



CLARENCE HOUSE

In 1996, when the original Action Planning publication was first produced by my then Institute of Architecture, community engagement still sat on the margins of statutory planning.

Twelve years later, it is heartening that public participation, once only considered relevant to the regeneration of awkward pockets of the inner-city, is now a legal requirement whenever new building schemes are proposed or spatial strategies drawn up. Local authorities must demonstrate that all has been done to engage those affected by new development in decisions about design and layout before planning permission is granted. I am proud to say that my own Foundation for the Built Environment has been a strong influence in this regard, pioneering – with English Partnerships – the Enquiry by Design process which brings together professional consultants and community representatives and which allows decisions on large developments to take place in as transparent a forum as possible. While the intensive nature of these events can be exacting, they can nevertheless secure solutions with astonishing speed, in contrast to the more usual sequential planning process. The value of early events is now demonstrated by a greater sophistication in built schemes around the United Kingdom, including Upton, on the edge of Northampton, or indeed Poundbury – which is still the largest scheme I am aware of to have benefited from a community planning process, back in 1989. Well planned settlements command both the pride of their inhabitants and – research suggests – a market premium.

Therefore, we have much to celebrate as this Community Planning Event Manual is published. But I would urge all those who are involved in the engagement of communities to push further, taking advantage of a vastly enhanced legal position to demand higher standards of design in the built environment – the kind of design that addresses real local needs, reflects local context and enhances local economies. Reflecting local (and natural) responses in materials and building skills will prove a better bet than the standard developer product, supporting the communities in which development sits and mitigating its effect on the planet.

The breadth and variety of collaborative planning events outlined in these pages reflect the passion shared by so many where changes to our precious towns and cities are concerned. If this strength of feeling can now be channelled to provoke meaningful, long-term change in the way we plan and build, then I hope that those early steps towards consensus planning will have been richly justified. I am delighted that my Foundation is helping to publish this manual to help people grasp the immense opportunities offered by this valuable approach.



HRH The Prince of Wales taking part in a Community Planning Event at Poundbury, Dorchester, UK. Over 2,000 people attended the 5-day 'planning weekend' to explore the implications of building a new town on Duchy of Cornwall property. Over 75% of the 400 people who filled in a questionnaire thought the event worthwhile and almost 90% wanted continued involvement as the project progressed.