

London Riverside Housing Development

Final Report

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the report

The London District of the Methodist Church Social Responsibility Commission aims to develop a strategy for the systematic inclusion of faith communities in the planning process of new housing developments.

The Commission is concerned to explore the factors involved in building communities in new housing developments. The report of the Riverside Housing Developments would provide lessons and guidelines to others undertaking similar ventures. It should outline how a planning/steering group (s) was assembled and made up of people who could usefully form such a group. Exploration of the interaction with developers and planning authorities would be most helpful together with anything which could be said about the relations with and feedback to the relevant stakeholders, e.g. circuits, in the area of the new development.

The views of key individuals in the process would be most helpful.

The commission also wishes to hear about the theological and contextual values which may have underpinned the process in Riverside, which could be suggested in hindsight as being important to consider.

Finally the report should explore the role of the development officer within the process and where the financial and management responsibility should be located.

1.2. Background to the research

The London Riverside Housing Development is frequently described as Barking Riverside. The Barking Riverside development is part of the larger London Thames Gateway development, which aims to regenerate the riverside area of East London through providing new homes, jobs, and services. Barking Riverside is a 350 acres of brownfield land and therefore needs site clearance and the removal of overhead power lines before it can go ahead. Construction was due to begin in 2008 (now November 2009), and the development is due to be completed around 2025. It will construct 10,000 new homes in the area, which will house around 25,000 people. New transport links will also be provided, including the East London Transit and the extension to the Docklands Light Railway at Barking Riverside DLR station. The development will also provide new public facilities, creating "a variety of living, working, leisure and cultural amenities". Two new primary schools and one secondary school will also be built. Residents of Barking and Dagenham will also gain access to use of 2 kilometres Thames river front for the first time.

Barking Riverside are also developing health and library facilities, open space and sports pitches and a community building for the faith communities.

In 2004 the Methodist London NE District appointed a Development Officer for Church and Community to lead an appropriate response to the new communities being planned all over the District. Following re-organisation in 2007 the officer was transferred to the new Beds Essex and Herts District and then the East Anglia District joined the project. As the other historic denominations were also interested in the new towns and villages, it

seemed sensible to turn the appointment into an ecumenical one, when the United Reformed Church, Eastern Synod and Thames North Synod, then the Diocese of St Albans and the Eastern Baptist Association asked to join. Each of these partner churches makes a substantial financial contribution to the appointment and participates in a quarterly Strategic Development Management Meeting held at the Methodist Beds Essex and Herts District office. Now the Regional Development Officer reports to all the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses in the East of England and is closely involved with the other non Christian faith communities through the East of England Faiths' Council. The Officer, Tony Barker is a Baptist Minister and an applied theologian whose original profession was as a Chartered Electrical Engineer. His recent experience was in setting up eleven community gospel projects with an emphasis on homelessness and housing which necessitated much involvement in obtaining planning permissions, listed building consent and managing substantial finances.

1.3. Methodology and sources of information

On 4th April 2005 the Barking, Dagenham and Ilford 1/17 and Romford 1/22 Circuits set up the London Riverside Church Project recognising that the Barking Riverside development covered both areas. An imaginative group of church members was chosen to lead a response to the plans and opportunities. Careful records and minutes were kept of the thinking and decision making. These have been used in the preparation of this report. In addition there is a huge amount of literature produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government, the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the Greater London Authority, the London Development Agency, East London Business Alliance, London Organising Committee of the 2012 Olympic Games, etc. All the information is on the websites.

Some in depth interviews have been conducted face to face and by telephone to establish the contemporary situation. The findings of the Three Dragons Research on behalf of Cambridgeshire Horizons has been included in which the Regional Development Officer participated.

2. Background and History

2.1. Barking Regeneration Group

In March 2005 the Ecumenical Barking Regeneration Group was convened by the Bishop of Barking to consider the many issues facing the area. One immediate matter was the development of Barking Riverside. Clive Wilding, the Project Director, Barking Riverside Ltd was invited to give a presentation on 22nd September 2005. Clive described the proposed development of Barking Riverside as far more than a large new housing development – it is about 'place-making' on a huge scale. The public realm and generous community facilities are an integral part of the vision – with new schools, shops and healthcare amenities tailored to meet the needs of the whole community. There are high aspirations for the area. The ambition is to create a new community where people want to settle and stay because they feel proud of where they live. The site has exceptional potential and its qualities offer an excellent starting point for the creation of a new, inspiring urban district.

