

An Assessment of Housing Market Renewal in East Lancashire

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Abstract: The paper analyses the impact of the Government Housing Market Renewal (HMR) programme in the UK. It focuses on Burnley, East Lancashire, and on the inner-city neighbourhood of Burnley Wood. The aim of the programme was to rebalance the housing market in places suffering shrinkage. The intention was to renew failing housing markets and reconnect them to regional markets, to improve neighbourhoods and to encourage people to live and work in these areas. One of these was East Lancashire and the author visited Burnley, one of its principal towns, in 2005, as part of a CABE study. The paper describes the Pathfinder policy, the actions being taken and the community's reaction. The author recently returned to Burnley and spoke to some of the same people reported in 2005. This paper documents what has been achieved in the past 7 years.

Key words: Housing market renewal, regeneration, East Lancashire, urban futures.

1. Introduction

Over £2 billion has been spent on Pathfinder, or Housing Market Renewal (HMR), in the UK. The aim of the programme was to rebalance the housing market in places suffering shrinkage [1]. The intention was to renew failing housing markets and reconnect them to regional markets, to improve neighbourhoods and to encourage people to live and work in these areas [2]. One of these was East Lancashire and the author visited Burnley, one of its principal towns, in 2005, as part of a CABE study [3-5].

In 2005, after years of neglect, urban regeneration and housing renewal were centre stage in British politics. Substantial state funding flowed into the English regions to tackle housing over-supply in the North and housing shortage in the South. Issues originally raised under the banner of 'urban renaissance' by Richard Rogers' Urban Task Force [6] were translated – in the hands of John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister – into a crusade for 'sustainable communities' [7-9].

Seven years later, in August 2012, the author revisited the town to see what had been achieved.

2. Housing Market Renewal – Pathfinder

Pathfinder is the latest in a line of government-funded initiatives aimed at revitalising the Burnley. Leather, Nevin et al. [10] say that the programme was an ambitious attempt to reverse decades of physical decline and a concentration of poverty and deprivation in inner cities in the North and Midlands. It aimed to reduce vacancy rates, improve the quality of the housing stock and address deprivation through linking housing investment with economic development and strategic planning.

The Audit Commission appointed to monitor the programme reported that house prices had increased in most Pathfinder areas. However, they caution that this could mask complex dynamics, such as the impact of national factors on local prices and speculation in the private rented market. The National Audit Office (2007) report echoed the Audit Commission's concerns that the Government's investment in Pathfinders represented a "high risk" strategy.

As well as the £2 billion of public funding, it is estimated that nearly £5 billion has been invested

privately in HMR. However, this has not prevented the continued outflow of young families from the affected areas. Significant problems with vacancies remain in some neighbourhoods. In the short term, there is a considerable risk that the worst neighbourhoods will enter a renewed spiral of decline, with associated population loss, increased dereliction and an outflow of private investment.

It was intended that housing market renewal provide ways of involving for the local community in a dialogue about the future of their neighbourhoods. But it was also recognised that housing market renewal might impact on social cohesion and might dramatically alter the character of neighbourhoods, raising tensions amongst residents [11].

HMR has been characterised in the media as a demolition programme, but the main emphasis of the programme was on preserving and improving the existing housing stock wherever possible and innovative approaches to the refurbishment of Victorian terraces in order to retain the original character of the neighbourhoods were used wherever this was practical.

A major difference between Housing Market Renewal and previous regeneration programmes was the Government's intention that most of the money would come, through public/private partnerships. To kick start renewal, councils like Burnley were not unnaturally anxious to assemble sites that were attractive to developers

Burnley Wood, the Audit Commission [12] reported. received £19m of HMR funding. In addition, over £14m of private sector plus a little additional public funding had been 'leveraged' into the area. which is a significantly higher level of leverage than in other areas. By 2010 this had delivered 44 new build homes and 256 external improvements. This number has increased in the subsequent two years and there are homes still on site.

Despite a wide-spread understanding that regeneration is not a quick fix, the programme was prematurely terminated nine years into a fifteen-year investment

strategy, following the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010.

