

Negotiating the complexities of redevelopment through the everyday experiences of residents: the incremental renewal of Bonnyrigg, Sydney

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Abstract: The comprehensive renewal of public housing estates has been the focus of much policy and academic debate in recent years. As sites of intervention, they have captured the tensions at play between strategic intent and the experience of those most directly affected by its aims and goals. There has been a particular focus on the potential disjuncture between the politics and policy of renewal on the one hand, and the needs and expectations of the communities involved on the other. However, an ongoing narrative of affected households – impacted in different ways at different stages of the process – is less evident in those debates. This paper draws upon findings from the first stage of a ten year longitudinal study exploring what renewal means to, how it is interpreted by, and how it impacts on, a community undergoing change. The panel comprises almost 100 households living on, or who had previously lived on, the Bonnyrigg estate in Sydney’s west. As Australia’s first social housing Public Private Partnership (PPP), the renewal of Bonnyrigg is defined by considerable complexity. However over 18 stages and 13 years it will impact at the *everyday* level, in various ways, with the lives of residents. The paper concludes by considering how insight into this ‘translation’ of a complex PPP on the ground in residents lives can contribute to wider conceptual, policy and planning debates tied to urban renewal.

Key words: incremental renewal, PPP, urban regeneration, social housing, mixed tenure

Introduction

The regeneration of Bonnyrigg, a public housing estate in southwest Sydney, represents complex urban policy on a number of levels. It is Australia’s first social housing Public Private Partnership (PPP); it has involved the complete transfer of housing stock and sitting tenants to a community housing provider; and its success in the long term depends on selling a vision of mixed tenure living developed in 18 different stages across 13 years – a timeframe that will see governments come and go, and economic and housing market cycles rise, fall and stagnate. At the heart of this change are its existing and often longstanding households, progressively joined by new residents attracted to living in the revitalised neighbourhood. In this paper, I draw upon insight from the first wave of in-depth interviews from a longitudinal study tracking the expectations, experiences and outcomes of residents for the duration of renewal activity. My interest focuses on how the complexity which defines the project in policy, financing and delivery terms is reflected in residents’ negotiation of renewal activity in their day-to-day lives. In particular, it is the incremental nature of the model and roll-out evident at Bonnyrigg that frames this paper’s conceptual lens: the renewal is clearly comprehensive but staged so that tenants remain on-site. The redeveloped suburb – Newleaf – is taking shape, gradually.

The project’s distinctive approach does not obviate the challenges that have long-been seen to define complex, comprehensive urban renewal, most notably: the displacement of existing households (Smith, 1996; Newman and Wyly, 2006; Davison, 2009); the inference of state-led gentrification objectives underlying such interventions (Hackworth, 2007; Lees et al., 2008; Porter and Shaw, 2009; MacLeod and Johnstone, 2012); and dissolution of existing social networks in the name of tenure mix (DeFilippis and Fraser, 2011; Bridge et al, 2012; Lees, 2013). The political genesis and resulting policy response at Bonnyrigg, compounded by its PPP credentials, arguably captures the zeitgeist of neoliberal housing and

urban policy: the justification and legitimation of market-led economic growth with the resulting outcomes impacting disproportionately on the poor (Atkinson, 2000; Allen, 2008; 2010).

In a number of ways, Bonnyrigg's renewal can be seen to present itself as a poster child for neoliberal policy, and, to a certain extent, residents' narratives may reflect some of the disconnect and more resigned reality seen to accompany 'the post-political construction of consensus' (Lees, 2013, p. 10; see also Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012) captured within much critical debate. My aim in this paper is not to counter these concerns. Nevertheless, tracking the engagement, insight and perspective of residents intimately tied to, and impacted by, the detailed roll-out of the intervention over many years arguably offers some nuance to the narratives often highlighted through readings beholden to a 'dystopic post-justice city' (Lees, 2013, p. 22). Speaking to one hundred voices establishes a narrative which stretches beyond factions, prejudice and particular interests to offer a record of how households individually and collectively negotiate difficult change beyond the at-times theory-driven constraints of incisive neoliberal critique.

