

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Creating Streets in Cornwall with consent

The story of the Nansledan urban extension to Newquay

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ONLINE EDITION

'At best civilisation advances by spirals.' Sabine Baring-Gould

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Foreword

What is the difference between housing and a place, between a home and a unit, between a street and a road, between a village green and a 'public open space'? What is the difference between a place we call home and something in which we merely exist?

So many discussions about how to 'solve Britain's housing crisis' end up in such desiccated discussions of 'units consented' or of the more esoteric elements of Britain's oddly and ineffectively complex planning process that it is easy to forget that we are building homes and settlements for future generations.

But the public don't forget this. In poll after poll the public tell us that most of them would rather live in an older home than a new one.¹ And, if you don't believe they mean it, the pricing data backs this up. Over the last 30 years, pre-1919 homes have increased in price faster than modern homes in much of the country; twice as fast in London. And, in an exhaustive survey of every single residential sale in London in 2016, the 'heritage premium' for living in a traditional residential neighbourhood or proximate to a listed building was four times larger than the 'new build' premium so beloved of estate agents. Nor are the British alone in this. Evidence from Holland and from the US is consistent.² Put simply, there is something about the scale, nature, beauty and 'sense of place' of more traditional towns, settlements and neighbourhoods that most of us seem to crave.

The public are right. Our bodies need warmth and shelter but our souls seek so much more: security, and repose, space and comfort, a real home in a real place. This might be in a city or a town or a small village but it is somewhere not anywhere or over there. And advances in neuroscience and environmental psychology are beginning (only beginning) to explain why this matters so much.

And yet we don't build these places. At least not enough of them. Nansledan is different. As one resident told us, it 'combines the traditional building style with all the modern advantages. Here every house looks different. And these differences have been carefully thought about.... I would say, you feel like you live here as an individual, not a number. That feels good.'

If new residents could say that of far more of the new 'housing' built in modern Britain, we don't think we would have a crisis of supply at all. For, ultimately, the question is not one of economics or even of supply but of public consent. 'Design quality' is not an after-thought to be stuck on like an elastoplast but an existential and intrinsic component of building settlements for the soul as well as the body; homes and neighbourhoods in which humans can live and love and flourish and grow.

Building these types of places is not easy. It needs landowners, professionals, developers and communities ready to think in the long term and to structure their investments of time and money patiently. But this can be done. And in this short study we set out the story of how one such place is quietly being created right now as an urban extension to Newquay in Cornwall. This is the story, so far, of Nansledan.

We would like to thank the Duchy of Cornwall's former Estate Surveyor, Tim Gray, Hugh Petter of ADAM architecture, the Duchy of Cornwall, (above all Nick Pollock and Peter James), Ben Bolgar of the Prince's Foundation, Rebecca Lyle and Phil Mason of Cornwall Council and all the kind residents of Nansledan who generously answered our questions, showed us round or let us into their homes. The findings of this report are entirely ours. All errors of fact and judgement remain, of course, our own.

Nicholas Boys Smith

Director, CREATE streets

The Nansledan urban extension to Newquay: what is being built?

Nansledan is a 218-hectare urban extension to the coastal town of Newquay on the north coast of Cornwall in South West England. It is designed to 'be an exemplary sustainable and quintessentially Cornish urban extension.' Originally conceived of as an extension of around 1,000 homes it has grown in the planning to a planned mixed development of more than 4,000 homes and 4,000 jobs – and to have done so (as far as we can tell) with strong local support. It is intended to meet the town's housing needs not for five but for fifty years.³

The houses are a range of flats, two and three-bed terraced and semi-detached houses and larger three, four and five bed family homes. Thirty percent will be affordable. These are being provided as a mix of affordable rented and shared equity housing and are distributed throughout Nansledan.⁴ In 2011, Newquay had a population of just over 20,000 so Nansledan represents a significant nearly 20 per cent increase to the town's size. So far about 200 homes have been built with new homes currently being built at the rate of around 100 per year. The development is twice the size of the landowner's previous major urban extension – Poundbury in Dorset.

Map of the Nansledan site



Nansledan is Cornish for 'broad valley' and both the landowner and the council have certainly been broad in their vision. With an aim to 'create an exemplary, dense, mixed use, sustainable extension that is distinctively Cornish in character and closely tailored to the needs of the local community,' the development will include its own high street, church, school and public spaces. It will also take advantage of the valley's sides gently sloping down to Chapel Stream which is one of several routes being retained as a wildlife corridor. The aim is to help meet Newquay's future needs sustainably and for the long term with one new job per household. The intent is

for all of the community's needs to be met locally, within walkable neighbourhoods and to 'promote public transport and the movement of pedestrians and cyclists over the motor car.' The intended Cornish character is reflected in both the use of Cornish names and the use of local materials - most notably Cornish slate and granite. This has created new jobs and secured the future of several local slate and granite quarries and businesses.

The project is being led by the Duchy of Cornwall, which owns most of the land that will make up Nansledan. The Duchy of Cornwall was established by Edward III in 1337 and is a private estate consisting of 43,000 hectares of land and an investment portfolio. Revenues from the estate are passed to the Prince of Wales. HM Treasury oversees major investment decisions to ensure that the long-term value of the estate is not compromised. Property development therefore has to be commercial with the Treasury needing to approve all property transactions above £500,000.⁵

Mixed-use in Kosti Veur



Context

History, population and economy

Newquay was a small fishing port which grew rapidly 150 years ago thanks to the arrival of a local railway. This allowed Newquay to act as the harbour for Cornish tin. Connection to the national railways system and to London from 1905 in turn allowed it to become a prosperous seaside destination for much of the twentieth century thanks to marvellous beaches, arresting Atlantic air and plenty of sunshine.

Recent history has been less kind. Tin is no longer mined. The richest tourists have long since fled south. And the surrounding farming is barely profitable. Cornwall is not rich. Remaining tourists are low spending and create jobs which are poorly paid and seasonal. Locals talk of 'Cornish salaries' and they don't mean high ones. Parts of the town centre have palpably seen better days. Modern interventions (the police station or the down-sized train station) are ugly and much twentieth century house-building is also ageing badly with a sprawling and hard to walk suburbia surrounding the town centre.

So, Newquay has its challenges. But it also has things going for it. Tourists may be low-spending but they still come. (Most coastal towns have entirely lost their tourist economy). Surfing is more popular than ever and the population increases to over 100,000 during the summer. There is also an airport and fibre optic broadband meaning that e-working is getting much easier. People *are* moving to Cornwall and there is pressure on homes and house prices. Where will they live?

Planning status

The local planning authority is (now) Cornwall Council.⁶ In 2001, the Local Plan allocated the land that is becoming Nansledan as part of the 'Newquay Growth Area'. The Growth Area was equal to about 40 per cent of the town's surface area.

