



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Attitudinal research on financial payments to reduce opposition to new homes

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# **Attitudinal research on financial payments to reduce opposition to new homes**

**From**

**The University of Sheffield, Opinion Research Services (ORS) & Hannah Hickman Consulting**

Report to the Department for Communities and Local Government

July 2015

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# Executive summary

This report summarises the findings of research into the use of financial payments on planning for new housing. The study was commissioned to help inform the government's approach to piloting Development Benefits (DB). The research focuses particularly on whether direct financial payments to individuals who are likely to oppose house building might reduce local opposition to housing development.

The research employed a case study approach and made use of qualitative methods. Structured interviews were undertaken with 109 households who would be likely to oppose development across six local authority areas in England. Although this work does not constitute a representative survey of the population, the respondents provide a substantive evidence base of the views of households in opposition to new housebuilding across a range of local authorities. The numbers of interviews achieved have provided significant depth and spread of views of different types of households across a range of different contexts. Complementary interviews were undertaken with 3-5 'key professionals' (local authority officers, elected members, developers and other stakeholders) in each of the six case study areas (n=22) to help contextualize the household interviews and provide evidence on the likely impact on the planning system. In total the research involved 131 in-depth interviews conducted over a six week period between October and November 2014.

The key questions addressed by the research were:

- Would a direct financial payment reduce levels of opposition to new housebuilding amongst those who are likely to oppose it?
- How much would that payment need to be to influence attitudes and behaviour?
- What are the potential wider implications of financial payments for local planning policy?

This approach has produced attitudinal evidence about:

- the potential response to financial payments amongst those who are likely to oppose development in a range of local contexts;
- the extent to which direct payments to individuals might influence the scale and scope of opposition to new housing development;
- the motivations of those who oppose new housebuilding, including the relationship between financial payments and other interventions that might help to reduce levels of opposition;
- the potential impact of financial payments on attitudes and behaviours amongst a sample of key professionals in the delivery of local planning for housing; and

- the potential practical implications of the use of financial payments

### *Key findings*

It is important to recognise that the study was a theoretical exercise. As in any Stated Preference study, responses are influenced by the specific wording of the questions and the contextual information provided. A real scenario that involved actual payment may have led to different responses. These caveats need to be taken into account when generalising from the findings.

The key findings from **household interviews (n=109)** are:

- A limited proportion of those interviewed (10%) felt that a direct financial payment would or might reduce their opposition to housing development; 6% said it would, 4% said maybe. The large majority (84%) felt that the payment would not influence their views on housing development or their likelihood to engage in some form of direct or indirect opposition to it.
- Those whose attitudes or behaviour might be influenced by a direct payment tended to be at the weaker end of the opposition spectrum.
- There was strong principled resistance to the idea of a financial payment amongst many households. Financial payments were associated with 'bribes' by 46% of respondents. There were also concerns by households that such payments could lead to a reduced developer contribution, especially as pressure on infrastructure and services was often the main reason for opposition to housing development.
- Views on opposition to new housebuilding were mainly about the scale of development and its impact on local infrastructure and services. Over one third of respondents said that they might be less opposed to new development if they could have more of a say over development, or if there was extra resource for infrastructure and services (especially schools and health care).
- There were mixed views on the perceived ability of residents to influence development. 74% of those interviewed felt that individual residents had a limited ability to influence development.
- Households generally found it easy to grasp the principles of the use of direct financial payments aimed at reducing opposition to new homes.

The findings from **key professional interviews (n=22)** are:

- There was no significant support for direct financial payments from any of the key professionals interviewed. At best, it was felt that such payments would have a marginal impact, perhaps easing the progress of some proposals a little in some cases.
- It was felt that potential benefits of financial payments would be outweighed by the other, negative, effects. The main concern was that payments might undermine trust in local planning processes. There was a feeling that payments could be divisive and

weaken community cohesion. There were particular concerns that payments could undermine work undertaken by Local Planning Authorities to build consensus and certainty around planning for new housebuilding.

- Local authority officers and members emphasized that opposition was an important part of the planning system and that it could be handled effectively through existing frameworks. They also felt that the National Planning Policy Framework has made it more difficult for planning applications to be prevented or slowed down by opposition within local authorities or amongst local residents when they are in conformity with local and national planning policy.
- Overall, household views were very consistent with those of the key professionals. The main differences are that households were more critical of financial payments from an ethical perspective and less likely to identify unintended wider consequences.

# 1. Introduction

1. At Budget 2014 Government announced that it would “launch a government-funded staged pilot for passing a share of the benefits of development directly to individual households, including further research and evaluation of the approach” (HM Treasury, 2014, P.63).
2. The aim of such ‘Development Benefits’ is to reduce the extent to which housing development is blocked or delayed as a result of opposition by local residents. The expectation is that Development Benefits would do this by providing a new financial incentive that would reduce the net incentive for residents to oppose development (i.e. eligible households within a certain distance from a new development would receive a financial payment when that development goes ahead.)
3. In order to help inform the approach to the piloting of Development Benefits the Department for Communities and Local Government commissioned research to explore household and professional attitudes towards the use of direct financial payments aimed at reducing opposition to new homes. This report summarises the findings of this research study.
4. The aim of the study was to deliver:
  - Qualitative research with a range of different types of households who are likely to oppose house building in six case studies across England with respect to direct payment and the extent to which it might impact on attitudes and behaviours towards housing development;
  - In-depth qualitative research into key professionals’ (planning officers, developers, opposition groups) perceptions of the impact of Development Benefits on the planning system.

The main objectives of the research were to provide evidence on:

- I. The key underlying reasons for why households oppose housing development;
- II. The extent to which direct financial payments might influence attitudes towards new development; and
- III. The impact of the scale of such payments on attitudes and behaviour.

## Structure of the report

5. The second section outlines the research design and presents a summary of the research methods used. The second section summarises the evidence review summary. The third and fourth sections present data and findings from the household interviews and key professional interviews. Brief conclusions are then



provided. The annexes include the extended evidence review, further data tables and the household interview topic guide.

## 2. Research approach and methods

There were three elements to the research:

- i. A review of evidence and experience relevant to financial payments and new housing development;
  - ii. Detailed structured interviews with 109 households who 'were likely to oppose new housing development' across 6 case-study areas selected to represent a range of local market conditions and institutional, social, economic and development contexts. The interviews included mostly closed questions that could allow for numerical analysis of the spread of responses to a particular issue;
  - iii. In depth interviews with 3-5 key professionals (i.e. local authority representatives and other local stakeholders) in each case-study area in order to contextualise the findings from the household interviews and canvass views on the principle and practical application of policy. In total, 22 key professionals were interviewed;
6. The field work with households and professionals was carried out during October and early November 2014.
  7. The research specifically and deliberately focused on households who would or would be likely to oppose housing development since they would be the target audience for any such government policy. . This therefore means that findings are not necessarily representative of the general population. This should be borne in mind when considering the findings of the household interviews, which only reflect the views of households with such attitudes towards new housing development

### Case-study selection and context

8. The study focused on six case-study areas drawn from across England. These were either entire local authority areas or parts of such areas.
9. The case-studies reflect a range of geographical, housing market, political-institutional, economic and planning contexts. Case study selection drew on data on housing delivery and planning context gathered for a previous DCLG study<sup>1</sup>.
10. The case-study authorities are anonymised throughout the report and are referred to by the following geographical categories: inner London (IL), outer London/London commuting (LC), the South East (SE), South West (SW), Eastern (E) and North of England (N). In all 6 case studies there is considerable market pressure for new

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<sup>1</sup> Dunning, R., Inch, A., Payne, S., Watkins, C., While, A., Young, G., Hickman, H., Bramley, G., McIntosh, S., Watkins, D. and Valler, D. (2014) *The Impact of the New Homes Bonus on Attitudes and Behaviour*, unpublished report for DCLG. Planning context data was based on applications, approvals, decision times and potential housing capacity.

housing development in at least part of the locality. The SE and N case-studies were the Neighbourhood Planning areas. Table 2.1 provides further general details about the case study areas.

Table 2.1: Case study profiles

<b>Case study</b>	<b>Urban/rural</b>	<b>Planning stance and context</b>
Inner London (IL)	Urban	Area of high demand for new housing. Local authority supports increased housebuilding targets in line with local plan policy. There are concerns about shortfalls in affordable housing, development viability challenges and GLA decisions.
Outer London/ London commuting (LC)	Small towns	In the face of considerable opposition, the local authority has pursued a strategy of managing growth since the late 2000s. There have been significant levels of housing development over recent decades on the edges of the town and further large housing development is proposed. The local community continues to oppose development but key professionals considered this opposition largely ineffective given local plan policy.
South East (SE)	Small town in mainly urban authority	Neighbourhood Planning area in area of economic growth and high demand for new housing. The local authority is generally supportive of new housebuilding but faced significant opposition in certain parts of the local authority area. Significant housing development is planned relative to the size of the town.
South West (SW)	Rural	High market demand. Local authority generally opposed to the scale of development arising out of latest population projections. Lack of five-year land supply and the absence of an adopted housing figure means that applications are coming forward in many parts of the authority.
Eastern (E)	Rural in growth area	High market demand. Support for housing growth by the local authority with a clear evidence base and a number of large development allocations. Opposition strong amongst some communities facing substantial housing development.
Northern (N)	Urban fringe	This Neighbourhood Planning area has the highest housing demand and prices in the city. The Local Planning Authority has avoided allocating controversial sites in this area, reflecting strong and effective local opposition. The identification of a 5-10 year supply of housing land is consequently challenging.

