

East of England VCS Infrastructure Consortia

Lead Bodies Evidence Paper

Growth Agenda and Changing Population

13 November 2008

Growth Agenda and Changing Population

This is one of a series of Evidence Papers commissioned by the East of England VCS Infrastructure Consortia Lead Bodies to inform the regional co-ordination of ChangeUp within the East of England.

Published by Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire on behalf of the East of England VCS Infrastructure Consortia Lead Bodies Group.

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Voluntary and Community Action is committed to strengthening the effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector in Bedfordshire by developing, enabling, promoting and supporting voluntary and community action. It seeks to achieve this through advocacy; capacity building activities; enhancing the provision of volunteering opportunities; the exchange of information; the provision of training; advice and consultancy; and by working in partnership with others.

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Published 13 November 2008

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The writing and publication of this report has been funded by Capacitybuilders.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform the regional co-ordination of ChangeUp within the East of England.

The research leading to this report has examined a range of sources concerned with spatial planning, infrastructure delivery and the sector's engagement in these issues. We have also examined evidence from growth localities within the East of England, reviewed key text and drawn from sub-regional Consortia Plans.

The report outlines the key issues, related to growth, as they affect the third sector, and third sector support services, in the East of England. It also makes recommendations as to how support services can best take the issues forward at a regional level.

Experience from the development of new communities in housing growth areas across the country shows that insufficient account is taken of the need for new social infrastructure and community development in the planning, early stages and throughout the development of new communities.

Building new communities is not just about erecting thousands of new dwellings. It must have regard to the people that will make up those new communities. Those moving into a new housing development will include many new and young families; providing a need for parent and toddler groups, play facilities etc. Residents' groups, new community groups, volunteering opportunities, and opportunities for people to get together through a range of social activities are also needed.

People arriving in new communities will not know other new arrivals or the availability of local services, both public and community based. They need to be provided with information, advice and guidance on local services and enabled to create and participate in local community activities, clubs and societies.

All these activities contribute to the creation of a strong sense of community. If these facilities and services are not provided people will move away from the area, feel isolated, insecure and unable to contribute to civil society. Ultimately, it will create a failing community, rather than a sustainable one, causing further isolation, insecurity and low levels of volunteering and community activity.

Over the next 15 years many new communities will be created in the East of England through new Growth Areas (and Locations), Growth Points and Eco-Towns. Millions of pounds will be invested in new houses, roads, schools, health facilities and other public buildings. It is also vital that investment is made in building the *social* fabric of these new communities and enabling them to be successfully integrated with people living in or near the areas experiencing new development. This needs a different sort of 'infrastructure': '**social infrastructure**'.

Plans are needed to build new communities into strong communities; those that are vibrant, where people feel a sense of identity, are actively involved in local community activity and where there is a culture of helping each other and of solving problems together.

Social infrastructure means providing community development staff, supporting and funding new community and voluntary groups, helping to organise volunteering, providing a place for people and local groups to meet, and developing community leaders. Through this investment the capacity of the community will be developed so that it has all the hallmarks of a 'strong community'.

But all of this needs to be championed, coordinated and delivered by the voluntary and community sector, in partnership with others – if it is left to planners and developers there is little chance of it succeeding – and that means Local VCS Infrastructure Organisations 'stepping up to the mark' and providing the leadership that is needed to ensure it happens.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Context

Although the Government currently intend to push ahead with the proposed housing growth (identified below) the current economic crisis will inevitably result in future changes, at least to the rate of growth. Potential house purchasers are finding it difficult to obtain mortgages and this is affecting the number of properties sold. There is currently a surplus of new properties, particularly apartments, that developers are finding difficult to sell, given the current slow-down. Many house builders have laid-off staff, put on hold current planning permissions and are finding it difficult to obtain the loans and credit needed to build new developments ahead of securing sales. As a consequence, the Government's housing growth targets will have to be reduced, although this is unlikely to be considered until local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships refresh their Local Area Agreements (during November 2008 – March 2009).

2007 Comprehensive Spending Review

The Government's 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review includes a number of key priorities for the Government in putting the Third Sector at the heart of work to build strong, active and connected communities, in partnership with local government, and in developing the sector's contribution to social and economic regeneration, including:

- enabling the sector's role in campaigning and representation
- increasing opportunities for participation in civic life and decisions on how services are delivered
- strengthening partnership working between local authorities and the Third Sector (including commissioning and procurement)
- developing community endowments to provide sustainable grant making
- investing in community anchor organisations and community asset and enterprise development
- supporting volunteering, particularly among young people and socially excluded groups
- raising awareness of the social enterprise business model and its potential for delivering public services
- investment in third sector infrastructure.

ChangeUp – The Government's Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector

In ChangeUp, the Government has set out its Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the voluntary and community sector as a whole (Home Office, June 2004). ChangeUp recognises however, that if citizens and communities are to get the support they need to become more actively involved, that support must be within easy reach, within their neighbourhood or parish, or focused on the community of interest with which they identify.

