STOPPED: WHY PEOPLE OPPOSE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THEIR BACK YARD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

London's housing market is not delivering. The city's Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies the need for nearly 50,000 new homes to be built every year until 2035.[1] But in 2015 the number of new homes completed was 24,620.[2] This discrepancy between supply and need is longstanding and has caused house prices to rise five-fold since 1996.[3] Housing is consistently the top concern for London voters and businesses.[4] Centre for London research shows that the crisis has also driven up poverty and inequality in the capital.[5]

There are many reasons that supply has failed to keep up with need. Indeed, a recent year-long London School of Economics research project identified no less than 14 "main barriers" to increasing the supply of new homes.[6] This report focuses on just one of them: opposition from local residents.

Opposition constrains supply by increasing the number of applications turned down or stalled. Though a greater stock of planning permissions have been approved in recent years,[7] new approvals are still not being issued fast enough to meet London's housing targets.[8] Our research also points to a more subtle way in which opposition reduces supply. As one borough leader put it: "If you talk to developers, there are places where they go and work, there are places where they don't go and work. It depends on the hassle factor." For every new development that is denied planning permission, there are therefore many more that were never applied for in the first place.

Why do people oppose new development in their area? The typical response is to dismiss them as "NIMBYs" (Not In My Back Yard) bent on preventing change. The aim of this report is to get under the skin of opposition to gain a more complete and nuanced understanding of why people oppose development in their neighbourhood. Some people oppose all development. Some feel excluded from the conversation. Others have specific concerns over design quality. Our starting point

1. Greater London Authority. (2014*). Homes for London, The London Housing Strategy, Draft for London Assembly.*
2. Greater London Authority. (2015). *London Housing Market Report.* Uncertainty over the UK's access to the Single Market is likely to slow down housing delivery in the capital.
3. Median, nominal house prices in Travers T., Sims S. & Bosetti N. (2015), *Housing and Inequality in London.* Centre for London.
4. Greater London Authority. (2014). Annual London Survey. See also McKee S. et al. (2014). *Getting our house in order: the impact of housing undersupply for London business*, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
5. Travers et al., (2015).
6. Holman, N., Fernandez-Arrigoitia, M., Scanlon, K., Whitehead, C. (2014). *Housing in London: Addressing the Supply Crisis*, London School of Economics.
7. Greater London Authority. (2016). *London Plan Annual Monitoring Report 12, 2014–2015.*
8. Stirling Ackroyd. (2016). *London New Homes Monitor.* 25th February 2016.

for this work is that it will only be possible to move toward solutions when we have an accurate understanding of what motivates opposition: diagnosis before prescription.

Our research started with a thorough literature review to ensure we drew on the best insights from academic planners, economists, sociologists and applied psychologists. From this, we developed a framework which we tested and refined through around 22 hours of interviews. Our final framework, which has also been tested with our expert advisory group, sets out seven reasons (many of which are legitimate) that people try to get new developments STOPPED. The summary we provide here is inevitably somewhat superficial, but the main chapters of the report go into much greater detail on the evidence underpinning each element.

Services: In a growing metropolis where infrastructure is stretched, residents fear that an increase in population will put strain on local services, particularly roads, public transport and healthcare. "I already have people who can't get on the train at 6.30 in the morning going into London. Their view is: if I build more housing, how the hell are they gonna get to work in the morning?" (*Leader, outer London borough*)

Trust: The complexity of the planning system and the vulnerability of development to the economic cycle has led to a decline in trust between residents, developers and local authorities. This hampers communication between the three groups and makes negotiation and compromise more difficult. Many Londoners simply do not believe that the local authority will act in the interest of residents.

Outsiders: There is a long history of research in social psychology showing that people identify with their own group and will take action if its identity is threatened by outsiders.[9] Objections to new housing are sometimes as much about new residents as about the houses they will live in. As one planning officer put it, residents worry the homes "may be for people [they] don't particularly like who have loud parties and keep dogs."

Place: People come to have close connections with the area in which they live, often to the extent that it forms part of their identity. Residents' objections are often rooted in the fear that new development will change the character or identity of the place they call home, or will simply be of too-poor quality. "They thought they had their nice warm blanket and suddenly it's pulled off the bed." (*Inner London resident*)

Politics: Elected politicians provide an important democratic check on development. But we found examples of planning debates being hijacked for alternative agendas or being used as a political

9. Riek, B. M., Mania, E. W., & Gaertner, S. L. (2006). Intergroup threat and outgroup attitudes: a meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review 10*(4), 336–353.

football. “If we did not have the local MP whipping up opposition to the planning application, we would have gone through without much opposition.” (*Director of Planning*)

Engagement: When people feel powerless they tend to protest and it is no different when residents feel ignored by planners and developers. Tokenistic and superficial engagement often leads to outright anger. “Developers change a couple of windows and hope that we will get tired.” (*West London resident*)

Disruption: Residents also fear the noise and safety impacts from construction. In some areas of London development is so intense that construction has begun to feel like a permanent feature of daily life. “There is always something going on: trucks going up and down; the roads are muddy; bits of pavement are cordoned off with the latest development hoardings; the noise. It’s just constant here.” (*Councillor*)

Solutions

Our research reflects the diverse range of motivations for opposition. Few sites will attract opposition for all seven reasons, each will instead have its own blend of issues specific to its location, history and demographics. Our framework can also help think through which mix of solutions is appropriate for which sites. The table below shows our assessment of how four commonly-proposed solutions match up to the STOPPED framework. The table highlights that no one solution can deal with all the problems. It will therefore often be necessary to mix and match them depending on the site.

Consultation, when it involves genuinely listening to residents and engaging with their concerns, can help bolster engagement and build trust. The dialogue it allows can also help developers manage disruption and enable design and planning work that is sensitive to how residents understand their local area. Neighbourhood planning goes a step further in allowing local communities to set the framework for the evolution of their neighbourhood, as part of the formal process of developing local plans.

A number of proposed solutions are based on incentivising new development with payments to the local authority. The New Homes Bonus, for example, involved payments to local authorities for each new home built, adding to existing mitigation and infrastructure payments like Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 payments. Our framework makes it clear that incentives are only a partial solution. At best they deal with concerns relating to local services. Local authorities could, for example, use payments to improve the road network to alleviate congestion from new development. But

even then it is unlikely to deal with concerns relating to health services, which are centrally funded and managed. Incentives do nothing about the other six reasons for opposition.

Others have argued that community-led housing schemes can help reduce opposition to residential development.[10] Community Land Trusts, for example, are member-led, non-profit organisations which build homes for rent or purchase by local residents and use their surpluses from development and asset management to benefit the local community. Homes are rented or sold at a discount that is transferred to the tenant or buyer, so that they remain affordable in perpetuity.[11] Community Land Trusts can help deal with issues of trust, fear of outsiders and place attachment because the housing is developed directly by and for local people, which may in turn reduce political opposition. For the time being, however, Community Land Trusts remain a rarity, because they require the land being donated or purchased by the community – which is unlikely in London where land values are very high.