11. In all cases there was evidence of opposition to new housebuilding either during the process of plan preparation, or in response to planning applications. IL and LC have already had significant housing development over the last decade and further development is proposed. In SW, SE and E large new housing developments are underway with further development proposed. In N there is increasing pressure for

housing development, particularly in the Neighbourhood Planning area examined here.

12. The findings are reported in section 4 as percentages, however sample sizes are relatively small and the research is qualitative in nature. Therefore, please refer back to the actual number of interviews when considering small percentages.

## Household interviews

13. Reflecting the aims of the direct financial benefits and the target population – i.e. helping to reduce opposition and build support for housebuilding – the interviews focused on households who were ‘*likely to oppose new housebuilding*’. Household interviewees were recruited through a combination of telephone contacts and door-to-door approaches. Commercially available telephone contact details were used to generate a random sample of telephone numbers in each of the study areas. Screening questions were used to identify households “likely to oppose new housebuilding”. Around 10%-30% of those who were contacted by telephone said that they were likely to oppose housing development, but the majority of those did not want to be interviewed for the study. To a certain degree, this self selecting sample may have skewed the findings.
14. Census Output Areas (OAs) were used to identify and recruit household participants in case-studies apart from IL where postcodes were used. Target OAs and postcodes were selected in consultation with local authorities and through a review of allocated sites for new housebuilding in local plans. Target OAs and postcodes were intended to provide a diverse sample frame in terms of age, tenure and economic profile of households.
15. In general, initial telephone contact was much more effective than door-to-door techniques in recruiting households for face to face interviews. Data collected on responses to initial screening in telephone interviews suggests that around a third of those sampled through random contact would be likely to oppose new housebuilding.
16. The initial intention was to carry out face to face interviews with all households. However given challenges in achieving such interviews in the time allocated a decision was made to undertake a combination of telephone and face to face interviews. Overall, the household analysis draws on 68 telephone interviews and 41 face-to-face interviews (see Table 2.2). The target was for a minimum of 15 interviews in each case-study area.

Table 2.2: Number of household interviews

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Face to face	6	7	4	8	8	8	41	38%
Telephone	17	8	13	8	11	11	68	62%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

17. Further detail on the breakdown of household interviewees by income, house type, age and tenure is available in Annex B. In general there was a reasonable spread of responses in terms of age and income bearing in mind that those most likely to oppose housing development are likely to be wealthier owner-occupiers. 28% of household interviewees were below 50 years of age (72% were aged 50 plus) and only 26% of household interviewees had a household income above £50,000. The majority (68%) of those interviewed were in detached or semi-detached houses; only 14% were in flats.
18. It was extremely difficult to recruit households from the private rented sector. Overall around 10-15% of telephone contacts were to private rented addresses (higher for London, lower for the other areas) but those households were less likely to oppose development and/or much more reluctant to be interviewed. As a result there was only one interview in the private rented sector. 13% of households interviewed were in housing association/local authority rental housing.

### **Telephone and face-to-face interviews**

19. There was no discernible difference in the quality of telephone and face-to-face interviews, mainly because the length and depth of interviews depended more on the interviewee's level of knowledge about, and engagement with, the planning system than on the interview medium. Interviews lasted on average between thirty minutes and one hour. All interviews were audio recorded and detailed notes were made of each individual interview, including verbatim quotes that are used in the analysis.

### **Household interview topic guide**

20. Questions related to financial payments were embedded within a broader discussion about attitudes and behaviour in relation to new housebuilding. The interviewer started by asking 'Do you like living in this area? What is particularly good about living here? What might be improved?' Interviewees were then asked about their attitudes to new housebuilding, the extent to which this translated into opposition activity (e.g. formally opposing planning applications, membership of a wider opposition group or network), and perceptions of the likely effectiveness of different types of opposition. Financial payments were presented as one of a number of options for reducing opposition, including having more of a say over development and investment in local infrastructure and services.

### **The direct payment question**

21. The study team were aware of the potential impact of the language used in questions and the contextual information provided. The question on the amount required to change behaviour towards development has some similarity to the *Willingness to Accept* stated preference method but is not necessarily a formal application of stated preference techniques<sup>2</sup>. Direct financial payment was framed as a mechanism for allowing residents to gain a direct share of the benefits of development. The interview guide indicated that the payment would be for all

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the benefits of *Willingness to Accept* methods in situations where revealed preference cannot be located see HM Treasury (2011) and the differences between *Willingness to Accept* and *Willingness to Pay* studies in the evidence review below.

households in a given catchment area regardless of whether they opposed development (the catchment areas was specified as 100-200m from sites in urban areas but more extensive in some contexts. Interviewees were asked their views on the scale of the catchment area). Payment would be made when development commenced.

22. The idea of direct financial payments was introduced in a standard format to all households, as follows:
23. *We would now like to explore whether your views might change if you were given a direct payment that would allow you to share some of the financial benefits of the new housing development.*
  - *The idea is that households might consider housing development differently and be less likely to oppose it if some of the benefit could be passed directly to them.*
  - *A payment would be made to you if your council agreed to the development going ahead and when construction started.*
  - *It would not affect any contributions that the developer makes for infrastructure, facilities and services.*
  - *All households who lived close to the site (distance dependent on site) would be given the payment regardless of whether they opposed the development or not.*
24. Households were first asked whether a direct financial payment might reduce their opposition to new housebuilding and were then asked to specify a payment (at that stage there were no suggested levels of payment). If the specified figure was above £5000 households were asked about whether a payment of £5000 or below would be sufficient to reduce their opposition to new development. Households were then asked if payment via council tax rebate would be more or less preferable to a lump sum paid into their bank account. Direct financial payment was presented as an additional payment over and above current developer contributions.

### **Accounting for bias**

25. Qualitative interviewing allowed the research team to examine the reasons for the answers given by households and address potential bias. For example, it is possible that some respondents might have been trying to influence the direction of housing and planning policy or justify their prior opposition to development. It is also important to recognise that this was a theoretical exercise and that the households involved in the study (those likely to oppose new development) may well be more critical of direct financial payments than would the general population. Moreover, although households were asked to respond with a particular site in mind, the study was more detached and abstract than a real scenario with actual payment.

## **Key professional interviews**

26. The key professional interviews were intended to help contextualise the householder interviews and gauge responses to the practicalities of financial payments and implications for the planning system. Key professional interviews included senior planning officers, key elected members (where possible the chair of

planning committee), and a mix of other stakeholders with a perspective on opposition to new housebuilding (such as representatives of amenity/opposition groups, local developers and other additional elected members). For the two Neighbourhood Planning areas, key professionals included a representative of the Neighbourhood Planning forum and local authority contacts. A total of 22 key professional interviews were undertaken (see Table 2.3) mostly by telephone. Interviews with key professionals varied from 30 minutes to 90 minutes. The majority of interviews took one hour.

Table 2.3: Key professional interviews

	N	SE	SW	E	IL	LC	Total
LA officer	1	1	1	1	1	1	<b>6</b>
LA member	1	1	1	2	1	1	<b>7</b>
Other	1	0	3	1	1	1	<b>7</b>
NP forum	1	1	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>

27. In total, the key professional interviews involved 6 local authority officers, 7 elected members, 3 developers/consultants, 4 representatives from resident/amenity groups or parish/town councils, and 2 representatives of Neighbourhood Planning fora. As stated before, the interviews provided a range of views to elucidate the potential issues in relation to Development Benefits. The views cannot be considered representative of all professionals.

## 3. Evidence review

28. There is very limited practical experience or theoretical evidence in relation to financial payments aimed at reducing opposition to new development (housing or otherwise). The evidence review therefore examined five sources of potential evidence about the impact of financial payments on opposition to new housebuilding:
1. **Hypothetical and theoretical studies** of the impact of payments on the willingness to accept unpopular development;
  2. Literature on **willingness to pay/willingness to accept** direct payments; and
  3. Evidence from the use of **community benefits** policy in the UK.
  4. Evidence about **reasons for opposing new housebuilding** in the UK and internationally.
  5. Evidence from the **British Social Attitudes Survey**
29. The following section summarises the findings of the evidence review (see Annex A for the full review).

