REGENERATION AND RETROFIT TASK GROUP
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Background

The current debates about community regeneration among central Government and local authorities tend to focus on programmes of demolition and new build. But the retrofit and renovation of existing homes should also be a fundamental part of urban regeneration plans.

Regeneration projects aim to breathe new life into local areas, primarily by providing an economic stimulus, but properly incorporating retrofit and energy efficiency into regeneration plans can also help to multiply the positive outcomes. Improving existing homes and communities can minimise the negative environmental and social impacts of regeneration projects, as well as enhancing the value of existing assets. The multiple benefits of energy efficiency retrofit for reducing household bills, improving health and wellbeing, and encouraging local employment can also help to ensure that the benefits of regeneration projects are fully felt by local residents and communities.

Low income communities are usually those in most need of regeneration, often having poor quality housing, high levels of ill health and fuel poverty, and low levels of employment. Retrofit-based regeneration projects could not only help to bring economic and social benefits to the local community, but could also form the cornerstone of city-wide approaches to retrofit. These area regeneration projects can provide a baseload of work to develop the local supply chain and allow the piloting of delivery mechanisms which could then be used to engage with and deliver to able-to-pay households living in more affluent areas in the city.

Birmingham City Summit

In February this year, UK-GBC partnered with Birmingham City Council to host our second City Summit. This saw us take a process of ‘breakthrough innovation’ to the city, working with members and local stakeholders to tackle some of the city’s key built environment challenges and co-create solutions. Attendees split into workshops to discuss the challenges of encouraging sustainable new developments, rolling out energy efficient retrofit in the existing building stock, and integrating green infrastructure into the cityscape.

During the two-day Summit, the delegates developed a range of promising ideas which we summarised in our ‘Breakthrough Birmingham’ report published in April\(^1\). The intention behind the Summit was to try and have an impact on the ground in Birmingham, so this task group will take forward some of the discussions and ideas from the workshops on home energy efficiency.

Healthy Homes task group

As part of the World Green Building Council’s Better Places for People campaign, UK-GBC recently convened a task group to examine the link between health and housing. It set out to review the evidence on the links between health and wellbeing and the design of properties, and to explore the metrics for measuring health and wellbeing in homes. The task group report consolidated guidance and information on green building features that enhance health and wellbeing, and provided evidence of the growing link between wellbeing and property value.

\(^1\) [http://www.ukgbc.org/resources/publication/breakthrough-birmingham-city-summit-2016-outputs](http://www.ukgbc.org/resources/publication/breakthrough-birmingham-city-summit-2016-outputs)
The task group report primarily focused on new build homes, but also referenced the issues that are faced in retrofitting properties. The regeneration and retrofit task group will build on this work, demonstrating how retrofitted property can offer significant health and wellbeing benefits to residents. Work on an existing dwelling is an opportunity to improve its internal environmental conditions, enhance security, reduce running costs and improve the internal layout and the external appearance; all of which can contribute to the health and wellbeing of the residents - as well as improving energy efficiency. These additional benefits will be vital in making the case for investment in area retrofit and in understanding how regeneration projects can be designed to achieve positive outcomes for the health and wellbeing of residents.

**Aim**

The Regeneration Task Group will highlight the link between area regeneration and whole house retrofit, and make the case for high quality, energy efficient buildings to become a cornerstone of regeneration projects. Building on the ideas developed at the Birmingham City Summit, it will develop tools and processes which will help city authorities to design, fund and deliver regeneration projects, and help to facilitate pilot projects.

The intention is to try and bring some coherence to the wide-ranging activity in this area as well as introducing innovative new ideas into current debates. The project will also seek to drive ‘on the ground’ delivery by facilitating partnerships between industry and local authorities, and identifying opportunities to roll out some of the tools and processes developed. The primary focus will be on the retrofit of existing homes, but area regeneration will also need to take account of complementary issues on new build, non-domestic retrofit, energy networks, green infrastructure and developing community spaces.

**Project structure**

The main Task Group programme will run from September 2016 to March 2017, undertaking four main activities as outlined below. These pieces of research and innovation development will be summarised in a task group report to be published in spring 2017.

Following publication of the report, we are planning follow-up work aimed at encouraging on-the-ground delivery. The intention is to host a series of workshops and site visits with local authorities and industry representatives who could integrate the task group findings into demonstrator projects.

**Task Group activities**

1. **The business case for retrofit as a way to regenerate communities**

   Investment in area regeneration is often focused on plans for demolition and new development, but by collating the existing evidence about the regenerative impact of whole house retrofits the task group will aim to demonstrate the economic, social and environmental case for investing in the existing housing stock. This will bring together a broad range of evidence around the benefits of street-by-street retrofit, the impacts of homes on fuel poverty and poor health, stimulating local businesses and employment, and opportunities for community renewal.

   The work will draw on existing research and case studies where available, but may also act as a gap analysis identifying where further research and evidence is still required. This body of evidence should provide a compelling strategic case for investment by cities and businesses in area-based retrofit.