How four commonly-proposed solutions match up to the STOPPED framework

	CONSULTATION	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING	INCENTIVES	COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS
SERVICES			◑	
TRUST	◔	◑		◑
OUTSIDERS				●
PLACE	◔	◑		◔
POLITICS				◔
ENGAGEMENT	◔	◑		
DISRUPTION	◔	◑		

10. Cadywould, C., & O'Leary, D. (2015). *Community Builders*. Demos.
11. National Community Land Trust Network. (2016). *Jargon Buster.*

The table also highlights the lack of solutions which address fear of outsiders and politics. We therefore make two further recommendations:

Psychologists have shown that something as simple as social contact can have a powerful effect on reducing fear of others.[12] **We recommend that people interested in buying a new property could be encouraged to register their interest early, then if they attend the relevant planning meetings and community engagement meetings to support the development they would be given first refusal on any residential development that does occur.** This would allow existing residents to meet the outsiders, helping reduce anxieties, and highlight the fact that when development gets stopped real people lose out.

Local politicians often come under particularly intense pressure to oppose development that is higher or denser than the surrounding housing stock. Given the importance of densification for delivering on London's housing needs, **we recommend a series of town hall seminars and study visits bringing together architects, urban designers, councillors and council officers to explore high-quality, higher-density development.**[13] This would build on the work of existing agencies like Urban Design London to give councillors and officers the expertise to guide developers toward higher-quality, high-density development, and to defend it where appropriate.

12. Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*(5), 751–783.
13. For more on high-quality, high-density development see: URBED (2008). *A Quality Charter for Growth in Cambridgeshire.* See also Prasad, S., Allies, B., Scott, F. & Powell, R. (2015). *Growing London: defining the future form of the city.* Mayor's Design Advisory Group.

INTRODUCTION

London's housing market is not delivering. The city's Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies the need for nearly 50,000 new homes to be built every year until 2035.[14] But in 2015 the number of new homes completed was 24,620.[15] This discrepancy between supply and need is longstanding and has caused house prices to rise five-fold since 1996.[16] It is no surprise then that house prices are the top issue for London voters, who are worried about rising rents and getting on the housing ladder. They are also a primary concern for employers, who are increasingly worried about their ability to recruit.[17] The housing crisis has also increased poverty and inequality in the capital.[18]

There are many reasons that supply has failed to keep up with need. Indeed, a recent year-long London School of Economics research project identified no less than 14 "main barriers" to increasing supply, including lack of capacity in planning departments, protracted viability negotiations and an overly concentrated construction market.[19] This report focuses on just one of those fourteen reasons: opposition to residential development, sometimes labelled "NIMBYism".

Where successful, opposition restricts the supply of land available for building, which is an important long-run reason for the shortage of new homes.[20] Even where opposition is not successful, it can delay development, add costs and reduce the number of units delivered. Detailed qualitative research has shown how local opposition, inside and outside elected authorities, can erode housing delivery targets,[21] and quantitative research comparing every local authority in England shows how local residents have been successful in reducing the number of homes built in their local area, suggesting opposition has had a meaningful impact on supply.[22] Surveys tell a similar story,

14. Greater London Authority. (2014). *Homes for London*, The London Housing Strategy, Draft for London Assembly.
15. Greater London Authority. (2015). London Housing Market Report.
16. Median, nominal house prices in Travers (2015), *Housing and Inequality in London*. Centre for London.
17. Greater London Authority. (2014). *Annual London Survey*. McKee S. et al. (2014). *Getting our house in order: the impact of housing undersupply for London business,* London Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
18. Travers (2015).
19. Holman et al., (2014). *Housing in London: Addressing the Supply Crisis*, London School of Economics.
20. Hilber, C. A., & Vermeulen, W. (2016). The impact of supply constraints on house prices in England. *The Economic Journal*, *126*(591), 358–405. Hilber, C. A., & Vermeulen, W. (2010). The impacts of restricting housing supply on house prices and affordability, Final report. *Department for Communities and Local Government.*
21. Sturzaker, J. (2010). The exercise of power to limit the development of new housing in the English countryside. *Environment and Planning A*, *42*(4), 1001–1016.
22. Coelho, M. C., Ratnoo, V., Dellepiane, S., & Coelho, M. C. (2014). *Housing That Works for All: The Political Economy of Housing in England.* Institute for Government.

with opposition to new development cited by developers and councillors as one of the main barriers to increased housebuilding.[23]

But as well as these measurable effects, opposition has a more subtle effect on housebuilding.[24] It was clear from our interviews with local authority Planning Directors and developers that many areas are considered off limits because of the strength of opposition that would likely occur *if applications were made*. "If you talk to developers, there are places where they go and work, there are places where they don't go and work. It depends on a hassle factor." Political scientists refer to this sort of dynamic as *anticipated response*. For every new development that is denied planning permission, there are many more that were never made in the first place, written off as simply being too difficult.

Why do people object to residential development? It is easy to caricature them as "NIMBYs", implying that they are motivated by a selfish desire to prevent change to their neighbourhood and protect the value of their home. However, this explanation for opposition has been roundly criticised by academic researchers as being at best partial and at worst incorrect and counterproductive.[25] The aim of this report is to get under the skin of opposition to gain a more complete and nuanced understanding of why people oppose opposition in their local area. Our starting point is that it will only be possible to move toward solutions when we have an accurate understanding of the problem. Diagnosis before prescription.

Our research started with a thorough literature review to ensure we drew on the best insights from academic planners, economists,

23. Craine, T. (2012). *Barriers to housing delivery: what are the market-perceived barriers to residential development in London?* Greater London Authority.
    Local Government Association (2012). *New Housing Developments Survey*. Lambert Hampton Smith (2016). *Residential Development Sentiment Survey.*
24. For more on how housing is kept off the agenda, see: Sturzaker, J. (2011). Can Community Empowerment Reduce Opposition to Housing? Evidence from Rural England. *Planning Practice and Research*, *26* (October 2014), 555–570.
25. Burningham, K., Barnett, J., & Thrush, D. (2006). The limitations of the NIMBY concept for understanding public engagement with renewable energy technologies: a literature review, 1–20.
    Devine-Wright, P. (2009). Rethinking NIMBYism: The Role of Place Attachment and Place Identity in Explaining Place-protective Action, *441* (November 2008), 426–441.
    Matthews, P., Bramley, G., & Hastings, A. (2014). Homo Economicus in a Big Society: Understanding Middle-class Activism and NIMBYism towards New Housing Developments. *Housing, Theory and Society*, *32*(1), 54–72.
    McClymont, K., & O''Hare, P. (2008). "We're not NIMBYs!" Contrasting local protest groups with idealised conceptions of sustainable communities. *Local Environment*, *13*(4), 1–15.
    Beaudreau, J. & Sarkissian, W. (2013). *Seeking a Path beyond NIMBY: The Evolution of a Pejorative Term and Considerations for Better Understanding of Local Land-Use Conflicts*. PIA 'How To' Seminar: How to Undertake Effective Public Engagement.
    Wolsink, M. (2006). Invalid theory impedes our understanding: a critique on the persistence of the language of NIMBY. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *31*(1), 85–91.