Many permanent residents avoid the over-crowded town centre, above all in summer. One even told us 'I keep away from the tourist-infected part of Newquay.' The council therefore felt that a mixed-use extension was particularly appropriate to avoid putting more pressure on the centre. The first outline permission was granted in September 2010. The Master Plan and supporting Design Statement were approved by Cornwall Council in 2011. Planning permission has now been granted for 1,500 homes, of which around 500 have detailed planning permission.

Nansledan Siteplan



Land owner's approach

The Duchy's approach to the development of Nansledan is not the typical approach of selling the land or optioning it to a land speculator. Instead the Duchy aspires to be guided by three principles of;

- staying involved;
- establishing confidence with local government and neighbours in the nature and quality of what will be delivered; and
- establishing a consortium partnership with developers.

Work began in earnest on an urban extension to Newquay in 2003. However, this should be set against a much longer background. The land had belonged to the Duchy for over 150 years and the long-term relationship between the council and the Duchy was important. Although Tim Gray, the Duchy of Cornwall's former Estate Surveyor who led the project for many years, is keen to stress that; 'it was never the case that we played for time to advantage' nevertheless major development is not quick in the UK.⁷ Tim Gray recalled;

*'The course of planning such schemes takes many years if the mood is to achieve something exceptional. There are many statutory hurdles and regulations to address in an inconsistent climate of changing central government political policies.'*⁸

The Duchy's relative lack of focus on quarterly reporting compared to a volume housebuilder clearly helped on this process. As one official reportedly said in the face of a delay; 'the Duchy's waited a few hundred years to gets its money out of the Newquay Growth Area. What's another 18 months?' However, it is worth stressing that, as demanded by statute, the project does have to be commercial and not to undermine the long-term value of the Duchy.⁹ Homes at the Duchy's other large development in the South West, Poundbury, sell at a 25 per cent premium to the local market.¹⁰

What design and engagement process is being used?

Local precedents

Reputation matters. Before detailed work began on the Newquay urban extension, a range of good precedents developed by the Duchy appear to have given local politicians and neighbours confidence that Nansledan would be high quality and 'fit in'. Nansledan's very first resident, John Williams, told us that he felt 'Poundbury has a pretty good reputation.'¹¹

Closer to home, a smaller development on a 4.4 hectare site to the south-western edge of Newquay town centre was consented in 2008. This is Tregunnel Hill. Construction began in 2012. It was completed in 2015. It has 174 homes, including 48 affordable homes (28 per cent) as well as employment space. Tregunnel Hill appears to have given confidence for the larger Nansledan project. Community groups and locals could see what was delivered and that it lived up to expectations.

Andrew Cameron, who has been acting as the Strategic Highways advisor on the whole plan, working with WSP, described it as; *'a test bed for design. It allowed local residents to see the quality of what was being built and that reassured them as well. You can go to Tregunnel Hill and it looks like it belongs in Cornwall. They are using local slate and stone. And they are using Art Deco for commercial buildings. It feels like it belongs in Cornwall. That's what people want, rather than boxes from straight out of a catalogue dumped on them.'*

The marketing team agrees. Tregunnel Hill features on Nansledan's website. And one sales agent commented that, 'people can see Tregunnel Hill now being finished and they like it.'¹² More importantly, so do the first residents. Without exception, every resident we spoke to who had visited the scheme said it encouraged them to buy at Nansledan. One, bank worker Taura Lloyd, had even lived there;

*'Before, I bought my house in Tregunnel Hill on a whim. I lucked right in.... As soon as I cottoned up that there were doing this, I came right up here.'*¹³

Tregunnel Hill



Pattern book

Following on from conversations with the American urban designer Ray Gindroz, the Duchy and the Prince's Foundation in 2004 commissioned Hugh Petter of Adam Urbanism to produce a Newquay pattern book to give a confident visual feel for the existing town and how it might evolve. This was intended to 'provide a useful framework that subsequent planning and design processes can incorporate, select, revise and add certain elements.' It covered urban patterns (the scale and character of various streets and blocks), building typologies (the massing, scale, proportions and details of individual buildings) and town landscape patterns (such as walls and planting).¹⁴ The pattern book appears to have gone down well and to have been 'taken over' by the wider community. The co-ordinating architect, Hugh Petter, has recalled;

'It's an American idea, looking at the pattern of streets, the palette of materials and the plants in the public spaces. We really get under the skin of the town. It went down very well. This has become the Maypole around which people began to dance as we worked together to develop the plan. People who had lived in the town all their lives had just not looked at the town in this way.'

Nick Pollock, Head of Planning at the Duchy, has added;

'Residents say "we don't need a design policy because we've got a pattern book." Residents refer to it as "our pattern book" because it is seen as theirs, not the Duchy's or the council's.'

Tim Gray regards the 'ten principles for development' which emerged in the Pattern Book as one of the two 'doctrinal passages which really guided us very effectively,' throughout the process of developing Nansledan.

Co-design not consultation – the Enquiry by Design process

In 2004 the Duchy commissioned the Prince's Foundation for Building Community to conduct an Enquiry by Design (EbD) public consultation process over six months to ask local people how they wanted to see Newquay grow and to inform the masterplan.

The Enquiry by Design (EbD) process

The EbD process is a planning tool that brings together key stakeholders and the local community to collaborate on a vision for a new or revived community, town or region.

The EbD is a multi-day on-site collaborative design and planning workshop. All affected parties, including local residents, landowners, local councillors, investors and amenity groups are involved through direct or representative means. Typically spanning between three to five days, EbDs are designed to offer all stakeholders the chance to present their own views and hear those of others. EbD visual reports are used to inform design principles, advise development partners and report back to the community.

The intent is that the vision is developed through workshops and open sessions that assess a complex range of design requirements for the development site, with every issue tested by being drawn, allowing participants to visualise how proposals will affect their area.

The EbD process began with a two-day briefing session in May 2004. Its aim was to clarify expectations for participants, and to begin to consider the main issues likely to be discussed for which technical information would be required. This was attended by several stakeholders including community groups, local authority councillors and officers, and others who had expressed an interest in the development. This in turn led to six working groups who worked up key themes for the development over the next six months.

The crucial workshop took place between 25th and 29th October 2004 at a local school. Informed by the working groups, it produced principles for the structure, scale and layout of the town as well as strategic agreement on mixed-use places and communities, great streets, public transport and adaptability of building design. It recommended a density of 36 homes per hectare. The process brought together key local stakeholders: statutory agencies and authorities, the landowner, the masterplanner, the local community and voluntary groups. In total, there were over 140 attendees. Through an 'intensive workshop,' the participants collaborated to articulate a vision for the site that did not suffer from the 'design disconnect' between designers and most members of the public. The EbD's report explained that the process involved a high level of technical input, and that 'fundamental to the process is the intensive design enquiry; every issue is tested by being drawn.' Problems could be raised, discussed and resolved as and when they arrived, throughout the process.

