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**Can The House Building Industry Create A  
Genuine Sense Of Community?  
A Critique Of Four Residential Development  
Models**

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## **Acknowledgements**

To mum and dad, with many thanks for everything.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the ability and capacity of the house building industry to create a sense of community and looks at what barriers exist to prevent the effective delivery of a sense of community in new residential communities. In tackling this I have concentrated on four residential development models that all claim to create a sense of community. These include Cohousing, the Common Interest Development, the Gated Community and finally the Smart Community.

These models sought to examine three key questions:

- How successful has the House Building Industry been in creating a genuine sense of community?
- What are the barriers to the House Building Industry in creating a genuine sense of community?
- What are the barriers to the House Building Industry in delivering and implementing the four residential models?

This examines how conducive the House Building Industry is to innovation and the community concept and suggests that there are conflicting priorities between creating a sense of community and practical deliverability.

The findings suggest that the House Building Industry have not yet achieved significant success due to the lack of community participation, for though the Industry might well have the capacity to *support* strong community feeling, it does not and can not *create* it.

The thesis concludes that the House Building Industry, within the four models, achieved some success in creating a sense of community but that there are three major barriers to the delivery of a genuine sense of community; cultural, institutional and economic.

The thesis will go on to suggest that the barriers to delivering a sense of community do not just exist within the House Building Industry but are also within consumer attitudes and culture and within the constraints of the British Planning system

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **Section One: Context and Background**

### ***Current Trends/Housing Market***

The UK's net housing stock is currently growing by 120,000 annually and since 1997 almost one million additional people have become owner-occupiers. The ongoing debate focuses on where the 4.4 million houses required in the UK by 2016 are going to be located and at *what standard?*

This questions the government agenda for developing high quality, affordable dwellings with a community emphasis. **Is this deliverable and how?**

Thus this huge population pressure that is concentrated particularly in the south-east will lead to one fundamental question- not 'where will they live' but '**how should they live?**'

The real objective is to develop 4.4 million houses to an acceptable standard and provide choice and affordability whilst promoting sustainable development without a sharp deterioration in quality. Over two million houses will be built over the next few years and there are fears of the huge impact that this will have on the new and existing communities. Property developers thus have a huge responsibility ahead of them and potentially one that calls on them to shift priority and harness this opportunity to contribute to sustainable development and sustainable communities. *The challenge is for new house building to make lasting improvements on the quality of life.*

### ***New Urbanism and Smart Growth***

The emerging agenda and political background is behind this recent push towards the planning of sustainable, mixed and balanced communities.

The principle of New Urbanism and its American equivalent of 'Smart Growth' legislation is a rapidly growing framework for the planning and design of new residential developments. Hasic (1997) wrote about the need to integrate this 'New Urbanism' approach to residential developments where planning creates neighbourhood cores, leisure places and gathering places and generating a heart to a community. Hasic believed that in order to create a genuine sense of community

one of the fundamental requirements was to ensure there was a balanced community with a mix of tenure and housing types to generate an associated mix of socio-economic backgrounds, income levels and ages creating a diversity of and the lifestyles. Indeed, many property developers are beginning to see the commercial and qualitative benefits of New Urbanism or at least adopt some of the principles of the model. 'Successful New Urbanism performs a difficult balancing act by maintaining the integrity of a walkable human scale neighbourhood whilst offering the modern residential and commercial product to compete with Conventional Sprawl Development' (Calthorpe 1993).

Indeed, New Urbanism signifies a step change in the way in which we develop and design and live in our new residential settlements. It promotes a quality of life and social capital by creating places that people want to live and work in. Moreover, the model aims to enable increased interaction with other residents and the creation of more meaningful relationships and increased community participation. This is indicative of the emerging paradigm in quality of life, distinctiveness and moreover, the community.

This emphasis on 'sense of community' has been reflected in the recent planning policy agenda, the legislative framework and government guidance.

### ***Consultation /Policy Documents***

Planning Policy Guidance 3 (PPG3) was released in March 2000 and demonstrated a step change in the Labour government thinking on delivering good quality residential development and providing a *choice* in terms of housing supply and to make the most efficient use of the land. It also promotes the creation of mixed and balanced communities- perhaps heralding the commencement of community planning. The guidance note includes a section on 'Creating Sustainable Residential Environments' to encourage mixed-use development and a greener residential environment, but moreover *put a greater emphasis on quality and designing places for people*. Thus the current government rationale is evidently to promote the *qualitative* and quantitative agenda and policy on development across the country to emphasize the community and quality of life.

This policy effectively acknowledges the debate and tensions between the dire need for housing in the UK, preventing urban sprawl and providing good quality homes and a sense of community. PPG3 advocates a choice of housing and that housing should not reinforce 'social distinctions'. It reads 'new housing and

residential environments should be well designed and should make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance and improving quality of life'.

The use of good design is encouraged in order to create attractive high quality living environments in which people choose to live and that developers and local authorities should be providing both housing choice and *lifestyle*. 'Promote improved quality of development which in their design, layout and allocation of space creates a sense of community'. The guidance note also provides an incentive to property developers to emphasize the case for quality and a sense of community in their developments. For in deciding which sites are to be allocated for housing in the development plans, Local Planning Authorities should assess their potential and suitability for development- where part of the criteria for assessment will be 'the ability to build communities to support new physical and social infrastructure. Similarly, this will also be a significant factor in determining planning applications. New residential developments, it informs us, will not be acceptable if they are merely functioning as a dormitory or satellite of an existing settlement- indeed, they must demonstrate a viable, self sufficient and sustainable community. PPG3 requires a greater emphasis on places for people, creating spaces and places that generate a distinctive identity and respects and enhances local character.

However, this guidance note asks that Local Planning Authorities should 'encourage' the development of mixed and balanced communities. This means that development does not have to implement this requirement and is guidance only thus leaving developers to ignore, modify or negotiate these requirements into commuted payments only.

The Millennium Villages and Sustainable Communities paper published in May 2000 discusses the rationale for sustainable settlements and 'sustainable infrastructure' by minimizing resource consumption, enhancing environmental capital, heightening design quality, creating a high *quality of life* for residents, creating equity and social inclusion and for the community to be commercially viable.

#### Sustainable Communities Plan: Building for the Future (February 2003)

This legislation is part of the Government's wider drive to raise the quality of life in our communities and thus emphasizes the need for Sustainable Communities flowing from the Government's strong commitment to sustainable development. This legislation marks a step change in approach; a strengthened determination by government to raise the quality of life in communities through increasing prosperity,



reducing inequalities, more employment, better public services, better health and education, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, and much more. It reflects key principles for public service reform: raising standards, devolving and delegating decision-making, providing greater flexibility over use of resources and choice for customer. Places where 'people want to live and will continue to want to live'. Thus putting an emphasis on long-term benefits and the long-term growth of a development for future generations.

#### Sustainable Communities in the South-East (February 2003)

Prescott (2003), within this paper, expands on the idea of the community in explaining that "sustainable thriving communities are so much more. They have green spaces where children can play safely, estates where street crime is just a distant memory, transport systems that take people to key public services, and a sense of community that includes not excludes its members. That is the sort of community I want to maintain". Indeed this paper puts social and qualitative objectives back into the Sustainable Communities agenda and moreover, a *sense of community*.

#### Planning Policy Statement 1: Creating Sustainable Communities

This consultation paper was published in March 2004 further to the proposed planning reform and in particular the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This paper will replace Planning Policy Guidance 1 (PPG1) and further emphasises the importance of the community in the future. This paper will guide the practical implementation of the all Planning Policy Statements and will be supporting the government's objectives for promoting the delivery of quality developments and emphasizes the need for social inclusion to be a fundamental part of future and proposed policy statements. This demonstrates the ongoing importance for community planning and for development to provide mixed and inclusive settlements. The paper asks for policy statements to 'set clear visions for community and help to integrate the wide range of activities relating to development and regeneration.... the government is committed to creating sustainable communities...communities that will stand the test of time, where people will want to live and which enable people to meet their aspirations and potential.'

Indeed, the policy framework is now more positive than ever before in encouraging the creation of communities, encouraging a greater emphasis on quality

of life and qualitative outcomes and in creating developments with a *genuine sense of community*.

## **Section Two: Concept Definition**

In recent years there has been a distinct renewed interest in 'community, resident satisfaction, **quality of life** and the creation of 'social capital' defined by Putman (1995) as 'features of organisation, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.'

One of the most difficult issues involved in the concept of a 'sense of community' are the conflicting perceptions and problems of definition. The concept to most means a feeling of familiarity, shared experience, support, and safety but needs to be kept separate to the notion of 'neighbourhood' and of quality of life.

Indeed, what is the difference between 'neighbourhood' and 'community?' Barton (2000) defines neighbourhood as a more spatial construct or a place-perhaps centred on local services or that has an obvious spatial identity. This has a more measurable and evident concept and thus is easier to distinguish. Indeed the 'neighbourhood' is seen as residential or mixed-use area that is a spatial construct. Community is very much a social term that has an aesthetic function. This defines a group of people with common interests and friendship and does not necessarily have to be local. A neighbourhood *can* be a locus of the community. The community is a fundamental part of all of our lives and for many represents a more traditional quality of life though can also mean something very different things to different people. Consequently measuring and defining a sense of community will be a difficult task.

Blakley and Snyder (1999) believe that one commonality that the term 'community' has across its many definitions is that of 'sharing'. This can be a shared territory, shared experience, social interaction, shared goals and traditions or a shared political or economic structure. Indeed, a shared territory can be defined by physical or social boundaries. However, this will be hotly contested by many other critics who believe that this emphasis on shared values and shared socio-economic status creates a homogenous community rather than one which is balanced and mixed and based on creating diversity.

Another inherent objective in creating a genuine sense of community is to create a distinct 'sense of place' that has aesthetic qualities and a rich and diverse culture. Indeed Lynch (1981) wrote about the importance of the townscape and creating legibility and also 'pedestrian-scaled neighbourhoods'. It is important that local

people can identify and define themselves by the place they live in and that a value can be placed on the unique characteristics of a geographical area and the notion of the 'locale'. To engage the residents in a development with their surroundings, Lynch felt that they required legible environments such as key nodes, vistas, open space, where use of local materials and built form all contribute to emphasising *distinctiveness* and the locale.

Indeed the degree of resident familiarity with each other and social relations are also both a cause and symptom of a good sense of community in a residential development where the relationship goes beyond the superficial and is genuine and based on a level of trust. Furthermore, it is recognized that community participation will enable democracy to become bottom- up and the neighbourhood to become accountable and responsible for its future and encourage local ownership.

Community democracy is a vital part of building a neighbourhood by allowing people to have a stake in their own futures and having a say in the issues of their community and for the needs of residents to be properly represented.

The degree that residents are satisfied with their neighbourhood is also an important factor in the community, which can be indicated by the levels of property turnover and the level of transience within a development and the general perception of the area. Indeed, Hasic (1997) claims that 'people's perceptions are both a cause and a consequence of a sense of community and satisfaction'.

No wonder then that given the numerous and often contradictory definitions of 'community' that there is no one simple formula for producing a 'successful' residential development with a genuine sense of community.

Hasic (1997) believes that quality in dwelling life is about 'social and psychological satisfaction by sustainable physical design and social/behavioural components'. He created the Sustainable Urban Matrix (SUM), which is a model that attempts to consolidate the neighbourhood in a more socially and spatially sustainable framework, where people can integrate their own values and form social links and bonds, thus becoming 'anchored'.

He thus names five such social components that are required to improve quality of dwelling life:

- Satisfaction
- Territorial Definition
- Personalisation
- Privacy

- Social Interaction

The New Economics Foundation (2002) wrote that a sense of community can mean a number of things but included:

- 1) Mutual Trust between residents and local organisations
- 2) Social connections between residents and local organisations
- 3) Shared Values
- 4) Capacity and skill to organise
- 5) Identity with their home, neighbour and community
- 6) Sense of belonging and ownership
- 7) Vision shared about the future of the community
- 8) Safety where social interaction is not restricted by fear

However, the relevance and importance of the community concept is in decline and many critics now claim that our sense of community is being eroded and is gradually disappearing.

### ***Why is the Community Concept disappearing?***

It was Ferdinand Tonnies, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who distinguished between creating a genuine sense of community and the superficial tokenistic sense of community. The term 'gesellschaft' is translated as the social, rational, modern 'associations' that we make compared to 'gemeinschaft' which is the natural, emotional and interdependent relations among people that has become symbolic of the traditional village community. Tonnies explained that gesellschaft is now the alienated, impersonal, mobile society that has replaced gemeinschaft, and so Blakely and Synder suggest that this is where our sense of community has been transformed into a more contemporary and transient emotion.

However, the concept of the community has significantly declined in importance in recent years and has thus become a distant part of the planning system.

The decay of locality and urban place has been a direct result of increased car ownership and mobility, meaning reduced use of local facilities and thus the closure of many small shops and local pubs, schools and post offices. Instead, the incentive now is for many facilities to locate in financially viable areas, which serve large catchments but are far away from homes and thus car trips rise and moreover, localization is eroded. People now no longer meet on the streets or after school and

so social interaction is restricted and behaviour and attitudes have become isolationist. For indeed, a fundamental issue is whether or not residents would actually chose to use local facilities even if they were located on their doorstep? In a car-dependent world, many people choose to drive to the largest supermarket on their journeys home from work and purchase in bulk. Moreover, people are obviously prepared to travel further for what they want in terms of specialized services or perhaps good education.

Nevertheless, it can also be claimed that people chose to use local facilities where they are available and are appropriate. Therefore this strengthens the requirement for developments to be located in an area where the settlement is far away enough from other settlements to be *sustainable and viable* in terms of meeting local needs and where local facilities are not detracted by nearby urban centres. Indeed, use of local facilities can be encouraged by good urban design by the central location of such facilities that can be reached on foot and by everyone.

### ***How relevant is a sense of community in a contemporary lifestyle?***

However, many critics claim that the concept of 'the community' is nothing more than 'nostalgic idealism' and believe that these expectations of such a return to the traditional way of life is unrealistic in the 'quest for utopia' (Minton 2002a).

Furthermore, to what extent do the residents of a development *want* to be a part of a community and to what extent do people actually *want to be involved*? Social capital and creating a sense of community is vitally dependent on the support, willingness and capacity of the residents but in many cases there is a constant battle with cynicism and lethargy towards such schemes, combined with a lack of trust in government institutions. There is often an inherent lack of faith in community groups and indeed in their own ability to change things. There is in fact a conflict between consumer preference, public attitudes and community objectives.

This scepticism makes this community participation difficult with many residents reluctant to be involved in public consultation and political issues and so again, attitudes and behavioural trends are a barrier to this objective. But Blakely and Synder (1999) firmly believe that the notion of community is not lost but its concept has been transformed to one of independence from proximity and territory.

### **Thus is it possible for developers to create a sense of community?**

## ***Intentional Community Design***

The quest for attempting to create a sense of community in new residential settlements is neither a new phenomenon nor an original concept. Its ultimate founder was Ebenezer Howard with his concept of 'The Garden City' and the 'three magnet' diagram. This was perhaps the first type of residential model, which explained that the city had economic and social opportunity but was disadvantaged by high densities, poor physical environment and high levels of pollution. Alternatively, the countryside could provide an attractive environment but experiences low employment levels and poor levels of amenity. The answer was to create a *third way of living* that combined town and country living. Thus the qualitative and social objectives of development and that of community were first introduced into house building and established the original concept of *social capital* and *quality of life*. This garden city movement indicated the shift towards balanced and sustainable communities and this desire for balanced and mixed communities is at the heart of today's rhetoric.

But Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement was in fact criticised by many at that time as being 'social engineering- the artificial creation of community by design- which they observed did not accord with the reality of the individual.... and was based on false perceptions of the designer's role and power' (Dennis 1968).

Osbourne (1991) believed that a sense of community could not actually be created through architecture alone. 'I doubt you can create a strong neighbourhood *consciousness*, through you can provide neighbourhood *convenience*.'

But as Llewellyn-Davies (1998) says, 'design for these things is not delivered by the market unassisted. It relies on a clear, integrated policy and determined implementation: the determination that physical design be used to open doors, to provide options, to safeguard the environment locally and globally and facilitate the development of the community.' This suggests that the House Building Industry has the ability to encourage and promote community living through clear and effective methods of implementation.

### **Section Three: Methods of Implementing a Sense of Community**

The literature review has shown that housing developers can be at the forefront of actions to facilitate social capital and a sense of community in providing the correct type of social and physical infrastructure at the right time and in the right place.

In July 2002, the New Economics Foundation carried out an audit on the property developer, Countryside Properties Plc entitled 'Building Communities: Promoting Social Capital through Housing Development. This report suggested that social capital depends on the *willingness* of residents to get involved in coordinated actions and also in the *ability or skill* of residents to get involved. The report stressed that house builders have an important role in overcoming the challenges of building a sense of community but add that 'there is only so much that they or the government can do to ensure that social capital is built and used constructively...actions can facilitate social capital...this cannot be used as a substitute for citizen action and endeavour.'

The NEF (2002) suggests that there are two different ways in which developers can create a sense of community: the creation of hard and soft foundations:

*Hard foundations* include the physical buildings and design interventions such as the street layouts and the creation of public realm for social interaction; secure by design principles and mixed use developments.

*Soft foundations* are about managing the process, the provision of community facilities and organisations and encouraging local participation. Soft foundations can promote local identity and cohesion and create a democratic space for residents- it is in summary about generating the capacity for a sense of community.

Thus to create a genuine sense of community, the property developer must provide both the *ability* and *capacity* within its residents.

Further to this, there is much in terms of previous research and literature on other methods of implementation that developers can utilise to create a sense of community:

### ***Mixed Community***

Central to the achievement of a mixed and balanced community is the concept of accessibility in the neighbourhood: to local facilities, to public transport, to employment, recreation and to affordable and good standard housing. This ensures that the development is not merely an exclusive area to a certain sector of society that encourages social polarization. The application of a series of tangible criteria such as tenure, mix, social composition and high environmental quality may make a positive contribution, but successful neighbourhoods need to work socially' (Jupp 1999). This suggests that a successful residential environment requires both a neighbourhood and a sense of community. The principle of mixed-use and diversity in New Urbanist developments with a mix of shop, offices, apartments and homes and a diversity of people in terms of age, race, income, occupation, class and culture to create balanced communities.

Indeed to enable this, residential developments need a mix of housing types to accommodate this diversity, via a mix of price, type and size of unit type. Increased density of buildings, shops, houses and services to enable ease of walking and create more efficient use of resources and this increased viability and the use of compact design development. This traditional neighbourhood structure needs to have an anchoring, obvious centre and an edge. Open public space needs to be accessible to all and the public realm to be of a high quality and plentiful to encourage social interaction.

However mixed neighbourhoods cannot rely on the assumption that they generate community. Hillman and Whalley (1983) write that 'community is likely to be assisted by shared local facilities and the casual meetings that occur in well-used streets....no more is housing mix justified by some principle that different classes should live cheek by jowl to cajole them into friendship...the key argument concern equity, economy and the environment'. Infrastructure and Amenities and a mixed-use development enable residents to increase levels of social capital by providing the 'hard and soft foundations' (NEF 2002) for participation and involvement in neighbourhood organisations and groups, events- formal and informal. Mixed-use developments can also encourage a degree of self-sufficiency and sustainability of the community as residents can use the local facilities and moreover can walk there. Hasic felt that the centre of each neighbourhood should be defined by a public space and activated by locally/oriented or commercial activities.



### ***Design and Layout***

Also vital to a sense of community is the design and quality of construction and the layout of the neighbourhood so that residents can foster a sense of pride, identity and a sense of ownership and belonging of their environment with individual expression and a variety of exterior materials. Hasic (1997) felt that architecture should respond to the surrounding fabric of buildings, spaces and local traditions and believed that developments must establish themselves as places to which people want to move and in which they expect to be able to achieve their life plans.

A well-planned layout can increase the level of social interaction, reduce the dominance of the car, create child-friendly developments and encourage 'walkable' communities with informal gathering places and create a genuine sense of place and space. New Urbanist principles recommend that neighbourhoods should be limited in size, have a well-defined edge and possess a centre and not be greater than five minutes walking time from edge to edge.

