

Prioritising local environmental concerns

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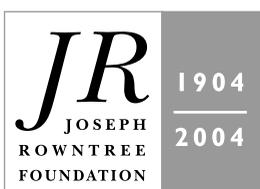
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The Centre for Sustainable Development (CfSD) was established within the School of the Built Environment at the University of Westminster in 1998. Over the past five years, the Centre has pioneered a programme of research exploring the policy interfaces between social, environmental and economic policy making and delivery in the UK, with an emphasis on making the links between social exclusion and sustainable development.

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Foreword

The research has endeavoured to capture a rapidly evolving policy area. The fieldwork for the research was carried out between May and July 2003. This was followed by a desktop mapping exercise to identify the local environmental rights of residents and who is responsible for ensuring these are being met. A seminar with key government officials and other 'experts' was held in December 2003 to update on the national policy situation.

Follow-up interviews were also conducted with a key representative from the two local strategic partnerships in April 2004 to capture local policy responses to the emerging national policy agenda and/or any local actions in response to the concerns raised by local residents.

Nevertheless, both the national and local position may have changed somewhat since the time of writing and the authors apologise for any oversight in this respect.

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consider their willingness to engage with our study especially generous in light of their demanding workloads.

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Abbreviations

ALMO	Arms length management organisation
ASBOs	Anti-social Behaviour Orders
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
CPA	Corporate Performance Assessment
DA	District Assembly
DCA	Department of Constitutional Affairs
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (1998–2002)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfT	Department for Transport
DoH	Department of Health
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EA	Environment Agency
EN	English Nature
ENCAMS	Environmental Campaigns
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FoE	Friends of the Earth
GAPP	Global Awareness Partnership Project
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HO	Home Office
ILD	Index of Local Deprivation
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA21	Local Agenda 21
LGA	Local Government Association
LSP	Local strategic partnership
LNRS	Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
MBC	Metropolitan Borough Council
MCC	Manchester City Council
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
NRS	Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCT	Primary care trust
PSA	Public Service Agreement
RAZ	Rubbish Action Zone
RSL	Residential social landlord

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SDC	Sustainable Development Commission
SDU	Sustainable Development Unit
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
TSPB	Tameside Strategic Partnership Board
TVP	Tame Valley Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
WSP	Wolverhampton Strategic Partnership
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1 Introduction and wider context of the research

Introduction

A number of previous JRF studies funded under the 'Reconciling environmental and social concerns' programme have identified that neighbourhood renewal policies in England are failing to adequately address the local environmental concerns of people living in poor neighbourhoods (e.g. Burningham and Thrush, 2001; Church and Elster, 2002; Lucas *et al.*, 2003). This is perhaps not surprising, as dog fouling, litter, abandoned cars, poorly maintained public spaces and graffiti can appear trivial problems in comparison to the high levels of unemployment, ill health, low educational attainment and incidents of crime experienced by people living in these areas. This report presents the argument that failure to address such concerns, however, not only significantly contributes to the stigmatisation of these neighbourhoods, but also can serve to undermine the willingness of local people to engage with the renewal process.

There is growing evidence of national government recognition of the problem. For example, the Local Government Act 2000 (LGA, 2000) now requires local authorities to promote policies that balance economic, social and environmental well-being. There is also direct government commitment to raising the local environmental quality of deprived areas through its Living Spaces initiative (ODPM, 2002a, 2002b). Furthermore, many of the local policy makers and practitioners responsible for delivering the Government's neighbourhood renewal agenda believe that a sustainable development approach can bring additional value to their activities (SDC, 2003).

Despite this, our research demonstrates that the dirty and neglected appearance of deprived neighbourhoods continues to plague local residents, often appearing at the top of their list of concerns about the local area. It serves to heighten their feelings of frustration and powerlessness. It fuels their belief that both local and national government are unable to deliver policies that reflect their concerns and address their needs. This, in turn, can reduce their willingness to engage in consultations about the future of their area and perpetuates their feelings of exclusion.

LSPs have been set up to 'spearhead' the process of improving public services in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Their key role is to bring together key stakeholders in communities to act strategically to deliver decisions and actions that join up partners' activities to tackle cross-cutting issues more effectively (DETR, 2001c). Each area has its own Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS), which sets out an agreed vision and plan for positive change in each renewal area. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, due to the strong social and economic focus of the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (SEU, 2001), it is 'pot luck' whether local environmental concerns are being addressed in the strategies that are being developed.

This report describes case study research with local residents and Neighbourhood Managers in six neighbourhood renewal areas and the two local strategic partnerships responsible for overseeing this process. A core aim of the research has been to identify appropriate mechanisms for, and good practice

in, addressing local environmental concerns in the context of the wider neighbourhood renewal agenda in deprived areas.

The national policy context

Regeneration policy

Regeneration policy in the UK has undergone several distinct phases under successive governments, each with its own set of philosophies on what is required to bring about change. Current policy is strongly focused on addressing the causes of decline at the local neighbourhood level through area-based programmes targeted at the most deprived neighbourhoods.