This paper is structured as follows. In the next section, a brief introduction to Bonnyrigg, the impetus for its redevelopment, and the resulting partnership renewal model are outlined. I then discuss the research approach taken, identifying the challenges involved in establishing, implementing and co-ordinating the outcomes of a longitudinal panel study on this scale. The main body of the paper draws upon research to explore the translation of complex renewal within and amongst the everyday lives of the neighbourhood's residents, focusing upon the nature of partnership, expectations, acceptance as well as tensions that infuse the reshaping of Bonnyrigg as a physical and social community. I argue that the incremental approach has established, structured, and continues to demand particular forms of negotiation between the renewal partnership and residents. With the first years of estate renewal tracking the post Global Financial Crisis (GFC) mire, I reflect upon the impact of partnership models tied to market and economic uncertainty on residents' day-to-day lives.

2 Bonnyrigg's renewal: Australia's first social housing PPP

Bonnyrigg, in Sydney's southwest, was one of the last major public housing estates built by the then Housing Commission of New South Wales (now Housing NSW). The end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s consolidated nascent policy shifts from supply-side to demand-side housing support measures (Yates and Wulff, 2000; Yates et al. 2007), and the development of large mono-tenure, low density neighbourhoods as seen in Bonnyrigg was coming to an end. The use of 'superlots', where multiple dwellings (often semi-detached or attached row houses) are built on a shared land title, cemented the mono-tenure nature of the built form: politically expedient at the time to prevent subsequent government sell-offs, but an added complexity over the longer-term when intervention and remodeling was the desired aim. As a newly built suburb, residents came to Bonnyrigg from across the Sydney metropolitan region to an isolated location on the urban fringe. Today, a significant cohort of these original pioneers remain on the estate, joined by households that have been brought together (whether through choice, or by virtue of sharing constraints within the housing market) to build a community reflective of the cultural diversity that defines much of western Sydney. It has an especially large Vietnamese population (Vietnamese is the primary language spoken in one third of the neighbourhood's homes (ABS, 2012)) – partly due to its proximity to Cabramatta, the cities primary hub for this community – but also the highest concentration of Assyrian and Lao people in Sydney.

The government's impetus for renewal was framed by a number of considerations. Asset-management and 'obsolescence' were pervasive arguments for intervention. The low-density 'Radburn' design of the estate had been seen as problematic (see figure 1 overleaf), and the properties were considered to be reaching the end of their intended lives and ongoing maintenance costs had become an increasing concern. After a series of unsuccessful attempts to mitigate shortcomings in the design and layout of the estate, calls for a more comprehensive renewal approach gained momentum. The estate – always seen as a pretty tough place – had become increasingly stigmatised, suffered high levels of crime, and the physical make-up of the estate was seen as compounding the multiple layers of social disadvantage shaping the lives of Bonnyrigg's residents.

Renewal imperatives were also driven by opportunity and perceived economic viability. While Bonnyrigg is positioned within western Sydney's relatively lower value market, there is substantive demand for relatively affordable and entry-level housing. Increasing density across the neighbourhood would enable a significant number of private properties to be introduced onto the original estate's footprint and facilitate a number of pervasive policy interests in encouraging social mix and to foster diversification in social housing provision and management. A desire to deliver renewal through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) was also borne out of political commitment to the model – the partnership approach had been applied to other forms of social infrastructure across NSW by the government, and housing was seen as next in line. The desire to 'dilute' concentrations of social disadvantage (Hanlon, 2010; Goetz, 2011) helped further confirm that renewal activity should no longer simply be treated as a matter for public funding alone: previous models had not been successful and a 'whole of community', 'whole of market' solution was required.

