

BUILDING FOR LIFE

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**REALLY SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES**

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REALLY SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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I should give you a warning that I have no beautiful pictures to show you. I happen to be somebody who thinks that one sentence can be worth a million pixels and, anyway, what I am going to talk to you about is policy management, the framework within which we try to build sustainable communities. I hope this will provide a bit of strategic context for some of the inspirational stuff that you have been seeing from other presenters. If not, well, they are comfortable armchairs and it was a good lunch!

So let me try and get the definitional thing out of way at the beginning because I think I can think of few more deadening topics than a definition of “sustainable settlements”. What would a sustainable community be? It will be somewhere that all sorts of people can live good lives without undermining other people’s interests, now or in the future, and without needing a drip feed of money. There are a few people going around the country saying “sustainable settlements, sustainable communities, it is all terribly complicated, or it is all vague, nobody knows what it means”. I think this is mischievous nonsense. I think 90 per cent of the people in this room will probably agree on 98 per cent of what is proposed. It is totally consistent with what the Government has been saying in the “Sustainable Communities” plan.

But being able to define it does not mean it can happen, so what I am going to do is look at whether it is possible and how we could, or fail to achieve it. We think we know how to. There is a new orthodox in planning circles about how we do this. It has a number of components: you build on brownfields; you build in urban areas; you build at high density; near amenities and public transport; you build mixed use; you build for mixed income; and you and try and build energy efficient. This is all familiar from a whole litany of Government documents. This is in opposition to a classic, if you like, wicked free market commercial house building which has all these opposing qualities.

I believe in this. I a true believer in this new orthodoxy but I think we have to be a little bit cleverer because you can do all these things and still not achieve sustainability. This is because circumstances can alter things. Not all brownfield sites are deserts. Some of them have high amenity and wildlife value. Nor are all greenfield sites are worth preserving. So you have got to be a bit cleverer than this greenfield good/brownfield bad mantra about where to build. We have to look at what particular sites actually do or do not deliver.

Building in urban areas can be dangerous, can be counterproductive if it overloads the existing infrastructure, whereas building outside urban areas can be very helpful if it anchors communities which would otherwise close down.

High density is wonderful but it is at occupied density that matters rather than the physical density. Until a couple of months ago I lived in one of the textbook bits of Islington -- high density, beautiful terraced houses, very large numbers of houses and habitable rooms per hectare -- but most of houses in my terrace were occupied by one or two people, many of whom actually had country

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houses as well, so the number of people living per hectare in that classic text book high density street was probably lower than a lot of the suburbia that we all love to hate. If low density housing is actually occupied intensely by a large number of people who fit the housing well, you might get more of the result that we are trying to achieve from high density.

Likewise, it is fine to build near public transport and amenities, but if people are going to drive out to superstores because they do not want to use the local shops, or reverse commute to the M25 corridor because that is where the jobs are, or are unwilling to send their kids to the local schools because those schools are not good enough and drive their kids to schools elsewhere, all the pious co-locating of amenities is for nothing. It does not actually achieve any benefits.

Likewise mixed use. The idea of mixing everybody in together, happily working together and taking in each other's washing is great. But actually there is research which says that people tend to socialise and network with people like themselves. So the dogma of saying we must cram everybody in together higgledy-piggledy so that the students keep the pensioners awake with their loud music and the kids drive the professional people berserk playing in the streets, you know, one wonders what benefit is actually achieved by this.

Likewise mixed tenure and income. There is some disquieting research by Demos suggesting that where this has been achieved you still have social networks operating in the same way - people socialising with people like themselves. It is fine to build to high energy efficiency standards, but if people then leave their windows open and do not bother to turn their heating down because it is so cheap, you have not actually won anything. So I draw some big lessons from this.

What should we learn from this? We have got to think about outcomes not inputs. The contexts in which buildings are build matter and we have to look at how a set of buildings or a set of housing relates to what is around it. The way people behave is pivotal. We are in danger of falling, I think, into a 1960s kind of design determinism of saying if we build it the right way then people will lead the right kind of lives in it. It is actually much more complicated and difficult than that.