There has been increasing policy emphasis on partnership working between local authorities and the other public, private and voluntary sector agencies responsible for service delivery in renewal areas. Such agencies must also actively engage with local people in the development and delivery of their programmes (SEU, 2001). Local authorities charged with ensuring the continuous improvement of the quality and efficiency of their services have, arguably, been given the necessary funds and powers to deliver this agenda (Russell, 2001).

In 2001, the Government set out its vision for neighbourhood renewal in a new national strategy – the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) (SEU, 2001). Its overarching aim is to narrow the gap between England's most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country, and it is specifically targeted at the 88 local authorities where deprivation is most acute. The strategy identifies a raft of new policies, funding mechanisms and targets aimed at delivering economic prosperity; safer

communities; high-quality education; decent housing; and better health to these areas over the next ten to 20 years.

Making the links between poverty and poor local environments

The UK Economic and Social Research Council's Global Environmental Change Programme recommends that everyone should have a right and be able to live in a healthy environment, with access to enough environmental resources for a healthy life. It finds that it is:

... the poorest and least powerful people that are missing these conditions.

(ESRC Global Environmental Change Programme, 2001, p. 1)

The available statistical evidence suggests that deprived communities are more likely to suffer the worst environments (see below). This assertion is confirmed in a recent study by the Environment Agency (2003), which found that there is an unequal distribution of 'environmental bads' in England.

This would suggest that government policies aimed at environmental improvement would do well to target these areas. However, in his internal report to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), Barton (2001) noted that the NRS fails to adequately recognise the important environmental concerns of deprived communities. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) recommends that 'mainstreaming' sustainable regeneration is vital if the UK is to meet its commitments to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to climate change and protect and enhance the environment for future generations (SDC, 2003).

Evidence of environmental inequality in the UK

- A study of the Environment Agency's 1999 UK Factory Emissions Data found that 82 per cent of large factories emitting carcinogenic chemicals were located in the 20 per cent most deprived local authority wards (FoE, 2000).
- Researchers at the University of Salford have identified that sites containing 'hazardous substance sites' are more likely to be located in wards with a higher proportion of minority ethnic population (Walker *et al.*, 2000).
- Respiratory problems in London are more concentrated in the poorest areas and correlate with the higher traffic levels experienced by people living in these areas, despite their significantly lower levels of car ownership and use (Stephens *et al.*, 1998).
- The Government's 'Health Inequalities' inquiry found that the highest burden of air pollution from motorised vehicles tends to fall on people experiencing disadvantage, although 30 per cent of these households do not have access to a car (Acheson, 1998).
- Children from Social Class V are also five times more likely to be knocked down by a car than children in Social Class I and Asian children more likely than white children (DETR, 2001a).
- In 2001, 38 per cent of social housing and 32 per cent of private sector

housing stock was classified as 'non-decent'; inevitably, the majority of substandard housing is located in the poorest neighbourhoods (ONS, 2004).

- At least 4.5 million households were living in fuel poverty in the UK in 2001 (DETR, 2001b), which increases the risk of heart and lung disease, and is linked to higher rates of winter mortality.
- Food poverty is still a problem in the UK, with 20 per cent of the population unable to afford healthy food (Stephens *et al.*, 2001).
- Poorer households are more likely to be located in areas with fewer shops and amenities and inadequate transport links to shops selling affordable healthy food (SEU, 2002).
- Two million households suffer from rubbish and litter, and 1.5 million from vandalism and graffiti in their area (Power, 2004). Authorities with high levels of deprivation have poorer performance standards than average in relation to environmental issues such as refuse collection, public parks and street cleaning (Duffy, 2000).

The emerging national policy agenda

In the past, national policy has tended to overlook local environmental issues, but, there is evidence to suggest growing government commitment to this in recent years. A number of policy guidance documents, legislative changes and new funding streams have now been introduced to address the issue of local

environmental quality. In 2002, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published a five-year 'Living Spaces' strategy, which sets out an ambitious agenda for improving public space and local environmental quality (ODPM, 2002a, 2002b).

The ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan (2003) identifies a £1 billion increase in local authorities' budgets over the next three years from which environmental improvements are to be funded. An additional £210 million has been set aside for 'liveability schemes' and a further £89 million for improving parks and public spaces, which will allow 250 additional (park, neighbourhood, etc.) wardens to be employed in each local authority area. Past evidence suggests, however, that the new funding is unlikely to be targeted at the most deprived areas unless there is an explicit requirement for local authorities to do so.

Part 6 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 also introduces new flexibilities for local authorities to take action on local environmental quality issues such as noise, fly-tipping, littering, graffiti and fly-posting. The DEFRA website also now provides information on the statutory duties of local authorities in relation to a raft of these local environmental quality issues (see Chapter 5).

A new local cleanliness performance indicator is currently being introduced and policy guidance on open spaces is being revised and strengthened. The Audit Commission has also introduced Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) (DTLR, 2001) to assist local authorities in assessment of their performance in respect of the management of public space. However, these indicators and assessments do not assess local authority performance on a

neighbourhood basis and so will fail to identify any inequalities in the distribution of this performance in respect to deprived areas.