Figure 1 Low density 'Radburn' layout of Bonnyrigg pre-renewal



Source: City Futures Research Centre image library

In 2007, the competitive tender to redevelop, manage tenancies and 'renew the community' was won by the Bonnyrigg Partnerships consortium, which comprised five partners: Westpac Bank, the financier; Becton Property Group, the developer; St George Community Housing; Spotless, the maintenance manager; and Bonnyrigg Management (now branded 'Newleaf'), who manage partnership integration and community renewal activity. The PPP is guided by a masterplan, which sets out partner responsibilities and rights, the staging of the renewal, as well as key deliverables and KPIs. The project is being delivered over 18 stages, and while originally envisaged as a 13-year program, slippage has already been seen (see figure 2). At completion, Bonnyrigg will comprise almost 2500 new homes, around 700 of which will be owned and managed by the community housing provider. Tenancy management and community renewal aspects of the PPP continue for a further 17 years after completion of the staged redevelopment.

Crucial to the approach advocated was compartmentalising or segmenting 'packages' across 18 stages of what is an incredibly complex intervention. These packages can be seen in terms of financing; tenancy management and relocation coordination; new house sales and marketing; and community regeneration. Each of the stages represents a bundle of debt, a certain number of residents to be rehoused at that time, and a certain number of homes for sale. It translates into financing spread over the years, a capacity to manage the 'shuffle' (Pinnegar, Liu and Randolph, 2013) of residents around the estate rather than decant all at once, and not flooding the housing market with hundreds of units all at the same time. It also means that the rollout of the renewal process over almost a generation is intimately tied to the wax and wane of those finance and housing markets, as well as broader economic trends.

Figure 2: 18 stages, 13 years (original Masterplan)



Source: <http://www.newleafcommunities.com.au/imagesDB/paragraph/StagingPlan.pdf>

3 Longitudinal Panel Study

A key driver for the renewal of Bonnyrigg has been the aim to improve the circumstances and outcomes for residents. The framework adopted in this research draws upon existing long-term longitudinal studies utilising a household Panel, and in particular the HOPE VI Panel Study from the US (Buron and Popkin, 2010; Popkin et al., 2004; 2009; 2010; Popkin, 2012), enabling the same households to be returned to systematically across the lifetime of a program in order to trace individual pathways and build in-depth trajectories of experience and outcomes. This was crucial: an initial community of primarily social housing tenants – the majority of whom decided to remain in Bonnyrigg and be integral to its future – are being joined by private tenants and owner occupiers who will, ultimately, outnumber them by three to one. Tracking change at the neighbourhood level, for example with a baseline, mid-term and final community survey would do little more than chart this transition, masking individual perspectives and outcomes. The research approach also shares an interest in hearing the narratives of displacement and movement and the ensuing outcomes for residents, whether forced or voluntary, with other relocation studies (see for example Fuller, 1995; Kleinhans, 2003; Manzo et al, 2008).

The approach developed seeks to reflect the evolving tenure composition of the neighbourhood, and comprises a number of cohorts (six in total, see figure 3) that capture different groups of residents reflective of tenure and households' place within the redevelopment trajectory. Retention is clearly a key objective, but as the Panel is refreshed over time, the shifting composition enabled by this refreshment is designed to take into account the shifting tenure profile of the neighbourhood itself. By mid-2012, 189 recruits had noted their interest in participating, although in translating that interest into actual involvement, just short of 100 households took part in first wave interviews. This represents around 10% of the total original community. Hardest to recruit, as might be envisaged, were those households who had decided to, or felt they had no choice but to, leave Bonnyrigg at the commencement of the process.

