

# THE SOCIAL ISSUES FACING COASTAL COMMUNITIES AND PLANNING RESPONSES



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Jade in her rented home. Stephen Shepherd/the Observer



# Trapped in Britain's new slums

## How austerity drove the poorest into crumbling homes

Years of cuts and benefit changes have slashed social housing and forced the vulnerable to rent squalid flats with mould, damp and rats. Can this cycle be broken?

*Tom Wall* reports from Weston-super-Mare

**T**he stark human cost of Britain's decade-long austerity drive, welfare reforms and warped housing priorities can be glimpsed in 11 decaying flats carved from what was once a grand Victorian terrace home in Weston-super-Mare.

These bay-fronted houses were most likely thrown up in the Somerset resort's 19th-century building boom, which carpeted the reclaimed marshland behind the windswept seafront with terraces, hotels and guesthouses. Now they

are home to vulnerable private renters trapped in a desperate cycle of falling benefits, squalid housing and poor health.

One of the ground-floor flats is rented by 40-year-old Jade Smith\*, who is unable to work due to anxiety and depression.

The ceilings and walls are covered with blooms of black mould spores caused by years of damp and leaks. The boiler is faulty and cuts out unless she drains it and resets the pressure three times a week. The floor in her kitchen is collapsing – her landlord put an MDF sheet

below her fridge to stop it from falling through the rotten boards.

"My mental health is going downhill rapidly due to this," she says gesturing at the black-green spores and peeling wallpaper.

Her 16-year-old son moved out at the weekend because he couldn't stand living there any longer. "He's got his exams," she says. "He can't have this worry on his head."

Smith says she has repeatedly complained to the landlord and the council but nothing has been done

*Continued overleaf*

And in 2019 ...



Tenants are trapped in squalid housing in this Weston-super-Mare block. One of them, Jade\*, is seen amid black mould and peeling wallpaper. Photographs by Stephen Shepherd/the Observer







# Content

- Residents' experience of living in coastal communities
- Social conditions related to housing and role of regeneration/planning
- Effective community engagement
- Future: wider coastal regeneration paradigm to focus on needs of residents?



HOUSE OF LORDS

Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside  
Towns and Communities

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Report of Session 2017–19

# The future of seaside towns

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Published by the Authority of the House of Lords

**Evidence taken  
17 May, 2018 to  
31 March, 2019**

# ① CONTEXT OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES

**Basis of social issues are economic:**

- **Inherent disadvantages:** peripherality, 180° hinterland, one industry towns, environmental constraints
- **Restructuring:** ports, resorts, post-defence
- **New opportunities:** reskilling of workforce
- **In-migration:** tourism and benefit-migration
- **+ Impact of climate change**

# ISSUES FOR RESIDENTS IN COASTAL TOWNS

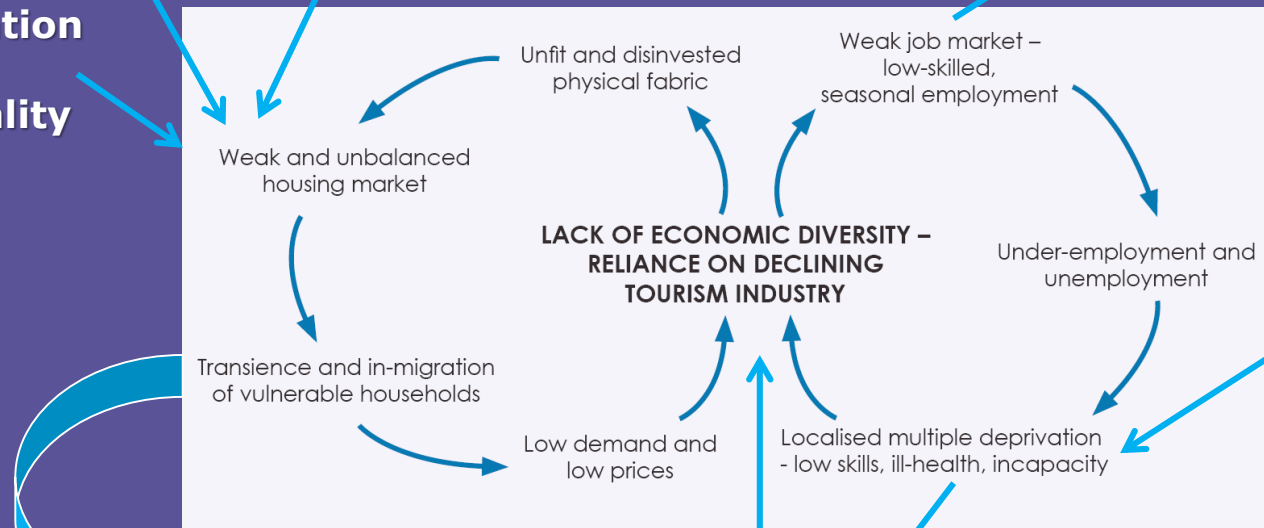
**In-migration of working age outstripping local employment growth**

