high quality design at the ‘cutting edge’ of housing aspirations, compared with more ordinary, formulaic housing estates which cater for what is currently mass market aspirations in British housing. First time home-buyers, including residents of Walker Riverside wanting to move up into home ownership may not at all aspire to mass-market

design. Similarly eco-innovation, such as high levels of insulation or solar orientation, can be largely invisible in new housing and of little or no relevance to the community at large as opposed to new residents. Clearly if existing Walker residents have aspirations to home ownership they may prefer low cost home ownership if their incomes are vulnerable.

These points highlight a fundamental tension in new community building in Britain, over to what extent new development should meet the existing demands of the majority and to what extent innovative design, should attempt to raise the bar in housing aspiration, either for design quality or eco-innovation in terms of energy efficiency, water recycling etc.

There is also tension in Walker over the extent to which new build is taken automatically as preferable to refurbished council properties, with some re-housed residents feeling worse-off in terms of interior space and garden size, compared with the very limited proportions of room size in new houses to keep prices within that affordable by either RSLs or buyers. With regard to the demolished stock, residents noting that while maintenance of council stock had been poor, the design fundamentals were good and other demolished housing being Edwardian terraces which could have been retained. Questions also arise over the extent to which a 'sense of community' is undermined by demolition with at least a proportion of residents choosing to leave the area, compared with hanging on for subsequent re-housing.

Finally there is tension over the extent of provision of affordable housing, with the Area Action Plan for Walker proposing 20% of social rented housing, set against the aspirations of community representatives for 35% provision against a housing need even higher. But the extent of social housing provision is dictated not just by design but by funding mechanisms in social housing provision. Other options, such as self-build or cohousing (where groups of people commission their own homes) or niche segments like housing for the elderly do not seem to have been sufficiently explored. This is possibly because at the ward level, politicians are Labour in a Lib-Dem council and may view tenure diversification and home ownership as a threat to their political base.

Connectivity There are four significant issues in Walker Riverside around connectivity. First, transport links to and from the neighbourhood are poor; it is not on the Metro and new bus routes may not be economically viable in the current climate in a country where public transport has to pay a significant portion of its operating costs. If Walker remains poorly connected in transport terms it fosters social exclusion by making it hard for local residents to access

the wider labour market and amenities of the city-region. Second, residents in Walker may not get new jobs, for example, in a new wind turbine production facility because of a lack of skills and aspirations. Third, they compete with residents driving in from further away. Finally, by tradition, people do not move around Walker Riverside and are more or less cut-off from what is potentially a delightful riverside park.

Green space in the community What is striking about Walker Riverside is the extent of potentially good green space which currently appears very undervalued and under appreciated. In part this is due to the extent of the loss of economically productive buildings (including most of the riverside ship building industry) and housing over decades, and a keen tree planting programme. But the design and use of green space is haphazard with much of it giving the appearance of unwanted, vacant land, slightly dangerous and subject to fly-tipping and littering, rather than any sense of place or of being in a park.

A number of participants felt Walker's green space and riverside was an underutilised asset, perhaps one of its principal ones. They argued that current plans are undervaluing the potential of waterfront regeneration and the need to positively link Walker to other nearby communities, such as St Peter's Basin.

These observations on Walker's green space and the *potentially* wonderful riverside setting, combined with its location close to the city centre, begin to suggest an answer to the question posed of '*what is Walker for?*' The answer might well be that the long-term vision for Walker is a pleasant, wonderful located inner city neighbourhood known for its riverside regional parkland and whose residents, new and old, enjoy life there and make significant use of sustainable transport because of its favourable location close to the city centre. In other words, plans for restoring the population may have to be re-thought.

CONCLUSIONS

Places like Walker may well be close to tipping point, when small changes in investment could have huge ramifications. The difficulties facing Walker Riverside brought out the need for organisational and financial mechanisms that could outlast political swings, and property market ups and downs. They raised the hard choices that many local authorities will be facing, as government cuts back its support, and neither the private sector or housing associations can fill the gaps. They brought out the importance of combining action to improve or build new housing with other measures to boost local

economies, and ensure that residents had the necessary skills and aspirations.

While it may be easy for politicians in Westminster to say there is no money, in fact the costs of leaving areas like Walker dormant and uncared for could be far greater (for example if drug-induced crime takes root). There was a clear difference between the short-term financial returns from house-building, and the longer-term environmental and social returns from building sustainable urban neighbourhoods. As the old business model of selling sites to house-builders no longer worked, it is crucial to develop more robust mechanisms. Thus Joint Venture Companies are being set up in Scotswood in the West End of Newcastle, where a developer has been appointed to take forward 2,000 homes. Another option is for a developer to take on a bundle of sites, some good some poor, as we heard Gateshead is now doing.

This report is therefore intended to generate reactions as to what members of the network might want to do together to warn against the dangers of neglect. It also starts to demonstrate some practical alternatives to retain and rebuild more balanced communities in our cities, including innovative forms of housing and open space.

APPENDIX A – LIST OF DELEGATES

Richard Armitage, Richard Armitage Transport Consultancy
Peter Aviston, Places for People
Julie Bhabra, Newcastle City Council
Julie Bullen, Newcastle City Council
Eddie Byrne, Local Resident
Jane Byrne, Local Resident
Michael Carley, SUNN Team
Guy Currey, Newcastle City Council
Jacquie Dale, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Nicholas Falk, SUNN Team
Claire Farrell, SUNN Team
Laura Foster, Norfolk Charitable Trust
Mike Galloway, Orchard Park Community Council
David Hardy, Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
John Hocking, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust
Julia Holmes, Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association
Kirsty Human, South Cambridgeshire District Council
Nigel Ingram, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Tim Jones, Newcastle City Council
Francesca King, SUNN Team
John Low, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
James McMillan, Great Places
Jo Mills, South Cambridgeshire District Council
Michelle Playford, Bridging NewcastleGateshead
Antony Proietti, Cambridgeshire County Council
Charles Robinson, Dickens Heath Parish Council
Andy Rose, Telford and Wrekin Borough Council
Guy Scott, Ironstone Development Group
David Slater, Newcastle City Council
John Sparkes, Bridging NewcastleGateshead
Alan Stewart, John Thompson & Partners
Janet Sutherland, John Thompson & Partners
Sheila Tolley, Bridging NewcastleGateshead
Rachel Underwood, Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association
Mike Vout, Telford and Wrekin Borough Council
Martin Walker, Newcastle City Council
John Watts, Trinity Estates
Graham Whitehead, Bridging NewcastleGateshead
Anne Wyatt, SUNN Team