Figure 3: Six cohorts in the Bonnyrigg Panel Study

Cohort	Basis for classification
C1	Public housing tenants who have transferred off-estate permanently
C2	Households that have been permanently rehoused in Bonnyrigg
C3	Households temporarily relocated on-site awaiting move to their new Bonnyrigg home
C4	Households to start the rehousing process in the next 2-3 years (4-5 stages)
C5	Households that will be rehoused in the later stages of renewal
C6	Existing and new private owner-occupiers and renters who live in the neighbourhood

Over half of the interviews were conducted in a language other than English, with a third being undertaken by a Vietnamese speaker. The large majority of discussions (around 80%) were conducted face-to-face, and typically in the interviewees' homes. These first wave interviews covered a breadth of issues with participants encouraged to tell their Bonnyrigg stories: how they had come to be living on the estate, their experiences over the years, raising their families in the community, trajectories of their health and wellbeing, education, employment, and views, engagement and experience of the renewal process.

4. Key insights from Wave 1 interviews

The comprehensive renewal of a whole neighbourhood is a substantive undertaking. It is significant for the consortium delivering Australia's first social housing PPP and for the NSW Government that set Bonnyrigg out on this trajectory. It is also, of course, a major factor in the lives of its residents. The first wave interviews offer a detailed, nuanced understanding of how complex urban renewal translates into the day-to-day lives of those most affected. Of interest here are insights which capture the everyday lens through which the delivery of renewal is experienced, and how the nature, structure and associated risks embedded within the partnership model inevitably shape and influence the relationship between residents and ensuing neighbourhood change. In particular, I focus on whether the incremental approach taken helps to counter or exacerbate the challenging considerations tied to any intervention stewarding major change within existing communities. Three interconnected lenses are used. The first looks at how the complexity of the partnership's task translates in terms of residents' experience of the *physical* renewal process. The second considers the issues and expectations tied to engagement and community building which are integral to the partnership model and the activities of Newleaf in particular. The third brings these together to focus on the question of information and communication between partners and residents in an evolving, complex project in difficult economic and political times.

4.1 Complex renewal, filtered through the everyday

They are just too small, maybe for a couple that is just starting but not for us. I ask myself, what will happen with the people who have dogs, cats and chickens? (C5, female, 65-74, 32 years)¹

Housing NSW had learned difficult lessons from earlier, poorly-prepared interventions such as Claymore and Minto (also in SW Sydney) in the early 2000s. Demonstrating commitment by the Department to do things differently at Bonnyrigg, engagement during the preparatory stages has been acknowledged as 'best practice' – by Housing NSW themselves (Coates et al, 2008) – but it is fair to say that it is a view endorsed to a large degree in the reflections provided by many of our interviewees. A strong level of initial engagement was acknowledged, and, importantly, recognition of an approach that encouraged the community to participate through building enabling skills – for example in terms of how to read and comment upon urban design plans. It had equipped the community with a good level of understanding of the aims and principles of the redevelopment process. Interviewees demonstrated a high degree of comprehension of the core elements shaping Bonnyrigg's renewal: the nature, composition and

¹ Quotes identify the cohort within which the interviewee belongs (C1-C6), their gender, their age bracket and the number of years they have lived in Bonnyrigg.

arguments for (and against) the public-private partnership (PPP) approach; the rationale for increasing density and introducing a more socially 'mixed' community; and the logic of a staged process over many years. This is not to suggest that this translates into residents being comfortable with all aspects of the process, or understanding the complexities of the contracts or market sensitivities that sit behind the development model. Nor does understanding equate with positive acceptance or empowerment: for a significant number there is a fair degree of resignation shaping their perspectives on a process that represents "*a huge big upheaval*" (C1, female, 65-74, 28 years) and symptomatic of the fact that "*it's government housing; it is their money not ours*" (C3, female, 55-64, 20 years).

The complexities and challenges facing the partnership tasked with delivering renewal are understood, but community members' negotiations and concerns tied up in those issues are expressed in rather more pragmatic terms. Although residents expressed views about increased densities, newcomers moving to the neighbourhood, and about the new houses themselves, their opinions were often shaped by everyday considerations. Residents were at their most exposed to the complexities of redevelopment when experiencing the 'in-between' spaces and sense of 'limbo' tied to temporary relocation, but even then, most interviewees demonstrated a resilience framed in just getting on with things: it was the understood trade-off of remaining on site. Concerns about reduced lot sizes or house layouts were as much about impacts on everyday spaces – the ability to grow Asian chillies in the garden, having somewhere to place their treasured shed, being able to fit their fridges into the allocated space, or having a dining table and the living area – as they were about more esoteric, academic debates about density and housing choice.

