Promoting Sustainable Communities in Growth Areas

Best Practice
for providing Community Resources
to promote Social Infrastructure

Cambridge City and South Cambs
Improving Health Partnership

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Contents

1. Introduction

> Sustainable Communities meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users, contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choice. They achieve this in ways that make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity.
>
> Source: The Egan Review - Skills for Sustainable Communities 2004

1.1 Sustainable communities are about people and places. When planning new growth areas, the people that move into the newly built houses are as important for the development of a sustainable community as the houses and public buildings that are provided for them.

1.2 This paper focuses on putting people into the growth agenda and is intended as a generic guide to the kind of resources and actions that are required to build social infrastructure and subsequently sustainability into any new community to ensure that it is strong and healthy.

2. Background and Context

2.1 This work has been developed as the result of discussions within the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Improving Health Partnership, with organisations from the voluntary community sector and with officers involved in the development of new communities in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City. It follows the publication of the Building Communities that are Healthy and Well Report[1] in which a cycle of easy-to-follow 'People Proofing Principles' was proposed and it was recommended that these principles needed to be embedded in any future building developments in the area. (See Appendix 1 page 7 for a summary table of the People Proofing Principles).

3. Purpose

3.1 This paper illustrates best practice when planning the types of community resources and actions that should be considered at the various stages of new developments. The types of community activities described are designed to meet 'people outcomes' (see Appendix 1) described in the Building Communities Report

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[1] Building Communities that are Healthy and Well in Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Improving Health Partnership, June 2008
http://www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk/default.asp?id=656

and the elements necessary for a sustainable community as described by Egan (see Appendix 2).

3.2   It is intended to give practical guidance and provide a useful tool for Planners and Developers when planning community services (including community workers) and agreeing resources for both people and places to ensure a strong and connected community. In this context, it has already been used to inform the emerging Northstowe Community Plan.

3.3   It provides a resource to inform S 106 discussions.

3.4   The guidance draws heavily on the Building Communities that are Healthy and Well in Cambridgeshire report and should be used with reference to this. Together these two documents detail:
- How to prioritise the needs of people in the building of new communities
- The facilities and resources necessary to plan and build a community
- The people, actions and links required to develop sustainable communities in growth areas

3.5   In addition, this paper illustrates the range of community development roles that contribute to a sustainable community by demonstrating their contribution to the various elements in Egan's wheel (see Appendix 2).

4.   Community Development Resources

4.1   Building an inclusive community in a new town requires considerable input in the form of worker resources who will engage with members of the new community and support them to develop the kind of facilities e.g. clubs, networks, interest groups, good neighbour schemes that are found in settled communities. These community led projects are the fabric which contribute to a high quality of life and promote community cohesion.

4.2   This paper outlines a range of community development initiatives and associated activities that can assist residents to become engaged in building the social capital necessary for their community.

4.3   In order to ensure that community development worker roles contribute to building a thriving, sustainable community from the moment that the very first residents move into their new homes in their new settlement, village or town, there must be a well-defined and co-ordinated approach to community working. Although community development roles may be fulfilled by different workers employed by different agencies, a common approach to working needs to be agreed by all relevant stakeholders.

4.4 The desired 'people outcomes' will be similar in different size developments but in smaller developments with less dedicated resources there may need to be a more flexible approach to meet needs through tapping into and broadening existing roles and skills of a range of workers.

4.5 The voluntary and community sector plays a major role in delivering a whole range of services in small hamlets to large towns and their flexible contribution should be taken into account at all stages of planning community development activities.

4.6 In order to ensure that the needs of new communities needs are being met it is essential that a monitoring component is built into the role of the community development team. In a large scale development such as Northstowe it is recommended that a dedicated action researcher role is included and is in place from the initial stages.