sociologists and applied psychologists. From this, we developed a framework that we tested and refined through around 22 hours of interviews with people involved in the planning process in London. Our interviews (all of which have been anonymised) included: seven resident groups; three councillors; four local authority Planning Directors; two local authority officers; four property developers (two large and two small); two engagement consultants; and one large public-sector landowner. Interviewees were chosen to provide a balance between different areas, types of site, and stakeholder groups. We also visited sites right across London to get a feel for the particular areas and developments where there has been opposition to new development. Our final framework, which has also been tested with our expert advisory group, sets out seven reasons that people try to get new development STOPPED (Services, Trust, Outsiders, Place, Politics, Engagement, Disruption). These are discussed in turn in the chapters that follow.

SERVICES STOPPED

A city is a concentration of people. This proximity brings residents into competition for certain scarce resources. The supply of many goods and services will rise to meet the demand from population growth. But the supply of some things, like space on the tube network, is difficult to expand. And the supply of public services, delivered by a variety of often ill-coordinated public bodies, is often sluggish to respond to increased demand. When services are already stretched, existing residents often oppose new development on the grounds that services will not be able to cope. Given the scale of the housing crisis, many local authorities are pressing ahead with new residential development. But some residents suggest they are not doing enough to coordinate the delivery of services and infrastructure. One resident told us the local authority attitude is "Let's get all this housing investment into the borough, and then we'll sort the mess out later".

Roads are a particular pinch point. Since 2008/9 average speeds in the afternoon peak have declined by just under a tenth while delays have increased by just over a fifth.[26] Given the clear pressure on London's network, residents are often reluctant to see new housing development bringing more cars onto the roads. It is often the areas with most potential for new building that are most opposed to new development on grounds of traffic growth. Rotherhithe, for example, has exceptionally low densities for an inner London area, with lots of semi-detached homes and driveways. In this respect at least, it is a prime candidate for additional development. But precisely because the residents are used to travelling by car, they are highly vocal in their opposition to new development, on the grounds that it would increase congestion. Some local authorities try to manage traffic objections by limiting parking spaces in new developments, but this can in turn prompt concerns about people parking on the streets. As one large developer told us: "We get hit both ways: if you're not providing 1:1 parking, they say streets will be full, and for whatever parking you *are* providing, others say you're going to increase traffic."

GP services are another common flash point, with one in ten patients nationwide saying they were unable to get an appointment last time they tried.[27] When new housing developments are proposed, residents are often concerned that appointments will become even scarcer. As one Director of Planning put it: "People are asking 'How are we going to access our healthcare and our GP? It's bad now and it's going to get worse.'" Local authorities and developers have limited

26. Transport for London (2015). *Travel in London.*
27. Ipsos-MORI (2016). *GP Patient Survey, National summary report.*

scope for responding to such concerns because it is the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) that control the opening of new clinics. We found one example of a development on ex-industrial land in an outer London borough where local residents had resisted development on the grounds that the local GP surgery was already near capacity. The developer had provided a purpose-built room for a GP practice to operate from in the heart of the development, but the local CCG refused to allow a new surgery to open up there because they are trying to consolidate primary care into larger, centralised surgeries.

"Section 106" and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions, by which developers pay money to local authorities to cover the cost of new infrastructure, are supposed to circumvent this problem. But it was clear from our research that local residents often do not trust (see Chapter 2) local authorities to translate these payments into the investment necessary to sustain services at their current levels. "Everyone is slightly ill-at-ease with that regime of financial contribution to local authorities because the general perception is that it goes into a big black hole. It's never seen again. Unless the developer is building something specifically, it's a difficult issue to manage." (*Engagement consultant*)

Many of the concerns about local services have a legitimate basis. Unfortunately, for exactly this reason, arguments about service provision are often used strategically to try to get planning applications denied. Our research suggests that there are small (but influential) bands of campaigners in some boroughs who are opposed to the vast majority of new development in their area. One outer London Director of Planning described them as "a handful of articulate, well-resourced residents [who] will oppose anything from a large development to a loft conversion." He added that, precisely because service capacity concerns are often legitimate, "seasoned campaigners" focus on these sorts of objections to try and get planning applications rejected.

Ensuring that new development doesn't put additional strain on services is difficult. The speed at which London is growing means its infrastructure is always struggling to catch up with demand. And decades of recommendations that government become "more joined up" have arguably amounted to little. Nevertheless, there are many small things that would help.

Encouraging less space-intensive and costly modes of transport, like cycling, would be a start. Research by TfL shows that increased provision of secure on-street bike parking, which could be fully integrated into new developments, would enable more people make

the switch to two wheels.[28] Improved rail links are also crucial for absorbing increased transport demand. But waiting for new rail lines or extensions to existing lines to enable specific local developments is expensive and likely to lead to delays (see the Barking Riverside example in the next chapter). What is required is widespread investment in transport capacity that enables new development to occur right across London. Our research on upgrading London's suburban rail network shows how this would be a cost-effective way to increase capacity.[29] This will of course come at a price. But it will help deliver the service improvements necessary to support new development wherever land becomes available.

Rebuilding stations as part of this network upgrade also creates the potential to integrate additional public service capacity in and around transport hubs. When Victoria station was redeveloped a GP surgery was integrated into the new building, for example, and the redevelopment around King's Cross includes a new school. Coordination between the different government agencies involved will still be difficult – and won't stop tactical use of concerns about services by those opposed to development for other reasons – but at least by bringing services in parallel with new housing development this model can help allay fears about local service capacity.

28. Transport for London. (2011). *What are the barriers to cycling amongst ethnic minority groups and people from deprived backgrounds?*
29. Sims, S., Roberts, J., & Wilson, B. (2016). *Turning South London Orange*. Centre for London.

SERVICES

TRUST

OPPED

Planning aims to shape the future of an area. To do so it requires compromise and deal-making between developers, residents and the planning authority. Trust between these three parties is therefore crucial to enable them to negotiate in good faith and make credible commitments to each other.[30] However, our interviews indicate a general lack of trust in developers in London. "Developers have gone from something we want, to people who just make money", as one engagement consultant put it. This chapter looks at how distrust slows down new development, what causes it, and what can be done to rebuild trust.

