

# Local land and local economies

Big Local Newcastle – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017

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# Agenda

- 1) Land – why should we care?
  - Land privatisation - getting the facts straight
  - **Activity – who owns the land around you?**
  
- 2) Building better land economies locally
  - Mapping land – what data and help is available?
  - How to: citizens land audits + making the case for community land ownership
  - **Discussion**

# Objectives

- Bring communities together over sites
  - >> provide a local mandate for councils and others to have more say over new developments
- Build public 'land literacy' in the context of affordable housing
  - >> build pressure for policy change around land use and valuation
- Empower more people to demand better housing
  - >> take the first step towards alternative plans

Land - why should we  
care?


## The problem: land is being privatised and communities are missing out

1. 69% of land in the UK is owned by 0.6% of the population  
– a 1/3 is still owned by aristocrats
2. UK housing is concentrated on only 5% of the country's  
land mass
3. We're in the midst of a public land fire sale, where  
10,000 hectares of land is being sold by the government  
and many local authorities are selling off sites and old  
buildings

Find out more:

- <http://neweconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NEF-housing-and-land-briefing-May-2017-WEB.pdf> and
- <http://www.landforwhat.org.uk/category/resources/>



 Land For What

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlIxCDK94ds>

## The public land sell off is not playing out in the public interest

- Only **one in five** of the new homes forecast to be built on public land are likely to be 'affordable'.
- As little as **6%** of new homes are likely to be social housing
- In some cases developments comprise solely of luxury properties.
- Behind schedule - at the current rate, the government's target of building 160,000 homes by selling off public land will take until 2032 to achieve, **12 years later** than promised.







## What could we do instead?

### HALT THE FIRE SALE OF PUBLIC LAND AND BUILD AFFORDABLE HOMES

In an initial snapshot survey of sites being offered for fire-sale, the New Economics Foundation has identified 10 plots of publicly-owned land that could provide 4,631 good quality, low cost homes.

The 10 sites are:

1. Brixton Prison
2. Maiden Law Hospital, County Durham
3. St George's Hospital, County Durham
4. Officers Mess within Connaught barracks site, Dover
5. Tipner Greyhound Stadium, Portsmouth
6. Site A Towergate, Milton Keynes
7. Alt Bridge Park, Liverpool
8. Chapel Street Site, Cornwall
9. St Ann's NHS Trust site, Haringey
10. Land at Ingersley Vale, Cheshire

“ON THESE 10 SITES ALONE – USING THE LAND FOR NON-PROFIT HOUSING COULD REDUCE THE HOUSING BENEFIT BILL BY £231 MILLION OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS.”

## Activity

1) who owns land and buildings in your area?

2) what are the barriers to communities having more control over land?

Local authority, schools, farmers, NHS,  
churches, Ministry of Defence, mystery land  
banks, local people, Crown Estate, National  
Trust, Network Rail.....

others?

# Barriers to land acquisition

- **Lack of information** – no one knows who owns it
- **Risk averse councils** - political, bureaucratic, different teams not talking to each other
- **Cost** – land values rising in many urban centres
- **Legal barriers** – best value requirement
- Others?

## 2) Building better land economies locally

**Community engagement  
activity – who owns the land  
around you?**

# DIY Land Spotting

## WHO can spot land?

Go solo! One person can achieve a lot:

- Decide on the geographical area that you want to spot empty land in
- Decide how long a period you want to spend identifying sites – a week? a month? a year?

OR

Form a spotting group!

- This could be with your friends, family, colleagues, community group
- The more people, the more disused land you will be able to identify. You could even meet up to share what you found out