While these 'everyday' matters may seem relatively minor against the scope and complexity of the project as a whole, these filters are far from irrelevant. They are absolutely central to understanding how the process of change is experienced and interpreted by Bonnyrigg households. Factors such as being unable to take much loved pets to their new home, losing one's garden, or feeling that expenditure made in their previous property is not taken into account at the time of moving, shape impressions of the wider renewal process.

4.2 An informed community; engaged on their terms

They have changed their tack over time. They say something and then they change it. (C5, female, 65-74, 32 years)

Ongoing community engagement is vital in any project of this kind. Where the project is complex and extends over such a period of time, it is crucial. Following mobilisation and completion of the first stages of the redevelopment, a regrouping can be observed in the level of engagement between the Newleaf partnership and community. In large part, it can be argued that this is an inevitability of the transition from design and development to delivery, where initial enthusiasm and energy amongst the community may wane. It also reflects the changing nature of necessary communication, moving from engagement and consultation activity where residents felt that they had a chance to express their views and voice their concerns during mobilisation, to the more 'information receiving' updates as the renewal actually rolls out. Furthermore – and as frequently expressed by our interviewees – community members decide to engage in different ways at different times as suits their needs, requirements or expectations. This includes, particularly for many not being rehoused until later stages, essentially ignoring the redevelopment process until their 'time' comes.

Many of our interviewees recounted their involvement in initial consultations regarding regeneration plans, visits to see alternative housing types on recent developments, and participation in design charettes. Others, however, felt poorly-informed and expressed disillusion: 'it's happening and there's not much I can do.' This needs to be balanced by a more nuanced view of the nature and degree of desired contact across the community as a whole. Newsletters from Newleaf were acknowledged, but interviewees admitted they often went unread. There was also a sense that many community events and programs put on reflected niche interests rather than being of wider appeal and value. This should not be seen as justification for putting on fewer activities; however, there is a need to reflect upon the different needs and expectations across the community and how this will change over the lifetime of the renewal process.

Arguably there is a risk of disjuncture between the extent of engagement deemed appropriate from the perspective of community renewal 'best practice' on the one hand, and the actual need and expectations tied to that engagement by residents on the other.

While a substantive imposition in their lives, many of our interviewees are dealing with tough situations on a day-to-day basis, whether tied to their own health or disability, or that of a partner, child, parent or extended family. For many, worrying about how the estate's renewal affects them only rises up their agenda of juggled concerns when it moves from abstract to real. Although all residents have a view on the transformation of the estate, and have a view of the positives and negatives involved, for many of those not immediately affected in current stages of relocation, the renewal process was often back-of-mind. Some wished it would 'go away'; a more common response was to park the inevitable change and disruption to their lives until closer to 'their' time.

Treating the redevelopment as 'somewhere else', and to be forgotten about for the time being, is an understandable strategy: there are other things to worry about, deal with, and get on with. For some, the new development and gradual transformation of the neighbourhood simply did not register in their day-to-day lives. For example, an interviewee living in one of the later redevelopment stages had never ventured across to the Newleaf development in the five years since construction commenced, despite the new streets and homes making up Stages 1 to 3 being no more than 250 metres from his existing home. But with his own relocation many years away, his life largely homebound and defined by continual support for his elderly mum and, when he did leave the house, trips to the Plaza reached through the streets of 'old Bonnyrigg', this understandable limited interest captures a need for a pragmatic perspective on how – and why – engagement is framed over time.