3. Case-study in 2005

Building Futures, a joint venture between CABI and RIBA, asked Cambridge Architectural Research to explore how to manage change within our urban areas in order to ensure the creation and retention of good quality environments. The study tried to envision how urban regeneration might be achieved by focusing on two neighbourhoods: one in Luton in the growing South East, the other in Burnley in declining North East Lancashire.

In Burnley in 2005 three inner neighbourhoods had been targeted as priority areas for the Pathfinder programme. After consideration Burnley Wood was chosen since it was more typical of other inner-city areas in Britain.

As well as visiting the town and neighbourhood various times, the following people were interviewed:

- *policy makers* (local authority officers and elected members)
- *service providers* (design consultants, community engagement enablers)
- *community members* (residents, community workers, the vicar, the local beat policeman)

The interviews were transcribed and analysed to identify the informants':

- *Aspirations* about how the town and neighbourhood should be regenerated over the next 10 to 20 years
- *Concerns* about how regeneration is likely to play out over this period

This information formed the basis of the case-study narrative.

4. Burnley

Burnley is in the Pennine hills of East Lancashire in North West England. The Borough covers an area of 110 square kilometres, most of which is moorland [13, 14].

Having once been the largest producer of cotton

cloth in the world, like many other cities in North America and Europe that have lost their manufacturing base, Burnley has been in economic decline with a shrinking population since 1911.

Burnley's population continues to fall. It was estimated to be 88,100 in 2011 compared with 89,541 at the 2001 census. The Office of National Statistics estimates that under current conditions Burnley's population will fall to 82,700 by 2028. This decline in population is unusually high compared to other places in the Region and the UK. (Office of National Statistics, 2001) In comparison the population of Leeds increased by over 11% [15].

Burnley became a centre of weaving in the 18th century and, along with many other towns in the North of England, grew rapidly in the 19th century. By 1834, prompted by the constructions of the Leeds-Liverpool

Canal, there were 17 cotton mills in the town. By 1894 there were 67, housing over a 100,000 looms [16]. There were several coal pits and factories producing machinery and steam engines. This gave the town its strong tradition of engineering. Burnley and Blackburn became the most important cotton-weaving towns in the world. Even in 1938, after the population began to decline, there were still 91 mills in the town. By 1990 nearly all had closed [17].

Road transport connections are good and, without traffic, it takes only 40 minutes from the town centre to the centre of Manchester. But in 2005 to get to Manchester by train took an hour and a half via Hebden Bridge or over two hours via Preston. Although there was a bus service to Manchester this lack of a good rail link was a serious barrier to Burnley's development as a commuter town.



Fig. 1 Burnley town centre, 2005.

In 2005 Burnley had a poor image. It looked gritty and rough and had the working class feel of manufacturing towns in decline. Burnley was impoverished and even poverty stricken. Car ownership was 10% lower than the national average. Unemployment compared favourably with the national average of 3.4% but there was a lot of 'make work' – part time, low paid jobs – and that was reflected in low average earnings.

One of the problems is that much of the terraced housing in Burnley is too mean to make modern family homes. Other towns in the north have fine houses where mill owners lived. But in Burnley manufacturers and the wealthy built houses in the Ribble Valley or on the coast in Lytham, Southport or Blackpool.

Burnley had a relatively young population: 21% under fifteen, compared with a national average of 19%. About 92% of the population were classified as White and 7% as Asian British. This was slightly higher than the national average of 4%. The majority of these people were of Pakistani (69%) or Bangladeshi (22%) origin.

Educational attainment was low. Burnley lost the chance of getting a university campus in the sixties when the proposed new university was founded in Lancaster instead. Burnley College was founded to provide skilled workers for the manufacturing industry of the town and this ethos of apprenticeship and jobs persists in the culture of the town.

Paradoxically Burnley may have been psychologically disposed to change. As one of the interviewees, Mike Wellock, Director of Housing Market Renewal in Burnley Council said in 2005, "We are up for radical change".

5. Burnley Wood

Standing on the towpath of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in 2005 one could look down on Burnley Wood with its tightly packed rows of terraced cottages. One could also see the roofs of sheds and derelict industrial buildings. To get to Burnley Wood from the town centre you had to make a detour to a bridge over the

canal and, despite its proximity to the town centre, it felt isolated. One resident described Burnley Wood as an island, separated from the town centre.