A competition was held to select the two independent Design Teams to be appointed to work with Barking Riverside Ltd on the first two (Eastern and Western) of four stages of

sub-framework plans, set within the context of the approved masterplan and the Urban Design Guidelines, which will total the first 4,000 homes to be built on the site.

Barking Riverside Ltd is a joint venture company of the national regeneration agency (now the Homes and Communities Agency) and Bellway Homes plc.

The presentation was followed by a substantial discussion in which the main points dealt with 1. The nature of sustainable development, 2. The availability of aspirational housing, 3. Service charges to be set at a proposed figure of £1.50 /sq ft 4. Climate issues in terms of the use of public open space, 5. Transience of population and the implications for the development, 6. The structural response of the churches to the development and to the need for regeneration, including the placement of clergy, training for leadership and facilities for the future church.

In June 2009 the £3.5bn Bellway joint venture was given planning permission subject to Section 106 Agreement. The first phase of the scheme will see 3,300 homes and two schools built in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency

Barking Riverside received approval from London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC) and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

The applications, submitted to LTGDC in December 2008, marks the delivery stage for the £3.5bn 10,800 home project, which will see a range of homes built over the next 25 years, and is designed to create a community for 26,000 people.

The approval will now pave the way for the construction of the first homes at Barking Riverside, to begin in April 2010, with the first homes ready for occupation as soon as autumn 2010.

The site will also see the development of the "Western Quarter", which includes plans for a day nursery and play space, as well as a new "District Centre", comprising a new primary and secondary school, polyclinic, and other retail and leisure facilities.

Over 45% of the 2,500 homes proposed in the second stage will be three-bedroom homes, and around 40% of the total area will be open space.

Peter Andrews, chief executive of LTGDC, said: "Barking Riverside is one of very few schemes in east London that delivers family housing rather than flats. It's what the public want and in the current economic environment it's the right thing to be building.

Mick McCarthy, cabinet member for regeneration at Barking and Dagenham council, said: "This innovative development will transform this former brown field site into a vibrant, sustainable community, with mixed tenure housing, increased employment opportunities and a variety of transport to access the area."

2.2. East London Methodist Inspiration

The London NE District recognised there was a need to develop a strategic plan in order to respond to the huge housing developments in its area. So a Development Officer was appointed in September 2004, with Connexional support, whose responsibility was to explore the overall state of planning and decision for new communities. With a District Management Group three areas were identified for priority attention. One was London Barking Riverside.

The London Riverside Church Project began as an imaginative conversation between the Barking, Dagenham and Ilford 1/17 and Romford 1/22 Circuits recognising that the housing site straddled the south of two circuits, and identified the possibility of each circuit contributing a manse in the middle of the new housing area and a team ministry of three (a Presbyterian, a Deacon and a Lay Worker) to engage in mission and ministry in the area, to establish cell churches and support community development initiatives. Whilst the ecumenical dimension was clearly recognised it was hoped to locate Methodist manses in the Mission Enterprise Zone with suitable church staff working in partnership with sister churches.

The first joint circuit project meeting (JCPM) was held on 4th April 2005 with the Superintendent Ministers and three representatives from each circuit chaired by the District Development Officer. At that stage in the national economic cycle it was envisaged that one manse would be established by September 2006 with a resident Presbyterian and another by September 2007 with a Deacon. A timetable and financial business plan were in process of agreement where the budget for manses was around £700,000 and revenue funding would be £50,000 in the first year and £75,000 in each of the subsequent four years of a five year programme. An application for funding for stipends was made to the Methodist Connexion. The JCPM quickly realised that to make progress it would be desirable to appoint a part-time officer who would make contact with all the partners and interested parties in the area to ensure good communication and liaison as well as effective community work, building strong networks with statutory and voluntary bodies. The task would include researching the potential for the project with other groups including the faith communities working in the area, exercising a geographically broad based ministry of developing and sustaining innovative mission ventures of church and community programmes. The District Resourcing Mission Committee agreed to fund a part time lay worker for three years with a grant of £11,500 per annum (salary 8,688, pension 500, employers NI 1,000, expenses 1,200) and insisted that the post be advertised. The appointment of Brian Endacott as the Methodist Riverside Development Officer (MRDO) began on 2nd January 2006.

