

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

In the summer of 2004 the Global Urban Research Unit (GURU) at Newcastle University was approached with a commission to carry out an audit of the community engagement strategy for the Byker Urban Design Competition over the last two years. This report provides an analysis of this work and is a culmination of nearly two years work by Newcastle City Council (NCC) on the Byker Urban Design Competition.

Jointly funded by Bridging Newcastle Gateshead¹ and the European Commission ERDF² and INTERREG³, the competition set out to provide a high quality family housing scheme. Three themes were highlighted in the Design Brief⁴; to achieve High Density housing on a key site on the outskirts of the city centre, provide family housing with a view to revitalising the housing market and to establish new levels of sustainable design in house building.

1 Bridging Newcastle Gateshead is the new name for the Newcastle Gateshead housing market renewal pathfinder. Bridging Newcastle Gateshead is one of nine housing market renewal pathfinders set up by the government to tackle the issue of low demand housing by involving local communities, the private and voluntary sectors to create great places to live.

2 European Regional Development Fund

3 INTERREG III is a European Commission Community Initiative to encourage transnational co-operation on spatial planning.

4 Byker Urban Design Competition Brief: Newcastle City Council, June 2004.

Close attention to the existing built environment was important as was the need to engage the community at an early stage. Consultation began in the summer of 2003 and a record of the techniques and practices adopted was recorded and audited.

The findings and recommendations of this report will form the evidence base to secure the necessary funding to effectively engage and empower the community through the next stages of the competition. In addition, Bridging Newcastle Gateshead will also be required to justify spend against the recommendations of this report.



Introduction

Newcastle upon Tyne is the regional capital of the North East of England and a major cultural centre. It is home to around 270,000 people and is visited by many more that come to work, study, shop and relax.

Changes to the economy have resulted in a reduction in the manufacturing base and while new sectors have developed to offset this decline, unemployment and skills development are significant issues. In turn, these factors have resulted in reduced economic prosperity, excluded communities, under-occupation of housing and a poor quality environment in some areas.

Newcastle also has many competitive advantages that can be built upon to regenerate the City, to increase economic prosperity and make it once more a City where people want to locate and reside. These include its strong, diverse culture, pleasant physical environment, good transport infrastructure and successful universities.

The City, in common with many northern English cities, has experienced a net out migration of population since the 1960's and this is projected to continue.

The Council adopted its (now defunct) Going for Growth Strategy in 1999 to address this decline. The Going for Growth Strategy was the Council's vision for Newcastle in 2020. Challenging targets were set that aimed to promote social inclusion and community stabilisation, and tackle poverty and deprivation. In this city-wide strategy NCC recognised the need to address the implications of decay and deprivation, and set out an ambitious and radical programme for the renaissance of the City's inner areas that endeavoured to unlock the potential of the City's communities and assets and in turn contribute to a strategic and sustainable regeneration.

As part of the Going for Growth process, regeneration plans for the East End of the City were prepared, following extensive consultation with residents and stakeholders in both 2000 and 2001. These plans set out a policy framework for future regeneration proposals and decisions. This approach to consultation was a major factor in helping the Council to confront difficult issues associated with the development of viable communities in areas with limited prospects.



The plans were prepared during a period of significant change in urban and social planning policy (e.g. Urban White Paper, National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal). The two competition areas in Byker that will be discussed in this report were highlighted at this stage for improvement. However the details of how this was to be done and the mechanisms for delivery were somewhat lacking prior to the Byker Design competition being established.



Byker background

Up until the late 1960's, Byker was a typical area of working class housing in the East End of Newcastle. Rows of terraced properties and Tyneside flats sloped down from Shields Road, the main shopping street in the East End of the city, towards the riverside where the shipyards and heavy industry was located. There was a strong local community, small shops and public houses spread throughout the area.

In the mid 1960's the condition of much of this housing was so poor that large scale clearance and redevelopment was proposed. Even though 80% of the residents of these back-to-back cobbled streets were in favour of clearance, the majority wanted to remain in the area and to be part of the Byker community.

This strong sense of community was an important factor in the design process and remains so today. Ralph Erskine, a young Anglo-Swedish architect and planner was appointed by the Housing Committee as the master-planner and consultant for this redevelopment process. Erskine was an architect with a very personal style and a very different approach to working with communities.

Erskine set his project office up in a disused funeral parlour in the centre of Byker. The team of architects worked openly behind the large glass shop front and had an 'open-house'

policy that encouraged local people to drop in, talk with the design team and raise neighbourhood issues of concern that went beyond the architectural.

This transparent 'design and build' approach is one that the City Council has wanted to renew, so as to create a sustainable and prosperous Byker to take the East End of Newcastle in line with other more prosperous and cohesive areas of the City.

Taking this into account the City Council decided that the best and most effective way to address the decline in the Byker area was via the mechanism of an Urban Design Competition, this combined the benefits of attracting 'cutting-edge' designers and architects to the area as well as maintaining a control and pace on delivery which would be beneficial to the area. Many key development schemes in the Newcastle area have taken far too long to be delivered and with this in mind the Council were adamant that the competition should be taken from inception to delivery in the shortest time possible. Initial consultation made this clear to residents and a timeline of events was created at the earliest stage.

The aim of this report

Under new planning legislation, which came into force in late 2004, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) should set out the planning authority's policy for involving the community in the preparation and revision of Local Development Documents and Planning Applications. An SCI should also be undertaken for Development Planning Documents, Area Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents etc. A number of regulations set minimum requirements for public involvement; these are Regulations 25 and 26 for Development Planning Documents (DPD's) and 17 for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's). Despite new guidance from National Government regarding community involvement in the planning process, Local Authorities are being left to work out the technicalities and implications of actualising such change for themselves.

This report has been compiled to support the planning application process of the Byker Urban Design Competition - a large scale regeneration programme for the Byker Area, East Newcastle upon Tyne. Some context is provided via the section in the influential 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' report (1999) which highlights the importance of such design competitions and the need for "all significant area

regeneration projects should be the subject of a design competition"⁵.

The design competition sets out key themes that it aims to achieve, in particular, issues surrounding affordable family homes, high density development and high levels of sustainability. The final design that is picked for the area will be worked up to form a Development Plan Document for the Area. The requirement for this report is that of an independent audit of NCC's approach to community engagement and involvement and whether this has been achieved. Recommendations will be made to NCC as to the future needs of the Byker community. This will provide and evidence base for future funding of the scheme that can be made apparent to Bridging Newcastle Gateshead.

In addition to the physical requirements of the design brief the City Council also sought to engage the community throughout the process and create a sense of ownership of the scheme – a situation that has failed to materialise in numerous regeneration initiatives across the country. This inverse approach as carried out through the design competition will hopefully establish a new wave of thinking within the authority

⁵ Towards and Urban Renaissance 1999: Urban Task Force, Crown Copyright, Taylor & Francis, London.

and assist in developing the strategy and procedure of community involvement in the future, avoiding a situation of ‘involvement by necessity’.⁶

Importantly, this approach is in accordance with new Government expectations in relation to community consultation (PPS 12), and the plans process more specifically.⁷ The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to form part of the evidence base in support of large scale development schemes. Such an approach aims to achieve a partnership that works and one that isn’t dominated by the local authority officials as this tends to increase public apathy towards future schemes.⁸

This report aims to highlight that a continual audit and progressive analysis of community engagement is needed in order to effectively deliver ‘people friendly’ schemes in line with new planning legislation. However, on that basis this report must be taken as a ‘thus far’ analysis with further evaluation and monitoring needed in order to successfully

deliver a successful community-owned and sustainable scheme.

Throughout this report it will be made clear where NCC are failing to sufficiently engage with the community, make recommendations to improve their approach, and highlight possible delivery mechanisms that might be pursued in the future.



6 Rowe, M. and Devanney, C. (2003), “Partnership and the governance of regeneration”.

7 ODPM Circular: Compulsory Purchase and the Crichel Down Rules Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (June 2004)

8 Chatterton, P. and Bradley, D. (2000), “Bringing Britain together?” They cover this and put forward the point that there is a need to quell the over dominance of schemes by officials.

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

Local Authorities should involve the community at an early stage, in order to achieve a sense of local ownership. The consultation techniques used should be tailored to involve the appropriate parts of the community. The consultation carried out should be of an appropriate level and style for the type of document being developed.

The Governments principles for community involvement are:

- Involvement that is appropriate to the level of planning.
- Front loading of involvement.
- Using methods of involvement that are applicable to the communities involved.
- Clearly identified opportunities for continuing involvement as part of a continuing programme of consultation.
- Transparency and accessibility of the process.
- Planning for involvement: community involvement should be planned into the process of preparation and revision of documents.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the standards to be attained by the Local Authority in relation to the levels of community involvement in the preparation and review of planning documents. This should be a transparent outline, allowing the community to know when and how they will be consulted. The Statement should outline how the Local Planning Authority will meet or exceed the outlined requirements within the regulations provided by Government. The SCI process that is carried out is presumed to be a sound procedure, unless evidence is provided that contradicts this. The procedure for verifying the soundness of the SCI follows a series of categories that the SCI must meet, these are:

- Compliance with the minimum requirements for consultation.
- Linkages with other community involvement initiatives.
- Identification of the community groups and other bodies who will be consulted.
- Methods of consultation are suitable for the guidance and groups involved.
- Proof that resources are available to manage community involvement.
- Illustration of how the results of community involvement will be fed into the plan preparation stages.⁹

⁹ Planning Policy Statement 12, Office of the Deputy Prime minister: 2004

Contents and Coverage

The SCI should identify the authority's vision and strategy for community involvement and how this will link to other strategy's e.g. the Community Strategy. The SCI should identify the community groups to be involved and the techniques which will be used for consultation. These consultation techniques should be suitable for all and groups who are predominantly difficult to reach by traditional methods of consultation.

The points at which consultation will be carried out will also be identified in relation to preparing Local Development Documents. Information should be provided concerning the methods of consultation to be used and their suitability for the different stages of Local Development Documents, e.g. Core Strategy, Area Action Plans, etc.

It may also be appropriate to explain how community involvement will be undertaken for different subjects or issues e.g. housing. The SCI may state which types of body will be consulted for different Local Development Documents and will also illustrate that there are resources available for the successful management of community involvement. The SCI will illustrate how the results achieved from community involvement should be fed into the preparation of Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Evidence must also be present of the Planning Authority's process for reviewing the SCI and also describe the Planning Authority's policy for consultation on Planning Applications.

Community engagement and empowerment

Involving the public in the statutory planning process has been a pre-occupation of governments since the 1960s. As a recent National Government report indicates:

“The planning profession’s history of working with communities can be traced back to the late 1960s and the publication of the Skeffington report ‘People and Planning’. That report accepted the need to involve the public in planning and made far-reaching recommendations which influenced subsequent legislation in the early 1970s. Publicity and consultation became required components of the statutory planning system providing local people with opportunities to comment on and object to development plans and planning applications. Planners in the 1970s embraced this new responsibility with some enthusiasm, and time and effort was spent preparing exhibitions and organising public meetings.

Despite the enthusiasm, the response from the public was typically disappointing. Gradually this led many councils to reassess their commitment to public consultation and to carry out only the minimum necessary to meet the requirements of the planning acts. However, some planning authorities stayed committed to the principle of participation and devised new strategies to overcome the barriers to engagement.

As a result, the planning profession today has a wealth of experience of working with communities and valuable examples of good practice to which we can refer”.¹⁰

Over recent years it has become clear that in order to successfully regenerate our towns and cities the inclusion of the community is of key importance.

“Regeneration is done by and with people; it is not done to them”.¹¹

This means not consulting with the local community in a tokenistic manner. If communities are to be involved in the planning process then their input should be valid, informed and above all, respected. The recently published Sustainable Communities plan clarifies this and makes it clear that effective community involvement is central to plan delivery.¹²

¹⁰ Public Participation in the Revised Planning System: Report for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Alan Townsend, with Janet Tully University of Durham.

¹¹ Active Partners: Community Participation (Yorkshire Forward: March 2000)

¹² Sustainable Communities: building for the future (ODPM: February 2003)



A clear observation, it would seem, is that too often the opinion of the community is disregarded and considered to be problematic.

The Sustainable Communities plan is part of a wider strategic remit by the ODPM and only touches on general aspects of community involvement. That said, many recent reports and publications have made suggestions and sometimes bold statements that the community should come first and that community engagement is at the heart of sustainable planning and regeneration. However few publications actually offer a tool kit to effectively deliver this. For example, Townsend and Tully, 2003¹³ draw some interesting conclusions when they look at the approaches of three different Councils. They suggest that community plans lack a spatial approach that is required for communities to understand them and highlight the possible merging of community plans with LDF's to create a clearer focus to community engagement.

Research looking into Practical Guidance for practitioners looks into some common attributes to community involvement, such as project management, communication, partnership

13 The legacy of the Development Corporations: from heavy engineering to call centres, in Northern Economic Review, No 33/34 Spring 2003, pp80-95

working and evaluation techniques.¹⁴ This reference is a useful tool when beginning in the process but it does little to establish direct action that can be done to essentially audit or appraise a particular engagement strategy. Further work by consultants ENTEC for the ODPM also drew attention to the possible beneficial relationships between Local Development Frameworks and Community Strategies in terms of improving community planning, creating more effective delivery mechanisms, the more efficient use of resources and expert knowledge.¹⁵ One of the most influential publications that relates to this topic area is Yorkshire Forwards 'Active Partners' Report 2000 which calls for quantifiable ways to assess community engagement:

If community participation is the key to success, it needs to happen across the range of public spending, and it needs to be measured¹⁶.

14 Larsen Christine: Facilitating community involvement 2004, Practical Guidance for Practitioners and Policy Makers, Development and Practice Report 27 (On-line report 53/04) (Accessed 21/12/2004)

15 The Relationships between Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, Entec, September 2003 (for the ODPM).

16 Active Partners Report: Benchmarking Community Participation in Regeneration, Yorkshire Forward, March 2000. Yorkshire forward is the RDA for the Yorkshire and Humber region and they have been instrumental in leading the way in relation to community empowerment and involvement.

The Active Partners report does just this. It sets out twelve clear benchmarks that should be met during the community involvement process and also makes recommendations as to how local authorities should take the lessons learnt forward and use the knowledge gained in future projects. Active Partners makes it clear that the best should do better and the worst need to reach acceptable standards that will bring success.

This holistic approach is unique. Until recently, related literature has offered little or no real guidance. For example, *Community Involvement in Planning*¹⁷ is one of the most up to date Government publications that reflect some of the work of Active Partners but it lacks content in relation to specific guidance on community empowerment; however, it does explain the legislative stance of SCIs. Active Partners also makes specific reference to the rights of the public with regard to planning, linking to the Human Rights Act (1998) and some rather helpful points on understanding communities, such as the Governments broader programme for community capacity building, enabling people to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities in their communities to engage with institutions and processes, including planning.

17 Community involvement in Planning: The Governments Objectives (ODPM, 2004)

In addition Planning Policy Statement 12 lays out some good pointers to assist in the production of SCI's, however these lack conviction and they seem to skirt around the subject. Practitioners need to know what action is best to take and as a result that guidance is still at present weak in this area.

The approach that Community Involvement in Planning takes is to give a 'crash course' in community involvement. Although the information provided is useful it does little to assist, for example, a Council Officer in compiling a Statement of Community Involvement or a consultation and involvement strategy for a master plan or such like. In comparison, Active Partners has a far more functional feel to it. Benchmarking is explained in detail and it pushes the argument that there is a need for formal auditing of consultation processes throughout - in order to achieve sustainable community based regeneration.