**Benefits driven migrants able to find suitable accommodation**

**Outmigration of youth for education and opportunities**

**Retirement in-migration seeking high quality of life**

**Lower educational attainment and enterprise in remaining pop**



**Choatic lifestyles**

**Image**

**Housing**

**Employment**

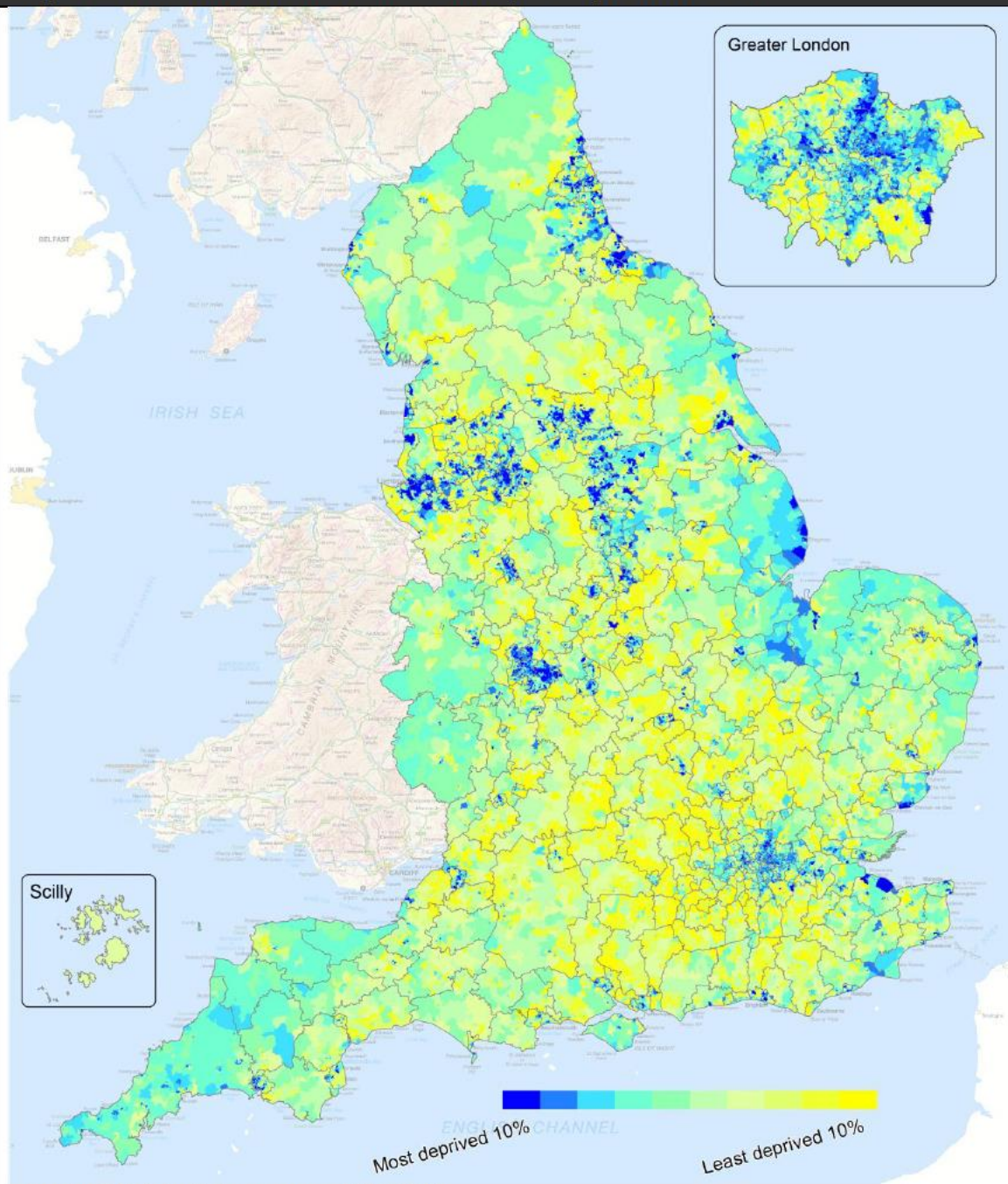
**Education & skills**

**Health**

**Source: Shared Intelligence (c.2008)**



Map 1: Distribution of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015



# Index of Deprivation 2015

## Top 20 most deprived places

- 1 Tendring - around St Osyth and Seawick
  - 2 Blackpool - By Central Pier
  - 3 Blackpool - Around the promenade near North Pier
  - 4 Thanet - Cliftonville West
  - 5 Blackpool - Near the South Pier
  - 6 Tendring - Clacton-on-Sea
  - 7 Blackpool - Between Waterloo Road and St Chad's Station
  - ~~8 Coventry - Around Titmorton Road in Henny~~
  - 9 Blackpool - Woolman Road and Clinton Avenue
  - 10 Waveney - near South Pier in Lowestoft
- 
- 11 Blackpool - around Cookson Street
  - 12 Kingston upon Hull - Around St John's Grove
  - 13 North East Lincolnshire - Around Oxford Street in Grimsby
  - ~~14 Blackpool - Around St. Mary's Church, Hill Street~~
  - ~~15 Burnley - Between Belvedere Road and Church Street~~
  - ~~16 Macclesfield - Around St. John's Church~~
  - 17 Blackpool - Around Manchester Square and Rigby Road
  - 18 Blackpool - Around Clevedon Road and Carshalton Road
  - ~~19 Blackburn with Darwen - Wensley Fold~~
  - 20 Great Yarmouth - Along the seafront

Contains OS data © Crown copyright (2015)

# **Six dimensions of social exclusion (Percy-Smith, 2009, p.9)**

- **Economic (for example, long-term unemployment, workless households, income poverty)**
- **Social (for example, homelessness, crime, disaffected youth)**
- **Political (for example, disempowerment, lack of political rights, alienation from/lack of confidence in political processes)**
- **Neighbourhood (for example, decaying housing stock, environmental degradation)**
- **Individual (for example, mental and physical ill-health, educational under-achievement)**
- **Spatial (for example, concentration/marginalisation of vulnerable groups)**





## Disadvantage in English seaside resorts: A typology of deprived neighbourhoods



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### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
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Deprivation  
Seaside resorts  
Neighbourhoods  
Typology  
UK

### ABSTRACT

Socio-economic disadvantage experienced by residents of English seaside resorts has been growing over the last decade, and academic and practice-based research is providing better insights into the causes, internal dynamics and appropriate policy responses to these issues in coastal communities. This paper examines the nature and extent of disadvantage in English seaside resorts through analysis of a specially devised spatial and temporal database, which draws together various publicly available sources beyond the population census and Index of Multiple Deprivation. Using univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses of this database, a new typology of highly deprived resort neighbourhoods has been devised, with clear implications for the formulation of more targeted policy responses. The results also indicate the persistence, complexity and distinct spatial clustering of deprivation, which establishes a case for a much stronger geographical emphasis in future research and policy agendas, including third sector partnerships.