Firm Foundations - The Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building

In the Government's Framework for Community Capacity Building (Home Office, December 2004), community capacity building is defined as:

'Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills, abilities and confidence of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities.'

This followed the Home Office review of community capacity-building, which found that:

The Government will only achieve many of its objectives if it fully involves citizens and communities. This means investing in successful efforts to build the skills, abilities, knowledge and confidence of people and community groups, to enable them to take effective action and play leading roles in the development of their communities. It also means expanding learning and development within public services, so that professionals, practitioners and policy-makers are better equipped to engage with citizens and communities. The review highlighted the need to recognise both geographical communities – neighbourhoods, parishes – and communities of people with a common interest or identity.

- Firm Foundations, Home Office, December 2004 [page 3]

The *Firm Foundations* review also identified a number of outcomes from community capacity-building:

- **Social capital and cohesion** – enabling communities to develop a common vision and sense of belonging where people from different backgrounds feel valued for the part they can play in making their community a better place to live, as well as having the ability to network beyond their own neighbourhoods.
- **Community self-help** – building the capacity of community-led service providers to plan and deliver activities and programmes to meet local needs.
- **Participatory governance** – enabling citizens, individually and collectively, to have a greater say in decisions that affect their communities' well-being.
- **Sustainable involvement** – increasing the confidence and capacity of individuals and groups to participate actively in their communities in ways and through structures that are supported and maintained from within those communities.'

- Firm Foundations, Home Office, December 2004 [page 7]

The Framework goes on to identify a number of objectives for community capacity-building, one of which is ensuring 'that appropriate support is accessible at neighbourhood, parish or community level.' The Framework picked out the key components of such support:

- **A meeting space or a base** (sometimes called a 'hub') which is available, welcoming and accessible to all. This could be a physical hub such as a community centre or village hall, school, community flat or shop, or development trust or settlement, or a virtual hub such as a website or e-mail network.
- **Access to seed corn funding**, most often small grants funds or community chests, which have proven very cost-effective in stimulating grass-roots activity and capacity building.
- Access to support provided by **workers with community development skills**, within the framework of values that underpin community development. A recent survey has uncovered the wide range of fields of work and organisations in which community development workers are found. The critical element is that they have the scope to start from the goals and needs that communities and groups define for themselves, helping them to learn the knowledge and skills needed for active involvement and to support their own groups.
- **A forum or network** that is deliberately inclusive, open and participatory, that is owned by and accountable to the community. This could be for example a network of community groups, a broad-based community association, a tenant management organisation or a neighbourhood partnership. It will ensure that individual actions and initiatives are drawn together in mutual support, rather than left to fragment and divide communities.

- *Access to high quality and appropriate **learning opportunities** to equip people for active citizenship and engagement. These will range from formal courses, through mentoring to informal sharing of ideas and experience. All must be grounded in people's own experiences, and be seen to have direct practical value.'*

- *Firm Foundations, Home Office, December 2004 [page 11]*

Communities in Control

The Government's White Paper on community engagement, *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2008) highlights the importance of the third sector in enabling individual citizens to be active in their communities, as volunteers and as members of community groups. It also recognises that *community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities* and goes on to state:

We support the role of community development workers as a catalyst for active citizenship. However, there are too few specialist community development workers to carry out this work on the scale needed. We are therefore keen to support local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) that want to prioritise community development, enabling front-line workers to do more community building.

- *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power, Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2008 (paragraph 2.24)*

Sustainable Communities Plan

The Government's sustainable communities plan, *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, February 2003), has been updated and is regularly kept under review. It sets out overall aims for the four growth areas, three of which include substantial areas within the East of England. In October 2006 identified what were called New Growth Points and in July 2007 developers and local authorities were invited to propose schemes for eco-towns, being new settlements of 5-20,000 homes with the whole settlement able to reach zero carbon standards. The Government have identified a shortlist of 15 locations for eco-towns, four of which are in the East of England. The final list of locations will be announced before the end of 2008.

Growth Areas

- London / Stansted / Cambridge/ Peterborough, which includes the Peterborough, Cambridge, Harlow and Stevenage growth locations
- Thames Gateway, which includes part of South Essex (The Essex Thames Gateway)
- Milton Keynes and South Midlands, which includes Bedford, Kempston and Northern Marston Vale growth location and the Luton and South Bedfordshire growth location

New Growth Points

Norwich

Haven Gateway (Felixstow, Harwich, Ipswich, Mistley and Colchester)

Thetford

The Government's plans for these Growth Points describe the new homes, jobs and regeneration that will be brought about by these initiatives, along with the improvements to transport infrastructure, the public realm and green infrastructure. Only the Thetford proposals mention the *physical, social and green infrastructure required to make the town a truly sustainable community.*

Eco-Towns (Shortlisted Locations)

Elsenham (Essex)

Marston Vale (Bedfordshire)

Hanley Grange (Cambridgeshire)

Coltishall (Norfolk)

The Developers' proposals for the Eco-Towns describe the community infrastructure that will be put in place, including schools, healthcare facilities; leisure, arts and cultural facilities and multi-purpose community buildings.