Colour in Cornwall



The EbD came up with a concept proposal underpinned by a set of clear principles. The specific spatial vision that emerged in 2004 was for an urban extension of 1,200 homes over 33 hectares with a large park around Chapel Stream flowing through the middle. The key agreed principles for the design of neighbourhoods in the growth area evolved over time, but were important in establishing a direction of travel. Outlined in Nansledan's Sustainability Strategy, the masterplan was developed using these core principles;

- 'Place: design that respects the complex character of a place and takes into consideration its history, geology, transportation links and its natural landscape;
- Hierarchy: a clear and legible ordering system which recognizes a hierarchy between types of buildings or roads and their individual parts in relation to the whole;
- Scale: towns and buildings which, whatever their size, relate to human proportions;
- Harmony: design that sounds its own 'note' and yet blends with the local and natural environment;
- Enclosure: design which establishes clear distinction between town and country, public and private space thus encouraging appropriate activities within each;
- Materials: design that uses materials that are, wherever possible, indigenous, have a natural harmony with the landscape, and which are selected with care to ensure they improve with age and weathering;
- Decoration: design whose decoration not only enhances the quantity and beauty of a building but helps to engender emotional value and personal and cultural relevance;

- Art and Craftsmanship: the care and attention with which a building is made rewards both the maker and the user and makes them likely to last and be valued by future generations;
- Signs, Lights and Public Space: a recognition that the designs of public areas, including 'street furniture', signage and lighting, is as important as the design of private spaces, and should be designed as part of an harmonious whole; and
- Community: the carefully facilitated early involvement of the local community in order to create places which have a civilizing influence, which meet people's needs, desires and aspirations and which engender civic pride.'

The principles were expanded over time to include;

- 'Permeability: urban design in which blocks of buildings are fully permeated by an interconnected street network;
- Longevity: design that creates streets and buildings that will cope with a variety of uses during their lifetime;
- Value: design that creates a valuable asset in economic, social and environmental terms.'

New houses in Kosti Veur



The evolution of the EbD into these core principles demonstrated both stability of aim but also flexibility of delivery. One of the broader positives to emerge from the EbD, according to Duchy Head of Planning, Nick Pollock, was that it; 'built up a head of steam. The whole town was behind it. It created certainty and confidence about delivery'.

From Newquay Growth Area to Nansledan – how the plans grew

In this context of locally supportive politics and the clear need for more housing, Cornwall Council felt very able to encourage an acceleration and expansion of the plan. The initial plans emerging from the Enquiry by Design had been for 1,200 homes. During the course of the next five years as the plans were worked up in more detail, this grew by over 230 per cent to plans for 4,000 homes. Specifically, from 2008 the council put the Duchy under pressure to increase their plans so great was the confidence in the quality, deliverability and political acceptability of the planned urban extension.

Phil Mason, Service Director for Planning and Sustainable Development at Cornwall County Council, who has worked on the site for many years is very clear as to both how popular the scheme is locally and why that is the

case. He sees it as due to the mixed nature of the development, the popularity of the design and the trust invested in the Duchy to keep their word and to do the right thing – in contrast to many developers;

'Nansledan is a comprehensive new place rather than just building houses. People don't see it "just" as housing as they normally do. This is particularly interesting because lots of the infrastructure is not there yet. The shops have been built but they are empty, apart from the sales agents. The perception is that it is going to be a place. The message that there is going to be a school, that there will be shops is very strong. The developer has credibility when they say, "this is how we do things." People don't suspect they will break their word. Their covenant is very strong. That is very important...

What is unmissable is that we've never had anyone say "this is not good quality." In architectural terms, I am sure it will be criticised as "pastiche" but the fact is that most normal people say it's nice. It's hard to get away from the fact that they have created something that looks attractive. 'It does feel like Cornwall. It says something about Cornwall.'¹⁵

Mixed-use in Trewollack



A certain strategy and building code to give confidence

How to put these principle into practice? And how to do so in a way that gave confidence to council and residents and was commercially viable, popular and deliverable? It was by creating far more certainty about what could be delivered and how. In the years that followed, the Duchy created a series of detailed linked strategies on energy, food, sustainability, transport and water as well as a street design character statement and a regulatory building code.

Building codes (see box on next page) are not encouraged by the development control focused British planning system. However, they essentially produce many of the qualities of certainty of outcome that seem to work better abroad. For example, a 2006 UK Government assessment of 15 different design codes contrasted to four non-coded approaches conducted by Professor Matthew Carmona of UCL found;

*'Significantly, where codes are being implemented on site, schemes have been delivering enhanced sales values and increased land values. When set off against the up-front investment, this to a large degree determines the value added by coding, at least in crude economic terms. The qualitative evidence suggests that the outcome is positive, and for commercial partners, over the long-term, codes seem to be more than paying for themselves.'*¹⁶

Codes tend to lead to greater value because they often seem to be associated with better-defined places than the more combative development control process otherwise normally delivers. The same survey found that design codes are associated with 'a more coherent public realm, resisting inappropriate development, generally raising the importance and profile of design and in encouraging the appointment of better quality designers than would otherwise be the case'.¹⁷ They also seem to weed out worse designers or designers more intent on ubiquitous originality than proven quality. The survey found that; 'codes help set quality aspirations that not all designers are able to meet, and in doing so they weed out such players early in the process'.¹⁸ The survey

concluded that 'coding for architectural design is both possible and popular.'¹⁹ These initial findings were corroborated by a 2012 follow up survey of 51 councils and 18 design practices conducted.²⁰

This was also the approach taken by landowners in the UK historically. Rather than selling off everything to one developer (as is now typical), they set out the framework for development and then worked with a range of builders and developers who worked within the 'code'.²¹

What is a design or building code?

All professions and specialisms have their jargon and lingo. And this is necessarily so. Complex ideas, rules and measurements need to be reduced to a word, acronym or brief phrase so that concepts can be swiftly expressed and ideas compared or rules set out. Architecture and planning is no exception. The problem is that when rules, policies and design needs to interact with the public such professional short hand is normally incomprehensible.

For this reason, some designers, planners and developers have increasingly found that setting out ideas about how streets, pavements, blocks and building facades will work visually as opposed to verbally aids clarity and makes it much easier for communities and non-specialists to feed in their ideas and preferences, to say (in short) 'what things will look like round here' and 'what type of streets and homes' we want to build.

This visualisation can be done in various ways and with differing levels of detail. They are often (but not always) known as form-based design codes or protocols, sometimes as building codes or design guides. Their modern genesis is largely American. They have been championed by bodies such as the Form-Based Code Initiative. A design code, put simply, defines all or some of the range of possible plots scales, shape, materials, layouts, urban forms, street and style of all development in a certain area. Their advocates have made several key arguments in their favour.

Firstly, that they are easier for layman and woman (and arguably to the professional as well) to comprehend, permitting more effective community engagement and consensus.

Secondly, that being so clear they permit greater certainty of delivery and outcome both to any community but also to landowners and investors.