Walking down the main road, Parliament Street, and looking up each road the houses looked well built, in sound gritstone with slate roofs. But many were vacant and boarded up with plywood over the windows and doors. Small back yards and alleyways separated the backs of adjacent terraces. None of the houses had been extended and there was an air of blight and neglect. A resident of Burnley Wood described the process of decline. "Absentee landlords bought houses and rented them out to drug users and alcoholics. The houses deteriorated. No-one cares what happens to the property."

Others have documented the decline [18] and Burnley residents are fully aware of the underlying economic causes of the decline. "Bacup, Burnley and Blackburn are mill towns that have lost their industry and have nothing to fill the gap." Most jobs are low skill, part-time and poorly paid, and so people don't have the spending power. "Very few who go to university come back."

Since a peak in 1989 there had been a significant fall in house prices. In 1989 a standard 'two up and two down' terraced house fetched about £25,000. Until the regeneration programme, asking prices fell as low as £2,000. Philip Chew, the vicar at St Stephens said that when he came to live here in 2002 "you could buy a terraced house on a credit card".

After widespread consultation the Council published its 'preferred option' Neighbourhood Action Plan for Burnley Wood in late 2004. The plan indicated that the Council wanted to clear a large number of properties. Mainly these would be unfit but "In some cases, these will be 'fit' properties, as we will need to create large sites for redevelopment."

6. Case Study Findings in 2005

We asked stakeholders in Burnley and Burnley Wood what they wanted to see happen over the next 10

to 20 years. Overall, there was consensus about aspirations for the town as a whole. Unsurprisingly everyone agreed that they would like the town to be vital and prosperous and Burnley Wood to be a thriving community again. But there are clear differences of emphasis, as well some areas of disagreement and conflict.

6.1 People and Housing

People's most immediate concerns in 2005 were boarded up houses and demolition sites, visible evidence that people had left the area. As one resident said, "Anyone with money or children has moved away." A resident described how people live a hand-to-mouth existence on-benefit. The Principal of Burnley College thought that the town was at crossroads. "In three years or so it will be clear that decline will continue or that it will regenerate and reinvent itself."

Policy makers thought that one of the key problems in attracting new families to the area was that there was too much of the wrong sort of housing. They were also concerned about the effects of demolition. "There is a huge clearance site in the middle of Burnley Wood and it's just getting bigger." They were also concerned that attacking housing market renewal directly would fail. "I can't see how doing something to the housing will improve the economy."

There was general agreement about the need to provide the right sort of housing and facilities to attract young families. Residents said they wanted Burnley Wood to regain the village feel with some local shops like it was 10 years ago, with all the properties occupied, no anti-social neighbours, low crime levels and a better bus timetable. But policy makers were thinking beyond the needs of current residents. They emphasised the need to attract new residents to the inner city to create more balanced communities with a larger middle class.

Policy makers defined the problem as housing market failure produced by an excess of housing. The recipe was to remove stock by demolition, to push up house prices and to encourage private developers by

providing attractive cleared sites. In contrast the community had seen the destructive effects of the renewal programme and were keen to prevent further demolition. They accepted that things would have to change to attract families, but they wanted to retain the best of the old.

For policy makers, success would be measured in terms of house prices – pushing them up would be a good thing. For the community success would be measured in terms of "a vibrant crime free community and better housing for existing residents as well as new families".

There was a strong desire to exploit the architectural heritage of the town. The vision of the policy makers was to "restore old mills and streets sympathetically and encourage conversion of mills into modern apartments". Members of the community agreed, but also signaled caution. "The town centre has been improved. It's more attractive and the town has a good Victorian heritage, but that's not appreciated by Burnley people".

6.2 Economy and education

Apart from housing, there were two other areas of particular concern – schooling and transport. "We have a new school with only five children registered to start next year." Policy makers were not blind to these problems. "Burnley Wood is in the throes of transition but no one is very clear what it is changing into. A key issue is how to keep services going when you have removed the population."