5 Community development resources at different stages

5.1 Community development actions when planning for initial population

A whole range of service providers need to be engaged in developing services both for and with existing communities affected by a new settlement very early in a development process. A coordinated approach is essential and this should be a key component of an initial community development role as agreed by the range of partners agencies. The type of community development actions will include:

- linking with and consulting with existing communities affected by the growth area - building on consultations and community engagement work which is already taking place. This would involve an action research component or be linked to a dedicated action researcher.

- liaising with service provider organisations and local interest groups to provide co-ordinated support and develop a welcome pack for new residents.

- meeting with and encouraging new residents to become familiar with their new neighbourhood.

- working with new residents to identify priorities for their community and to work alongside them to achieve these priorities.

- encouraging residents to become further involved in, and take responsibility for, the continued provision of specific interest group activities.

- providing liaison and guidance for subsequent community based projects and workers that will come on board as the new community grows

5.2 Actions when early residents established

Following the initial population of the new development, community-based tasks could be delivered by workers employed by any of the following of providers: registered social landlords, voluntary organisations or local authorities and other statutory organisations as appropriate.

These additional community development worker roles will be activated at pre-specified trigger points of housing occupation, for example at around 1000 homes, and will complement the initial community development role(s) that should already be in place. The type of actions to be covered will include:

- assisting groups and networks already in place to develop and grow.

- identifying how further community resources need to be directed. For example by a undertaking a resident satisfaction survey (see section 6 on monitoring) that includes questions about facilities, community networks and community groups.

- encouraging residents to become involved in the management of the facilities that are becoming available through S106 agreements. This might be done through the development of a community trust, initially managed by a shadow arms length organisation, but with the objective that this is handed over to a community-led board of trustees when appropriate (see Governance page 10).

- ensuring that there is equitable access to both facilities and interest group activities so that all sections of the community are able to participate in community activities as they wish and all feel an equal sense of ownership of those activities.

- providing appropriate support to residents who may have difficulty in accessing services because of a range of personal circumstances including disability, caring responsibilities, health, mobility, financial and cultural issues. This can be facilitated by working both with other members of the community, voluntary sector and faith groups, and with professionals such as health visitors, housing officers, care assistants, and voluntary sector organisations.

- linking with and signposting to family support. Families with young children have particular needs in a new community and can be at risk of isolation through inability to access activities. Examples of supportive roles are family support workers (who can be part of the new primary school provision), Home Start volunteers, Patient Support Worker (linked to general practices), and Family Learning Advisers provided by the County Council.

- signposting and facilitating access for young people to appropriate activities for young people including youth bus provision, faith groups and 'uniformed' groups as well as sports and cultural activities.

- linking with other workers who have been appointed with specific community roles. For example infrastructure planning and transport officers; a dedicated

travel planning officer for larger developments can incorporate working with residents to promote stainable travel into wider community issues.

- working seamlessly with Arts Development Officer and Sports Development Officers (if these have been agreed) to provide access to cultural and sports activities for all residents regardless of age or ability.

5.3 Actions when early communities have been established and settlement continues to grow

As more residents move in, additional resources will be required to support the increasingly diverse needs of a growing community as illustrated by the range of characteristics identified in the Building Communities report [1].This could be for example at around 4,000 homes.

A key activity will be one of monitoring (see below) to identify and be responsive to the needs of the growing community. The types of activity will build on those already described and is likely to involve a greater need for coordination with the increased range of provision that is likely to evolve. Rather than making fixed decisions on numbers and types of community development roles, it is important that financial resources are allocated than be used flexibly and chime with the needs of the community. Appendix 2 gives further descriptions on the types of roles and activities that are likely to be required.

6 Monitoring

6.1 How will we know that providing these kind of community resources has enabled residents and workers to successfully develop into an active, inclusive and sustainable community?