### 1. Introduction: poverty, multiple deprivation and coastal areas

English seaside resorts have experienced a significant period of restructuring in recent decades and many are suffering from a range of economic and social problems, which are more readily associated with inner-city areas than quaint holiday destinations (Agarwal & Brunt, 2005, 2006; Shared Intelligence, 2008; Walton & Browne, 2010) and locations associated with high levels of well-being (Page et al., 2017). Despite recognition of these problems, many policy debates continue to suggest that tourism could be a panacea to solve all the ills of regions and localities, typically as a major generator of employment (see British Hospitality Association, 2017; Johnson & Thomas, 1990; Penrose, 2011; Walton & Browne, 2010). Industry studies herald tourism as the fourth largest employer in the UK, with considerable potential to generate further employment growth in the future (Deloitte & Oxford Economics, 2013). Yet within the context of many coastal communities, long-term tourism development has been a poisoned chalice because the unskilled, low paid and seasonal nature of employment in the sector has fashioned a major societal issue of poverty and deprivation. In some cases, this social problem has damaged the image of resorts, with negative representations featuring in the media. For example, in Lupton's (2003) *Poverty Street*, one of the 12 most deprived areas in the UK was a

coastal resort in England. Meanwhile, popular media television programmes such as *Benefits by the Sea* aired in 2015 illustrate the impact of deprivation in coastal communities: namely, unemployed migrants in receipt of benefits (e.g. see Davies, 1994) housed in hostels converted from bed and breakfast and hotel establishments as a result of declining visitation.

Although much has been written within the academic and policy literature about the socio-economic problems associated with many coastal destinations, surprisingly, detailed understanding of the causes and the factors driving social disadvantage in these environments is scant. There has been limited debate on the effects of both seasonality (see Ball, 1989) and economic restructuring on deprivation in coastal localities with a significant visitor economy. Several studies in the 1980s and 1990s alluded to the apparent structural problems of employment and economic development in seaside resorts (e.g. English Tourist Board, 1991). Only the emergent critical debates in tourism geographies (e.g. Britton, 1991) have begun to challenge the policy rhetoric that tourism brings positive economic benefits to localities, building on the seminal studies of the 1970s (e.g. Bryden, 1973). It is therefore pertinent that this paper begins to expand the international debate on the costs and benefits of long-term tourism development in coastal communities and its impact on residents (Lindberg & Johnson,

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## Findings:

- Diversity of deprivation within resorts and neighbourhoods
- Dynamics of resort change: create socio-economic inequality and an internal social geography
- Persistence of deprivation
- Spatial clustering

## ② HOUSING DIMENSIONS

### Dual housing market:

- **Premium owner occupier housing:**
  - In-migration of retirement: ageing population
  - In-migration of working age population
  - Second homes
- **High proportion of privately rented accommodation:**
  - Historical legacy of hotels and guesthouses
  - In-migration of vulnerable households (homeless, children in care)

# **Delivery of affordable housing**

## **Problematic in coastal areas:**

- **Waterfronts are prime residential locations**
- **Favours urban renaissance design**
- **Abnormal development costs**  
(remediation, flood risk, marine environment)
- **Viability tests in a neoliberal regime**
- **Any provision: segregated**





## The delivery of mixed communities in the regeneration of urban waterfronts: An investigation of the comparative experience of Plymouth and Bristol

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Mixed communities  
Urban renaissance  
Waterfront regeneration  
Planning obligations

### ABSTRACT

The raison d'être of spatial planning is to secure public benefits or goods through the regulation of private development. Under neoliberalism, where economic growth is privileged over community interests, the ability of planning to deliver public goods can be compromised. The aim of this research was to investigate the delivery of mixed communities in the regeneration of waterfront sites in two outwardly comparable, but in detail, rather different port cities, namely Plymouth and Bristol. The range of dwelling types, extent of affordable housing and associated practicalities of delivery were evaluated using planning application data, 2000–2017 and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholder groups (local planning authority [LPA] officers, developers, land agents and politicians).

The results indicate that there is a standard 'model' of delivery for port regeneration with city centre harbour-side land yielding high density apartment developments and with houses becoming the prevalent house type in suburban waterfront locations. Planning policies for social mixing have not, in general, been successfully implemented in waterfront sites due to the greater priority afforded to development viability and the political pressure to unlock and accelerate economic growth. The exception to these findings was where public land had been used. For both cities, just two per cent of the dwellings delivered on privately procured sites were affordable housing units compared to over 25% on public land. This paper highlights the effect of neoliberalisation on the English planning system, which enables developers to acquire sites without regard to local development plan policies. Such policies allow developers and landowners to negate planning obligations to provide affordable housing to the detriment of public good and trust in the system.