The quality of the streetscape can improve the sense of community – a street full of life and activity suggests interaction amongst residents and if it is well maintained suggests the area is well cared for and is respected. Maintenance (both communal and private) and good landscaping is important in creating a sense of community as according to Hasic (1997) it demonstrates pride in an area, showing that people care about the neighbourhood and displays a sense of ownership. Indeed abandoned properties, poorly kept borders/fences, lack of directions and rules, graffiti all create a poor impression to both residents and visitors.

Neighbourhood Gateways and prominent entries give a first impression of a neighbourhood and affect the way residents feel about their neighbourhood as it creates a sense of arrival, of belonging and of territoriality. To engage the residents in a development with their surroundings, Lynch felt that they required legible environments such as key nodes, vistas, open space, where use of local materials and built form all contribute to emphasising distinctiveness and the locale.

### ***Transportation***

Good provision of public transport is vital, mixed activities for different types and ages of people, buildings for a variety of functions and streets created for the public realm that emphasise a 'sense of place'. Traffic Calming makes a clear statement that this is a residential neighbourhood where people not cars are priority e.g. narrow streets, different materials/palate, speed humps, and landscaped islands.

Thus there are a number of different ways that a sense of community can be encouraged or created in a residential development. But there have been criticisms that the House Building industry is failing to do just this.

Thus this concept of 'sense of community' is fundamental to housing delivery- but how is this going to be practically implemented? How well equipped is the house building industry to deliver this sense of community?

#### **Section Four: The House Building Industry and Consumerism**

##### ***New Settlements and the house-building product***

In response to this changing political background and shifting legislation, large-scale master planned developments are recently *attempting* to provide a sense of community in order to present the potential purchaser with the 'complete package'. Many property developers claim to no longer provide just the house but the complete lifestyle – the commodity is now the community and is perhaps the new marketing tool that provides the 'premium product' and adds value.

However, many critics and much of the literature does not cast property developers and new residential settlements in a very positive light in terms of creating quality communities **and believe that the house building industry contains inherent constraints that will act as a barrier to implementing a sense of community.**

Barton et al (1999) writes that 'the development industry emphasises individual consumption at the expense of community cooperation, mobility not stability, internet rather than interplay ...neighbourhood while in principle is a good thing, is perceived as running counter to dominant, multifold trends...a nostalgic concept harking back to a pre-motor, pre-phone age where many people live their lives out of one locality'. There are constant criticisms that the new residential developments of many property developers can be described as having 'aesthetic monotony and excessive residential social polarization' (Aldums 1992) thus indirectly creating ghettos. Moreover, in terms of quality, there has been much criticism of the standard house product and the 'executive cul-de-sac, the zoning madness and the creeping standardisation... that is an insult to our sense of place' (Gummer 1995).

The product is claimed to have little individuality and is 'soulless and dispiriting' according to Falconer (1991).

Indeed, Carmona (2001b) sees the failures of the house building industry as:

1. Not respecting the urban/landscape context
2. Having no sense of place
3. Not encouraging a sense of community or social diversity
4. No coherent urban space/layout
5. No creation of a legible environment
6. No connectivity
7. Car dominance
8. No secure environment
9. No innovation/architectural quality
10. No encouragement of flexible/adaptable homes
11. Restricted choice/variety
12. Little response to the sustainable agenda
13. Over emphasis on a zoning philosophy rather than a mixed-use development.

Black (1997) agrees with Carmona (2001b) by adding that the house building industry is led by a 'build and walk away trading ethos' where the emphasis is predominantly on manufacturing rather than design and planning. It is about mass production and minimal consultation. The industry is thus criticised as being inelastic and unresponsive to demand according to Meen (1996) whereby though demand has significantly increased, supply of housing has now reached an all time low in recent years.

Webber (1962) writes that many house builders merely build what they perceive the buyer to want resulting in little variation in housing type, long pedestrian routes, lack of local facilities and very little connection to locality that reinforces consumerism and materialism over consumer individuality and cohesion. It is claimed that lifestyle trends today and the decline in the locality has led to 'non-place communities'. Halter (1995) argues that there is a real danger that community 'developers are creating master planned communities that will be obsolete before they are even complete and that the communities will be out of touch with consumer needs 'no matter how good the market or how desirable the location'.

### ***The House building Industry***

These may indeed be the criticisms but is this the fault of the property developers, the consumer, the planning system or the house building industry itself?

Indeed, how feasible is the 'community' concept in today's society to property developers where consumer preference and profit motivation is predominantly driving the housing market? Carmona, Carmona and Gallent (2003) demonstrate the complex housing provision debate and the conflicting objectives that house builders are faced with in developing housing and in the delivery of new homes.

Ultimately they suggest that there are a number of fundamental changes that are urgently required if we are to provide the types and numbers of housing required and illustrates that it is vital that we find a better way of delivering new homes. The suggestion is that the private house builder has been known to have an agenda that is not conducive to innovation, quality, design and the creation of a sense of community. Indeed, the house builder, in the main, is generally concerned about an investment opportunity that is profitable, reducing their risk and increasing certainty, reducing delay and avoiding high initial costs. Healey (1992) reminds us that the development process is all about managing risk for 'at all stages, the development industry is vulnerable to internal and external risks, market forces, stakeholder roles, objectives, different power relationships, public and private relations' and he thus implies that the overall objectives of the industry is not towards a qualitative outcome. The house builder or property developer will also have a number of internal tensions, not least its statutory responsibility to its shareholders and investors and so performance and objectives is more financially based on quantitative outcomes rather than about design quality and social issues. As Davidson (1987) adds 'we are after all, in the business of making money, not houses.'

In response, house builders have blamed the planning system has acting as a constraint on the market. 'It is not a result of inefficiencies in their industry which has been consistently criticised for its failure to innovate, but is a direct result of planning constraint '(Carmona 2001b). House builders have criticised the planning system as preventing local initiative and being technocratic, negative, having no vision and not providing the certainty necessary for competitiveness. In fact since the 1980's and the Thatcherite period, planning has basically been about physical regeneration with an emphasis on quantitative objectives. The Planning system has since suffered in terms of the amount of social regeneration activity due to lack of vision, innovation and ultimately resources. Perhaps correctly, Stewart (2002) argues that that current

Government policy and guidance does not adequately encourage any improvement in the standard product and potentially requires more incentive and clear guidance.

Indeed the private house builder contributes 1.2% to the GDP (Stewart 1997) and accounts for 180,000 jobs in the UK (HBF 2002a) and so it is a very important concern that the industry remains competitive but meets the needs of the market.

Carmona, Carmona and Gallent (2003) summarise by saying 'although the construction aspect of what the house builder does is important, it is only one part of a whole. Their major objective is to find land and on it create market value, a process in many respects akin to a marketing business than a building business'.

Indeed, the house building industry is forced to achieve a turnover as quickly as possible and so generally rejects any complex development or bespoke solutions as it generates too much risk.

Carmona, Carmona and Gallent (2003) suggest that house builders bring in good design consultation too late in the development process and that there is very little time for adequate site analysis, so that qualitative outcomes are secondary in the process. They also believe that there is very little designer involvement after the development starts construction and the main objectives become programme and cost targets. Consequently, 'housing which is produced is frequently neither that which planners aim to produce nor that which a free market would prefer.'

So does the house building industry allow the developer to innovate?

Ball (1999) suggests that a method of making the housing market more conducive to innovation is to increase public intervention, lower the focus on land development profits, subsidise innovation in housing production and provide a regulatory regime which is more innovation-friendly. Thus suggesting that the house building industry requires a structural and regulatory change to the market before a social change is both deliverable and feasible.

However, despite these criticisms, house builders argue that they are merely providing what the market wants and that these so called 'standard' products are actually selling regardless of what critics claim. Indeed, to the house builder, innovation and change are expensive and risky and the purchaser does not want to be funding this in the resultant high house prices that make a development uncompetitive and thus undeliverable. The emphasis for house builders has therefore remained on the production of 'suburbs'- single use, single- tenure, car-reliant developments on the edge of existing settlements.

### **Consumer Demand**

Indeed, for many people, the traditional village life associated with this 'sense of community' can be perceived as claustrophobic, outmoded and isolated. Many consumers or residents today want easy and convenient locations that do not necessarily equate to a community development and moreover, current demographic trends illustrate a highly mobile and migratory population. This means that many areas are subject to a high turnover of people moving in and out of the area so social ties and networks do not have the opportunity to establish and develop with the house to some people not really being a 'home'.

There are counter-arguments that suggest community can be socially stifling and create narrow-mindedness and invades privacy which can in fact encourage social exclusion of particular groups.

But Carmona, Carmona and Gallent (2003) believe that developers have not been at all responsive to market demand and thus 'debate has focused on the production of the physical artefact (the house), rather than the activity of the dwelling (the home)' and so there is a shift in the attitudes by consumers towards new housing development.

However, research found that many purchasers actually buy for 'the short term' in order to gain a place on the property ladder and increase their ability to buy bigger in the future, thus space standards, energy efficiency and environmental quality are not always the main concerns in the decision to purchase. The seven factors according to Carmona and Gallent (2003) are in fact:

- 1) Price/Value
- 2) Locality
- 3) Estate/Urban Design
- 4) House design
- 5) Liveability of the house
- 6) Features
- 7) Construction

Further research suggests that consumers want spacious layouts, low density, quiet locations, imaginative design, increased privacy and a greater range of layouts and house type. Indeed the high profile study, Kerb Appeal by the Popular Housing Forum (1998) found that there was generally a very poor image of the industry's product and were highly critical of new residential environments, though interestingly

found that many consumers wanted to live in car-dominated developments and wanted to be well separated from any amenities. Mixed -use developments were apparently undesirable, as they are apparently perceived as 'living on both lively and cosmopolitan streets or on through-roads'.

Added to this, Roscow (1998) argues that the consumer actually wants a standardised product. 'Do we really know what delights the homebuyer in new commercial housing? And do the customers really have an ideal home in mind, which is not unlike their childhood pictures? How can architects influence house design when design is considered to be such a tiny component of the product value?'

Thus as Carmona and Gallent observe, 'the outcomes represent a significant gap between what many house buyers perceive to be important in a residential area and what many theorists and practitioners argue is good for them'.

But Halter claims there is no longer a typical homeowner and that consumers are becoming increasingly demanding of quality of life and this is consequently forcing a radical shift in policy, consumer attitude and expectation, development strategies, research and the actual housing product. Thus there is increased expectation and responsibility being placed upon house builders and developers as the typical profile of the purchaser is continually changing and 'lifestyle' is becoming a fundamental aim.

The dilemma that developers face will thus be between the need to meet the apparent consumer preference for a 'community' but also to protect their profit and long term competitive edge which may not necessarily correlate.

## **Section Five: Thesis Focus**

Thus it appears that the house building industry and property developers have a huge challenge ahead of them to create this 'sense of community'.

Past experience has shown both successes and failures in the house building industry and in the creation of communities. Indeed there are numerous residential development models across the world that all have varying degrees of success in creating a genuine sense of community.

By looking at such models it can be seen that there are a number of different methods of implementation but can a sense of community actually be **delivered**?

Past criticisms have focused on the *ability* of the House Building Industry to actually create a sense of community and there has been significant debate about the community concept and what developers *should be doing* and *why*.

But what about the *how*?

**What about its practical delivery? What are the barriers to delivery?**



# **Chapter Two: Research Methods**

## **Section 1: Research Area and Topic Justification**

The introduction to this thesis has outlined a number of areas of research that has been undertaken regarding the concept of 'community'. This in effect outlined that the concept is a very controversial and relevant topic in this period of increasing housing demand and rapid growth. Indeed, the literature review has clearly outlined the ongoing debates and criticisms of the house building industry and the concerns over the quality of new residential settlements and the evident lack of community within them.

Property developers and the house building industry are now under growing pressure to innovate and add value in new residential settlements and in creating a sense of community in their developments. Indeed, it appears that 'community' is becoming a much-used term in property development and has now become very much a commodity.

But the literature and research has raised the question as to how conducive the House Building Industry is to innovation and the community concept where qualitative outcomes would almost have to take precedence over quantitative targets. In this demanding climate, property developers need to make a number of fundamental changes if they are to provide the quality and quantity of housing required and a better way of delivering homes.

The literature discusses the many different types and methods of creating a sense of community in terms of hard and soft foundations (NEF 2000) and as Intentional Community Design begins to emerge in new settlements, there have been many attempts around the world at creating different residential development models with the objective of creating a sense of community.

However, the research has predominantly focused on the relevance and definition of 'community' but there has been very little published on *how* this concept is applied and the *barriers* to the practical delivery of a sense of community in residential developments.

Indeed, does the House Building have the *capacity and ability* to create a genuine sense of community and if not, what barriers does the industry face in the delivery of a sense of community?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there have been numerous attempts by developers to create a sense of community across the world. These residential models demonstrate the different initiatives and methods in creating a sense of community, all with different levels of success.

Because this is such a wide topic, I have chosen to focus on four residential development models that all claim to create a sense of community.

Thus the question I will be addressing is:

### **Can the House Building Industry Create A Sense Of Community? A Critique of Four Residential Development Models.**

This topic was picked as a reflection of both a personal and professional interest. My undergraduate degree dissertation was based on community consultation and so I have always retained an interest in the value of the community across various disciplines in society. I have also worked for a prominent property developer /house builder for the last three years who are involved in the creation of large, strategic mixed-use and mixed-tenure developments. The company is renowned for its emphasis on community and in new build high quality development but in working for them I am aware of the problems involved in the delivery and implementation in creating a sense of community and also the viability issues.

The company are keen to look at new and emerging innovative models and can perhaps learn from the mistakes and successes of past models of residential development. Thus they would be interested in the limitations and constraints that currently exist within the house building industry.

This type of research can enable the company to remain competitive, add value and also to meet the needs of the consumer and the wider community. Indeed, the company is always looking for new methods of delivering houses and thus the thesis question is a definite area of research and of much value to the company.

In a wider sense, I believe that this research will fit into existing research by continuing on from work done on *why* we need a sense of community, and *what* can be done to create a sense of community *to what is currently preventing the house building industry from implementing this sense of community*. This can highlight the

fundamental areas for change so that the house building industry can meet their targets and deliver quality housing in genuine communities.

## **Section 2: Key Questions and Objectives**

- How successful have the models been in creating a genuine sense of community?
- What are the barriers to creating a genuine sense of community?
- What are the barriers to delivering and implementing the four residential models?

## **Section Three: Thesis Approach**

This thesis will consist of a review and critique of four residential development models. This will involve the critical analysis of the methods that house builders have utilised in attempting to create a sense of community in new residential developments and will highlight the apparent barriers to effective delivery.

I will then interview a number of different property developers and other key players involved in this delivery to look at the viability and barriers towards the delivery of these models.

## **Section Four: Data Gathering**

This thesis is based on both primary and secondary data:

### ***Secondary Data***

The secondary data was selected to enable qualitative analysis based on the content and meaning of various literature sources and theories. Thus I will critically examine relevant literature that will include journal articles, academic journals, articles, textbooks, government policy and publications, specialist reports, conferences, professional journals, online journals, surveys, guides and ephemera or private data gathered from company information and reports. I have also utilized tertiary data in locating and refining further data and relevant literature such as Internet search engines, specialist web sites and general bibliographies. The detail of my data can be seen in my bibliography. This depth will give the analysis and critique both a subjective, objective and factual context. Furthermore, the range of secondary data are written by a number of different authors, some planners, some academics, developers, professionals, architects, residents, consultants and government bodies.

This would again provide depth of data sources as each would provide a different perspective with different influences and experiences.

I decided to base my thesis and my analysis on four different residential models as I felt it would demonstrate effectively the different methods of implementing a sense of community and potentially highlight different constraints. I will look at the barriers to implementing these four models so that I can determine the wider constraints the housing industry faces in creating a sense of community.

My selection of models was based on a number of factors that were generated from my literature review. All four models have a mixture of 'hard' and 'soft' foundations and have been applied in a number of different countries, predominantly in new build settlements.

These models have all received both positive and negative comments and are all, to varying degrees, relatively controversial. I also feel that all four residential development models are becoming significant in the planning and development within this country and so are likely to become popular models. Each model claims to have the primary objective and purpose of creating a sense of community and are predominantly developer-led schemes. Indeed, each model demonstrates varying extremes of implementation; successes and innovative methods and each have differing levels of community participation required.

Though the four case studies all seem to concentrate on the US experience, this is largely due to the fact that this where most of the residential models are either being widely implemented or where there have been interesting adaptations to the model.

- 1) The Cohousing Development Model was selected as it provides a relatively extreme example of creating a sense of community. This area is more about the process of creating community and is very much about very early and ongoing community participation and resident involvement. The model has many different methods of delivery and has been adapted to cover a number of different partnership mechanisms with developers.
- 2) The Common Interest Development (CID) model was chosen because it represented a very different method- that of governance and ownership and is very focused also on the physical appearance of the community and less about community participation. It would perhaps be described as a more superficial example of a residential model.

- 3) Gated Community Models are a very good example of where physical infrastructure has been used to try to create a sense of community. This model has possibly attracted the most controversy and thus has a great deal of literature. It is becoming one of the most popular models in residential development in the world.
- 4) The Smart Community model is about the use of community electronic networks. It is the model indicative of contemporary and changing lifestyles in terms of globalisation and the increased use of the Internet. It represents the changing notion of place and thus is a good method for looking at how the concept of the community will fit into this high tech environment. Many critics believe globalisation and the use of the Internet will reduce locality and thus erode our sense of community. Consequently a critique of how community and electronic networks have been implemented is an interesting indication of future trends for developers and consumers to realise.

### ***Primary Data***

In order to provide higher quality primary data that illustrates a realistic perspective, I decided to carry out a series of interviews to the key players involved in the practical implementation and delivery of a sense of community. I chose to interview a range of property developers from the large strategic property developers to the smaller house builders to gain a range of responses and different perspectives on delivery and their perceived barriers and constraints to delivering a sense of community. In order to provide some primary research on the four residential models I would also ask for their opinion on these models in terms of delivery and viability. I will also interview a planner and a community infrastructure consultant who are also highly involved in the delivery of a sense of community and may again offer another perspective and another set of constraints and recommendations.

The companies I will interview are:

- 1) Countryside Properties
- 2) Kilmartin Property Group
- 3) David Wilson Homes
- 4) Fairview
- 5) Taylor Woodrow
- 6) Crest Nicholson

7) Senior planner from Southend District Council

9) Social Infrastructure Consultant

Interviewing these people would mean that the secondary data and the theoretical work on the models could be compared and analysed against the practical experience and delivery of the interviewees. However, so that the interviewees can answer honestly and freely, the responses will be anonymous.

The questions will be:

- 1. Which residential development model would your company be most keen to develop and why?**
- 2. What experience does your company have in developing these models?**
- 3. What are the barriers to the implementation of each of these models?**
- 4. Which residential development model would you consider to be the most effective in creating a sense of community?**

This combination of questions will enable the analysis of:

- Which model would be *viable and deliverable* to the developer and is thus the most attractive from that perspective
- Why is it the most *attractive* model for the developer
- Whether there is a difference between the model that creates a sense of community and one that the developer would pick as their method of implementation- conflicting priorities between the sense of community and the developer priorities
- What models are currently being implemented by developers
- The barriers to creating a sense of community in these models
- Differing views between the different developers and also between the developers and the planner and consultant and their perceived barriers to implementation.

## **Section Five: Analytical Methods**

This critique will focus on the key questions and objectives that were set out in the previous section and will seek to examine each development model against a set of common criteria. It is important that in order to create a solid analysis and argument that each residential model is analysed and measured against the same set of criteria and to enable an effective comparison:

In each residential development model I will thus critically examine the following:

1. Evaluate the literature/ research/viewpoints
2. Feasibility and deliverability of model in creating a sense of community for property developers
3. Effectiveness in creating a sense of community
4. Case Studies and practical applications
5. Problems/Constraints/Opportunities and Limitations

This criterion will inform the type and range of data that needs to be gathered so that key questions and objectives can be met and achieved.

As discussed in the data gathering section, I will be using the results of the interviews to help analyse these models to incorporate the views of the private and public sector.

However, the bulk of my analysis will be in Chapter Five- Discussion, whereby the four models will be analysed alongside the results of my interviews to enable my objectives and key questions to be answered.