### Hypothetical and theoretical studies

30. There are limited hypothetical and theoretical studies of the impact of direct payments on willingness to accept unpopular development. Shelter's submission to the Wolfson Prize 2014 is the most relevant to the research (Shelter, 2014). Focus groups and a citizens' jury were used to assess the potential impact of direct payments on support for a Garden City in the South East of England. The study found that a direct payment of below £5,000 was not viewed as significant enough to change people's minds about development; and that direct payments may increase opposition as people feel they are being bought off or the money represents a bribe.

### Willingness to pay/accept studies

31. Studies of willingness to pay (WTP) to prevent development and willingness to accept a financial payment (WTA) in compensation are the economic literature closest to the use of individual financial payments to reduce opposition to new housing development. However there are no directly relevant WTA studies as WTA has tended to focus on non-housing issues. Relevant studies of WTP to prevent new housing development are dated and only relate to the USA.

### Pricing amenity value

32. Hedonic studies have sought to price amenities in order to compensate for planning permission: the house (e.g. garden); neighbourhood (e.g. parks, trees, local shops, leisure facilities); and location (e.g. access to jobs). However, there are limitations in these attempts to value amenity accurately. The assumptions of hedonic studies are rarely tested in practice.



## Evidence from community benefits policy

33. The experience of *community* benefits in relation to UK energy infrastructure projects is not necessarily equivalent to the *individual* payments considered in this study, but there are potential lessons that can be drawn from their application. It is too early to draw clear lessons about the role of community benefits in reducing opposition. In relation to wind farms Cowell et al (2011) suggest that 'there is limited evidence to suggest that providing community benefits changes opinions about development ... indeed, there is often more obvious anxiety that such gains should not subvert planning decisions'. Community benefits may be seen as a form of 'compensation' rather than 'benefit' and this might reduce their social acceptability.

## Opposition to new housebuilding

### *Opposition to new housebuilding and financial compensation*

34. A wide range of literature suggests that opposition to new development is likely to be motivated by concerns that cannot be assuaged through financial payment. Literature on 'NIMBYism' has demonstrated the importance of issues such as identity, principles and amenity value. Bell et al (2005) suggest that 'before policy makers choose to adopt a financial incentive strategy [to reduce opposition to development] they need to be sure that they are dealing with [...] people whose principles are for sale'.

### *Who opposes and what makes for effective opposition?*

35. Middle class, affluent individuals and groups are more likely to oppose new housebuilding. Home owners are more likely to oppose development than private renters because of their greater 'place dependence'. These groups are often advantaged in their ability to influence local planning process, but not always. Sturzaker (2010) documents the power of rural elites to influence planning policy in England. Conversely While et al (2004) demonstrate how in Cambridgeshire a coalition of local authorities, economic interests and supportive local residents were able to 'outmanoeuvre' previously strong rural opposition to new housebuilding. There is very limited research on the role played by local councillors in opposition to new house building in the UK.

36. Overall there is a deficit of systematic evidence on the reasons for opposition, the overall scale of opposition, its geographical patterning and its net impact on decision-making

## Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey

37. The 2014 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey series provides some evidence that public opposition to new housing development has reduced. The percentage of those who would support or strongly support new housebuilding in their local area

increased from 28% (2010) through 47% (2013) to 56% in 2014. The level of opposition to more new housebuilding in the local area fell from 46% (2010) through 31% (2013) to 21% in 2014.

38. The BSA reports low levels of support for the use of financial payments in helping to reduce opposition and build support for more new housebuilding. In BSA 2010 only 1.7% of households who did not support more new housebuilding felt that a financial incentive to existing residents as a potential benefit would make them support more homes in the area. In BSA 2013 this figure was 1.8%.

39. The BSA 2014 asked about financial incentives as a stand-alone question, rather than in a list of potential benefits as above. Of respondents who did not support new homes in their local area only 2% said they would become *much* more supportive if households who lived close to a proposed development were given a cash payment if the development went ahead, while 16 per cent said they would be more supportive. The majority of respondents at 65 per cent stated a cash payment would make no difference to their level of support, whilst a significant minority at 12 per cent would become more opposed to development and 4 per cent much more opposed.

## Conclusions

40. The main findings from the evidence review are:

- There is limited empirical or theoretical evidence that is directly relevant to direct payments aimed at reducing opposition to new development.
- Theoretical work that has been undertaken suggests that direct financial payments are unlikely to influence the attitudes or behaviour of those most opposed to new housebuilding and may lead to concerns about due process in determining planning applications.
- Some of the concerns about new housing development that lead to opposition are unlikely to be assuaged by a financial payment, whilst the offer of payment itself could potentially increase opposition.
- There is limited systematic analysis and detailed understanding of the reasons why people oppose new housebuilding and what might be done to reduce that opposition. Academic and policy literature tends to focus on cases of conflict and opposition rather than agreement and consensus building.
- Hypothetical studies of financial payment are strongly influenced by nuances in the language used and suggested levels of payment.

41. The full findings of the evidence review and full references are provided in Annex A.

## 4. Household interview analysis

42. The analysis presented in this section follows the order of questioning asked within the interviews (see Annex C for interview topic guide).

### Strength of opposition and reasons for opposition

43. Pre-screening questions ensured that all of those interviewed would “**be likely to oppose some aspect of new housebuilding in their local area**”. Questions were asked about the strength of attitudes and the likelihood of actively opposing development. Interviewees were also asked if they had opposed development previously.

44. Although all households interviewed were deemed to be opposed to new housebuilding, through their responses the study recorded the strength of opposition on a 3 point ‘opposition spectrum’. Overall, 25% of those interviewed said that they would be very strongly opposed to new housebuilding in their local area and a further 44% said that they would be strongly opposed. The remaining 31% were less strongly opposed to new housebuilding but had some level of opposition (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Would you be opposed to new housebuilding (or a particular aspect of new housebuilding) in your local area?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Weaker opposition	5	5	6	3	6	9	34	31%
Strongly opposed	16	8	8	7	4	5	48	44%
Very strong	2	2	3	6	9	5	27	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

45. The strength of opposition to new housebuilding in their local area varied across the case studies. The South West case study registered the highest proportion at the weaker end of the opposition spectrum; the South East case study had the highest proportion that of those who appeared to be strongly opposed (nearly 50%).

46. Households reported that they were mainly opposed to the scale of new development and its perceived impact on the local area. In areas that had experienced high levels of new housing development in recent years – notably SW, SE and LC – households were particularly concerned about the scale of development proposed and the impact on infrastructure, health services and schools:

*“Yes. There is a big development [name]. It looks like a toy town and there are no local services. It seems that this is the way they build now, without thinking of the utilities that people need, like local shops. It is imposing a huge number of houses*

*on a small town. The schools can't cope. In the next 10 years, the Upper school will all be on one site, which will be massive even without extra kids coming in. It's difficult to get appointments at the doctors." (SE)*

*"The amount of traffic concerns me. Everywhere you go is new housing estates. It is difficult to even turn out of our house, especially during rush hour." (LC)*

*"So when they're talking about new housing developments, that's great if you have infrastructure: schools and roads and GP practices. The schools have been great – the surgeries are great. It's not about their quality of service, it's their capacity really." (SW)*

47. In the Inner London case study the main concerns were the scale and high density of new housing developments and the limited provision of housing considered affordable for local residents:

*"It's all private tower blocks, I'm only opposed because it's not for normal people, the average rents are £300 a week, it's not affordable. In this area it's all tower blocks along the canal, it's way beyond what people can afford." (IL)*

48. The perceived pricing out of local housing needs was also a cause for concern for around 10% of households in the other case-studies:

*Our concern is whether the price of the houses that are being put up are really within reach of young people." (LC)*

49. Concerns about design quality and the loss of local character were also mentioned by around a quarter of residents in all areas:

*... It just seems like this area is being swamped with the volume of houses. Slowly but surely, its turning into one big sprawl. We will lose the village and community feel of the place ... (LC)*

*"We get so much new development in [PLACE] which is low "value" and doesn't look great. When you see it on the plans it seems brilliant but when built there are cut backs to the quality and design and the Council is always disappointed but it happens again and again." (E).*

*"It needs to be done sympathetically. I accept that we do need houses. The development on the [SITE] was nicely done and that was OK" (LC)*

## Attitudes and behaviour in opposition to new housebuilding

50. 55% of respondents indicated they were likely to act on their concerns and would formally oppose development through the planning system. A further 10% said they might act on their concerns depending on the location and type of development and 17% did not know (Table 4.2). Overall 18% said that they were unlikely to take formal action in opposition to housing development. However the proportion of

households unlikely to act on their opposition to new housing development was significantly higher in Inner London (50%).