Elsenham proposes to establish the Elsenham Community Trust, a community-owned organisation funded initially by the Fairfield Partnership to oversee social and community development, including:

- supporting community development workers to welcome new residents and help establish social and other networks;
- managing sports and community facilities and potentially some retail units to secure a stream of income for the Trust;
- promoting social education programmes within the development.

The Hanley Grange proposals seek to ensure the delivery of all social and physical infrastructure required in a timely manner and maintained into the long term through a Town Trust, which will be responsible for (among other things)

- community centres
- community development and arrival workers
- management of leisure facilities, open space and allotments
- volunteering and 'time-banking' initiatives.

Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy

The Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) Sub Regional Strategy was published in March 2005 by the Deputy Prime Minister. The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a *clear, agreed, sub-regional strategy for the period 2001-2021, and a long-term spatial vision for the sub-region towards the year 2031*. The objectives of the Strategy are:

- *To achieve a major increase in the number of new homes provided in the area, meeting needs for affordable housing and a range of types and sizes of market housing*
- *To provide for a commensurate level of economic growth and developing skills in the workforce, particularly in the high value, knowledge-based sectors*
- *To locate development in the main urban areas to support urban renaissance, regeneration of deprived areas, recycling of land and sustainable patterns of travel*
- *To ensure that development contributes to an improved environment, by requiring high standards of design and sustainable construction, protecting and enhancing environmental assets (including landscape and biodiversity) and providing green space and related infrastructure (green infrastructure)*
- *To meet existing infrastructure needs and provide for requirements generated by new development by investing in new and improved infrastructure, by planning to reduce the need to travel and by creating a shift to more sustainable modes of travel*
- *To create sustainable communities by ensuring that economic, environmental, **social** and cultural **infrastructure** needs are met in step with growth*

- Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy
March 2005 [page 11 emboldening added]

The voluntary and community sector has an important part to play, and much to contribute, in the development of sustainable communities. The MKSM Public Examination and the final MKSM Strategy both recognised the important role the sector can play in building the social infrastructure of new sustainable communities:

Sustainable Communities will be achieved through the implementation of development in accordance with the following principles [including]: promoting and facilitating community development through the active involvement of the voluntary and community sector.

- Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy
March 2005 [page 19]

This was the first and only cross-regional Sub-Regional Strategy to cover a Growth Area; subsequent strategies were included in the Regional Spatial Strategies for each Region, with the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy forming a supplementary document to the East of England Plan (see below). The objectives cited above illustrate what is expected from the growth locations being developed through current Government policy.

Planning Policy Statement 12

The Government's recently published *Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities through Local Spatial Planning* (Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2008) concerns itself more with the process of infrastructure planning than the type of infrastructure planned for. Nevertheless, it clearly states that the Core Strategy *vision should be in general conformity with the RSS and it should closely relate to any Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for the area*. Statutory Guidance (for LSPs) states that *local authorities should as far as possible align the Core Strategy with the SCS*. It goes on to state that the SCS and LDF should incorporate consideration of social and economic effects in addition to matters outlined in the Strategic Environment Assessment directive.

PPS12 also states that *the strategic objectives form the link between the high level vision and the detailed strategy. They should expand the vision into key specific issues for the area which need to be addressed, and how that will be achieved within the timescale of the core strategy*. It is therefore important to ensure that social infrastructure issues are clearly stated in the vision of local Sustainable Community Strategies so that these can then be argued for in the Core Strategy vision, objectives and detail.

Regional Context

Regional Economic Strategy

In *Inventing our Future Collective Action for a Sustainable Economy: The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031* the East of England Development Agency sets out its commitment to the third sector, in relation to the contribution it can make to economic development within the region. Priority 5: A Vibrant, Skilled and Resourced Third Sector highlights that *third sector organisations often have a good understanding of need at individual and community level, and the ability to deliver services in a tailored and sensitive way* [and that third sector organisations] *can play important roles in helping to empower people and communities to tackle local issues and have a major economic impact in their own right*. The implementation priorities identified in the plan refer to *improving quality of place ... in disadvantaged communities* (rather than new communities) [East of England Development Agency, 2008: 74].

East of England Plan

A new Regional Spatial Strategy - *The East of England Plan* - was published in September 2008 and sets out the spatial strategy for the region and specifies the additional dwellings that need to be built between now and 2021 – See Appendix 2. Policy SS1 Achieving Sustainable Development includes the following as elements contributing to the creation of sustainable communities:

- *active, inclusive and safe in terms of community identity and cohesion, social inclusion and leisure opportunities;*
- *well run in terms of participation, representation and leadership;*
- *well served in terms of public, private, community and voluntary services.*

Policy SS2 Overall Spatial Strategy goes on to state that growth should be directed to the region's urban areas where *there is the greatest potential to build on existing concentrations of activities and physical and social infrastructure [...].* The Plan goes on to state that *where housing is proposed consideration needs to be given to its implications for the full range of health and social infrastructure that should be provided or augmented in parallel with development. Local Development Documents need to take account of the 2004 Regional Social Strategy [...]* [Paragraph 3.11].