## **Chapter Three: Residential Development Models**

### **The Cohousing Model**

Cohousing developments are initiated, developed, and managed by residents with the implementation of a shared 'house' and shared facilities within the development although this has been recently adapted to become more developer-led. Cohousing adapts the legal forms of the Common Interest Development (my next residential model) to a more intensive, deliberative democracy and explicitly strives for a sense of community by use of Intentional Neighbourhood Design. This is where physical design encourages a strong sense of community and in this case where the extensive community facilities are there as a supplement to private dwellings.

This model demonstrates the first example of how a sense of community can be created and demonstrates some of the barriers that developers face in creating a sense of community.

#### ***Background/Trends***

As discussed in the introduction, current demographic and cultural trends have gradually led to an increased demand for a different way of living and a move away from the traditional form of settlement and development process. Many theorists now believe that we will no longer just choose a new house when we move; we will join a new community. Such trends indicate that declining household size and increasing levels of single parent households have led to an increased demand for greater levels of community-building. More women are also working outside the home thus leading to a child care crisis, there are also evident affordable housing issues, increasing levels of crime and violence and a growing transient culture where few people stay for long in one place.

This shift in culture, the economy and the population has led to an increasing need according to McCamant and Durrett (1994) for a genuine creation of a community. They believe that existing forms of housing no longer address the needs of the people and thus more and more people are living alone, less now live within family



units and the population is ageing thus calling for a thorough re-examination of household and community requirements.

### ***Concept Origins***

The Cohousing Concept was based upon such changing trends in Denmark whereby a new housing type and new form of development has redefined the community concept in real terms. This was based on the belief that people had tired of single person households and have instead built houses combining 'the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantage of community living' (McCamant and Durrett 1994) by combining both a private residence with shared extensive common facilities. This led to a grass-roots movement that focused on changing the *approach* to housing and not about creating a new way of life. Hence in 1993, more than 140 of these communities called 'bofoellesskaber' were developed across Denmark ranging in size from 6 to 40 households.

### ***The Main Characteristics of Cohousing***

Cohousing communities offer extensive shared facilities and moreover, are *organised, planned and managed by the residents themselves* and it is this the characteristic that separates this model from the rest.

The average development size can contain 15-30 houses or 40-100 people at mainly 2-3 storey heights. Cohousing developments are generally higher density and more compact than other residential developments so that land use is more efficient and allows more land for public open space and recreation.

The layout is generally designed to promote clustering of the units around the shared house facility and cars are not given priority and restricted to the edge of the site. The design of a Cohousing development usually has a hierarchy of spaces from private, common and public realm. The need to accommodate diverse households is reflected in a choice of housing models with 4 –6 house plans provided at start for residents to choose and many cohousing developments contain flexible architecture in order to design for future additions e.g. larger units if a family have more children so can move within the community. This will ensure that residents can remain within the community and thus increase the general stability of the development.

However, this model is perhaps more about the process than the outcome in that the process is based on a genuine participation- residents organise and participate in the planning and design process for the development and is genuinely a bottom-up

approach. Indeed residents in some cases can take part in some of the construction themselves e.g. landscaping/interiors and even after completion, residents can continue to manage the development in terms of maintenance.

### ***Participatory Process***

The processes of group formation and project development according to McCamant and Durrett are the initial stages of cohousing community building. The leadership role assumed by one person or a few individuals is often crucial to the successful completion of a cohousing project.

*Consequently, it could be said that this is a key limitation of the model in its capacity to create a genuine sense of community. The long term viability and effectiveness of cohousing is thus heavily dependent on attracting and retaining the right type of resident e.g. one that is motivated, capable and willing to participate both during construction and post occupation. The person and entire group needs to have the correct skills in terms of negotiation, consultation and the ability to work in a team. As the group moves forward in the development and design processes described below, group membership may change as households drop out or enter and thus it is crucial to have participants that are willing to remain within the community for the long term. However, there would surely be very few people willing to offer this type of commitment particularly in other countries. Although alternatively, it could be said that if a sense of community is successfully created, resident satisfaction is higher and they are more likely to stay. This would depend on the level of support they receive throughout the process and the way the process is managed.*

### ***Development Process***

Indeed, residents would face a number of difficult hurdles within the development process, particularly if they are doing so unaided. The group will may lack capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, ability and financial assets for the group will need to find a site and contribute to an initial pool of money to secure the land. The group will also need to cope with the demands and processes of local land use and planning system bureaucracies and the entire development process, from initial group formation through the end of construction, can last between two and eight years. *So again,*

*although this bottom-up approach can bring new and fresh ideas to the development process and could be seen as an opportunity, lack of knowledge and expertise is also a constraint.*

Residents participate in the planning and design of the development and of the community so that it directly responds to their needs in terms of layout, house type, amenities and facilities. *However, this group of residents who have decided the future and components of the development may not be necessarily correctly representing future residents' views and may not therefore be entirely democratic.*

Involvement commences from the earliest planning through to construction stages though the number of people may vary according to the project. This core group can agree to find the architect and establishes development programme and locate a site.

This essential part of the Cohousing Model meets (*in theory*) a number of the definitions and literature discussed in the previous chapter. The participatory process is a prime example of how 'soft' foundations within a development can increase the sense of community in terms of providing a channel for shared experiences and shared goals by having a say in the future of the community. This participatory process can encourage a sense of ownership within those residents and a sense of belonging and also empowers the community and provides it with a part of the decision-making process.

In addition, this process encourages a relatively deep bond and connections between residents, which encourages social interaction. Though this will only remain relevant and effective if those residents remain within the Cohousing development long term and continue to participate long term which is another obvious limitation of the model.

*However, as it will become apparent within the case studies, the process can inevitably become very complicated and stressful. Residents can disagree between themselves and with the architects or planners, on the plans for the development and create internal conflicts that have the potential of remaining post completion. This can also influence the type of community bonds away from friendship towards more of a business relationship and can thus move against creating a sense of community.*

### ***Where can the developer contribute?***

The resident group can collaborate with a housing association/private developer and perhaps create a Joint Venture mechanism of delivery. Developer initiated/driven projects can be implemented and indeed this may actually make it

easier for more people to participate in the process. On the other hand, a well-designed, pedestrian-oriented community with no resident involvement in the planning might be "cohousing inspired", but is not a cohousing community.

Indeed, many Cohousing 'consultancies' are available particularly in the US, which can assist with the process. This can include providing community-building experts or community facilitators, project management and developments and advisors for legal, financial and construction and land acquisition. Moreover, consultancies can advise on the initial feasibility of the project in terms of financial, marketing, demand, political and planning deliverability. Such consultants include the 'Cohousing Company' (who incidentally is run by the architects McCamant and Durrett) and 'Cohousing Resources'. Cohousing Resources advise potential cohousing residents to "work with the best cohousing design professionals from across the country. Have an experienced cohousing design team design your project from start to finish, or have them train your local design professionals". They suggest a 'Streamline Development Model that enables feasibility and viability to be calculated via inputting various assumptions so that costs can also be calculated including the required start-up costs, household mortgages, initial funding and likely build costs. The consultancy will also create a project programme or schedule, suggest various development approaches and then finally bring in the 'experts' to manage the permits, architects, contractors and other professionals'.

Indeed, this is a method in which the majority of American cohousing model developments are moving towards but *this in effect removes the active participation although it suggests that the residents can retain the decision-making power. The emphasis on feasibility and viability programmes and schedule does suggest however that the priority here is not about the community concept but profitable development.* Thus this conflict of priorities between the professionals and the residents may be a key barrier to the effective creation of a sense of community. It seems also that literature is suggesting that this model can *either create a genuine sense of community or can be profitable and deliverable.*

However, some proponents (Brenton 1998) of using private developers in cohousing have argued that because the "community" life of cohousing is not defined by the process of creating physical structures, but by living within them and so do not believe the participatory process is important. They believe that using professionals to assist in developing cohousing makes the process of building these communities more efficient and more likely to succeed. In other words, 'the creation of the physical properties of cohousing is secondary to and detached from the practice of community'.

### ***Intentional Neighbourhood Design***

Cohousing is based on Intentional Neighbourhood Design, which McCamant and Durrett (1994) define as a *physical environment that encourages a strong neighbourhood atmosphere* where the people are consciously committed to living as a community. This is the fundamental component of the Cohousing development model. The physical design encourages a sense of community via communal living and social interaction as well as maintaining the option for privacy. Indeed, it appears that to encourage a sense of community, it requires more than merely following pedestrian-oriented design and locating cars at the periphery.

The common facilities are designed for daily use; they are an integral part of the community and typically include a dining area, sitting area, children's play room, guest room, as well as garden and other amenities. Each household owns a private residence -complete with kitchen and also shares extensive common facilities with the larger group. Residents of cohousing communities often have several optional group meals in the common building each week

*However, this can also count against the components of creating a sense of community in that it could impinge on resident's privacy and sense of private ownership, although admittedly, these residents would have actively decided to enter this type of environment and so may not consider this to be a negative component.*

Indeed, this is a fundamental barrier to the success of this model in this county. *The characteristic of shared community may not be a concept that could be easily absorbed within different cultures, particularly in the UK where many consumers value their privacy and as discussed, may view the community concept as stifling and intrusive.* Though does this mean that it is not viable or does it mean that consumers need to change their attitudes?

### ***Resident management***

Residents manage their own community after they move in and make decisions of common concern at the regular community meetings. Unlike other Resident Associations there is a non-hierarchical structure and decision-making is made as a group. There are leadership roles, but not leaders though there is often one person that gets the community off the ground and often each person has their own area of 'expertise', role or responsibility e.g. the financial role. McCamant and Durrett believe that 'If your community has a leader that sets policy or establishes standards unilaterally, it is not cohousing.' Furthermore there is no shared community economy: McCamant and Durrett believe that if the community provides residents with their

primary income, this is a significant change to the dynamic between neighbours and defines another level of community beyond the scope of cohousing. This appears to be an extremely effective method of encouraging a sense of community by increasing the residents' sense of ownership and creating a democratic space for empowering the community and allowing them to share collective visions.

Indeed this model has been widely adopted and applied across the world with many variations. The notion of Cohousing has now spread from Denmark to the Netherlands who have the 'centraal wonen' (central living) but who have differed in their approach to shared facilities whereby they have four to eight household clusters who share a kitchen, living and dining area.

Fromme (1996) wrote about the Central Wonen and it appears that there are some very subtle differences in the Dutch models. The Dutch see this form of shared housing as an opportunity for wide-scale housing reform as well as promoting a sense of community. Moreover, there is greater awareness and acceptance of this model in Holland, whereby the cohousing developments have secured *government support* for their initiatives.

While Danish cohousing attracted predominately married couples, the Dutch groups grew to include more singles, single parents, and elderly people -- almost half are single and a third are single parents. This suggests there is less pressure for a 'family only' mentality in these developments and possibly less general restrictions and selection. Alternatively, it may be that a family-based development would be more conducive to creating a sense of community?

In 1970, a group of 25 households organized to build collaborative housing in Hilversum, just outside Amsterdam. The group wanted to make housing *affordable* to all levels of society and this again is a different objective to other Cohousing developments.

The layout and design differed in that there were a number of small clusters rather than one large one. Though dividing the larger community into smaller groups fosters a greater sense of intimacy, Fromme explains that 'because of their intimacy, groups of 12 households or fewer have more small-scale social problems than larger groups'. She also felt that there might be confusion between the jurisdiction of the cluster and that of the community as a whole. 'Should the cluster or the whole community select new members?' This layout was found to reinforce small social

groupings by connecting each housing unit to a specific cluster kitchen, providing few opportunities to mix or eat with the larger community. The Central Wonen also encouraged and attracted a larger number of renters than in other countries. This can have a dual effect in that it obviously attracts a greater cross section of society and thus a mixed and balanced community. But it may also mean the community is not as stable or as permanent as those with a high level of homeownership, thus bonds may not be as strong. *Thus this variation of the model demonstrates where the concept has become more mainstream and more acceptable, and as well as creating a community is also a viable model. Alternatively, it also demonstrates some barriers that remain that can prevent the effective delivery to a sense of community.*

Sweden has also adapted the idea and has cohousing that is instigated and developed by housing professionals creating a more institutional approach. More recently, this type of housing development model has now spread to North America and there are now more than a hundred cohousing communities completed or in development across the United States and Canada.

### ***Translating Cohousing to America and the UK***

#### **Muir Commons, Davis, California**

Muir Commons was completed in August 1991 after taking three years to complete and involved residents, a developer and The CoHousing Company. This case study demonstrates the way in which this model has been adapted to become more developer- and more commercially oriented. *This case study also illustrates the problems and constraints it faced, problems of delivery and ways in which the model has been adapted in creating a sense of community.*

The Developer- Virginia Thigpen of West Davis Associates was planning a 110-acre subdivision and was looking for a new model to meet the city requirements. Legal agreements, professionals and financing were all undertaken by the developer, which suggests that the developer really was there to facilitate the residents and not make all the decisions. It seems however, that the developer, Thigpen had become interested in cohousing because they were interested in having the 'cohousing units provide the city-mandated affordable housing component as well as a means to speed up the design and construction process' (Spreitzer 1992). *Therefore there is a conflict of objectives between the residents and the developer, whereby the developer saw this as a solution to quicker construction and quicker profits.*

Moreover, the Cohousing consultants on their website wrote 'though a participatory design process was undertaken, the residents did not sign a formal agreement defining the extent of their decision-making and so they tended to struggle to make their opinions considered'. *Again the introduction here of a formal agreement defining the extent of decision-making shows a significant departure from the Danish model to become more institutionalised and constrained by legal agreements though this could be purely a result of changing times and a very different culture.*

*Alternatively, it could be suggested that the introduction of a developer into the Cohousing model upsets the fundamental part of the model- its participatory process and has moved away from creating a genuine sense of community towards profitability and deliverability. The Cohousing model in this respect would become increasingly 'diluted' until it became a standard development that fits more into the house building industry's priorities and mainstream culture rather than the other way round.*

In Muir Commons, the Developer clearly had very different priorities to the residents. They were under pressure to build quickly and keep to a low budget and the architect had very little experience in the participatory process not helped by the inability of the residents to agree between them on the layout of the development.

The developer attempted to develop a set of management documents concerning community participation, the use of common facilities, and the orientation of new households in the community. Through these "participation agreements" for owners and renters, original and subsequent residents are urged to make a number of commitments. These new owners will have to commit to playing "an active role" in the community association by participating in the preparation of common meals and contributing to the maintenance and improvement of the property as well as share the same active roles and responsibilities in the community owners. But will rules and regulations 'force' someone into participating and will the use of formal legislation like this create an inclusive atmosphere for social capital? *Alternatively is this a negotiation tool between resident and developer to reducing those barriers to implementation?*

Indeed, resident composition changed during the design and construction process, but 12 households remained from start to finish. Sprietzer (1992) described that 'reasons for leaving ranged from *financial constraints* to having interpersonal differences with others in the group. One couple left because they felt that the process was too bureaucratic and rigid.' *This suggests that developer involvement*



*must strike a fine balance between providing support and guidance but not being too controlling or restrictive.*

However, once completed there was a huge demand for a house in Muir Commons with a long waiting list. 73% of residents questioned in a recent survey chose having a "closer relationship with neighbours and a sense of community" as their top reason for choosing to live in cohousing. Over 90% from both groups listed a sense of community as one of their top three reasons for living in cohousing (Spreitzer1992). This suggests that though the process of creating a community by the developer and resident was indeed difficult, the result did actually create a sense of community.

McCamanat and Durett advise that 'residents need to think less as consumers and more as developers' but this clearly goes against the whole point of the Cohousing process in that the development is meant to reflect their needs and requirements and the active participation creates and builds the capacity for building a sense of community. On the other hand, the development must obviously be financially viable and so the residents need to be aware of the need to keep to budget and programme. However, developers may not have quality as a priority and are profit motivated and so will work differently and will very likely want to standardise design in order to keep costs down. Their evidently needs to be some *balance* applied here in that if the development is too standardised, diversity of households and the uniqueness of the environment will compromise the creation of a sense of *community*.

### ***UK experience***

The UK experience of Cohousing is very much smaller than in the rest of Europe and America. *This is due to a number of reasons including the different cultures; land and planning legislation and the way in which the housing market operates that are all institutional and cultural barriers to this model actually creating a sense of community.*

Nock (2001) who runs the Community Project, a cohousing scheme in Lewes, Sussex, has much experience in such developments. She believes that the culture in the UK is adverse to the American Cohousing model as the British have stronger aspirations of ownership, privacy and individual status.

## Uplands Cohousing

The Cohousing Company bought the Uplands Cohousing site in Stroud, Gloucestershire on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2000 and this was essentially the first new build Cohousing Community in the U.K whereby 30% of the units were pre-sold off plan before the land was even purchased. This suggests that there is a latent demand for such a community concept in this country. *Moreover this demand is a very attractive concept for developers as selling off-plan is clearly going to increase profit levels and improve the financial viability of the project.* The site received detailed planning permission for 35 houses/flats on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2001 and so the development only took less than one year to achieve planning consent which compared to many residential developments in this country, is a relatively short time period. Furthermore, the time between consent and the completion of the first phase of development was also short taking only a year to develop. This development, as in the US instructed The Cohousing Company to obtain detailed planning permission, to sell building plots to its members and arrange and manage the building works again questioning the effectiveness of the model if resident participation is not part of the process.

Each householder will be an equal shareholder in the Stroud Cohousing Company who will manage and own the common land and the communal house and thus decision-making will be by consensus. However, in reviewing their sales literature for new residents, The Stroud Cohousing Company (2004) wrote that "the group as a whole will decide who to offer the house to, after checking that candidates have the necessary finances. Factors that may be taken into consideration are the balance within the group (in terms of age, for example, or number of children). But of course the group will also be influenced by the degree to which the interested party has become involved in the project and the contribution they have made."

This is particularly revealing in its meaning and content. It demonstrates that there is a selection process for new residents which though is understandable as residents who will have the ability and capacity to participate is vital for the long term viability and effectiveness of the development in terms of creating a sense of community.

However, this could also be seen as a form of social exclusion and does not create a mixed, balanced and diverse development and potentially a homogenous community.

Furthermore, the price of the units being sold are typically more expensive than similarly sized and equipped individual houses with the added costs of the community house and the general costs of running the community and so reduces affordability, and accessibility is reduced to some members of society. This suggests that some examples of Cohousing itself are relatively homogeneous in the racial, social, and economic backgrounds of its participants. This is due at least in part to

self-selection and the requirements of available capital, knowledge, and time to participate.

*Indeed one area of constraint and limitation on Cohousing in this country is the lack of experience and awareness of the model. This means that at present there is limited government support and that the relatively rigid planning frameworks would need to adapt to this new model. Consequently, gaining planning approval for such developments may take longer. Linked to this lack of experience is the difficulty in getting an insured mortgage due to the high level of banking and legal fees that are required by some residents up front in becoming a cohousing member. Indeed, finding enough prospective residents that are willing to take the risk of developing their own housing may also prove difficult.*

In examining the research and literature across the spectrum, it does not seem as though there are many Cohousing projects that have lasted past a couple of generations. Though this may be due to the fact that they have been a relatively recent phenomenon, it could also suggest that they are *not viable long term, or sustainable past the initial years in that it requires the continuing active involvement of its residents and relies perhaps too heavily on community participation. It could suggest that we will need a structural alteration in societal values and attitudes in the way in which we build and the way in which we live.*

So in summary and responding back to the three key questions, this critique has demonstrated, at least in part, the successful creation of a sense of community. This indicates that the House Building Industry has at least the *ability* to create a sense of community. However, this model has also demonstrated that there are significant barriers to the creation of community and in the delivery of this model by developers.

Indeed there have been examples where the participatory process within Cohousing has created heightened levels of conflict between residents and put strain on resident relations. Conversely it appears that too much developer involvement or input can also take away the opportunity for effective and genuine resident participation and involvement- decision-making can be tokenistic. Another barrier to creating a sense of community is the often-apparent conflicting priorities between the developer and resident not least the possibility that the developer would want to initiate and implement legal agreements.

The cohousing concept was also originated in a very different culture and on a much smaller scale and this may not be applicable or deliverable in a British culture or housing market. British culture would not be generally conducive to this open, shared community due to lack of awareness and experience of the model.

The model is heavily dependent on early and prolonged residential participation, which is another fundamental constraint of the successful delivery of this model and is also dependent on attracting and retaining motivated and willing residents who also have the finances, knowledge and expertise to deliver. Indeed very few consumers would be willing to commit to this and so consequently, resident composition is likely to change over the period of the development due to financial constraints, which reduces the likely levels of social capital, created.