Behaviour depends on perceptions, what people think of as the good life. Perceptions are not something exogenous and God-given, they can be influenced by policy. That is where the real challenge is and that is something I want to come back to later.

Let me start with this question of outcomes versus inputs, and I will take energy as the example. We have build regulations that concentrate on improving heat loss per surface area buildings. That is essentially what Part L does. There are variations but that is the dominant idea behind Part L, through better insulation and double leaves in construction. We do not concentrate enough on heat loss per external envelope. One way of doing Part L gives you that. That is getting further because that is actually looking at the amount of heat that you are actually losing from a building. There are various ways of doing this. You can achieve it through putting small window in buildings, which is undesirable, or you can be clever about the build so obviously you have less external area per dwelling. So we are getting warm here. We are getting a

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little bit further on from just external surface area. Because the problem with surface area is you can satisfy Part L with a building that is full of ins and outs and odd shapes and is much bigger than is actually needed for the people in it, provided you have got your elements right. So it is a very poor proxy for what we are actually concerned about.

But let us go a bit further. What we are really concerned about is the amount of heat that is lost per occupant. You need to go one stage further to look at this. How can you reduce heat loss per occupant? You can cram them in tighter in small rooms, which is again the undesirable way of doing it. Or you can get a better fit of occupants to the available space. Or you can improve people's ability to manage their heat use. Or we can look at the way people occupy housing. We now expect every member of a household to go to a separate room and put on a separate set of complication audio-visual equipment to watch a different channel of entertainment every evening. Of course, if every room is heated, that is going to use an awful lot more heat than if people actually spend a bit of time eyeballing the people that they technically live with and being in the same room together! One might speculate that we would be happier and more content and have more social cohesion and less worry about uncontrollable teenagers if people actually got into the habit of being together as households a little bit more as well.

So this is getting nearer to the outcome. But even heat loss proxy is not what we are really concerned about. What we are really concerned is greenhouse emissions per occupant. We can take this on a bit further to say how we look at greenhouse emissions per occupant. There are technical ways of improving greenhouse emissions per occupant. We can have CHP. We can go for renewables. We can manage the microclimate of housing more intelligently so that we have tree cover stopping overheating but also allowing sunshine to come through at low levels in winter. We can be cleverer about these kinds of things than we have been habitually in the past to reduce the amount of energy that needs to be burned to keep you warm in your homes.

So far so good. We have been talking about what we can do within a house. But hidden round the back of every house are still in awful lot of cars. One wonders from the kinds of places like West Malling is, how far do those people have to drive? That is in area with an immense flow of commuter traffic in all directions. There is a station at West Malling but it is down the road from King's Hill and if you get on the bus from King's Hill down to the station you have got one or two lame or otherwise disadvantaged people on the bus with you and the bus driver makes it clear that it is surprising to see anybody who looks as if he has a decent income getting on the bus, because people drive everywhere. So if we are looking at the energy costs of people in housing we need to look at their transport emissions as well.

This gets us into another set of questions. How do we reduce transport emissions? Well, cleaner greener vehicles is what the Government is very keen and that reduces emissions per vehicle kilometre. But if the vehicles are going further and faster and longer, that is not going even keep up with increases in consumption. So we have got to look at ways of getting more movement, more access per unit of fuel. So take a friend - car sharing schemes - less emission per passenger kilometre. Then we are getting closer to an outcome that we are concerned about and not just talking about an input.

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We could go further. Suppose we did not have to go so far to get to amenities? That is an obvious way of reducing fuel use. Again, the ratio we are talking about here is getting nearer to real outcomes - less emissions per destination reached. But then life is not about reaching destinations. Life is about achieving purposes or errands. So if you can do more than one thing in a journey you are getting better off still - less emissions per errand.

