Introduction

0.1 The following is a response to the House of Lords Citizenship and Civic Engagement Committee’s paper on Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century. The response concentrates on citizenship and civic engagement from a planning and urban policy perspective, which is the focus of our work.

0.2 Urban Vision Enterprise CIC is social enterprise providing professional services in planning, regeneration, economic development and third sector organisational development. We are based in Liverpool and North Staffordshire.

0.3 Our specialisms include:

- neighbourhood planning,
- community engagement and consultation,
- housing need assessment,
- heritage-led regeneration and conservation,
- urban design, including design review,
- feasibility studies and business plans,
- community-led development and projects,
- training, continuing professional development (CPD) and education,
- third sector (not-for-profit) organisational development.

0.4 Clients include UK and national professional bodies and membership organisations, local authorities, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums and local community groups. Urban Vision Enterprise has extensive experience of dealing with urban and rural areas, including city and town centres and villages all around the country.

0.5 The response to selected questions are included in the following six pages.
Response to Questions

1. Question 1

1. What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21st century? Why does it matter, and how does it relate to questions of identity?

1.1 There is clearly no simple definition to citizenship. However, we would highlight potential dimensions of citizenship and civic engagement:

**Everyday interaction:** People live in neighbourhoods, go to work, use local shops and facilities and interact with family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours.

**Democratic Processes:** People can vote in elections at various levels and in referendums. Some people choose to stand as candidates for election. Others seek to scrutinise or influence elected representatives. Community engagement and consultation activities are also part of how people can influence decisions and outcomes.

**Community Action:** Some people choose to become actively involved in their neighbourhood and community through volunteering. This can range in scope from organising a local tea morning or helping a neighbour to developing and delivering significant community-led development, regeneration and economic development. It should be noted that community action can have a substantial impact on localities, sometimes helping to achieve substantial economic, social and environmental benefits. There are also national dimensions to volunteering, such as governance or other work for professional and membership bodies.

1.2 Citizenship and identity are intrinsically linked. We have experience of delivering projects that help build citizenship and civic engagement by developing skills, providing opportunities for volunteering, improving understanding of local areas and involving people in making improvements to their area. Such projects help to instill a sense of purpose, civic pride and belonging within a community. This reinforces the identity of both individual and community.

1.3 The planning system also involves participation. People can comment on planning applications or proposed policies and site allocations in development plans. As individuals, people may not feel empowered. But they can act as a group to promote positive change. One of the best examples of this is through the formation of Neighbourhood Forums, where local people cannot just influence local policy, but actually take a lead role in policy-making through the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. These are then subject to a local referendum.

2. Questions 3 and 8

3. Civic engagement can be seen as both a responsibility and a right of citizenship. Beyond the existing legal framework, should citizens have additional formal rights and responsibilities? How do you see the relationship between the two? Should they have the force of law individually or be presented as reciprocal duties between citizen and state? How should they be monitored and/or enforced?
8. What are the values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support? Can you identify any threats to these values, which affect the citizenship of, for instance, women or various minority groups? If so, how can their citizenship be strengthened?

2.1 Rights and responsibilities are intrinsically linked. There must be a level playing field for all citizens. This includes:

- Equality of opportunity in terms of education, employment and access to facilities;
- Equality in law and also laws to protect citizens against discrimination, for example on grounds of gender, race, sexuality and disability.

2.2 For citizens, the expectation should be:

- Respect for our democratic processes;
- Respect for other citizens and avoidance of discrimination.

Much of this is already enshrined in law, though such laws continually need to adapt,

2.3 In terms of equality of opportunity, we have serious concerns over current urban policies. There are serious imbalances between different parts of the country. This is discussed in more detail under Question 9.

3. Questions 4 and 7

4. Do current laws encourage active political engagement? What are your views on changes to the franchise for national or local elections, including lowering the voting age? Should changes be made to the voting process or the voting registration process?

7. How can society support civic engagement? What responsibility should central government, devolved and local governments, third sector organisations and the individual have for encouraging civic engagement? What can the Government and Parliament do to support civil society initiatives to increase civic engagement?

3.1 The UK’s embedded democratic systems are fundamental to our way of life. However, the nature of democracy is changing. There are changing expectations. Representative democracy needs to be accompanied by more participatory forms of democracy. This needs to be built into decision-making processes.

3.2 There are various reasons why more participatory forms of democracy are important:

- National and local elections taken place at 4-5 year intervals and are based on the widest range of issues. This creates a democratic deficit in terms of opportunities to influence more detailed decision-making;
- Consultation is often a statutory requirement and this is made easier if there has been effective community engagement from the earliest stage;
- Well organised community engagement is useful in developing political consensus, maintaining public confidence and giving people a stake in their future;
Community engagement draws on a wide pool of knowledge and expertise, leading to better informed and more realistic decisions and outcomes;
Together, these factors help to avoid conflict, delay, and additional costs at later stages.