Case studies have shown that the resident can have difficulties in securing a mortgage or a bank loan due to lack of knowledge or experience of model in this country. Indeed this lack of knowledge or awareness of this model is a significant barrier in itself. This can create a lack of awareness by the local planning authorities, which can mean the model can take longer to achieve planning consent. Furthermore, UK planning legislation is not conducive to such development models due to the rigid planning framework.

*In essence, this concept may be effective in theory in creating a sense of community but may not actually be deliverable.*

## Common Interest Developments

Common Interest Developments (CID) are planned residential developments with governance structures organized within an association. This can be created by either a statute or covenants running with the land in order to maintain a quality residential environment.

### ***Trends and History***

The first Common Interest Developments began in the US in the late 1800s. These started out as 'enclaves for the rich with restricted covenants barring unwanted ethnic groups' (Minton 2002b). Across America, there are now 205,000 Common Interest Developments housing over 43 million residents and 15% of the nation's housing stock and such growth has been predominant in California since the 1960s movement and the campaign for increased bottom -up innovation.

### ***Objectives***

The CID according to (Fenster 1999) was created in order to create a *well-maintained community* and moreover create a sense of community, security and a greater level of community participation

However CIDs were also created in order to *reduce* civic responsibility and spending whereby municipalities wanted to increase the tax base but also wanted to avoid the huge cost of providing expensive roads and utilities. Similarly to meet the demand for affordable housing, developers wanted to build more units on less land to keep costs down. The solution was to build Common Interest Developments where instead of providing every house with its own pool, driveway and lawn; CIDs provided homes with shared amenities. *Thus this suggests that the rationale for such a model was not to create a sense of community but to effectively save money.* The CIDs also meant that the communities were private developments and so the local authority did not have to oversee or maintain them.

### ***Components of the CID model***

The CID is based upon associational ownership of common property and deed restrictions that limit the individual owners' uses of their property. This is a housing model that combines individual ownership of private dwellings with shared ownership of common facilities such as the roads, water systems, swimming pools and golf courses. More generally it regulates site ownership, densities, parking requirements, traffic levels and design standards and so on. Ownership is managed by a Community Association (made up of the developer or professionals) who are given 'authority' by the homeowners to enforce special rules of covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs). Such a model allows for the design of developments that are architecturally and environmentally innovative by a strict application of standard zoning controls. This combines and coordinates architectural styles, building forms, structural and visual relationships within an environment to allow a *mixing* of different environments. Indeed this is a strong basis for creating an attractive and well maintained residential development and encourages residents to feel satisfied and for the environment to be *perceived* as idyllic.

The model also ensures that there is abundant, accessible and properly located public open space, schools and public/ private facilities for the community. Because of the shared ownership feature, CID residents enjoy such things as dependable water systems, well-maintained roadways, open space and even ocean access that they may not be able to afford otherwise. This on a superficial level can provide an attractive and extremely well maintained quality physical environment, which can potentially create the internal and external perception of community and a sense of pride. This also allows increased accessibility to quality facilities, amenities and services.

Thus the House Building Industry here has the ability to create an environment entirely conducive to creating a sense of community.

*However there are some distinct disadvantages to living in a Common Interest Development and thus its impact on creating a sense of community can also vary significantly due to a number of barriers to implementation.*

The CID can also experience increased levels of conflict between residents and a lack of homeowner control as a result of the overzealous CC & R enforcement. However, Chavis and Wandersman (1990) believe that 'a sense of community is increased by social conflict being exerted in a development- in that a 'problem

neighbourhood' difficult issues can serve as a motivator to collective action and participation'.

### **Covenants Conditions & Restrictions**

Each CID is governed by a set of bylaws and CC&Rs, which are there to ensure the continued quality and appearance of the development. Some CC&Rs claim that by imposing architectural restrictions and enforcing bylaws they help to "preserve the integrity of the community" but the covenants are not necessarily the will of the community. The CC&Rs address such things as minimum house size, property line setbacks, and design control, fences, trees, domestic animals, car and boat storage and home occupations. *However, it is difficult to see how effective this is in creating a real sense of community? Does the colour of your fence equate to quality of life? Indeed this level of control and regulation can significantly impact on the diversity and uniqueness of a community and restrict the levels of self-expression which in turn can mean the resident does not feel a sense of ownership towards both their property and their community.* "Community is defined by exclusion, strengthened by homogeneity and enforced by law but the CC&Rs also allow the developers of the land to have a major voice in deciding how the land is used in perpetuity" (Alexander 1994).

The Community Association has the power to enforce the CC&Rs, collect regular and special assessments, levy fines for violations, record liens and even initiate non-judicial proceedings to collect unpaid assessments. Most associations attempt to resolve disputes privately or through mediation and arbitration. However, either the association or individual homeowners can file lawsuits to enforce the regulations. *Surely this is a huge constraint on the viability of both the model itself and the effectiveness of creating a community- with this level of control, how can the developer retain a good relationship with the resident? Moreover these bylaws specify the number of directors on the community association board, how they are elected and their terms of office. Consequently it suggests that the board is not necessarily democratically elected and are thus not effectively representing the needs of the community on this community association board.*

Therefore, in effect, the presence of CC&Rs mean that the decisions about the future of the community and its maintenance have already been made for them. This has led to Johnston and Johnstone-Dodds (2002) writing that many residents do not understand the CC&R rules when they purchase the house and sign up to the

HA. They recommend that if the residents were involved in the making of the rules they might have an increased level of understanding and compliance. However, it is unlikely that property developers would allow this to happen to any great extent as it means relinquishing some of their control.

CC&Rs cannot include any provisions which violate existing laws barring housing discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, familial status, marital status, disability, national origin or ancestry but can create 'adult only' communities. This means that this model has the potential to allow a mixed and balanced community though in reality, this development is in effect aimed at a particular market and 'type' of person and so they are unlikely to get a genuine mix of backgrounds and people.

This has led to what McKenzie (1994) has termed the 'creation of "privatopias" based upon exclusion and isolation that are threats to democracy and social interaction. He also says that the exclusion of lower income individuals from the vast majority of CIDs through lot size, house size, and the resulting price creates an anti-democratic governance process.

### ***Private and exclusive communities?***

Boddy (1995) claims that the CID model, rather than encouraging a sense of community, is leading to 'privatisation of local government'. Services and amenities are privatised and in some cases, the residents are allowed to reduce their local property tax or council tax thus eroding the area's tax base. Such shirking of financial responsibility does not bode well for a shared sense of responsibility in the greater community in which they live.

Such a movement is being termed by many as a 'quiet revolution' (Boddy 1995) but also one that is subject to a growing body of criticism. For example, some claim that facilities such as ' parks, open space and recreational facilities- formerly enjoyed as a right of the general population are now becoming the privilege of private communities.' Indeed in Putnam's (2000) *Bowling Alone* he termed CIDs as nothing more than 'maligned gated communities'. 'It is a total transformation of the landscape of American home ownership,' says McKenzie. 'The traditional family home is becoming extinct in larger cities'. *This suggests that the CID model is damaging the traditional lifestyles based on community and could actually have an adverse impact on the sense of community in an area - the very thing it claims to create.*



Indeed, Bannister believes that CIDs experience many difficulties because developers set up the homeowner associations that are inappropriate and unsuitable, imposing overly strict deed restriction and then disappear after completion. While certain rules can be changed quickly by the governing board, deed restrictions are almost impossible to change, requiring a huge majority of owners.

"The oversight responsibilities instead fell to volunteer committees of private homeowners with help from professional property managers and lawyers, creating in each CID a private government with residents signing a binding contract to obey its laws" (McKenzie 1994).

Thus the continued and ongoing role of the developer is also important in the creation of a sense of community that continues long after the developer has gone.

Many CIDs are 20 or more years old and thus if the developer's responsibility has ended, the homeowners have to finance repairs. "The associations should have reserves to pay for that, but the developers almost always set maintenance fees very low to help them sell units, and the associations invariably find themselves under funded." To raise the needed funds, the Home Owner Associations levy hefty special assessments and often hike the monthly fees to create future reserves. The developer has to think very carefully about the rules that govern the development after completion as a home in a community with a sound constitution is more valuable and thus more saleable than a home in a community with a governance structure that features less clear property rights...these developers sell more than homes.... they also sell constitutional rules' (Gordon and Keston 2000). *Thus a key limitation of this model is how the Community Association is established and how the developers can continue their role after completion- indeed many developers would not want an ongoing role, either financially or to enforce the CC&Rs,*

### **Consumerism**

However, these may be the criticisms but homeowners seem to want this type of regulation, where their community is *permanently protected*, though other owners resent the fact that they have limited choice and freedom. But then it must be said that these residents had the choice to purchase these houses in such a development and indeed many chose the development precisely for such a controlled community. Indeed, this is clarified by the watchdog Hyland, director of the National Institute of

Community Management. 'It is for homeowners who are sacrificing privacy, control and freedom of choice- the point of the rules is to protect the community- to maintain or improve the property values- if you don't want to live by the rules you should not buy the house'. However, many homeowners, however, don't realize what rights they've signed away until it's too late and thus indicates that these CC&Rs are not made clear enough. Hyland explains that 'the homeowner is handing over control of your home and your community, often to people with little knowledge of the law, or business and who sometimes have very different ideas as to what they want in their community'.

### ***The Town of Celebration***

The Town Of Celebration, Florida is illustrative of this new form of planned residential development and the new lifestyle known as 'New Urbanism' and includes 20,000 residents. The objective or catchphrase of the development on the town's marketing material is where 'all neighbours can be friends and everyone keeps their lawns mowed' suggesting that the masterplanners of Celebration believed that a 'tidy' regulated environment was enough to secure social capital. This example of a CID illustrates the barriers to implementation that can exist in creating a sense of community.

The master planner of Celebration was initially Walt Disney though it was not until 1994 that this planned community was finally commenced and developers and designers alike were faced with the challenge, not just of building dwellings but they had to build a *community*. However, this 'town' is not in fact a town but is a vast tract of privately owned land known as the Celebration Community Development District and all commercial properties are owned by the Celebration Company and housing is owned privately by the residents who together form the Celebration Residential Owners Association (CROA), where residents pay fees so the CROA can maintain the shared facilities.

Indeed, from an external perspective, Celebration has been a resounding success with long purchaser waiting lists, house prices 20% above adjacent communities and tourists visiting daily to see this 'perfect' development thus demonstrating that there is a demand for this type of residential development model and moreover a demand for the return to community living.

'Residents of Celebration understand...if they are paying a premium for their new home, they're paying it for a reason...so they can live in this ideal community, and

they understand that certain rules are necessary in order to keep the community the way it is'. (Ross 2000)

One section of text from the Celebration website was particularly revealing in that it explained "Officially, there are no "rules" for living in Celebration but there are certainly strong suggestions or recommendations. Understandably, these guidelines have reportedly been put in place to maintain property values."

*It could be said here that the developers have attempted to 'play down' the strict application of the CC&Rs and their legal implications if ignored and so this lack of information does not create an informed, happy resident and thus does not encourage a harmonious sense of community.*

### ***The Declaration of Covenants***

In fact, when homeowners move into Celebration, they sign an agreement called the 'Declaration of Covenants' in order to demonstrate shared values and lists the rules by which residents must abide. If the Celebration Board, which again is made up of unelected officials, receives complaints from other homeowners about a resident's pet, they can remove the pet from the community without the owner's permission. This has been heavily criticised as removing the resident's rights of freedom, though again, this resident would have signed up to these rules in order to create this 'cohesive' community.

Moreover, in this Declaration of Covenants, Celebration's residents do not have elected representation on the local level giving much of the town's control to Disney who believe this is a selling point of Celebration and who believe that everyone should have the same ideals and goals. 'Like other utopian communities, they have to some extent *separated themselves from society* to live their beliefs, beliefs voiced by a dynamic and persuasive leader, in this case the Walt Disney Company, and about which residents have no say.'(Farley 1995)

Indeed, the development has been termed a 'living paradox' by Boddy (1995) as although residents are happy that their neighbour can never put his car on car on blocks in his driveway- would they be happy to pay extra to be told to move their own car from their driveway? Indeed it could be said that the developer is taking away their freedom and rights of choice but then conversely it could be claimed that this necessary to encourage cohesion and solidarity?

Stuetville (2003) criticises the concept claiming 'for those who would attack New Urbanism as insipid nostalgia, Disney is a fat target'.

He also argues that there are two fundamental barriers that mean the objectives for CIDs are not being met.

This includes the *ability to build viable retail centres and the ability to construct affordable homes. But are these two barriers suggesting that creating a sense of community is expensive or that property developers are actually making a lot of profit from the community concept and the high values it can apparently achieve?*

However, Stuetville admits that if they can accomplish those goals of affordability and viability, the New Urbanism is poised to become the dominant real estate and planning trend of the century.'

### ***Objective of Celebration***

Hogan (1998) has examined the town of Celebration in terms of its ability to create social capital. She believes that Celebration emerges from two prevalent strains in American thought, the search for a utopian life and the romance of the past into idealized forms.

The Walt Disney Company has attempted in Celebration to create a community in the 'utopian model, ruled by a single vision, structured through a set of principles to which every resident must subscribe, and envisioned as an example to the rest of society, a city upon a hill, in which residents live a more meaningful existence'. This line from the Celebration website suggests a type of detachment, the possibility that with enough money one can remove and protect oneself from the troubling aspects and complications of society. In Celebration, Hogan (1998) believes that the Walt Disney Company's has created an environment in which this type of detachment can thrive while simultaneously claiming to cherish and represent community *implying that a superficial sense of community has been created predominately for marketing and sales terms.*

But as discussed, the application of the strict CC&Rs has had a dual effect on the appearance of the community. Though it has evidently created an 'idyllic' environment, it has also created an indistinct one. 'Because of Celebration's zoning codes, most homes have the same plants in their yards. Garages are hidden and strict guidelines keep any distinctive features out of front yards. Even the size of

houses is meant to be indistinguishable one from another. Blandness and little variety-all the same colour and with the same decorative detailing' Hogan (1998).

The question however is what objective exactly are CIDs trying or aiming to achieve? Are they businesses, government or community? Johnston and Johnstone-Dodds (2002) state that 'Common Interest Developments are poorly understood not only by residents and prospective buyers but also by many of the people who deal with them professionally. This is not surprising since associations mix elements of government, business and neighbourhood organisations yet do not fit the model of any one of them'. Johnston and Johnstone-Dodds (2002) also believe that CIDs will not become effective in creating a genuine sense of community until the *level of homeownership increases*. Most CID managers and professionals claim that if a CID is going to run and function well, residents must have a vested interest in order to sustain their participation.

Indeed, resident participation is low for a number of reasons that include the fact that residents did not understand, prior to purchase, how much homeowner cooperation was required and that there needed to be more information and explanation on this.

However, Johnston and Johnstone-Dodds go on to explain that many of these professional manager and boards *do not actually encourage resident participation* for 'when homeowners participate it can be time consuming and can hinder boards from addressing business issues in a timely manner which they often feel is their first priority'. This however questions the entire ethos of the CID and its management and governance structure and seems to defeat the whole purpose of the model. *It suggests that the business objective is of greater priority than the community and also demonstrates that the residents and community are not being genuinely represented in this governance. This form of management takes control and decision-making away from the community and limits capacity-building and cohesion within the community.* This indeed suggests that the CID model has a very rigid structure and framework within that is heavily controlled and managed by professionals or the developer. *What could have been an opportunity for creating a sense of community has instead become a constraint.*

Thus again to summarise and to look again at the key questions, the level of success in creating a sense of community and the barriers that exist in the implementation and delivery of the Common Interest Development:

Indeed, the Common Interest Development model had many components that demonstrate the *capacity* that the house building industry has to create a sense of community but also shows where it has arguably directed too much control and regulation on the community. However, Homeowner or Residents Association within CIDs has the potential to encourage a sense of ownership and empower the community with its ability to control and regulate. This has enabled the creation of a good quality and attractive environment and is something that is highly regarded by consumers and is a key measurement of a sense of community. Indeed this is a strong basis for encouraging residents to feel satisfied and engenders a real sense of pride in the area. However, the CID, or rather the developers have been criticised for creating a 'superficial' sense of community that is predominantly for marketing purposes or for increasing house prices.

The barriers to creating an effective sense of community within this model is partly due to the organisational set up of the resident association that is too frequently managed by undemocratically elected management. The strict and inflexible content and enforcement of the CC&Rs can also create high levels of conflict between residents and between residents and the developers and not least restricts freedom and self-expression. As well as the faults of the developer, there is also a lack of community participation due to lack of willingness by residents and community associations.

Indeed, many developers have found the CID model difficult to deliver and implement due to the fact that the Local Authorities may be adverse to the implementation of CIDs due to privatisation of public amenities and the fear that the high level of regulation and restrictions may repel potential purchasers.

## **Gated Communities**

### ***Trends/Background***

In this period of demographic, social and economic change, many citizens feel insecure and vulnerable and unsure of the stability of their neighbourhoods. Many communities are threatened by the rise in crime levels in their areas and this is creating the 'fortress mentality' (Blakeley and Synder 1999) for consumers or residents attempting to secure house prices, reduce the levels of crime or the fear of it and find neighbours who share a common sense of community. The Gated Community concept has become ubiquitous in the American residential development model since the 1980s largely due to the fear of crime and a lack of trust in society so that 'Americans increasingly are seeking solace in homogenous communities, sorting themselves into more and more finely distinguished 'lifestyle enclaves' (Minton 2002b). Moreover, the Gated Community model is now becoming a very popular form of residential development in this country.

### ***Objectives of the Model***

The definition of 'gated communities' according to Blandy et al (2003) is a 'Walled or fenced housing developments to which public access is restricted, often guarded using CCTV and/or security personnel, and usually characterised by legal agreements (tenancy or leasehold) which tie the residents to a common code of conduct.'

The Gated Community model is rapidly becoming the most common model for residential development in North America, present in over 40% of planned new residential developments in response to the wider civic and community issues, crime and safety. *But in looking at the literature and background, this movement is not necessarily a response by consumers or developers for a sense of community.* Indeed the literature also suggests that the main features of a gated community is not the physical presence of the actual gate but is the underlying governance system of the Home Owner Association (HOA).

This is where each property owner shares legal ownership of the common facilities and elected boards oversee these areas. *However, these homeowners may have legal ownership but are not always involved in the actual management or decision making, these are two very different things and suggest a difference between the genuine sense of community and a superficial one.* 'Although the goal is to re-

establish a sense of genuine mutual community, the means they use are sometimes far less communal than controlling' (Minton 2002a). *Furthermore, the reasoning and justification for the model is seemingly not to create a genuine sense of community but apparently for commercial and monetary purposes.*

### **Characteristics and benefits of the model**

Indeed there are many advantages to Gated Communities but does this model encourage a genuine sense of community and what are the barriers to its implementation?

The Gated Community model enables residents to establish and protect their boundaries and thus acts as a controlling access to their territory. Consequently a sense of identity and security are created, generating the *capacity* for strong communities. Indeed the principal purpose of many of these developments is to create a better way of life and meets the criteria for encouraging an open, friendly and cohesive community. As discussed in chapter one, the community concept can be defined as the level of common and shared values in an area, the feeling of belonging, identification and the creation of a localised culture of friendship and support. Community is also about a shared democracy, community participation and interaction and the fact that 'our quality of life depends on our environment and the people in it' (Alexander1994).

It could indeed be argued that gated communities provide a genuine sense of community as the development is marketed to attract people in search of a particular lifestyle, and thus attracts residents who have much in common, thus providing a firm basis for community-building. The physical boundaries of a gated community can encourage social interaction and ownership that can help residents bond, encouraging both a sense of community and community participation in a shared environment. Homogeneity and cohesion is encouraged in terms of attracting people of a similar income, interests and lifestyle so that the basis and capacity is there for interaction and community building.

Furthermore, it could also be true that residents are more likely to participate in activities such as school boards in an effort to derail new spending and lower their taxes- they have a vested financial interest in the workings of the community- it is after all their own investment.

### **Types of Gated Community**

There are three types of gated community within this model of residential development according to Blakely and Synder (1999). Within each category the gate



and boundary symbolise something very different, the type of residents can vary, the main purpose and objective can differ and the type of activity or amenities can be very different. Consequently each variation has different results in terms of its capacity and success in creating a genuine sense of community.

