

## SOCIAL HOUSING AND TENANT PARTICIPATION (Summary Release)

Many of the problems associated with social housing – largely council housing – could have been prevented had politicians and professionals in the housing sector consulted with and allowed council tenants to participate in choice of location, design and build of social housing. This is argued by Peter Shapely of Bangor University in his research paper on social housing and tenant participation, published by History & Policy.

Shapely, in outlining the impact of governments' housing policies since the 1920s, contends that many mistakes were made in site location and building of homes to meet housing demands to alleviate the growing slum problem; but the greatest mistake was 'the failure to ask tenants themselves about fundamental issues such as the design and location of new homes'. As 'Choice was never on the agenda', too often social housing policy was dominated by the 'top-down approach', with people in charge – 'whether they were politicians, social reformers or professionals' – exercising a 'knew best' attitude.

The resultant site location of social housing led to a break up of established communities where tenants had 'felt secure amidst the established family and neighbourhood networks and where they could easily walk to work. Moving people to new estates involved the destruction of existing communities, created a sense of dislocation and isolation as well as placing greater pressure on the family budget because of increased travel costs', states Shapely.

-more-

## SOCIAL HOUSING - 2

In essence, it could be argued that the history of social housing problems has led to an increase in tenants' dissatisfaction, country-wide protests and an erosion of trust between tenants and social housing landlords – in particular, local authorities; and maybe a contributing factor to the anti-social behaviour seen on social housing estates, today.

However, Manchester's Hulme Estate, at one time a byword for the cumulative ills of social housing, is today, in the wake of its redevelopment, the standard bearer of how social housing should be planned and effected: 'through forging effective partnerships [with a] commitment to extensive tenant consultation and participation'.

ends.

### NOTE TO EDITORS:

'Social housing and tenant participation' by Peter Shapely can be access directly on clicking the link: <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-71.html>