3.3 Consultation often takes place too late in decision-making processes. It is important to engage before detailed work is done on policy development, project development, or design of proposals.

3.4 There are various stages of community engagement and consultation. As a broad generalisation, these are:

**Early Engagement (Front Loading):** This takes place at the beginning of the process as a means to gathering information and evidence. This should take place before policies, strategies, masterplans, or project proposals are formulated.

**Issues and Options:** It is important to provide feedback on the outcomes of earlier stages of engagement. For some decisions, people can become involved in considering issues and developing options and solutions. This is the most interactive stage of engagement, potentially.

**Consultation:** This is a late stage where detailed proposals are tested. A failure to engage at earlier stages can result in difficulties at the consultation stage. Sometimes, consultation is a statutory requirement.

3.5 In addition to more formal methods of community engagement and consultation, participation can occur through a grass-roots approach. One example is the People’s Republic of Stokes Croft (PRSC) in Bristol. The community began to ‘brand’ the area, which is located on the periphery of the city centre. This helped to encourage and grow a sense of civic pride and identity. This helped the area to became a hub for creative people in the city. Diverse street art on prominent gable ends and redundant buildings and also branding of street furniture (bins, benches and grit boxes) inspired a community reaction and helped create a local identity.

3.6 There is a recognised problem of trust in politics. Whilst most hold the concept of democracy in high esteem, the same can’t be said with regard to those that stand for office. We have considerable sympathy for politicians who have to take difficult decisions, make compromises whilst being scrutinized by an often-hostile media. This puts many people off standing for office. There are no simple solutions to this; media scrutiny is an essential part of democracy.

3.7 It is also critical that decision makers and those running consultations do so in a manner that encourages a diverse level of engagement. It must be clear how this informs the decision-making process. This is about engaging at all stages. It is not about developing detailed options behind closed doors and then asking which people prefer.

3.8 Other barriers to active citizenship may include the method or language used in consultation. Careful consideration should be given to develop tools and materials appropriate to the audiences and maximizing the opportunity for individuals to feel they can contribute positively to the process.
3.9 We are especially concerned over the hemorrhaging of capacity and expertise in government bodies at all levels, which means that elected representatives sometimes do not have the level of professional and technical support that is required for effective and well-informed decision making. It also means that expertise in community engagement and consultation is often not available. This may have serious consequences in the future.

4. **Question 9**

9. Why do so many communities and groups feel “left behind”? Are there any specific factors which act as barriers to active citizenship faced by different communities or groups - white, BME, young, old, rural, urban? How might these barriers be overcome?

4.1 Planning and urban policies are often London-centric. Policies to develop the north of the country (the Northern Powerhouse) focus on governance (city regions) and infrastructure, but there is little to address problems of development viability in areas with suppressed land values.

4.2 The London housing crisis dominates the agenda. However, in many parts of the country, socio-economic analysis indicates that economic development should be the priority.

4.3 For example, the Community Infrastructure Levy raises money in areas where the land economy is overheating, but raises nothing to address viability in the areas that need it most.

4.4 At the same time, a disproportionate amount of investment is going into London and the south-east (on a per head basis). The decision to invest in Crossrail 2 in London, but not the Transpennine route in the north, is clearly unbalanced and unjustified. This worsens geographical economic imbalances, rather than addressing them. This is unsustainable, socially, economically and environmentally.

4.5 Such decisions disempower citizens both in London and in the north of the country. In London, there is a relentless cycle of congestion, infrastructure building and development. Many citizens feel that they have little say or influence over the future of their area. This has resulted in acute land inflation, placing housing beyond the economic means of most people.

4.6 At the same time, there is a relative lack of economic opportunity in many other parts of the country. This limits the life opportunities of many people in those areas. There is a serious economic imbalance. Yet Government decisions on expenditure continue to exacerbate geographical economic imbalances.

4.7 Expenditure on housing also exacerbates economic imbalance. Much public money is spend to reduce the price of housing in areas where the land economy is overheating. But even with such subsidies, such housing remains beyond the means of many people. So the policy is at best a very partial success and in reality may actually make the problem worse by further stoking land inflation. The funding should be switched to focus on underperforming areas, to incentivise investment in employment related development. This would result in employment being located in areas with much more affordable house prices. This would help to address economic geographical imbalances, rather than making them worse.
4.8 It should be noted that in areas where there are development viability problems, the solution is often through community-led approaches.