So far, NCC has produced "The Newcastle Plan"¹⁸ which is a supporting document towards the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The Newcastle Plan is intended to reflect the needs of people living in Newcastle on a variety of issues such as environment, education and housing.

18 Making a Great North City: The Newcastle Plan, Part two – LNRS for the East End, West End and North and Outer West 2004-7



This has direct links to newly emerging Local Development Frameworks (LDF's)¹⁹. However, although this includes areas of the East End of the City it is not focussed enough to serve as a SCI and it fails to offer any real detailed spatial element, therefore making it difficult to relate it to land use.

A City Wide SCI is emerging and is due to be passed in early 2006, this document will support all of the Development Plan Documents that are currently being prepared and will be written in accordance with the guidance that is set down by Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12.²⁰ it will also link to the community strategy.

Therefore, in order to satisfy the needs of the community as well as according with the legislative requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004²¹ it is necessary to produce this report profiling and auditing the steps made thus far in engaging the community in relation to stages two and three of the Byker Urban Design Competition. Although the emerging SCI from the City Council is an overarching

19 LDFs will comprise Local Development Documents (LDDs), which will include planning documents with development plan status – to be known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs), and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). There will be new requirements for the process of producing and examining DPDs. The Government requires Local Development Frameworks to be fully in place by March 2007.

20 Planning Policy Statement 12: ODPM, 2004

21 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004: © Crown Copyright 2004

strategy, for the purposes of adopting the winning scheme in the competition a SCI will be needed in order to create an Area Action Plan for Byker.

From reviewing relevant reports on this subject it is clear that community involvement is central to the effective delivery of urban regeneration programmes. The process should not be one of ticking boxes but more a learning curve for the community as well as the Local Authority. A system of auditing throughout process must be adhered to in order to justify funding from Bridging Newcastle Gateshead and to ensure effective delivery of the sustainable community led regeneration planned in Byker.



Community engagement in Newcastle

It is not uncommon that community consultation processes falls short of really addressing the problems in hand and generally serves as a one way information exchange with residents venting their frustrations in relation to the council failing to meet certain service requirements. In conjunction with Bridging Newcastle Gateshead and Newcastle City Council, a new and more collaborative consultation approach was sought during the Byker Design Competition. This aimed to successfully engage the local community and enable ownership of the scheme as it is developed.

From the outset the approach from the Council was transparent, an approach that was considered suspect by the local people – due to poor consultation efforts by NCC in the past. This report will discuss how this strategy of engagement changed and evolved over the period of the scheme and also it will show how the council has adopted an increasingly flexible approach to attempt to include everyone in the Byker area.

This report will focus on key benchmark targets that NCC should have achieved in the consultation phase and analyse and critique the outcomes of the approach. It will conclude with future recommendations to be adopted in order to ensure further improvements in the scheme into its further stages.

Benchmarking Targets

In order to audit and appraise the how NCC has delivered the scheme and involved the community it is essential to set benchmarks to compare success from. The following benchmarking indicators are taken from Yorkshire Forwards Active Partners Report¹⁴.



Influence

- Is the community recognised and valued as an equal partner at all stages of the process?
- Who had the first word in the regeneration strategy and how are community agendas reflected from day one and throughout the process?
- How are community members made to feel valued as equal partners?
- There is meaningful community representation on all decision making bodies from initiation.
- How are communities represented on decision making groups (in addition to/instead of the bigger players such as local councillors)?
- How are decision-making processes enabling communities to be heard and to influence?
- How have communities determined decision making agendas from the preparatory stage through to the forward strategy?



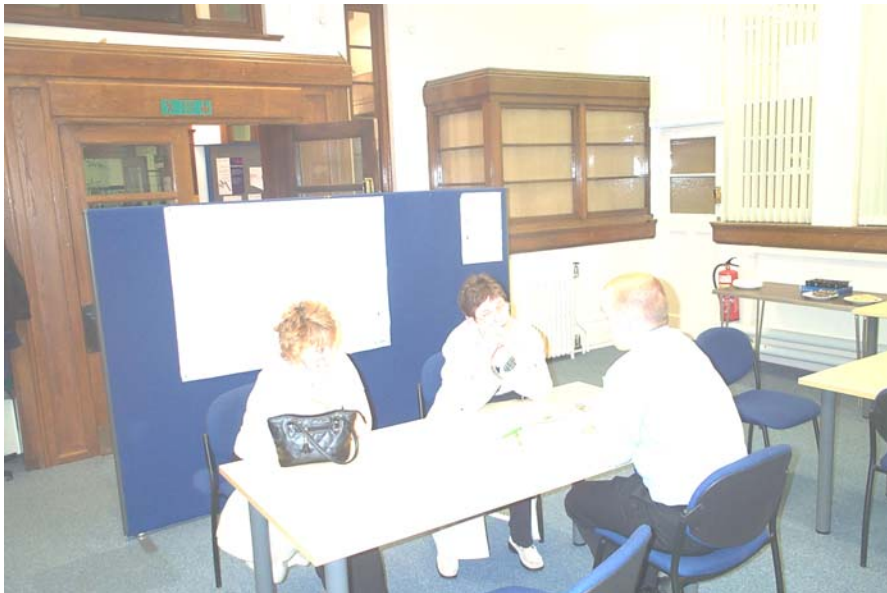
Inclusivity



- All community members have the opportunity to participate.
- How are you supporting community networks/structures through which all communities can contribute to decision making?
- What creative/flexible approaches have you developed to engage members of all communities?
- What are the ranges of opportunities through which community members can influence decisions?
- Communities have access to and control over resources.
- In what ways do regeneration workers and decision makers make themselves accessible to community members?
- How is community control of resources being increased?
- Evaluation of regeneration partnerships incorporates a community agenda.
- How are you ensuring community ownership of evaluation processes?
- The diversity of local communities and interests are reflected at all levels of the regeneration process.

Communication

- A two-way information strategy is developed and implemented.
- How do you ensure that information is clear and accessible and reaches all communities in time for it to be acted upon?
- How are these involved in regeneration informed about the communities with whom they are working?
- Programme and project procedures are clear and accessible.
- What steps are you taking to ensure that scheme procedures facilitate community participation rather than act as a barrier?





Capacity

- Communities are resourced to participate.
- What resources are provided for the development of community led networks and community groups?
- What support is provided for community members and community representatives?
- What strategy is in place to support community led sustainability?
- Understanding, knowledge and skills are developed to support partnership working.
- How are you ensuring that all partners (including senior people from the public and private sectors), develop the understanding, knowledge and skills to work in partnership and engage with communities?
- What training is provided and who is participating in both the delivery and learning?

Community involvement Audit Trail

The table (see appendix) gives a chronological trail of the community engagement techniques that have been adopted by NCC so far.

It highlights dates locations and information relating to the feedback that was received from focus groups and interviews with the residents representatives.

What follows is analyses of the feedback from these meetings.



Feedback from the community

When asked about how they felt in relation to being recognised as an equal partner in the scheme the residents felt that after a slow start things were getting better. They criticised the initial approach of the Council and said that they did not think the warnings and implications of the scheme were made clear and as a result people became apathetic towards the scheme. They remarked that they did feel cynical in the early stages but now things seemed to be ‘coming together’:

There might have been a little more ‘oomph’ in the initial contact!

When asked about if they had the ‘first word’ in the regeneration strategy the community curtly responded with a NO. On elaboration it became clear they felt that NCC were asking their views because they were obliged to and when they weren’t doing this they were just ‘bulldozing ahead’.

You know legally they have to do it and sometimes you feel as though they are just paying lip service to you.

They did say in conclusion that they felt they were beginning to take ownership of the scheme and they were pleased. However, they noted that a better understanding of how and why the design competition came about would have been useful.

Certainly I don’t know enough about how this came into being, you know, how this thing was born other than it has something to do with the listing of the Byker Wall and the recognition that something had to be done at Raby Cross and then suddenly it appeared that St Lawrence Square could be involved in it.

Initially the community thought that too many decisions had been made before initial contact was made and concluded that in the first instance the scheme had a Council – as opposed to a – Community feel to it.

This viewpoint gathers additional weighting when the community was asked as to whether there had been meaningful community representation on all decision taking from initiation of the scheme.

I wouldn’t say that we have had the opportunity to be part of the decision making as such.



They did remark that the open approach from officers involved had been good and they felt like they could contact them at any time and ask questions.

Residents felt that at times 'the approach' was over-complicated and could have been simplified, especially the exhibition of the entries. They thought that the entries should have been asked to submit more community-friendly designs and drawings.

They did feel however that their views were becoming more relevant as the process develops. That said, they did think that the ultimate decision would not be up to them and irrespective of their views and opinions, Councillors and Officers would have the final word. However they did comment that they had had some influence in changing aspects of the process, in particular the approach by NCC to explain the different schemes to them. As a result the community secured the drafting of a charter. They were pleased with this outcome and felt that they were 'being heard'.

In relation to inclusivity the representatives did feel that the community had been given the opportunity to get involved in the process. However they had concerns regarding the apathy that many members of the community had shown to the scheme and they hoped for ways that this could be improved.

They thought that the study visits, in particular, were an excellent vehicle to include everyone and thought it broke down some of the barriers that existed between the community and NCC. They were also pleased with the locations that were chosen for meetings; The St Peter's Social Club was a favourite because the community felt they were on familiar ground and were more relaxed and therefore more enthusiastic to participate in debate and discussion.

That was the first meeting where things started to take off I think.

Existing community networks were considered to be good – yet severely understaffed and resourced. They commended the work of Fiona Swindell at BARC and thought that this was a key to the future success of the scheme and in particular, her ability to engage hard to reach groups. The group also felt that translation services should be available via BARC.

The inability to engage hard to reach groups such as asylum seekers and young people was mentioned. A particular example that was drawn upon was the Richmond Fellowship in St Lawrence Square. It was also highlighted that NCC had missed the opportunity to engage in more informal networks within Byker. Sam, a local shopkeeper, was astounded at the fact that he hadn't received newsletters and leaflets to give out in his shop.

I could say here is a newsletter about the design competition, take it away and read it I am sure that out of every 100 I gave out I would get 30-40 back. I honestly believe that.

The group considered this to be quite an omission in the engagement process and suggested that informal networking such as this should be considered. They also said that it is these informal paths that generally produce the best results.

I don't think they have made a specific effort to pinpoint each one. I think they have done it as an overall mass thing and those areas of the community have been included in on-mass.

Overall, the group did think that NCC had failed to include a diverse cross section of the community that will be affected by the competition. However it was also recognised that there are difficulties in engaging people in hard to reach groups.

When asked about how they felt about having access to resources the residents said that funding was available via community development workers and they had received expenses as well as the opportunity to undertake training. However, in general, the ability of resident representatives to access and control resources was far from clear (but was improving).

When asked about information being a two way process and it being clear and accessible the group agreed that all information and material that NCC had produced was clear and understandable. However the main issue they had was that there were too many time delays in receiving information that they requested. They considered this to be unacceptable and if they were expected to put the effort in to attend meetings and promote the competition, the least NCC could do is acquire reports for them within a set time frame. Issues around NCC staff capacity were raised and understood by the group – this will be looked at later in the report. The group summed up the issue of information and its availability;

Just this delay in getting information back annoys me because we started, the four reps have now started to meet on a regular basis, we have only had one meeting and the day before yesterday, I got the minutes of that meeting and the agenda for the next one. When you look down the minutes of the meeting, you've probably got them there. There are about four or five requests for information, you know, specific information and we are going to the next meeting without that.

The group thought that a protocol that NCC should adhere to should be established the community charter addressed some these issues but the group thought that its development had been slow. Issues arose around the pressures that the group felt in drawing a distinction between their own personal views

and those of the community they represented. Also, it came to light that the group felt 'guilty' at times because the views they were representing were purely personal as they had no conflicting views from other residents in the area.

Another observation by the group was that their names were not put on the newsletter and it was thought that in order to increase the participation of the residents in the area they should be made aware of who their representatives were. Finally, it was noted that there is a severe lack of awareness of the competition between Council Officers and this is something that needs to be improved. A recent study by Your Homes Newcastle²² in St Lawrence Square was looking at property investment; the residents were astounded that this was being proposed when the competition was hinting at possible demolition.

There is a lack of joined up thinking at the Council.

In relation to capacity and the group's access to resources they felt that this had been lacking. A couple of the group felt that it had only been as a result of the skills they had – not those that were developed – that they had been able to get so actively involved in the process and role of being a community

²² Your Homes Newcastle is the organisation responsible for managing council homes on behalf of tenants and leaseholders for Newcastle City Council. It was launched on 1st April 2004 and has responsibility for the Council's 33,000 housing stock.

representative. It was considered that there was a need to provide specific training for community representatives so that they could perform better in the role. The situation at present was considered to be like a 'voyage of discovery' with neither side knowing the true remit of their role.

It is something different to anything else that they had done so everyone is working in the dark to a certain extent and almost in a way learning as they go along and I think that is on both sides, Council and community. In a way I suppose we are supporting each other in that aspect.

A glossary of terms was also requested so that the residents group could explain with more ease to the community. This would be particularly useful if they were to hold meetings in the community at BARC (Byker Area Resource Centre) to explain the competition and the progress so far. All of this is dependant on the funding and the worker capacity. The group made an interesting point in that they thought that if funding and capacity wasn't available to make the scheme a success then NCC should not have began in the first place.

The question then is begged, well if that is the case and they don't have the resources should they have thought about that before and not set this up until they had full resources to do this.

The residents thought that there was a need for more designated feedback sessions in the area where they would get answers to their questions as opposed to being promised responses.

Overall it was thought that a section of funds that they could control would be ideal. They expressed interest in being able to go on further site visits of the short-listed entries, attend seminars and lectures to build on their knowledge. As well as this they thought that a more informal approach was required.

I think it just needs to be a fairly full session with various people so if and when we go back to a meeting where there are other residents and so on and somebody says what's that then we can put it into fairly simple words.

Evidence that the residents were building their knowledge and understanding was apparent and it was good to see that the efforts so far have been beneficial. This can hopefully form the evidence base to justify future funding in this area.

If this competition hadn't come up I would have gone on to my horoscope or the Times Supplements, you know. But because I saw this one (an article on urban design) I thought right, I sat down to read and it does have an effect on what we are doing here so you know, the next time I meet that guy from CABE I might start asking him some questions.



Analysis of approach

To date it can be argued that the efforts by NCC have been honourable, in that they have made considerable efforts to be open and inclusive in their approach to the community engagement strategy for Byker. The community have recognised these efforts and feel that they are gradually becoming empowered as a result of the scheme. The layout and original ethos behind the estate has made this approach easier as community facilities and a clearly defined community network were established prior to the conception of the competition and this has been of use.

However, it can be said that NCC are not really taking advantage of the informal networks that exist – as it is these that invariably prove to be the most effective. This argument is a double edged sword. On one hand some would argue that to put trust in just these areas would be foolish. On the other hand, add on benefits such as correctly briefing wardens, school teachers and other locally based sources of information would only seek to better inform the local populous and also get the word on the street.

On the whole, the community feel that they are included in the process, yet they are sceptical still of the motives for this and suspect that NCC is adopting this approach through necessity as opposed to need.