Third that they make it easier to deliver 'variety within a pattern' by permitting a range of builders, architects and designers to work within a consistent framework ('one code many hands'). This should lead to better places and higher values.

The Duchy's building code, prepared by lead architect Hugh Petter of Adam Architecture, sets out quite tight rules for materials, building heights and typologies, street patterns, use of colour, landscaping and street furniture. Most of these go far beyond what any normal planning department would require. Some are shown below.

Extracts from Nansledan Building Code



Most developers abandon sites as they sell them off. The Duchy is taking a different approach and one which is very rare in a British context. Each home owner or resident is given a copy of their neighbourhood's Design and Community Code. This is a legal covenant on freeholders which purchasers are obliged to enter into as part of their purchase. It sets out verbally and visually what changes can (and cannot) be made to homes. For example, it sets what colours walls and door can be painted or what changes can be made to windows. The Design and Community Code also applies to shop-owners and to shopfronts. Although it goes beyond usual planning permission, it is worth emphasising that it focuses entirely on external matters and, above all, on public facades. As Alain de Botton put it, 'when buildings talk, it is never with a single voice. Buildings are choirs rather than soloists.'²² The Duchy's hope and intent is that this will also help engender local civic pride.

Extracts from Kosti Veur Design & Community Code setting out some of the permissible colours²³



Any analysis at this stage is necessarily self-selecting. Clearly the early residents of Nansledan are likely to be accepting of the Community Code or they would not have bought houses there. This indeed seems to be the case. All residents we interviewed were strongly supportive and saw it as protecting the quality of the neighbourhood and (in one case) of their investment. For example, Steve Fountain, a journalist and copywriter who has bought a cottage with his wife in 2017 after his children left home was clear;

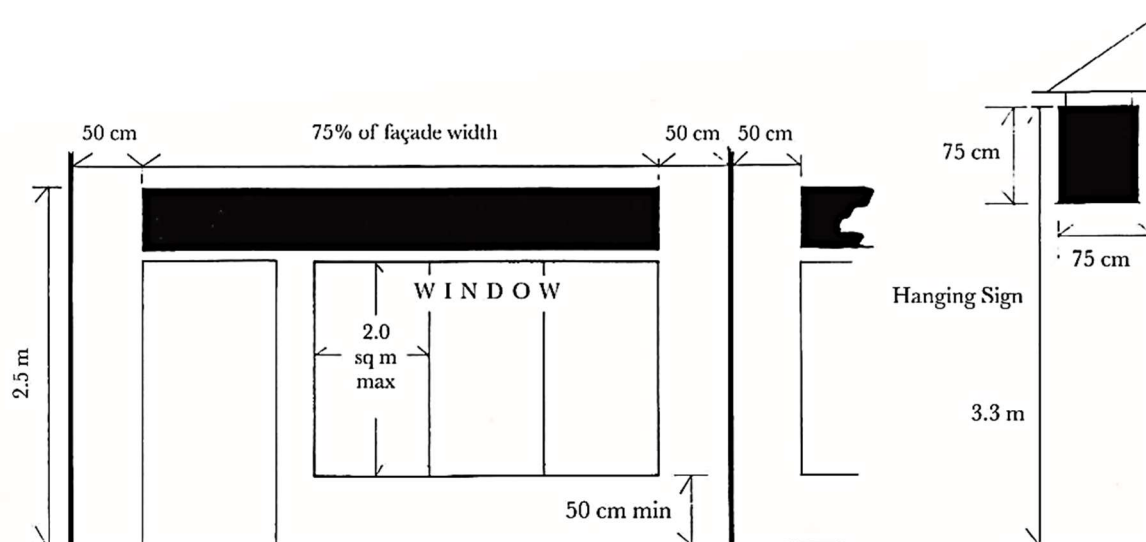
'Once you get over the initial shock, it's a great idea. It preserves the long-term look and feel of the development.'

Taura Lloyd, a bank compliance officer, agreed;

'I didn't know if I was keen on it at first. In hindsight, it means everything stays looking right. For instance, you can't put up satellite dishes. There's a central satellite dish. That means everything's not ruined by ugly dishes.'

In short, this confidence in how the future development will look, how it will 'fit into' the town and how it will continue to look seems to be crucial. Even a prominent county councillor, who had been critical of the Duchy's plans elsewhere, felt obliged to state publicly in a council meeting that he supported the development at Nansledan because it fitted in with the 'Cornish Vernacular.'

Extracts from Kosti Veur Design & Community Code setting out shop front proportions



Sustainability

Right from the start of the formal process, sustainability has been consistently critical to the local community whose support is an essential buttress of the whole strategy. This has led to a 2009 sustainability strategy and a series of interlinked energy, water, food and transport detailed strategies which have set the tone both for what the town is and will become but also its reputation and 'image' in the local town.

One key strategy is a commitment to use *locally sourced materials* wherever possible, including Cornish slate and granite. This was partly to create a sense of place through regionally distinctive architecture. It was also to ensure that the development supported the local economy and did not create a needlessly long supply chain. This has created new jobs and secured the future of several local slate and granite quarries and businesses. Mandy Hopkins, head of the Trevillet Quarry, has commented;

'The long term nature of the project at Nansledan has created a certain level of security for the company allowing us to invest in facilities, equipment and personnel. To date we have taken on and trained an extra 5 quarrymen, the company now employs 28 people.'

To my knowledge, never in modern times has one development used so much locally produced roofing slate, Trevillet quarry is only 30 miles from Newquay. Right from the start the Duchy of Cornwall and its partners made a pledge to use local producers of materials and suppliers of services over those found further afield in a bid to allow the financial benefits of the project to remain in Cornwall and the greater southwest region...

*For me, probably the most significant outcome of our involvement at Nansledan is the fact that slate quarrying, a very distinctive and strategically important industry associated with Cornwall, is being supported when so many old slate workings in the region have long ago ceased to operate.'*²⁴

Other sustainability aims are embedded in the urban design and the building code. For example, by interspersing shops with homes and requiring readily walkable streets, Nansledan designs out *over-reliance on cars*. By putting a major focus on allotments and by requiring the planting of edible plants (such as fruit trees) the plans also help to 'reduce the negative environmental impacts of food' and 'to improve residents' health through food' – both objectives of the Nansledan food strategy.²⁵ The Duchy has also supported a neighbouring community orchard social enterprise to expand, to plant hundreds of trees and will be supporting the creation of a restaurant selling good made with locally grown produce. Once Nansledan is finished, this community green space will be a key 'bridge' between the urban extension and the original town. Luke Berkeley, who runs the Newquay Community Orchard, explains;

'The hope is to educate and persuade residents to plant edible plants so that the whole development can become much more sustainable and efficient.... We've been planting Cornish breeds of apple tree so that they can cope with the wind. It's important that they do the same throughout Nansledan so that the trees can survive.'