Both policy makers and community saw that the crux of the problem as economic and that doing something to housing would not fix the economy. "Burnley can't compete with Blackburn, just as Blackburn can't compete with Preston. We're at the end of a long arm." One policy maker was worried that in twenty years time, "Burnley may still be struggling." People in the community were equally concerned about Burnley's economic future. "It is an ex-mill town, in transition and it doesn't know where it is going." "Burnley

doesn't have contact with Manchester or West Yorkshire."

If better rapid transit connections to Manchester and Leeds were one plank of the town's vision for its economic future, then another was bringing higher paid, higher skilled jobs to the town. Burnley might become the major service centre for East Lancashire. Policy makers and community agreed on the central importance of high-quality education from nursery to higher education. The hope was to attract new further and higher educational facilities, perhaps with the involvement of the University of Central Lancashire.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, policy makers and the community were in agreement about the crucial importance of transport. "Better train connections to Manchester would make Burnley ideal for commuting, attract new people into the area, and make the town more affluent." This vision of Burnley as a commuter town for Manchester or Leeds and an

institute of higher education may be unrealistic. But without either the town's economic future looked bleak.

7. The Urban Futures Game

It seemed important to play back these aspirations and concerns to the people interviewed. But it became apparent that a way of making wealth of material accessible to the participants was needed. This involved devising a 'game' to make the process of sifting and prioritising more enjoyable. This game formed the basis of the Urban Futures Game published by CABE [19-21].

As well as prioritising their aspirations and concerns, workshop participants were also asked to assess:

- *Options* for future change that might be favoured

The event was billed as 'a short blue-skies workshop to explore regeneration issues and options. To record people's answers at the workshops wall charts were devised.



Fig. 2 People playing the Urban Futures Game in Burnley, 2005.

options



Commuter village

- gentrification of existing terraces
- houses privately renovated and extended
- families with young children move in
- crime and anti-social behaviour initiatives
- people typically commute to work.



Urban wood

- demolition returns area to pre-industrialisation status.
- extension of park to the town centre.
- outdoor leisure promoted
- green lifestyles encouraged
- town promotes itself as a centre for sustainable living



Small business incubator

- development of attractive location for small-scale businesses
- innovation supported by university
- aligned with a skills training in local colleges
- incentives for new businesses
- rise in skill levels and wages



Design-led

- regeneration led by an iconic building, structure or work of art
- emphasis on high quality design
- focus on liveable environment to encourage social contact
- draws on contributions across community
- innovative design and enhanced heritage and distinctiveness

Fig. 3 Urban Futures Game options, 2005.

Exercise 1 Aspirations

People	Housing	Community	Infrastructure	Economy	Education	Process	Leadership
1.1 Attract and retain dynamic young people ●	2.1 Have fewer but broader range of houses	3.1 Don't demolish, refurbish	4.1 Restore old mills and streets sympathetically and encourage conversion of mills into modern apartments ●	5.1 Establish the town as a major service centre for the area ● ●	6.1 Manage the transition from manufacturing to higher skilled service economy ● ●	7.1 Use an inclusive 'whole borough' approach to regeneration work ●	8.1 Get good news stories on regional TV
1.2 Create a more balanced community with a larger middle class	2.2 Push up house prices	3.2 Get rid of absentee private landlords ●	4.2 Make gateways into town attractive	5.2 Create more vibrant town centre capable of attracting department stores	6.2 Develop skilled service industry activities and small-scale creative industries ● ●	7.2 Use existing local capabilities and resources to deliver regeneration ● ● ● ●	8.2 Provide and market a new identity for the town that people can take pride in ● ● ● ●
1.3 Give existing residents first choice of new homes ●	2.3 Insist on adaptable high quality housing using renewable energy ● ●	3.3 Upgrade communities by reducing crime, improving facilities and providing better transport ● ● ●	4.3 Maintain and preserve Victorian heritage and built environment ● ●	5.3 Increase renewable energy and other green technologies, permaculture centre ● ● ●	6.3 Deliver greater levels of educational choice	7.3 Ensure people have faith in what Borough Council is doing by treating them well	8.3 Promote town as having affordable housing and fantastic scenery ● ●
1.4 Provide houses and facilities to attract young families ●	2.4 Demolish areas of decline and return them to woodland	3.4 Regain the urban village feel with local shops and where people care about each other ● ●	4.4 Regenerate neighbourhoods to benefit whole town not just existing residents ● ● ● ●	5.4 Provide jobs to attract families into the area ●	6.4 Develop workforce skills through training programme with local colleges ●	7.4 Develop a collective responsibility for delivering change ● ●	8.4 Provide evidence of early wins to show how regeneration can work
1.5 Encourage gentrification of the housing stock	2.5 There will be a market for sandblasted oversized lofts for people who can't afford to live in Manchester ●	3.5 Deliver mixed communities with greater breakdown in inter-area tensions ●	4.5 People need to be able to live in BW and walk down to the rapid transit station and be in Manchester in half an hour. ●	5.5 Tackle poverty to reduce racism ●	6.5 Improve educational attainment to equivalent in rest of country ● ●	7.5 Respond to how the majority feel regeneration should go	8.5 Burnley could be a fantastic environment. A great place to get out of the city with a range of housing types ●
1.6 We will attract people by providing the sort of housing people want to live in and good schools ● ● ●	2.6 I know all the current thinking is about city living but people with kids want more space ●	3.6 Employ facilitators and residents for community building activities	4.6 The canal is the key to regenerating not only Burnley, but the surrounding area as well	5.6 Burnley's role in the regional economy has to be the major driving force ● ● ● ● ●	6.6 Greater university provision to attract and retain university students ● ● ● ●	7.6 Build a regeneration vehicle based on long-term relationships with lead developers	8.6 Make the town attractive to those commuting to Manchester and Leeds