Distrust slows down the planning process in a number of ways. When residents do not believe the supporting evidence put forward by planners or developers, for example, they often spend time (and money) commissioning their own research. If the findings conflict then this can complicate decision-making and cause delays. Lack of trust can also slow down negotiation. If residents do not think that developers or local authorities can be trusted to stick to their commitments, then it becomes harder to trade off present costs for future benefits, making negotiation more difficult.

Distrust is often the result of broken promises. In Barking and Dagenham, for example, there has been significant opposition to new development because of broken commitments to extend the DLR. In 2007 there was a public consultation on extending the light railway to connect the large (10,000 home) development planned at Barking Riverside. However in 2008, residents were told by the new Mayor of London that the extension had been cancelled due to lack of funding, but construction of the homes would go ahead regardless. An extension of the London Overground is now planned for the area, but local residents do not believe that the link will be delivered. Many of them are therefore opposed to the new development for fear that local transport links will not be able to cope with the additional demand.

Trust seems to have broken down entirely in many estate regeneration projects. Many London boroughs have begun to redevelop publicly owned housing estates to deliver more housing.[31] However, a series of high-profile newspaper articles and TV documentaries have exposed cases in which some residents have lost out.[32] Activists have helped to publicise these findings on particular estates. Although it is not clear whether the problem is widespread,

30. Walker, G., Devine-Wright, P., Hunter, S., High, H., & Evans, B. (2010). Trust and community: Exploring the meanings, contexts and dynamics of community renewable energy. *Energy Policy*, *38*(6), 2655–2663.
31. Centre for London report to be published later this year.
32. Chakrabortty, A. & Robinson-Tillett, S. (2014). The truth about gentrification: regeneration or con trick? *The Guardian*, Sunday 18 May 2014. BBC. (2016). The Estate We're In.

or limited to a number of extreme cases, this has caused concerns amongst residents of other estates earmarked for redevelopment. We visited one such estate in west London where all residents were (in the view of the local authority, at least) being offered comparable or better housing on the same estate. However, the well-publicised controversies on other estates meant that, despite the time and money spent by the local authority trying to reassure residents, many were still bitterly opposed to the scheme.

Unfortunately the planning system sometimes exacerbates these trust issues. Empirical research shows that whether people believe a decision has been made through a fair process has a powerful impact on whether they trust the decision-making body and how likely they are to object.[33] But the complex way in which decisions are reached by local authorities often leaves residents feeling confused, rather than reassured. For example, all London boroughs publish a local plan, which sets out policies for land use and development. When it comes to agreeing planning permission on a particular site, however, these principles are sometimes in conflict and need to be traded off against each other. For example, one town centre redevelopment required the refurbishment of a Grade II listed building on the site. However, achieving this while maintaining viability for the scheme required a reduction in the proportion of affordable housing below the local authority's stated target.[34] Local residents struggled to understand why the local authority had compromised their own planning policies and felt that they had sold out to private interests. As a developer explained, "If there's a policy, people don't understand why they don't stick to it… That's why communities are as angry with local authorities as they are with us."

How can trust be rebuilt? Laboratory experiments conducted by economists have shown how making and keeping promises can help build trust, even between strangers.[35] In the early nineties, for example, the US Department for Energy was facing ballooning costs for its radioactive disposal programme and was widely seen as unfit for purpose. The then Secretary of Energy,

33. Grimes, M. (2006). Organizing consent: The role of procedural fairness in political trust and compliance. *European Journal of Political Research*, *45*(2), 285–315.
Devine-Wright, P. (2012). Explaining "NIMBY" Objections to a Power Line: The Role of Personal, Place Attachment and Project-Related Factors. *Environment and Behavior*.
Frey, B. S., & Oberholzer-Gee, F. (1996). Fair siting procedures: an empirical analysis of their importance and characteristics. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *15*(3), 353–376.
34. Royal Borough of Kingston (2013). Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
35. Schniter, E., Sheremeta, R. M., & Sznycer, D. (2013). Building and rebuilding trust with promises and apologies. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *94*, 242–256.

James D. Watkins, commissioned research from an academic, Daniel Metlay, on how he could restore trust in his department. Metlay's recommendations focused on the need for the Department to consistently meet and exceed its public commitments in order to restore the belief that it could be taken on its word. This went on to form an important part of the Department's strategy for the next five years and is credited with helping to revive the Department's public image.[36]

During our research we found lots of examples of good practice which embody this principle. One Director of Planning told us how they used small commitments to residents to build trust in an estate regeneration project. Instead of winding down maintenance on the old housing stock that was set to be replaced, they chose to keep going with maintenance but rebrand it under the name of the regeneration project. "If you know you can get your heater fixed through the regen process, then people start to think the regen is a good thing… That buys you support for the broader scheme." They also prioritised knocking down a problematic pub which had become a centre for drug dealing to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme to residents. On a controversial town centre intensification scheme, developers and the local authority brought forward a Section 106 payment to repave the town centre so that the benefit could be seen early on. Each time a promise was made and kept, residents invested that bit more trust in the developers and the local authority.

36. La Porte, T. R., & Metlay, D. S. (1996). Hazards and institutional trustworthiness: Facing a deficit of trust. *Public Administration Review*, 341–347.

SERVICES
TRUST
OUTSIDERS
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There is a long history of research in social psychology showing that people identify with their own groups – be that a street, neighbourhood, or community group – and will act to protect the identity and fortunes of that group if they feel it is threatened by outsiders.[37] Sociologists analysing the same phenomenon refer to this as the fear of "otherness".[38] For our purposes, this boils down to the same thing. When people object to new residential development they are often objecting not to the new homes, but to the people they fear will live in them. This is rarely explicitly stated, but our interviews with planning officials suggest that it is often just below the surface. This chapter looks at the different forms that fear of outsiders can take and how these anxieties can be addressed.

The requirement that a certain percentage of homes built by private developers are "affordable" means that most new development comes with some level of social change. This sometimes creates concerns amongst existing residents that the new development will bring in the "wrong sort". A Local Authority Planning Officer with experience of working in several London boroughs summed up the concerns of some middle-class residents that affordable housing is "for people I don't particularly like who have loud parties and keep dogs."

But fear of outsiders is not always snobbery. Our research showed that low-income groups were often as worried about rich newcomers. Such concerns were often rooted in a fear that rich incomers would dilute or alter the existing sense of community. "These yuppies breed like rats" as one resident put it. These difficulties are compounded on major estate redevelopment projects, where rebuilding the existing council stock is premised on cross-subsidy from building additional market-rate units. A Regeneration Manager explained how some of the residents on his estate, "who might not have conventional lifestyles", feared that affluent new neighbours might be less tolerant and would force them to change through e.g. registering noise complaints with the local authority.