Newquay Community Orchard's Community Growing Space – both part of the food and sustainability strategies



However, the project also has to work commercially, to be affordable and to meet what potential buyers are prepared to purchase. This required some thinking and some trade-offs. The co-ordinating architect and masterplanner, Hugh Petter, recalls;

'We've looked hard at sustainability. We realised that the Code for Sustainable Homes was at risk of being a 'tick-box' exercise which considered only the building and not peoples' wider lifestyles. We have had to go back to first principles about what was meant by sustainability and the use of local materials that survive well in a harsh maritime environment. In time, the council become comfortable that our approach was better. For example, we went over to Hanover to see Passivhaus. The problem is that they are on the edge of Hanover. Even if the buildings are 100 per cent carbon neutral, people need to use their Volkswagen to get anywhere!'

*'We've made our buildings as efficient as we could though they are not zero carbon. We meet the residual demand though efficient gas boilers. And the development is very sustainable in other ways. It is a walkable neighbourhood. We are encouraging local food via allotments. The community reacted very well to this. It fitted well with their aspirations.'*²⁶

As with the overall approach to the design code and the working relationship with the consortium some degree of flexibility has nevertheless been required.

'When we started, we were looking at shared district heating systems. One of the advantages of working with a consortium of housebuilders is they were able to show to us that there was serious resistance from a sales perspective. We also became very sceptical that it was necessarily more sustainable with huge lorries bringing wood chippings and the like down the motorway.'

Some might regard these decisions as compromises, others as a richer and wider understanding of sustainability. At any rate people do seem to have confidence that the development's approach to sustainability is genuine and no 'green-wash' like the sky gardens in London's walkie talkie or the rich fully flowering hanging gardens of Babylon applied by CGI to the windows and terraces of so many architectural proposals. Luke Berkeley, of the Newquay Community Orchard, is frank that he regrets the loss of nearby fields but also concedes that the development is 'far better' than other nearby developments.²⁷

Development and delivery model

Financing

Due to its size, the Duchy of Cornwall is in the fortunate position of having been able to meet much of the up-front planning and infrastructure costs of developing Nansledan since 2004 before land sales receipts have started coming through. These have not been trivial and it is a limitation of this patient capital model that it might be harder for smaller landowners to follow the same model. Since 2010, detailed planning permission costs have been met by individual developers for their specific sites.

Infrastructure

The major infrastructure investment required is the Newquay Strategic Route. This is a road which does not just link the urban extension to Newquay but also a way of suppressing several level crossings over the railway and of relieving traffic pressure on neighbouring villages. Unlike nearly every other development for 70 years, the strategic route will also act as a high street running through the centre of Nansledan. It will use design to suppress traffic speeds. Parts of the Newquay Strategic Route are being paid for by and delivered by Cornwall Council. Those parts within Nansledan itself (the high street) are being delivered by the Duchy.

Developing

In 2012 the Duchy of Cornwall formed a consortium with three regional South West building companies; CG Fry & Son, Morrish Builders and Wainhomes who had to subscribe a capital sum. Under the terms of the consortium, the site as a whole is master-planned and promoted by the consortium as phased single-site developments. Up-front strategic costs were met by the Duchy. Detailed planning permission costs are met by the individual developers. Promotion costs are shared equally. As the consortium obtains detailed planning consent for each parcel of land, the Duchy then sells it, with permission, to one of the three developers. This means that the land is transferred to the developers normally in fairly small tranches of 50 to 75 homes at a time. The developers then sell and transfer the houses directly to the buyers.

The consortium agreement is a highly innovative legal agreement for this kind of project. It binds the landowner and housebuilder together, but gives the landowner complete authority to the end of construction, when the finished building must be signed off by the landowner before it is sold to the purchaser. It has several key features;²⁸

- It draws in housebuilders' expertise early on to ensure the scheme is buildable and viable;
- It sets out a 'common aspiration' for high design standards;
- It has a detailed development specification focusing on external layout and design, materials and sustainability strategy. Internal specifications are left to individual builders;
- It sets out precise obligations for each party for provision of and payment for streets and other infrastructure. The parties' respective obligations are reflected in the pricing provisions for the land;
- It shares promotion and planning costs so should be possible for smaller as well as larger landowners; and
- It defines detailed rights and methods for ensuring quality control and the ongoing nature of the development (see below).

There is an important analogy to the development of public sector land. Too many public sector landowners sell off their land 100 per cent to developers and surrender all practicable influence over the nature and quality

of the development. A better approach is for the public sector and private sectors to work together in public / private partnerships, via long term urban estate management or by using institutionally-backed strategic land investments.²⁹

Quality control

The Duchy may have signed over the land with planning but they retain some key rights over the land. One of these is quality control. Streets and buildings do not just need to follow the planning permission. They also need to follow the detailed building design code and street design documents. And, crucially, in the legal contracts underpinning the consortium the Duchy has the right to 'sign off' on this. *In extremis* they can even require that a building is rebuilt. This has not quite happened yet (though it has nearly) but clearly gives real teeth to quality control.

Stone home under construction - had to be re-started three times due to wrong stone quality



Is it worth it?

There are significant challenges to this approach compared to a more 'traditional' sale of land from a landowner to a developer or volume housebuilder. The landowner faces more up-front costs and requires more expertise. The developer has to put up with delivery risk if quality is not good enough and with the ongoing interference of the landowner. Is it worth it commercially to the landowner? The evidence from earlier similar schemes would suggest that it is.

Kentlands, Washington Maryland: 'the original master developer of Kentlands, wanted to build a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood but it was illegal.'

Kentlands is a neighbourhood in the American city of Gaithersburg, Maryland. It was an early attempt to design and build a community along 'New Urbanism' principles. The aim was to create a development that was walkable, mixed use and denser than the suburban sprawl that typifies many twentieth century American suburban developments. It required the re-drafting of the City of Gaithersburg's pre-existing laws which would have obliged a more suburban, lower-density urban form. Development began in 1988. The first residents moved in three years later in 1991. There are now 2,181 households and 70,000m² of commercial space.³⁰

A design code was drawn up. This included many very clear pre-set rules to facilitate development by being very clear about what was and was not acceptable. Rules included, for example, requiring private buildings to be built across 100 per cent of their front property line and to have a horizontal eave to the street. Public buildings, by contrast, may be set back and have a gable end to the street.

Kentlands latest plan and terraced streets³¹



There was a concerted effort to regulate the design of the space between buildings, using best-practice architectural approaches. It has given Kentlands a distinctive character that sets it apart from other suburban areas of Gaithersburg and much of the rest of Maryland and the USA. It is also worth nearly 15 per cent more.

For example, in the US Charles Tu and Mark Eppli studied the price premium related to what they termed 'Traditional Neighbourhood Development' compared to conventional suburban developments.³² Their research focused on detached homes in three different American developments: Kentlands in Maryland, Laguna West in California and Southern Village in North Carolina. 5,350 housing transactions were analysed using hedonic regression. These developments were chosen because they had built at least 150 homes by 1997, had no or very few second home owners and had nearby contrasting more typically suburban developments. The confident conclusion was that '*the price premium for new urbanist housing exists across geographic areas,*' though to differing degrees. In Kentlands, the price premium was 15 per cent; in Laguna West, 4 per cent; and in Southern Village it was just over 10 per cent. More information is given on the experience and process at Kentlands in the above box.