The JCPM quickly established itself as a visionary think tank though with a very practical approach. Wide ranging consideration was given to the new Barking Riverside requirements including schools, health clinic, day centres, library, the needs of children and teenagers, and faith buildings. A Christian ecumenical building alongside a synagogue, mosque and temple was envisaged, built around a faiths square. A centre piece public art fountain of a world globe held by two hands was sketched and a small model made. This became an expression of practical theology, matching belief with a tangible outcome. These ideas were relevant and timely as the developer Barking Riverside Ltd (a company set up by English Partnerships and Bellway Homes) published the Urban Design Guidelines where 60% of the site was to be residential development including street networks and neighbourhood squares and 40% would be parks, open spaces and nature conservation areas. A District Centre was envisaged well connected to public transport and relating to the Riverside Park and the Riverfront and where the Faith Square could be located. Other ideas were considered including obtaining the famous pub The Ship and Shovel as a community centre for the interim and possibly as a permanent facility. Careful thought was given to the question of selling and moving an existing Circuit manse (possibly raising £300,000) to the first phase of the new housing area, purchasing a new build 4/5 bedroomed house subsidised by the developer.

The MRDO was encouraged to meet the Ward Councillors, the developer Bellway Homes and the officers of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham concerning the details of the Section 106 Planning Agreement and the Community Arts Budget. He was urged to keep the practical and spiritual needs of the community at the forefront and to represent the Methodist Church as a 'main player' in all aspects of the development.

As the project continued Brian made very good contacts with the local forums of Aveley Village, Kenningtons, South Ockendon and Purfleet as well as the overall Thames Gateway London Partnership which was expecting major funding allocations in the spring of 2007. He built up a good relationship with the Project Director of Barking Riverside Ltd, Clive Wilding.

The Joint Circuit Project Meeting met approximately bi-monthly to hear a detailed report of the activities and contacts made by the Methodist Riverside Development Officer, Brian Endacott, to evaluate the outcomes and to set aims and directions for the next two months. Between meetings, the chair Tony Barker met regularly with Brian to guide,

encourage and make suggestions about further work required. These conversations were enhanced with telephone and email communications and visits to the regular conferences held by the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. In addition the Superintendent Ministers of the Barking, Dagenham and Ilford 1/17 and Romford 1/22 Circuits exercised a pastoral and supervisory role.

2.3. Interfaith contacts and possibilities

Early contacts were established with the local Anglican Church (Thames View Parish Church and the Revd David Pearson) and the Salvation Army (Workplace and Community Chaplain Major Judy Schultz) who were co-operating with shared ministry and a common vision to establish Christian presence in the new Barking Creek housing development. Brian Endacott attended the Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum Workshop on 27th March 2006 to consider *Ilford Town Centre Development and Urban Spirituality* which was an excellent way to make contact with some of the other faith communities in the area, e.g. Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Baha'i. The Local Authority pledged to work with all faith communities to build a sense of harmony in the London Riverside area and would be drawing up a strategic plan. The Chair of the Faith Forum subsequently invited the MRDO to the Faiths' Executive to give a presentation of the vision of a faiths square from the JCPM. The idea was officially adopted by the Faith Forum on 14th September 2006 following a discussion with two 'homeless' evangelical churches, and included in its position paper *Sustainable Communities: Regeneration and Urban Spirituality*.

3. Theological and Contextual Perspectives

3.1. Divine insights concerning housing and development

Good housing for all people is important to God. This is frequently expressed in the Biblical record and in the convictions and practice of the church over many centuries. House and home is a popular theme running through Scripture with more than 1643 references. Just as unemployment is anathema to the Lord God, so is homelessness. Even when the people of God followed a wandering and nomadic lifestyle, the early regulations for administering a successful and healthy mobile home were detailed and precise. As the community became more settled the Divine imperative became more focussed and all embracing. Treating all members of the nation irrespective of age, wealth and position with equity and justice in the matter of housing provision, is an injunction from heaven and to be taken seriously. Each family is required to provide housing for its own members and to provide hospitality for the foreigner and stranger alike with generosity and care. Failing to do this incurs the wrath of God toward individuals, tribes and nations.

The Incarnation of the Christ highlights the need for housing when no room can be found in the inn for the King of Kings. There is no suggestion that the Christ child should be born in the palace of King Herod or the administrative headquarters of the Roman Governor but in a simple shed or stable, thereby identifying with the homeless poor and expressing divine solidarity with a central issue in human society. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ continues to build on this fundamental need in that the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head but depends on a welcome from the humble and even a borrowed tomb.

As the New Testament applies the message of Atonement to a new spiritual community it often uses the symbolism of the church as the household of God.