### 1- Lifestyle Communities

In such communities, the main objective and purpose of this development is to create a sense of community through the presence of the gate and in providing leisure facilities for its residents. The gates are there to provide security for the leisure activities and amenities within and can be based on the retirement community and the golf/ leisure community.

A lifestyle community is predominantly made up of the middle to upper class retirees and is based around recreation and leisure services. These are often originally made up of second homes that then become permanent. *Immediately this suggests that the community is not particularly stable in that residents are not present for all of the time and so reduces the capacity to interact and genuinely bond with one another.* Social interaction predominantly focuses on recreation, and so consequently many gated residents interpret their recreation as their 'community'. Restricted access has meant that all residents are 'pre-approved' and are all generally of the same mindset, income bracket, class and share interests. Indeed Gated Communities add a level of satisfaction as residents feel a sense of belonging and included and as all residents share similar values it could be claimed that trust and familiarity is easier to find. These developments are intentionally homogenous and so the gates also symbolise a class-conscious development.

However, the Blackhawk Country Club in San Ramon in California is a growing golf-based development of over 4,000 acres consisting of many wealthy residents working in nearby Silicon Valley and San Francisco and also to many professional athletes, entertainers, millionaires and upper middle class professionals. Interestingly, only a third of the residents actually play golf but are attracted to the promised lifestyle and the general 'feel' of the place and one resident even added that 'the gate is kind of incidental...is not a determining factor'. *This suggests that the gate is not the predominant aspect of this model but rather the selection and homogeneity of the residents and the status of the development and thus is less about how the developer can design for the community but moreover, how it can be marketed and to whom.*

But the level of participation does not seem to have genuinely increased with the addition of a gate- the Resident Association meetings are very ill attended though residents apparently see this as sign that the development is already well managed. This is seen as the responsibility of the security company, the property management company and the maintenance company, who have consciously been employed to take care of the issues instead of the residents.

Furthermore, it appears that though there may be an increased sense of cohesion and community within the gates, many critics believe that such an elitist development creates an acute divide from the outside world. One resident felt part of Blackhawk but not part of the wider area as a whole. Surely the sense of a community should extend beyond the immediate locality to the broader community?

But although there is this supposed 'shared values', residents do not seem to feel any strong commitment to each other, sharing in *territorial space rather than in common goals*. Indeed Blakeley and Synder (1999) suggest that 'gated communities are artificial creations, faux communities. They are contrived rather than organic communities in every respect'. This however can be said of most new build developments, which all have growth limits defined and high house prices can restrict entry or ownership. Though admittedly, the presence of the gate and boundaries are extreme in its definition and a very fixed and permanent marker.

This is suggestive of the fact that developers can create all of the circumstances for a sense of community but that a lack of willing resident participation can demonstrate a complete barrier to creating a sense of community.

## 2- Prestige Communities

This gated community has a slightly different objective and is an example of how this model has become less about community and more about property values.

Prestige Communities are made up mainly of executive homes for the middle classes, gated to symbolise distinction, prestige and class and to protect the development as a secure place on the social ladder. These gates are primarily there to assert an image and to control house prices and so image and status are the rationale for this development rather than to consciously create a sense of community. Instead 'the intention is in part to artificially induce community in an ersatz homogenous neighbourhood, where physical security and social security are enhanced both by sameness and by controlled access' (Blakely and Synder 1999).

Cottonwood Valley in Texas is a development of 300 homes flanked with monumental architecture, extravagant landscaping and twenty-four hour gatehouse

guards at its entrance. The majority of the residents had chosen to live at Cottonwood because of the gates, but also for the impressive homes, the prestige of having wealthy or even famous neighbours and security of property values.

This community lacks the leisure amenities of the Lifestyle Community but instead possesses elaborate gatehouses, monumental entrances, and prestige amenities such as artificial lakes and riverfronts.

*However, ironically, the very type of people the development attracts is a barrier to creating a genuine sense of community.* These are predominantly professional, self-sufficient and busy people who rarely have the time or inclination to socialise, thus relationships with neighbours are difficult to maintain. Many residents have more connections and friendships with people outside the development than within. 'The wall seems to bind the residents together, but it only does so physically, when it comes to socialising, the ties between those behind the gate appear to be no stronger that would be in an otherwise similar but non-gated development' (Blandy et al 2003).

Furthermore, many of the residents were not attracted to this gated community for community but that of *privacy, the image it portrays and security.* The gates are in effect a status symbol in themselves- the guards are often not 'security' but there to monitor who enters and to slow traffic

### 3- Security Zone Communities

Security Zone Communities are in the main there through a response to fear of crime or outsiders, thus creating a residential development that has become a 'defensive fortification'. The gates are there as a response to a fear of an outside threat such as crime or traffic, which may be a real or perceived threat against their quality of life.

It is not usually the property developer who builds the gates but the residents who are attempting to maintain and stay with their neighbourhood. The residents believe the answer is to mark boundaries and restrict access in an attempt to build and strengthen the feeling and function of community. But is this more for themselves to assert their solidarity and cohesion rather than 'prevent' crime?

However, interestingly, in Whitley Heights in Hollywood, residents had campaigned to have gates built in their town after an increase in crime rates and local traffic. The residents wanted to protect their community and consequently began a series of fund raising initiatives.

Nevertheless, the residents experienced very strong opposition, particularly from the neighbours who would be outside the gates and the fire department on grounds of the restricted access. After a long battle and the gates were finally built, the stress of the three-year fight had exhausted and torn apart the Whitley Heights community and for the first time in eighty years, the annual community auction and street party was cancelled and the neighbourhood association board was disbanded. *Evidently, the gated community concept can go either way in building a community- for where this collective, coordinated action could have strengthened the sense of community within the development it destroyed it. This also demonstrates that this model can generate a high level of controversy and opposition.*

### **A Genuine Sense of Community ?**

Blakley and Synder (1999) believe that there is a significant difference between an *identification* with a place and a *genuine sense of belonging* and suggest that Gated Communities have not generally achieved this objective due to lack of community participation and that *this is a key limitation of this model*. In short, it seems that the presence of gates around a development has very little impact on the sense of community- for though their structure might well *support* strong community feeling, it does not *create* it. Thus a *neighbourhood* in the sense of a collectively identified boundary can be physically created, but the *community* in the sense of mutual responsibility is much more difficult to create.

### **Exclusion and Privatisation**

McKenzie (1994), believed that 'in place of Howard's utopia is 'privatopia', where the dominant ideology is privatism, where property rights and property values are the focus of community life, and where homogeneity, exclusiveness and even exclusion are the foundations of social organisation.' The real question over the gated community is if they are creating barriers between the residents and the rest of the world creating an 'internal' or closed community? Or are the gates and walls refuges from the forces that threaten family, economic security and quality of life, thus creating security and promoting a sense of community?

Ultimately Gated Communities are about the setting of boundaries, which immediately defines those within and those without and is in effect an exclusionary land-use policy that restricts or limits access to residential, commercial or public spaces. These developments control access to streets, sidewalks, parks, beaches, rivers, playgrounds and schools. 'Those living behind gates become detached from mainstream society, not only physically but politically...the result is a growing trend to

opt out of local involvement in local government and the payment of local taxes, so undermining local democracy' (Minton 2002b). Anthony Giddens (2000) describes this as a method of 'voluntary exclusion of the elites and the involuntary exclusion of the excluded'. However, again there are plenty of new residential settlements that, with or without a gate, can isolate the existing communities and thus this could be said of any poorly designed and poorly integrated development.

Blakley and Snyder describe gated developments as reflecting the 'community as an island, a social bulwark against the degradation of the urban social order....gates and walls are not necessary or natural consequences of social trends, or causes of them, they are, a rather dramatic manifestation of them.' "Which came first," the authors ask, "withdrawal behind gates or the decay of a sense of community?" *This actually suggests that the gating of communities has led to the erosion of a sense of community; encouraging the loss of the very thing they are there to preserve.*

Indeed, some residents appear not just to be there to create community but others are there to effectively escape real life and its many issues. 'Some are conscious of the anti-communitarian implications of their withdrawal; others defiantly defend their right to privacy and to live how - and among whom - they choose. They want to escape the messiness of a larger community' (Guterson 1992).

But Minton (2002b) believes that the result of a gated community is class and race *segregation* and the removal of quality recreational space, amenities and services from the public realm, threatening public services, local democracy and local governance. The effective screening of residents does not create a balanced and mixed community or encourage diversity of lifestyles.

### ***Developer/Marketing***

Indeed, developers are attracted by the commercial benefits of Gated Communities as sales are quicker, turnover is faster and thus profit is greater- the promise of 'personal' facilities, guarded entrances etc provides the much sought after product differentiation, a distinct identity and thus a price premium. Lang (1997) has criticised Gated Communities as really having very little to do with creating a community but are instead nothing more than 'suburbia with a logo.... residents have purchased a tightly defined lifestyle...the community is a commodity'. Guterson (1992) agrees with this theory that Gated Communities are the product of property developers creating a brand name and marketing the concept in order to sell their product. Indeed Blakeley and Snyder are critical of developers using 'community' as a sales pitch with their marketing brochures written to suggest a sense of community,

lifestyle, emphasising the feeling of belonging to the potential purchaser and the belief that the addition of the main gates in a development extends the feeling of home. Many property developers exploit the term 'community' in how their developments can benefit the community and how it can create a feeling of community but this is a superficial belief in many cases and *the notion of community has become nothing more than a commodity to add value to the development.*

### ***Resident Motivations***

Existing research showed that motivations for living in a gated community are primarily driven by the need for security and a more generalised fear of crime rather than a sense of community. Though levels of crime appear to go down in some cases, it does not in others and may also be displaced to adjacent locales.

It seems there was no apparent desire to come into contact with the 'community' within the gated or walled area but *perceived* sense of safety is higher.

Problems and disputes with neighbours appeared in several studies and general levels of neighbourliness were perceived to be quite low. *This suggests that the type of people attracted to this model do not attach much importance to community spirit.* Conversely, neighbourhood satisfaction within gated communities generally appears to be high - satisfaction may be an indicator of a sense of community but it does not go far enough to creating a genuine sense of community with low levels of neighbourliness and again implies that these residents are perfectly happy with a low level of community spirit.

Lang (1997) suggests there are a number of paradoxes that exist within the gated community which essentially define the gated community debate and outline the key barriers to implementation:

He believes that where there is increased community participation within the development, the presence of the gates reduce the need for the residents to participate with the outside community. Secondly, where there is deregulation of public services and the local government, there is hyper- regulation inside the gates with the increase in governance institutions. Finally, Lang suggests that there is both integration and segregation from the control of access and excluding residents on the basis of social class. However, this theory of selection and regulation could be applied generally across the housing market as the high prices of housing could be said to encourage segregation as many can not afford to live in particular areas, thus resulting in socio- economic segregation.

Walled and gated developments are not just an American phenomenon; this form of housing has also seen huge growth in South America, South Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. However, in Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, development of gated communities is not so widespread although almost every country now has some examples and it seems that gated communities are becoming more established as a new form of housing in the UK.

### ***Gated Communities in the UK***

#### *Planning and Policy*

Atkinson and Flint (2003) define the Gated Community in this country as 'residential areas or a development that is fenced, walled-off from its surroundings either prohibiting or controlling access to these areas by means of gates or booms. The concept can refer to residential areas with a restricted access so that use is restricted.'

Indeed, evidence on the wider literature of gated communities to Local Planning Authorities suggests that a *key barrier to the implementation of this model is the lack of uniform planning guidance in the UK which makes local discretion a key problem, especially where roads remain private. The British planning system as it exists is not equipped with the prescriptions needed to consider this kind of development mode or moreover how it can more effectively create a sense of community.* Gated communities can also throw up a range of secondary problems that need to be considered in the context of the Government's Sustainable Communities and urban renaissance agendas. In particular the possibility of withdrawal from local services by residents associations and subsequent proposals for opting-out of local taxation will influence the impact of gated developments.

Despite this, the Gated Communities model is rapidly becoming a popular form of residential development in the UK though very little appears to be known about the number and success of these communities.

In their paper on UK Gated Communities, Atkinson and Flint interviewed a number of people and organisations, including the RTP1, the NHBC, the Town Planning Institute, and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the GLA, the CPRE and four housing developers. They also interviewed a number of key people involved in a number of Gated developments including residents, a representative from the local planning department and environmental services and community police officers.

Their study found that there are approximately 1000 gated communities in the UK that are generally well dispersed but with a particular focus around South-East England. The common trend is for a focus of wealthy individuals due to the higher than average house prices in such developments. However, there also tends to be a number of young professionals, retired people and a mix of family households thus suggesting there is a balanced and mixed community. In reading the literature, it seems that the American Gated Community concept is much more based upon creating a heightened sense of community than in the UK and that this is one of the predominant reasons for locating there. In the UK, it appears that the primary reason for purchasing a house in a gated community is not for an increased level of a sense of community but is according to Blandy (2003) part of the search for a feeling of distinction, exclusivity, privacy, proximity to employment centres, desired schools, increased levels of security, value for money, the residential location and a secured long term investment. *Thus a key limitation on the effectiveness of this model is it does not attract the consumer for its sense of community.*

Blandy and Lister (2003) describe their current research as looking at a Gated Community on the outskirts of Sheffield called Nether Edge. This development has quality architecture and a well-maintained environment with communal gardens, high-density development and electronically controlled gates. The researchers contacted and questioned its residents over an eighteen-month period in order to determine the residents' motivations for moving to the development and their community relations. It appears in summary, that most residents have chosen to move to the development for increased security, the maintenance of property values and good leisure facilities. Also high on the list were proximity to local schools and jobs. Though these are all indicators of the presence of a sense of community e.g. safety, security, satisfaction etc, very few residents actually mentioned this term.

In consequence, Blandy and Lister (2003) cite that 'Gated Communities are likely to grow in number in England and this impact, is far reaching. They may bring about a change in the ways in which the wider community is regarded and perceived, with insular living becoming more attractive to many people.'

However in questioning gated community residents, Atkinson and Flint (2003) found that levels of security and crime, as in America, were no lower in incidence and perception. Indeed "Substituting non-gated for gated residency does not necessarily lead to a reduction in anxiety, indeed fears from outsiders seem to be increased". Moreover, as in America, many experiences in gated communities also suggest that there are *many examples of internal conflict, both between residents and between residents and the management companies.* Some residents complained of internal



'cliques' and divides and thus does not imply a cohesive, safe and secure community that is clearly not conducive to creating a sense of community. Furthermore, 'privacy is sacrificed by subsuming personal freedom for covenants and rules not just of the management board but as local community strictures about acceptable conduct'.

Many UK gated communities are also heavily criticised for not encouraging or even preventing permeability and connectivity with the wider areas, creating so called 'island communities' that are not encouraging mixed and balanced communities. One local community police officer commented that instead of promoting integration with the surrounding existing communities, gated communities do not contribute or integrate with the local area. Many residents that locate in the gated community have 'commuter lifestyles' as a result of their jobs etc and so do not use local facilities and have no need to socialise with local people. In fact a view expressed by some gated community residents was that their main reason for locating there was to escape the community.

As a point of interest in examining this research for its content and meaning, it was also interesting to look at what issues were missed out. Indeed, in Atkinson and Flint's paper, though discussing the relative merits and issues associated with Gated Communities, they did not once mention the term 'sense of community' or any associated concept. *Therefore this suggests that a potential barrier to implementation of a sense of community in this model is that the model is marketed and perceived as something very different and thus attracts those residents that have no interest in a community. However, if the correct design and social infrastructure was in place to facilitate community, then this should not be a factor.*

Indeed Blandy and Lister (2003) believe that 'gated residents' rights and responsibilities are, by and large, confined to legalities and management functions within the development and do not extend to a commitment to enhance social networks either within the development or in the adjacent wider community.' They therefore believe that Gated Communities are about the 'close monitoring of behaviour' and the weakening of social ties that have 'far reaching implications for community cohesion'. However, Forrest and Keans (2001) disagree with this prediction and suggest that 'the neighbourhood level of governance, together with residents' responsibility for their own community and use of enforceable, legal contracts could even be seen as a prototype or ideal form for increased sense of community.'

Indeed the Gated Community to a certain extent does provide the *capacity* to create a level of social capital and indeed indicates that property developers can create a sense of community. The presence of the gates and boundary clearly meets a number of criteria in creating a community in that it enables residents to establish and protect their boundaries and thus acts as a controlling access to their territory. Consequently property developers can create a sense of identity and an increased sense of security, generating the *capacity* but not necessarily the *motivation* for strong communities.

However, there is no doubt that this model provides high values and high sales for developers and that the majority of residents that move to gated communities are rarely attracted by their promised sense of community and moreover, do not seem to want it. Indeed a barrier to creating this sense of community is largely due to lack of community participation but also due to the developers incorporating Homeowner Associations that are professionally managed and so do not always enable a genuine sense of ownership and control.

The increased fear of crime and lack of trust has meant the culture and attitudes of the consumer is not conducive a sense of community and indeed it seems that people that move to gated communities have lifestyles that are not conducive to social interaction.

## **Smart Communities**

The Smart Communities model represents a community where the House Building Industry has consciously used technology as a catalyst to solving its social and business needs by focusing on building high-speed broadband infrastructures, rebuilding and renewing a sense of place, and in the process a sense of civic pride. Thus the Smart Community model may indeed be an effective method for creating an increased sense of community within residential developments by creating a community intranet.

A "smart community" is a community in which government, business, and residents understand the potential of Information Technology (I.T), and make a conscious decision to use that technology to transform life and work in their region in significant and positive ways. Smart communities of the future may find it profitable to develop high-profile Web-based informational, educational, or entertainment programming on their own for the primary purpose of attracting interest in their communities, products, or services. This is not seen as an end in itself but more a long-term method of creating larger benefits to communities.

Consequently countries across the world are now starting to introduce such technologies and are constructing large-scale public access networks into new residential developments where residents can find information about government activities, community events and social services in order to encourage them to get involved within their own communities.

### ***Green Square Development***

The Green Square Community Plan looks at the contribution technology could make to the future quality of life in an area and increase the sense of community. Indeed a report carried out by the South Sydney Development Corporation concludes that it can 'act as a catalyst for greater social interaction and participation.... synergies may be established between economic development, education and knowledge, cultural industries, new technologies, urban design and social capital' (Elton 2000).

The report looked at how such visions can be converted into reality in the new South Sydney Growth Centre- a 487 hectare site based around Green Square Station,

Australia and is designated by the Australian government for large scale regeneration and redevelopment.

In particular, the South Sydney Development Corporation is interested in incorporating ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and creating a 'Smart Community'. In 1997, an Arthur Anderson report was produced entitled 'Real Estate and Technology in the Knowledge Economy- A Vision for the Future'. This outlined that 'virtual spaces are increasingly replacing physical places which effectively replaces real estate as a medium for doing business and that technology as a result creates the rapid obsolescence of real estate assets of all types. *However, in looking at the significance of this statement, it suggests the further erosion of place, space and thus the long-term viability of the community concept as technology progresses, thus implying that this model will actually work against the creation of community.* However, though this will be examined further, it emphasises the fundamental needs for developers, planners, residents and communities to look instead at how information technology can be harnessed as an opportunity to complement and build the community. Thus this model could thus be seen as a rather *contradictory model.*

Indeed, the introduction of I.T into our developments can change the nature of employment by allowing people to work remotely and the report predicts that home-based businesses will have consequences for the residential property market. 'The challenge for property developers is not so much to predict trends, but to build development that will have the flexibility to adapt to this rapidly changing environment.' The fundamental question therefore within the Smart Growth model is whether technology can help encourage or create the process of community building and in developing a sense of community?

### ***Technology and Community Building***

There are many local and international examples of how new technologies can benefit residents in local communities, namely by increasing access to IT and services and developing *electronic community networks such as a community intranet.*

Community networks can be designated to serve the common interests of a geographically defined community and can help the community meet the objectives of social inclusion. However, it must be imperative that the network must be relevant

to and inclusive to *all* members of the community and not just to traditional computer users. Another method of using electronic networks to create a sense of community through *community ownership and democratic participation* in the network and its management. Finally there can be a central physical point to manage collection, organisation and distribution of information and to provide training and technical support. This can retain a geographical focus to a community and also enable social interaction within the public realm.