Policy SS3: Key Centres for Development and Change states that new development should be concentrated at the following locations:

- Basildon
- Bedford/Kempston/Northern Marston Vale
- Bury St Edmunds
- Cambridge
- Chelmsford
- Colchester
- Great Yarmouth
- Harlow
- Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City
- Hemel Hempstead
- Ipswich
- King's Lynn
- Lowestoft
- Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis and Leighton-Linslade
- Norwich
- Peterborough
- Southend-on-Sea
- Stevenage
- Thurrock urban area
- Thetford
- Watford

Section 14 of the Plan deals with implementation, monitoring and review. It states that the Plan *requires significant investment in social, environmental and physical infrastructure from a variety of sources:*

- *central government, local government and European funding,*
- *private market funding for the bulk of development and contributions to the provision of necessary public/social infrastructure, and*
- *voluntary sector funding for a range of services not otherwise provided by public or private organizations [sic].* [Paragraph 14.1].

Policy IMP1: Implementing the RSS states that *Implementation will be achieved through the private, public and voluntary sectors working in an effective and coordinated way [...].*

The process for arriving at an Implementation Plan is currently being driven forward by the East of England Development Agency [EEDA] with stakeholder consultation on the scope of the plan currently taking place (deadline 7 November 2008).

East of England Regional Social Strategy

The Regional Social Strategy provides a number of priorities and actions, including:

- promoting the benefits of volunteering in terms of improving an individuals skills and confidence and providing a valuable 'stepping-stone' to future(paid) employment opportunities
- offering a range of voluntary and community work opportunities for older people to develop their skills and wider social networks
- reviewing voluntary and other employers' best practice in relation to volunteering policies and opportunities
- promoting volunteering as an integral element of sustainable communities and a network of quality volunteer development agencies promoting and enabling volunteering and community involvement
- using existing, and helping to further develop, community assets for achieving sustainable regeneration solutions
- supporting the infrastructure of voluntary and community organisations and enabling them to help shape and deliver high quality public services
- building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to win tenders for the delivery of services, with more services being delivered by local VCS providers.

Local Delivery Vehicle Business Plans and Local Development Frameworks

Each of the Growth Area locations have a Local Delivery Vehicle in place to oversee the development of each location (different arrangements exist for Luton and South Bedfordshire where there is a Joint Committee overseeing the development of strategy and policy; an Interim Local Development Vehicle is being established to oversee delivery). There would be value in looking at the Business Plans and Local Development Framework documents for each of these areas. The Growth Area Annual Monitoring Reports may also reveal whether there is any consideration of social and community infrastructure; research to date suggests they tend to focus on major infrastructure projects (such as transport) and housing numbers.

There would be also be value in looking at the Local Development Framework documents for each of the Growth Points (in fact, all of the areas specified in East of England Plan Policy SS3) to identify what the Core Strategy, Supplementary Planning Documents (on, for example, Social and Community Infrastructure, and Developer Contributions) and any development briefs have to say about the provision of social and community Infrastructure.

Unfortunately these searches would entail considerable work that is outside the scope of this report.

Ageing Population and Migrants

The East of England region is fast growing in population terms with it growing at twice the rate of England as a whole, by 11.1% compared with 5%, between 1981 – 2001. The region's growth is projected to continue at well above average, by another 10% over the period to 2021. The population is also aging, reflecting longer lives, falling birth rates and the aging of the baby boom generation. Projected changes over the next 20 years in broad terms are:

- Younger Working Age (16-49) group decreasing slightly
- Older Working Age (50-64) group increasing by nearly 30%
- Young Old (65-74) group increasing by about 45%

- Middle Old (75-84) group increasing by over 30%
- Old Old (65-74) group increasing by almost 40%

Many areas of the east of England have historically had a large population of older people in their populations, and the overall pattern of aging will have more effect on those places where this was not previously the case.

Black and Minority Ethnic and non-English speaking populations are growing. This is reflected within the growing number of migrants from Eastern Europe and many diverse communities moving out of London.

Regional Consortia Plans and Research

Common themes emerge from the regional and sub-regional strategies and plans; these include the need to:

- improve, develop and increase the levels of volunteering;
- develop and deliver effective infrastructure services to disparate communities
- developing and supporting small community groups

The Essex, Southend and Thurrock Consortium Plan acknowledges *plans for significant population growth across the county with the resulting need for a stronger community infrastructure* (ChangeUp East Regional Meta Plan (page 52)).