3.2. Thames Gateway to the world

The Thames Gateway is an area of opportunity 40 miles long and up to 20 miles wide stretching from East London extending along the R Thames in Kent and Essex. It is 800,000 hectares, much of it is brownfield land, and has 1.6 million residents and 700,000 households. The vision is that by 2016 there will be 120,000 new homes (at least 35% will be affordable housing for rent or purchase) and 180,000 new jobs in a quality environment. Within this area London Riverside will be a new mixed urban centre on the north bank of the river. It will make optimum use of land to accommodate leading-edge businesses and sustainable housing, new leisure and community facilities designed around new and existing public transport and integrated with existing communities. By 2016, London Riverside will be able to accommodate 20,000 new homes and jobs for an extra 25,000 people.

Now the vision is being extended to 2050 as it is increasingly recognised that the Thames Gateway plays a critical role in supporting wealth creation in a very competitive world. Major new environmental industries will be established, including carbon recycling, capture and storage. The Gateway will have new business and financial services employment second only to Central London within Europe. There will be a major increase in transport employment, including ports and logistics. The knowledge economy and centres of advanced manufacturing will be a strong feature of the area. In terms of low carbon communities, the Gateway will be energy self sufficient with an 80% carbon reduction target through wind, solar, tidal and biomass sources. Water neutrality and all waste re-processed within the gateway

3.3. Christian values of development

Whilst it may appear publicly that the church is only interested in establishing itself in new religious buildings at the expense of the developer, Local Authority or wealthy donor, the opposite is frequently the fact. Indeed most Churches take the view that they have enough buildings to maintain already and unless there is a good reason for a new one would prefer not to have many more. However the churches are very interested in the provision of new homes for the existing population and especially the young, as well as for new workers from other parts of the European Community and wider world. Stressing the importance of building homes to the highest standard with the best facilities according to the Government's aim of *decent homes for decent people* there is also a recognition that new and modern building methods must be employed to enable the greatest number of houses to be built for the resources available. Whilst there may be a market for small one bedroom starter homes (though most towns now have a glut of apartments unsold), the greatest need is for family homes that will enhance family life with opportunities for communal meals and conversation as well as offering realistic privacy. Gardens are also important for fresh air as well as growing flowers and food, and to avoid the overcrowded densification of some 20th Century developments. In this context Christians believe that safe open spaces are vital for recreation, exercise and sport as well as preserving and enhancing important aspects of the environment. Good stewardship of the natural resources is of great concern to the churches and especially water. Careful use of supplied water and reuse of grey water must be a feature of all new developments. This has implications for drainage and the ongoing belief of the churches from the mid 19th Century, that good sewers reduce disease.

Christians believe that every community needs schools and educational facilities for all ages, primary healthcare, shops and services to provide a range of day to day help, cultural centres for the arts as well as community buildings where many and varied interest groups are able to meet together. These centres can also be used for the important rites of passage and celebration which change as a community matures. A burial ground becomes ever more important.

3.4. Church involvement in new communities

Arising from the theological understanding and beliefs about development, the churches wish to be involved in new communities as early as possible. From the first public advertisement of a new town, village or housing area local churches and congregations usually with the support of regional church leaders and administrations have attempted to be involved in the thinking and planning which may take many years. Ecumenical groups of churches have appointed a representative to the local council's Local Development Framework to shape the envisaged new build and the content of the Section 106 Planning Agreement. Increasingly the church wishes to be present as soon as homes begin to be built by renting or buying one of the first completions and appointing an individual church worker or family as a point of reference and community champion. Frequently if the house is suitable embryonic community and faith activities are started there in a spirit of welcome and friendship. This can lead to the provision of temporary buildings for a whole range of activities, long before schools and community centres are erected by the developer. All this is about creating human networks of interest and concern in what can be a lonely and dispiriting situation.

3.5. Building community for centuries

Whilst there are many agencies now involved in community development, the church can justly make the claim that it has been involved in building communities for more than six centuries. It has shown that it has tenacity and is generally very committed to old and new communities. Whilst in the past some aspects of the presence of the church has been due to political and financial considerations, the overwhelming interest has been religious and human community. So with a sense of historical perspective and theological insight, the church wishes to participate in the creation of the new communities by using its experience, the placement of individuals or groups of its people, the gift of its limited resources, and the contribution of its Christian faith strengths of prayer and worship.

4. Faith Facilities in New Developments

4.1. Facilities for Faith Communities in New Developments in the Cambridge Sub-Region

Cambridgeshire Horizons, in partnership with local authorities, commissioned a study to identify best practice in making provision for facilities for faith communities in the major new developments, as part of the wider community facility provision in the Cambridge Sub-region. The impetus for the study was the recognised role that faith groups can play in building cohesive new communities and the difficulties they face in obtaining premises (e.g. Cambourne Church).