Further efforts to widen the influence that local people have will help to quell these opinions and reassert the confidence in the Local Authority that many had during the original phase of the estate. As a result of this increase in inclusivity - the knock on effect of the community feeling that they have more influence on the outcomes of the competition. At present there are worries that as the scheme moves further into the implementation phases the reigns that the community have on the scheme will have less and less control.

Communication so far has been clear and effective, with residents in general feeling happy with the style and format of publications. Yet they did seem to think that a more, albeit controversial, approach to marketing could be used to 'enthuse' more members of the area to 'sit up and take note'. Furthermore, concerns were raised in connection to 'equal opportunities' and the ability for all members of the community to read leaflets etc, and incorrect procedures in connection to translation and clarity were highlighted. The use of the website and the community forum was seen as an excellent idea that should be continued. Also the general approach of immediate contact with key officers is appreciated by the members of the advisory group.

That said, additional outreach work needs to be considered though. Further efforts by NCC to bridge the gap between 'technical jargon' and 'down to earth explanation' were thought to be needed as, at times, the community did feel that particular aspects of the scheme were 'going over their heads'. In addition to this it was noted that the community *per se* lacked the knowledge and understanding of the scheme and without this being addressed they had serious anxieties as to the future of the project and their level of inclusion. Capacity of resources was mentioned and the community resented the fact that funds were available for practices, yet as so called 'equal partners', they had insufficient funds available to develop and effectively contribute.

The establishment of the community charter is a useful tool in addressing these issues and its further development is imperative. Also, an element of independent advice seemed to be lacking.

Questions around the issue of capacity were prevalent when speaking to the group of residents and concerns were raised as to the speed at which requests for information and feedback were processed. This is a problem that is going to have to be looked at. Current staffing does not allow for designated work on this and, unless addressed, it could become a major problem in the future when slippage and error could be costly and of severe detriment to the outcome and success of the scheme.

Two-way information was considered inadequate and the community felt at times that they were being sidelined. It was felt that a clear strategy of engagement wasn't apparent as well as a lack of designated target areas (i.e. businesses and voluntary groups).

Overall, the approach to community engagement seemed to be far too *ad hoc* and lacked any clear strategic direction or focus. As a consequence it was accused of being 'top down'. Finally, keeping to time-scales seemed to be an attribute that the community felt was very important - this has specific interest to those who were likely to be relocated.

Conclusions

To conclude this report returns to the four themes that were highlighted at the start of the report and makes conclusions and recommendations on the basis of those four areas.

Influence

From auditing the approach by NCC it is clear that efforts have been made to establish the communities influence on the competition. Consultation on the design brief was done and aspects of community engagement have been reflected in that pictures from local school children were used. The communities views were taken on board by the judging panel and the resident representatives were present on the day and had an equal voice in the decision making process. Continued community involvement and influence is an intention in the further stages of the scheme. However, as the process becomes more complex it will be necessary to provide training to improve the community representatives ability to contribute. The resident advisory group needs to be engaged in the decision making process otherwise their role is merely one of tokenistic representation as opposed to one of empowerment and engagement.



Inclusivity

The Council are still facing problems when trying to widen the scope of their involvement with different members of the community. Efforts have been made and the audit table reveals different approaches to address the problem and this is commendable.

However, it seems that there is a lack of structure to the techniques being used. A lot of the consultations have been rushed and obvious mistakes have been made that have had a detrimental effect on the quality of the feedback received. Efforts have also been made to engage local schools. Pressures of time and lack of staff have meant that this has not been explored further. Hard to reach groups, in particular the large amounts of asylum seekers and residents, whose mother tongue is not English, have been largely ignored.

Residents in the Rodney Street area have been confused at times because they have been unsure whether they are included in the curtilage of the competition site, this has led to an apathy towards the competition that will be difficult, although not impossible, to reverse. NCC needs to formulate and adopt a community strategy in Byker as part of the design competition that will serve to better include the wider community. This need not be a lengthy and complicated document, merely a series of points that clearly outline the obligations that NCC will have.

Targeting places where people already are. For example: Local Supermarkets, Shops, and Community Facilities in the Area. And creating more imaginative engagement events, such as film festivals and carnivals would also help this strategy.

The strategy should be joined up with a proactive marketing strategy that would seek to attract and increase interest in the competition as a whole.



Communication

Communication between the community and NCC isn't as clear as it has to be to ensure the smooth and efficient running of a scheme of this nature. Decisions made by Councillors on the need to leaflet certain areas, but not others, on the basis of cost need to be thought of in context. If NCC are attempting to include more people then there are likely to be costs incurred in doing this, the scheme appears to be well financed by Bridging Newcastle Gateshead and this should therefore be used to formulate, as previously mentioned, a clear communication strategy as well as a marketing strategy that should run in parallel.

The residents group feel that they do not have the required knowledge or understanding to 'spread the word' about the competition to the wider community and feel limited in their ability to answer questions relating to relocation, compulsory purchase, etc. Inability to communicate on their part is a direct consequence of NCC's current shortcomings with passing on information and making minutes of meetings available as well as simple tasks such as briefing residents groups prior to meetings with short listed teams. A remit of the core responsibilities should be agreed between the representatives and NCC and vice versa from the residents in the form of a statement of obligation. Personnel should be made available to facilitate and ensure that communication strategies are

being adhered to. The website is a good medium of communication; however it does have a restrictive and exclusionary element. It is essential that varied and equally opportunistic techniques of communication are administered to both improve inclusion and influence for, and by, the local community.



Capacity

In respect to funding, NCC is adequately resourced to deliver this scheme. The problem that is apparent is that there are staffing issues that limit the scope and effectiveness of NCC's aims. Funds need to be ring fenced to accommodate a more dedicated workforce, otherwise as the scheme moves into its further stages it will lose momentum and community participation and support will be lost.

Funding is lacking with respect to developing the knowledge and understanding of the residents group. Specifically, the residents need to be briefed and brought up to speed on the basic legislative measures that will affect people living in the area. In addition there is a requirement that they improve their knowledge and understanding of regeneration and the planning system in general.

Community involvement and participation is by no means an easy task and there are still numerous grey areas surrounding this particular field. A heuristic approach is at times appropriate and it must be remembered that an element of understanding is required by both parties. NCC has made efforts to include and actively engage the community in Byker.

As a result of some apathy and ineffective techniques these attempts have at times fallen on deaf ears. NCC should not feel as though they have failed. They should seek to learn from these mistakes and take them forward so as to fine tune their engagement and empowerment strategies in the future. In order for the scheme to be successful there needs to be an understanding between NCC and the community and a mutual understanding of each others key aims and objectives.



Recommendations for the future

Short Term – next three months

- A two way agreement between NCC and the community representatives should be drawn up and signed. This should highlight the obligations that both parties expect of each other.
- A community engagement strategy to be formulated with the community and this should be delivered in partnership with a marketing strategy aimed at increasing awareness and seeking to engage people further. Bridging Newcastle Gateshead, NCC and the local community to produce this in collaboration. There should be clear officer responsibility for the management and co-ordination of the communications strategy with a single post dealing with community newsletters, management of the competition web site and technical / press releases.
- A Community Charter to be written in collaboration with residents groups and wider community then finalised and signed off by Leader of the Council, Local Councillors, Pathfinder, NCC and five short listed entries.

The nature and precise role of the ‘charter’ has to be fit for purpose and reflect the needs of the urban design competition. The charter should set out generic principles for the regeneration activities, in addition to the practical implications for the delivery / management process and the substantive content within the physical proposals. It may be useful to provide sections of the charter that relate to the anticipated levels of impact; such as:

- [1] Residents with properties directly affected within the two linked competition sites;
- [2] Residents within the wider Byker and St Lawrence areas who are indirectly affected by changes to the level of community / education / retail services, etc;
- [3] Commercial and community enterprises within the two competition sites.

The onus within the ‘charter’ should include the clear identification of responsibilities for each principle [typically these will be the responsibility of residents, councillors, City Council as ‘client’, short-listed design practices, regeneration / development partners] and the anticipated resource implications to be able to meet the charter standards.



- Schools, community groups and local shopkeepers should be encouraged to get involved. Regular update sessions and drop-in advice centres should be set up.
- A translation service for all publications should be offered and this should be made clear on all future publications.
- An independent advocate should be appointed to administer the needs of the community. This has to be based upon comparative regeneration models and protocols where the advocate has explicit responsibility for providing and co-ordinating a range of technical training sessions for the resident representatives sitting on the Judging panel. At this stage, it is possible to identify a number of training workshops that explicitly relate to:

[1] The detailed design of community facilities and future service provision, working with individual services users and providers in and around Raby Cross.

[2] Exploration of the function and potential sub-regional role of an urban studies centre based within the competition area.

[3] Issues relating to urban design, scale and density.

[4] The implications of the statutory planning system on the design competition.

- In addition to this level of community support and capacity building, the advocate role would attend the internal City Council Byker Technical Team meetings and ensure a clear communication link between the work of the Technical Team, resident representatives and the wider community affected by the competition proposals. [A sample brief for this role will be available soon and should be the basis for immediate invitation to tender].
- The residents' advisory group and their independent advocate should be invited to attend the Technical Team meetings and minutes of meetings should be made available on the website and via post. Copies of the minutes should also be displayed in the window of BARC and St Lawrence Community Centre as well as being sent to people on the mailing list.
- Utilisation of a shop front in Raby Cross could accommodate an electronic board that could give updates of the competition in various commonly spoken languages in the area.
- Take advantage of informal networks such as Local Police Constables, Neighbourhood Wardens and Housing Offices (Your Homes Newcastle) by ensuring that they are correctly informed and kept up to date with developments.



- Wider distribution of information to places that people frequent such as schools, pubs, shops and supermarkets.
- The Council need to appoint and recruit an enabling/project management position as soon as possible in order to coordinate the various recommendations mentioned and steer the competition through the next stages.
- Another Urban Design Officer needs to be recruited to take on the increasing work load that will start to emerge from this project, at present human resources are far too stretched.



Medium term – next six months

- The establishment of a site office is recommended with a view to creating an area based team in the area.
- Funds need to be made available to offer seminars, workshops and lectures as well as additional support that the community feel they need. A conference and community planning weekend should take place at the end of Stage 2 to promote the competition.
- One-stop-shop sessions to be held during next stages of the competition to offer advice and answer questions relating to relocation, compulsory purchase etc.
- A ‘tease campaign’ should be initiated to increase enthusiasm and interest in the competition throughout stage two. This should take advantage of the Walker Road fronting with South Byker and the advertising hoarding adjacent to St Lawrence Square. A logo or acronym should be attributed to the competition to create a sense a mystery and suspense and therefore increase interest.



Long term – next 6 to12 months

- A high profile event in the summer should be held to promote the culmination of Stage 2. A carnival/film festival would be ideal and it could be incorporated within the Ouseburn and Shields Road Festivals.
- Future regeneration partnerships should be obliged to engage and fund outreach work as well as the funding of training and capacity building that is considered necessary by the local community.
- Independent auditing of the competition should continue throughout the further stages with a view to producing a good practice guide.
- There should be a continuation of national and international level benchmarking the processes of community design.

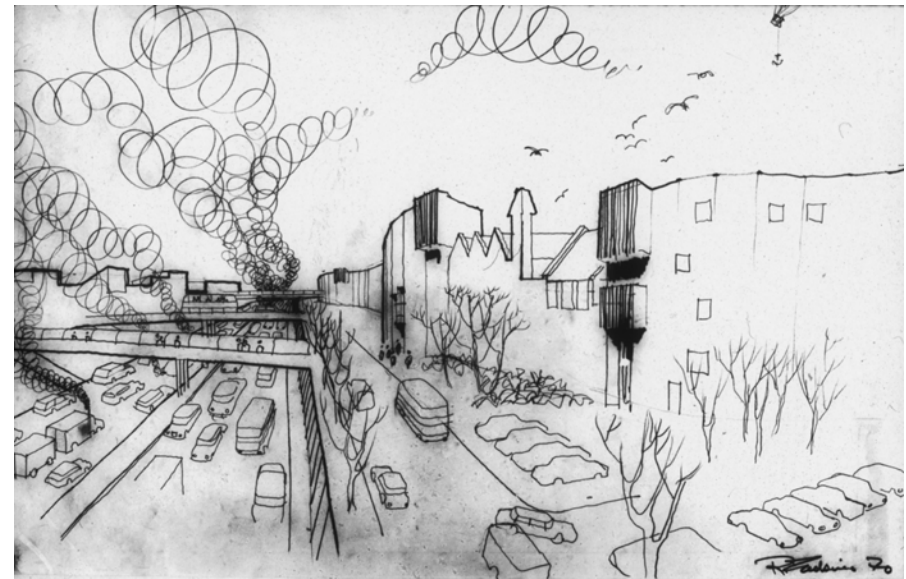


Closing Comment

The innovative approach to working ‘actively’ with the Byker community has to be maintained at a level which is comparable to national ‘best-practice’. There are opportunities that exist to collaborate at a national level with the Home Office’s ‘Civic Pioneers²³’ initiative as a basis for sharing the practical experience gained through the management of the community consultation and to collaborate at an international level as part of the European Union’s 6th Framework programme investigating the community implications for sustainable design.

The urban design competition should use these and other similar opportunities positively to maintain a high standard of community involvement and seek to ensure resident representatives and elected members become involved in or aware of the role of ‘benchmarking’ the processes of community involvement.

²³ Civic pioneers are councils who are committed to developing and sustaining opportunities for local people and groups to influence what happens in their communities.



Appendix

Please note that all photographs in this report are courtesy of Newcastle City Council, 2005.

Community feedback of the efforts made so far.

A meeting was scheduled with the residents' advisory group and knowledge house. The purpose was to receive first hand feedback on the opinions of the local community in connection to the effective engagement that had been achieved so far through the competition.

The meeting took on a focus group feel as opposed to an interview. Present at the meeting were;

Dr Jon Coaffee	GURU, Newcastle University
Chris Brocklebank	GURU, Newcastle University
Sandra Lathbury	Byker residents advisory group - Member of panel
Judith Moore	Byker residents advisory group - Member of panel
Sam Badwall	Byker residents advisory group - Business representative
Bev Blythe	St Lawrence Square Resident

Time and location details available in audit table

A list of the questions that were asked of the residents can be found in the appendices as well as notes made in the meeting and a printout of the minutes recorded.