### 1. Introduction

Since 2000, as part of the urban renaissance agenda, UK planning policy has sought to promote sustainable 'mixed communities', consisting of developments of market-priced and affordable housing as a model of a more integrated, egalitarian, balanced and connected society (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, 2010; Colomb, 2007)). These high density developments, often on brownfield land, have become common in many inner urban areas, although the delivered reality of mixed communities is often contested. This delivery is placed into sharp focus in waterfront locations, where the sales premiums attached to such sites, together with abnormal costs associated with the remediation of ground contamination and flood mitigation, can affect viability and reduce the scope for land value capture for 'public good' from planning conditions and obligations. The

increasing political prominence given to development viability and the delivery of economic growth after the 2008 recession has arguably reduced the ability of planning to secure wider public goods, such as affordable housing. This emphasis has far-reaching implications for urban land use and the associated equitable outcomes of planning decisions.

The aim of this research was to investigate the delivery of mixed communities in the regeneration of waterfront sites in two port cities, Plymouth and Bristol. While these two cities might appear outwardly comparable, their economies are very different, which affects the strength of the market and the ability to deliver public goods, such as affordable housing, from new development. The objectives of the study were: first, to establish the range of dwelling types delivered on waterfront regeneration sites using data compiled from relevant planning applications, 2000–2017; second, to understand the factors influencing

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# Main findings:

- Waterfront development tends to be exclusive
- Only exceptions: affordable housing provided on public land, through public subsidy or on larger sites with economies of scale

**Bristol and Plymouth:  
Private: 2% affordable  
Public land: 25%**

# **Private-rented: Houses in Multiple Occupation**

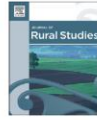
## **Growth:**

- **Expensive housing markets, poor access to mortgages and lack of social housing (demand)**
- **Availability of buy-to-rent mortgages (supply)**
- **Caused distortion in rental values in private rented sector and created a financial incentive for HMO production**
- **Coastal areas: seasonal workers and surplus of former tourist accommodation**
- **Benefit reforms in 2012 accentuated demand for HMOs in coastal communities**
  - **Eligibility for en-suite facilities: 25 to 35**
  - **Cap on costs: migration from expensive areas to cheaper (eg coast)**

## **DCLG (2007) Coastal Towns: the government's second response (HC69)**

***“Large numbers of HMOs can present difficulties for the regeneration of an area, as their poor physical condition can put off investors. Many people that live in HMOs often stay on a short-term basis, which can make it difficult to get resident support for local regeneration projects”.***





## Geographies of exclusion: Seaside towns and Houses in Multiple Occupancy



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### ARTICLE INFO

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Poverty  
Social exclusion  
Seaside towns  
Housing  
Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

### ABSTRACT

This paper has two intentions. The first is to focus on seaside towns as sites of social exclusion and to contribute to the development of a 'seaside scholarship', provoking scholars of poverty and exclusion to engage more critically with seaside locales beyond rural/urban binaries. As this paper demonstrates, many seaside towns face problems associated with both rural and urban areas and therefore a more place-based approach to geographical studies of poverty and exclusion is needed. The second intention of this paper is to explore further how problems associated with traditionally 'rural' areas such as remoteness, seasonal employment and a labour market which potentially reinforces gender divisions are often held in tension in seaside towns with traditionally more 'urban' concerns such as the quality of privately rented housing, or more specifically Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). This paper argues that HMOs are a fundamental factor for the particular nuance of exclusion in many seaside towns due to their potential to attract individuals in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB). By attracting HB claimants into seaside towns HMOs indirectly affect those individuals' opportunities to find and sustain long-term employment and access services in ways which mimic those evidenced in rural areas. To support these claims a case study from the town of Ilfracombe, north Devon is used, drawing from a large qualitative data set which includes interviews with local authority officers, community workers and HMO residents.