The study considers:

- Roles of faith communities in community building and the government policy context

- Best practice in faith facilities provision in major new developments
- Current need and projected demand for faith facilities in Cambridge sub-region
- Issues around co-location and sharing of facilities

4.2. Key Findings and recommendations

- Developers should make available 0.5 hectares of free land per 3,000 homes (or its equivalent in buildings and/or financial contribution) for some form of faith facility. Timing of land would be triggered by completion of a certain number of dwellings (e.g. 1,500 dwellings out of a possible 2-3,000 for a 0.5-hectare site/allocation). This standard should be adopted as planning policy.
- In order to secure free land or buildings, faith groups would need to demonstrate that they could fulfil the following criteria:
 1. The building would provide, and staff would be available to support, the provision of a range of community activities that are open to all (including making premises available to other community and faith groups).
 2. They had the resources and practical skills to provide the new facility within a reasonable time
 3. The organisation that would own and manage the building had charitable status.
- Where more than one faith group wishes to access free/discounted land (or buildings) for faith and community use, local authorities should put in place an adequate process of selection.
- Co-location and sharing of facilities by a variety of faith groups is not an attractive option for most faith groups, although an ecumenical approach to faith facility provision may work.
- Mechanisms need to be developed to give access to large sites to faith groups with capital that require larger premises. Suggested options are to zone further sites in residential areas for faith groups and other community uses (D1 in Use Classes Order) or to allow large faith groups to bid for sites in employment areas.

4.3. Faith facilities - Next Steps

- Cambridgeshire Horizons should keep this issue under review and work with local authorities to ensure that it is fully taken into account in master planning and development of S106 Agreements.
- The East of England Faiths Council should set up a multi-faith committee at regional or local level to continue dialogue with the local authorities and developers to help facilitate agreement, guide negotiation and comment on emerging priorities and mechanisms for the provision of facilities for faith groups.
- Local authorities should carry out a detailed survey of local faith groups, attendance levels and premises requirements to form part of the evidence base to justify the 0.5 hectare standard.
- Cambridge City Council should address the urgent need for minority faith facilities in the City of Cambridge and develop a greater knowledge of existing sources of land/buildings for faith groups in Cambridge.

4.4. Barking and Dagenham Council: Unitary Development Plan Policy

The Barking and Dagenham Council: Unitary Development Plan Policy C2 says that planning permission will normally be granted for new religious buildings subject to specific criteria. Policy C3 states that the Council will, where possible, help to identify appropriate sites and advise groups seeking premises for religious use. However in new developments these policies are not always followed in practice so that appropriate land

is not allocated at the outset. When the many competing requirements for space are being considered, it is very easy for faith and community needs to be overlooked. Hence the research on behalf of Cambridgeshire Horizons is very helpful for all local authorities.

5. Current Situation

5.1. House building has begun

What might happen in the future?

Brian Endacott reports that housebuilding will begin in April 2010 and at the same time the new community buildings are due to be finished by late 2010. This will include a church centre offered by Bellway Homes Clive Wilding plus the opportunity to buy a four bedroomed house with a large ground floor room suitable for community activities, 100yds from the church centre. It is still hoped that the Methodist BDI Circuit will be able to purchase this house as soon as it becomes available. The church centre (100 seats) will be next to the school with facilities for either to expand into the other as required. Other faiths didn't want the centre so Brian, David Pearson and Judith Scultz have negotiated with the developers. A Management team has been formed (Churches Together at Barking Riverside). A CofE missionary will be appointed who may have use of a van to be a mobile presence organised by Carol Richards.

Rainham and Dagenham likely to join up, around A1306 (was A13) Purfleet 6000 new houses, 800 at Aveley and Ockendon. Covent Garden Opera House studios and storage moving there.

Bellway starts in Thurrock

Bellway starts on 80 new homes in Thurrock.

Work has started on an 80-home development on brownfield land in South Ockendon. Bellway Homes and the Estuary Housing Association this month started work on a mixture of family houses and apartments at the 42 acres site on the western and eastern sides of Arisdale Avenue to the north of the town.

A spokesman from Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation said: "New Arisdale will be a well-planned, memorable place, built to last. It will be a distinctive neighbourhood that is part of the wider, existing community.

"We are pleased that work has started and look forward to seeing other developments follow in due course."

The scheme is designed by award winning architect Stock Woolstencroft and replaces a disused factory, completion is expected in Summer 2010.