Date	Venue and publicity	Event Description	Comments	References
12/11/2003	Brinkburn Centre	Initial Consultation exercise	Involved walkthrough of boards explaining competition with officers. Also involved completing a preliminary questionnaire that officers assisted with. 1000 letter sent out. Concerns about demolition of homes and issues about social housing mix.	Questionnaires and responses report.
17/11/2003	St Lawrence Community Centre	Initial Consultation exercise	Same as above. Supplementary mail shot hand delivered to St Lawrence area (70 letters). Community passionate about area and don't want to leave, some residents were pleased at the early stage of the consultation.	Questionnaires and responses report.
18/11/2003	Brinkburn Centre – Byker Ward Committee Meeting	Public meeting, aprox 30 residents.	Presentation by Area Director. Interest in visiting other schemes. Request that residents remain in social housing if they want to. Suggestion the LA should set up its own development company and retain ownership of the project.	Questionnaire Responses Report November 2003 Byker Ward Committee minutes Exhibition and Questionnaires available.
1/12/2003	Byker Area Resource Centre	Session with Byker Advice and Information Project (BAIP) Area Resource Centre	Group sought a Mix of housing and improved shops, with all projects together under one roof, sharing resources.	Questionnaire Responses Report

6/01/2004	St Michaels Centre	Consultation with Clergy	Interested in maintaining a place of worship in the area together with other projects under one roof.	Questionnaire Responses Report
07/01/2004	Byker Primary School	Full public meeting, outlined content of brief and context study. Held work shops with residents to further explore their needs and issues.	Letters sent home with pupils (200 hundred or so), also sent to Community Groups and Posters. Two public exhibition and Consultation sessions, a.m. and p.m. breakfast and afternoon tea was provided to encourage attendance. Qualitative data recorded by individual questionnaire. Exhibition attended by 50 residents. Generally favourable but concern about potential demolition of homes and community projects.	Questionnaire Responses Report
23/01/2004	Mail shot	Leaflet Distributed to residents	Explained competition and gave contact details and information of future events.	Copy of leaflet and mail shot addresses
27/01/2004	Byker Primary School	Public meeting, further consultation including a workshop with local school children.	Letter sent to all residents who indicated interest in future meetings at consultation events (60 residents on mailing list). Community update meeting, attended by approximately 40 local residents. Progress report, draft brief presented, comments recorded and potential community representatives identified. Highlighted issues were:- Future environmental maintenance, Mix of tenure, demographics, sustainable	Letter re: Consultation on the Brief - 27 th January

			design, transport, services, links to current housing developments see letter re: Consultation on the Brief .	
10/02/2004	Byker Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to class six to set picture exercise. Later visit for mapping exercise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finished drawing indicated concerns about housing, environment, play facilities and transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class six pictures some incorporated into the final version of the brief.
06/04/2004	Walker Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers met with a Walker Road residents rep, to discuss concerns and questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future of their homes, protocol of builders, possibility of refurbishment grants, state of neglect of unfinished Byker Cycle link. Notes of meeting forwarded to design Team. Area Director responded by letter. Offer made to set up explanatory meeting re quayside developments. Cycle way issues forwarded to DEEC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes of meeting. • Area Director’s response letter.
20/04/2004	Newcastle University	Briefing with Urban Design Students	Urban Design final year students were set the task of creating their own solutions for Byker, some interesting and thought provoking ideas. Helped technical panel realise the scope of the possible entries that they may receive.	Submissions from students

17/05/2004	Official Launch date of BDC	Briefs available and interested parties invited to request an application pack.	High profile newspaper, radio and industry press coverage in previous weeks. Also, website launched www.newcastle.gov.uk/byker that provides a Q & A section as well as a community forum. (See website for details)	News clippings etc
19/05/2004	St Peter's Social Club, Byker	Community meeting at the request of residents.	This meeting was the first time that the residents started to understand the aims and objectives of the scheme. Members of the Scotswood JWT were in attendance and their input helped the Byker residents began to believe and trust the City Council from this point onwards. 1 st Draft of the brief was presented and discussed, residents were happy with the content.	Draft brief
04/06/2004	Staithes and Westoe site visit	First outing for residents involved in the capacity building.	Reactions to these schemes were mixed but on the whole there was a lack of enthusiasm for the Westoe scheme.	Residents comments DVD of study visit
04/07/2004	Shields Road Festival	Stall and a poster display was part of the Shields Road Community Festival to present the approach to the design competition and raise awareness.	While there was some interest from people attending the community festival, the inclement weather on the day meant that this was a small number with almost everyone visiting the stall and exhibition from outside of the competition area.	Publicity

29/06/2004 to 30/06/2004	London	Coin Street Fact finding trip	The design of the public spaces was considered one of the most attractive and successful aspects of the scheme.	Feedback and DVD available
29/06/2004 to 30/06/2004	Greenwich	Fact finding trip	There were mixed responses to the guided tour of the first phases of the Greenwich Millennium Village.	Feedback and DVD available
29/06/2004 to 30/06/2004	BEDZED	Fact finding Trip	It was felt that Byker would be an ideal place to reproduce the principles of high density, good design, innovative use of space both internally and externally and environmentally friendly practices of this development, as long of they were not 'watered down'	Feedback and DVD available
07/07/2004	Byker Primary School	Update meeting	To update residents on progress thus far and also for further discussions on resident representation and the ballot process. Briefing on the format for the future trip to Sweden as well.	Ballot letter
12/07/2004	Sweden	Malmö, Augustenborg Regeneration Project Site Visit/Study Tour	Positive feedback from residents in respect of sustainable drainage techniques as well as waste collection. They also commented on the array of community facilities that were available.	Feedback and DVD available

12/07/2004	Sweden	Malmö, Bo01 Housing Expo Site Site Visit/Study Tour	The positives were the use of excellent materials, wide open spaces. The walkways were well lit, wide, a lot of open sky. However, they thought it was an exhibition, not suitable at all for the regeneration of Byker, the mixture of styles and designs, led to a lack of cohesion. It felt soulless, in fact, surprisingly enough the only point of interest was the tower, as it was unique.	Feedback and DVD available
12/07/2004	Sweden	Stockholm, St Eriks Quarter Site Visit/Study Tour	This was the most favoured scheme. Good use of highly populated area and land – fantastic quality materials used. Blended in really well with the rest of the city – good use of straight lines and curves	Feedback and DVD available
12/07/2004	Sweden	Bo02 Hammarby Sjöstad Site Visit/Study Tour	Good use of space/water and greenery, The initial feeling of isolation, and feeling like a cast member of The Prisoner never went away. I felt that again it was soulless, like a dormitory town. I would like to visit in a number of years to see if it has survived, I do not hold out much hope.	Feedback and DVD available
12/07/2004	Sweden	Järla Sjö, Nacka Site Visit/Study Tour	Residents given tour by Vernon Gracie and had lunch after, residents took opportunity to question Vernon on	Feedback and DVD available

			aspects of Järsla Sjö and Byker. This is a vast improvement on Byker – great school, community space/activities.	
22/07/2004	Byker Sands Family Centre	A presentation of the 'work in progress'	A mixed group of voluntary and community sector workers based in or close to the south Byker competition site. This was followed by a question and answer session. 18 individuals attended the session. They comprised a mix of local workers; including representatives from the Local Housing Office, the Asylum Seekers Unit; and a small number of residents.	Minutes of meeting and actions, copy of presentation.
24/07/2004	Ouseburn Festival	Stall and a poster display	Part of the Ouseburn Festival to present the approach to the design competition and raise the level of local awareness.	Copy of posters
07/2004	City life article	Details of the Design Competition	Locations and dates for the exhibition of entries were contained in the July/August 2004 edition of 'Citylife' [a free circulation newsletter to every household within the city].	Copy of article
30/07/2004	Competition entries received	All entries assessed to accord with entrant requirements	16 in total Insert on internal mail and link from NCC homepage set up.	www.newcastle.gov.uk/byker

09/08/2004-12/08/2004	Civic Centre	Exhibition of 16 entries	Stage 1 of the Byker Urban Design Competition closed on 30th July 2004 and 16 qualifying entries have been received from architects across the UK, showing their proposals for the redevelopment of St Lawrence Square and South Byker areas.	Feedback forms and photos
16/08/2004	Byker Sands family centre	Exhibition of 16 entries	Local community able to comment on 16 entrants. Officers available to offer assistance to residents and answer questions.	Feedback forms and photos
18/08/2004	Evening Chronicle	Coverage of competition	Highlighted the competition, announced that 16 entrants had been received and gave information as well as contact details to get more information.	Press cutting
25/08/2004			All 16 anonymous entries placed on website. www.newcastle.gov.uk	See website
31/08/2004	St Lawrence Community Centre	Exhibition of 16 entries	Local community able to comment on 16 entrants. Officers available to offer assistance to residents and answer questions. Some residents were upset as they felt that they had not been kept informed of developments.	Feedback forms and photos
23/09/2004		Briefing Session with Resident Representatives on the Judging Panel	Informal session with the judging panel to outline the evaluation and judging process and to prepare some common questions for the development of the	Notes available as well as copy of draft community charter.

			short-listed proposals. Actions from this meeting.	
27/09/2004			Residents given digital copies of all entries as well as a leaflet with all entries on.	Copies available
28/09/2004	Brinkburn Centre	Community Meeting		
07/10/2004 and 08/10/2004		Raby Cross Tenants Association	An opportunity for residents to come and see a presentation that explains the content of each entry and ask questions about them. Organised at the request of the resident's advisory panel.	Comments and feedback
10/11/2004	Byker Area Resource Centre	Residents advisory group meeting	Independent consultants from Newcastle University meet with resident's advisory group to discuss consultation approach of NCC.	Feedback and minutes available
20/11/2004	Byker Metro and Morrisons store	Posters displayed	Large posters displayed in Metro station as well as busy supermarket window in Byker. The aim was to increase awareness and improve numbers attending meeting on 3 rd December.	Copy of poster available Response list
03/12/2004	BARC	Meeting with five practices and residents	Chance to meet and greet and put faces to names.	Some issue in relation to format, recorded and

		advisory group.	Some confusion over the agenda and the aim of the day between residents group and NCC.	submitted to NCC.
03/12/2004	St Peter's Social Club Byker	Public meeting with 5 short listed practices	Formal announcement of short listed groups, opportunity for residents to ask questions and see presentations from them.	Forms filled in giving feedback from residents.
08/12/2004	BARC	Resident meeting	Independent consultants from Newcastle University meet with the residents' advisory group to discuss consultation approach of NCC.	Feedback and minutes available
Various dates throughout the scheme.	Byker area (Two competition sites)	Door Knocking and Leaflet drops	Door knocking exercises carried out on several occasions by community development workers to further engage with community. Also, regular leaflet drops around the area to increase awareness and range of people getting involved.	List of addresses on mailing list.
Dates to be confirmed	Site office Whickham Gardens	Site office for practices to engage with community.	N/A	N/A
22/12/2004	BARC	Meeting with NCC, GURU and residents advisory panel to discuss final draft of SCI report.	Comments fed back into final report	Agenda and minutes of meeting

Meeting with residents and GURU 10/11/2004

As I said one of the simple things I have got in my head is that if they don't do them then essentially they won't get planning permission for the end scheme. That was one of the things I needed to get on board when I was doing it. I think there are quite a lot of things to go through and as I say some things will overlap but as a general, we may repeat some things but if you could bear with us as we have not really done this yet This is the first time.

The first point is on the influence side of things is have you ie the community and the person as well, but in a wider sense as well, have you felt recognised and valued as an equal partner at all stages of the process?

I think we are getting there but I think at the beginning emm not specifically. I think the Council make it, comparing this exercise with others I have known in the past, project I think it has been much better and they have made a much greater effort but I think that the very initial contact they had with us telling us about this wasn't explicit enough to warn people that everyone in both the areas, in some way would be affected. So quite a number of people just ignored it, withdrew or didn't feel that it actually had anything to do with them. I think that that initial impact could have been a lot better.

In the beginning I was a bit cynical about going to meetings initially because the Council has quite a bad track record about bulldozing ahead with plans and I did wonder whether this whole business of sending representatives was like paying lip service, you know is this an exercise a balance between what the Government expectations and requirements are about community and how much was coming direct from the Council, housing and planning about going that bit further than basic requirements to actually make it a good job.

Does this reflect any of the processes around the Growing for Growth plans at all, this sort of cynicism you have.

No this is kind of me going back on a much, much longer term, I am talking 20 years on I mean a lot of people originally especially the older residents and when I first realised how important this was, and talking to other residents, some had had notification and others hadn't, obviously known before..... It was that kind of initial lethargy, you know apathy, seen it all before, done it, been there had the teashirt, lets see what else they can come up with. I think at that point because it is such an important project, possibly the biggest thing that has happened to Byker since the war. There might just have been a bit more oomph about the initial contact.

These are some little add on points from that general, you might have a few things extra to say. Who do you think had the first words about the regeneration strategy and how are the community.

Have you the community felt recognised and valued as an equal partner at all stages of the process?

No

Do you want to elaborate

I just feel that sometimes the Council ... where they really have to and other times they just do what the hell they want.

You know legally they have to do it so lets do it and sometimes you feel as though they are just paying lip service to you.

That's right.

Any more on that subject.

The next thing is, it is sort of an aside from that. Who do you think had the first word in the regeneration strategy ie the compensation and so on.

On regeneration are you talking about us specifically.

Yes. It is a broader question but it is relating to the competition itself. Who do you think had the first word in the regeneration strategy being the competition and how are the community agendas reflected from day one throughout the process. I mean it is quite a long winded question but do you think that you were part of the process from day one or do you think you have come in at a different level.

We came in at the very beginning but I don't think that anyone else, you know, the community as a whole felt that they were involved at all or even wanted to be involved at that particular point because not a lot of people realised you know the impact that this would have. I think that a lot of people are getting on board for various other reasons at this later stage but at the beginning no. Certainly I don't know enough about how this came into being, you know, how this thing was born other than it has something to do with the Listing of the Byker Wall and the recognition that something had to be done at Raby Cross and then suddenly it appeared that St Lawrence Square could be involved in it. It seems from my point of view that the community in particular were not particularly involved at that initial stage but it seemed to be a number of organisations or departments, or I don't know what they were or who they were really. Obviously the planners over the Listing and the housing people over the voids and that kind of thing. To me it almost looks as if the Council were met with a fait accompli. We have got to do something with this so what

do we do. Generally, it certainly wasn't community led but would be Council led.

Is there anything else you want to add.

I felt there was an agenda right and that certain stages had been taken up and then the term representation was flagged up as something to get on with. It wasn't there right from the very beginning it was added on to the process. What I have been trying to find out and I haven't had a satisfactory answer yet is what actually prompted, generated the focus on Byker for redevelopment because it has been said in very documents the problems in Byker have been identified. Now that hasn't actually been spelt out to me. Some things are obvious, anti social behaviour, vandalism etc. and I have been curious were those things spelt out to the competition entrants. This is an estate an area where there are certain problems where we are looking for redevelopment, revival to look at those problems and in very simplistic terms what difference is a different housing estate going to make to the problems that exist here. Because one of the problems that have been highlighted when I have talked to other people is housing management. Byker is known as a bit of a dumping ground, like there is high competition for areas like Sandyford, Heaton where there is Council housing a shortage of general housing. There is really high demand, you can't get in. When you have got estates like West End around here where it is predominantly Council housing you can walk into

the office and come out with a set of keys in the afternoon. If you jump through a few hoops and that has come across that they will put anybody in there. That is bad for the people who live there because you get people with not much commitment to the area that are passing through and they are there because they have got to be there. I am curious is the grand design thing when it is done going to be an opportunity to have a bit of a cull. Are they going to move. I have been told by the wardens that you can identify about 9 anti-social families in this area. If you got rid of them you would get rid of most of the problems. I don't know if that is true or not. What difference is housing and planning going to make to that.

There is not much really I can add apart from that being involved in this pretty much from the start as well. I just feel that what Newcastle City Council might be slightly forced into doing it with the regeneration of the Ouseburn and Walker Riverside and they can't just leave Byker as it is. From both sides it is being pushed in and it would just leave Byker sitting there. They have to redevelop. I just feel that we are just little bit part players who they have to involve and they can agree to what we have to say and I think that most of the time they do.