Finally, if you can avoid using a machine you can reduce emissions much further per errand achieved, or if you can avoid going at all by getting whatever it is you are after closer to home, then zero machines per benefit are gained. So you see we are circling in. We are starting from, the conventional technical measure of vehicle fuel efficiency and we are getting closer to what we are really concerned about, which is how much environmental damage does somebody have to do to live their lives?

So I have a way of saying this to people who are hung up on technologies. Here is my favourite innovative technology for sustainable access. It is called Compact Integrated Transaction Intensifying Edifice Systems, or CITIES for short. The other technology here, A W Lovens is very keen on something called the hypercar, which is this mythical car which uses no fuel and produces no emissions. I have got news for him. They exist already. You can buy them cheap from Halfords! So let us not get hung up on the technical fixes, let us think about the behavioural effects here as well.

Let me just try and address one of the problems that may be coming at the back of your mind here. I am not talking about going back to the dull, slow, old, the John Major view of the good life: spinsters cycling through warm beer to Evensong, the clanking slow life. Well, actually, I am and I want to show you why. Let us contrast two life-styles. If you like a high-speed fast-lane modern life-style where people are driving to lots of different amenities one after another, getting lots of high-quality existing experiences but each of them packaged, commoditised, bought in the market and needing another car journey to get to them. Contrast that with the John Major way of life, clanking along on an old bicycle up a hill to a local shop. Very, very slow but furtively fast because you are getting multiple satisfactions. You are getting your exercise, you are getting your food, you are getting your fix of wildlife, you are getting a sight of the external world and you are seeing your friends all in the same set of activities. So you do not need a creativity outclass if you are exercising your own creativity conjuring a decent meal out of a load of mucky tuberous objects that you bought in the local shop. You see the fast-lane life finally where you have to drive if you take that too far.

This is a caricature. I am well aware that it is the convivial meal with friends and family that drives a lot of people to need to go to the psychotherapist!! So I am not saying everybody needs to live like this. What I am trying to show you though is the idea that the apparent exciting speed of the life-style on the left actually may be illusory. We may have to run ourselves ragged in that kind of a life-style to get the same satisfactions which we get effortlessly in the other "slow" life-style by combining things, by getting multiple satisfactions together. So again I think I am arguing against a sort of glitzy technical fix approach to what a sustainable way of life is and I would think a way of life that enables more of us to live more like that has advantages.

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Another big health warning, of course, about that one is that in the past it was always the women who had to cycle around and scrub the muddy tubers while the men were still zooming around in their cars having exciting meetings in their offices. So also, you know, they are complicated issues behind this, but I hope still the stereotype does actually give some ideas.

So what is this all pointing towards? To manage outcome we have got to target the right things. So greenhouse emissions per resident is what we have got to look at. We need policy that actually makes us look in these things. So my idea is we need models that actually look at the whole life greenhouse emissions cost of a particular life-style at a particular place and predicts those as a tool in the same way as that we use BREEM or SAP or other energy models. We need to say to developers you achieve those outcomes through whatever mixture of things you want. Let us not micromanage the development process. Let us say to the developer, fine, you choose you choose what mix of tenement forms, onsite CHP, buying shares in renewable energy companies elsewhere, putting enough amenities on site that the people do not need to travel, et cetera. You choose, you perm the options, but show us that you are going to achieve the outcomes.

Then we have got to measure these things. We are very good at setting these kinds of targets and then not actually measuring whether they are happening. We need to enforce them by penalising people who fail to deliver what is wanted and by rewarding those who do succeed. Developers who manage to achieve the kinds of things that David Birkbeck was just showing us should be given an easier ride, faster and more enthusiastic planning permission with fewer strings attached next time around. People who do not achieve that, they need to pay a levy and they have their developments looked at in much more detail next time. Let us make it worthwhile for the development industry to go for the top possible standard because they are going to get benefits afterwards and let us make good performance profitable. This seems to be what is missing from a lot of what we have got at the moment. So that is the way we have got to look at outcomes.