Fig. 4 Urban Futures Game wall chart showing people's aspirations.

Neighbourhood regeneration in Burnley is preoccupied with short-term goals. To raise people's horizons four iconic options or scenarios were devised: commuter village, urban wood, small business incubator and design-led regeneration. People discussed the options and were asked to rank them. We were concerned that people might find this exercise too theoretical but the options worked well and people understood their relevance and were able to express clear preferences.

7.1 Aspirations

The results of playing the game in Burnley show that the focus of people's aspiration were on the Economy and Education columns. Everyone agreed that regeneration depends on the regional economy. Policy makers/providers then choose aspirations that described policy initiatives, while residents of Burnley Wood seemed to be thinking more holistically.

7.2 Concerns

As one might expect from the diversity of aspirations, there were widespread concerns about regeneration. In Burnley the overriding concern was about the economy. This is not surprising, Burnley has a long history of false dawns. Both sides were concerned that the town will still be struggling in 20 years' time, but policy makers/providers were more concerned about introducing aspiring households into the neighbourhood and raising the expectations of those who already live there, while community members were more concerned about the lack of vision and whether the Pathfinder programme, with its focus on housing market renewal, stood any chance of working.

7.3 Options

At the workshops people were asked to assess the options for regenerating towns and neighbourhoods like theirs over the next 10 to 20 years. Despite the abstract nature of the options on offer, none of participants had problems doing so. What was striking

is that no single option is favoured. This means that the preferred solution is likely to be a package of measures.

All interest groups marginally preferred Option 3 *Small business incubator*. This obviously reflected their focus on education and economy. They also liked Option 1 *Commuter village* that would exploit the town's relatively cheap housing and proximity to a major conurbation. Beyond this there were some differences. In Burnley, policy makers/providers preferred Option 4 *Design-led regeneration* while the community was prepared to consider Option 2 *Urban wood*. A new footbridge, crossing the canal was mentioned as an example of a *Design-led* intervention.

The results of the workshop showed both the strength of options as a futures technique and the practical utility of the game-based exercises built around them. Amongst the stakeholders present at the workshop a clear convergence began to emerge about the most appropriate future. This convergence could be used as a platform on which to build a wider consensus between policy-makers, service providers and community members.

8. What Had Been Achieved by 2012

8.1 Housing

As Lead Developer Partners (LDP) the Council appointed Keepmoat to work in Burnley Wood. However, the people moving in will be young Burnley families rather than the aspiring middle-class families Elevate hoped would be attracted to the town. This movement will cause further dereliction in other areas. They will in the main be moving from old terraced property into these new 3-bedroom homes. The new housing is semi-detached with narrow gaps, rather than the more efficient terrace form.