Participants of one of our interviewee cohorts – existing owner occupiers living on the estate – expressed a particular sense of detachment from decisions shaping the renewal process. Although the proportion of resident owners pepper-potted across Bonnyrigg is small, they are living through substantive change alongside their social renting counterparts, without being fully part of the process. A number of issues emerged. In part, these related to concerns that they were not being kept as well-informed, or had the opportunity for as much input, as other residents on the estate. It also reflected concerns that renewal activity was something that 'happened around' them. Furthermore, because private owners were not to go through the process of relocation and rehousing, there was relatively little consideration given within the renewal framework to the change taking place 'around' those residents, and how they might be affected.

4.3 Community as partners: the importance of on-going discussion

At the end of the day it's not our house, it's their house. We have to do as we're told (C5 female, 65-74, 25 years)

Insight from almost one hundred households presents a diversity of perspectives as would be expected. As noted above, members of the community engage on their terms, in different ways, and at different times, and for many, putting it to the back of their minds until the time comes is an appropriate and understandable strategy. This does not translate, however, into disinterest or detachment regarding the broader operation of partnership activity. 2012 was a difficult year for the project, and this translated into similar challenges in terms of engagement and information. Heavy rains and site drainage problems led to site-specific disruption, however wider concerns were at play. Significant shifts in the relative fortunes of the respective partnership members were taking place. Most notably Becton, the developer, had been struggling in terms of its balance sheet since the onset of the GFC, and by 2012 the company had come under sustained pressure.

Early in the year, the long-term masterplan was also subject to iteration – in part to reflect the need to accommodate a higher number of social housing tenants by the end of the renewal process, and in part to accommodate the failure of the 'quadplex' model (four interlocking apartments across two storeys) which had originally been developed as a key building typology for enabling higher densities to be

accommodated in the neighbourhood. Interestingly, it was the market that had rejected the concept (they did not sell) although tenants also expressed reservations. This combination of events – the increasingly apparent delays in the staging timetable, and the push through of the revised plan with little opportunity for the community to input and engage – was reflected upon by a number of interviewees. A more pervasive concern was that the problems faced by the partnership had not kept key members of that partnership – the residents directly affected – abreast of the challenges being faced. They were aware that there were problems: not least those temporarily rehoused awaiting their move-in dates to new housing that showed little sign of being built.

As Stage 3 of the renewal became delayed, and with the consortium partners facing uncertainty in negotiating the pressures that broader market and economic factors placed upon the partnership model, the community was also fully exposed to the complexities which infuse and define the project. Crucially, while the partnership approach had inextricably tied the renewal outcomes of the project to these wider forces, the arrangements in place limited the means whereby residents could be informed of those concerns. For example, contractual conditions required the community housing provider to have tenants rehoused in their new homes within a certain timeframe from notifying them of that impending move, and the shifting goalposts caused by delays in construction were not conducive to such requirements: uncertainty translated into silence. With residents there, directly observing things not progressing to plan, it becomes all the more apparent. The decision taken to renew Bonnyrigg through a PPP was at the same time a decision to expose the community to the complexities, and risks, of such models. Where those risks eventuate – as became increasingly apparent through 2012 – then it can be argued that the approach needs to work to the full terms and expectations defined by that partnership.

Conclusions: translating complex renewal with existing communities in-situ

The fact that it is staged is probably good because where things go a little bit astray in Stage 2 you make adjustments so that in Stage 5 it doesn't happen again ... also on the basis of the whole estate would be unbearable if the whole thing was a construction site (C6, male, 65-74, 31 years)

This first wave of interviews with our residents' panel has provided unrivalled insight into the passage of urban renewal from those most directly impacted by the process. While consideration and expectations of households in relation to the renewal process are as diverse as the community themselves, commonly observed views tend to capture a tension between the big picture of complex renewal (and the multiple demands framing how it gets delivered) and how it translates and impacts on a day-to-day level for residents. Arguments about social and tenure mix and increased density are understood. However, for residents the options regarding the renewal process, and its potential impacts on their lives, are quite rightly filtered through a more everyday lens.