### ***Social Interaction***

One of the primary benefits of an electronic community network is that it promotes the integration of new comers in meeting others in the creation of interest groups. Furthermore, the creation of discussion groups on local topics is not constrained by location, time or social grouping enabling a more democratic process and a more inclusive participation. Added to this is the enhanced capacity for house-bound people.

Electronic community networks also enables the exchange of local goods, services and skills, swap shops and bulletin boards and also promotes interactive communication between residents, local service providers e.g. schools, local authorities, leisure, cultural facilities thus enabling the development of linkages among people with common interests and a collection of like-minded sub-communities to take action on issues of community concern.' It is stressed that community networks are not intended to replace face-to-face patterns of communication but can reinforce them by providing connections among people who can arrange to meet subsequently for face-to-face discussion' (Elton 2000).

### ***Local Information***

Community networks can contain invaluable local information that can help encourage an increased sense of community. Directories of local services, facilities and businesses, Local council information e.g. council minutes, agendas, schedules and the local neighbourhood news, newsletters and local events that aide community participation and a community awareness and identity can all be posted in the intranet site. Furthermore the community networks can publicise local arts and entertainment, local adverts and job vacancies as well as tourist and new resident information such as details of rubbish collection, information on the management company. Information can also be posted that can help a property developer with community consultation such as including the future plans for the area's development.

Information can also encourage residents to have a say in their community and the wider region by promoting participation in elections, surveys and community petitions. The dispersal of such local information enables empowerment and allows residents to become more involved in local decision-making, developing skills and a knowledge base.

### ***Access to Local Services***

The use of local services and facilities can also be utilised and encouraged online within the community networks. This can include the payment and access to municipal services and on-line shopping/financial services and can enable bookings for local recreational events and baby sitting services or gardening. Educational facilities and learning opportunities can be made easier to access to all groups of the community and can offer training and support services which will add to community involvement and promote the skills of the community thus stimulating community enterprise and local economic development. There is much to be gained in encouraging grass-roots community involvement in the establishment and running of the network so that local people have a high degree of involvement and input into its contents and its aims and objectives are relevant to the community's needs and skills. This can also meet the apparently conflicting goals of viability and community as this resident management can mean the developer does not have to take on the long-term management of the development to such an extent.

However, there are some significant barriers to how successful community networks can be in creating a genuine sense of community.

One of the fundamental criticisms of the Smart Community concept is that *there would be a reduction of face-to-face local interaction and gathering at community focal points as this has been replaced by email and using the internet. Indeed this could significantly promote social isolation thus undermining traditional forms of social capital.*

A second barrier to effective implementation is the fact that this model may create a widening gap between the information rich (those that have access or indeed have the know-how and capacity to use it) and the information poor. Thus creating a manifestation of social exclusion. Moreover, this can create a gap between the connected residents within the new settlement and the existing communities and thus it could impinge on the interaction and cohesion of the wider community and create an insular 'island community' in the new settlement if not dealt with correctly.

A key constraint to this model both to the developer in terms of viability and the creation of community are the real issues of *funding and sponsorship* of such networks. This is predominantly because it is such an *innovative* and new concept and thus carries a significant *degree of uncertainty and risk at this stage so few are willing to invest*.

Finally there are also more *technical and physical constraints* that also increase the *cost of this model of development again partly due to the lack of experience* in dealing with this concept. This may include the need for each service-provider to lay its own cables and the fact that residents will *not have a choice of service provider thus limiting their choice*. Furthermore, developers will have to leave adequate space for ducting and cables, which will *add some considerable expense to the build costs of a development and may impact on the design and layout of the development*.

But purely relying on market forces and the inevitability of technology will not create smart communities. It needs a vision, a commitment to change, and a willingness to work together with others in their community to achieve a common purpose. *This will evidently mean the success of creating a community will depend on the developer commitment but also the willingness and motivation of the residents themselves. Thus the impetus to overcome these barriers is not just on the developer but also on the resident and consumer.* 'Communities must first transform their social and economic institutions to foster change, collaboration, and competitiveness' (Eger 1999)

Eger (1999) argues that we live in an age of paradox. 'The more high tech our world, the more high touch we are becoming. The more global, the more intensely local our focus needs to be. The more competitive our market, the more cooperation is a critical element in developing our business strategies.' Indeed, the more we live and work in cyberspace, the more important real place becomes. He argues that we are already seeing the knowledge worker and the high tech knowledge-sensitive industries migrating to highly liveable communities -- communities with mountains or lakes, open spaces, clean air and water, and, as in the case of Portland, Oregon and other communities where there is less reliance on the automobile as the primary mode of transportation. Eger (1999) warns us that 'if we are to capitalize on this paradoxical shift by which telecommunications becomes a substitute for transportation. This view suggests that as I.T develops, there is less need to travel to work outside the community and thus can would increase the importance of place and the community. However, it could also go to the extreme and could also mean

that we would actually rarely need to leave the home and so become isolated from society?

Eger believes that in order to harness the opportunity of I.T in our new settlements *we must renew our sense of place and rethink our attitudes* and our policies toward civic life, the village green, and the fundamental and historical reason for the city; to bring people together in harmony with one another and with their environment for economic gain and glory.' Indeed, in his earlier work on Smart Communities, Eger (1997) adds: 'until flesh-and-blood human beings can be digitized into electronic pulses in the same way in which computer scientists have transformed data and images, the denizens of cyberspace will have to live IRL ("in real life") in some sort of real, physical space - a physical environment that will continue to dominate and constrain our future lives in the same way that our homes, neighbourhoods, and communities do so today'.

*But the key issue and possible constraint is the long-term survivability of the model, particularly as it is such a new and innovative concept.*

Indeed such projects may have a tendency to veer off into dead-ends or prematurely stable states, and may not take into account enough of the interests of the community to win broad community support. Therefore it is imperative to ensure that there is *sufficient demand and capacity in the community* for such a model- this can include the finances to run the model, the knowledge to apply and use the model, the institutional infrastructure to run it and finally, the culture and attitude to make the most of the model.

Cohill M and Kavanah A (1999) recommends that prior to any implementation of the community networks an assessment must be undertaken to identify the key services to offer the residents and to look at local needs so that the model is complementary to the community. There must be sufficient demand by citizens and businesses- early financial models indicate that 40% of a neighbourhood must be willing to hook up to the system to make it *viable and financially feasible*. This may include assessing the need for education and training on how to use the Internet with a potential community technology centre for access, training and online education.

### ***Blacksberg Electronic Village***

The university town of Blacksburg in Virginia has less than 40,000 residents and was named by Reader's Digest last summer as "The Most Wired Town in America" with more than 87% of its residents online. The basis and rationale for Blacksberg



Electronic Village (BEV) is based on a Community Network Infrastructure and is one of the 'pioneers' for the Digital Village and Smart Communities model.

In January 1992, Blacksberg town officials joined with the local university, Virginia Tech, and private industry to discuss how to create an "electronic village."

Less than five years later, more than 40% of the town is on the Internet, and 62% use electronic mail.

Through cooperative efforts with the public schools and the public library, all school children that desire it have free e-mail accounts and free, direct access to the World Wide Web. This network access has enabled citizens, businesses and organisations in the community to get connected and creates an information 'service' which includes email accounts, mailing lists, online calendars, discussion forums, online directories of people, community groups and businesses. Indeed this has led to increased social interaction and increased use of local facilities and services within the town by the residents. Though the Kavanaugh and Cohill (1999) states that 'more than two-thirds of Blacksberg companies are also online and advertise on the Internet with Web sites and online services'. *This evidently means that there is still a significant percentage of people who are not 'online' and are excluded either through cost, lack of knowledge or lack of motivation to participate.*

Indeed, Kavanaugh and Cohill (1999) in their research on BEV between 1995 and 1998 found that the largest group of those using the networks was young, college-educated males but that the number of residents getting online is growing every year and so this model has the potential to be exclusionary.

However, this research asked one fundamental question to a random selection of users 'since going on to the internet, are you more, less or equally involved in local issues?'. Over 80% said they were equally involved, 10.5 % less and 9.5 % said more so which does indeed suggest that these community networks in this case have not encouraged increased social interaction. Furthermore, in asking the same question about feeling more connected to their neighbours and more involved in their community, a large percentage of respondents replied with 'equally'. In addition the research found that those who were 'passively involved' in the community became more involved after going online. Moreover, the residents surveyed all felt increased satisfaction with their community after going online. It was also determined that the longer the resident had been in the community, the more involved in the community they felt. *This suggests that this type of model can take a long time to become fully effective.*

*Indeed, in Blacksberg, accessibility to the electronic networks took a very long time to establish in terms of technical ducting but also in educating residents in how to use the Internet for example. Thus again the time taken for full access and implementation is a barrier to be overcome.*

The network infrastructure has benefited the community by creating a level playing field for its private companies thus creating a competitive marketplace and promoting the long term viability of the community. Moreover, such a competitive market demonstrates that the community is a professional, attractive place to live and work to others. Skills are learned in the new community and allow every resident to have access to new skills and knowledge and thus allowing participation. BEV believes that 'any community of any size, regardless of financial resources, can make a modest and effective effort to develop and sustain community-based information services.'

Further to this are the problems of long-term *issues of control and management of the resource once the developer leaves the area*. Cohill also suggests the community can incorporate a non-profit service company and hire a part time operations manager. This will mean that the model is a long term, viable option but it also means the running and maintenance of the electronic network will be run by professionals rather than the residents which is perhaps a missed opportunity to promote community participation and a sense of ownership. However, Locke (1998) argues that there is much past evidence that suggests that leaving infrastructure development to the private sector or developer has not previously experienced much success even since the onslaught of privatisation and deregulation.

Indeed there are *financial and budget constraints* that may make this a difficult model to implement when this is such a new concept. There are high costs associated with the implementation of electronic networks. This initial expense could prove to be a significant constraint on the application of this model and any builders and developers must be willing to share costs and must understand how the technology fits into existing building design specifications for indeed this is likely to be a new experience for them too. Moreover, technology and support issues must be understood by town planners, engineers and public works staff as well.

Cohill and Kavanah (1999) in their survey of residents at Blacksburg Electronic Village in Virginia found that one of the main recommendations was that 'too much planning can be just as damaging as too little'. The technology and

network services that flow from the implementation of technology are changing so rapidly that it is difficult to look ahead more than 12 months and know what might happen with any certainty. *Therefore communities must be flexible to changing needs*, both physically e.g. architecture and the ability of a home to accommodate future changes and socially, where residents are keen to learn more. Indeed, communities, in order to prepare for the 21<sup>st</sup> century must, according to Eger (1997) update their infrastructure to meet the 'information age.... cities of the past were built along waterways, railroads and interstate highways, cities of the future will be built along 'information highways'.

Other recommendations included the need to involve a number of stakeholders such as the local authority, local schools, recreational organisations, community groups, adjoining communities, developers, local businesses and resident representatives. For the 'success of an electronic community network is not dependent upon technology...ensure equitable access to technology and to make sure that all sections of the community are aware of the opportunities available to them and are educated enough to take up these opportunities' (Rheingold H 2000).

However, both Rheingold (2000) and Locke (1998) disagree that the Smart Community model can help create a sense of community and believe that I.T cannot replace physical social interaction. Rheingold writes that 'the virtual community is a perversion of the notion of community.... the virtualisation of human relationships are unhealthy'. Much of what BEV is about is providing 'digital opportunities' however, Cohill does not believe that 'buying books online represents a digital opportunity...hanging out in a chat room represents a digital opportunity...the real issue is whether or not we know what to do with the stuff.' Cohill explains that Blacksberg has really not outwardly changed as a result of the digital access, they 'still leave their homes to work, to play, to participate in the life of the community...but the way we think about community has changed'. He also adds that 'computers do not solve problems. People solve problems'.

As with the other models, it is imperative that motivated people who are willing to participate and learn are involved, no matter how high-tech the hard infrastructure; it needs to be accompanied with the soft infrastructure, the education and the support. Indeed, owning a computer and being online does not automatically enable a person to become more involved in the community - as *residents may own computers but do not know how to use them effectively*. Thus the 'digital divide will

need to focus less on acquiring computers and focus more on comprehensive training programmes at all levels' (Rheingold 2000).

But are consumers ready for the Smart Community model to create a sense of community? A key barrier to creating a sense of community and in implementing this model may be *lack of consumer demand*.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) conducted research in to the market potential for 'smart homes' in 'smart communities' for there is little point in implementing such a model if there is no consumer demand.

Although consumer views about Smart Homes were fairly mixed, there was a significant level of underlying interest in the concept. Almost half those surveyed (45%) agreed with the statement "I am really interested in having the sort of functions a Smart Home could offer". Four in ten (40%) respondents agreed with the statement "I could see myself living in a Smart Home in 10 years' time". The concept was most attractive to younger, pro-technology consumers thus demonstrating the obvious need for education and increased awareness of the model and how it can be used effectively for the model will only create a genuine sense of community if *everyone* in the community is connected and utilising it.

However, this survey involved a number of stakeholders such as local authorities, local schools, recreational organisations, community groups, adjoining communities, developers, local businesses and resident representatives. The results showed concerns that Smart Communities "are just a fad" and a current "buzz word" and thus suggests that the Smart Home model has yet to develop a sustainable momentum. This is partly due to the *high initial costs of implementation and lack of experience in the field and highlights the need to increase general awareness and implementation of the model*. Indeed, as discussed in chapter one, the house building industry needs to change its structure and focus in order to take risks and innovate and this is a prime example of such a need.

Thus the Smart Communities model illustrates an area where the House Building Industry has experienced a significant level of success in creating a sense of community or at least the encouraging it. The Community Electronic Networks and moreover the developer, has the ability of creating an effective sense of community if it is managed through *community ownership and democratic participation*. This has had the success of encouraging grass-roots community involvement and also promoted the dispersal of local information, local businesses and local events via the

community intranet. Thus this model has enabled greater community empowerment and encourages residents to become more involved in local decision-making, developing skills and a knowledge base and is very successful in the creation a sense of community.

However, there is certainly room for improvement in creating a sense of community, there is often an over-emphasis on technology and not enough soft infrastructure such as educating the residents to enable access to the entire community.

The model has also been criticised as having the potential to erode sense of place and reduce face-to-face interaction. The lack of experience and awareness of the model also means the model is currently not easy or cheap to deliver due to lack of investment, lack of government funding or incentive, technical and the physical constraints associated with a new concept and lack of understanding. This model is currently a high risk for the House Building Industry due to the high initial costs of implementation and uncertainty of market demand.

Finally the model and its success are perhaps outside the developer control as a key barrier to effective delivery is that it depends heavily on community participation and on resident ability and capacity.

## **Chapter Four: Interview Analysis**

As discussed in my research methods in chapter two, in order to address my key questions of what barriers face the House Building Industry in delivering a sense of community, I interviewed representatives from this industry in order to gauge their response to the delivery of the four residential development models.

The companies I interviewed are:

- 1) Countryside Properties
- 2) Kilmartin Property Group
- 3) David Wilson Homes
- 4) Fairview
- 5) Taylor Woodrow
- 6) Crest Nicholson
- 7) Senior planner from Southend District Council
- 9) Social Infrastructure Consultant

However, so that the interviewees could answer honestly and freely, the responses will be anonymous.

The questions asked in order to respond to the three key questions were:

- 1. Which residential development model would your company be most keen to develop and why?**
- 2. What experience does your company have in developing these models?**
- 3. What are the barriers to the implementation of each of these models?**
- 4. Which residential development model would you consider to be the most effective in creating a sense of community?**

This provided a realistic and first hand perspective from the developers on these four models in comparison to the theoretical research and literature.

The interviews demonstrated the motivations of the House Building Industry and indeed what they considered or perceived to be deliverable. The interviews would indicate whether the house building industry has the *capacity* to meet both industry *quantitative* targets as well as the capacity to create a *sense of community*, and if not, *why not?*

The interviews and moreover, the responses clearly demonstrated that there is an evident and almost stark difference between *deliverability* and *sense of community*.

In interviewing the developers about which model they would find most attractive to develop in contrast to which model they perceived would create the most effective sense of community, it was clear that the majority of developers saw an evident contrast (either real or perceived) between *deliverability* and in *creating a sense of community*.

Indeed, in analysing the responses to the four different models, they suggest that many of the developers questioned felt that though the models may be good *in theory* at creating a sense of community they are not seen as deliverable.

In looking at what barriers the developers believed prevented these models being delivered and thus prevented a sense of community being created the list include:

- Strict corporate policies/procedures/ priorities
- Lack of experience and knowledge/risk
- Consumer demand and culture
- Community participation
- Economic constraints
- Technical constraints
- Short term/ myopic viewpoint
- Planning

The majority of developers would thus pick either the Smart Communities model or the Gated Communities to develop, even though many acknowledged that the Gated Community model *was unlikely to create a genuine sense of community*. On the other hand, all of the developers felt that the Cohousing model would create

the most effective sense of community but equally that they would not be interested in developing it due to difficulties of practical delivery and apparent lack of consumer demand in this country. Thus this shows a significant barrier within the House Building Industry to the delivery of a sense of community.

This suggests that deliverability and feasibility largely come before creating a community in the industry's priorities.

This conflict of interests and priorities can be seen in the responses to the cohousing model. Many of the developers questioned felt that the Cohousing scheme *in theory* would create the most effective and genuine sense of community but was also seen as the model that was the most difficult to deliver and contained a significant number of barriers for implementation by the House Building Industry predominantly the difficulties in working with residents and that there would not be sufficient consumer demand to justify the risks of development.

One developer enthused "I like the co housing model as it delivers on achieving a sense of belonging, sense of place, encourages people to get out into the street and has complete and genuine community participation— everybody has a 'buy in' into the community and will be discouraged from causing a nuisance. But I can't see it working in Britain."

### ***Market Demand/Culture***

The developers were all in consensus that a fundamental reason why the House Building Industry has not developed more community-oriented developments was largely due to lack of demand by the consumer themselves. For example a smart community or a community intranet is not a determining factor in selling a house and though it may add value; it is not currently seen as high in consumer demand. Consequently, the House Building Industry has not seen the need to be more innovative or build more than the standard product as "a developer seeks to minimise risk and protect profit. He will therefore seek to deliver what the market expects in order to sell as quickly as possible". Indeed this is interesting in itself, that the House Building Industry delivers 'what the market expects' and not the other way round- thus it could be a fair observation that The Industry is reactive rather than proactive to the housing market.

Indeed this was seen as the main barrier to the practical delivery of the cohousing project in that the developers did not believe that this concept was appropriate to the British consumer and culture- that they would be dissuaded from purchasing due to



the lack of parking, the lack of privacy and the high level of resident participation required.

In fact one developer spoke about the Smart Community being undeliverable not because of any technical or financial difficulty but because the British consumer does not “have the mind set”. Another developer who works within a smart community described how the potential purchaser rarely asks about the community intranet, instead “the bottom line in whether this becomes a sale or not will not be the presence of a community intranet or ICT but will be price and location”. But is this because this model has not had enough exposure, that consumers do not know enough about it to make an informed decision? Indeed just because this was not a determining factor of sale does not mean it is not important in the resident’s way of life or that it will not create a sense of community afterwards.

Another developer echoes these comments by saying that “market demand has been on the basis of location, environmental credentials and architectural quality.... and the fact that it provides something very different to other products available in the locality” and so it does appear that at least the consumer is attracted by a product that is bespoke rather than standardised.

However, in response to this, another developer believes this apparent lack of consumer demand is merely due to the novelty of the concept. He believes that the Smart Community model is likely to become more relevant as technology begins to permeate the British culture and the British community. Indeed one developer felt that this was becoming more acceptable in the British housing market due to rapidly rising house prices and the growing issue of affordability as “more people now need to get together and co-habit in order to buy a house.... and correspondingly, house builders will eventually take the entrepreneurial risk if there is a market demand...but this will take a gutsy developer until it becomes more mainstream”.

However, this perceived barrier was seen by most of the developers and indeed the planner as the main reason they would not develop the Cohousing model as “foreign models reflect foreign cultures.” Much of this response was a due to the belief that the British consumer was either not interested in a sense of community in a development or that the private nature of the British consumer was not conducive to the open, sharing concept of the cohousing scheme.