Another example that I think is relevant is to look at the right kinds of measures of economic performance. We have been talking about housing, we have been talking about environment. One of the big issues about settlements is how do people earn their living? One of the main policy drivers in all the plans that I am doing sustainability appraisal of at the moment is we need a strong economy. I have no problem with that. But it is a question of how it is measured and what we mean by "strong economy". We tend to measure a strong economy in terms of employment, conventional jobs in the conventional market, and income. But we need to get behind those. We need to say are those satisfying jobs? Are those jobs we want to do? We need to say does the income give people the ability to afford a comfortable life-style? I know of places and probably most of you can think of places where there has been upsurge of income but that has actually made it more expensive for people to live, because the cheap amenities that used to be available on street corners are priced out of the market and the people on low incomes now need to spend much more money to get to the things that they need to live their lives. So we have to be in a bit more clever about income. We have to say it is the ability to afford to live well that matters.

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There is another twist to this, which is that it is all fine and dandy getting better incomes and more prosperity for the people who are already wealthy, already in employment, already have options. What about the people at the bottom of the pile: are we helping them get a better quality of life? That may be a bit out at a tangent from housing, but I think we have to think about this in terms of sustainable community and what it means to live in.

So how do we manage this? I think a principle, a slogan if you like, is that the development package should replace or substitute for whatever public goods are affected by development. For example, in many of the growth areas - I have not studied Milton Keynes but I did some work on the capacity study for Ashford and I am currently doing sustainability appraisal work for the eastern region and in all of those areas availability of potable water is a huge constraint on development. It seems to me a very prudent sustainability constraint on house building in these areas that we should not actually increase the amount of potable water we need, because already we are near the limit and climate change is going to both increase demand for potable water and reduce supply. So one constraint I suggest would be very prudent in housing in these growth areas is there should not be any net increase in demand for drinking water. There are various ways again that can be achieved: a mixture of efficiency in housing as built; efficient appliances, showers and so on and so forth; use of rainwater, use of grey water, recycling water, et cetera; but also getting those things offsite. I think it would be perfectly reasonable for a house builder to say I am going to build some houses with perfectly normal mediocre water performance, but I am also going to endow the paper mill down the road to put in a closed loop water recycling system which will offset the paper mill's water demand by exactly the same amount that I am increasing it in my housing. That seems to me fine. Unfortunately, the planning system is not really working that way.

The same idea can apply to all the other benefits that may be affected by a site. Say to the developer, fine, do what you like, but make sure that you substitute for whatever public goods your development is taking away. I think there is a conflict between the Sustainable Communities plan, which at least in principle is aspiring to this kind of standard, and the planning reforms, which seem to be designed to weaken the planning system's ability to enforce these kinds of things. I am arguing for the much more muscular and pro-active to approach to planning gain to make these kinds of requirements on developments stick.

This is not anti-development. This is making sure that developers are given an incentive framework within which they can strive for excellence and profit by excellence rather than aiming for the lowest common denominator, which seem to be what is currently promoted.

Let me move on the question of behaviour. I have a tale full of yellow trams. A few years ago I went to Vienna to study how bicycles and trams got on together on the same road. I asked the tram undertaking to tell me where there is a modern, state-of-the-art tram network that demonstrates their approach to this. They said go to such and such. It is a brand new tram link, only opened a week ago. So I went there. I went along on this tram, got off in a huge building side where a new satellite settlement was being built on the outskirts of Vienna. I got off my tram - I was the only passenger - stood gaping at these huge buildings going upsurge and six minutes later another