Table 4.2: Would households act on their opposition to new housing development?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Yes	17	8	8	7	9	11	60	55%
Maybe	2	4	0	0	2	3	11	10%
No	3	0	7	1	5	4	20	18%
Don't know	1	3	2	8	3	1	18	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

51. Opposition would mainly take the form of registering formal objections to planning applications, but a number of households said that they would attend meetings or contact councillors. Most households had not been strongly involved in organising campaigns against new housebuilding. The relatively high proportion of *don't knows* in the SE is because application for significant housebuilding are still mainly at proposal stage in that area.

52. 44% of households interviewed had previously opposed new housing development (Table 4.3). Again, households in Inner London were less likely to have opposed new housing proposals than households in the other case study areas.

Table 4.3: Have you previously opposed new housing development?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Yes	0	10	6	9	10	7	42	44%
No	23	3	11	1	5	11	54	56%
No answer	0	2	0	6	4	1	13	
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

## The influence of neighbours, friends, family and local campaign groups

53. Households were asked 'to what extent is your attitude to new housing development influenced by other people, such as neighbours, friends or family members or local campaign groups?'

54. Within the case studies forms of opposition varied from well organised campaigns to more localised mobilization via social media, petitions, meetings and individual comments on planning applications. Well organised community scrutiny and campaigns were more evident in LC and E reflecting a longer history of opposition to high levels of new development. In a small number of cases elected members

had been involved in opposition campaigns, but were not mentioned in the majority of interviews.

55. Whilst a small number of respondents had been influenced by campaigns and discussion with friends, over 90% of respondents felt that opposition was a personal matter. The following responses were typical of that view:

*“Not at all, I have my own opinions. Most people are against it, but that doesn’t sway my opinion.” (SW)*

*“I have my own mind they wouldn’t influence me; I have my own belief in terms of the correct course of action.” (E)*

56. There was evidence of active mobilisation through campaign groups and amenity societies in most localities, but most interviewees said they were not strongly influenced by formal campaigns.

## Knowledge of the planning system and ability to influence it

57. Interviewees were asked about their knowledge of the planning system and their understanding of the role that they could play in influencing the planning of new housing in their local area. Interviewees were asked ‘to what extent do you believe that local residents can get the council to refuse or change proposed developments that are submitted?’

58. Respondents tended to feel that they had a good knowledge of the planning system and the mechanisms for opposing development. However there was a strong feeling across all case studies that the ability of residents to oppose new housing was limited. Generally, interviewees did not feel confident about their ability to prevent development even when there was strong community mobilization.

*“It doesn’t matter a dot what we think. They’re [the local authority] not interested; they just tell us what’s going to happen. Local residents can’t change anything – it’s money that’s talking.” (LC)*

*“Very limited, you can put in a complaint but if it’s a private development they will always employ a lawyer or someone to find a way round it, by tweaking the rules or threatening to tie the council up in a court case. People need somewhere to live and if there’s an objection there’s always a way round it. The Council has no influence or feels their hands are tied.” (IL)*

*“I have the tendency to think that this is what the government wants, and no if you look at the example of [place] - when they had the planning meeting, two of our district councillors ... were against it. They had something like 300 online objections and they had something like five that approved so when the decision came – oh we’ve got five that approved, we’ll go ahead with it. So did residents have a voice? No.” (SW)*

*“I can play no role at all in influencing planning. There’s nothing I can do as the council don’t care. I feel totally helpless and ignored as a citizen. This is a consensus in the community.” (LC)*

*“I would like to think that we could change the proposed development if we pull together... but I think they have already decided and they are going through the formalities.” (E)*

59. Where opposition had been successful it was felt to take considerable effort by individuals and campaign groups:

*“In my experience residents have been successful but they have to put in an extraordinary amount of effort, it’s not enough just to write in, they have to understand on what basis they are objecting and whether it’s a reasonable objection. In areas like this it’s difficult to get a critical mass but my sense is that they can get cowed and don’t feel they have a chance, whereas I feel that if you have a strong case it only takes one person to make it, but you have to be committed – time, effort, attending meetings, it’s hard.” (IL)*

60. There was felt to be less leverage over elected members than in the past:

*“One of the Councilors has told me the reason why they can’t or won’t oppose new housing. The Government is telling them to put these houses up, as they have targets. In a way they’re at their wits end trying to try and find places to build these houses as nobody wants them. They blame the Government.” (SW)*

61. Regardless of the likely outcome from the planning process, the principle of opposing development was perceived to be important by around 10% of respondents:

*“I think you are limited in terms of influence but I believe the louder and longer you shout things may change.” (E)*

62. 20% of respondents indicated that they could have a medium or significant role in influencing the planning of new housing, whilst 42% thought that they would have a limited impact and 26% indicated that they would not be able to have any impact (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: What is your understanding of the role that you can play in influencing the planning of new housing in your local area?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Significant	0	0	2	0	0	1	3	3%
Medium	1	6	3	2	3	4	19	17%
Limited	10	6	5	9	6	10	46	42%
None	7	1	4	5	9	2	28	26%
Don't know	5	2	3	0	1	2	13	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

## What might help reduce household opposition to new housebuilding?

63. Prior to asking about individual financial payments, interviewees were asked whether other government policy interventions might make them less opposed to, or more supportive of, new housebuilding.

64. 53% of households said that having more of a say over design and layout of development might make them less opposed to new housebuilding (32% yes, 21% maybe) (Table 4.5). That proportion was slightly lower (48% or 33% yes, 15% maybe) for those most strongly opposed to new housebuilding.

Table 4.5: Would you be less opposed to new housebuilding if if you could have more of a say over the design and layout of development at the planning stage?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Yes	6	6	7	6	5	5	35	32%
Maybe	5	5	1	3	5	4	23	21%
No	8	3	8	4	3	7	33	30%
Don't know	4	1	1	3	6	3	18	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

65. 59% of households said that they were likely to be less opposed to new housebuilding if there was more investment in infrastructure and services (44% yes, 15% maybe) (Table 4.6). The proportion of those who would be less likely to oppose new housebuilding was slightly higher (66% or 44% yes, 22% maybe) for those most strongly opposed to new housebuilding.

Table 4.6: Would you take be less opposed to new housebuilding if more money was provided to help fund local public services such as transport, education, health and/or environmental facilities?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Yes	7	6	7	8	7	13	48	44%
Maybe	5	2	1	2	5	1	16	15%
No	8	6	6	4	3	2	29	27%
Don't know	3	1	3	2	4	3	16	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

66. 39% of households indicated that there were other considerations that would make them less opposed to new housing in their local area, notably this included the provision of social housing (though some also wanted less social housing in new developments close to them) and/or ensuring that housing was affordable for younger residents (Table 4.7).



Table 4.7: If there anything else that would make you less opposed to new housing development in your local area?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Yes	6	5	5	5	3	6	30	28%
Maybe	9	1	1	0	1	0	12	11%
No	4	5	9	8	6	11	43	39%
Don't know	4	4	2	3	9	2	24	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

## Extent to which individual financial payments might change attitudes or behaviour

67. Households were asked 'if you were to receive a financial payment if new housing development went ahead, would you be less likely to oppose the development?'

68. 10% of respondents (11 in total) said that they would or might be less likely to oppose new housing development if they were to receive a direct financial payment linked to the development; 6% said yes, 4% said maybe (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: If you were to receive a financial payment if new housing development went ahead, would you be less likely to oppose the development?

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Yes	1	1	2	1	0	2	7	6%
Maybe	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	4%
No	19	11	15	13	17	15	91	84%
Don't know	3	1	0	2	1	0	7	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

69. The eleven households who said they would or might be influenced by a direct payment can be divided into three groups:

- i. There were three households in local authority/social housing and at the medium to weaker end of the opposition spectrum who specified a payment of £1,000-2,000.
- ii. A second group consists of five owner occupier households on incomes of £30K or more. For this group the payment would need to be at least £5,000 to reduce their opposition to new development and in most cases more than £5,000 (five households). This group tended towards the middle of the opposition spectrum. One of those households (income of £30-39K) felt that £5,000 was an "inviting sum of money" that could "compensate for the inconvenience". One of the owner-occupier households said they might be influenced by a payment but were uncomfortable with the principle: "that's coming at it in the wrong way ... to pay people is completely undemocratic" (N, £50-59K income).

- iii. Two households are strong opponents of new housing development but said that a direct payment would reduce their opposition if the payment allowed them to move (i.e. covered moving costs). These two households would require at least £5,000. These two households felt that new housing development would proceed regardless of local opposition.
70. Two of the households who specified a payment of over £5,000 felt that the level of payment should relate to the impact of new housebuilding on individual properties:
- I think it's a really good idea.... It depends, if people are being affected more, they should get more money.” (N)*
71. Impact was defined as a combination of loss of amenity value and reduction in house value if that occurred.
72. There was some indication that the reality of an actual payment might complicate household attitudes and behaviour. For example one householder who was opposed to payment in principle was likely to accept a payment of £5000 if it was on offer:
- “Yes it probably would [make a difference to attitude]. Nasty isn't it.... I'm retired and on a pension. It would be a little windfall” (SW)*
73. That respondent was uncertain whether the payment would reduce their opposition to new housing development.
74. There were no significant geographical variations in attitudes to the financial payment. Respondents who said that payments would reduce their opposition to housing development were mainly those at the weaker end of the opposition spectrum and/or on lower incomes. There was some evidence of a correlation between the amount required to reduce their opposition to new housing and household income, but given the limited number of households who would accept the payment no precise correlation can be determined. See Annex D for more detail on households who would or might reduce their opposition to new housebuilding if there was a financial payment.