However is the lack of consumer demand *a real or perceived barrier?*

It could be suggested that this is perhaps an excuse by the House Building Industry not to deviate from the standard product and that the developer does not really know what the consumer actually wants or needs or is afraid of testing the boundaries of

innovation. Indeed is this an inherent criticism of the house building industry that rather than being *reactive* to consumer demand they should be *proactive* in innovation and product though as later discussed, many of the developers felt that the industry would be more innovative if there was sufficient incentive or government support.

### ***Lack of Experience /Risk***

However, aside from the Cohousing model, the interviewees were all well aware of the three remaining models. All of the developers questioned had developed a Gated Community; three had been involved in creating a Smart Community and at two of the developers had experienced a varied form of the Common Interest Development model with the use of restrictive covenants. This suggests that the House Building Industry are beginning to look at new and innovative methods such as the Smart Community and thus have the impetus to create a sense of community. Indeed as more and more developers utilise these methods, they will become increasingly accepted as the norm.

The fact that none of the developers had an awareness of the cohousing model meant that they were consequently wary and cautious of developing it due to lack of knowledge and experience.

Thus this is evidently another barrier as many developers are reluctant to invest in a new, unknown or 'untested' product due to the level of risk involved. Not only would a lack of awareness of a model repel the developer, it seems that it can also create a lack of consumer demand, create opposition from the Local Planning Authority and mean a lack of understanding for contractors. One developer commented that "though in theory the smart community model is extremely good in creating a sense of community; I have yet to see much genuine practice of it and so would be reluctant to take the risk.'

Most of the developers thus would be prepared to develop the models if they had had some experience of the models or were aware of the models so that it would reduce the risk and increase certainty e.g. in build cost, construction duration, impact on land values and consumer demand.

Indeed, many of the developers when asked which of the models they would find the most attractive to develop, felt that they would choose the Gated Community model, purely down to viability, deliverability, high values and a high volume of sales. Many developers also found it an attractive option as it is a well known model, most

of the developers had first hand experience of this model, the consumer, contractor, planner, investor and their own management institutions were all aware of the model. Indeed all developers who had developed a gated community had all experienced a massive market demand for such a product, and moreover, many felt that most of these purchasers bought into this model on the basis of status, security, amenities and an attractive environment. Few of the purchasers, according to the developers, were attracted to the gated community based on a sense of community. "It secures the highest premiums, market demand is high, and it creates a prestige development and meets the lifestyle changes that are occurring in the market". Another developer believes that in effect, the gated community concept does encompass a different type of 'community' that "suits the British consumer's perception of what a sense of community is to them.... privacy, local amenities and companionship when you want it". Indeed this suggests that the notion of community has transformed and has become a more contemporary and selective notion. Indeed this perception may be the most significant and critical barrier to the House Building Industry in creating a sense of community. The consumer (according to the developer) seems to want some of the aspects of 'community' in terms of appearance and amenities but little in the way of genuine social integration and participation.

### ***Community Participation***

Indeed much of what the House building Industry decides is deliverable is not only about profitability levels but also about the levels of consumer or resident participation involved in each model. Indeed this could be due to the fact that developers do not want to work with residents, but it also seems that many developers have had negative experiences in attempting to involve residents and encourage increased social interaction. Moreover many developers have noticed that the need to participate can actually *dissuade* potential purchasers from buying and so again the majority of the developers felt that this would mean the cohousing model would not be feasible.

The majority of the developers felt that a fundamental barrier in the effective delivery of the Smart Communities model was that it is heavily dependent on consumer participation. A commonly held view by the developers was that it is *often beyond the capacity of the developer to change society's values and priorities*. Indeed developers can only set up the circumstances for social interaction through a planning and design led philosophy, through coordinated actions and putting in place the mechanisms to secure this. All of the developers had experienced past difficulties in engaging its residents in participation and consultation aside from when there is an

issue that directly affects the resident e.g. new construction near their house.

Therefore apparently any model that relies heavily on community participation will experience large difficulties.

### ***Financial***

The models that required significant up-front or initial costs would, according to a number of the developers, make the development potentially unviable and so was seen as a barrier to the delivery of the Smart Community. Indeed one developer spoke about his experience with the Smart Community model where its implementation meant that the build costs rose from an average of £60 per square foot to over £100 per square foot, although this developer acknowledged that this cost would hopefully be absorbed within the added value and it will contribute to the higher house prices. "Innovation seriously hits the bottom line where build costs are inflated to accommodate new materials and contractors lack of understanding in how to use them properly".

Much of the internal corporate assessment of delivery or feasibility examines the "risk-reward" analysis that most developers use to assess the potential development opportunity. This is indicative of the house building industry's motivations when looking at feasibility, is fundamentally based on financial targets. Indeed one developer confirmed this by stating "more important than design is that it is financially viable and that it will add value". A number of the interviewees felt that at present there was little government support, encouragement or incentive to innovate or develop such models to create a sense of community, as the high build costs associated with the Smart Community for example would potentially require some form of government investment. Alternatively, developers would look towards the planning system to see if incorporating a model that demonstrated a sense of community would secure quicker planning consent. Indeed one developer felt that they would be prepared to work with residents in creating a cohousing scheme but felt that this would generate very high build costs due to the creation of a bespoke product, and claimed they "would let them become the decision-makers on design and process as long as they would be prepared to accept the higher house prices". However, the social infrastructure consultant felt that this was a commonly held misconception for a 'bespoke' product will not always be the most expensive option in the long term and it is this long term, strategic perspective that she feels the House Building Industry fails to realise. Moreover, they must see this cost as an investment.

### ***Short term Delivery/Responsibility***

Many of the developers expressed little desire for any form of ongoing role after the completion of the development. This indicates a key constraint in creating a sense of community, for developers do not want to deal with long term management, maintenance or ownership issues- in essence- the long term responsibility of the development.

Indeed a common response to the Common Interest Development was that the developer would have no end of problems to deal with enforcement, and would have to deal with “problems that would traditionally be dealt with by the local authorities”. Conversely, some developers perceived the cohousing model to be attractive in this respect as because there would be fewer customer care complaints post completion and also less issues of management. Again, this narrow, short- term approach to development is clearly not conducive to creating a genuine sense of community. Indeed, the social infrastructure consultant believes that “too many developers “abandon” the developments on completion leaving a trail of issues and then are not there to deal with the consequences. She believes that many house builders are too focused on delivering in the short term rather than strategically and for the long term. Indeed she suggests that “many developers do not realise the benefits they can bring to the business in creating a sense of community...experience and a good track record in community-building can mean that company shares can go up, relationships with the local planning authorities are improved, the company can win competitive land bids on the basis of their reputation and expertise and obviously more people want to buy their houses”.

### ***Corporate Institutions/Policy/Structure***

Indeed it appears that much of the barriers that the Industry face are largely down to the top-down management approach and profit-driven procedures that are inherent within the company structures that are neither particularly flexible nor accommodating to innovation or uncertainty. Indeed many developers are constrained by very strict company guidelines, policies and profit margins where the necessary funds and budgets for development are not approved and released by their management boards unless they can demonstrate the development will meet a certain level of profits.

However, on a more positive note, one developer believes that corporate policies and targets are changing and becoming more socially- aware.

A major barrier to creating effective communities used to be that of conflicting priorities within the business that was not conducive to social and qualitative objectives. However, this development company now publishes an Environmental Social and Ethical (ESE) Report each year to communicate the company's achievements and targets met in terms of social practices. Thus the company is now being audited on such targets and demonstrates that the industry is not just about meeting financial targets. Many shareholders have actively bought shares purely because of this company's social and ethical track record in communities and well-managed environments. Businesses now have to be socially balanced and have to respond to social policy and so the business strategy would be flawed if this was not adhered to. Thus creating a sense of community is becoming an inherent part of the business and questions the belief that the house building industry is purely based on profit.

Thus it is becoming increasingly hard for the house building industry to ignore creating genuine communities and what is known as Corporate Social Responsibility. Though the ESE report is currently a voluntary commitment for companies to report their social objectives, in the US and France this is now mandatory and could be indicative of the way in which regulation and policy might turn in this country.

It is vital however, that the company has a robust management system to manage the risks of innovation; moreover this company now accords to the "triple bottom line" meeting economic, environmental and social targets and there is also now an underlying 'fourth line'; that of ethical.

### ***Planning/ Institutional***

The planner interviewed was completely opposed to the Gated Community in that it creates an insular isolated community where the residents do not "live in the real world" and lacks integration with the wider community, and thus is not sustainable in the long term. She also goes on to suggest that the gated community contravenes "professional planning principles of openness, diversity and equity" and that this is partly due to the fact that most Local Planning Authorities do not have specific planning policies or guidelines to regulate gated communities. Conversely, she also recognised that "planners and local authorities also operate under fiscal and political constraints that can make it difficult to resist gating...councils can approve private roads and communities to facilitate the transfer of development costs to

developers and consumers". Thus the barriers are also inherent in the planning system and within local politics.

The planner thus felt that the Smart Community would be likely to create the most effective sense of community if combined with educating the entire community. She felt that this model would attract the least objections and opposition and would also accord with the demands of the Sustainable Communities legislation.

However, many of the apparent criticisms of the house building industry have been founded on developments that have apparently lacked community. However, in talking to the developers a key restraint in creating a sense of community is that new models and practices will take time to implement and develop before they become effective and create a genuine sense of community and so there is no "quick-fix". Indeed this suggests that there are often unrealistic demands on the house building industry *for immediate success rather than the long-term gains*.

As one developer explained, "the creation of place and community can take generations to become effective and genuine, places take time to embed just as the New Towns have taken a long time to develop.... this means there is a massive constraint for new build developments as they cannot create an 'instant' community". He adds that "this is why effective marketing is required as it is vital to sell to purchasers the long term benefits and vision for the community and how they can input in to it. Another method is to instead integrate into existing communities so new developments can 'bolt on' to existing social capital- so urban extensions work very well".

## **Chapter Four: Discussion**

This section essentially brings together the critique of the four residential models and the analysis of the interviews and looks at the findings against the background context, and the literature review. This discussion will assess the findings in response to my title question and to my three key questions set out in chapter two:

### ***Can the House Building Industry Create A Sense Of Community? A Critique of Four Residential Development Models.***

- **How successful have the models been in creating a genuine sense of community?**
- **What are the barriers to creating a genuine sense of community?**
- **What are the barriers to delivering and implementing the four residential models?**

Indeed as outlined in Chapter One, if the House Building Industry is to meet the challenge of creating quality homes in sustainable communities; the industry must look at its strengths and weaknesses in its ability to create a genuine sense of community and in delivering quality new homes.

Past experience has shown both successes and failures in the house building industry and in the creation of communities but one that has undoubtedly received much criticism. Indeed, the literature and research has raised the question as to how conducive the House Building industry is to innovation and the community concept where qualitative outcomes would almost have to take precedence over quantitative targets. However, what is preventing *both* these targets being met?

In this demanding climate, property developers need to make a number of fundamental changes if they are to provide the quality and quantity of housing required and a better way of delivering homes.

These criticisms have focused on the *ability* of the House Building Industry to actually create a sense of community-and indeed the four residential development models have demonstrated that though to an extent a sense of community can be created there are indeed significant barriers to genuine and effective delivery.



The findings demonstrate that the house building industry in terms of its structure and priorities, contain a number of limitations that means that many of these developments have little sense of community, no sense of place, no connectivity to the wider community and moreover little innovation. This has previously resulted in a standardised product and little variety.

Consequently, there has been increased social polarisation and a high level of mobility within the developments and so property developers have appeared unresponsive to demand. This indeed suggests that The Industry could be reinforcing consumerism and materialism over consumer individuality and cohesion.

Alternatively, the four models and their case studies do indicate that the House Building Industry is *attempting* to create a sense of community and that to some extent this has been relatively successful. This also demonstrates that there are some interesting emerging innovations and areas of good practice that indicates there is a movement by the House Building Industry towards the creation of a sense of community.

### **The Cohousing Model**

The Cohousing model was potentially one of the most effective and successful models in creating a genuine sense of community. This model's participatory process and use of Intentional Community Design provides the capacity to create a sense of community in terms of shared values, shared goals and territory, increased sense of belonging and ownership and a very high level of social interaction and participation. This has generally been successful in also integrating with the wider community outside and has also attracted relatively high consumer demand in other countries and in a very small number of cohousing projects in the UK. The most effective component of this model appears to be the high level participation not just at the start of the process but during and after the completion. This is something that was not attempted in any other of the three models and is an intensive, deliberative democracy that *explicitly strives for a sense of community*. However, this model has also shown that it has the capacity to deliver a sense of community *with or without* a developer. This has shown that with the involvement of a developer, though the model may have increased chance of deliverability, in some cases it may reduce the extent of resident involvement and empowerment-potentially reducing the sense of community created. However, the case studies

have also shown that the developer has often done all it could to *encourage* a sense of community. Indeed the level of success in creating a sense of community in a Cohousing scheme is often down to the *ability and motivation of the residents* themselves. Thus the impetus (and barrier) of this model is also dependent on the willingness of the resident. Thus suggesting that it may not *just* be about the House Building Industry's ability to create a sense of community but more about the consumer's willingness to participate.

Furthermore, this may then suggest that this model is more successful in creating a sense of community when the residents instigate the process and the developer takes the role of facilitator rather than leader.

However, in response to my second key question- the house building industry has clearly faced some barriers in creating a sense of community in the Cohousing models and this has sometimes impacted on the sense of community created and thus the model's success.

The participatory process can be a 'double edged sword' in its effect on the community. The case studies have demonstrated that the difficult and sometimes lengthy process of planning, designing and constructing can create conflict between residents and put strain on resident relations, indeed some have also left due to the financial pressures. This also implies that there is a role for the developer to play, albeit in a facilitator and advisory capacity.

However, another barrier in creating a sense of community is that *too much* professional control or developer input can take away the opportunity for effective and genuine resident participation and involvement- decision making can be tokenistic and thus a key limitation on this model is the need to achieve the correct balance of input by resident and developer.

As demonstrated in the case study at Davis, California, there are often conflicts between the developer's priorities and the residents' needs and objectives. This can result in a battle between profit generation for the developer and building a more standardised product rather than creating a development that is conducive to the community's needs and to facilitate participation.

Finally, a key barrier to the effective delivery of a sense of community is that the success of the model depends on the 'right type' of resident but this can result in the resident composition becoming selective and so promotes homogeneity and social exclusion.

It seems that though this model may be effective *in theory* in creating a sense of community but may not actually be entirely *deliverable*, particularly in this country. Consequently, in response to key question 3, the critique also demonstrated that there are significant barriers to the practical *implementation* and delivery of the model:

Indeed the Cohousing concept was originated in and based on, a very different culture and on a much smaller scale and so this model may not be applicable or deliverable for the British consumer or for larger, mixed-use sites. Furthermore the Cohousing concept was not initially based on any method of developer involvement, which would be very difficult to deliver without the developer's expert knowledge and capability.

The main components of this model are also heavily dependent on early and prolonged residential participation. As a consequence, the Cohousing model may not be viable long term and indeed it is such a relatively new concept that it is not known how sustainable this model is.

Indeed this difficulty in attracting consumer demand would be even more difficult in this country as British culture would not usually be conducive to this open, shared community, partly due to lack of awareness and experience of the model.

This would mean it is a risky and potentially unstable model and is also heavily dependent on attracting and retaining motivated and willing residents who also have the finances, knowledge, time and expertise to deliver but very few consumers would be willing to commit to this. Indeed it seems that some residents have experienced difficulties in securing a mortgage or bank loan due to lack of knowledge or experience of this model in this country. So this again reduces the level or capacity of the market demand that could be involved. This lack of awareness of cohousing may also create difficulties in finding a site that would achieve planning consent, partly due to lack of planning support but also a poor public perception of this model- many believe it is a 'commune' and may object to a planning application.

In terms of the institutional framework, the UK planning legislation is not conducive to such development models due to the rigid planning framework and it is unlikely that this model would achieve any form of government support or incentives to encourage the developer to innovate.

Indeed, it appears that in interviewing the property developers, many of these constraints of delivery were repeated; though many of the developers conceded that this model would in theory, create the most effective and genuine sense of community. However, because of these levels of constraints and barriers to delivery

and implementation, this model was not seen as an attractive model to develop by any of the developers.

Consequently this suggests that there are so many different barriers to the House Building Industry in implementing a sense of community, that it does not have the capacity to overcome these constraints and create a sense of community unless there are significant changes.

The majority of the developers did not believe that this model was “*seen as mainstream enough*” or would have sufficient consumer demand or market demand to justify developing it. This was partly due to the lack of experience or awareness of the model to appeal to consumers and this also meant that often planners or the company’s internal management would not be sufficiently aware and thus would be cautious or even sceptical.

This lack of consumer demand would thus be seen as impacting on the land values and thus would not generate enough profit to meet the strict and inflexible company profit margins. “Innovation seriously hits the bottom line especially where build costs are inflated to accommodate new materials and contractors lack of understanding in how to use them properly”. Indeed this reaffirms that the majority of developers are restricted in how innovative they can be in that it must still meet the strict company policies and guidelines.

This lack of experience of the Cohousing model thus means that developers would be faced with unknown build costs, an unknown role or extent of the role with the residents and thus there is not sufficient certainty or control for the property developer.

Again one response from a developer believes that “foreign models reflect foreign cultures” and that this type of model would not appeal to the British culture, although this was not based on any method of market research, only perception and experience. The developer felt that the consumer would be concerned about lack of parking and lack of private space and that this would be a higher priority to them than creating a sense of community. Indeed, a sense of community, according to two developers, is not a “saleable” factor, that location and price are usually the determining factors and are thus the ones in which the house building industry focus on.

Another interesting quote by one developer stated that the cohousing model “achieves a high sense of belonging and sense of place, teamwork and ownership, genuine community participation...but I can’t see it working in Britain”.

Finally, the majority of the developers felt that learning from past experience, a barrier to implementing this model would be the high level of community participation required. This would either repel consumers or the residents would not be willing to participate to any great extent.

Thus the cohousing model though largely successful in creating a sense of community does create a number of barriers that include consumer demand, profit levels, lack of experience and awareness, lack of participation and the relationship between the residents and developer. Developers acknowledged this model would potentially create the most genuine and effective sense of community but would be very difficult to deliver.

### **Common Interest Development**

The Common Interest Development model had many components that demonstrate the *capacity* that the house building industry has to create a sense of community but also shows where it can arguably direct too much control and regulation on the community. However, the associational ownership of common property through an effective Homeowner or Residents Association within CIDs has demonstrated that it has the *potential* to encourage a sense of ownership and empower the community. This has enabled the creation of a good quality and attractive environment and is something that is highly regarded by consumers and is a key measurement of a sense of community. This regulation coordinates the architectural styles, building forms, structural and visual relationships within an environment to allow a *mixing* of different environments. Indeed this is a strong basis for encouraging residents to feel satisfied and engenders a real sense of pride in the area. Indeed the use of Conditions, Covenants & Restrictions means that residents can live to a common consensus, with shared goals and also provides certainty and stability in the community. However, the CID, or rather the developers have been criticised for creating a 'superficial' sense of community that is predominantly for marketing purposes or for increasing house prices.

Indeed there are a number of barriers exist within this model that prevents the creation of a genuine sense of community:

The so called 'resident or community association' is often 'managed' by an undemocratically elected professional management team which means there is not genuine community ownership or a sense of control, in effect, they are not really participating in the community. This suggests that there is too much professional

ownership, management, control and intervention although conversely, this lack of community participation can also be due to a lack of willingness by residents.

Furthermore, the often inflexible and overly strict CC&Rs can create high levels of conflict between residents and with the developers, and also restricts freedom and self-expression leading to bland and indistinct developments. All of which are not conducive to creating a sense of community. Indeed these covenants are set by developers with no resident consultation and are imposed onto the residents, often creating a lack of privacy and choice.

Indeed in terms of barriers to the delivery of the CID, Local Authorities may be adverse to the implementation of CIDs due to privatisation of amenities and moreover, developers would not want to retain an ongoing role of maintenance and enforcement. Many CIDs have also been unable to create viable retail centres or affordable units, which may also mean planning approval would be hard to achieve and would not meet the Sustainable Communities requirements.

The CID model actually attracted very little response from the developers as seems that though the CID is not practiced much in Britain; many developers use restrictive covenants in their developments and one developer even said it was "common practice". However, many stated that the CID in its complete form would repel consumers and would attract controversy and opposition from planners and wider community due to the lack of experience of the model in this country.