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tram arrived at the tram stop, with nobody on it this time, not even an English consultant, and stood there with its doors open for thirty seconds, then closed its doors and whispered off back into Vienna. This happened at six-minute intervals. I looked at the timetable, and I think Austrian timetables never lie. This one said there is a tram every six minutes right through the day from 6.00 in the morning till midnight. When I next went back to the tram undertaking, I said this seems a bit inefficient. He said, yes, it is inefficient in terms of tram management, but the City Council has a policy that nobody in the city should ever be forced to adopt a car dependent life-style because the public transport is not good enough to get them to amenities. Good enough in our Vienna standards means a tram every six minutes minimum from 6.00 in the morning till midnight. So before anybody is allowed to move into a new settlement we have to have the tram link in and operating to that standard. So grossly inefficient in micro terms, but part of a broader policy which was triumphantly successful. It is a wonderful city for getting around without needing a car because the public transport is excellent, you can cycle and walk easily, the streets are safe, the area air is clean, et cetera.

So there is a broader message which I think we need to take from this, which is that "inefficiency" can often be very efficient. Individual services may need to be managed inefficiently in order to live a broader policy gain of objectives. Small local public service deliveries good enough that most people are willing to use the one that is within walking distance and not insist on travelling somewhere else I think is a key to this.

We give ourselves a huge problem in this country because we have adopted a concept of efficiency and performance which actually pushes in the opposite direction. Every individual service tries to achieve the best outcome in terms of passenger miles per bus conductor employed; planning applications turned around per box of paper clips bought; phone call answered within less than five seconds, all these kinds of things. We are all under the cosh of this kind of performance measure and it makes it much harder for us to run our own little thing in a way that is less efficient in those terms but actually helps to deliver broader policy objectives. So again I think there is a big contradiction between the considered efficiency which we are still being forced to adopt in public services and the need for coherent integrated management of things like public transport, schools, hospitals, service providers, to make Sustainable Communities really work. I think the Vienna example is quite striking there.

At the conference a week ago I was holding forth about this and I realised there was somebody in the audience from Vienna City Council, so I paused with some trepidation and asked him whether it is still the case and to my great relief he said, yes, it is. Is this policy of running empty trams while new settlements open up is still part of their very well entrenched transport policy.

So left me try and draw some conclusions from an example. There may be lots of other examples that people would use. This is the one that I happen to have visited and seen for real. It is called Vauban. It is in a suburb of Freiberg in Germany and is an ex-barracks site that is been developed as a new sustainable settlement. It is ruthlessly car free within the settlement. You can drive to your door at a crawl in order to unload a grand piano, but you must then take your car back to the outskirts of the settlement and you cannot leave it outside your door for any longer than it has taken you to get the stool up to

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your apartment. The design standard is that it should be safe for five-year-olds to walk to school. You can have a parking space but it will be at the edge of the settlement and it will cost you the equivalent of £10,000 if you want one. This settlement is oversubscribed with young families. In fact they were so taken by surprise by the number of young families moving in they had to open a second kindergarten instead of just the one they thought they were going to have to cope with the young kids.

It also restricts all sorts of freedoms that people here may take for granted. The development itself sets a very, very high set of standards in terms of water and energy efficiency. It requires you to buy your power from the CHP system on site, which was a condition which the energy utility required before they would invest in putting in the CHP scheme. It has all the basic amenities of normal life on site and you are expected to walk to them. In fact you do not have a lot of option since you do not have your car and you have to walk past the shop to get to the car if you wanted to drive to any other shops.

How does it succeed? Well, for a start, and this is my point about context, the context there is very supportive. Giving up a car is only a very small incremental step in Freiberg because it is quicker to get to town by tram than by car, most people are in the habit of using the tram or bus or bike or walking for most of the journeys that they make, and we have a virtual circle. There is no shame in using public transport. It is not just for the losers and the nutters as it is seen as in most of this country. I was catching a tram home after a very convivial evening in Freiberg late on a Saturday night. As a Londoner my customary London watchfulness took over and as the tram approached I was starting to think where is the driver, where is the emergency exit, if somebody pulls a knife on me how can do I get off, and I was so busy thinking in these terms that I had not realised that a whole mob of respectable middle-aged people in homburg hats got onto this tram, the doors had shut and I was left at the stop! More and more citizens in Freiberg use public transport in the middle of the night, and because lots of them use it, it feels safe and stays safe, and because it feels safe people use it even in what in British terms would be a very dangerous time of day. So we have a virtual circle here that because they never lost good public transport, so long as they keep it running well, so long as they keep investing in it, and so long as they keep restricting car use so nobody can slip out of this pattern, they can keep this going.