## Reasons why payments would not influence attitudes and behaviour

75. 84% said that a direct financial payment would not alter their attitudes or behaviour with respect to new housing development. Some of those felt that the level of payment would have to be so large as to be unaffordable for those making the payment:
- “It would need to be so enormous; they are not going to give everyone enough to move. It's irrelevant. Small amounts are not an incentive.” (LC)*

76. There was a strong reaction amongst households against the principle of financial payments. Bribery terminology<sup>3</sup> was mentioned in more than 46% of interviews in relation to the direct payment. The following quotes give a sense of the reaction:

*“Is that because your house may be de-valued? I feel quite negative about it. I think it sounds like bribery. It doesn’t negate my concerns. It sounds like paying residents to agree with what developers want to do. I feel pretty annoyed about it. I think once people start exchanging money like that, how much is out in the open? You wonder how much is going on behind the scenes- corruption. I think that is a very slippery slope.” (LC)*

*“To be given the offer of a payment doesn’t sound right. It’s unfair, it is buying people off. Regardless of your opinion, if you are given money, it negates your right to express an opinion. I wouldn’t take it. It would feel like blood money.” (SE)*

*“I think it’s disgusting and I am absolutely appalled that they are trying to pay people off to get them on their side” (N)*

*“I wouldn’t agree with any incentives however they are presented – I think it is bribery just because they don’t agree with something you can’t just chuck money at it that is buying people” (E)*

77. Two households felt that residents should be compensated financially for the loss of amenity arising from new housing development but did not like the idea of a payment that might influence decisions about planning permission.

## Additional concerns about direct financial payments

78. A number of interviewees felt that the payment could be divisive:

*“Jealousy may arise, if some people get £X where others don’t. People shouldn’t be paid off. However we must have new houses, but it needs to be done sensibly and properly.”(LC)*

*“I think that’s disgraceful. That’s paying people to change their mind. That’s wrong. So if somebody says I don’t want a housing estate. So if I give you £500 do you want one now? Isn’t that wrong? If you take a hundred metre distance from the new development – so the poor person who’s 100.5 doesn’t get their money. Whenever you draw a boundary line you’re going to always get an issue. So that’s not looking at the bigger picture.”(SW)*

*“I think it could cause really bad feeling, if one gets it and another doesn’t. It would stop some people fully exploring their options. It almost breaks up a community by giving cash to people” (LC)*

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<sup>3</sup> Bribery terminology includes derivatives of: “bribe”, “corruption”, “being bought off” or “backhanders” in a negative context. It does not include respondents who indicated that they were against financial payment in principle, but did not stipulate what the principle was.

79. A number of households felt that direct payments to households would divert resource from investment in local infrastructure and public services

*“Where would that money come from? It’s a difficult one. Funds are low for everyone. Is it affecting a fund that was meant for something else? They don’t just give money away with no repercussions, something has to give.” (LC)*

*“I disagree with that form of incentive. I see it as a form of bribery. I would much rather they put in three houses for the elderly or people with learning difficulties as there is a social benefit of it. It just doesn’t seem logical to me.” (SW)*

## 5. Key professional interviews

80. As outlined in Section 2, the 22 “key professionals” interviewed for the study were a mix of senior planning officers, key elected members and other stakeholders with a perspective on opposition to new housebuilding (such as representatives of amenity/opposition groups, local developers and other additional elected members). Interviewees included a housing developer and a consultant mainly working for housebuilders. They provide a range of views; however, these cannot be considered representative of all professionals and are therefore not generalisable.
81. These key professionals were asked a range of questions in relation to: the form and impact of opposition to new housebuilding in their locality; the main reasons why residents oppose new housing development; the response of elected members to opposition; the extent to which financial payments are likely to reduce opposition to new homes in the local authority area or speed up decision-making; other options available that might be more effective in reducing opposition; and the possible wider impacts of the policy approach.

### Levels of support for financial payments

82. Overall there was no significant support for direct financial payments from any of the twenty two key professionals interviewed. All were opposed to the principle and/or highlighted practical difficulties with the policy. At best, it was felt that such payments could have a marginal impact in some cases (perhaps easing the progress of some proposals a little) but this would be outweighed by the other, negative, effects of the policy.
83. There was significant concern amongst all interviewees, including the housing developers and consultants, that financial payments would diminish trust in the local planning process and this could make it more difficult to secure planning permission. These concerns about trust were most marked in areas where local authorities had worked hard to make the case for new housebuilding.
84. Local government officers and members all felt that financial payments could be divisive because the impact of development often extends beyond the catchment area and outside of the geographical area intended for such payments. In SW it was felt that financial payments would “*inflame and antagonise*” (local authority officer, SW) and “*send ripples through communities*” (developer, SW). All of the key professionals felt that it would be difficult to determine or justify the catchment area of payment.
85. There were also concerns amongst local government representatives that financial payments could undermine community cohesion and foster conflict around new housebuilding:

*“it puts people in an invidious position with their neighbours and will divide communities, creating more conflict rather than less” (elected member, E).*

*“[DB payments] ... would be hugely divisive and would create issues of disenchantment within the community.” (Neighbourhood Planning forum, N)*

86. Financial payments were perceived as impacting negatively on development viability and provision for infrastructure, as funding *“will have to come off someone’s budget”* (local authority officer, E). There was a preference within local authorities for spending extra resource on infrastructure and services as this was often the major concern with new housebuilding:

*“If money is available, it would be better spent on people’s real concerns - infrastructure and education” (NP forum, SE).*

87. In certain authorities (particularly LC, E, SE and IL) key professionals also expressed concern that financial payments might serve to undermine local political commitment to planning proactively for new housebuilding. In this respect there was concern that the proposal showed little appreciation of work that had gone into generating local acceptance of the need to plan positively for a five-year supply of housing land.

88. As in the householder interviews, there was concern that financial payments could be seen *“as a form of bribery”* (Parish Council representative, E):

*“I would be appalled if people – residents and/or elected members -- were not allowed to give their views freely and unquestionably in relation to the democratic process. Where there are legitimate planning concerns they should stand on their own merits, and not be swayed by financial concerns.” (elected member, E).*

89. In LC a local authority member cautioned against giving the impression of *‘buying and selling of planning permission’*. Conversely the housing developer was concerned that financial payment might be construed as compensation, potentially reinforcing the negative perception of new housing development.

90. All of the key professionals felt that the financial incentives were unlikely to influence those most opposed to decisions and who were most active in their opposition.

*“for many communities here, the sort of payment likely to be offered by Development Benefits would be loose change, derisory.” (local authority officer, SW).*

*“... no one [here] would be influenced by 5K, especially if they knew they were going to get it anyway.” (NP forum, N)*

91. The developer also questioned whether the payment would be able to achieve its goal of reducing opposition if it does not *“lead to withdrawal of objection”* (housebuilder, SW).

## Were there any circumstances where financial payments might be considered beneficial?

92. Three of the key professionals (two developers and one local authority officer) felt that financial payments might be useful in a limited number of contexts, but not necessarily in the areas where opposition is most influential:

*“it’s a nice idea that might work in some HMAs but not high value areas.”*  
(housebuilder, SW)

*“I could imagine it being useful for some sites but not for any of ours.”* (local authority officer, IL)

93. When pressed those key professionals were unable to suggest particular sites where financial payments could make a difference.

## When is opposition a problem?

94. Local authorities were concerned about opposition always being portrayed as a problem. Local Planning Authorities all felt that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) made it less likely that local opposition would slow down or prevent development that was in conformity with national and local planning policy. In SW, developers and local planning officers both recognised that there had been a change in planning stance; applications that *“ordinarily would have been refused, are now being approved”* (local authority officer). Key professionals all felt that local opposition to new housebuilding was less likely to succeed following publication of the NPPF. It was felt that the NPPF has made it more difficult for local authorities to refuse applications that are in conformity with national or local planning policy.
95. Opposition can put considerable pressure on local elected members, particularly at election time. However in E and LC there was evidence that well organised opposition campaigns had not prevented land allocations being made in local plans or prevented planning permission being granted. Chairs of planning committees emphasized that their role was to remain impartial in weighing up decisions. This view was confirmed by residents who were active in campaign groups. There was a feeling that assumptions underlying a financial payments policy might overestimate the role and effectiveness of local opposition in relation to specific development proposals.
96. A number of interviewees advocated the benefits of legitimate opposition in helping to work through concerns about new housebuilding and support better proposals. In E opposition was seen as *“promoting good debate and principled argument about genuine issues”* (elected member), often resulting in positive improvements to developments. Planning officers in SW noted that *“opposition shouldn’t be dismissed. People’s experience of housing development is poor and this is what needs to be addressed”*.