Race, religion and cultural practices also come into play. One experienced planning consultant told us how a resident had approached her for advice about stopping an extension to a home on her street because she feared that the Asian people moving in across the road would bring with them their (assumed large) extended family. A Planning Director in an outer east London borough told us how the large Pentecostal churches that had recently opened up in a traditionally

37. Riek, B. M., Mania, E. W., & Gaertner, S. L. (2006). Intergroup threat and outgroup attitudes: a meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 10*(4), 336–353.
38. Calcutt, L., Woodward, I., & Skrbis, Z. (2009). Conceptualizing otherness: An exploration of the cosmopolitan schema. *Journal of Sociology, 45*(2), 169–186.

white working-class area had become a conduit for objections to new housing development on the grounds that they were bringing in a "lot of black faces". These examples underline the point that any distinctive group identity can serve as a dividing line between existing residents and newcomers. People are generally wary about outsiders intruding on the place they call home.

What can be done to reduce the fear of outsiders? Psychologists have shown that something as simple as social contact can have a powerful effect on reducing fear of others.[39] This seems to work by replacing the (often negative) stereotypes that can so easily be attached to the abstract concept of "outsiders" with a more realistic, more humanised image of the incomers. This requires getting "outsiders" involved earlier in the process, which is difficult because a property is only sold after (sometimes long after) a planning application is submitted. But it may be possible to develop more innovative approaches to bring existing and new residents together. One possible approach is discussed in the final chapter.

39. Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*(5), 751–783.

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To describe a building as our home means more than describing that same building as our house. Generally we would only use the former term after we had filled a house with familiar furniture and possessions, lived there for a while and developed a certain attachment to it. At this point a house becomes *our home*, something familiar, meaningful and personal.

In the same way that a home is more than a house, a place is often more than just a location. The park where we walk our dog in the morning. The neighbour who takes in our post. The restaurant where we first got to know our partner. Though our neighbourhood is not as personal as our home, it can also come to form part of our identity. The phrase "putting down roots" expresses the idea that we come to develop deep connections with the place we live. Academics call it *place attachment*.[40]

Place attachment is in many ways a good thing. But it does have downsides. When the look and feel of the place we live comes to form an important part of our identity, plans to change the area can be experienced as threatening our understanding of ourselves. Place becomes personal. This helps to explain the strong feelings experienced by some people who oppose new residential development. Indeed, empirical research suggests that it can be amongst the most powerful motivations for opposition.[41] It also helps explain the lengths to which people are willing to go to protect what they identify with in their local area.[42]

Indeed, there are some types of opposition to development that are hard to explain without an understanding of place attachment. Our qualitative research took us to one leafy, well-networked conservation area south of the Thames, just the sort of place likely to have high place attachment.[43] This particular area benefits from a consistent architectural style and layout that provides a strong sense of place. One of the very few blots in this otherwise picture-postcard setting was a vacant car dealership with a large, empty forecourt. A development was recently proposed which would have replaced it with a set of new family homes that would have been in much closer keeping with the rest of the area. However, opposition from nearby residents meant the scheme had fallen through.

40. Lewicka, M. (2011). Place attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years? *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *31*(3), 207–230.
41. Vorkinn, M., & Riese, H. (2001). Environmental Concern in a Local Context: The Significance of Place Attachment. *Environment and Behavior*, *33*(2), 249–263.
42. Stedman, R. C. (2002). Toward a Social Psychology of Place: Predicting Behavior from Place-Based Cognitions, Attitude, and Identity. *Environment and Behavior*, *34*(5), 561–581.
43. Livingston, M., Bailey, N., & Kearns, A. (2008). *People's Attachment To Place.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Residents agreed that the incongruous, vacant site needed to be redeveloped. They also agreed that it should be used for housing. The way the houses looked didn't seem to be a problem either: they had been designed to look similar to the housing stock on the other side of the road. What was really at stake seemed to be residents' own very precise sense of the place in which they lived: "They were excavating big deep light wells… I didn't feel that that fit the character of the Village in the sense that you get Georgian half windows, lower ground floor, but not deep light wells like you see in Camden or Westminster. It is this sort of urbanisation that I did not feel was appropriate." The residents saw themselves as villagers, an identity that was threatened by the identities which they associated with the proposals. The threat to this identity was significant enough that a new residents' group was formed to oppose the development, which met regularly and submitted detailed objections to the council. The scheme was put on hold and the vacant garage is still there, waiting to be redeveloped.

Place attachment has significant implications for residential development in London. In areas where residents are attached to the idea and symbolism of the place, any attempts to densify or diversify the housing stock will potentially be met by resistance from residents, keen to protect their current understanding of the place they call home.

Fortunately place identity can also be harnessed to win local people around to support for local development. Research from Exeter University has shown that ensuring new development fits with the identity, and even enhances the distinctiveness of the local area, can actually help garner active support for a new project.[44] Many developers and architects are of course already adept at designing schemes that respect local understanding of place. One development we visited in an outer London borough, for example, was being built adjacent to the church in the town centre. The architect ensured that development didn't crowd around or diminish the presence of the church. The thoroughfares in the new development were arranged to focus on the church and the mid-rise tower on the edge of the development was designed to echo the form of the church spire, further emphasising its centrality.

Doing infill or small-scale development that is in keeping with the scale and style of existing buildings is fairly straightforward. What is harder is respecting people's sense of place while densifying an area, which very likely involves introducing new building types. As brownfield

44. Devine-Wright, P. (2011). Enhancing local distinctiveness fosters public acceptance of tidal energy: A UK case study. *Energy Policy*, *39*(1), 83–93.

land in London begins to dwindle, delivering on ambitious housing targets will increasingly require significant densification. The Old Vinyl Factory development in Hayes is a good example of where this has been achieved in an otherwise suburban, outer London setting by harnessing and working with the identity of the old EMI pressing plant site. The development includes space for modern manufacturing and live music venues, in order to reflect its historic use. The names of the residential buildings also align with the history of the site: the Gatefold; the Pressing Plant; the Cabinet Building.

Harnessing identity and place attachment to secure support for new development can be powerful, but by its very nature depends on local circumstances. And not all sites benefit from an identity as strong and attractive as the Old Vinyl Factory. But by listening carefully to residents to develop a nuanced, site-specific understanding of how people identify with their local area, planners and developers can get more homes built, with less opposition. Most good developers assess the character of a local area before beginning design work. Adding an assessment of residents' sense of home could be a valuable addition to such exercises.

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D

The last two chapters have focused on personal reasons for opposition to new development. In this chapter, we shift the focus back to group interactions. When a new development is planned, residents' response to the proposals are not usually pre-determined.[45] Rather, they have to make sense of the proposals and these interpretations are largely formed through discussion with others.[46] This may be conversations with neighbours, or community leaders – politics with a small p. Or it may be with elected representatives – Politics. The local media also has an influence. This chapter looks at both processes, to show how the way that these conversations develop influences the opposition to residential development.