More specifically, and as we have seen, homes in the Duchy's other large urban extension, Poundbury, now sell at a 25 per cent premium to the local market.³³ This has been used to permit a higher than typical proportion of affordable homes (around 35 per cent).

Nansledan is much less advanced than Poundbury. So far only 5 per cent of the homes have been built and only about 37 per cent have received outline planning permission. We have not conducted a full price comparison. However, a series of simple comparisons of sales prices and conversations with agents would suggest the same

pattern is repeating itself. Homes in Nansledan are already achieving a near 20 per cent price premium over other new builds on the outskirts of Newquay.³⁴

The challenge of success

The emerging strong commercial success of Nansledan is not without its challenges and consequences. As we have seen it echoes the success of similarly-motivated and managed developments in America. However, it also echoes their challenges.

Seaside, Florida: from insane idea to exclusive success



For example, starting in 1981, Seaside in Florida, US (above), was the first development designed and built to New Urbanist Principles. It used a form-based code and has created an integrated mix of uses, including housing, office, retail, and civic institutions. These are arranged in a walkable block structure in vernacular American architecture. Pedestrians are prioritised over cars. And within the overall code there is a clear variety within the pattern. It was initially widely derided but the value of Seaside real estate has increased faster than equivalent areas in Florida. Lots sold for \$15,000 in 1982. Already in 2001, cottages were selling for \$800,000-to-\$900,000 range whilst those on the beach were over \$1 million.³⁵ More recently, a one-bedroom cottage sold for \$1.5m. Even flats above shops sell for \$800,000. For much of the last 50 years flats over shops have been a hard form to sell or finance in the American market.

In fact, so great are the prices at Seaside that the development is now criticised for lack of diversity which is a consequence of its success and rarity value. Seaside is privately owned. Its founders took a long-term approach and have commented that they have done '*much better overall than if we had sold the land earlier*'.³⁶

There is a risk that a similar pattern might emerge in Cornwall. One sales agent estimated that while initial sales were mainly to local residents, this is now diminishing: '*I'd say it is 50 per cent local buyers and 50 per cent out of county*' in contrast to the earlier Tregunnel Hill development which he estimated '*was 85 per cent local.*' Taura Lloyd, one of the first home purchasers, is worrying that already Nansledan is pricing out locals;

*'My concern is who is buying them. There's not many from Cornwall.... This is being seen as an expensive bit of town. I was lucky. I got in early. But I don't have any friends buying here because they can't. Not on a Cornish wage.... Most of my neighbours are not local.'*⁹⁷

The same concern is starting to be echoed by Cornwall Council. Phil Mason, the Service Director for Planning and Sustainable Development, agrees; *'the values are becoming higher.... that is an issue for lots of people.'*

It is important not to overstate the point. With 30 per cent affordable homes on the site, at least 65 per cent of all homes in total are going to people from Cornwall. Some more recent sales estimates also imply a higher proportion (over 70 per cent) of locally-based purchasers. And, as Phil Mason rightly adds, the problem is not inherent in the quality of Nansledan but in the poor quality of most other developments:

*'Everyone should be made to build to higher standards. If they did the premium to the Duchy would not be so high. That's the main issue. We need to bring the base up. People's expectations should be higher.'*⁹⁸

Commercial units in Trewollack



Attitudes to this development and how they have evolved

Local views

Individuals and attitudes differ. But, based on our indicative online survey of 35 residents living in Nansledan and Newquay, the development is stunningly popular. It should be noted that the numbers are small. However, at the time of writing only around 200 houses have been built (and not all are yet occupied) so this represents a reasonable proportion of new residents.

On the whole, there was consistent support for the plans, prior to construction. On a rating out of 5, with 5 being 'strongly support' and 1 being 'strongly oppose' every element scored highly.

Support for elements of plan prior to construction

Elements of plan (in principle)	Average support (out of 5)
Plans overall	4.28
Designs of Homes	4.53
Designs of Streets	4.00
Amenities	4.35
Green Spaces	4.32

This support fell slightly when assessing what has been built so far.

Support for elements of plan prior to construction

Elements of plan (as built)	Average support (out of 5)
Plans overall	4.21
Designs of Homes	4.40
Designs of Streets	3.59
Amenities	3.06
Green Spaces	2.55

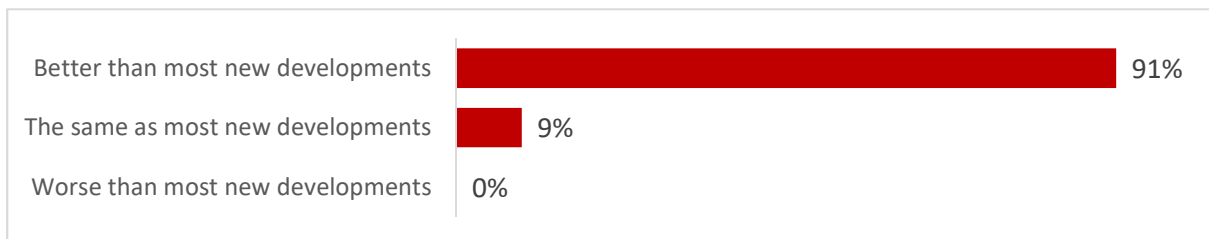
The lowest score, for green spaces (which echoes our interviews- see below), reflects that there is not enough green infrastructure yet built on the development. The low rating of amenities will also reflect the reality of being in phase one. No shops are yet open. There is no direct walking link through to the town.

Despite this, most respondents appear to recognise that Nansledan remains work in progress, and are encouraged enough by what they have seen so far to believe that the promised green spaces and amenities will materialise. This is reflected in the fact that 91 per cent thought that Nansledan was better than most developments.

New homes in Trewollack

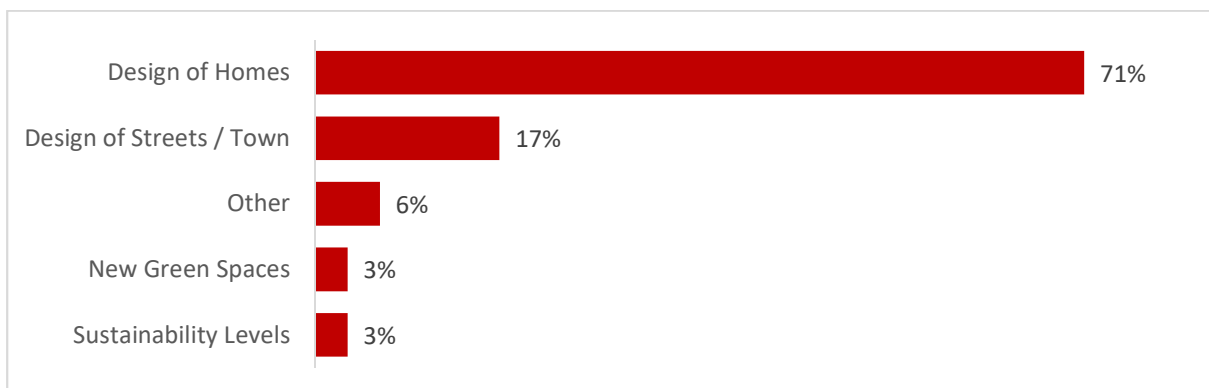


Based on what you know of the plans and have seen so far, do you think Nansledan is...