## Financial payments and neighbourhood planning

97. If anything, financial payments were felt to be potentially more divisive in Neighbourhood Planning areas because of potential conflicts between payments to individuals and collective investment in infrastructure and services. Neighbourhood Planning was felt to rely on a collective understanding and agreement about how best to meet local housing needs. Financial payments were also felt to be insufficient to make a meaningful contribution to individual households if pooled and distributed across a wider area. Key professionals involved in Neighbourhood Planning saw a potential conflict between collective investment and individual payments.



## 5. Conclusions

98. This report has presented findings from research on the potential impact of financial payments on household attitudes and behavior and on planning for new housebuilding. The research has focused particularly on whether direct financial payment to individuals most likely to oppose house building is likely to reduce local opposition to residential development.

99. The research has produced attitudinal evidence about:

- Attitudes and behavior towards new housebuilding;
- Household knowledge of the planning system and what might reduce opposition;
- The potential response to financial payments amongst those who are likely to oppose development in a range of local and regional contexts;
- The extent to which direct payments to individuals might influence the scale and scope of opposition to new housing development;
- The motivations of those who oppose new housebuilding, including the relationship between financial payments and other interventions that might help to reduce levels of opposition;
- The potential impact of financial payments on attitudes and behaviours amongst a sample of key professionals involved in the delivery of local planning for housing; and
- The potential practical implications of the use of financial payments

100. As emphasised throughout this report, when assessing the data and findings from the study it is important to account for the theoretical nature of the research, the particular framing of questions, and potential bias in household responses. It is possible that some households involved in the study may be more critical of direct financial payments than the general population. As in any Stated Preference study, responses will have been influenced by the wording of questions and the contextual information provided. It should be noted therefore that a real scenario that involved actual payment would not necessarily generate the same response.

101. With those caveats in mind, the key findings from the interviews are:

### **In relation to household interviews (n=109):**

- A limited proportion of those interviewed (10%) said that a direct financial payment would or might reduce their opposition to housing development; 6% said it would, 4% said maybe. The large majority (84%) felt that the payment would not influence their

views on housing development or their likelihood to engage in some form of direct or indirect opposition to it.

- There was strong principled resistance to the idea of a financial payment amongst many households. Financial payments were associated with 'bribes' by 46% of respondents. There were also concerns by households that such payments could lead to a reduced developer contribution, especially as pressure on infrastructure and services was often the main reason for opposition to housing development.
- The majority of those who said that a payment would or might reduce their opposition indicated that the payment would need to be greater than £5,000. Those who would accept a payment of less than £5,000 tended to be on lower incomes and at the weakest end of the opposition spectrum.
- Views on opposition to new housebuilding were mainly about the scale of development and its impact on local infrastructure and services. Over one third of respondents said they would be less opposed to new development if they could have more of a say over development, or if there was extra resource for infrastructure and services (especially schools and health care). There was evidence that those who oppose tend to oppose the scale and nature of development rather than new development per se.
- There were mixed views on the perceived ability of residents to influence development. 74% of those interviewed felt that individual residents had a limited ability to influence development.
- Households generally found it easy to grasp the principles of the use of direct financial payments aimed at reducing opposition to new homes.

### **In relation to key professional interviews (n=22):**

- There was no significant support for direct financial payments from any of the key professionals interviewed. At best, it was felt that such payments would have a marginal impact in specific circumstances (perhaps easing the progress of some proposals a little in some special cases).
- It was felt that potential benefits of financial payments would be outweighed by the other, negative, effects. The main concern was that payments might undermine trust in local planning processes. There was a feeling that payments could be divisive and weaken community cohesion. There were particular concerns that payments could undermine work undertaken by Local Planning Authorities to build consensus and certainty around planning for new housebuilding.
- Key professionals emphasized that opposition was an important part of the planning system and that it can be handled effectively through existing frameworks. They also felt that the NPPF has made it less easy for new housing to be prevented or slowed down by opposition to planning within the local authority or amongst local residents.
- Overall, households' views were very consistent with those of the key professionals. The main differences are that households were much more critical of financial

payments from an ethical perspective and less likely to identify unintended, wider consequences.

### **Areas for further consideration and research**

The initial research was a theoretical exercise and households may well respond differently when presented with real financial payments. However the research does raise a number of new research questions which could be posed to explore the potential impact of direct benefits in more depth in view of possible 'deadweight' losses of implementing and implications for additionality.

- To what extent would eliminating opposition to house building allow additional schemes to be submitted to the planning system up stream of the points at which active opposition occurs?
- Under what circumstances might development benefits in the form of financial payments be effective in securing support for house building, and for whom? Recognising that the majority of our sample of opposers felt financial payments would not influence their behaviour at less than £5,000 and viewed payments as bribes.
- Are there other forms of development benefits other than financial payments that could change views on opposition (or neutral views)? For example, infrastructure, facilities or non-financial incentives (e.g. insulation, solar panels).
- Is there a difference in opinion and opposition to development benefits based on who makes the payment and how the money is used, e.g. to reduce council tax?
- Is there a role in nurturing the ability to engage in the planning system for those who currently support additional house building, but have no mechanism of engaging with the planning system, not simply changing the attitudes and behaviours of individuals who oppose house building to gain from additional units being submitted?

# Annex A: Evidence review

There is very limited practical experience or theoretical evidence about the impact of direct financial payments on opposition to development (housing or otherwise) in the UK or internationally.

The evidence review therefore considered five main sources of potential evidence with respect to the application of DB policy to reduce opposition in planning for housing:

1. **Hypothetical and theoretical studies** of the impact of payments on the willingness to accept unpopular development;
2. Literature on **willingness to pay/willingness to accept** direct payments; and
3. Evidence from the use of **community benefits** policy in the UK.
4. Evidence about **reasons for opposing new housebuilding** in the UK and internationally and the extent to which this might be influenced by direct financial payment.
5. Evidence from the **British Social Attitudes Survey**

## Hypothetical and theoretical studies

There is little or no evidence of directly relevant policy initiatives in the UK or elsewhere in the world. However the issue of using financial payment to help reduce development opposition has been considered in a limited range of hypothetical and theoretical studies, notably:

- Shelter's submission to the Wolfson Prize 2014 assesses the potential impact of direct payments on support for a Garden City. Evidence is derived from four Focus Groups (the submission does not specify the number of people involved, or the precise break down of participants, but they were divided into four groups: those aged 20-30 in private rental accommodation; owner-occupiers aged 31-60 with at least one child over 16; residents of social housing aged 31-60 with at least one child over 16; and, those aged 60+ who are owner occupiers) and a Citizens' Jury (the submission does not indicate the number of participants, but suggests that are a representative cross-section of Medway). The study found that a direct payment of below £5,000 was not viewed as significant enough to change people's minds about development; and that direct payments may increase opposition as people feel they are being bought off or the money represents a bribe.
- Frey and Oberholzer-Gee (1997) found that, when residents were offered a financial payment as compensation for an unpopular development (a nuclear dump), the financial incentive crowded out civic duty in the recipients' actions and led to a significant reduction (from 50% to 25%) in the proportion of people willing to accept that development. However, the payment on offer may not have been enough to outweigh the altruistic feeling gained through acting in the wider public's interest.

The theoretical and hypothetical studies may be of limited wider value because the effect described depends on the specific issue and the framing of the problem (e.g. Fehr and Hächter, 2002 in the case of voluntary services). Given the heterogeneity of housing markets, local political discourses and oppositional perspectives, care is needed in applying insights from the literature across markets and circumstances.

## Evidence from community benefits policy

Community benefits are now being used to help reduce opposition to energy facilities in the UK. The experience of *community* benefits in relation to UK energy infrastructure projects is not necessarily equivalent to the *individual* payments considered in this study, but there are potential lessons that can be drawn from their application. As Cowell et al (2011) point out, one rationale of community benefits 'is to foster social acceptance: the belief that community benefits make communities more accepting of major new energy developments'. However it is concluded that in practice 'there is limited evidence to suggest that providing community benefits changes opinions about development ... indeed, there is often more obvious anxiety that such gains should not subvert planning decisions' (see also Cass et al (2010) and Strachen and Jones (2011)). Cowell et al (2011) suggest that community benefits tend to be seen as a form of 'compensation' rather than 'benefit' and this might reduce their social acceptability. However that argument has not been systematically tested in practice.