Conversations matter because the way that facts are presented has a big impact on how people respond to those facts. Sociologists have long emphasised the importance of the way that ideas are "framed".[47] In order to assess the importance of framing, Edward Goetz from Minnesota University sent a survey to 1,400 people in Minneapolis asking their opinion on new subsidised housing being built in their local area.[48] Goetz randomly sent half of the sample a survey which referred to "affordable housing", the standard terminology, while the other half received identical information but using the phrase "life-style housing" instead. The results showed that while 24% of respondents expressed strong opposition to affordable housing being built in their area, this dropped to just 16% among those that received the "life-style housing" surveys. Similar research has shown that explaining the effects of high house prices on family life and children significantly reduces opposition.[49] The same development could therefore receive very different levels of opposition depending on how residents first become aware of it.

This creates political competition to try and establish the dominant frame through which development is viewed. John Sturzaker from Liverpool University cites the following example of a letter sent

45. Esaiasson, P. (2010). Why Citizens (Sometimes) Dispute Public Facility Sitings in Their Neighborhood – An Experimental Account of the NIMBY-syndrome. *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*.
46. For a discussion of how this interpretation occurs see: Devine-Wright, P. (2009). Rethinking NIMBYism: The role of place attachment and place identity in explaining place-protective action. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *19*(6), 426–441.
47. Nguyen, M. T., Basolo, V., & Tiwari, A. (2012). Opposition to Affordable Housing in the USA: Debate Framing and the Responses of Local Actors. *Housing, Theory and Society*, August 2015, 1–24.
48. Goetz, E. G. (2008). Words Matter: The Importance of Issue Framing and the Case of Affordable Housing. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *74*(2), 222–229.
49. Stewart, D. (2004) New Public Opinion Research Identifies Affordable Housing Issues that Resonate. *Housing Facts and Findings 6*(1). Fannie Mae Foundation.

to supporters by the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England in 2008:[50]

Wording from a letter sent by Campaign for Protection of Rural England[51]

WHAT DO *YOU* WANT?		
A HEDGEROW TEEMING WITH BUTTERFLIES?	OR	AN OUT-OF-TOWN SUPERMARKET TEEMING WITH CARS AND SHOPPERS?
A QUIET STAND OF OAKS CASTING SHADE ON THE PATH?	OR	ROARING JUGGERNAUTS BELCHING EXHAUST ON A MOTORWAY VERGE?
CHILDREN LYING IN THE GRASS GAZING AT THE STARLIGHT?	OR	ENOUGH ELECTRIC LIGHTS TO MAKE NIGHT LOOK LIKE DAY?
A BABBLING STREAM WINDING AMONG THE BLUEBELLS IN A WOOD?	OR	A STREAM OF CARS TO NEW EXECUTIVE HOMES HALF A MILE AWAY?

Sometimes the debate is framed to suit specific political causes. In one outer London area we visited, a local authority officer with intimate knowledge of the local area told us about how far-right groups had used the issue of new housebuilding to whip up anti-immigrant sentiment by highlighting the ethnic makeup of some of the new residents. This had resulted in opposition to new development but was motivated by a quite separate issue. "There are agendas going on here, rather than just straightforward development", as he put it.

Elected politicians play a valuable, indeed crucial, role in making planning decisions. But as well as providing an important democratic input, politics can at times hinder the proper functioning of the planning process. One Director of Planning described a scheme which had become a political football. "We've had politicians trying to score points against each other. If we did not have the local MP whipping up opposition to the planning application, it would have gone through without much opposition." We have also heard reports of planning applications being turned down for fear that they will change the demographics of an area and threaten an incumbent politician's chance of re-election. Polling shows that 20% of inner London councillors see advocating for more housebuilding as a vote-loser, rising to 40% in outer London.[52] To reiterate, politicians play a vital and difficult role in making planning decisions. But

50. Sturzaker, J. (2010). The exercise of power to limit the development of new housing in the English countryside. *Environment and Planning A*, *42*(4), 1001–1016.
51. Wording from a fundraising letter sent by Campaign for Protection of Rural England (2008), quoted in Sturzaker, J. (2010).
52. London First and Turner & Townsend. (2014). *Moving Out: How London's Housing Shortage is Threatening the Capital's Competitiveness.*

it is difficult to see these sorts of dynamics as a healthy feature of local democracy.

It is desirable that elected politicians come under pressure from their constituents. Opposition to poor-quality development represents a valuable form of civic activism. But what can be done to insulate the planning process from some of the more dysfunctional elements of politics (small and big p)? The influence of framing shows how important it is for developers to start communicating with residents early in order to frame new housing development (accurately) as a social necessity that benefits real people. Councillors also need to be given additional support. In a survey of councillors in the south east of England in 2004, respondents said that they lacked design expertise.[53] We highlight one way of boosting expertise and the quality of debate around new development in the final chapter.

53. URBED. (2004). *Attitudes to higher density development in the South East.*

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Research suggests that residents are more likely to support development if they can influence it.[54] For example, planning expert John Sturzaker found that affordable housing developments were more likely to be successful where residents had been involved in developing the plans.[55] When done right, engagement is important because it helps underpin so many of the other aspects of STOPPED. Being involved in a project allows residents to influence a development to ensure it fits with their understanding of the **place** they live. It also allows them to gather information on how the project will impact **services,** and to ensure that **disruption** is kept to a minimum. It also provides an important opportunity to engage with decision-makers, test out expert opinion and develop **trust**.[56]

Unfortunately, engagement is often poor. Developers, residents and local authorities agree that the statutory consultation that accompanies a planning application kicks in too late, only after the viability assessment between developers and planners has occurred. As a small developer put it: "By the time you get to consultation you already have a land deal, you've already worked out the economics on the site. Based on the economics the building has to be of a certain size and of certain typology." This often leaves little room for manoeuvre in response to residents' input. Budget cuts also mean that London borough planning departments have had to scale back on more proactive engagement work. Many are now limited to the provision of essential information and responding to residents' queries.

In this context, some developers have begun to take the lead on communicating with residents, and some of the examples of good practice are quite remarkable. For example, one developer building a 500-unit scheme in a west London town centre sent a letter to all residents in the borough (over one 100,000 addresses) and held weekly meetings with residents for two years to inform and respond to residents. Perhaps the most innovative example of community engagement we came across is the community choir on the Battersea Power Station development, made up of staff and young people from the local area. But not all developers put in the necessary work. In one area we visited, residents were outraged that the developer on a 20-unit scheme only held a single public meeting while many of them were away on their summer

54. Loring, J. M. (2007). Wind energy planning in England, Wales and Denmark: Factors influencing project success. *Energy Policy*, *35*(4), 2648–2660.
55. Sturzaker, J. (2011). Can community empowerment reduce opposition to housing? Evidence from rural England. *Planning Practice and Research*, *26*(5), 555–570.
56. On the value of being able to engage directly with experts, see: Petts, J. (1997). The public-expert interface in local waste management decisions: expertise, credibility and process. *Public Understanding of Science*, *6*(4), 359–381.

holiday. There was a real anger amongst residents and a feeling that they had had the wool pulled over their eyes.

