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Sustainable Urban Competitiveness and Low Income Residential Development:
Experience from Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Dr Geoff O’Brien

10th International Forum on Urban Competitiveness
Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, 27th to 28th June 2012
Overview of Presentation

Context

Short history of Newcastle upon Tyne

Regeneration
Mapping Sustainable Development

Increasing Socio-Economic Justice Concerns

- Equality
- Transformation
- Reform

Inequality

Increasing Environmental Concerns

- Little Environmental Concern
- Techno Centred
- Eco Centred

Mainstream Environment Groups

Indigenous Movements

Ecological Modernisers

Direction of travel of ongoing debates

Source: Adapted from Hopwood, O'Brien and Mellor 2005
Newcastle upon Tyne

Founded in 1080 AD

Grew rapidly during Industrial Revolution

Main sectors: Coal, Shipbuilding, Armaments, Locomotives, Heavy Engineering
Newcastle upon Tyne

But industrialisation brought other problems!

Poor Housing
Bad Public Health
Urban Poverty
Newcastle upon Tyne

Post WWII efforts were made to improve housing but the emphasis was placed on suburbs and many parts of the inner-city declined.

Many social housing projects were of a low standard and quickly became unpopular. As the traditional heavy industries closed these areas began to decline, leading to high unemployment and crime.
Newcastle upon Tyne

Many of the pre 1919 terraced streets remain. Building new homes is not feasible. Refurbishment of existing properties is needed.
Newcastle upon Tyne

Vitality is measure using unemployment, crime, educational and health data
Newcastle upon Tyne Housing Facts

Housing Stock in Newcastle.
Total 120,000 dwellings

- Council Housing: 53%
- RSL: 6%
- Private Rented: 16%
- Owner Occupied: 25%
What has happened?

Where possible we have replaced

Old with New
What has happened?

Refurbished existing stock

Air-tightness test
What has happened?

Built very energy efficient homes for older people
New Deal for Communities (2000-2012)

A 10 year programme focused on Community-Led Regeneration

Covered 4000 households (about 3% of city housing stock)

Area selected has some of highest levels of deprivation in the UK – the inner west of the city the traditional heavy industries has disappeared – high levels of Unemployment and crime, low educational attainment and poor health statistics.

Main themes were education, jobs and business, health, crime and community safety, community, and housing

The belief was that we had to things differently as all previous projects in the inner-west had failed – the aim was involved the community in all aspects of the regeneration programme.
What was achieved?

- Sustained reduction in overall crime in area (50%) since 2000
- 16 Community Safety projects, including Community Policing team based in the area, Neighbourhood Wardens, Youth Inclusion Project
- Improved over 2000 houses
- Helped 1300 local people into jobs
- Large scale environmental improvements
- Gap in vitality between NDC area and rest of city has narrowed by 5 percentage points
New Deal for Communities (2000-2012)

Demolition to create green Spaces
Refurbished and re-designated existing tower blocks: social housing (to rent), affordable housing (can only be purchased by low-income families) and a block for the over 50s.
New Deal for Communities (2000-2012)

Refurbished existing homes and improved the public realm
Centre West

The Centre West charity was established to carry on the work of New Deal.

It is funded by a property portfolio acquired during New Deal.

It has developed a new building, The Beacon, that acts as a community focal point.

The building is rated at the highest UK environmental standard, BREAAM Excellent.

Activities in the Beacon include incubator units for entrepreneurs, artist units, a local community radio station, office space, training facilities, temporary supported business pods, a bistro and a large flexible multi-purpose space.
The Beacon
Concluding Remarks

There is no point in repeating the mistakes of the past – do things differently.

Getting the community to engage is difficult but it does improve effectiveness.

Linking housing improvements to employment opportunities with targeted support packages does work – living a nicer and safer environment does change attitudes.

Though New Deal was a relatively small project it does show actively working with people can deliver results.

Don’t give up!
Thank You and Any Questions?