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### 1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, the 'traditional' British seaside holiday has waned in popularity and many seaside towns have been caught in a spiral of economic decline. The nature of this decline has been documented in various academic and policy works, most notably research conducted within tourism studies (Argawal, 2004; Walton, 2000; Beatty and Fothergill, 2004). However, despite this documentation seaside towns have become an under-researched entity in geographical studies of poverty and social exclusion, where historically research has focused on 'urban' and, more recently, 'rural' locations. This paper alternatively takes seaside towns as its focus and makes two key contributions. First, this paper contributes to the development of a 'seaside scholarship', provoking poverty and exclusion scholars to engage more critically with seaside locales beyond rural/urban binaries. Second, this paper investigates how problems associated with traditionally 'rural'

areas such as remoteness, seasonal employment and a labour market which potentially reinforces gender divisions are often held in tension with traditionally more 'urban' concerns, namely Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), to establish a unique inflection of social exclusion within seaside towns. More specifically, this paper examines the effects that living in a seaside HMO can have on an individual's experiences of social exclusion using individual case studies of HMO residents living in a seaside town in north Devon.

#### 1.1. Government policy and the seaside

Whilst seaside towns have historically been subject to relative neglect in policy circles, the last decade has seen something of an awakening to the problems facing such places; whilst the Labour government of 1997–2010 had no specific policy or national strategy for so-called 'seaside communities', the 2006 Select Committee report on Seaside Towns generated greater political awareness regarding this issue and in particular identified a series of key 'problems' facing seaside towns (House of Commons Report, 2007). Perhaps most notably the Select Committee report identified

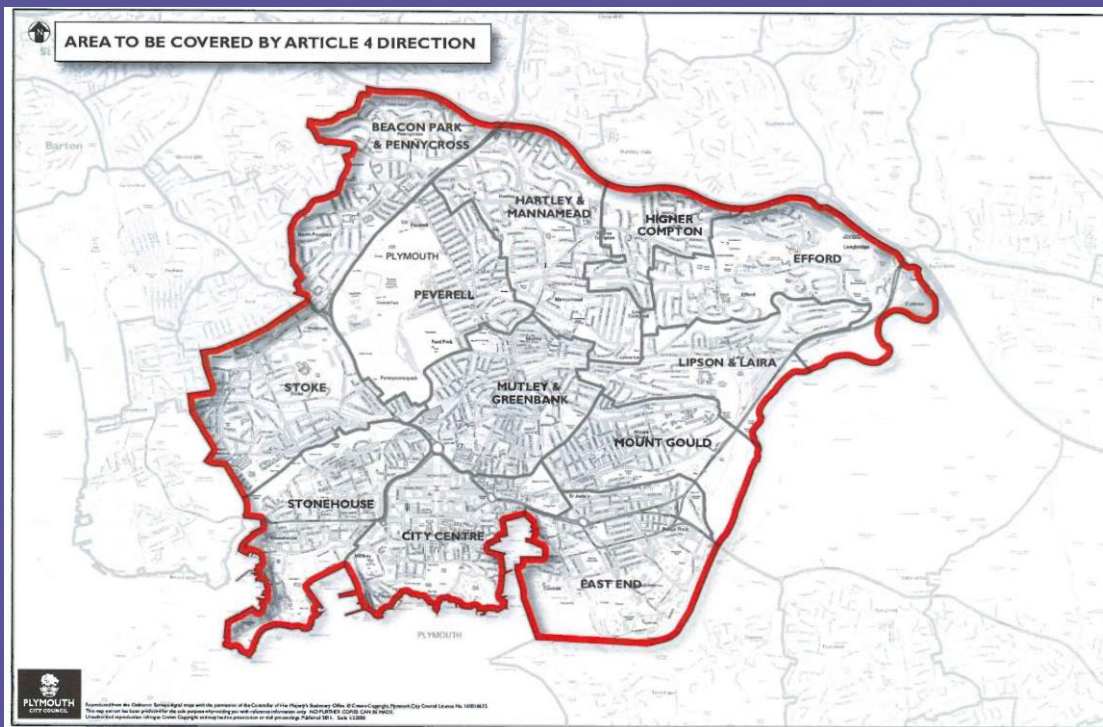
E-mail address: [kimward@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:kimward@cardiff.ac.uk).