I am quite skeptical about the fact that the majority of the problems appear to be in Raby Cross although St Lawrence has had its fair share as well. But if you look at the two areas St Lawrence is a very, very desirable area for development



and I just wonder whether the Council took this opportunity thinking, you know, we are not going to get a developer just to do Council housing and to clear up the bits that we don't like. Lets offer them something and its a carrot to attract them to come and that was why the two were joined together because the way it is going on the Quayside I could see at some point somebody wanting to snap up St Lawrence Square with the park and develop it purely as very expensive housing and that the Council had stepped in. I mean this is all, I have no idea whether this is right or not this is my own personal views. Obviously the regeneration came from the Council, and the Listing as well.

So that probably brings us on to the next point. How are community members made to feel valued as equal partners in this process of the competition in general.

I don't think they have been, certainly not at the very beginning. Because quite a lot of the community weren't even informed about what was going on. So if the Council felt that strongly that every member in either site knew what was going on, it failed miserably at the beginning because it didn't happen, and its from pressure put on by people who came to the first ones to make sure that all the neighbours and that as many people in the two sites know about it as possible because it is so important that it has begun to take on a momentum and more people are coming in and expressing views and being involved in it.

Could you repeat the question.

Yes how are community members made to feel valued as equal partners in this process of the competition.

I think what Sandra said there is pretty much right there but as a general thing I don't think most of the community are bothered. There are a few people who always tend to appear at these meetings the half dozen or dozen that appear. I feel that we are starting to have our say in getting more but sometimes I think the Council complicate things like when they put up the designs. Half the people didn't know what they were looking at. I think even the people who know don't fully get the idea.

If you are going to value the community then I would suggest that the community involves everybody that's residents and businesses and in the initial notification they weren't told. The people who did get them were some of the residents, certainly not all of them as far as I can see but certainly we have only got one business that I know of that is actually in our site. They weren't informed about this at all. Certainly the businesses on the perimeter of the two sites which will be affected and residents I don't think that they were particularly well informed at all.

Sorry, I just thought you were saying something about the understanding of the schemes and that sort of thing. Is there a way that you think that could be addressed.

I think there is, I think if they sort of simplify things instead of putting them on the boards maybe it having like group meetings where they present it a bit better and they show the areas and they tried to say if you took a general photograph of the area and laid on top the plans and said this is what is what instead of just sticking them on huge boards. Take this I don't think that will work.

I suggested that to Peter Ellis that if they had a laminate of each of the four designs to superimpose on that original aerial photograph that you can see this will change and this will be more user friendly to understand. I think to recap there was you know the Council majority changed hands during this process so it was a Labour headed Council initiative and its now a Liberal Council initiative, I don't know what sort of weight of importance the two parties are putting on this. Is this going to make a difference to how it is done?

Do you feel that it is making any difference or it is too early to say.

I know that Tony Flynn supported this. I mean personally, the people that we have met obviously Alison, Clare and Chris who sort of held our hand through the initial things and had a

good knowledge of the background and what we are actually going to see and what we are going to look at you know the yardstick for comparison. It was really good, I felt that people were listening to what we were saying and that it wasn't just a polite exercise but certainly when we spent that day at the Civic I felt that some people, you know, were actually taking notes of what we were saying, Councillor Peter Arnold, and not just being polite that we were there at lip service thing again because it was required.

I think at the very beginning it lacked this consultation, it lacked the contact, it just kind of missed the mark but once it started to come its beginning now to move but its not, I would not put that down to the Council who are doing that, you know who have got that momentum going. It is more the people, the few people who have attended meetings and gone to the visits and so on who have been able to have contact with the Council officers and so on. They have then been able to go back into the community and really kind of get them by the throat and say you have really got to take note of this because it is going to affect you. My big beef about this right through this is the business of this other audit that was going on at the same time which totally threw quite a number of residents and made them think that this particular project had nothing to do with them and infact some of them were in absolute total denial and one whole street, you know Albion Row, were in absolute total denial that this was going to happen.

Is this the audit by the

That's right. You know we had to go around and say please humour us, go and see the exhibition, and so for them, I mean we started in October when the first notice was that this was going to happen. When was the first exhibition on.

This time last year.

No, No the one at St Lawrence Square.

Just before the August Bank Holiday.

Well up until that point a good percentage of St Lawrence Square were in total denial that this was anything to do with them and it was only because we knocked on doors and put letters through and from that point on it seems to have gained momentum and it also seems that the Council have wanted to become slightly more involved and value their opinions. ie we had that meeting which I think has been the most constructive today, you know that Tuesday one at Brinkburn, were you there Simon.

I don't think I was.

Is that the one with Michael Crilly, that meeting.

That was the one where Michael was allegedly going to go through every single one for us and then we had had a meeting on Thursday and kind of expressed some of our doubts and the problems we thought we were having and Martin and I were going to have a meeting on our own with just the residents and work it in a certain way. When we got to that meeting on the Tuesday you lot had set it up the second half after Michael had given his presentation, so that saved us a lot, but at least we felt at that point Oh God we are being listened to, you know. Somebody is taking notice now, but I really do think that was probably about the first time that I began to feel that...

So that was quite a long way into the process.

Yes.

A good ten eleven weeks.

Yes but I think a lot of it was almost hijacked by that other audit.

Yes

Because people were saying of this has nothing to do with us. We have had these guys around and we are going to have new windows and we are going to have new sinks. I would question even that audit because the way that the

interviewers or whoever they were, were obviously going into houses and saying, instead of saying this is a Citywide audit and we are trying to identify areas that need improving, which I think is what it basically was. They were kind of saying would you like new double glazing, would you like new doors, would you like a fence and of course, everybody was saying Oh Great when is this coming up. Oh well this, possibly and then being told the audit will come together in approximately 18 months. So it left everybody, and I am not just talking about Albion Row, Rodney Street was the same

[Problem with Tape]

because when one of them rang the housing office to ask about this just before that initial meeting. One lady had said that she had two ladies come around with this note saying please come and see this exhibition because it is affecting you and she was told these two ladies were scare mongering. So that really has been quite a difficulty I think for people to realise that yes, that's one audit going on and we have had questions about that. But it doesn't really affect us as much as this is going to do. As the design competition is.

As recently as last month I saw the building inspector and I asked what was the chance of getting a new front door and something else that had been left by the previous tenant and

had never been seen to and he said oh no we are not doing anything except major repairs, nothing minor, nothing cosmetic etc. because you are going to get all this new this that and the other. I said is the delay anything to do with the Byker design to establish what is going to be altered and what is going to say. He said What is Byker Design. It has, its been a real problem.

Has there been meaningful community representation on all decision taking from initiation of the scheme, we have probably touched on that.

No. I wouldn't say that we have had the opportunity to be part of the decision making as such. We have given views, we have had access to people. You know you can pick the phone up and Peter Allison is as likely to pick the phone up as Clare O'Shea. You know people are accessible they know you etc but it has been very much about view expression and looking at the shortlist, I think that was the only hands up count that we have ever been actually involved in.

At the beginning slowly they are but ultimately I don't think the choice would lie with the residents. They can put their views forward but the decision lie with the few people who they choose to develop, people in the Council, they would take into account residents views but how much weight they will give them is entirely up to them. But opinions in shortlisting and things they will take our views but

What astounded me was there is a number, any number of community organisations in Raby Cross. There are none at all in St Lawrence Square and I was amazed that there did not seem to be any representation from all of these organisations other than Judith and Nicola. I know Nicola represents maybe two or three and I think this goes back to what you were saying that the same people are on the same committees, you know, so it is a very small nucleolus of people who are doing that. So the residents representation was actually drawn from quite a small number of people. Now whether that was to do with the apathy of all the rest of the residents I have got a feeling that it has more to do with that than it had in the fact that people were trying to get people interested in it. What that led down to were that there were four people from, you know two from each thing and yes we sat on a judging panel to make a decision but if you looked at the four we were quite well out-numbered. They listened to our views and as it turned out, our views were very similar to theirs so there wasn't any conflict but it would make me wonder what would happen if the four reps had gone up into the judging panel and been met with, you know, a of architects and planners and designers who said you know we really do like this and we said no we hate this, you know, how much would our views be represented then and you know our votes would have been swamped. It didn't happen but it could have happened,

We only represented 25% of that judging panel.

That's right.

Are there any instances within this whole process where you actually feel you have got decisions that you felt may change because there has been complaint or worry afterwards.

Yes, that meeting that you had because, the one that Michael was going to do the presentation, that originally I felt was very much going to be everyone coming along to an open meeting, Michael is going to go through all of these things which was what was stated in the letter we got. When we got there he had put them into four categories and just did the top four for each one, so we did see all of them. But it was the discussion afterwards. I wonder if that would have taken place if we had not been a bit stroppy on the week before. You know what I mean. I have a feeling it would have just been an exercise saying well you know we have shown you the exhibition, some people complained that they couldn't work out what it was, so this is what it is. But in fact it turned out, and from that, from the meeting that we had we got a charter, a draft charter anyway and that was being able, we were then able to present that at that meeting and there were a lot more, very much more positive views. Now whether they were taken on board or not I do not know because we have not seen, you know, the end result of the charter but I do think yes, that was a very positive thing to come out of the exercise so far, and I think this is what I am trying to get that it started off very

badly, well not very badly but it didn't start off at all well. But is gaining momentum but I think a lot of that has to do with the people who are actually involved.

OK.

There sometimes seems, I think the main thing is there is a gap between when we talk about it, when we discuss it, when we ask for something and it seems quite a long time before we get.

Why do you think that is?

I don't know because I have never been through a, through a, you know this kind of process before so maybe that is usual.

Right.

I mean I don't know what the timescales are. My timescales are always very quick. I want everything yesterday. And maybe that is unreasonable, it probably is. But if we have been to a meeting where views have been expressed and tempers have been raised and you know, its been a good discussion and everybody goes away thinking well we are going to get this, we are going to get this, we are going to get this, and a week later we haven't heard anything and a fortnight later we are not quite hearing about it, after that you might hear via somebody else that this might happen or

something. So its communication all the time that needs to be tightened up. I sometimes wonder how representative we are. There are four of us, you know, when you consider the number of people who actually live here and you know, we are saying what we think etc but how representative that is. I always feel happy about this on my part because I think its the one thing that, well the result wasn't very good but I do think that on this occasion the Council did notify everyone that you could make nominations and the end result was very poor and ended up with us lot. But at least I do feel that, you know, for our area, for our site that Marcia and I have got the bit between our teeth now and are actually going out and making sure that everybody, you know, we have spoken to just about everybody we possibly could so I don't feel unhappy that Marcia, or I feel happy that Marcia and I are giving the views that we are. In some ways we have put our heads on a block because I, and Marcia, are representing people, representing their views and going for that and as a person, you know, as someone who lives in that site, it might be horrendous for me, you know, it might just be the worst thing possible that the end result, whichever entry is picked, you know I might find my house is done or something but because we are representing everybody else, if that is what they want then you know, I have taken that on board.

You are right your visibly identified because you live there, you have attended meetings and been around the

doors. Nicola have lived quite near each other and what we have got is the apathy. People in St Lawrence Square.. Oh we have had that.

They are going to get. They know they are going to get cash compensation for their house..

No they don't.

Well they are assuming if there is any major development. People up here are just quite apathetic, its like so if they pull it down we will get moved. I haven't, apart from a couple of people on my block. There doesn't seem to be anybody with much of a commitment to the area to want to stay in it. Actually interested in what's the area's outcome going to be and how is it going to affect me and what is the initial impact going to be. Is that going to affect me like I can get out of Byker somewhere else and just let them get on with it.

Do you find that a difficult role to play? From what you are saying you are turning up to meetings and consultation events and essentially you are more or less representing yourself. Do you find that awkward being a community rep.

Not really because we have done everything we possibly could. Meetings here, being available and I still don't think that in any of the newsletters we have been physically identified or named, as persons.

We have, we have.

Do you want to be?

Well I mean we can use here as a thing.

We have lots of photographs of the as to whether the junction panel was.....

I mean you can always offer the facilities.....

Because you and Nicola represent a number of these organisations that I was saying exist in Raby Cross so if anybody is going to be representative of these residents its got to be you and Nicola. Marty and I were working with absolutely nothing, we got there. But you were already there so you surely would have known a lot of the views of the people at Raby Cross.

So it was wearing two hats at a residents hat and a worker hat I was aware of the problems and there is a route like through the community for the various groups identified, but even then there was a letter sent out to the various groups. There are fourteen major groups in this area only seven bothered to return the thing, so that says as much as anything about the users as the residents. I also feel quite strongly about

business interests in this area, so I don't know if it is appropriate at this bit or later.

Yes

There aren't many businesses around Raby Cross, there are a couple of shops, a garage in the yard, Social Services and sure start and the resource centre. There isn't a lot when you think 3, well 4 commercial businesses. What came across when having the discussions was that whatever happens here has an impact on the surrounding areas like Byker North, it isn't a separate thing, if there are facilities here they are going to be used by people over there. But what came across was that you have got this block of commercial stuff between Raby Cross and St Lawrence Square. You've got things like where its natural very obvious impact, you've got a coach works at the top of St Lawrence Square which is quite busy. If you've got building and site access in all this it is going to have an impact with the dust, extra stuff on that. And that is only one thing. How attractive is it going to for people to move here, I mean to buy in St Lawrence Square if you have got this industrial number in the middle. Is that going to be developed in any sense or is it just going to be static and things are going to happen around it.

Is that a rhetorical question.

I think so.

Yes.

Do you want to move on to the next sort of like section that we have got here?

Tell us if we wander off the original question because I am sure that is what we have been doing.

That's his job.

.....

It a general meeting. Do you think all community members, I stress all community members have had the opportunity to participate.

Yes.

Anything else to say.

No, I think yes they have. Again I stress that at the beginning it was a slow thing but definitely by now they all have and it is entirely their choice whether they want to take the opportunity to give their views or not. I certainly think that they, everybody by now has had more than enough chance.

How do you think The City Council is supporting say community networks maybe existing community networks and structures through which all communities could contribute, do you think there should be more effort there, there is a lot of old existing networks that are around in Byker, do you think they are utilising them to the best of their ability.

From my area, I don't know because there aren't any there at all. The kind of ad hoc residents group, its not even that, its just basically Marcia and I knocking on doors and talking to people and putting letters through. So I can't comment on that one but Judith should be able to.

I am very conscious that this is a personal comment on an individual. Fiona has offered to make the premises available, use of her equipment and come down here on Friday to look at some research stuff. To look at Colin Street and other developments about community representation, responses and stuff like that. She is always available and she to be directly involved in this in her role as a Development Officer. She has been understaffed by two bodies for months and I think it is quite appalling that the Council expect people to give a good service and be available and don't put some cash in by pulling some staff in.

If this additional work on top of her normal workload. But when you were talking about support given to groups did you mean individually or did you mean that, you know, via us, in

which case Judith has answered the question to a degree. Because I presume that, you know, that the Council has said well you are representing all of those groups now so in effect what support are we getting as opposed to what support are individual ones are getting.

You could probably say that the existing groups that are in Byker at the moment various voluntary organisations etc you could probably benefit yourselves from being a point of contact with those various different organisations or do you think that is being effectively done.

Starting.

We represent quite a few so which is actually based in St Lawrence Square. Now I am there, I am here, to go to various things with that hat on as well because any development is going to have implications for the health project down there but apart from being used as a venue for the design competition and a circular filled in, there isn't any expectation from the Council any encouragement from the Council for the health project to be used as a resource around this design project.

If at any point anybody wants to drop ... I will be happy to dish them out. I need the correct number. We will be available.

