

## Home Zones Pilots – Lessons to be learnt

Planning and implementing a Home Zone is very complex, success hinges on effective community participation and decisions being reached with as much consensus from the community and other key stakeholders as possible.

Involving as many people from the community **from the start** and other important stakeholders such as emergency services, refuse, local business and local councillors, is fundamental.

The aim is not just to consult them, but enable these people to make decisions about what they want from their home zone and what they want their home zone to be. Community involvement must be timed and coordinated very closely with the technical issues that need to be clarified, for example issues such as underground services, parking controls and limitations of budget are best cleared at an early stage.

There are nine pilot Home Zone projects in England and Wales.

Four have been completed:

- (Northmoor in Manchester (phase 1)
- Methleys in Leeds
- Magor Village in Monmouthshire
- Morice Town in Plymouth.

Three are partly finished:

- Cavell Way in Sittingbourne
- Clifton in Nottingham (this is a large project consisting of many small home zones)
- Five Roads in West Ealing

Two are yet to begin building:

- New England in Peterborough
- Holmewood in Lambeth

These pilot Home Zones have enabled us to learn from their success stories (and they all have some) and from their difficulties.

## Effective Community Participation

Effective community participation requires all or a minimum of two of the following:

- **A champion within the local authority** (preferably project officer, community liaison officer or housing officer), who remains with the project from inception to completion, to ensure continuity, be a point of contact for residents and other stakeholders and to keep the pressure on within the authority in terms of funding and resources. Somebody who is able to bring together all the complexities. Northmoor, Magor Village and Morice Town home zones have all had this person.
- **A strong external facilitator independent of the residents and the council.** Preferably somebody who already has experience of using varied community participation approaches, who is able to build up and maintain a good report with the local community, stakeholders and authority. A company or individual who lives/works close to the proposed home zone area is also preferable, in order that they can be on site regularly and become part of the community. A facilitator can draw out of people what they want, what their concerns are and feed this information to architects and engineers. While some community architects have acquired the additional experience in community involvement, it is doubtful whether the average person traditionally trained as an architect or engineer would have the skills to be able to fully engage the community and reach consensus on what they want. Northmoor and Sittingbourne home zones have used Housing associations to facilitate community participation with great success.
- **Strong residents, tenants groups or associations or forum.** A group of residents or tenants who are able to accurately represent the views of the whole community and relay information to and from the whole community, who are keen to work in partnership with the facilitator and authority. Methleys and Ealing home zones were championed by local residents groups. In the Methleys the group did much of the initial facilitation and consultation with the wider residents and in Ealing the group has been involved in aiding facilitation. Plymouth city council set up a resident's advisory group, consisting of residents and other stakeholders and this proved to be an excellent go-between the authority and community and helped to alleviate mistrust about the authority. Amongst the advisory group were some key champions of the home zone.

For a home zone to be planned and implemented with optimum success at least two of the above are needed. A Housing Association working as facilitator and an officer championing the project has been shown to work in Northmoor, and enabled the community to become fully involved and supportive. While an enthusiastic, strong advisory group and committed officer were shown to work in Morice Town. Methleys home zone was driven by the community group, but they did have support and commitment from the authority and a consistent contact within the authority.

## 10 lessons to be learnt

- 1) Although an independent facilitator is often helpful because they have the skills of engaging the community and breaking down mistrust, some of the pilot home zones that have gone smoothly (e.g., Morice Town) have achieved the same levels of community participation through an advisory group which is semi-autonomous from the authority.
- 2) However, having said that, the experience from Sittingbourne (which has experienced issues of vandalism) and Northmoor (which has a very varied cultural makeup within the home zone) is that having a housing association which already has skills at working with multi-cultural communities and young people can lead to their being able to make headway where an authority would potentially lack the skills or experience.
- 3) Using different consultation processes to reach different sections of the community has shown to be effective. Northmoor for example set up a young person's advisory group. Attending existing groups such as toddler groups in the community ensures that people, such as mothers with young children, are involved who may find it difficult to go to meetings at other times.
- 4) The home zone projects that have experienced the most difficulty have not had a consistent project manager from within the council from the inception of the project, for example Ealing and Lambeth have both had staff turnover within this post, resulting in loss of momentum and potentially other difficulties such as breakdown in communication between the community and authority. Nottingham city council set up an officer project team, which potentially may overcome the unexpected difficulties of staff turnover. But success of a project and certainly maintaining momentum seems to rely on having somebody at the helm who has been there from the start and who is championing the project. Northmoor, Morice Town and Sittingbourne all demonstrate the benefits of this.
- 5) A home zone can be driven by the local community with a strong residents association championing it, but it is even harder work if there is not a facilitator or project manager championing the project within the authority, Ealing have experienced these setbacks but have managed to overcome most of these problems through sheer determination!
- 6) In the absence of a strong residents or tenants association or community group or if there is apathy amongst some of the community, then good facilitation becomes fundamental and the authority may want to consider contracting this key role out to an experienced facilitator. A facilitator would also have the skills to engage residents who are disruptive and negative about the project, involving such people is important as they can present significant obstacles for the rest of the residents.
- 7) Relying solely on one of the key people/groups above is not enough and the project takes longer and encounters many more hurdles and is unlikely to meet the true home zone ethos.
- 8) A number of the pilots benefited from making visits to home zones schemes in the Netherlands. The Home Zone Challenge projects will have the advantage of visiting completed sites in the UK and talking to residents about their views and experiences.
- 9) The most pressing concern for residents almost always is parking, they want to be able to park near their home and stop non-residents parking in the street. Controlled parking zones can overcome parking problems and should be discussed very early on, while taking into account both the possible costs and

design implications that they have, for example, some parking services teams insist on yellow lines everywhere in controlled parking zones, which could ruin any home zone.

- 10) Some pilot home zones have had problems with underground services. There is a need to cater for service lines and these will influence the design. Very clear advice about the location of services from relevant utility and telecommunication companies is required early on, reiterate to them the need for accuracy with this information and do whatever can be done to make it clear to any relevant utilities that not only should they do any planned work in conjunction with the home zone being implemented but further that any re-instatement necessary will be particularly carefully checked for quality.

If Home Zones in the UK are to reach the true ethos of a place for people, a street where children can play safely, a street where people can stop and chat with their neighbours then we need to stop thinking of them in terms of glorified traffic calming and view them as a communal garden, play area, car park and lastly as a street.

### **Further information**

Home Zone News website, giving further information about the pilot studies:  
[www.homezonenews.org.uk](http://www.homezonenews.org.uk)

Transport 2000's Streets for People, advice and information to members on home zones, traffic calming and general traffic problems. Membership includes very useful Taming the Traffic manual, £10 membership to communities, £30 for local authorities/consultants.  
[www.transport2000.org.uk/changeyourstreets](http://www.transport2000.org.uk/changeyourstreets)

Sustrans, practical experience of home zone developments, advice and information, including linking home zones into wider sustainable transport schemes such as Safe routes to Schools.  
[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)