# Main findings:

- Insight into the experience of social exclusion:
  - Cheap housing that accepts Benefits
  - Poor standards
  - Unsympathetic landlords
  - Access to employment
  - Isolation

# Interventions

- **Article 4 Directives**
  - Change permitted development rights for a designated area to prevent further HMOs



## Planning considerations:

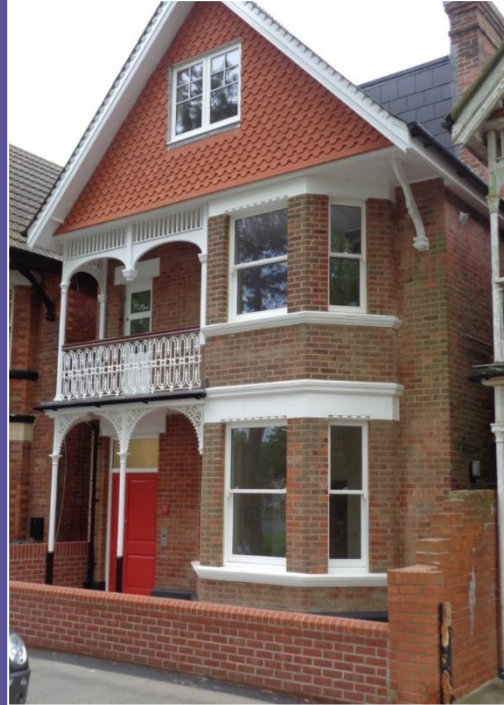
- Impact on residential character
- Impact to neighbours
- Standard of accommodation
- Transport and parking

Concentrations of HMOs higher than 25% would not create balanced communities, so changes of use above this threshold would be resisted

PCC Article 4 Direction from 14.9.12 to require planning permission for change of use from C3 to C4 HMO.



- **Regeneration schemes**



## **Boscombe Regeneration Partnership, 2012**

**Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset Police, Jobcentre Plus, Bmth Council for Voluntary Service and Dorset Probation Trust**

**Purchase HMOs and convert into self-contained flats (£2.7m)**

**30 Churchill Gardens, Boscombe**

**By 2011, 86 properties sub-divided into 345 units: 191 bedsits, 131 self-contained flats and 13 family homes**







# 30 Churchill Gardens, Boscombe

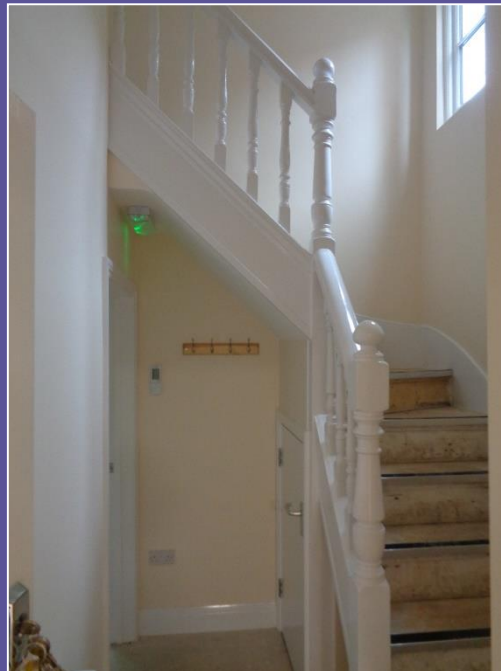
## Area Lettings Plan 2015

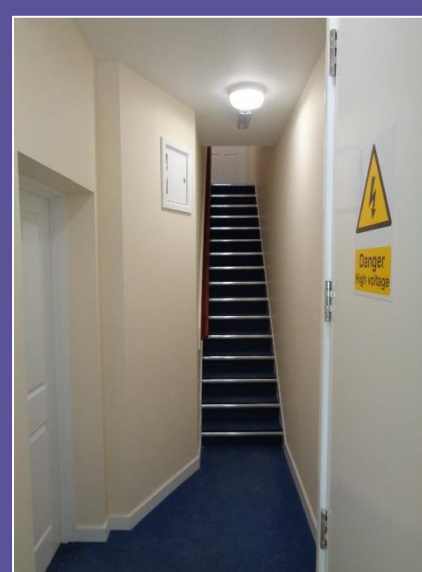
The exclusion criteria are as follows:

- Is known to have been involved in anti social behaviour within the last 24 months
- Has a current addiction problem
- Has been convicted for the offence of supplying drugs or has been served with a crack house closure notice or warning letter
- Individuals or a member of the household were former tenants of any ALP partner in the last 24 months and have former tenant's arrears or history of tenancy breaches at this tenancy
- Has been convicted of, or has been held responsible for, criminal damage or arson within the last 24 months
- Has been subject to a possession order for neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour within the last 24 months.
- Has caused neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour that would have resulted in possession proceedings within the last 24 months
- Has been violent towards staff employed by ALP partners within the last 24 months
- Has been convicted of any public order offence including aggravated offences and hate crime within the last 24 months

### Preference will be given to applicants who:

- Are currently in employment, training or any type of voluntary work (including voluntary work within the community) or are actively seeking employment or training
- Have a local connection to the area, either by having resided in the area for more than 24 months, or by having family connections
- Are overcrowded in their current accommodation







# ③ GOVERNMENT REGENERATION SUPPORT



**Local Enterprise Partnerships**

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund**



# **Effectiveness of existing support**

**(House of Lords, 2019)**

- **Favours larger communities/projects**
- **Emphasis on short-term quick returns**
- **Small scale/reduced funding: restricts strategic investments**
- **Over-subscribed and competitive**
- **More devolution to local agencies**
- **Better research and data at local scale**
- **Coastal proofing of policy across Whitehall departments**

# ④ ENGAGING DEPRIVED COASTAL COMMUNITIES

## • Challenges faced

'Usual suspects'  
Active engagement:

- Retired
- Affluent middle class
- Tourism interests

NIMBY: oppose change

Time, money, education and 'place attachment' to engage

Seldom heard

- Working population
- Lower skilled immigrants
- Deprived
- Transient groups

Might support new opportunities

Lack social capital to engage

# Jaywick, Essex coast

An aerial photograph of Jaywick, Essex, showing a residential area with many houses, a large sandy beach, and a coastal road. The sea is visible in the background.

## 'Reaching Jaywick' (2010-13):

- Support community activities in Jaywick
- Improve enjoyment of open spaces, including Jaywick beach
- Providing creative opportunities to gain skills and learning
- Developing a community led improvement plan

## Approach based on:

- Time (building relationships)
- Listening – talking – responding (developing trust)
- Creating a connected community (community ideas + shaping actions and capacity building)
- Action (making things happen - needs based)
- Reflection

1929 developed as resort for East London by Frank Stedman: 'Plotland' development



## **5 CONCLUSION**

- **Wider coastal regeneration paradigm to focus on needs of residents?**
- **Experiential dimensions of deprivation and social exclusion**
- **Limitations of planning in delivering 'public good' in a neoliberal regime**
- **Danger that regeneration accentuates social exclusion (gentrification)**
- **Utilisation of public sector land resource**
- **Challenges of effective community engagement**



13th Biennial of European Towns and Town Planners

## Planning on the edge

11th - 13th September 2019 | University of Plymouth | UK

The central theme of this conference is to investigate planning in places which are defined by their peripherality or location between two or more boundaries.

- Coastal urban regeneration
- Marine and coastal environments
- Boundaries, cities and territories
- Urban spaces on the edge

Confirmed speakers:

**Lord Kerslake:** Former Head of the British House Civil Service and former Chief Executive of local authorities, Houses and Communities Agency, Permanent Secretary of Department for Communities and Local Government.

**Ronald Waterman:** International specialist in coastal development and land reclamation.

**Professor Carola Hein** (Delft University of Technology): Architecture and urban planning in port cities.

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- Plymouth City Council
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- ECTP
- RTPi

Further information:

[www.plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/european-council-of-town-planners-biennial-conference-2019](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/european-council-of-town-planners-biennial-conference-2019)