6.2 The People Proofing Principles described in 'Building Communities that are healthy and well' sets out a framework that informs both the design of activities and actions that will meet the new communities' needs and a method of monitoring whether these are being met . Based on this, it is recommended that the following questions are used as a basis to monitor if new residents are getting what they need to be part of an inclusive new community:

1. Can I meet up with people I know?
2. Can I meet new people?
3. Can I have a say on how things are run?
4. Can I run things around here?
5. Can I get the information I need about services relating to health, leisure, transport, housing, education, environment and a range of networks?
6. Do I know who to go to for help with problems?

6.3 If the answers to the above questions are yes then there are structures in place that demonstrate factors associated with good social capital and that people are

able to meet, interact and be involved in community life in ways that are if interest to them. In this case the developers and those responsible for building new communities, in the widest sense of the word, will have gone a long way to putting the people who live in them first.

6. 4 If the answers are less positive then this provides the opportunity to provide remedial action: to review the effectiveness of the community development activities and design new actions or re-orientate as appropriate. This needs to be reviewed in the context of the built environment e.g. ensuring appropriate community facilities are also in place.

6.4 Using the monitoring questions above (6.2) is one of a portfolio approach that will be needed to ascertain the health and wellbeing health status of the new community. Other tools include
- the Place survey which will be conducted to inform a range of National indicators in the Local Area Agreement. The frequency if this is to be determined.
- using sustainability indicators agreed for the development
- adopting specific wellbeing indicators that will be recommended in the forthcoming JSNA on new communities (March 2009).
- using other surveys undertaken by partners/developers and anecdotal evidence from resident groups etc.

6.5 In order to ensure that monitoring and review is integral to the process it is recommended that a dedicated action researcher is employed as part of the co-ordinated community development team structure from the outset.

6.6 It would be good practice to set up an arms length monitoring group to coordinate and steer the monitoring process. This group would work closely with the developers to ensure that any remedial action was identified and implemented.

The People Proofing Principles

The People Proofing Principles for the growth agenda

Set up a coherent social development team structure at the outset
Agree the evaluation method at start
Design all activities and actions designed to meet **People Outcomes**

People Outcomes:
1. **I can meet up with people I know**
2. **I can meet new people**
3. **I can have a say in how things are run around here**
4. **I can run things around here**
5. **I can easily get the information I need for health, leisure, transport, housing, education, environment etc**
6. **I know who to go to for help with…..**

Monitor actions against outcomes
Review effectiveness of actions as a team
Change or design new actions
Survey local population about improvements using People Outcomes
Cycle of monitoring and reviewing (at least annually)

The Egan Wheel

The following sections of Appendix 2 examine the elements of the Egan Wheel and describe how community development workers contribute to these.

Governance

"When decisions are made about a community, local people are included in the decision making process. The community enjoys a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride"

The idea of governance will start at a very early stage in the development of a new community. It is likely to begin during liaison with villages and communities that are located closest to the proposed new development. This regular consultation with existing neighbouring communities is important from the outset as they can be used as a sounding board for establishing what facilities will be required, they will know where service gaps are and, if involved from the beginning, will be more likely to react positively to the first new residents using their resources during the early settlement period. Their skills and knowledge can be engaged to help with setting up similar services and facilities in the new development.

The parish council of a neighbouring existing village can play an important role as a "shadow" council for the growth area. This can facilitate the development of skills in interested new residents to enable them to participate in and be elected to the parish or town council for the growth area when the time comes for that to be self governing.

Another form of self governance is a community trust. This has the means to raise additional funding for a growth area and to take on the ownership and management of facilities coming from the S106 agreement. Such a trust can act as a check and balance by working alongside planners, developers and the local authority to ensure that facilities that are delivered under S106 are to the standard stipulated in the agreement and that they are completed within the agreed time scale. New and existing residents should be encouraged to play an active role in the development trust alongside elected members and professionals who can advise on business development, finance, planning, education etc.