### **Willingness to pay/willingness to accept and direct payments**

Studies of willingness to pay (WTP) to prevent development and willingness to accept (WTA) a financial payment to put up with unpopular development are the economic literature closest to the use of individual financial payments to reduce opposition to new housing development. Stated preference methods, such as WTA or WTP are used in cases where revealed preferences are unobservable or non-existent currently. Where revealed preferences cannot be observed, stated preference studies are recommended by government (HM Treasury, 2011). There are however, conceptual differences between WTA and WTP, notably in terms of the relation of the subject to the right and to the ability of the subject to make/receive a payment (Horowitz & McConnell, 2002; Hanemann, 1991). These differences lead to very different levels of estimated amounts that people are WTA and WTP in studies of the same issue. The less 'ordinary' is the good, the greater is the likely difference between WTA and WTP. For example, Horowitz & McConnell (2002, 428) find that in "the case of preserving land from development [...] the mean WTA/WTP ratio is approximately 7". However the study assumes that the undeveloped land is owned by the subjects rather than its benefits being merely enjoyed by them. Despite being more appropriate for the use of financial payments in relation to new house building there are no directly relevant WTA studies as WTA has tended to focus on non-housing issues (such as water reliability, e.g. Howe et al, 1994; MacDonald et al, 2010).

The difference outlined above – i.e. the difference between levels of estimated amounts that people are WTA and WTP in studies of the same issue -- hinders the direct use of the small number of WTP studies which focus explicitly on people's WTP to prevent new housing development. In addition, the identified studies are dated and relate to the USA. In the 1980s Beasley et al (1986) estimated that, on average, households would be willing

to pay \$144 pa. to prevent the residential and commercial development of agricultural land in close proximity to them (in Southern Alaska in 1983). Breffle et al (1998) considered households' WTP to preserve from development a 5.5 acre site on the edge of the built-up area of Boulder, Colorado in 1991. Households within 0.1 miles of the site were WTP \$1,197 in the form of a one-off payment. The overall average WTP of households within 1 mile of the site was \$294.

It is important to note that the policy under investigation is intended to reduce opposition to new house building by allowing households a direct share in the benefits of development. This is distinct from payments intended to compensate households for the loss of property or amenity value arising from new development.

### **Pricing amenity value**

Whilst there is evidence that opposition is rarely a question simply of financial value or of a decline in amenity value, mainstream economists argue that amenity value can be priced. Those prices might provide the basis for a financial payment to offset perceived or actual loss of amenity through new development. There is a large number of hedonic studies which focus variously on amenities related to: the house (e.g. garden); neighbourhood (e.g. parks, trees, local shops, leisure facilities); and location (e.g. access to jobs). However, there are two significant limitations to these attempts to value amenity accurately. First, hedonic pricing models may be systematically inaccurate because they under-price some amenities that have psychic value as well as use/exchange value, and they rely on precise model specifications (for example knowing the full range of significant location and type variables). Second, some aspects of amenity simply cannot be priced either at all or with any accuracy (e.g. sense of local identity), so policies informed by these artificially low (or no) prices may give rise to unintended consequences. There is no evidence on whether a financial payment based on hypothecated loss of amenity value would reduce opposition to development.

## **Understanding opposition to new housebuilding**

There are numerous studies on opposition to new housing and other forms of development in the UK and elsewhere (e.g. Dear, 1992; Fischel, 2001; Schively, 2007; Sturzaker, 2011 and 2011; Inch, 2012). However, there is a deficit of systematic evidence on the reasons for opposition, the overall scale of opposition, its geographical patterning and its net impact on decision-making.

Community opposition has often been understood as a collective action problem. It is widely viewed as a rational response for property owners whose property values and quality of life are negatively and directly affected by new housing to object to proposals, despite the wider collective benefits such development might bring (Leunig, 2007; Rydin & Pennington, 2000). However, studies of third-party appeals against development in the Republic of Ireland (Ellis, 2004) and Australia (Cook et al, 2012) suggest that a variety of factors may motivate objection. These range from a desire to exclude particular social groups from a neighbourhood, through cynicism and the pursuit of due process, to environmentally inspired altruism. Opposition often reflects the combination of a range of factors and there is often not a clear delineation between different concerns.

Literature on 'NIMBYism' has demonstrated the importance of issues such as identity, principles and amenity value (Burningham, 2000; Bell et al, 2005; Burningham et al, 2006; Schively, 2007). Additional factors include trust in government, and the degree of resident input and engagement (Wolsink, 2000). Research has shown how opposition is influenced by type of development in a neighbourhood (Davison et al, 2013), emotional attachment to place, which may form individual and community identity (Devine-Wright, 2011) and the visibility (rather than proximity) of the site (Jones & Eiser, 2010). Bell et al (2005) emphasise the importance of principles in opposition and suggest that 'before policy makers choose to adopt a financial incentive strategy they need to be sure that they are dealing with [...] people whose principles are for sale'.

### **Middle class 'sharp elbows'**

Evidence suggests that middle class affluent individuals and groups are more likely to oppose new housebuilding and much more likely to act on their concerns. Affluent individuals are likely to be in a position where the impact of loss of amenity and/or property value is felt to be of greater concern (Sturzaker, 2010).

There is evidence that middle class, affluent individuals and groups are often advantaged in their ability to influence local public services to their advantage, and this has traditionally included local planning process. As Hastings and Matthews (2011, 2) point out, middle class advantage 'can be gained as a result of the deliberate actions and strategies of affluent individuals and groups. However, it can also be an unintentional consequence of the actions and attitudes of service providers, as well as a product of broader policy and practice.' Middle class residents tend to have greater access to the knowledge, skills, resources and networks needed to influence decisions (e.g. education, skills, networks and resources) and this often corresponds with the value sets of those in power. Middle class residents are likely to be more motivated to oppose by virtue of their place dependence. Hastings and Matthews (2011) conclude that 'there is a clear need for middle class advantage to be afforded more prominence as a policy problem' in areas such as local planning policy.

However there has been limited systematic analysis of the dynamics of opposition movements and their impact. Sturzaker (2010) documents the power of rural elites to influence planning policy in England. While et al (2004) demonstrates how local planning authorities in Cambridgeshire were able to overcome the power of rural elites to prevent new housebuilding.

Further work is required to understand why opposition is more or less effective in different local contexts. There has been no detailed assessment of the impact of the NPPF on levels and impact of local opposition to new housebuilding.

Research by Matthews et al (2014) suggests that home owners are more likely to oppose development than private renters. However, this paper also suggests that whilst tenure divisions may conform to assumptions of economic rationality, opposition is also likely to be contingent upon intervening variables such as class, political support and age. They also find that the movement toward a localist planning agenda is likely to bring together actors with higher levels of social capital to oppose development as a group rather than individually. The term 'homo democraticus' is used to represent this oppositional group that may, as a result of the Big Society agenda, act in a less self-interestedly individualistic manner than they would otherwise.

Available literature and evidence may overestimate the scale and influence of local opposition to new house building in England because opposition makes for more interesting media articles and academic research. This systemic view can also be seen in the extensive use of the term NIMBY, including misapplication to opposition groups who are concerned with wider aspects of the development such as societal conflict and political distrust (Burningham et al, 2006; Ellis, 2004).

There is limited evidence of the role played by local councillors in opposition to new house building in the UK.

#### *Overcoming development resistance through plan-making*

Literature demonstrates how consensus building around plan-making and decision-making has helped to allay concerns about new development (Lake, 1993; Sturzaker, 2011). In some cases this involves negotiation around the scale and 'quality' of development. Conversely, weak engagement, feelings of disempowerment and poor communication can intensify opposition (Inch, 2012). While et al's (2004) research in Cambridgeshire demonstrates how proactive plan-making can help build support for new house building.

## Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey

British Social Attitudes (BSA) Surveys provide some evidence that public opposition to new housing development might be reducing, with more support for new housebuilding. The proportion of those who would support or strongly support new housebuilding in their local area increased from 28% (BSA 2010) to 47% (BSA 2013) (see Table 1). The level of opposition to more new housebuilding in the local area fell from 47% (2010 BSA) to 31% (2013 BSA). This continues a trend that can be traced back to 2005 (Bramley, undated).

Table 1. BSA survey responses: attitude to more new housebuilding in the local area

		Support strongly	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Oppose strongly	It depends	Don't know
2010	Responses	5%	23%	23%	31%	16%	2%	1%
	Grouped response	28%	23%	47%				
2013	Responses	10%	37%	20%	23%	7%	2%	0%
	Grouped response	47%	20%	31%				

Source: compiled from British Social Attitudes survey's 2010 & 2013

Bramley (undated) noted the wide regional and tenure based variation in opposition to new housebuilding in the 2005 CityForm and 2010 British Social Attitude survey. The 2013 Survey marks a decrease in the regional variation of opposition and support once Inner



London has been removed. Inner London respondents are more supportive of new housebuilding, with the proportion of support increasing from 50% (2010) to 73% (2013). The deviation in tenures remains between 2010 and 2013, but by 2013 there were more households supporting development in their area than opposing in all tenures.