Indeed, this model is not perceived as a model that was conducive to creating a sense of community but only to retain quality and well-maintained development. Thus the Common Interest Development model has some components that have achieved a level of success in creating a sense of community, and developers are divided in how common practice this is in this country. Indeed, it seems that in a less extreme form, the use of CC&Rs are a popular and deliverable tool to the House Building Industry although the extent it creates a genuine sense of community is doubtful.

### **Gated Community**

The presence of the gates and a boundary clearly meets a number of criteria in creating a community in that it enables residents to establish and protect their boundaries and thus acts as a controlling access to their territory. Consequently

property developers can create a sense of identity and increased sense of security, generating the *capacity* but not necessarily the *motivation* for strong communities. The internal facilities and lifestyle attracts a high level of common and shared values in an area, and the creation of a localised culture of friendship and support. The findings suggested that the gate is not the predominant aspect of this model but rather it is the *selection and homogeneity of the residents* and the *status* of the development rather than the sense of community that is attracting potential purchasers. This suggests that this model is less about the *design* of the development but more about how it is *marketed* and to *whom*.

The presence of gates around a development however, has very little impact on the sense of community- for though their structure might well *support* strong community feeling, it does not *create* it.. Indeed, in the case studies, most residents appeared to have a high level of satisfaction but acknowledge the low level of 'neighbourliness' suggesting that many residents do not attach much importance to community spirit in Gated Communities. Indeed this implies that the House Building Industry really cannot effectively create a genuine sense of community However, Gated communities can create the *capacity* for stronger and cohesive communities.

However, this is a very controversial model and is also very well known to consumers, developers, planners and the general public, which can be both an opportunity and a constraint. However, literature has not been favourable towards this model and thus many people have a poor perception of the Gated Community. However, this has not repelled purchasers and is one of the most popular models despite not being known to create a genuine sense of community and so developers will continue to build it regardless of its levels of social capital. This can suggest that a sense of community is not as important to consumers as theorists might think and moreover while the consumer demands this type of development model, the developer will continue to provide it.

However, a barrier towards creating a sense of community is due to the increased fear of crime and lack of trust inherent in many consumers and British culture today. This has meant the culture and attitudes of the consumer are not conducive to social interaction and a sense of community. Thus the property developer has capitalised on this fear and thus knows that such developments will sell quickly. Moreover, rising house prices mean that consumers are more concerned about property values than the community

This all implies that generally, people do not move to Gated Communities for its sense of community but for other reasons and thus the developers can provide sufficient social infrastructure to encourage a sense of community but it can be in vain.

Homeowner Associations do not always have a genuine sense of ownership and control as they are often professionally managed which is also due to the lack of willing community participation as many people that move to gated communities have lifestyles that are not conducive to social interaction.

Indeed there is a real lack of uniform planning guidance in the UK that means there is no control over the need for gated communities to integrate with the wider community. However, there is much opposition to this model by the wider communities, some Local Planning Authorities and the emergency services and so there would be many objections to planning applications. However, this is partly due to the little positive research and literature on Gated Communities and on their benefits and so they have a poor reputation.

However, there is a mixed response by the developers in the success it has in creating a genuine sense of community although nearly all of the developers would see the gated community as the most attractive model to develop to most of developers. This is due to the high market demand; it is viable and profitable and achieves high sales values and again suggests that in many cases, the House Building Industry will look at profits and sales above the ability to create a sense of community.

A couple of the interviewees also believed that this model was the most relevant and applicable to British homeowner in that would suit the British consumer's perception of what a sense of community is to them- "privacy, local amenities and companionship when you want it". Whether this opinion was based on fact or perception, it still remains to be a commonly held view and is thus a significant barrier to implementing a sense of community.

However, the Planner interviewed sees as creating an exclusive, insular community and not at all sustainable, she also believes it would contravene planning principles and prevents affordability and choice.



## Smart Communities

The Smart Communities model is perhaps the most indicative of contemporary and changing lifestyles and how the House Building Industry can harness the increased use of technology into creating a sense of community.

The Community Electronic Networks and moreover the developer, has the ability to create an effective sense of community if it is managed through *community ownership and democratic participation*. This has had the success of encouraging grass-roots community involvement and also promotes the dispersal of local information, local businesses and local events via the community intranet. Thus this model has enabled greater community empowerment and encourages residents to become more involved in local decision-making, developing skills and a knowledge base and is very successful in the creation a sense of community. It also encourages increased educational and learning opportunities to be made more accessible to all groups of the community, promoting the skills of the community and thus stimulating community enterprise and local economic development. Indeed as suggested the use of Information Technology and Community Electronic Networks can increase the *importance* of place and moreover the role the community plays in that many people can now work from home and thus the community is where people live *and work*. By using this model, developers can attempt to change the way in which we live through increased accessibility and education, promoting the long-term viability of the community and allowing *all* residents to become increasingly involved in community affairs. The developer can enhance the *quality of life* where residents can take ownership of their community. Indeed the implementation of a Smart Community can act as a catalyst for greater social interaction and community participation and can also link various aspects of the community together e.g. community groups, local businesses, educational establishments and recreational/cultural activities.

However, this model has also experienced some difficulties in creating a sense of community, partly due to the over-emphasis or over- reliance by developers on technology and not enough soft infrastructure such as education to enable residents to utilise this tool. In essence, this suggests that the model is not always inclusive to the *whole* community. Moreover, the model is a very new concept, particularly in this country and so there is really little long term evidence to show how successful it really is, only that it has *potential*.

This over reliance on the virtual community can be seen are eroding sense of place and causing a reduction of face-to-face interaction.

There are also significant barriers to the implementation and practical delivery of the Smart Community, mainly due to the lack of knowledge, awareness and experience of the model by the developers who may consequently be reluctant to take the risk. There is also a lack of awareness by the consumer affecting current consumer demand (or the perception by developers of it). Moreover there is a lack of awareness of the model by investors and so there are issues of funding and sponsorship due to the lack of investment.

The model's effective delivery can be affected by technical and physical constraints that can increase the build costs and affect the development design and layout. Thus this model is dependent on sufficient demand and capacity within the development for it to be viable which in turn relies heavily on resident ability and knowledge. Furthermore, for this to create any significant sense of community, it requires more than the infrastructure the developer implements but also depends on the level of resident participation. Indeed the Smart Community can take time to be effective and it also creates high initial costs of implementation and potential issues of long term management which may repel some developers from implementation.

Despite this number of constraints and barriers, the Smart Community is seen as an attractive model to deliver by a number of the developers and indeed has been already developed by a number of the developers. This suggests that there is a growing acceptance, understanding and awareness of the model by planners, consumers, developers and their internal management, as it becomes part of UK culture.

However, the developers were divided in how relevant this was to the British consumer and the level of consumer demand. Most believed that at present it was not currently a determining factor of a sale but would become so, although one developer does not believe this model would be applicable to the British consumer as they do not have the 'mind set'. Thus suggests that a potential barrier to the House Building Industry is that they do not really know (or cannot agree) what the consumer wants or needs.

The technical difficulties according to one large strategic developer, was in joined-up thinking with other house builders on a site in terms of coordinated planning of ducting. Indeed, currently the delivery of this model can almost double the build costs of a development, partly due to a lack of contractor understanding and the need to accommodate new materials.

Finally, the planner believes that this model would attract the least objections and accords with government guidance e.g. sustainable communities.

Indeed a number of the interviewees felt that this model would also create the most effective sense of community, *which perhaps suggests that the House Building Industry is starting to innovate and develop a product that meets the seemingly conflicting priorities of deliverability and community.*

Thus we return to the main question of this thesis,

***Can the House Building Industry Create A Sense Of Community? A Critique of Four Residential Development Models.***

Indeed the four models certainly demonstrate some areas of good practice emerging which many developers in this country are starting to implement in to our residential developments and at least demonstrates a move towards creating a sense of community. However, the models do show there are limits as to the levels of social capital which include:

- Resident relations and resident/developer relations
- Too much professional management/ input into a community
- Too much developer control and regulation
- Lack of willing and genuine community participation
- Privatised and insular developments and lack of wider integration
- Lack of planning guidance
- Lack of soft infrastructure
- Social exclusion

In interviewing the developers about which model they would find most attractive to develop in contrast to which model they perceived would create the most effective sense of community, it was clear that the majority of developers saw an evident contrast between *deliverability* and in *creating a sense of community*. The majority of developers would thus pick either the Smart Communities model or the Gated Communities to develop, even though many acknowledged that the Gated Community model *was unlikely to create a genuine sense of community*. On the other hand, all of the developers felt that the Cohousing model would create the most effective sense of community but equally that they would not be interested in developing it due to difficulties of practical delivery and the apparent lack of consumer demand in this country.

Thus this shows a significant barrier within the House Building Industry to the delivery of a sense of community. This suggests that deliverability and feasibility largely come before creating a community in the industry's priorities. However, though many of these barriers are evident, some are very much based on the industry's *perceptions and reactionary institutional framework*.

Thus in looking at what are the main barriers to prevent these models being delivered and thus prevented a sense of community being created, the barriers can be summarised as **economic, cultural and institutional**.

### ***Institutional***

- Lack of government incentives
- Speed of planning consent
- Lack of awareness of by the Local Planning Authority, consumers, investors and company internal management
- Internal Corporate procedures, policies and targets

### ***Cultural***

- Preconceived ideas of models
- British culture, lifestyles and attitudes
- Lack of consumer demand or awareness
- Levels of controversy or criticism of model
- Lack of consumer participation
- Difficulties of resident engagement
- High levels of opposition from planners/ existing communities

### ***Economic***

- Impact on land values
- Initial/ upfront costs involved
- Impact on build costs
- Level of new materials
- Determining factor of sale/ saleable factor
- Profitability/Profit Margins
- Level of developer control
- Length of construction period
- Contractor understanding and experience with model
- High levels of long term management involved

- Risk of keeping to programme and budget

Interestingly, the social infrastructure consultant felt that the difficulty in the application of models is that a 'sense of community' is interpreted differently in every development and so she would be hesitant to use development models. Moreover, she does not believe that businesses are geared up to creating a sense of community, there are some 'market leaders and some pioneers. Indeed she felt that many developers do not realise the benefits they can bring to the business in creating a sense of community. "Experience and a good track record in community-building can mean that company shares can go up, relationships with the local planning authorities are improved, the company can win competitive land bids on the basis of their reputation and expertise and obviously more people want to buy their houses".

The House Building Industry needs to make a number of step changes in terms of its management systems, staff that are dedicated to promoting and working with the community, an industry that is more conducive to innovation and taking risks and one that can encourage genuine participation with the community. Indeed the findings demonstrate that there is no one solution to creating a genuine sense of community and that the creation of an '*instant*' sense of community is not possible in new residential developments and thus developers and consumers must be in it for the long-term benefits.

However the barriers to creating a sense of community and in delivering these models also demonstrate that it is not *only* the House Building Industry who is at fault and who needs to change their focus, structure and priorities. Indeed it appears that a major barrier to the effective implementation of both the four residential models and in creating a genuine sense of community is also down to the *consumer, resident or the planning system*.

Indeed the case studies have shown that though developers can *create* the mechanisms for social interaction and a sense of community, it clearly cannot force community on to residents if they do not want it or do not want to participate. Consequently, it seems that in all of the development models, there was often a variation of residents' willingness to participate, at least for the *long term* and many residents would apparently prefer to employ a team of professionals to manage their development. Furthermore, as revealed in the case studies, more important to many

British homeowners than a sense of community, is apparently proximity to local schools, proximity to jobs, local amenities and a good investment opportunity.

It appears that though many consumers support the *idea* of a sense of community, in reality, many only want certain aspects of community life. This can include the appearance of a community and the benefits associated with a sense of community but many are unwilling to actively participate in the community. Indeed as one developer stated, the British consumer often interprets community as- “privacy, local amenities and companionship when you want it”. Therefore if this is what consumers are demanding then the House Building Industry will not need to innovate for as another developer claims “a developer seeks to minimise risk and protect profit. He will therefore seek to deliver what the market expects in order to sell as quickly as possible”.

The consumer or resident would also benefit from a shift in attitude and behaviour in terms of awareness of the wider community, increased participation and responsibility for our communities and become more open to greater inclusiveness and motivation.

Secondly, there needs to be a change in the structure and direction of the planning system- towards increased innovation, clearer guidance, encouraging more community participation and collaboration, conducting more pre-planning assessments of community needs and finally more incentives to the house builder to create a genuine sense of community.

However, there does seem to be a changing philosophy by the house building towards building a sense of community. Indeed, there is an increasing emphasis for the house building companies to be more socially responsible, where shareholders are starting to look for the more socially and innovative house builder and where company targets now also incorporate social and ethical objectives. This movement has been reinforced by the four models of residential development that all contain areas of good practice that we can build on.

Indeed this chapter and its findings have determined *some of the barriers that are currently preventing the house building industry from implementing this sense of community*. However, it can also highlight the fundamental areas for change so that the House Building Industry can meet their targets and deliver quality housing in genuine communities.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions**

The four models and this thesis have demonstrated that the House Building Industry clearly has the ability and the capacity to create a sense of community on the basis that there is evidence of some success and many examples of emerging innovation and areas of good practice.

It is apparent that in this current climate of the housing market, the House Building Industry needs to reassess its strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures to enable the industry to make some fundamental changes so that it can meet the challenge of delivering quality houses in sustainable communities and moreover, to remain a competitive industry. Evidently, there are still a number of barriers that prevent the genuine and effective delivery of a sense of community though this thesis has determined that these barriers are in effect both a *cause and symptom* of the apparent lack of consumer demand within this country. Indeed whether it is the lack of house builder innovation that is suppressing consumer demand for genuine communities or vice versa, this 'spiral of decline' needs to be stopped and addressed.

Indeed this research can highlight these barriers so that they can be acknowledged and overcome or at least suggest areas in which the House Building Industry can look at and examine and hopefully change.

This thesis demonstrates that at present, the House Building Industry perceives that there is an evident and stark difference between deliverability and creating a sense of community. Similarly the developers noted a perceived gap between the *theory* and *practice* of creating new communities. This perception in itself is a fundamental barrier, for until the industry realises that the seemingly conflicting objectives of deliverability and creating communities can be met, these communities will not be built.

However, this thesis has found that there are significant barriers within the House Building Industry in creating a genuine sense of community.

These can be categorised, as economic, institutional and cultural.

The constraints in creating a sense of community and deliverability includes strict and inflexible corporate policies and institutional procedures within the house

building companies that are not conducive to risk and innovation. The House Building Industry does not currently have the institutional framework that allows developers to take risks and profit margins are neither flexible nor geared towards innovation. They are instead too focused on quantitative outcomes where financial viability is more important than design and the emphasis is on programme, budget and profit.

There also appears to be a lack of joined-up thinking between the different sectors within the industry and the industry needs to provide a method of reducing the risks of innovation in the development process or at least providing a buffer to cushion against these risks. House Builders also need to re-examine their feasibility appraisal systems e.g. the risk-reward analysis for new development opportunities to include the wider social and long-term perspectives, and social capital benefits rather than merely using financial appraisals.

The industry tends instead to take a short term, myopic perspective rather than long-term strategic perspective whereby the developer takes a long-term ongoing role in the development. Indeed many of the House Builders do not realise the benefits in creating a sense of community for their own business and long-term profits. Indeed creating a sense of community can improve the company and industry's reputation and track record, can help win the company competitive bids, add value to the product and encourage and promote consumer demand.

Another constraint is that of the consumer demand and culture that the Industry believes are not encouraging or stimulating the building of communities. Indeed, this thesis has suggested that many consumers or potential purchasers predominantly look at the location and price of a potential purchase rather than demanding a development that incorporates a sense of community. Thus a huge barrier in creating a sense of community is actually the level of consumer demand for the community concept although it could indeed be asked if this is based on the House Building Industry's perception rather than the reality of the situation? Thus the industry clearly needs to raise increased awareness of what the consumer *could* have and the benefits to the consumer in creating a sense of community.

However, as Llewellyn-Davies (1998) writes 'design for these things is not delivered by the market unassisted. It relies on a clearly integrated policy and determined implementation: the determination that physical design can be used to open doors, to provide options, to safeguard the environment locally and globally and to facilitate the development of the community'. The House Building Industry perhaps need to demonstrate and build for what the consumer *should be demanding* to at



least encourage community living rather than waiting for the industry to be asked and invited to do so.

For even though housing demand for high quality and affordable housing has reached record levels, supply has actually reached an all time low, the House Building Industry has appeared unresponsive to demand and so surely the Industry has little choice but to expand the supply and that this is clearly the time to do it. Thus the thesis suggests that the House Building Industry can often be too *reactive* to consumer demand rather than *proactive* in the housing market and delivery. It also means that it is also up to the House Building Industry to provide consumers with a choice in housing delivery and residential development and not make the choice for them. Further to this, there should be greater analysis of future consumer preference in order to map the community needs and requirements so that developers can target the market demand and niche markets.

However, this thesis has demonstrated that there are so many different definitions and interpretations of 'sense of community' that there is little wonder that there is no one simple formula or solution for producing a 'successful' residential development. Indeed it has also been suggested that in fact the consumer no longer wants the traditional version of 'community' that theorists believe they *should* be demanding. It could be that there has been a transformation of 'community' into a more contemporary lifestyle concept and this is what the House Building Industry need to cater for and encourage rather than building for an outmoded and unrealistic notion.

There have also been evident cynicism and lethargy by residents and consumers towards community participation and consultation. Thus this can act as a limit on how effective the House Building Industry can really be in creating a community for they can "create community *consciousness* but not community *convenience*" (Osborne 1991).

Therefore, these barriers are not only a fault of the House Building Industry. Indeed evidently there are also constraints within the planning system, government support and within consumers and residents. Thus there are evident constraints across the sectors that also need to be highlighted and changes made.

The planning system needs to be increasingly innovative, provide clearer guidance, increase the level of genuine community participation and consultation, increase levels of pre-planning community -needs assessments and provide more incentives to the house building industry to build effective and genuine communities.

The consumer also needs a shift in attitudes and values so that there is increased responsibility and participation towards the wider community and who need to push the House Building Industry in to providing a product that improves quality of life and builds for the future.

Government, Local Planning Authorities and critics all need to realise that they can put unrealistic demands on the House Building Industry for they cannot create an 'instant' community. Residential developments can take years to properly imbed and create a genuine sense of community and so it needs to be realised that this is a long-term solution. Moreover, the government need to appeal to the House Building Industry to build more communities by providing increased support and incentive and in providing clearer legislation to guide the Industry.

However, corporate policy and the direction of the House Building Industry are changing for the better in creating a sense of community. The industry is slowly becoming more conducive towards the social and ethical targets as they realise the barriers that are currently preventing the effective and genuine creation of a sense of community. Many of the more socially and community-aware house building companies now publish their social and ethical targets and practices which encourages a more transparent and innovative industry. Companies may become increasingly audited on community building and also suggests that shareholders too may start looking at company performance and targets along these lines. This in itself may spur a company to look at implementing community and social capital into their business strategies.

Indeed Social Capital Plans could be made mandatory for each residential development scheme, which should be based on feasibility, participation and needs assessment with a programme for implementing hard and soft infrastructure, funding and long term management. This could be written by a collaboration of the developers, the key stakeholders and existing community groups

Thus the thesis has demonstrated that the House Building Industry needs to make some fundamental changes in its structure and priorities and that this needs to be accompanied by changes within the planning system, government legislation and in consumer attitudes and values. *Thus a regulatory and societal change is required to create a genuine sense of communities in our residential developments.*

### **Areas for Further Research**

Indeed further work could continue on this research to create a 'sense of community' toolkit for the House Building Industry to implement in to their future business strategies. Further research could also look in greater detail at what these changes could include, for example, determine and analyse what exactly the consumer wants and needs in terms of the housing market. Research could also look at what changes the planning system could make in encouraging the House Building Industry to innovate and consult with communities. Indeed it will be interesting to note how the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase intends to encourage a greater sense of community in the light of the Sustainable Communities movement.

Thus to summarise and conclude, the House Building Industry clearly has a mammoth challenge ahead of them to meet this massive housing demand. The Industry has the unique ability to influence the very nature of our communities and the way in which we live, and this combined with some changes within the planning system, government legislation and our societal attitudes could turn these constraints into real opportunities.

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