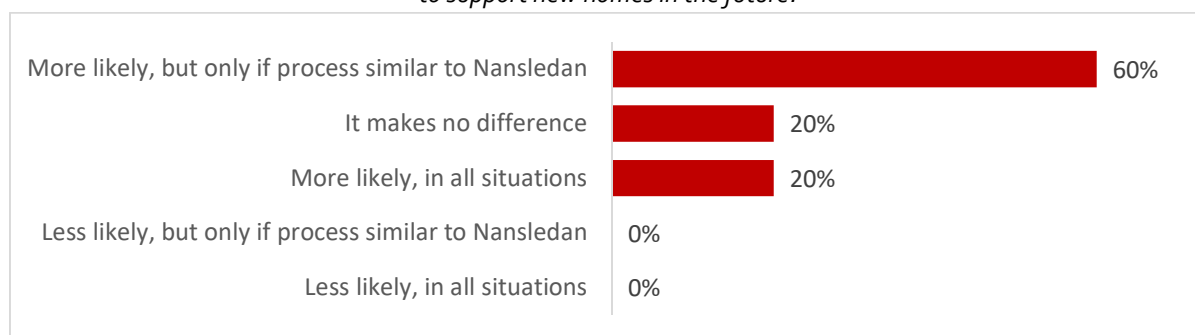
People also rated their own home very highly, with an average of 4.41. Likewise, 71 per cent of respondents identified 'Design of Homes' as the thing they most like about Nansledan. This is, by far, the most popular quality.

What do you like most about Nansledan?



The broader impact of the development is seen as positive as well. 63 per cent thought that Nansledan improved Newquay's quality of life; 37 per cent 'by a little; and 26 per cent 'greatly.' Nansledan also appears to increase support for new homes; 80 per cent said that their knowledge and experience of Nansledan would make them more likely to support new homes. This consisted of 60 per cent of all respondents saying it would be dependent on the process being similar to Nansledan, whilst 20 per cent said it would make them more likely in all situations.

Does your knowledge and experience of Nansledan make you more or less likely to support new homes in the future?



Certainly, the first residents we spoke to seem very happy with the decisions they have made. We interviewed six new residents in late October 2017. Their views were remarkably consistent and positive with the aesthetic and variety of the design combined with the advantages of a new home in a real place standing out. There was also an emphasis on sustainability and the reputation of the Duchy of Cornwall. Here is a representative sample of comments;

'I like that all the houses look different. I prefer it to the other estates which look like Legoland. It looks like a village that has been built gradually. I like that there are different sizes so everyone has to live together. We've all got to live together. I think it's brilliant. I like the colours. The sustainability drew me to it. I like that the shops are going to be independent. This creates more jobs. This is important to me. It can't just be houses.' Dinah Turner, one of first residents.

'I've continually got people looking through the windows. They like the house and they want to know what it's like on the inside.' Taura Lloyd, one of the first residents.

'I loved the idea of being part of something 'new'... of a community coming together. I know all my neighbours. They come in for a cup of tea. I've helped them out. They've helped me out. It's been just wonderful.' Eleanor Dinsmore, resident since April 2017.

'The particular design combines the traditional building style with all the modern advantages. Here every house looks different. And these differences have been carefully thought about....I would say, you feel like you live here as an individual, not a number. That feels good.' Steve Fountain, resident since July 2017.

'We bought here because of the quality of the material and the building and the reputation.... The diversity of design was very appealing. And the quality of the materials and the build.' John Williams, first resident of Nansledan, July 2015.³⁹

With one exception, everyone we spoke to knew all their neighbours and felt that the 'old town' values were really coming through. Steve Fountain observed that; *'we pretty much know all our neighbours.'*

Key concerns expressed were (as we have seen) a growing worry about affordability and who was buying homes and, for several though not all people, the lack of street trees and green infrastructure. Dinah Turner said that; *'I'd like to see more green around, it can be a bit concretey. I want to see trees.'* Eleanor Dinsmore added, *'I would like to see more green areas...I'd love to see a park where us dog walkers can walk.'*⁴⁰

It is true that (other than front gardens and a few apple trees) very little green infrastructure has yet been provided although it is clearly there in the various strategies and detailed planning permissions. The reason for the delay appears to be twofold. Firstly, in the phasing of development the various town squares and green lanes have not yet been 'reached.'⁴¹ Secondly, it has not yet been possible to plant street trees until further building cuts down the wind from the sea and allows them to survive. But (we were told), it is coming.

While everyone accepted that they had (for the time being at any rate) 'bought into a building site' there were some concerns about the speed of the development and a desire for it to be built and for Nansledan to come into proper existence. The first resident, John Williams, commented that;

'One concern is the speed of the development. We were sold the big big vision. But, actually it's going to take a long time to get made. I don't think this was clear enough. I'd like a couple of cafés. Nansledan was sold as a vision of community, as trying to get back to core values. But it's taking many years.' As in our wider survey, the experience of Nansledan appears to have modestly increased support for new housing though mainly conditionally on a similar scheme and a similar process. Taura Lloyd commented that her support for new development 'depends on the builder' and commented on nearby schemes by a major housebuilder;

'There was no love in it. It was just thrown up... it's not nice on the eye, it's a bit of an eyesore.'

Steve Fountain added;

'Yes. A development like this gives new housing a good reputation because of the design and care taken to build it.'

Council views

Officials within the local council appear to agree. Rebecca Lyle, Transport Planning and Strategy Officer, was clear;

*'It's a no brainer that this is a great model. A great example of how to do things well. The concept of streets for people is part of a big shift.'*⁴²

In fact, so impressed are Cornwall Council by Nansledan (even though it is only 5 per cent completed) that, as Rebecca Lyle continued, it is starting to influence their approach to other developments. They are trying to persuade other landowners to emulate the Duchy with more up-front focus on popular mixed use development and fewer objections and controversy *en route*.

'We are championing this approach to other schemes.... We have called upon the Duchy to present their approach to members.' Phil Mason explained. *'From the planning point of view, we accept that, commercially, the Duchy is exercising greater control than we can through planning. We are happy with that. In fact we have been talking to the Duchy about a Local Development Order to the extent that we relinquish control and let them exercise development control on individual houses.'*

Why does the council have to have a layer of bureaucracy that is weaker than the guardian of the place itself? Why should we do it twice? It must feel odd for the house-owner. If the Duchy are exercising greater control than we can, then we should step back.'