The Bedfordshire and Luton Consortium Plan acknowledges *that the sub-region is one of the government's growth areas with over 90,000 new homes being built by 2031. This will see a 43% growth in population, the development of new social infrastructure, including new community groups and volunteers, all of which will need support services.*

Strong Communities: A Social Infrastructure Plan for voluntary and Community Action

The Strong Communities Report was commissioned by the Bedfordshire & Luton VCS Infrastructure Consortium (on behalf of the MKSM Social Infrastructure Group) as part of the earlier region-wide projects funded by ChangeUp East.

The report seeks to establish a Plan for providing additional social infrastructure for voluntary and community action in the sub-region. It sets out a definition of social infrastructure, explores the importance of creating and sustaining sustainable communities, establishes a number of 'guiding principles' for planning and delivery of social infrastructure, and recommends an approach to the planning, delivery and resourcing of social infrastructure provision. It focuses on social infrastructure investment in communities created or affected by new housing growth.

The report is strategic response to the issues brought about by the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan. The importance of social infrastructure is highlighted by reference to a range of government policy documents, policy statements and research findings that emphasise the importance of investing in a variety of activities and organisations in order to build community capacity and so lead to *Strong Communities*. Some of these are considered above.

The report also acknowledges that investment in social infrastructure can benefit other aspects of growth, such as green infrastructure, culture, community safety and health and social care. It also sets out to define the key components and principles of social infrastructure (see below).

Components of Social Infrastructure:

- 1. Community facilities** - access to a meeting place or a base that is available, welcoming and accessible to all from day one and is owned and/or run by voluntary/community organisations.
- 2. Community development** - workers with skills to welcome new residents, facilitate community events and support communities in identifying and meeting their needs.
- 3. Groups and organisations** - providing support for the setting up of 'locally grown' organisations providing community activities and services and for a local forum or network that is inclusive, open and participatory, owned by and accountable to the community.
- 4. Grant funding** - grants will support the start up and early running costs of new community groups in new/adjoining communities and the development of existing voluntary service providers to deliver their services in these communities.
- 5. Learning and skills development** - opportunities to equip people for active involvement in, and support to, their own groups and communities.
- 6. Volunteering and other mutual support** - access to volunteering opportunities and new volunteering programmes.

Guiding Principles for Social Infrastructure

- 1. Involvement** - People in communities affected by new development will be involved in shaping this and will encourage potential bridge building to incoming residents. Local voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations will be actively involved in identifying and advocating the need for social infrastructure development.
- 2. Sustainability** - Organisations developed in new communities will have their long term viability and development considered and planned for from the start (including provision of community assets); a detailed specification for facilities and assets to be funded (and possibly transferred) will be drawn up; the overall design of the development takes due account of long term maintenance needs and costs.
- 3. Coordination** - community facilities will be provided in step with growth; an initial community base will be in place at the same time as the first houses; an appropriate mix and style of social infrastructure will be developed; joint use of proposed community facilities and new ways of providing public services will feature in detailed planning discussions.
- 4. Support** - there will be provision of people with appropriate expertise in community development; support for new communities will be tailored to their particular needs and feature training and development opportunities for those potentially or already in positions of community leadership; technical support (e.g. on Section 106 agreements and the planning system) will be made available to community groups.
- 5. Communication** - there will be an early commitment to open, transparent, honest and effective communications between the community, developers and public bodies to build trust and effective relationships.
- 6. Inclusion** - Social infrastructure investment will ensure that all sections of the community are communicated with and their particular needs are considered, whether through their shared location, or because of common experiences or interests.

7. Empowerment - Appropriate social infrastructure investment will be provided to help develop individuals, groups and communities to enable them to take control of their futures and be able to take action with reducing levels of external support.

8. Learning - Action research and other systems for monitoring, reflection, evaluation and learning from investment in social infrastructure will be developed, which enable strategic and local planners to adjust and develop future plans and investment.

9. Collaboration - Social infrastructure investment will encourage mutual support and action between groups and organisations in existing communities and associated new developments.

10. Comprehensiveness - Social infrastructure investment will cover all residents in a new and associated existing community and not be focused on a particular group; e.g. social renters, a particular ethnic or cultural group etc.

The Strong Communities report highlights a number of case studies that could be said to have contributed to the development of social infrastructure. They include an innovative project being developed by Voluntary and Community Action in South Bedfordshire:

Planning for a substantial new development (of around 4,000 dwellings) is underway in Leighton Buzzard and Voluntary and Community Action saw the opportunity to develop an action research project on the provision of social infrastructure services to new communities. Their proposals were included in the Development Brief but not fully incorporated in to the developer planning application. They challenged these proposals through the planning application process, including a Planning Appeal held in public. They have secured the provision of two 'community houses' as meeting places and a base for the project, although with the slowdown of the housing market these are not now expected to come on stream until March 2011 at the earliest. It was not possible to secure any of the running costs for the project so these now have to be raised from other sources. The project will provide for:

- 'Community Mobilisers' (workers) to welcome new residents and work with them in the development and provision of social activities;
- the promotion of volunteering;
- the formation of new community groups and networks;
- a small budget for 'start up' grants;
- the recruitment and development of community leaders.