However the BSA revealed low levels of support for a financial payment policy. In the 2010 British Social Attitude Survey, only 1.7% of households who did not support new housebuilding felt that a financial incentive to existing residents would make them support more homes in the area. In 2013 this figure was 1.8%.

There has been no detailed research on the extent to which the BSA responses are reflected in changing levels of opposition to and/or support for new housebuilding in actual planning applications or local plan preparation.

## Conclusions

The main findings from the evidence review are:

- The review confirmed that there is limited empirical or theoretical evidence that is directly relevant to financial payments aimed at reducing opposition to new development.
- Theoretical work that has been undertaken suggests that direct financial payments are unlikely to influence the attitudes or behaviour of those opposed to new housebuilding and may lead to concerns about due process in determining planning applications.
- Some of the concerns about new housing development that lead to opposition are unlikely to be assuaged by a financial payment.
- There is limited systematic analysis and detailed understanding of the reasons why people oppose new housebuilding and what might be done to reduce that opposition. Academic and policy literature tends to focus on cases of conflict and opposition rather than agreement and consensus building.
- Hypothetical studies of financial payment are strongly influenced by nuances in the language used and suggested levels of payment.

## Annex B: The household respondents

Table B1: Household respondents– age

Age bracket	Number
20-35	7
36-50	24
51-65	43
66+	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>

Table B2: Number of interviews by income group by case study area

	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
0-9k			2	1			3	4%
10-19k	3		2	5		1	11	14%
20-29k	4		1	3	3	4	15	19%
30-39k	3	3	2		7	2	17	22%
40-49k	6		1		1	5	13	16%
50-59k	1	3			2		6	8%
60-69k		1	1	1		1	4	5%
80-89k		2				1	3	4%
90-99k					1	1	2	3%
100k+			2	1	2		5	6%
Not revealed	6	6	6	5	3	4	30	
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

Table B3: Household respondents – housing type

Row Labels	E	N	IL	SE	LC	SW	Total	%
Detached	10	11		2	13	9	45	41%
Flat			14	1			15	14%
Semi	5	3		5	5	4	22	20%
Terrace	8	1	3	8	1	6	27	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>109</b>	

Table B4: Household respondents – tenure

Row Labels	Total	%
Housing association	3	3%
Local authority	11	10%
Owner occupier with mortgage	28	26%
Owner occupier with other equity share	1	1%
Owner occupier, owned outright	65	60%
Private rental sector	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	

# Annex C: Household interview topic guide

**A. Interviewee characteristics/background**

A1 Postcode: .....

A2 Household composition and age of residents:

- Single occupier M/F  
 Couple  
 Single adult + ..... children  
 Two adults + ..... children  
 Other .....

A3 Household income (per year)

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-9K    | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-59K |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10K-19K | <input type="checkbox"/> 60-69K |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20K-29K | <input type="checkbox"/> 70-79K |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39K  | <input type="checkbox"/> 80-89K |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49K  | <input type="checkbox"/> 90-99K |
|                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 100K+  |

A4 Tenure type:

- Owner occ.:  mortgage  
 owned outright  
  
 Rented:  private rent  
 housing association  
 local authority

A5 Length of time in house:

- 0-1 year  
 1-2 years  
 3-4 years  
 5 years + (specify) .....

A6 Housing type:

- Detached  
 Semi-detached  
 Terrace (incl. end terrace)  
 Flat  
 Other

A7 Do you like living in this area? What is particularly good about living here?

.....

A8. Are there things you do not like about living here or would improve? Are you settled here?

.....

**B. Attitudes and behaviour in relation to new housebuilding**

B1 Would you be opposed to new housebuilding (or a particular aspect of new housebuilding) in your local area? Why? What are your concerns?

.....  
.....  
.....

B2 Is your attitude to new housebuilding related to any specific sites/places where housing development has occurred, has been proposed, or might be proposed in the future?

.....  
.....

B3 Would you be likely to act on your concerns if there was a proposal for new housebuilding? What would you do?

Yes       No       Maybe       Don't know

.....  
.....  
.....

B4 Have you previously opposed new housing development? Why did you oppose that housing development or feel opposed? What did you do to oppose new housing development?

Yes       No

.....  
.....  
.....

B5 To what extent is your attitude to new housing development influenced by other people, such as neighbours, friends or family members or local campaign groups? Has that influenced your actions in relation to new housebuilding and if so how?

.....  
.....

**C. Understanding and experience of the planning system**

C1 What is your understanding of the role that you can play in influencing the planning of new housing in your local area? To what extent do you believe that local residents can get the council to refuse or change proposed developments that are submitted? Have you had any experience of that?

.....  
.....  
.....

C2 What is your understanding of the financial contribution that developers may make to minimise the local impact of the new houses that they build?

.....  
.....  
.....

**D. What might make you less opposed to new housebuilding?**

D1 Would you be less opposed to new housebuilding if you could have more of a say over the design and layout of development at the planning stage? Why? Please explain. How would you think or act differently?

- Yes       No       Maybe       Don't know

.....  
.....  
.....

D2 Would you be less opposed to new housebuilding if you could have more of a say over the design and layout of development at the planning stage? If more money was provided to help to fund local public services such as transport, education, health and/or environmental facilities? Why? Please explain. How would you think or act differently?

- Yes       No       Maybe       Don't know

.....  
.....  
.....

D3 Is there anything else that might make you feel less likely to oppose new housing development in your local area? And/or make you less likely to act on your opposition?

- Yes       No       Maybe       Don't know

.....  
.....  
.....

**E. Development benefits**

We would now like to explore whether your views might change if you were given a direct payment that would allow you to share some of the financial benefits of the new housing development.

- The idea is that households might consider housing development differently and be less likely to oppose it if some of the benefit could be passed directly to them.
- A payment would be made to you if your council agreed to the development going ahead and when construction started. *[if asked, we are working on the basis of a tax free payment when development commences that will not affect benefits or tax bands]*
- It would not affect any contributions that the developer makes for infrastructure, facilities and services.
- All households who lived close to the site (distance dependent on site) would be given the payment regardless of whether they opposed the development or not.

E1 If you were to receive a financial payment if new housing development went ahead, would you be less likely to oppose the development? Please explain.

- Yes       No       Maybe       Don't know

E2 What payment would be required for you **not** to take action in opposition to new development?

£ .....

If payment would not make a difference, why not?

.....

.....

.....

*[If payment would make a difference, even if the amount was less than £5000, use E3 to test whether a lower figure would make a difference]*

E3 Would financial payment of [below] be enough for you **not** to take action to oppose new development:

- £1000
- £2000
- £3000
- £4000
- £5000
- More than £5000 [for those who did not specify in E2], please specify £.....

Please explain your response. Why that amount?

.....

.....



E4 Would it make a difference if the payment was made through an alternative means such as council tax discount or other methods rather than as a single cash payment?

- Yes       No       Maybe       Don't know

.....  
.....  
.....

**F. In general**

F1 Are there any other issues you would like to raise about the idea of providing direct payments to households to share in the benefits of new housing development?

.....  
.....

F2 Are there any other issues/factors we haven't dealt with that might influence your attitude and behaviour towards new housing development?

.....  
.....

*[Thank you for your time]*

# Annex D: Profiles of willing to accept households

Table D1: Respondents who said that a financial payment **would** reduce their opposition to new housing

Area	Age	Tenure	Household Income	Opposition spectrum	Amount unprompted	Prompted on lower amount	Comments
IL	30s	Social flat	10-19K	Weak	£1000		Not strongly opposed
IL	60s	LA flat	10-19K	Medium	£1000		To cover the inconvenience.
SE	60s	OO flat	0-9K	Weak	£2000	No change	Not strongly opposed
E	20s	LA terrace	30-39K	Weak	£1000		"I'm not that opposed"
N	70s	OO detached	60-69K	Medium	£5000+	No change	Not strongly opposed
SW	30s	OO terrace	30-39K,	Strong	D/K	£5000+	Enough to pay for moving costs.
SW	20s	OO semi	30-39K	Strong	D/K	£5000	Development will go ahead anyway

Table D2: Respondents who said that a financial payment **might** reduce their opposition to new housing

Area	Age	Tenure	Household Income	Opposition spectrum	Amount unprompted	Prompted on amount	Comments
SW	40s	OO terrace	30-39K	Medium	Don't know	£5,000	"compensate for all the inconvenience. It's an inviting sum of money."
SW	30s	OO detached	40-49K	Medium	£10,000	No change	Make a difference to mortgage
LC	50s	OO semi	20-29K	Weak	Don't know	Over £1000	Only if it was over and above the developer contribution.
N	50s	OO semi	50-59K	Strong	Don't know	£10,000	"but that's coming at it in the wrong way ... to pay people is completely undemocratic"

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