What you were on about were the Council. I must admit from the last meeting we brought up the fact that there were this amazing number of groups, sometimes we didn't even know they existed and so on. Through Fiona we have been put onto their mailing list and we are beginning to get information back from them and notice of meetings and so on. So I think we are slightly more aware of them and I think they are slightly more aware of us now.

What creative or flexible approaches have been developed to engage members of the communities in Byker.

The visits, I presume, would be the biggest one, wouldn't they. I am looking at you for....

I thought the free beer was quite an incentive.

I missed that, when was that on.

It was tremendous that club....

Oh yes when we were down.....

The bottles room.

It was like here's a pint and.... There was about 40 people there...

That was the first meeting where things started to take off I think. That would be the first, second, third, fourth meeting.

It was in a bit of a more real environment.

Yes it was.

I think the visits to the different housing was good. I particularly liked the fact that it was kind of an open invitation. I know it went back to the same people going but there was an open invitation there so it was up to individuals to take on that.

I feel a bit bolshie when people say things like Oh I didn't know about this or I didn't know about that.

I think they did.

The opportunity has been there from day one and like Sandra is saying the same people are turning up at meetings, the same people are interested, but am I representing them.

Is it OK for me to say something..... on top of that I think we saw a number of parallel reasons because the people who were shortlisted are actually responsible for attracted their interest in working in the north east as well which is something we didn't think about.

You are right, I hadn't thought of it that way.

So in terms of promoting bankers

Do you think the community ie Byker and the areas etc have had access to and control over resources in any way shape or form ie have you been able to prioritise particular areas and say that you wished money to be spent on say helping your understanding of the scheme or anything. I know it is quite broad. In what ways

[rewind]

Do you think that communities have had access to and control over resources to push things in the direction that they wish things to go in, in relation to the competition.

It is beginning to happen now, isn't it. Via Fiona. What happened at the last meeting of the representatives was that Fiona for the first time was able to state quite clearly what her job was and what the liaison between us was and her and we had got it all wrong up until that point, hadn't we.

Yes.

I thought she was just facilitating.....

Being like Fiona offering to burden everything without actually a remit from the Council about her involvement.

Because our contact had always been via Clare or Peter Allison and directly with the Civic Centre, Fiona we had seen just as somebody kind of facilitating everything when Clare was on holiday and we didn't realise just how she was able to help and we were quite taken aback. That hadn't been explained to us. On that point she has now been able to say right 'What do you need in the way of training, what do you need in the way looking at legal aspects' and she has given us a whole list that we will be discussing over the next few months. So yes it has been there but we weren't actually that aware of it.

It was a bit daft four of us conscientiously avoiding discussing individual designs or making comments about them because the confidentiality of things. But she had more information than us.

Because Fiona is one of the members of the Technical Steering Group.

Yes but we didn't realise that. That had not been explained to us.

That's a communication issue.

Yes, yes.

Either with us or with the Council where she fitted into the grand scheme. That has been a big kind of weight off us, hasn't it because we are now able to kind of know that, but in a way I find that difficult for Fiona, because she has also got her bread and butter work with the community groups and acting as a kind of liaison coordinator for Byker and she is now being asked to accept this on top and we are a bit concerned that she would possibly need additional help. Now I presume you know, there is a budgetary....

Two staff are on long term sick leave and until she hits the point where she is on salary because they are sticking to budget doesn't release money to buy in somebody to compensate.

But I want to know is the money in the budget from Urban Design to give her the kind of backing that she needs to give us the backing that we need.

Pathfinders, the funder for the scheme, you know this is a Pathfinder scheme.

That maybe something we can discuss in the next month or so. Because we do feel, I feel a bit guilty actually. What I feel guilty about the fact that I was looking at Fiona as just being like a glorified PA to somebody, you know, who was sort of

sending us notification of the meetings and so on but didn't realise that she had the kind of technical nouse to help us out. I have said in various meetings that we have had or to individuals that having the four reps was fine and that Fiona couldn't obviously be a rep because she wasn't a resident and she knew more about what was going on than anybody because she had a finger in all sorts of pies. She was involved but nobody disclosed that. I think I meant why not. If I am stating something like as a question or as a statement of fact nobody corrected me or made me aware. An individual rather than a Council.....

So now we have that backing on hand as it were, I am just concerned is she able to do that without having this additional stress and this additional work.

So what you are saying is that you have got access to, if you like, knowledge resources through Fiona but you have no access to funding or anything like that at all.

Absolutely nothing.

I am not clear when you ask about resources...

I don't know what funding is being given to Fiona to facilitate her looking after us.

I mean, for example, we have mentioned training, or widening your knowledge to assist in being on the residents group, possible seminars, lectures.

Trips to Sweden.

What worries me is that when we had that kind, hang on I have got to work back. When the first exhibition at St Lawrence's community centre was mooted, I got a notification that was going on, as did a number of other people. We began to realise very quickly that not everybody had got the notification and I rang up and said who was notified, was everybody in the site notified. Well the people who have shown interested were notified, well where did you get them from. Well they would have attended meetings. Well the meetings were very poorly attended up to that point and I said but every person in the two sites should have been notified and I was told Oh yes but you know there is a cost in postage there, that was what started us, we were so mad we did our own letter and went and knocked on doors and literally canvassed every single door. Now it worries me that if they haven't got funding for bloody postage, you know, what kind of funding is there going to be to help Fiona to help us.

So its actually your initiative that did that.

Oh yes, absolutely, yes.

This is a daft thing, this sounds a bit of a diversion, I didn't get stuff and when I queried that I hadn't got it I was told that it was because there is a gate at the bottom of my stairs.

That might just be the postman.

Well, so what, they don't go through gates to deliver circulars.

We shouted loud and long about this.

I do believe from now on that people are you know, because I sat with Fiona and the mailing list and every single number of every person that is in my area were crossed off to make sure that everybody got it. So I am hoping from now on that everybody does get it including businesses as well because the businesses weren't getting them only residents.

It doesn't have to cost that much, I just mentioned it to Peter and Michael jokingly. If you printed off 1000 of those and I put them in batches of 50 and put them on top of my carton, every good customer who I knew that wasn't really aware of this scheme, I could say here is a newsletter about the design competition, take it away and read it I am sure that out of every 100 I gave out I would get 30-40 back. I honestly believe that. The community as a whole aren't really aware of what is going on.

So there is a question about informal networking.



Yes, it is informal networking.

So would you say that the Council has missed a trick here in terms of going through the community forum or some of the other governance areas and not necessarily investigating the informal routes.

Yes, and its the informal networks that are actually doing the work.

Because that's where a lot of the stuff is around hearsay.

I am not trying to blow my own trumpet but I am certain that I could attract a lot more people to get interested in this Byker design competition by plotting those on my route. handed out.....

The other thing is that, it sounds like I am trying to you know, like some politician. It literally is the personal touch that if you can knock on a door and say, which is what we said, have you had a letter, have you had notification, no, and then explain what was happening. From that point on they were beginning to look for things. I mean I have had somebody say to me 'Oh my God I am in dispute with the Council because my windows are not done properly. I just take one look at the logo on the top and I chuck it in the bin'. You know there is that kind of percentage of people as well. I honestly don't think that the

sort of, the organisations that are set up in the area, I don't think its been, I don't think any of them have been particularly involved in this process. Its been the kind of use as you said more informal contact. Although I have to say that they did come from the meetings that the Council set up.

So it facilitated it.

So they have to a degree. It just so happened that you have had two or three bolshy people who have said right this really does mean something to us and we are going to make sure that everybody else knows that this is going on. I think, as Judith has said, if there had been even more of us than there has you wouldn't have got anybody at all.

I did wonder, is it intended to put these in housing offices, post offices and things, because quite often you pick something up while you are waiting in the queue to look at.

OK. So moving away from that do you think that the diversity of the local community and their interests are reflected at all levels of the regeneration processing. When I say that it is in relation to trying to balance the composition of different gender balance, ethnic diversity, geographical area. Do you think that everyone has been included, but not in an opportunity style, you know, in relation to asylum seekers.

Fiona is actually the only involved person who would access view from those groups. I think I am representing me stuck at the top group there, this is the me who doesn't have the problems that somebody down here has.

[He is just behind you. The other one with the white thing on the bottom.]

Sorry go on.

Just to recap we are doing the question in relation to representation. It is quite difficult to draw a question out of this.

I don't think they have make a specific effort to pinpoint each one. I think they have done it as an overall mass thing and those areas of the community have been included in on-mass. But I don't think they have made any specific effort to contact them, I don't know about you Sam.

They were asked to send a survey thing in but we said no to 14 community groups. Three of the ones that didn't reply were working with core minority groups. There was an Asian lady and her daughter and an African woman who came sort of under Fiona's wing to meetings. Like the Asian woman, she wanted somewhere safe, nice decent housing, somewhere safe you know, it might be a perspective because

of her experiences being different. But you couldn't really say they were talking minority group representatives, they were two individuals that I think Fiona had roped in, but there hasn't been any input at all from any of the ethnic or other minority groups in this area.

If you have a look at my situation, there are four businesses, myself, the Post Office, well the newsagents across the road, the garage at the back and the fish and chip shop. It is run by Chinese people, an English fellow runs the garage. Now all the people I have spoken to like that, he is like my uncle and he came to a few meetings. They have all lost interest, they really don't care, all they want, they said that if something happens and we don't like it we will take the relocation, take the compensation, we will walk, we will go elsewhere. We will give up our business here, we will go out to work.

I think there seems to be more, less apathy in the area that I am in, St Lawrence, because there are more people that want to stay there and so you know, I think it is easier for Marcia and I to represent them. But if you are talking about minority groups and so on the main one in St Lawrence Square is Richmond Fellowship Trust. This is an organisation that finds homes for kind of care in the community and so on and they have leased a number of flats in there and how we got them involved, again it was the reps that targeted them if you like. When we decided that we would take this letter out and knock on doors, I then thought God I might knock on somebody's

door and really freak them because you know. This actually happened to one young man who lived over the road from us Leo who we told about, told him what was happening. He actually moved out because he felt he might not have roof over his head in a year and a half, you know. We were really concerned about him. Luckily he had been in the area long enough to kind of be able to assimilate and we know he has had problems when he moved and we have kept in touch with him. Sort of digressing here. But what happened was I had to then ring Richmond Fellowship Trust and say look on such and such a day we are going to be knocking on doors. What numbers do you have, which numbers do you lease so we can either miss them out or will you inform them that we are going to be there so that they don't. We don't want you to lose out and their response was well yeah we don't really know much about this. Yes. And what they did do was to let their tenants know that we might be knocking and this letter might be coming and on the day of the meeting they sent carers along to take their tenants, I think one is a Kosovian or something like that, doesn't speak very much English, so you know, that was very good and, but that again that was our doing rather than the Council and the Council again were just doing this kind of overall mailing and I don't honestly think that they. Other than as you say they did do that one questionnaire which wasn't very well replied to.

I was having a chat with Fiona before you guys turned up and we were talking about translation services that are available. She says there is none.

There isn't no.

Available. So do you think if there was a translation service you would get more people interested or is that ...

I don't think so.

Do you think irrespective of what language you speak you can still be apathetic towards it.

Some more so than others, I think.

OK. You have touched on this already its about this like to think of a two way information service so the Council give you information you give the Council information. Do you think that system has been established in the case of this project and how well do you think its worked.

It has now. Just this delay in getting information back annoys me because we started, the four reps have now started to meet on a regular basis, we have only had one meeting and the day before yesterday, I got the minutes of that meeting and the agenda for the next one. When you look down the minutes of the meeting, you've probably got them there.

There are about four or five requests for information, you know, specific information and we are going to the next meeting without that, so you know, what is the point, they are beautifully drawn up minutes, as much as minutes ever are. But if you look down there at the number of things we have asked for, specific information. We happen to meet on the day that the five shortlisted were going to be announced. One we didn't know that so we asked for what kind of information were they being given, when were they being informed. We haven't had that back. I think when you look there are four or five so although we are not set up to ask for it, I just think again there is this delay in getting it back. When we first started I got the plans downloaded by my neighbour on his computer because we were given nothing at all until the Tuesday before the final judging panel, the actual plans. So again there was a lot of work and a lot of effort put in by the reps to get information that should have really been there already from the Council and we are still really struggling with that. Although we ask we don't get it very quickly.

Would you perhaps like to see a protocol set up for these meetings to say that if information is requested it should be made available within a certain time.

Yes and perhaps you know, we are just getting to that stage now because we have only had one meeting. The meeting, the first meeting was, literally what is the role of the reps so discussions went along those lines. Now we were all

expecting to having information back for this second meeting, we haven't got it so in this second meeting we can say right from now on we need to have answers. So its slow but its slightly gathering momentum.

At the last community forum meeting it was going to be adopted as procedure that if something came up during the meeting and there wasn't a response within such and such a time that it was flagged up that it was written back. You know when you are talking about this two way traffic I feel handicapped and its going back to think I feel quite often that when I say things to Council Officers or to you, I am representing the collective views of the reps and my own individual views, I don't feel

I think from the very beginning when you took this job on you had to realise that 1. you were representing people and you were representing views that might not be yours, but in a number of occasions, you know, on a number of occasions its bound to happen that the views coincide, so I don't think you can worry about the fact that if your views coincide with the views of your neighbours, in a lot of, you know, most of the time I have got a feeling, knowing the area that I represent, that my views are the same as my neighbours and so on, but I do know at the back of my mind that there might come a point where I have got to represent their views and it is quite detrimental to my own personal views and I have taken that on board. I think you need to have that.

This sounds really patronising maybe it shouldn't be. I wouldn't say that my particularly representative of the neighbours that I have got.

But you don't say that you represent the views of your community.

Views from neighbours.....

You are representing the views that have been represented to you.

You can only represent the views that have been even if it is just a few people.

The views are negligible.

But if you are reported back saying that not many views are going through.

That's you doing your job.

So I would not have a crisis of conscience.

So what if somebody says I have got this newsletter who is my rep, who do I contact and how do I get input. Nicola and I have made it known that we have been prepared to be

available and to meet people collectively or individually.... possibly will be in the future. Apart from that what more can you do.

You can only do so much, I mean you can only represent the views that are given to you. In our case we were a bit concerned, what we decided was that we could sit on our backsides and take the views of the few that had been contacted up to that point, just before the first exhibition, you know. It would have been quite within the remit of representing people because we were representing the views of the people who had put views forward. But we felt that perhaps that wasn't ethical and that is why we went out and canvassed and actually their views were the same as the other ones it just happened to be that that did occur. And that is all you can do, you can't literally grab people by the scruff of the neck and drag them in saying well what do you think about this. If they want to do that then that is their choice.

Sam is representing businesses in the area he is 25% of the businesses round here because the other 75% aren't sufficiently bothered.

They don't care, they honestly don't care.

So you are 25% of the business community around here so you are expressing your views, fine, that's it.

You talk about well established businesses, apart from the chip shop which has changed hands. You know that is the attitude, its people's livelihood, they can pick it up and do it elsewhere.

That is most people's attitude around this area.

No, no our area is quite different, and this is what the difficulty is as well I think about the project, that they are two quite disparate areas.

But obviously we are linked together and from my point of view, business wise, we should stay linked together. If my business is to be moved from next door it should be moved across....

Because you already do serve our area as well.

Both areas as opposed to being moved right down to the bottom where I would be out of the way to where you live.