A part-time Development Officer will also provide some initial support, advice and training to new groups.

The proposals and arguments set out in the Strong Communities report have been subjected to a detailed analysis and scrutiny by the Colin Buchanan consultancy and Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at University College London as part of a detailed study into Social and Community Infrastructure for the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee and their respective Local Strategic Partnerships. They concluded that *the findings and recommendations of the Strong Communities and the perspectives of the planning authorities and infrastructure organisations has identified the clear need, and acceptance for the principle, for social infrastructure to be provided in tandem with community infrastructure. The third sector organisations consulted as part of this study confirmed this need, and were positive about their capacity, and that of the community, to make the most of the opportunities coming forward.*

INTERPRETATION AND DEFINITIONS

It is important to emphasise some deficiencies in the existing policy and literature. Much of the academic literature that exists relating to infrastructure is concerned with transport and large scale infrastructure (such as airports and iconic bridges). Literature in social and community infrastructure – which frequently uses the terms interchangeably – is largely focussed on social networks and community planning, information infrastructure or the environmental impacts of large scale projects.

There is little in the way of generic literature that identifies key principles of social and community infrastructure. Even key texts on spatial planning and spatial strategy tend to focus on the integration of infrastructure such as transport or utilities infrastructure. In three recent key texts only one of them makes a single reference to social infrastructure in relation to school provision although it does acknowledge the difficulty of bringing the infrastructure agenda to the heart of the current housing growth discourse (Haughton and Counsell, 2004: 205). Others suggested the planning system has begun to re-engage with key social infrastructure as part of the new emphasis on spatial planning. However, their definition of social infrastructure focuses on what we would call public sector funded community infrastructure (i.e. schools, health centres etc.) (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2007: 388).

The MKSM Sub Regional Strategy's last objective is where we first see the term 'social infrastructure' but this is undefined. Neither does the current Planning Bill provide a clear definition of what is meant by *Community Infrastructure*. The East of England Plan refers to *Social Infrastructure* but this too is undefined. The Scoping Report for the Implementation Plan refers to *Community Infrastructure* (but not *Social Infrastructure*), which is defined as cultural, health, recreation and other community services.

Much of the literature around defining what social and community infrastructure is comes from Supplementary Planning Documents setting out the Section 106 or Tariff contributions developers will be expected to contribute to new large scale developments. These usually specify contributions towards transportation, education, fire and rescue, social services, community facilities and open space (green infrastructure).

However, interestingly, Milton Keynes Borough Council sets out what it calls Social Infrastructure Planning Obligations (*Social Infrastructure Planning Obligations*, Milton Keynes Council, September 2005). This includes libraries, adult continuing education, crematorium and burial grounds, museums and archives, health facilities, waste management, public art, social care and emergency services; as well as community houses, voluntary sector and reserve site contributions.

The Strong Communities Report commissioned by the Bedfordshire & Luton VCS Infrastructure Consortium sets out a clear definition where social infrastructure is defined as:

Building strong communities through the continuing development and delivery of activities, resources and support to strengthen the skills and confidence of people and community groups to enable them to take effective action and play leading roles.

This definition is less about the physical infrastructure and more concerned with the activities that will bring about strong communities. This includes provision of permanent and interim community facilities (e.g. community centres and community houses), community development, local networks, community groups and organisations, small scale funding to help fund new community groups, personal learning and skills development to help develop community leaders and volunteering.

It also recognises the strategic role local third sector infrastructure organisations have in championing social infrastructure, liaising with planners and ensuring social infrastructure is adequately addressed in large scale planning applications and through the development of Local Development Documents.

There is no clearly defined definition of Social Infrastructure or Community Infrastructure used by Government or regional agencies, including Inspire East, EERA, EEDA and GO-East.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Planning Social Infrastructure

It is clear from the research carried out for this report that there is a need for a systematic, properly resourced and structured approach to investment in social infrastructure.

A vital element in this is the effective coordination and collective approach by the Voluntary and Community Sector across the region and at more local levels. At the MKSM Sub Regional level, VCS Infrastructure Organisations from across the growth locations have formed the MKSM Social Infrastructure Group, which is represented by one of its members on the MKSM Inter-regional Board's Environment and Quality of Life Group provides a good foundation for this collective approach.

At local level the picture is more mixed, with some areas benefiting from a strong, inclusive representative body and in others the picture being more fragmented. It is clear that the VCS in each local delivery area needs to be encouraged and supported in forming into a collective voice with regard to social infrastructure development, both to act as effective advocates and in relation to the delivery of social infrastructure on the ground.