5.2. The market and political climate

The number of homes built in England and Wales in 2009/10 will slump to the lowest level since 1923. A chronic shortage of housing will leave millions of people in overcrowded and substandard housing for a generation to come. 4.5 million people in England are on housing waiting lists. The National Housing Federation estimates that 122,700 homes will be built between April 2009 and March 2010. This is 18,000 fewer than were built in the previous financial year and will be the lowest total since 1923/24 when just 86,000 were built. The recession has resulted in private developers reducing the number of new homes constructed while housing associations will deliver more than 45,000 backed by record levels of public investment and more flexible government grants via the Homes and Communities Agency. This will be the highest total achieved by the affordable housing sector for a decade.

Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government: Housing Policy

Following the change of Government at the 2010 General Election, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government have made a number of proposals for a change to national Housing Policy. Affirming the need for more homes, it is intended that they must be built in a way that protects the environment and provides the infrastructure to support local communities.

That's why local people need to decide where new homes should go, instead of Whitehall bureaucrats. And that's why financial incentives will encourage new homes to be built, rather than letting unelected quangos impose unsustainable development on communities.

Labour's planning rules have resulted in a shortage of family homes and the bulldozing of homes with gardens - and they have prevented the market building new homes with parking spaces and gardens. The new Government will change these rules as a matter of urgency by:

- Scrapping Stamp Duty for first-time buyers on homes up to £250,000, so that nine out of ten pay nothing
- Abolishing Home Information Packs which have made moving house even more expensive and difficult
- Making it easier for social tenants to own or part-own their home. This will not only help people up the housing ladder, but also ensure residents have greater pride and a greater stake in their community.

The Minister for Housing, Grant Shapps has set out a series of radical new housing policies that will promote social opportunity and neighbourhood pride.

The measures will provide England's four million social tenants with genuine social mobility, and will restore pride to rundown housing estates by helping to encourage social responsibility.

It will also ensure that local homes are built for local people, with the community having the final say on the homes they want.

The proposals include:

- Rewards for good behaviour - tenants with a record of five years' good tenant behaviour will be offered a 10% equity share in their social rented property, giving them a direct financial stake in the state of their neighbourhood
- A 'Right to Move' - a comprehensive national mobility scheme that will allow good tenants to move to other social sector properties
- Supporting the low-cost housing sector - measures will include strengthening shared ownership schemes so that those on intermediate incomes can part-own their home

- Local Housing Trusts - villages and towns will be able to create entirely new community-led bodies with planning powers to develop local homes for local people, provided there is strong community backing
- Breaking the monopoly on empty government property - local people will have new powers to demand the selling of empty or under-used government property
- Stopping the Whitehall imposition of unwanted development - regional planning will be scrapped, enabling councils to revise their plans to protect Green Belt land and prevent the unwanted imposition of so-called eco-towns

5.3. Section 106 Agreements CIL and Promises

Section 106 is changing

The Planning Act 2008, provides for a change in the way contributions from developer funds infrastructure and community facilities. Consultations have been held to look at the draft regulations for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) sometimes called the roof tax which will not be finalised before Autumn 2010 due to the economic climate.

Section 106 Agreements and the Downturn

There may be limited opportunity to obtain community facilities under future Section 106 agreements and those already negotiated may not be forthcoming. It looks likely that we will go back to developing more urban sprawl without facilities. On the other hand there may be opportunities for churches to fill some of the gaps.

Local authorities may have to sacrifice community benefits previously promised by developers in order to get mixed-use regeneration projects back on track.

Homes & Communities Agency chief executive Sir Bob Kerslake told the Regeneration & Renewal conference that maintaining momentum on mixed-use regeneration projects was an even bigger challenge than reviving housebuilding. He said it might be necessary to re-examine the community benefits promised as part of section 106 planning gain deals in order to help maintain projects' viability.

However bad things are at the moment, the recession will soon hit us a lot harder. Public spending brought forward from 2010-11 is currently cushioning the economy. We have one more year before we have to start paying for that cushion with cost savings.

Similarly, unemployment seems set to rise by another million over the next 12 months.

Kerslake reinforced the message that regeneration practitioners would have to take difficult decisions to get through tough times. He said that councils might have to sacrifice some hard won community benefits as the price of keeping mixed-use regeneration projects on track.

Both (viewpoints) are justified in telling the sector that it needs to make pragmatic choices about the use of resources that will soon become scarce. It won't always be easy to prioritise businesses or regeneration schemes with the best long-term prospects over those with the most acute short-term need. But in the current climate, it will be necessary.