A key role for an initial development worker will be to build on community engagement work with existing communities to ensure that all local stakeholders are kept informed of developments relating to the growth area and interested residents are given the opportunity to become involved in the development of the emerging community. This involvement can take a number of forms including membership of local stakeholder groups which will meet regularly with developers, planners and potential service deliverers. As residents begin to move in, the focus of community development work will naturally shift, to encompass new priorities that emerge as a result of the influx of the first residents.

In an existing community new residents move in as single families. Their child care, social, health and learning requirements are easily assimilated into the existing social structure. Community facilities, schools, shops, interest groups, parish council, health facilities are all in place and tried and tested.

A new community tends to have groups of residents moving in within a narrow time span, this can create pressure on existing organisations and services and there is a drive to respond to these pressures in a reactive way. Community development work will need to balance the needs of the existing communities where much of the early work has been previously targeted, with the emerging priorities coming from newly arrived residents. Some additional services will need to be quickly established to meet specific emerging needs as they become apparent

There is potential for new residents to react separately to meeting their own requirements without interaction with one another. Some residents may try to develop a community group based on their individual need or interest but be discouraged by lack of interest or even hostility of other new residents. One role of community workers is to act as facilitators, supporting active individuals but ensuring that less articulate residents have the opportunity to be heard also.

They can also be the catalyst to develop the building blocks of a well run community in which residents are included in decision making processes. These decisions can vary from the setting up of a sports club to starting a toddler group to taking an active role in a resident stakeholder group that could be the precursor to an emerging town or parish council.

Not every one will want to be involved in everything. The important thing is that any individual who wants to become involved in something has the opportunity to do so by feeling confident that they will be listened to in the first instance and encouraged and supported to participate in whatever way they want after that.

In short, every new community will need workers and facilitators who are there in the first instance to bring residents of a new development together, to find out what the priorities for those residents are and help them to develop into cohesive, sustainable interest groups that can work together to achieve outcomes that meet their priorities.

They are also able to facilitate the beginnings of local governance. Identifying potential community leaders, supporting and signposting to training opportunities so that when it is time to look at the development of a parish council or for more local ownership of a community trust there is a core of knowledgeable, committed residents to fill those important roles

Equity - Fair for Everyone

"People of all ages, races, cultures, sexes and abilities are given access to services, jobs and education in the community. This fairness is not a luxury; it is normal to everyone. The fairness lasts to provide opportunities for future generations."

Paid community workers are not the only resource that can contribute to a sustainable community, although their input at the earliest possible stage in a new development is vital. Working alongside them, as resident numbers increase, can be a number of voluntary organisations with specialist knowledge in working with specific needs groups.

For example: Age Concern have years of knowledge and experience in delivering services for and supporting older people; Home Start is a national organisation that supports families with children under five through recruiting and training volunteers to go into families under pressure and support both the parent and the children. Research shows that a higher than average proportion of new residents are families with young children.

In planning for new communities we should be looking at how specialist voluntary organisation services can be funded to deliver services once long term needs have been identified. It may well be that funds used for early community worker posts are commuted into funding for delivery of services by specialist voluntary organisations.

An early response to the need of young families is the role of a family support worker whose primary responsibility is liaison between schools and the health centre. This role can pick up stress in families and, through liaison with the school and health services, can provide early intervention. The role could be provided through the statutory or voluntary sector and potentially located in the primary school.

Social and Cultural: Active, Inclusive & Safe

"A Community spirit is created. People are always welcome to join in events (e.g. sports, fundraising, festivals). Neighbours look out for one another and respect each other. All people are treated fairly. There are low levels of crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour with viable, effective and community-friendly policing"

Community workers can help a community become active and inclusive. A sense of community is engendered by:

- Bringing people together to prioritise their requirements for social, recreational, cultural and interest groups.
- Supporting people to work together to fulfil some of these requirements through their own efforts, encouraging more reticent residents and supporting active ones.
- Working with specialist organisations to ensure there is equity of access to services and a sense of embracing multi culturism

Breaking down barriers and encouraging people to work together promotes a safe community. Petty crime and antisocial behaviour is discouraged because different interest groups are bought together to encourage a common aim of building and owning their new community. Through this common aim people come to know, tolerate and respect one another.