We are even wondering whether this approach could be extended. We want to exercise greater control over design to get more housing build. It's in nobody's interests if we just have bad design and poor quality. That's never going to work as an argument for more housing.'

Conclusions: what are the strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken at Nansledan?

Key element of the strategy

The key components of the approach taken at Nansledan can be summarised as;

- An urban extension not a new town;
- A mixed use 'real place' with as many jobs as homes;
- A walkable town that prioritises pedestrians over drivers;
- A traditional, popular, variegated and locally-based design;
- Modest green spaces (gardens and squares) scattered throughout the development;
- A consortium approach between landowner and developers not an option or outright sale approach;
- A deep alliance with the local planning authority;
- An intensive co-design rather than a 'design and consult' model; and
- Spreading of the 'economic glow' not just through affordable housing (at 30 per cent) but also through the preferred use of local suppliers and materials such as Cornish slate and granite.

What conclusions can we draw from the approach taken at Nansledan and from the progress so far? What has worked? Why? And what has worked less well?

Key reasons for success

What are the key reasons for this success which is driven, it is worth re-emphasising, from a very different model to the usual developer model? From our interviews with residents, local officials, the landowners and their agents as well as our reading of all the main planning and development materials we would pull out four main reasons. They are;

- The long and genuinely consultative co-design approach with local residents and the local council with consequent much higher levels of confidence;
- The patient capital nature of the consortium agreement between the landowner and the developers;
- The popular traditional design, variety and urban form of homes, conventional streets and blocks in walkable streets; and
- The popular focus on sustainability of design, sourcing and green infrastructure.

What has worked less well?

What concerns need highlighting? Three stand out;

- The sheer amount of time and money that this approach has taken. The pressure for more homes is urgent and this is not an easy approach for smaller, less well-financed landowners to take;
- The expertise required. Several key officials within the Duchy have now learnt 'on the job' (most notably at Poundbury but also, locally, at Tregunnel Hill). Again, this is not an easy approach for less experienced landowners to take; and
- The challenge of success. As values rise due to the development's unarguable popularity, and with excellent broadband and communications, does Nansledan risk becoming a town of disproportionately second homes from London? Not yet, certainly, but the risk is there.

Nansledan remains a 'work in progress'. At the time of writing only 1,500 of 4,000 new homes have been granted detailed consent. And only about 200 have actually been built. However, the signs so far appear to be very good. The local population is broadly supportive. The development has quadrupled in size during the planning process without political resistance. New residents are happy. The homes are being built. The model is sustainable and shows every sign of being very profitable – there is already a 20 percent value premium to the local new build market and there is every reason to believe this will increase as the development matures and grows. Sometimes new houses can add more value than fields – not just to owners but to the community. And sometimes landowners can create not housing and roads but homes and streets, working not *at* the community but *with* them.

New houses in Trewollack



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- ¹ See Boys Smith (2016), *Heart in the Right Street*, pp 85-90 for a summary of the polling data.
- ² See Boys Smith, Venerandi & Toms (2017), *Beyond Location*, pp. 82-91, pp.99-107 and pp. 120-1.
- ³ This case study is based on a review of all the major planning and development documents from 2004 to today and from nearly 20 interviews with Duchy employees, architects, contractors, officials, new residents and other local stakeholders. We also made a two day site visit in October 2017 and surveyed 35 local residents.
- ⁴ www.nansledan.com/living-working/living/homes/
- ⁵ www.duchyofcornwall.org/frequently-asked-questions.html#question_1
- ⁶ It became a unitary authority in 2009.
- ⁷ Tim Gray left the Duchy in 2017 and is now running Landowner Legacy Ltd.
- ⁸ Interview in November 2017.
- ⁹ The Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall (Accounts) Act 1838 requires that the Duchy's management cannot compromise the long term value of the estate.
- ¹⁰ Savills (2017), *Development, the value of placemaking*.
- ¹¹ Interview, 20 October 2017.
- ¹² Interview, 19 October 2017.
- ¹³ Interview, 20 October 2017.
- ¹⁴ *Newquay Growth Area Pattern Book* (2005), p.11.
- ¹⁵ Interview 26 October 2017.
- ¹⁶ DCLG (2006), *Design Code Practice: an evaluation*, pp. 14-5.
- ¹⁷ DCLG (2006), *Design Code Practice: an evaluation*, p16.
- ¹⁸ DCLG (2006), *Design Code Practice: an evaluation*, p122.
- ¹⁹ DCLG (2006), *Design Code Practice: an evaluation*, p66.
- ²⁰ Carmona & Giodano (2012), *Design Coding, Diffusion of Practice in England*, pp. 9-10.
- ²¹ See Cruickshank & Wyld,(1975), *London: the art of Georgian building* for more detail.
- ²² de Botton (2006), *The Architecture of Happiness*, p.217.
- ²³ www.nansledan.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Kosti-Veur-Design-Community-Code.pdf
- ²⁴ E-mail to authors. 2 November 2017.
- ²⁵ *Newquay Growth Areas, Food Strategy* (2009), p.5.
- ²⁶ Interview, 19 September 2017.
- ²⁷ Interview, 20 October 2017.
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- ²⁹ These models have been explored more fully in Savills (2016), *Regeneration and Intensification of Housing Supply on Local Authority Housing Estates in London*.
- ³⁰ City of Gaithersburg (2016), *Dwelling Units and Estimated Population*.
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- ³² Tu & Eppli (2001), 'An empirical examination of traditional neighborhood development', *Real Estate Economics*, 29(3), 485-501.
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- ³⁴ This figure is based on prices in October 2017.
- ³⁵ Dunlop (2001), *In Florida, A New Emphasis on Design*. <http://cnuflorida.org/resources/new-urbanism-florida-articles/in-florida-a-new-emphasis-on-design/>, [Online; accessed 21 April 2017]
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- ³⁷ Interview, 20 October 2017.
- ³⁸ Interview, 26 October 2017.

³⁹ All interviews from 20 October 2017.

⁴⁰ All interviews from 20 October 2017.

⁴¹ In typical developments, which happen within the normal 5-year local authority plan period window, there are usually numerous small pieces of green space, so that every phase complies with the Fields in Trust Standard. However, Nansledan, with its 50-year vision, has pursued a more strategic approach to the delivery of green space and considered green space for Nansledan as whole rather than for individual phases. This long-term vision allows the need for significant new green spaces such as new playing fields to be identified at the outset then located in an appropriate place. This means that some phases deliver less greenery than the usual standards. The designers are confident that when Nansledan is complete the overall amount will be both compliant, but also appropriately thought-out and located. However, as we have seen, this phasing is not without its challenges.

⁴² Interview, 26 October 2017.

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