While it is important to have a sufficient level of engagement, the methods are perhaps more important than the quantity. Sherry Arnstein famously argued that much of what passes for engagement is no more than window dressing and the "real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning… but to enable power holders to 'educate' or 'cure' the participants".[57] Arnstein is particularly withering about consultation in which information is collected without any intention of being used, with residents being treated as "statistical abstractions". In our research in London we found a few examples of this sort of sham consultation. A councillor describes a carefully constructed survey conducted by a large developer for a tall building application in inner London: "Do you agree that this current site is a blight in the landscape? Yes. Do you think that we need more housing in London? Yes. They do this very leading questionnaire, and then that translates into: 90% of people were in support of our development." However, it was clear to the councillors that there was nowhere near this much support for the specific proposal. The process left residents feeling angry and manipulated. Opposition to the scheme grew as a result.

Engagement is only effective if it goes beyond collecting information to genuinely listen to residents. An experienced planning consultant we interviewed stressed the need to both listen to residents and *be seen to be* listening. On a potentially controversial project she was working on, they ensured that the first planning meeting didn't involve any drawings, other than a site plan, to show that the decision hadn't been pre-judged. She also ensured that the architects and developers attended to demonstrate that residents' views were going directly to the decision-makers. "That first meeting was very much about asking residents: how do you see this site being developed?" The chairman of a residents' group involved in a similar development elsewhere echoed the sentiment: "I spent a whole summer evening walking around the conservation area with the developer and looking at what they would do. And they were just making notes, not pre-empting anything."

Despite the lead that some developers and engagement consultants have been taking, engagement remains patchy, particularly on smaller sites where there is a temptation for developers to try and get in and out quickly without getting entangled. However, the strength of feeling (and opposition) we found amongst residents who feel they have been ignored suggests that this is unlikely to be a wise approach. Despite

57. Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *35*(4), 216–224.

serious capacity shortages, local authorities therefore still have an important role to play in orchestrating and coordinating the work undertaken by developers. Their power as the ultimate decision-makers on most planning decisions gives them the leverage to clearly set out, and enforce, high standards of engagement from developers. Neighbourhood planning can also help by allowing engagement to occur before all the decisions on a site have been made (we return to this point in the Conclusion).

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DISRUPTION

Some of the elements of STOPPED deal with deep-seated psychological reactions and concerns about permanent, irreversible change. But opposition to development is also driven by more mundane, short-term considerations, like the disruption that will be caused during the construction process. Such concerns often have a legitimate basis. Despite recent improvements in the practices of the construction industry, we have heard stories about dust clouds shutting down businesses and requiring people to get their homes professionally cleaned. Noisy truck movements early in the morning or persistent pile-driving are also common complaints. In residential areas, concerns often centre round the safety of children walking to school while lorries drop off materials.

Many developments are completed within a year or two. But some large developments take much longer and in certain areas construction work has become a near-permanent feature of life, with a string of developments occurring one after another. A councillor we spoke to in an inner London borough, where new development has been particularly intense, sympathised with her residents: "People are sick and tired of living on the construction site, because it never ends. There is always something going on: trucks going up and down; the roads are muddy; bits of pavement are cordoned off with the latest development hoardings; the noise. It's just constant here."

Indeed, one local authority Director of Planning told us that fear of disruption was often the real reason for a lot of opposition to new development. "A lot of ordinary people don't feel comfortable saying it's because your builders will be swearing and listening to Kiss FM all day, so they dress it up as something else." Residents therefore present other objections, such as height or character, in order to try and block development. But in reality "they don't actually object to the new houses… It's the lorries, the diggers and all that sort of stuff." This underlines the importance of listening carefully to residents (see Chapter 6) in order to elicit the underlying reasons for opposition, rather than taking the reasons given in formal meetings, or on formal documents, at face value. With the right precautions, concerns about disruption can often be surfaced and dealt with effectively.

Addressing residents' concerns requires two things, both of which are already done by the best developers. The first is involving residents in the planning of the construction work. In one development in outer west London the developer invited residents to a meeting early on: "They have been pro-active and given us information," said the local residents group, "told us what they need to do in terms of getting the cranes delivered, and so on". The residents were then able to influence the decision-making process. "We made comments on delivery trucks,

which roads they shouldn't be going down and what times they shouldn't be delivering." By working together, and seeing the world from each other's point of view, they created a productive working relationship and managed to nip problems in the bud.

Residents also want to be reassured that, once the project starts, there is someone they can contact with their concerns. Most developers and all local authorities have a number that can be called to make a complaint. But residents rarely have any confidence that getting in contact with a distant call centre will have much of an effect. They want to know that they can easily contact somebody they know and trust, who is working on-site at the time. As one of the west London residents put it: "We want to make absolutely certain that there is a site manager that we can contact, so that if our house starts shaking, we can phone him up straight away and get it stopped."

CONCLUSION

We set out on this research project with the aim of painting a more nuanced picture of why people oppose residential development. One strength of our framework is that it shows the broad range of motivations for opposition. Fortunately, it is unlikely that all seven reasons will apply on any one site. Each development will instead have a blend of issues specific to its location, history and demographics.

Solutions therefore also need to be tailored to different sites. A second strength of our framework is that it can also help think through which policy responses are appropriate for which sites. The table below shows our assessment of how four commonly proposed solutions to opposition map onto the framework. The coloured circles represent our judgement of how well each solution deals with each of the STOPPED concerns: the more complete the circle, the stronger the solution. This is based on our judgement but has also been tested with our expert advisory group.

Consultation, when done properly, can help bolster engagement and build trust by creating a dialogue between residents, planners and developers. This dialogue can also help developers reduce disruption for residents. Consultation can help with concerns related to place by helping local authorities and developers get a clearer picture of how residents understand their local area and enable them to design around this. Neighbourhood planning goes a step further in allowing local communities to set the framework for the evolution of their neighbourhood, as part of the formal process of developing local plans. This addresses the same set of concerns as consultation but, by formally redistributing power, arguably does so in a more powerful way. Again, we are assuming here that this is neighbourhood planning done properly.