## HOW to spot land?

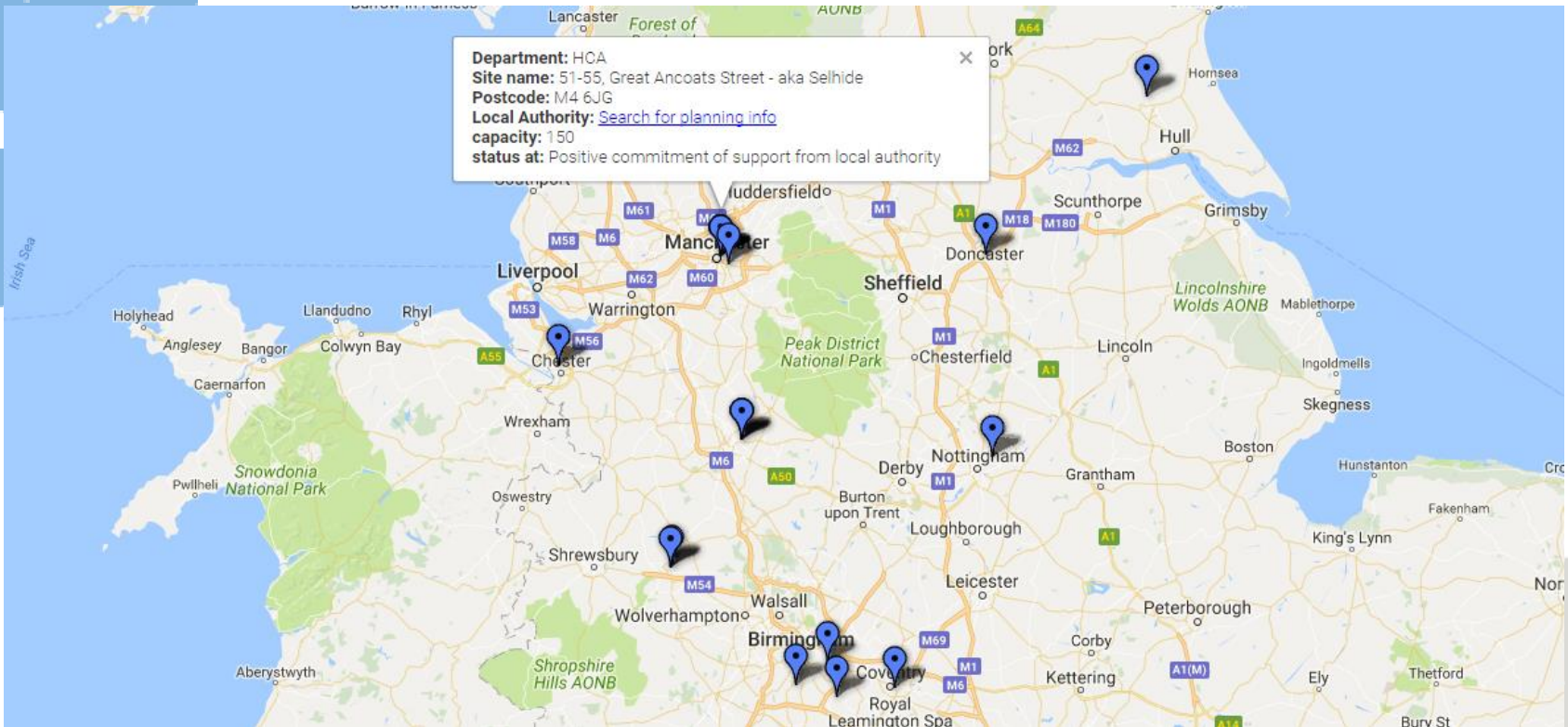
- On your way to work
- Taking your kids to school
- On dedicated land spotting walks in your area



## WHAT to gather information on?

- **The location of the site.** This is the most important piece of information. The best way to record the location of the site is to [place a pin on Google Maps and save it](#). This data can then be used to create a map of disused land across the UK.
- **How long the site has been disused.** This might be something that you know yourself or it might be something you can find out by asking local people or through Google.
- **Who you think might own it.** Again, this might be something you know, or it might be something you can find out by asking the neighbours or through the [Land Registry](#).
- **What it used to be used for.** Again, this might be something that you know yourself or it might be something you can find out by asking local people or through Google.
- Keep in touch and send your data on – [alice.martin@neweconomics.org](mailto:alice.martin@neweconomics.org)

## Mapping the public land sell off – send in your data and stories to NEF



NEF's public land map will be live in Summer 2017 – add your details here to receive updates:

<http://action.neweconomics.org/page/s/we-can-take-control-of-our-housing>

## Ways to have influence over land use

- Ask your local authority what's happening on empty sites
- Monitor new developments to ensure they provide affordable homes
- Flood the local self-build register – the more names, the more land the council has to allocate to community-led projects
- Join or set up a neighbourhood planning committee
- Propose an alternative plan for new homes - look for a community-led housing hub in your area

## Overcoming legal and cost barriers

1. “Less than best” consideration
  - Councils can give up to £2million discount
  - Asset lock – gives council confidence to reduce price
  - Deferred payment
  
2. One public estate programme
  - public authorities pooling their land and property assets
  - priorities are changing – not just a focus on cash receipt but projects that have community benefits
  
3. Compulsory purchase orders (CPOs)
  - Council’s likely to have stronger powers (Housing White Paper)
  - Might be able to acquire land at cheaper rates
  
4. Community / local authority partnerships
  - councils keen to do deals for land development – they keep the freehold and community groups develop housing on site
  - affordable borrowing through the PWLB

# Alternatives?



## Common Ground – for Mutual Home Ownership

Community land trusts and shared-equity co-operatives to secure permanently affordable homes for key workers

Written by the New Economics Foundation and CDS Co-operatives  
Pat Conaty, Johnston Birchall, Steve Bendle, and Rosemary Foggett

The mutual state in action 3



## **What is community-led housing?**

- Affordable homes to rent or buy that are democratically developed and managed
- Community land trusts, renters cooperatives, mutual home ownership, collectively owned social housing

## **Why community-led?**

- State stepping away from collective provision – this should be opposed
- Public and social housing becoming extinct – risk of right to buy, changing measure of affordable
- Community-led models could be scaled up, with land supplied by local authorities and development support from housing associations – Welsh government model

## **Issues to overcome:**

- Access to affordable land
- Still considered niche
- Economics / business case not made

# Discussion

**THANK YOU**

**Keep in touch –  
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