The Pathfinder solution was to acquire and demolish blocks of terraced housing to create plots big enough to attract private housing developers. Councillor Roger Frost, Mayor of Burley 2005-6 and Chairman of Civic Society would have preferred demolishing every other

terraced row to create gardens and put two houses together to make a family home as they had done in Wentworth, South Yorkshire.

The Liberal administration that was in power for six years until 2011 cured the demolition blight. In Burnley Wood three areas were cleared that were large enough to attract private developers – Keepmoat Contractors. And other cleared areas have been seeded with wild flowers and look attractive.

8.2 Transport

A year ago, Burnley, Calderdale and the County Council found £8.9M to replace the Todmorden Curve and reinstate the Leeds-Manchester line. The works also include renovating Manchester Road Station, extending platforms and enlarging the car park. This will reduce the travel time from Burnley to Manchester

to 40 minutes. Work has already started and will be complete by 2014. This is part of making Victoria Station in Manchester a hub. Station improvements at Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Victoria are part of the National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP).

The first £85m part of the Northern Hub project (known as the Ordsall Chord) was given the go ahead in the recent Budget. This new piece of railway will connect Manchester Piccadilly and Victoria stations and could see most fast trans-Pennine services going via Manchester Victoria station – a much quicker route – as soon as 2016. The scheme envisages a 40% increase in trains per day across the region (700 extra train services per day) with an extra 3.5 million passengers per year travelling on faster, more frequent services from Manchester.



Fig. 5 New homes in Burnley Wood, 2012.



Fig. 6 Artist impression of the refurbished Manchester Road Station, Burnley, 2012.

8.3 Education

In Burnley the Local Education Authority has closed down a number of primary schools but there has been an increase in school age children and there are a growing number of appeals against primary school allocation. The new school in Burnley Wood, that was suffering from low rolls in 2005, was renamed Springfield and has survived [22].

Despite some opposition in the town because people thought it wasteful, all the high schools in the town have been rebuilt under the Building Schools for the Future programme at a cost of about £20M each.

Most significantly there has been an increase in higher educational opportunities. The University of Central Lancashire has founded a new campus in Burnley at a cost of £10m with an anticipated intake of about 1,000 students. It will specialise in high-tech

manufacturing and teacher training. The University is aiming at the foreign market. The Keirby Hotel in the centre is being remodelled as a hall of residence.

Burnley has a long football tradition and a new University College of Football Business is being created by the University of Buckingham at Turfmoor football ground. It will offer a two-year course to about 60 students a year. Burnley College has moved from Ormerod Road to much improved facilities on Curzon Street at a cost of £70M.

A new University Technical College offering a modern version of apprenticeships for 14–19-year-olds is being built in what was a sizeable spinning mill in the Weavers Triangle next to the canal. It will provide training in the technical aspects of commerce. Students will begin as full-time pupils and progress to day release part-time study as they get older. The UTC will take children from high schools. Its future will depend on the quality



Fig. 7 New Burnley Campus of University of Central Lancashire, 2012.

of its staff, their connections with industry and commerce and their ability to place students in work.

Despite all these initiatives it is not clear if they will be sufficient to deal with Burnley's central issue – its ability to attract and retain graduates.

8.4 Jobs

Any housing policy is likely to fail, Roger Frost says, unless the fundamental problem of low income is tackled. "Demolition has been tried in the past. In the 1930s parts of the city were designated as slums and cleared and council housing built. Some sites remained vacant until the 60s. And in the 70s, as a consequence of M65 building, other areas were cleared and thousands of houses were demolished. But this didn't stop the collapse in the housing market."

Policy formers in Westminster need to tackle

employment, he says. The problem of Burnley is poor employment prospects and poverty. Tackle this and housing would take care of itself. But previous governments have tried and failed to address this issue.

The canal side has been redeveloped and old mills have been renovated for offices. These are still vacant, but if the new University Technical College next door is successful, it could have spin-off for the rest of the Weavers triangle.