I think you missed the beginning when I was pontificating about the fact that I think that St Lawrence Square is the carrot that is being used to developers to come in to do a project, because I don't think if you just gave them this area they would want to do it.

Probably is but I don't think that is fair.

I don't think it is fair but you know,

I think there is a big point that is not getting addressed in all these consultations etc. You have got an indifferent population of business and residents that whatever they decide to do if it creates disturbance in where people are living they will be given compensation and moved on. They are quite indifferent as long as they move to somewhere where basically they want to be. In all these design projects should it be focused that the existing community and what they are saying or should all this design thing be organised for a prospective community.

No. I don't think it is. I don't get that feeling.

.....

Yes possibly. But I am saying is that what should be looked at or..

But we have now got this charter or will have this charter, which I have still yet to see, which goes back to this information being delayed. That we set this charter up over a month ago, it was discussed. It was set up the meeting with the reps. It was discussed at the open meeting and we still haven't seen it yet. So at least there is that charter there which hopefully will make some attempt to represent the

residents here and to give them some kind of security, if you call it security, I don't know what you call it. As to what is going to happen to them or their property if they are owner occupiers. So that already has been done and I think that possibly up to date is probably one of the best things that has happened. So even the people who are apathetic about it are being covered by this charter.

Again, like lip service.

I know, the Council in the end are going to do what they want and at the end of this exercise there may not be enough money or none of them might be feasible, what happens, you know we are back to square one. I don't think that is going to happen but again I think it is a possibility and you could just go on saying if, if, if. I think you have to be slightly more positive about OK we had 16 we have now got down to 5. Lets look at these, we have got a residents group, a group of four residents representing the two areas, there is more apathy in one than there is in the other and you have got to work along side that. So it is up to us to try to get as much information as possible from the Council and to disseminate that around the two areas and it is beginning to move at a faster pace and it is, as stage 2 comes on. You know, we have got the possibility of them being on site and we have got the possibility of open meetings with the designers, haven't we. That was discussed, there is this charter, we now realise what Fiona's role is and we can now use her in a much more

positive way than we have been doing before. So given the situation I mean I am sure there are better ways of doing things than we are but this is what we have got to work with and I don't think it is as bad as it could have been or might have looked.

Do you feel, I use the buzz word "empowered" by this process.

More than we did at the very beginning. I am still fairly skeptical because we are still not getting information back when we want it.

Right.

It makes me think why are we not getting it back, is it that the typists have got flue and haven't been able to get it back or is it that we are going to get information after an event has happened. Which I am skeptical about. But at least we have got a way of asking about it which we didn't have before.

I think one of the, just a general observation from me. I think the problems you are highlighted about receiving information and delays and stuff is primarily down to a problem of resourcing within the Council itself, on issues such as this on projects such as this that need some sort of real direction and understanding.

The question then is begged, well if that is the case and they don't have the resources should they have thought about that before and not set this up until they had full resources to do this.

It is an important budget.

A while back I think Peter Allison said at one of the meetings that this was the first time something like this had been attempted for this kind of urban design competition. It is something different to anything else that they had done so everyone is working in the dark to a certain extent and almost in a way learning as they go along, and I think that is on both sides, Council and community. In a way I suppose we are supporting each other in that aspect.

Related to that is the question all the material that you get sent do you think that is clear and easy to understand.

I mean the worst things to understand where the flaming maps, the designs themselves, they were badly presented, really, really, badly presented. They didn't even run in numerical order did they. I spent 10 minutes trying to collate one view with another one and found they were two separate things. We did actually ask when they went to another exhibition site whether that could be changed and it wasn't. It was difficult at that point because at St Lawrence Square the Albion Road people who were absolutely in total denial of it

had nothing to do with it, then came in and it was a huge shock to them that it did affect them and they found great difficulty in trying to make sense of that particular exhibition. That was improved on slightly at that open meeting where Michael gave his presentation on each of the things. I think from those two points, certainly from my area, that was when things started to move on. It worries me that we have had this meeting, we have had the minutes, we have asked for information, we are going to have a meeting on Friday and we have got none of the information that we asked for.

That means nothing to me. Because I was speaking to my landlord who is a chief surveyor in Estates and Properties David Franklin and I mentioned the design competition and Peter Allison and it meant nothing to him. I am talking 4 weeks back. He did not know that potentially 50% of the businesses would be demolished. Now he is sort of getting involved.

That is lack of communication. But that happened with that other audit, where people were thinking they were going to have all these improvements and that is nothing to do with us. So they are just not, you know, one department, there is total lack of communication between the departments as to. I mean I would have thought that the housing office in Byker would have been one of the first people to know what was going on down here and it appears they have no idea.

My landlord should know more than me about what is going to happen.

Are the housing office controlled by the

I don't know.

They are outsourced.

They are not even on site, they are at the old Sage building in Gosforth so.

They should know shouldn't they.

There is a lack of joined up thinking at the Council.

The housing office in Byker has been operating from St Anthony's because it is now a refurbishment. So they are quite unclear about who is going back there and what purpose they will serve.

That also goes for owner occupied houses, especially on Walker Road where I am because quite a number a rented flats, people have bought them for, they have a landlord and they will have tenants in. Now a number of those tenants are quite transient, it has always been an area a particular block or two where it has been particularly transient, we are talking to them and we have had to say to them would you let your

landlord know about this. We don't know that the landlords do know about this. In fact I have been contacted by two different landlords saying what is going on and I have kept in touch with them. It is obvious that the Council don't know those landlords and that yes they are talking to the tenants, but like you say some of the tenants aren't particularly bothered and some of the others where there obviously isn't anyone in, you look through the letterbox, you chuck the letter through and its going to be on another pile of all the junk so you know for a fact that if the landlord comes back he is going to bin it.

Over 50% of those landlords.....

No because they have bought them as an investment property. They can't lose because they have got good properties, if they go they will hopefully get market value plus. Well that's what they, you know.

No, no we have not been told anything yet, this is just Chinese Whispers.

Predictable situation where, you know, people are going to get compensation.

I don't know anything about it if I am being honest but I remember some guy standing up at a meeting some weeks ago and saying he had been offered £9,000 for his house.

Yes, it happened across in the west end and basically it was because the Council had let everything else around go down the Swannie. I don't think that would happen in this particular area where we are, because we are now being called Upper Quayside. We are now thinking of asking our bit of Walker Road to be changed to St Lawrence Mews.

OK. We have just got one final question, its about the types of skills that you feel you have gained as a result of being involved with this process. The first part of the question is about what training you feel has been provided to you on the project and what skills have you developed.

I think we, certainly Marcia and I have used the skills to do some of the work that the Council should have done. I think that if we didn't have the kind of background that she and I have that there wouldn't be such a positive response and to date I don't think we have had any real training as such. We have had one meeting with Michael where we went through some of the, we went through each of the entries and he kind of explained some of the jargon to us. We asked for a glossary, and we have got a half finished glossary of jargon and we are still waiting for the final thing which I think we would certainly need for the second stage when it comes to getting a winner. But because we have started to set up this series of meetings with that is something that we can now but we don't know whether there will be any funding to

allow that to happen and we have got to identify the kind of training that we might need or the kind of contact we might have to make with other things. I don't think any of us have looked at the skills we already have.

There may be scope as well for maybe sort of exposure to different learning skills and things like that and more knowledge about such issues as regeneration and about design aspects and things like that. Formal lectures.

I think it needs to be on the whole fairly informal all the way round. What we don't want to do is to go somewhere and have to go back to our neighbours and so on and all we can do is quote jargon at them that we barely understand, so we want things explained to us in words of two syllables and to be able to, I think that one of the things we do need to have is to look at how we can take back what we learn from the Council from various meetings that we have, how we can get that back to the residents.

So its almost training as being community representatives.

I think we have done reasonably well to date but it has been more luck than judgment and it has basically been in spite of not because of the Council.

There are things where we have been aware, that is being able to read a design plan, a knowledge of urban development.

Some of that, you have gone on a whole series of trips.

That was later, it was very much a visual thing than going with an educated eye to look at what we have done. Technicalities.

Go and get a feel for places.

I think you need to have somebody who can talk at an idiot level even if you are working with planners and architects and so on. Sometimes I think it needs someone to say to them, just come down to our level we don't know what you're talking about. We don't want to go some to learn, you know, I mean when we went to that meeting at St Peters. One of the ladies, a lovely lady from Scotswood said Oh we had a weekend where we built this whole town and we had loads of stuff and what not and somebody said what did you get out of it and she said well nothing. So to me that is a fruitless exercise. There needs to be a specific need in any of the training we are doing. I don't like the word training at all. I think it just needs to be a fairly full sessions with various people so if and when we go back to a meeting where there are other residents and so on and somebody says what's that then we can put into fairly simple words.

What I would like to have known before we went to the Civic was a biography of the other people on the panel. All we got was a name and the organisation it represented like Hemingway Designs. I would have liked to have known much more about what they did, what was sort of, what did they have to offer to the design thing. Did they have a record of success about being involved in.

I did a little bit on my own and did that. This is what I am saying that we gained some knowledge on our own despite of not because of. Certain observations. Its sort of like what do they do. A bit like that article I was talking about. If this competition hadn't come up I would have gone on to my horoscope or the Times Supplements, you know. But because I saw this one I thought right, I sat down to read and it does have an effect on what we are doing here so you know, the next time I meet that guy from CAVE I might start asking him some questions.

Was it the same guy that you met that wrote the article.

No, no it was a Times reporter commenting on these two estates and the role that CAVE was playing and saying. The original, the estate that got slated was an estate that people would have been queuing up for before the foundations were put down. It seemed to me to be a perfectly normal very nice kind of thing and it got slated for everything and yet they were

saying they had a school there, they had Thai Chi classes in the community centre and it seemed to be a growing community and the one that got really, really high marks, if 50 was the top they got 47 was Greenwich Village and you know what that was like. It was appalling. Three miles off it looks quite interesting but get there and you know, that was useful because if I hadn't been there I wouldn't have know how awful Greenwich Village was.

I have got to pop off to a meeting.

OK I think we are done.

That's really helpful, thank you for your time.

Meeting with residents 08/12/2004

The first point is have you, the community, felt valued and recognised as an equal partner at all stages of the process?

There has been major issues with regard to adequate communication with us. I know that at the initial stages a number of areas were actually leafleted. Rodney Street, Albion Road were not even leafleted about it and at the times the timing of the leafleting has been inadequate. We have been getting leaflets, a day before meetings, after meetings, the meeting that was held on 1 December, the letters that came out, came out on the Saturday the day after and we have identified that all the meetings I have attended that there was a better communication strategy. We asked where they were actually pamphleting but nobody from the Council has actually been able to tell us where that it. We were told that would be resolved and the last communication there was a note on the leaflet saying we had to pick up information and when I spoke to the Team, Michael Crilly's Team, I was told that our Councillors had insisted that was the way forward and I said well from the meetings we had asked for leaflet drops and that really wasn't good enough and the Councillors, as far as I am concerned, are the decision makers on the communication strategy. We have expressed concerns and they haven't been met.

Do you think there is a meaningful community representation on all the decision making from initiation of the scheme?

The concept of the community reps I think was a good one. I think you would have to speak to them direct to whether they actually feel as though they have been involved and quickly.

Just for the purposes

Right. The big issues we have had is, you know, it became apparent later on who our points of contact were. Initially I was told it was Miriam Chisholm. When it first started off I contacted her direct and felt quite fobbed off with some of the questions and queries I had. I believe that the process hasn't been thought through well enough. From day one I have asked the Advocacy, an independent source of advocacy for the residents because there are so many implications with regard to our right to buy, so many implications with regard to communication. It is felt there hasn't been a central enough point of contact and the concepts they have come up with have been too little too late as far as I am concerned.

Do you think, just as an aside. Do you think that the Council are withholding information?

There is a fear among us that that might be the case. As you can imagine because the communication has been poor people are getting I have heard so many rumours about what is happening. I have no issue with the area being regenerated but I feel at the moment that we are a ticking box exercise in terms of participation. I am not participating in this exercise, I am being trickled down information when it seems appropriate and in a format that doesn't meet our requirement as residents and I have huge issues with regard to, if there is another agenda there. I think we are concerned because we are well aware that you want prime real estate land and if we are not adequately involved in the process that our needs aren't actually going to be met by the process.

When you say we, I assume you mean....

St Lawrence Square predominantly, you know.

Do you think that all community members have had the opportunity to participate?

In terms of certain geographical areas, no. I would say Rodney Street and Albion Row have been dragged into it at quite a late stage despite the potential implications for them on a housing level. I know they are very concerned because there are a lot of owner/occupiers in that area.

Isn't Sandra taking part?

Yes, I believe Sandra is, yes. So they were, Rodney Street, some of their residents didn't turn up till about the third or fourth meeting. They knew nothing about it, they thought they were safe, Albion Road felt something similar whereas we have always known we are earmarked. Well, at one stage the community reps were actually leafleting us with regard to some meetings because they weren't confident we were getting some information and it was through their effort that a number of us attended. We didn't get the information in time. This is at the actual stage where they had the resource centre down at St Lawrence Square used to display the then competition entries and then, more generally, in terms of feedback and research questionnaires that had been administered on the site, again it seems to be the process hasn't been good. You know, we had someone coming out asking us about our area and what we thought about it after the research brief, the design brief had been sent out to the architects and we are looking at designs where they are looking at drug problems in our park, there aren't any. They

are talking about they allegedly have a handle on what they think the issues are at a community level for the parks, yet we were not solicited for our opinions until after that design brief went out, so it seems daft the way that they have approached this. Surely the first process should have been to consult us about what we thought about the area then sent the design brief out. This is about what the Council thinks the issues are and not what the residents actually living here think what the issues are.

Probably a good lead off from that is what are the ranges of opportunities through which community members have been able to influence decisions?

At the moment I don't feel that community members are influencing. I think we have been invited along haphazardly to various stages of the process and we had a bit of a running debate. People around feel the meetings were getting caught up with the fact that people don't feel as though they are communicated with. We sat there and talked through what were allegedly the best designs from the 18 or whatever it was that we had a look at initially and you know, there have been quite extensive booklets on that and I just feel as though it is, it seems so tokenistic at the moment. I don't feel I have got a voice and then you know to sit there with Peter Addison,

we all work together in workshops and Peter Addison said right OK I want two points from each table and we turned around and said well actually Peter that is not good enough. This is to talk about issues about the Charter, what our concerns were, we want to feedback all of our concerns and you have a right to listen to us. We only feel as though it is meeting their requirements as opposed to what we want to actually say.

In relation to resources, do you think the community has had access and control over any resources?

None whatsoever. My biggest concern has been inadequate independent resources for us. Advocating us and advising us a lay-people about what the Council's obligations and duties are with regards to a legislative policy and guidance issue. None of that has been forthcoming. I have constantly bantered on about we need someone independent, you know someone like Shelter could actually do a good advocacy job for us. Our request for advocacy and independent source of information haven't been forthcoming. The number of, the analysis and consultation and questionnaires have been received have all been analysed in-house. I have huge issues with that. If there is an agenda then it is rather convenient that in-house sources are actually analysing the data that is actually coming out from us and we haven't actually been

given much information about what data was produced and what that data is actually been collected for.

Just to sort of go further on that, is there any way in which you think, like advocacy and that. What vehicle do you think should be used in order to give the community those resources?