A large new development will attract residents with diversity of needs and from multicultural backgrounds. This also will include Gypsies and Travellers and migrant workers.

It is essential that thought is given to how we will provide facilities that will meet the diversity of needs and are culturally sensitive. It is important that early community development workers have the breadth of experience to address diverse issues and to bring in specialist support as appropriate e.g. a specialist worker experienced in multi cultural information advice. Community development workers will also have a signposting role to other specialist groups with experience of working with for example: older people, people with disabilities and people excluded and marginalised for different reasons.

Housing and the Built Environment

"A sense of place (e.g. a place with a positive 'feeling' for people and local distinctiveness). Buildings are attractive, safe and useful to the people who use them. Buildings that people want to go into with lots of open space for people to play and relax."

Facilities to support activities that encourage an active, inclusive and safe community are necessary from the beginning.

There is a need for community buildings that are welcoming and provide a focus for first residents to meet and socialise. Examples of activities to be accommodated are welcome parties, interest groups, toddler and youth groups, lunch clubs and minority ethnic forums, music and drama groups. While a social club will support some of these needs, in the early days a facility that provides small, informal meeting rooms is also important.

Consideration should be given to allocating a community house in the early stages of development. In the past many local interest groups started with two or three people around a kitchen table, a community house can recreate this kind of facility and encourage a spirit of self help. A community house can provide the combination of rooms that can support information giving and signposting, coffee mornings, a crèche, a small lunch club, embryonic group meetings and so on.

As the community grows a need for specialist voluntary services will be identified and the timing of the building of a community hub that has provision for outreach work from advice and support agencies is an important consideration.

Equally, open spaces need to encourage people to come together and work together to build on the facilities that are available and ensure that residents get the very best from them. The role of a second and third community development worker could be to work alongside residents to develop interest groups and activities linked to a community building and to open spaces, as well as working with voluntary organisations who will have a stake in service provision as the community grows.

Services

"Well served – with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all."

Alongside the work of the community development workers and other workers with community roles there needs to be a coordinated plan through which all activities are managed.

A multi-agency forum for service providers that will encompass statutory and voluntary sector providers is essential to the day to day quality of life of residents. This group will be made up of key stakeholders and service providers prior to the arrival of the first residents

Through this service providers group, gaps in service provision can be identified. Links can be made, through the community workers, with the emerging interest groups so that the providers group is aware of issues that are arising within the community.

Additional resources are vital to support new and emerging interest groups that are growing out of the needs and priorities of new residents. These additional resources can be delivered through a wide range of agencies. It is important that the developers, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and local authorities involved in the growth area take account of the experience and skills of existing voluntary and community sector organisations that have local knowledge and flexible structures that enable them to deliver targeted services.

Examples of this more specialised provision could include a lunch club for elderly people, a weekly family group meeting for mothers with babies and pre-school children, a mobile youth venue in the form of a bus that can fill the need for information and diversion for young people prior to the opening of a dedicated youth venue. Understanding of this range of available skills and the will to ensure they can be resourced is essential to ensure a flexible range of services for new communities and will enable a flexible and prompt response to these issues.

Many services will be designed in as part of the infrastructure of the development, e.g. education, health, refuse collections, roads, footpaths and street lighting. But even here early knowledge of gaps, e.g. anti social behaviour issues that are developing in an area that is poorly lit have the potential to be more flexibly addressed where service providers have been bought together and have a facility for receiving on the ground information.

By working with smaller, local providers, e.g. a church group or emerging youth group, intervention can also be part of prevention.

Environmental

"Environmentally sensitive – providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment".

Resources can be put into promoting the potential of low carbon buildings and homes and a more sustainable local environment. The wheel elements of Environment Transport and Economy all need to be linked together if any impact is to be made and real benefits are to be derived.