A number of proposed solutions are based on incentivising new development with payments to the local authority. The New Homes Bonus, for example, involves payments to local authorities for each new home built, and local authorities also levy Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 payments on developers to provide new infrastructure and mitigate the impact of development. Our framework makes it clear that this is only a partial solution. At best, incentive payments deal with concerns relating to local services. Local authorities could, for example, use it to improve the road network to try and manage any congestion from new development. But incentives are unlikely to deal with concerns relating to health services, which are centrally funded and managed. And incentives are silent on the other six reasons for opposition. As one south London Director of Planning explained: “Even if you introduce sweeteners to the development,

car parking or community facilities, even when the area improves in line with what they want, they're still going to get strangers in town, messing up their world."

Demos has proposed that community-led housing schemes can help reduce opposition to residential development.[58] Community Land Trusts, for example, are member-led, non-profit organisations which build homes for rent or purchase by local residents and use their surpluses from development and asset management to benefit the local community. Homes are rented or sold at a discount that is transferred to the next buyer or tenant, so that they remain affordable.[59] The authors of the Demos report argue that this can help deal with issues of trust and place attachment because the housing is developed directly by local people. Our framework suggests that it may also help short circuit fear of outsiders, by allocating housing to local people. It could also help with politics both by reframing the issue of new housing development as something positive, and because the beneficiaries of the scheme will be constituents of local politicians, providing more balanced incentives for councillors who might otherwise be tempted to oppose the scheme for electoral reasons. However as the authors admit, Community Land Trusts are likely to remain a very small contributor of new homes in London.[60]

58. Cadywould, C., & O'Leary, D. (2015). *Community Builders*. Demos.
59. National Community Land Trust Network. *Jargon Buster*.
60. Not least because they require that the land be donated to them free of charge in order to be viable.

How four commonly-proposed solutions match up to the STOPPED framework

	CONSULTATION	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING	INCENTIVES	COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS
SERVICES			◑	
TRUST	◔	◑		◑
OUTSIDERS				●
PLACE	◔	◑		◔
POLITICS				◔
ENGAGEMENT	◔	◑		
DISRUPTION	◔	◑		

It is clear from the table that none of these solutions are capable of dealing with all objections. But by mixing and matching the four solutions to address the challenges on a specific site, it should be possible to simultaneously improve the quality and increase the quantity of new residential development. In addition to deploying these four solutions as and when appropriate to specific projects, our research has suggested a number of other ways to reduce opposition. Most of these relate to the everyday practice of planning and the way that interactions between developers, residents and local authorities happen. We also have two recommendations which can help address either opposition rooted in fear of outsiders or political considerations, neither of which are dealt with particularly well by existing solutions (see table). They can be grouped under two broad principles.

Be more personal

Much of the good practice that has been highlighted in this report shares the feature of being *more personal*. By treating people like people, rather than Arnstein's "statistical abstractions", opposition to residential development could be significantly reduced.[61] In the chapter

61. Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *35*(4), 216–224.

on **place** we saw how people develop an intimate connection with the area in which they live. Ensuring that development fits with people's understandings of place therefore requires developers to understand the nuanced ways in which people understand and identify with their area. This requires a more personal approach, taking the time to listen to, discuss and elicit residents' understandings. Our chapter on **engagement** showed how genuinely listening to people helps reduce opposition. Having a known, trusted individual that can be contacted to make enquiries or complaints, rather than a faceless call centre, helps instil confidence that any **disruption** will be managed properly.

Similarly, in the chapter on **outsiders** we saw how residents often fear unknown newcomers to their area. Psychologists have shown that something as simple as social contact can have a powerful effect on reducing fear of others.[62] This seems to work by replacing the (often negative) stereotypes that can so easily be attached to the abstract concept of "outsiders" with a more realistic, more humanised image of the incomers. This requires getting the outsiders involved earlier in the development process. **We recommend that people interested in buying a new property could be encouraged to register their interest early, then if they attend the relevant planning meetings and community engagement meetings to support the development, they would be given first refusal on any residential development that does occur.** Given competition for property in London, this should prove an attractive proposition for many first-time buyers. The process would also allow existing residents to meet the outsiders, helping reduce anxieties, and highlight the fact that when development gets stopped real people lose out.

Be more proactive

We also need to be more proactive. In the chapter on **trust** we saw how savvy local authorities and developers make small, short-term promises, and then keep them, in order to build the confidence and support necessary for doing the bigger, more difficult things. Good local authorities and developers generate excuses to demonstrate that they are as good as their word, because they recognise the value of *building it before you need it.* As much as possible, **services** also need to be expanded before the extra demand for them is generated. Increasing the frequency of existing Overground rail services and ensuring that cycling is a viable option in more areas of London will ensure that more areas in London are development-ready. Relying on project-specific

62. Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(5), 751–783.

infrastructure investments to "unlock" development in certain areas will always be a more risky and expensive approach. Local authorities also need to get ahead of the game, leveraging their power as the ultimate decision-makers, to set and enforce clear expectations for the quality of **engagement** from developers.

Local **politicians** also need to be more proactive**.** If we are to retain the Metropolitan Greenbelt then densifying London will be essential to provide the number of new homes the city requires.[63] However, our research shows that local politicians often come under particularly intense pressure to oppose development which is higher or denser than the surrounding housing stock. It would be glib to simply exhort councillors to show more leadership on this issue. Our interviews suggested many councillors lacked the confidence to defend high-quality densification, and this is supported by a survey of councillors in the south east of England in which they reported a lack of design expertise.[64] **Given the importance of this issue for delivering on London's housing needs we recommend a programme of town hall seminars bringing together architects, urban designers, councillors and council officers to explore how the quality of high-density developments can be improved.** These events, building on the work already undertaken by organisations like Urban Design London, could help equip councillors and officers with the expertise and confidence to guide developers toward higher-quality development[65] and defend it against opposition, where appropriate. Inviting residents' groups to these seminars could also give councillors and residents a common language, helping make debates about specific developments more constructive.

Pressure for new development in London is intense, as the city seeks to accommodate a rapidly growing population. Town planning always involves trade-offs and balancing the interests of different groups, and some communities' opposition to new housing is deep-seated and hard to shift. But the analysis in this report shows how councils can better understand the motivations of local residents opposing new development, and can work with them and with developers to accommodate the growth London needs.

63. Quod, Shelter. (2016). *When brownfield isn't enough.*
64. URBED. (2004). *Attitudes to higher density development in the South East.*
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When polled, the majority of Londoners claim that they support housebuilding in their local area. In reality, however, opposition is widespread. Indeed, the London School of Economics has identified opposition to new homes as one of the main barriers to increasing housing supply in the capital.

Those who oppose new development in their area are often dismissed as NIMBYs, bent on preventing change and protecting house prices. In this report, we get beyond the stereotype to paint a more nuanced picture of why people try to get new development STOPPED. Our analysis also reveals what can be done to unblock London's housing pipeline.

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