2. **Case studies of project delivery**
Various innovative approaches and techniques for area-based retrofit have been trialled in recent years, but the breadth of activity means that coherent communication of outcomes can be difficult. This often leads to poor awareness of what has been tried and whether it has worked, and often results in duplication of effort. Without understanding where work has been undertaken elsewhere, it can be difficult for project planners to know what approaches are most likely to be successful.

The task group will bring together case studies of successful processes and tools which cities can use to design, fund and deliver high-quality regeneration projects. This will include areas of good practice such as from the GLA’s Re:New framework, the Scottish Government’s HEEPS programme, and the Investor Confidence Project. Together these case studies will provide a practical guide to help cities design and deliver regeneration programmes, and overcome some of the most common barriers to delivery.

3. **Develop new tools to deliver regeneration projects**

Delegates in the homes energy efficiency workstream at the City Summit were taken on a site visit to a 1970s council estate which, in spite of piecemeal repairs, was badly in need of major investment. Subsequent workshops identified that retrofit projects such as these often face significant barriers around engaging local residents and financing the improvement works, particularly when the area includes a range of different tenures and household circumstances. To address these issues, delegates developed two closely related ‘breakthrough ideas’ which could help to enable home retrofit in this and other deprived communities:

- A Community Interest Company which can help to engage local residents and provide local apprenticeships and employment in construction and retrofit.
- A Local Authority revolving fund which can offer a variety of loans and support to residents which are appropriate to their individual circumstances.

The Task Group will further develop these ideas so that they could form the cornerstones of future retrofit projects. This will include further work on how the ideas could be designed and implemented, and outlining where similar approaches have been successful. Alongside the catalogue of case studies, these ideas will form a range of tools and processes which can help cities to develop effective regeneration programmes.

4. **Principles for a model regeneration project**

Building on the business case and case studies, the group will aim to develop a coherent vision for using retrofit as a catalyst for regeneration. This will set out the principles which should be considered in planning and delivering area regeneration programmes to ensure they deliver the multiple benefits of lower carbon emissions, reduced energy bills, improved health and wellbeing, new employment opportunities, and stronger local communities.

The vision should provide with a better understanding of the potential opportunities from projects. It could help project planners to understand where additional objectives and benefits could be integrated into programmes.

This vision should outline the different elements and considerations for a high quality regeneration project. For example:

- Stimulating the local supply chain
- Creating employment opportunities
- Ongoing community engagement
- An offer for every home
- Net zero energy retrofits
- High quality new build on in-fill sites
- Green infrastructure and community space improvements
- Heat networks accessible to the local area
- Ongoing performance monitoring
- Encouraging resilient communities
Project follow-up

Workshops and site visits

Following report launch and the end of the core task group, we will then aim encourage the development of real projects and programmes. With a strong case for action and a broad set of case studies to guide delivery, we hope to facilitate partnerships between local authorities and the industry and realise the vision of using high quality retrofit to drive area regeneration. Members of the task group are not required to be involved in these events but will be strongly encouraged to actively participate in order to help communicate the findings.

Workshops will be used to engage Local Authority contacts and explore how the principle developed by the task group could be applied to different sites and contexts. Site visits will also allow stakeholders to see innovative pioneering projects and help to identify potential sites to develop the area regeneration approach. The intention would be to try and help cities to move beyond individual pilot projects towards ambitious area-based approaches which could form the basis of city-wide retrofit programmes.

How to get involved

Work commitment

Participants will be expected undertake activities including attending fortnightly task group meetings, attending some additional sub-group meetings, conducting desk-based research, engagement with relevant stakeholders, and contributing to drafting the final report.

The first meeting will take place on Wednesday 14 September at 2-4pm, and continue on a fortnightly basis every Wednesday at the same time. An average time commitment of 3-4 hours per fortnight is expected (including meeting time), with the group due to run up to March 2017.

Applications

Applications to join the Task Group will be open until Friday 12 August. To apply, please complete the attached application form and return to Richard.Twinn@ukgbc.org. UK-GBC will confirm your participation during the week commencing 15 August.

The core Task Group will be limited to between 12 and 15 participants. We expect the group to be at least 3 or 4 times oversubscribed, so please do not be too disappointed if we cannot accommodate you. We will prioritise applicants with the specific expertise we require, who are able to make the time commitments throughout the project.

We are specifically looking for expertise in the following:

- Innovative funding arrangements for retrofit and regeneration
- Estate regeneration
- Community and householder engagement
- Area-based retrofit delivery
- Developing the supply chain and local apprenticeships

Representatives are likely to come from the following sectors:

- Energy sector
- Contractors
- Developers/investors
- Architects
- Engineers/consultants
Sponsorship

We are actively looking for sponsorship for this task group. Please indicate if you are interested and we will send you more information.

Local authorities

Local authorities will be vital stakeholders for the task group but we understand that officials may not be able to make the time commitment to participate fully in the task group. We are therefore planning to set up a virtual advisory group of local authorities to help feed into the work.

The advisory group will be expected to input into research and provide feedback on proposals and drafts from the task group. A face-to-face introductory meeting for the advisory group will be held on Friday 16 September to introduce participants to the work of the task group. Please contact Richard.Twinn@ukgbc.org if you are interested in being involved in the advisory group.