Well, we don't have a residents association down at St Lawrence, other parts of Byker are much more vocal and much more organised. I don't actually think a residents association is necessarily the best forum for us to be having that. I think you are looking at the regeneration of a wide geographical area with disparate groups and disparate needs and I think it is very important that there is somebody there independently who could bring it all together and who has the knowledge base that we require so that if they are saying, you know I flagged it up with Marty and Sandra, you know if they build multi-storey tower blocks on that land and we are re-housed in those, I no longer have a right to buy. There are implications for me Council Tax band wise, there are implications for the owner/occupiers at the moment, we don't know where we stand. We know that there is going to be a certain amount of re-settlement and re-location yet we have

no information with regards to which teams will be sourcing that and how that will be done. We are very much being left in the dark about it and I just think that if there was some independent source of information for us that with liaison with yourselves, it would be more cohesive.

In what ways do you think that regeneration workers and decision makers make themselves accessible and available to community members?

We have telephone numbers for them but its seems as though we have no compulsion to make them do, or respond to how we act. As I say I have sent e-mails to Miriam Chisholm about my concerns, she then said she would pass it on to Director of Housing, that was in March. I have heard nothing since. There seems very little accountability and I would like to see a better accountability and a working strategy so that when things flagged up what timescales we can expect with regard to those being resolved or at least being partially answered. I had expected, you know, from meetings I attended comprehensive minutes to be made available to the residents and that hasn't been done. I do know talking to other teams that they have stated that they have a resource issue with regard to the communication yet we do know that there is a vast sum of money available for the architects that have been

shortlisted to draw up plans and to come on site, yet it seems a couple of grand towards communication issue hasn't been. There has been a very big, very prominent, 'Lets go and visit other sites', for select individuals who were able to take the time off work or don't have work commitments to do it. That's great from an ideas perspective but the actual nitty gritty of sitting down and working out the logistics just doesn't seem to be happening for us on a communication level.

Do you think that the Council are ensuring that community ownership of this scheme takes place?

No, No. I feel its a consultation, I don't feel there is any participation except for the community reps on the board and as I say I don't know how effective they feel their participation is or whether they feel excluded.

I think ultimately the question that they wished to ask at the previous meeting is do they feel empowered?

No. Absolutely not. This is a huge issue, you know, I am lucky I am educated, I am articulate and I am assertive about what my needs and my wishes are. There are a lot of issues

with the residents groups around, we have people with learning difficulties, we have people with mental health problems. They don't grasp the issues around sustainability, around development. They don't understand, they need it in very plain English and in very simple terms. What the impact is going to be for them, what a simple timescale is. A number of them have been out of their depth at meetings and actually have been quite dismissed because they are angry because they don't know what is going on but nobody is communicating in any way that is effective for them. That's not the same, there might be people who are house-bound or who actually have mobility issues and can't access the general meetings anyway.

Do you think that has local communities and their interests are reflected at all levels of the regeneration process?

There are two community centres in my area, one is an owner/occupier centre, friends and neighbours and I think in terms of the representation have actually got the time to do this. I work full time, I have other community commitments, I would love to have been involved in this process but unfortunately don't have the time and I think there has actually been a huge onus put onto those community

reps to try to get the communication cycle sorted out without actually the Council taking any ownership of it. I don't feel as though we have any ownership, I feel as though we are being told what is happening to us. It is not a dialogue at all. Its not about, its not a dialogue or a debate and I think that is why people have got really angry in the meetings. They feel as though its all very wishy washy about what the Council, what our expectations of the Council should be, we don't know what to expect of the Council, we don't know what our rights are you know.

What actions have been taken to ensure that representations by all partners are received and staffed to reflect the gender balance and the diversity of the geographical area? That's quite a long winded question.

Well to be honest in terms of what the residents know about the gender basis ... in the city, the sexual orientations or the age of the current residents, I have no idea what the of residents is. I was unaware of that so I don't know how the community sort of is represented. I think in terms of community reps who is available and who has to do the work and also because a lot of people are frightened of actually representing other views within that forum. They are

intimidating when you are dealing with regeneration every day and your a lay-person and don't have the knowledge. I have a housing background but I am not an expert in it and I certainly wouldn't necessarily have the confidence to do that. Goodness only knows what somebody who has no background at all would feel like.

Do you think equal opportunities policies that are in place have been implemented?

They haven't produced any equal opportunities policies for us that we have been able to access or discuss.

In what way do you mean that?

Well, I worked in Newcastle City Council, in Social Services we have a very explicit equal opportunities policy. It has never been brought to the attention of any of the residents at any of the meetings I have attended that there was actually one in existence so whether it is something that the Council are concerned about, it never came up. In theory, it may well be in existence but I would say the residents don't know about it.

I would imagine that anything the Council does would have to

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They would have to adhere to it yes. But I would say as residents we are actually unaware of an explicit policy about that. I don't know what the actual level of asylum seekers or refugees is in the area but I have not seen any involvement from those groups at all. There has been no specialist kind of interest groups that I have been aware of, that have attended, it has been individual residents who are concerned. But again no information that we have had about specialist groups or their presence at any of the meetings.

Are ... workers and volunteers valued do you think?

The fact that they are unpaid - No.

There are issues in relation to this.

Of course there are. Are they valued? Again in terms of my involvement and my communications I don't feel valued, I feel dismissed heavily. That's mainly because I don't have the actual clout of having a community rep tag attached to me. I would actually argue that the number of times I have been

referred back to my community rep, whereas I feel as an individual I have got the right to represent myself as well, although I am happy with the community rep to go forward with ideas. I don't know whether their expenses are being met. I know that I have made numerous phone calls, e-mails and taken time out to do these things and I am happy to do that but there are resource implications for any individual who wants to do that and given the fact that I am being told that there is not even money to send out leaflets, I wonder how they can adequately say that that is the case.

What opportunities do you think, maybe from people you have spoken to or whatever, what opportunities have been provided for personal development?

None. None.

Do you think this is something that should be addressed?

I think in terms of personal development specific to the remit of the design brief, ie lets get you on some training in relation to housing rights, lets get you on to training that will look at National policies on regeneration and relocation, so we have some concept. We are lay-people and we have, as lay-people, we are at a distinct disadvantage to Council



employees or various associated parties who have the knowledge and the background of working regularly in this area. So as far as I know there has been no personal development around this design brief.

Do you think that a two-way information strategy has developed in implemented, management created or...?

No I think it is wholly inadequate as it stands. The basic requirements for a project like this is participation and communication and consultation is that there is a definitive database of people who need to be targeted and addresses that need to be targeted. The Council has yet to tell us whether that is in place or whether they actually have one in their system. The actual reality seems to reflect that it has been very ad hoc very piecemeal due to the fact that the communications received are either too late, infrequently, or only going to specific addresses and nobody seems to be able to tell me which addresses they are targeting. I don't know how they can't. They know the area affected, why is it such a problem to say whether they are actually sending out information to them. top down approach. They send us information, they invite us to meetings where anything we do say or respond to is actually quoted. There is no evidence of that as it stands because there are no minutes from meetings.

There is no formal form of responses to any of the queries I have had.

When you say very top down do you mean that the community is Do you think that there is a way in which the community could then take that and reverse that back on Councillors coming to think that they organise things.

That would be lovely to see but given the fact that as a community we actually have very little idea or clue about what the actual timescales are we are dealing with here. We have a rough month, things get changed, things get put back so things can't be helped but there is very little communication that is soliciting our individual opinions outside what the community reps are putting forward. You know, there is a telephone number but you know, I have made numerous phone calls and all I have is a record of those phone calls, you know, what I have bothered to note down, e-mails that I have sent haven't really been responded to. It would be great if the community could grab the bull by the horns and say well actually no, its changing now and you guys need to come to this meeting or that meeting. At the moment it seems as though the Council decides when the meetings are happening, where they are happening. You know, we had to

apparently fight for them to bring the actual competition entries down to St Lawrence Square, and given the fact that St Lawrence is highly likely to be demolished I find it amazing that they didn't think that was an appropriate response from day 1 and it actually had to be pointed out to them. It seems as though the community reps are spending a lot of time trying to allay people's fears with very little information that those fears are unfounded. Its all very vague to us at the minute.

Do you think that the steps that have been taken within the scheme itself are, as opposed to facilitating community participation, they are acting more as a barrier?

As it stands the strategy they allege to have in place is a barrier. It is not an open forum. It is not open communication or adequate communication, it seems too little too late. Going back to the questionnaire for the residents, you know, to ask the residents after the design brief has been sent out and after the closing date for the design brief has been met, what we actually think of our area, that's back to front, surely the first stage would have been to question us about what we thought what were the problematic areas or the bonus areas of where we live and then incorporate those concepts and quality of information from the research questionnaires about what it is

we actually want in the area. No, you see design competition entries saying well you're going to lose your park when actually the vast majority of us actually love that park or you know say the park has problems with drug use where actually we don't feel as though it is a problem for drug use. It seems they haven't got their process correct at all from day 1.

From what we have discussed now it seems that there is a problem with the fact that things were sort of, seemed a great idea, and the concept.....

It has been an ill thought out idea. It is a fantastic concept and hopefully we can still remedy some of the issues that have been felt in other areas of the city like the Going for Growth Strategy, like what has been happening down Walker Riverside in terms of people feeling dictated to. But it wasn't thought out well enough, its been thought out terribly and whoever thought of the idea is obviously responsible for the process, if I was responsible I would have sacked them because they haven't got the actual emm, in terms of you know, at this stage we will do x, y and z. They haven't got that formula right at all. Stuff coming up months in that should have been implemented from Day 1, like the communications strategy, that should have been the first thing that was discussed when they thought about a design competition.

How can we adequately communicate with the residents, what resources do we have available to do that. Again there has been a lot of reference to Internet, you know look at stuff on the Internet, well you know that is a form of social exclusion in itself, because not everyone has access or are computer literate. So the concept seems fab but the actual implementation has been very poor.

.....

I desperately want to be involved but I need more than 3 or 4 days notice of a meeting, obviously I work and I manage wherever possible to re-jig work and schedule other commitments to attend because I really want to be part of this process. But you know, it is no good telling us that there will be a meeting a couple of days before or after the event. At least they could give two or three weeks notice. We need it flagged up, you know I have never seen anything in Morrisons You know where people might use A large of people who aren't actually involved in this process and we need to actually ask those people who to give them this information, we can't actually even work out how to leaflet this area effectively.

It seems to me that there is a need to get in touch with

Not only individually but the areas that potentially are effected have a right to receive written communication or other forms that they are able to access in a format that they understand. The newsletters and looking at the stuff that they print about the shortlisting, people aren't familiar with concepts about housing sustainability around green corridors. These are foreign words, these are not to them. Issues about urban density, can you imagine, what the hell do you mean by urban density. At the actually meeting where they discussed all the designs and started looking at the shortlists I had to point out on a number of occasions, what do you mean by that, what do you mean by these terms, what do these concepts actually mean, for people to understand. People have no knowledge of the concepts and terms that they are working with. There is a lot of jargon. I work in Social Services and I would be shot by my managers if I started spouting out social work jargon It has got to be in a format that people can be accessible and at the present moment it is definitely not.

There are not really any more questions. Is there anything else that you want to say?

No, I think its fine. I still think I am confused as to how there is money available to order to process but then I am being told there is not money or resources available with regard to a



communication strategy and again that makes someone like me suspect about the Council's intent here. Because we all know about how auditing and the various issues around need various requirements to get this pot of money or that pot of money. It is very important that the Council think through the process so I don't just want to be part, I just don't want to be another pin that is going to get the Council this pot of money or can tick this box saying the community, saying they are communicating over consulting with us when the reality on the ground is actually these guys haven't even got it right to be able to leaflet effectively the areas affected.

I think from what I understand the Council are aware that things are going wrong with relation to the community strategy.

Absolutely, they have been aware for months though. Every meeting I have attended since I started attending the meetings we have all said we are not being communicated with, we should still be getting leaflets after the event where we had a chance to be able to be vocal. It doesn't even go beyond not being good enough, it is actually negligent and it is certainly not a consultation, its lip service. That makes me angry because you know, whether the Council wants to admit it or not there is a good sense of community down St Lawrence Square and in the surrounding areas and many of us are very happy with the area and we are very happy to see development go ahead if we feel as though we have a stake

in them. I think what the major issue I have is that at this point in time I certainly feel as though I don't have a say. I feel as though the Council is dictating. How we respond to the group of residents through it all will be interesting because you know, I am not scared of being vocal and I am not scared of using what contacts and resources I have to force the Council's hand on issues but it shouldn't require one person in a group like that to kick up a stink for anything to be done about it. It should be there from Day 1. They should be looking at things like language, they should be looking at hard to reach groups, they should be looking at special interest groups. The blanket feeling I have in talking to neighbours is that they feel as though that this an exercise that Newcastle will be able to tick a box saying yes we consulted them. But the reality has been a lot further from the truth.

Do you think that, from what I have I think that one of the biggest problems that we have is that all the issues that [can't hear the question]

To be honest I think that as residents we are actually unaware of what resources are available and that is another big issue. We know there is money available for the shortlisted architects to draw together plans and we understand the reasons for that but that money has been made available and then to be told well actually we can't get the communications right because there aren't enough resources. That seems skew if to me.

I think when they say resources I don't think it is about the money its more about the actual capacity. I am interested

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You are talking about the staffing then. Right as far as I know the main contact point I have got is Clare and Michael. I have found both of them very approachable and I have no issues with them on a personal level but what I am hearing is that resources are an issue but I think.

Questions that the residents were asked

Have you (the community) felt recognised and valued as an equal partner at all stages of the process?

Points to consider

- Who had the first word in the regeneration strategy and how are community agendas reflected from day one and throughout the process?
- How are community members made to feel valued as equal partners?

Has there been meaningful community representation on all decision making from initiation of the scheme?

- How are communities represented on decision making groups (in addition to/instead of the bigger players such as local councillors)?
- How are your decision making processes enabling communities to be heard and to influence
- How have communities determined decision making agendas from the preparatory stage through to the forward strategy?

Do you think that all community members have had the opportunity to participate?

- How are NCC supporting community networks/structures through which all communities can contribute to decision making?

- What creative/flexible approaches have been developed to engage members of all communities?
- What are the ranges of opportunities through which community members can influence decisions?

Communities have access to and control over resources.

- In what ways do regeneration workers and decision makers make themselves accessible to community members?
- How is community control of resources being increased?

Evaluation of regeneration partnerships incorporates a community agenda (Charter)?

- How are you ensuring community ownership of evaluation processes?

Has the diversity of local communities and their interests been reflected at all levels of the regeneration process?

- What steps have been taken to ensure that all communities can be involved with and influence regeneration strategy and activity?
- What actions have been taken to ensure that representation by all partner agencies and staff composition reflect the gender balance and ethnic diversity of the geographical area?



Are equal opportunities policies in place and being implemented?

Are unpaid workers/volunteer activists valued?

- Have you been sufficiently and resourced as unpaid workers?
- What opportunities have been provided for personal development?

A two-way information strategy is developed and implemented.

- Has information been clear and accessible and reached all communities in time for it to be acted upon?

Programme and project procedures are clear and accessible.

- What steps are being taken to ensure that scheme procedures facilitate community participation rather than act as a barrier?

Communities are resourced to participate.

- What resources are provided for the development of community led networks and community groups?
- What support is provided for community members and community representatives?

Understanding, knowledge and skills are developed to support partnership working.

- Do you think that you have been given the opportunity to develop the understanding, knowledge and skills required to work in this partnership?
- What training has been provided?