Industry 'bond holders' work closely with the Council. Councillors of the different political parties work together on big schemes that benefit the whole town. But there is a lot of infighting over smaller initiatives. For example, in Burnley Wood the two Liberal and one Labour Councillor invariably oppose each other's proposals for how to spend their £11k ward allowance.



Fig. 8 Weavers triangle canal side development and new University Technical College.

9. Lessons for Elsewhere

All redundant manufacturing towns across Europe can't become centres of excellence and advanced industry. One thing is clear. We need to change not only the physical fabric of a place that needs regeneration but also its function, its reason for being, and its self-image. We need a vision of what can be achieved that people identify with and support. To get behind a plan people need to believe that the sacrifices they are called on to make today will be rewarded in the future. This process needs a champion, an archetypal hero, to articulate the vision and coordinate the effort.

Part of the problem is that physical artefacts – master plans, buildings, landscape designs – are being used to represent underlying economic, social and

environmental choices. This means that the underlying issues are often implicit and unexpressed. As a result, areas conflict and consensus are muddled and what goals should drive regeneration are left unresolved. Instead, the battle is fought over the specific issues, for example demolition.

Issues need to be defined clearly so that informed choices can be made. Ideally this should happen before funding programmes begin. If this clarity is absent and plans push ahead without consensus and community support, then there is a strong chance that the programme will fail because underlying social and economic issues are not effectively addressed and so remain unresolved.

What the 2005 CABA study showed is that different interest groups are able to engage constructively at a

strategic level to discuss positive change in their town and neighbourhood if presented with a framework of ideas and options about the future.

Nowhere is the legacy of the industrial age expressed more strongly than in a Northern mill town like Burnley. The evidence of past enterprise and expansion, contrasts alarmingly with present decay and abandon. As one approaches the Calder Valley from the north, the chimneystacks and stonework form a strong impression on the mind. Everywhere one goes in the town there is evidence of past glory and present decline. And the response to this has been a flight of the young and the best, and inarticulate shock and resentment amongst the remaining townsfolk.

But things may change, and places like Burnley, that are currently despised, may one day become popular. There is much to admire in the ways of life in a Northern mill town: a place of work and community, of trades and skills. These days are gone, but who knows whether a nostalgia for this lost world might not create a new way of life. In the same way hippies found Hebden Bridge and settled there in the sixties, might not a new generation find a haven in a place like Burnley?

Towns like Burnley are vulnerable. What was once required is no longer necessary. Industrialisation and the flight from the land that gave birth to these towns left rural areas depopulated and abandoned. Yet affluence and the motorcar have made the countryside highly desirable. But most of the rural residents will be working in local service industries or commuting to jobs in towns rather than working in agriculture. In a similar way small town life may become popular. The industrial past leaves a strong legacy in ex-manufacturing towns and the image of millwork and factories may be something that people can adopt without having actually to work on an assembly line. Small towns offer a range of services and amenities and a life style that may become increasingly attractive to future families.

People who live in towns like Burnley can find

themselves trapped by feeling inferior, with low aspirations and expectations. Designers and community workers, in particular, have key roles to play here. But to do so, they have to act sensitively, starting from where people currently are and then moving them on supportively. They have to help people understand both how they can break free of current constraints and how they can realise their aspirations for something better.

Funding regimes have a critical impact on regeneration initiatives. They strongly constrain what can and cannot be done. But funding regimes do not necessarily operate in the best interest of sustainability – either of an existing community in a renewed neighbourhood or any replacement proposed. The common focus on initial capital funding of physical fabric and facilities, as opposed to longer-term revenue costs of operation and use, threaten the continued viability of a proposal, especially where it fails to address underlying social or economic problems.

There are real differences between regeneration initiatives that seek to benefit the existing community in a particular neighbourhood and those that seek to renew a specific area for the benefit of a whole town. Those who fund and run regeneration initiatives have to be open with community stakeholders about which of these two objectives is being pursued.

Leadership is a critical function in regeneration initiatives. Small towns may only have a small pool of local talent on which to draw. But expertise parachuted in from outside runs the risk of lacking sensitivity to local circumstances and leaving an unfillable void when it leaves just as rapidly. We need to identify and support ‘local heroes’ if regeneration is to be successful.

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