So more lessons about how they have done it. There was a dedicated agency which had some European life funding which negotiated all the deals on behalf of the Vauban settlement. It negotiated a deal for bending the rules on parking, because in Germany in general you have to provide a parking space with any flat. They got that rule suspended so that you do not have to have a parking space; you only have one if you pay this extra rather punitive charge for it. They did the deal to get the combined heat and power scheme into the site. They produced the Master Plan and got it agreed by the City Council and by other stakeholders locally setting these very, very high standards.

This took time and I think one of uncomfortable messages for the United Kingdom is you can have it innovative, you can have it high standard, you can have it cheap and you can have it fast, but you cannot have it all of those things at once. If you want it innovative and high standard, then be prepared to spend some time on negotiating the deals that are needed to achieve this. Think of

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ways to get round the normal Highways Agency's standards on road schemes. Now, I will bet that the developers actually had to work very hard to get those deregulations for those sites. Getting things to very high standards which are unconventional requires time. Vauban actually gave itself the time to do this.

Another interesting thing about Vauban which has, I think, some interesting messages for us here is that the Master Plan has been defined and groups of people get together in consortia to commission architects and builders to build them blocks of apartments. The Vauban organisation does a match-making job, putting groups of people together and helping build these consortia. But there is no rule in this for the conventional commercial developers, who are still the main driver of all housing development in this country. It is driven by the occupants working together, commissioning buildings from the professionals to standards which have been set in the Master Plan in advance. So this, I think, is possibly a challenge for the way we do things in this country.

Another very important thing that made this possible was that the deal whereby the Federal Government handed this site over to the City Council. If the City Council made any profit over above the costs of servicing the site and putting in infrastructure, then that profit would be clawed back by the Federal Government. So the City Council had no incentive to get the maximum commercial return on the site. Instead what they did was go for what we call a policy dividend. They jacked up the sustainability standards. They have accepted lower commercial returns on selling off lots of land, they have accepted higher infrastructure costs. They are just about covering their costs but they are not making a profit because they are not used to making a profit. I think that is probably one of the most important things about Vauban.

Interestingly enough, Bed Zed had the same situation. Sutton Council actually managed to persuade the DoE as it was at the time to let them sell the Bed Zed site to Peabody and Bioregional for less than the commercial going rate in return for financing the exemplary sustainability performance on that site. The deal would not have been possible. There was a commercial developer waiting wanting to go buy the site to build in a much more conventional way, offering much more money for it. It was only the ability to sell at lower than the market price that made Bed Zed possible. So again I think we have a challenging message here. If we want to achieve really high standards of sustainability in an economy which is stacked quite strongly against it, then we are going to have to accept lower values from sites that we sell.

So what are the lessons from all of this? We need a lot of intervention to get virtual circles going, particularly in this country where we have got vicious circles. We have the opposite of the Freiberg public transport situation here, where people avoid using public transport because it is dangerous and unreliable, and because they do not put in the fair income, it stays unreliable and dangerous, and there is no amount of subsidising little buses to trundle around empty that is really going to alter that. Now we have patterns of land use that make it much harder to get anywhere by public transport than by cars.

So we have got a problem about the way that our freedoms operate. Another very uncomfortable message is we have to restrict a lot of freedoms if we want sustainable communities. For example, we have got to restrict the ability for you all to shop around for cheap energy if we want the kinds of energy

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installation which they have got at Vauban. We have got to restrict the ability for you all just to jump in the car whenever it is the easiest thing to do. We have got to restrict the ability for people to desert local public services and shop around and travel further to get to things that they want, because again it is choice that actually creates a lot of these problems. If we can choose schools, what that actually means is the good schools choose the kids they want and everybody else has to put up with what is left and everybody is driving to and fro in return.