Building a new development, village or town provides, not just the opportunity to build homes and buildings that can contribute to low carbon living, but also the opportunity to change the way people understand what they can do to live low carbon lives. Providing the infrastructure of low carbon buildings is only the beginning. Encouraging residents to think about their environment and make use of new facilities e.g. easily accessible public transport, walk and cycle ways, open spaces, takes longer.

A community ranger or open spaces promoter is a relatively new role in Growth Areas and has huge potential in larger developments to deliver on environmental, economic and transport elements of community sustainability. Such a role can have benefits in terms of health improvement for residents by facilitating community walks to familiarise residents with their new environment. It can link to and support the development of economic activity related to the environment e.g. by recruiting and supporting volunteers for a community farm or volunteers for an environmental group interested in maintaining and protecting open spaces and going into schools to raise awareness of the environment. The post could work collaboratively with a sports development worker to set up a rambling, cycling or fishing club. The opportunities and potential for having an impact on the health and well being of residents is enormous.

The potential for low carbon living spans all elements of Egan's wheel because everything that makes up a growth area is dependent on fossil fuels. Reducing dependence on these requires a major shift change in the way people think and plan their lives. This can perhaps be more readily accomplished in an area that is providing a new start for a whole community of people at the same time, together with new buildings that are built to carbon reducing specifications. Local communities should be supported and encouraged to become active community champions and community owners of low carbon and renewable energy technology, for example the establishment of Energy Supply Companies (ESCO's).

Transport and Connectivity

Well connected – with good transport services and communications linking people to jobs, health and other services.

Good transport links are essential to community development. In the first place people will be encouraged to move to a growth area that has good transports links – not just road and bus but also cycle ways and pedestrian access. Good bus and cycle routes that cut down on car usage contribute to an environmentally friendly community as do well planned open spaces and parks that are accessible and family friendly. These are particularly important considerations in high density developments. It is also essential that there are effective transport links between existing and new communities as this is vital for integrating communities. This is particularly important for the first residents.

Specific travel planning workers to work alongside new residents to promote sustainable travel for domestic and business journeys may be appointed and can work very effectively with other community development workers to identify and respond to wider community needs e.g. identifying mobility and access issues; setting up a cycle repair club; promoting subsidised travel. This has important health and wellbeing implications for promoting physical and social activity.

It is something of a given that new communities will have broadband connections and WiFi. This IT connectivity can play an important role in enabling and encouraging home working which in itself cuts down on carbon emissions and, with people being at home all day, helps build a sense of community during the day. It is also important for service delivery for residents requiring information. For example touch screen computers are becoming more common as information hubs to screen individual information requirements and signpost them to appropriate help. This could be benefit or legal advice, financial management information or information about local services provided by a variety of delivery agents.

Economy

Thriving – with a flourishing and diverse local economy

The economy of a rural growth area can, for example, focus on local food production. Food production contributes massively to CO_2 emissions, both through meat production and food transport. It is not unrealistic to include a community farm in the proposal for a new development. This has a number of obvious benefits including; employment opportunities, healthy eating initiatives, fresh, locally grown, cheaper food.

Cottage industries are another potential benefit of a socially active growth area. Some may well be a direct consequence of a community farm. Even here voluntary organisations have a role to play, taking up the challenge of running classes that can enable residents to make the most of locally available resources and perhaps selling them through a community owned and run shop or local market.   A bicycle repair shop, that also provides bicycles for hire is almost an essential in this environmentally aware community. With the right support and knowledge a new community can be encouraged to develop a local economy that also contributes to a sustainable environment.

Purchasing and renting new homes can precipitate financial problems and access to support is essential. It will be important to consider how voluntary sector organisations such as the Citizen's Advice Bureaus can be established or accessed from early days in the development of a new community. This could be by putting on sessions adjacent to health facilities.