5.4. Church Mission

Church mission is ongoing and continuous through the members of churches who presently live and work in the area, who participate in the construction and administration of London Riverside as well as the many expressions of the institutional church. The new community churches are attracted to the area especially if there are some existing unused commercial and industrial buildings, which may serve as worship/church centres. The growing black churches are especially interested in larger premises or even land where new facilities can be built. New ideas and concepts are emerging for Christian presence and witness due to the movement for fresh expressions of church. One idea that has been suggested by the CofE is the possibility of a mobile church in the form of a caravan or mobile home with a worker who would provide welcome, advice, support and spiritual counselling as new residents arrive in their homes and workers in new businesses.

5.5. Church regional response to new communities

The churches have much experience of involvement in developing new communities. Much can be done to prepare for the growth of housing which will follow the recession. For example:

1. Select and train pioneer ministers for new communities where the emphasis is on mission rather than maintenance.
2. Recruit church community development workers who are young, visionary, possibility thinkers with an element of the entrepreneurial.
3. Encourage individual members and church families to consider moving to new developments in the early stages to form the nucleus of a Church.
4. Appoint representatives to each Local Strategic Partnership across the region.
5. Buy, lease or rent one of the first houses to be built as a centre of church and community life.
6. Press for land in the Section 106 Agreement according to the research report produced by Cambridgeshire Horizons and East of England Faiths' Council.
7. Design and obtain mobile, temporary buildings which could serve as initial community/church centres for the first few years until more permanent buildings can be built. Mobile buildings could then be moved to other sites as required. This might include a bus ministry for mission and especially youth work in a new development.
8. Prepare imaginative fresh expressions of church life using experimental work already underway. Consider the importance of music, sport and excellent food. Some existing church buildings have begun to include Post Offices, community shops, doctors/dentists surgeries, health centres, gyms, police stations, farmers' markets, Ukonline centres, SureStart centres, adult learning, after school clubs, public libraries, heritage centres and internet cafes.
9. Begin to plan Eco-Congregations for all new developments guided by theological, environmental and practical considerations.
10. Design green church and community permanent buildings, which could be constructed by the new congregation to at least Code Level 4 or possibly Levels 5 or 6. Work with a sector leader such as ruralZED which uses technologies and building physics solutions which have been proven on existing ZED buildings over the past ten years.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. About the conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are offered at a time of great opportunity for the churches. As confidence in financial institutions and the power of credit has been shaken, there is a new window for the eternal verities of trust and faith, human and heavenly community, even Christian hope and love. Whilst recession makes funding more difficult, it opens the way for the church to demonstrate its belief in the power of God's concern for the poor as well as the middle classes and the homeless. The shortage of housing presents the churches together with a relevant and contemporary avenue for mission in the heart of the nation.

6.2. Early involvement

Though any development may take years from the germ of the idea to the implementation, buildings erected and communities created, it is never too early to get involved. Thus it is vital to identify one person working with a group of key stakeholders/representatives of local circuits and the London District who will offer continuity during the length of the planning and construction. Local, District or regional development officers have the time and interest to build bridges with national and local government as well as the individual developers and house builders concerned with the project. A District Development Officer should ideally have a formal qualification in Planning, holding full membership of the RTPI (or equivalent) and substantial, proven related experience of the planning processes. S/he should possess excellent communication and analytical skills, and be able to build good relationships with other professionals at all levels. The development officer should be formally connected to the District Policy Committee and to the grant making mechanisms of the church, and should be in good standing with a member church of Churches Together in England, demonstrating considerable sympathy with the policies and aims of the Methodist Church. A university applied theological qualification is very desirable to enable planning policies to be evaluated and scrutinised both in church councils and committees as well as national and local planning forums. Increasingly developers and planners wish to deal with one member of the churches rather than representatives of each denomination, so this should be an ecumenical appointment with access given to the policy-making bodies in each of the partner churches/synods and councils but without overwhelming the officer with ecclesiastical responsibilities. The development officer can be attached to one church who will be responsible for the administration of the position but the post can be funded by all participating partner churches. To be able to influence the initial thinking, philosophy and planning as well as the design of a new community, contact with the developer should be made as soon as there is a whisper of a suggestion that it might happen.

6.3. Engage with Local Authority

It is important to meet and speak with the elected members of the local authority and especially the ward(s) in which the development is to be suited. These councillors will have an understanding of what is proposed and will be eager to hear the views of individuals, organisations and churches in the community. Each local authority has to create a Local Strategic Partnership to advise and comment on planning and development matters. Faith communities can expect to have a seat on the LSP and thus some influence on any new housing development. When the LA receives an application for planning permission it will begin to negotiate a Section 106 Agreement (this may be superseded by a Community Infrastructure Levy or possibly both) with the developer. The churches working together with the other faith communities will have an opportunity

to participate in the debate concerning community and faith facilities. But only if we are there and ready to express a strong and united view.