Within this narrative, the incremental nature of Bonnyrigg's renewal is a pervasive theme and one which I return to in this concluding discussion. The estate's regeneration is undoubtedly 'comprehensive' – involving the complete transformation of the urban form, and restructuring the resident profile over 18 stages. It has also involved the complexity that necessarily defines urban restructuring activity in neoliberal frameworks: public-private partnership working; structured debt and equity finance; dependency of social outcomes on prevailing housing market conditions. Any large scheme will comprise a series of stages in terms of financing and phase of construction. However, it is the structuring and defining nature of Bonnyrigg's renewal process that warrants further consideration. This incremental framework is incredibly complex, but nevertheless provides a means to break down the structure of impenetrable 'comprehensiveness' that elsewhere risks both loss of community as well as the risk of excluding those communities from the act of renewal.

Is incremental renewal working from the residents' point of view? The narratives built up through this research capture the diversity of personal experiences and perspectives in this regard, but a general acceptance of the disruption and uncertainty tied to the gradual, staged approach was voiced. A degree of resignation infuses this negotiation, but commitment to the neighbourhood, and recognition that this arrangement enabled them to remain part of it, was typically the overriding concern. For those that

decided to leave at the outset and who struggled, initially at least, with the resulting dislocation, the passage of time has largely assisted. However, the incremental nature of the model – stretching out over many years – was a contributing factor in their decision (or perceived necessity) to leave. For those choosing to remain, the decision essentially signified acceptance towards stage-by-stage disruption for many years. The dislocation is perhaps less invasive and incisive when compared to those relocated off-estate, but the decision to stay was, whether proactive or more resigned in nature, a commitment by residents to see the renewal process through. Being made to make a choice also evoked a position where in effect they have ‘bought in’ to the process – warts and all. As such, the imposition of temporary relocation elsewhere on the estate while redevelopment of their part of the neighbourhood is undertaken has largely been matched with resilience and households getting on with life as best they can. The resilience seen indicates a number of factors at play but in large part, it reflects a community committed to their locality, and a preparedness to accept the stresses incurred through renewal as a condition tied to remaining ‘on site’.

An arguably more conceptually substantive, point focuses on how the incremental nature of the renewal process, with both an in-situ community and with Bonnyrigg as ‘place’, embeds and demands a particular level of partnership working. Having the residents remain on site, and redevelopment rolling out in stages over many years, ties in the community to the mode of delivery and the relative fortunes of the partnership in ways more transparent than otherwise would have been the case. It enrolls residents, and factors shaping their everyday lives, into the complexity not only of the renewal process but also the partnership arrangements structuring that process, and indeed the myriad externalities shaping the operation and activities of the partnership.

The PPP framework offers some protection from the uncertainty of policy and political change, shielded (to some extent at least) by the realities of the contract from changing priorities and changing budgets (Gilmour et al, 2010). But it also exposes the community to the economic and market realities that define private sector capacity and operation, and which may ultimately undermine that contract and relationships defined within the partnership. Each stage can be separately bundled up and packaged in terms of financing, marketing and construction. It helps the redevelopment program work with the ‘grain’ of the market, but is also predicated on those markets performing as expected in order to progress as envisaged. When conditions are less favourable – as in recent years – then the incremental framework responds with a commensurate slowdown and, worse, heightened exposure and risk of failure.

Bonnyrigg’s renewal activity is less than five years into its 30-year term, but already the ever-evolving nature of complex programs – including those defined by contractual obligations and requirements in the form of a PPP contract – can be seen. A revised masterplan has been put forward to accommodate both market demands as well as increased community housing requirements; the redevelopment process has experienced delays; one of the key consortium partners, the developer Becton, has failed. The model requires flexibility over time to adapt: it is working within, and for, ‘living’ communities, and the staged nature of renewal ensures that the relationship with residents is continually worked through over that extended period. But it also means that the demands placed upon those residents – and the risks that they have been exposed to – need to be acknowledged and accommodated.

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