We also cannot do this on the cheap. Pevsner said something which I think resonates more and more. He said the English will go to any expense to get something on the cheap! I think that has been our approach to housing, to public services, to infrastructure for too long. We are now paying the price of our bargains in these areas.

So I want to end with a bit of a diatribe about choice because some of my recent work has been around the idea of choice. I wrote a policy track for the Fabians called "A Better Choice of Choice", saying essentially that consumer choice is a problem rather than a solution. Think about two examples. First of all, whenever anybody switches from bus to car, we get the public transport getting worse, which makes more people make the switch. We get a worse service, which encourages more people to drive. We get it feeling dangerous so people tend to avoid using public transport, so it gets more dangerous, so more people switch to cars. You see the feedback operating there. Over time we have consequences from the way that shops and offices locate by means of car accessible sites, town centre amenities decline, more people will move out. The whole thing just snowballs and more people are forced into having cars and once you have got a car it is cheaper to run it, so you tend to use it for more of your journeys. So we have the whole feedback loop here pushing us away from what we want, all driven by personal choice.

So the result of this is degraded inner cities, some urbanised countryside, a doughnut development, people stuck in transport poverty unable to get to amenities because they do not have a car, more fuel intense lives. Nobody intended this. Nobody set out to achieve these things, but that is where individual choice led us. In the same way, the example I have mentioned, parental choice in schools, actually means the schools can perpetuate their advantage and everybody finishes driving to and fro further, both the chosen and the rejected have to go and make long journeys cutting across each other.

So my final conclusion is we can have sustainable communities, but we know a lot of the technologies needed, we know a lot of the logistics needed, we know the behaviour needed. What we need to achieve this is basically political bottle. We have got to promote and sell the idea of places where restricting a lot of sacred private freedoms that we set so much store by, is necessary in order to give us public goods like safe streets, vibrant communities, lower resource demand, and people without cars still being able to live decent ways of life. These seem to be the public goods that are actually well worth a bit of restriction on the ability to jump into a metal box and go and queue with lots of other metal boxes to get to something which is further away because we are all trying to get to it by metal boxes.

I think the London Congestion Charge is a very, very interesting political straw

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in the wind. What was most interesting about it was there wasn't bedlam and gridlock and civil insurrection and traffic wardens being hanged from lampposts and things like this. People just shrugged, changed their behaviour a bit and, to everybody's surprise, most people are better off as a result. The people who pay the charge can get to where they want to much more reliably because there are fewer of them doing it; the people who do not pay the charge find, amazingly, that the buses move faster because there are fewer cars on the road, so a lot of them get to work faster than they could have done before the Congestion Charge. It is a wonderful example of a win/win. Even the Evening Standard, with its vendetta against Ken Livingstone, really has to scrape the barrel to find to complain about the Congestion Charge these days. I think that is something which politicians at all levels and of all parties should take note of. It is possible to make a difference somewhere closer than Baghdad and politically survive!

Instead of saying to people we will give you more choice of public services so you can desert the lousy ones, we should be saying we will make all the providers good enough that you do not feel the need to exercise choice to escape bad provision. We need a stronger planning system rather than a weaker planning system to set and enforce outcome standards of the sort that I have just been talking about.

I would suggest we also need to try some more social democratic delivery vehicles, allowing people to, if you like, make a life-style choice to live in a sustainable way rather than relying solely on packaging up sustainable life-styles as a commodity to be sold in the market by developers whose commercial advantage will always be to talk it up but to do things in the cheapest way possible. I am not blaming developers, I am blaming the framework within which we try and deliver development, which gives incentives in exactly the wrong direction.

So some difficult messages but I hope they make sense. I think we have some opportunities to try and do these things. I hope that has been a useful rundown of some of the ways we can have Sustainable Communities, really sustainable communities, if we have the political will. Thank you.