6.4. Meet the Developer

Developers are very keen to meet and get to know the key stakeholders involved and interested in their proposal. A request for a meeting from the churches is always welcome. They are interested in the building and formation of good residential accommodation with the best possible sense of community. They do not want to replicate soulless estates with dubious reputations as in the past but excellent places for people, which will be popular. However they do not want to deal with a large number of representatives from all the various churches and faith communities. If one person can be appointed ecumenically who has the confidence and trust all of the churches, most developers will be eager to work with such a person.

6.5. Understand the vision

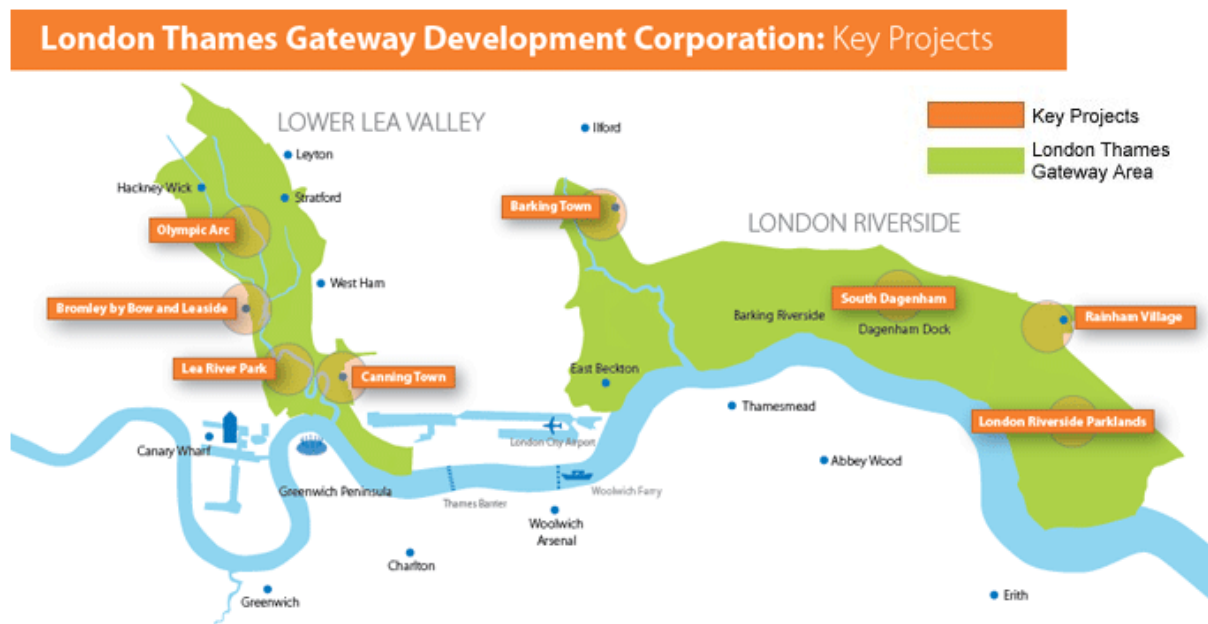
It is vital for the churches to know what vision they have for any new community. A vague and woolly concept will impress neither local authority nor developer. What kind of Christian mission presence and dialogue will be appropriate throughout the planning stages? Do the churches wish to fully engage with community development in the early stages and as the new area begins to take shape? Is the long-term hope to have a centre available for everyone or a special building set aside and suitable for worship, significant community events and rites of passage? If this is so what steps might be taken to reach such a centre, i.e., Buy/rent one of the first houses, work in partnership, obtain a temporary community building, negotiate for land, obtain funding, construct building? Should land be identified as a burial ground?

6.6 Imaginative church

A new housing area gives the church a time for imagination to express the gospel of Christ in a new and lively way, a genuine fresh expression unencumbered by many of the historical patterns of another age. There is a wave of new thinking sweeping Britain as churches and congregations seek to find a relevant way to contact those who have little connection with the church. Whilst a new development can easily take thirty years from planning to final implementation, this gives the church opportunity to experiment with flexible, changing expressions of what it means to be church in an emerging town or village community. Many young church leaders are enthusiastic to be part of the theological thinking and practical working out of imaginative church for the 21st Century when they are given the freedom and responsibility to dream dreams and see visions.

7. Maps

7.1. London Thames Gateway Development Corporation: Key projects



7.2. Location of Stages 1 & 2 of the Barking Riverside Development