This could be achieved through existing VCS Infrastructure Organisations, through ChangeUp sub-regional consortium or by the creation of local Social Infrastructure Partnerships for each growth area (or Local Planning Authority area), led by a VCS infrastructure organisation.

At the same time it is clear that if social infrastructure is to be effectively promoted and planned for, people with the right knowledge, skills and experience to contribute to strategic and more detailed planning and development work are needed. A key element of this, therefore is the appointment of people who can play this role on behalf of the VCS and who can also help to support the collective action and contribution of the VCS in local areas. A Partnerships Officer or 'Social Infrastructure Manager', sitting firmly within the VCS, and relating to each growth area (or Local Planning Authority area) would be a key way of taking this work forward.

The 'Social Infrastructure Managers' work programme would be based on the relative scale and complexity of forthcoming housing development programmes in each growth area. With these staff in post and the VCS able to offer a coherent contribution to strategic and local negotiations and planning for social infrastructure, a basic model for planning and delivery for individual developments can be designed, the key features of which would be:

- the close working of Social Infrastructure Managers with their Social Infrastructure Partners and Local Planning Authority(ies) in relation to forward planning and negotiations about social infrastructure provision at both strategic and scheme levels; this would include identifying and agreeing an initial investment in community consultation and development work with the communities affected by or adjoining the proposed new development.
- The development of a 'Social Infrastructure Impact Assessment' at the early stages of planning for new development schemes. This would result in proposals for social infrastructure development and investment, adapted to suit local circumstances and needs as revealed in the Assessment. This would feed into detailed negotiations about a particular schemes above, say 25 dwellings, and would vary in their depth and complexity according to the size and nature of particular schemes, but all could consider other aspects of the design of the development that have a bearing on community capacity and the development of strong communities.
- Once a detailed plan for Social Infrastructure investment in a particular scheme had been agreed and is formalised in a Section 106 agreement or equivalent, together with agreement for public sector contributions to this package (possibly via the LSP), it would be necessary to

necessary to design and agree with partners the delivery and monitoring process for implementing social infrastructure.

Delivering Social Infrastructure

There is a need to secure interim community facilities that should be available from the time at which the first dwelling in a scheme is occupied. These should be provided by the developer and leased to the provider until six months after the last house is occupied or permanent community facilities are made available.

In addition there should be Community Development Workers who are able to:

- welcome new residents and work with them in the development and provision of social activities;
- promote and develop volunteering;
- assist with the formation of new community groups and networks, including the provision of 'start up' grants;
- recruit and develop new community leaders;
- provide some initial support, advice and training to new groups.

This report (and Appendix 2) has highlighted the Government's plans for housing growth, across the East of England, over the next 15 years (2006-2021). This is likely to see over 989,000 new residents in over 402,000 new homes. Consequently there will be a need to establish and support 5,541 NEW community groups and support 267,127 additional people undertaking formal volunteering within these new communities by 2021. There will also be an ongoing need for local voluntary organisations and community groups to extend their services to cover the area of the proposed development schemes and for new groups to maintain their services and activities.

Investment in Social Infrastructure

The big question is what level of investment should there be to ensure that the social infrastructure needs of new communities are met and how will it be funded.

The first element that needs some public funding is the provision of Partnerships Officers or 'Social Infrastructure Managers' within each growth area so that they can set up the structures and systems to plan and deliver social infrastructure. An important part of their role will be securing the future investment needed in each scheme of development.

Investment to meet the Social Infrastructure needs of new communities could come from Section 106 planning contributions but competition for these will be intense; there is simply not enough planning contributions to go round and with the current economic climate and housing slump there will be even less. Priority tends to go to transport, schools, other public realm infrastructure and perhaps green infrastructure. 'Social Infrastructure Managers' need to argue the case for local planning authorities to allocated funding for social infrastructure and ensure that all infrastructure gets funded in proportion to one another, rather than social infrastructure remaining a low priority with little or no funding.

Some authorities have introduced a tariff approach to developer contributions and the Government's current Planning Bill introduces a similar approach through the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy. Such approaches may be easier to administer but are unlikely to generate significantly increased levels of funding for the infrastructure that is needed.

The MKSM Social Infrastructure Group, through its work on the Strong Communities report, has set out a well reasoned argument and formula for calculating the investment that would be needed to deliver social infrastructure. By looking at the different types of social infrastructure needed at different stages of a new development and applying costs to these, a model for investment has

been created. This proposes that the majority of the costs of local social infrastructure are met by developer contributes of £525 per dwelling (as a tariff or levy on the new development), in addition to the provision of interim community facilities; with a further £175 coming from other public sources (such as LSPs, lottery and charitable trusts).

Detailed analysis and scrutiny of this work by the Colin Buchanan consultancy and Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at University College London concluded that *the tariff model, topped up by public funding, is not considered unrealistic in terms of level of tariff required*. It goes on to state, however, *in the light of the difficulties in securing up-front contributions from developers and securing public sector match funding, the approach is not considered to be financially sustainable*. This is also recognised in the report. Both reports go on to suggest that additional mechanisms also need to be considered, with the important aspect being the identification of income generating assets that can be used to provide a sustainable income for third sector organisations.