4.9 For Government, we would suggest the following actions:

- To create a test to ensure that infrastructure, cultural and other expenditure is targeted to address economic imbalance, rather than making it worse;
- To create a greater consistency in expenditure per head of population across the country;
- To ensure all polices take account of the needs of the whole country and avoid exacerbating market failures, including both overheating and under-performing land economies; and
- To incentivise and enable development in areas suffering from land and development viability problems.
- To ensure that those involved in the decision making process deliver meaningful and appropriate community engagement consultation from the earliest stage;

5. **Question 12**

12. Can you give examples of initiatives and role models that have helped promote a positive vision of British Citizenship within a tolerant and cohesive society?

5.1 A good example from our own field of work is in neighbourhood planning, where local communities can become involved in formulating policies for the future development of their area. In addition, we work with community organisations that are involved in directly delivering development and other initiatives in their area. These are examples of community leadership.

5.2 Neighbourhood planning is a significant shift to a more participatory form of planning. We would like to see this approach extended into other parts of the planning process. Advantages of neighbourhood planning include:

- A wide range of skills input into process, often including people from the business community and local community groups;
- Policies may be focused on needs of the specific neighbourhood;
- Greater stake in and commitment to the local area;
- It helps to promote community understanding of planning and buy-in to the resulting policies;
- There are examples of neighbourhood plans enabling higher levels of growth;
- The process creates dialogue between neighbourhood planning bodies, local authorities and other organisations.
- Neighbourhood plans can lead to community projects and community-led development.

5.3 Urban Vision Enterprise prepared a plain English guide to neighbourhood planning for Locality, the body leading on the national neighbourhood planning support programme. This is widely used by groups all around England. The guide is available here:
5.4 Urban Vision Enterprise was co-author to Connections: 12 approaches to relationship-based placemaking (August 2016). In this publication, we explored the benefits and approach of alternative methods of consultation and participation to influence planning policy and encourage participation in the process from creative industries through a process we called ‘Learning Journeys’.
Authorship

This paper has been prepared by Dave Chetwyn, Managing Director of Urban Vision Enterprise, with support from Hannah Barter, Director/Partner.

Dave Chetwyn, MA, MRTPi, IHBC, FInstLM

Dave Chetwyn is Managing Director and Partner of Urban Vision Enterprise and has 29 years’ experience in planning and regeneration in the public, private and third sectors.

Other current roles include:

- Managing Director of D2H Ltd.
- Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Planning Forum.
- Design Council CABE Built Environment Expert.
- Associate of the Consultation Institute.

Former roles include:

- Head of Planning Aid England.
- Chair of the Historic Towns Forum (UK membership body).
- Consultant heritage specialist for Crossrail Thames Tunnels Section.
- Chair of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (UK professional body).
- Team leader in local Government.

Dave has acted as a neighbourhood plan independent examiner and has appeared as a public inquiry expert witness. He is the author of the Locality *Roadmap Guide to Neighbourhood Planning* and other guidance, including guides to regeneration, community-led housing and conservation professional practice. He authored parts of BS7913.

Dave has leadership and management experience with UK, national and local organisations and a strong track record in third-sector organisational development. He has advised various Government departments, groups, reviews and Parliamentary select committees on planning, regeneration, heritage, urban design, economic development, state aid and community empowerment. He has also developed and delivered numerous projects and programmes at national and local levels.

Dave is a Chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and a Fellow of the Institute of Leadership and Management.
Hannah Barter, MAUD, Dip T&CP, MRTPI

Hannah Barter is a Director and Partner of Urban Vision Enterprise CIC and has 14 years’ experience in planning and community development, working in the public, private and third sectors. Her experience and expertise includes planning, arboriculture, urban design, community engagement and environmental education.

Other roles include

Previous roles include:

- Project Development Coordinator with Urban Vision North Staffordshire (Urban Vision’s charitable arm).
- Chair of the RTPI West Midlands Urban Design Forum.
- Planning Officer (development control) with Rutland County Council.
- Planning Officer (development control) with Lichfield District Council.

Hannah was awarded the Chesterton Zoe Dawson Award in 2002-03 for her work on urban green spaces with Birmingham City Council.

Hannah has successfully developed and delivered numerous planning and community projects and is currently providing direct support to various neighbourhood plan groups across England. Some of the most recent projects include:

- Local Heritage Review, Enfield Borough Council;
- Local Heritage Review, Barnet Council;
- Brown Edge Neighbourhood Plan Feasibility Study;
- Linby Masterplan on Safeguarded Land ‘Top Wighay Farm’;
- Derby City Council THI (Stage 1 and Stage 2 bids and Phase 3).

Hannah is experienced in addressing funders’ requirements, including recording outputs and outcomes, project returns and reporting, and producing financial information (including for auditing). Funders she has worked with include ERDF, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Historic England, and The Design Council.

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