Milton Keynes already has a Community Foundation that has substantial revenue earning assets, which allows third sector organisations to benefit from these, in addition to developer contributions received for each new development scheme in accordance with the existing tariff arrangements.

Similar arrangements are recommended in both the Strong Communities report and the Colin Buchanan report. It is also worth noting that two of the region's Eco-Town proposals include the setting up of the Elsenham Community Trust and the Hanley Grange Town Trust, both with income earning assets to enable the long term social infrastructure needs of these communities to be met.

In addition to the provision of Community Houses (as interim community facilities) and a contribution to their running costs Milton Keynes Council *Social Infrastructure Planning Obligations* includes obligations to support the voluntary and community sector in providing services to an increased population at a charge of £250 per dwelling. Our research shows there to be no proper formula for this amount and that it is set at an inadequate level. It is important that the planning obligations include provision for the support of the voluntary and community sector in providing services to an increased population, at a rate of £350 per dwelling where a developer also provides for a Community House with running costs or £750 if there is no provision for a Community House.

Ageing Population and Migrants

Some of the implications from the rising number of older people are the increased likelihood of illness and of the burden on informal carers and health and social care services with more people requiring longer-term care. Many of these services are provided by third sector organisations. Community groups catering for the social interests and needs of older people will also be likely to have increased clients/members. There is also the potential for increasing the number of older people who volunteer.

Some of the new generation minority groups and migrants moving in to the region have a different set of cultural values to those of earlier generations now settled in the region. This can provide tensions within communities, with the need to support separate, additional, community groups catering for their different needs and values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the following definition of social infrastructure be used and adopted by the sector and regional agencies, including Inspire East, EERA, EEDA and GO-East:
Social infrastructure is defined as:
Building strong communities through the continuing development and delivery of activities, resources and support to strengthen the skills and confidence of people and community groups to enable them to take effective action and play leading roles.
2. That the need to meet the social infrastructure needs of new communities (as defined in this report) is clearly communicated with regional agencies, including Inspire East, EERA, EEDA and GO-East, so that these can be incorporated into their policy papers and discussions with Local Planning Authorities.
3. That the East of England sub-Regional Consortia Lead Bodies Group seek financial assistance from regional institutions and Capacitybuilders to meet the range of sub regional needs for the planning of social infrastructure (i.e. Social Infrastructure Managers and Partnership costs; training and networking for social infrastructure staff; action research, monitoring and evaluation; specialist advice; front end funding of community development work).
4. That VCS Infrastructure Organisations or Consortia in each Local Planning Authority affected by the Government's growth area plans discuss and agree with local partners the most appropriate means by which VCS involvement in the growth areas can be achieved, with a view to achieving:
 - recognition that the social infrastructure needs of new communities need to be met by Local Planning Authorities as part of their Local Development Framework, including Supplementary Planning Documents, development briefs and the planning obligations of developers;
 - the provision of interim community facilities, community development workers, continuing support for third sector organisations and all associated running costs are provided for within new communities so that their social infrastructure needs can be met in step with growth.
5. To secure funding to undertake a number of social action research projects into the building of social capital, the creation of new community groups and the role volunteering plays in the development of new communities and to apply the lessons learned and good practice developed to similar projects in the future.

APPENDIX 1 – LITERATURE SOURCES

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APPENDIX 2 – HOUSING TARGETS WITH NEW GROUPS AND VOLUNTEERS

As a result of the expected minimum number of dwellings to be built over the next 15 years (2006-2021) it is possible to estimate the population that will result from these (based on the 2001 Census average household density). From this the number of NEW voluntary and community organisations that will need to be supported, as well as the number of NEW volunteers that will need to find volunteer placements and be supported in doing so, can also be estimated.

Sub Region	Minimum Number of New Dwellings still to build by 2021	Estimated Population based on household density of 2.46*	NEW Voluntary and Community Organisations based on 5.6 per 1,000 head of population		NEW Volunteers based on 27% of population undertaking formal volunteering**	
			Growth Period	Average PA	Growth Period	Average PA
Bedfordshire and Luton	48,010	118,105	661	44	31,888	2,126
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	79,390	195,299	1094	73	52,731	3,515
Essex, Thurrock and Southend	98,620	242,605	1359	91	65,503	4,367
Hertfordshire	65,720	161,671	905	60	43,651	2,910
Norfolk	62,340	153,356	859	57	41,406	2,760
Suffolk	48,100	118,326	663	44	31,948	2,130
TOTAL 2006 - 2021	402,450	989,362	5,541	-	267,127	-

* Source: 2001 Census - average household density of 2.46

** Source: Citizenship Survey 2007 showed that 27% of people volunteered formally (through groups, clubs or organisations) at least once a month (Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2008).