In March this year, DEFRA organised a participative workshop for all government departments to specifically discuss the issue of promoting greater environmental and social justice across government (Quest Associates Ltd, 2004). The event was attended by representatives from all the key departments as well as a number of non-governmental experts in this area.

The SDU is aiming to establish a working group to take forward ideas from the workshop and is currently involved in bilateral meetings with the NRU to discuss future policy implications. The intention is to include an environment and social justice theme in the new Sustainable Development Strategy, which is due for publication in early 2005. This would suggest that achieving greater environmental and social justice is a live issue for Government and one it considers is largely unresolved in terms of the current national policy framework.

The local policy position

Emergent government interest in the issue of environmental justice may, in large part, be attributable to the external pressure from European and international laws, such as the Aarhus Convention (SDC, 2003). Arguably, however, it could equally be said to have arisen from national and local government concern about the regularity with which poor public service delivery is being raised locally as a concern by resident surveys and other consultation exercises, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods.

Service delivery in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

There is widespread recognition that public services meet the needs of residents less well in deprived areas (SEU, 1998), due to both the higher demand placed on services and lower service quality. There is also strong evidence to suggest that authorities with high levels of deprivation have poorer performance standards than average in relation to environmental issues such as refuse collection, public parks and street cleaning (Duffy, 2000). Duffy (2000) identifies a number of reasons why this is the case.

- Residents in deprived areas tend to be more reliant on public services, as they do not have the resources to purchase private resources.
- Residents place more complex and intense demands on public services. For example, health care is made more difficult by poor diets, the stress of unemployment and poverty, and where patients do not speak the same language as their doctors.
- People living in deprived areas lack access to some of the tools that make service delivery more straightforward. They are less likely to have internet access and perhaps even lack a phone.
- Practical problems, including higher crime and disorder rates.
- Local fundraising and volunteering is lower in deprived areas, due to mistrust between residents and public bodies.

The role of local strategic partnerships

Local strategic partnerships (LSPs) are specifically charged with overseeing public services' improvements and ensuring better quality of life in neighbourhood renewal areas. To achieve this, they must bring together at the local level public sector agencies, local government, the voluntary and community sectors, businesses and local residents. In the 88 most deprived areas, each LSP has been allocated Neighbourhood Renewal Funds (NRF) to help them 'bend' local mainstream funding programmes to better target the problems of deprived areas. Although these funds can be spent any way that the LSP sees fit in tackling local deprivation, it must satisfy the grant conditions set out by the NRU (DETR, 2001c).

Each LSP must prepare a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (LNRS), which sets out an agreed vision and plan for positive change in as many neighbourhoods as are in need of renewal. This must have the agreement and commitment of all the key people and institutions who have a stake in the neighbourhood, or have an impact on it.

A five-year LSP evaluation is currently under way by ODPM and DfT, due for completion in 2005 (ODPM and DfT, 2003). The first-year interim findings from this evaluation identify that every LSP is individual in terms of structure and operation. Although this flexibility allows them to better reflect local circumstances and needs, it makes it difficult to offer a general picture of how they are performing at the present time.

LSPs' performance on the environment

Environment and the NRS

The NRS identified 105 new government commitments for neighbourhood renewal, each of which was designated to a specific government department to take the lead in ensuring its delivery. Commitment 1 represents the overarching aim of the strategy, the stated aim of which is:

To have lower worklessness, better skills, less crime, better health and better housing and physical environment in all the poorest neighbourhoods and to narrow the gap between England's most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country over the next 10–20 years.
(SEU, 2001, p. 61, authors' emphasis)

Four commitments were also specifically targeted at improving the physical environment of poor neighbourhoods. These were as follows.

- Commitment 77: new delivery arrangements for physical change in urban areas (e.g. Urban Regeneration Companies) – ODPM to lead.
- Commitment 78: a pilot English Cities Fund, to invest in mixed-use development in priority areas – ODPM to lead.
- Commitment 79: Air Quality Strategy targets – DEFRA to lead.
- Commitment 80: Waste Strategy targets – DEFRA to lead.

Commitment 95 also promised a review of resources for delivering core public services in deprived areas and to ensure that money is targeted at these, as a condition of national

Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for local government. This was to be completed by all relevant departments by December 2001.

It can be seen that the policy targets set by the Strategy primarily focus on land-use change and meeting the Government's national targets for air quality and waste reduction rather than the local environmental concerns that are emerging from consultations with residents in neighbourhood renewal areas (see Chapter 2).

Frontline environmental activity

Environmental practitioners acting as Advisory Board members on the project have recommended that, even in the absence of local environmental targets, a number of LSPs are increasingly concerning themselves with delivery on this agenda. The Groundwork Trust has also been actively involved in the delivery of local environmental improvement projects in deprived neighbourhoods over the past ten years. A recent study by GFA Consulting and Sheffield Hallam University for the JRF identified:

... an impressive range of project activity given the scale of resources that are available for such projects.

(Groundwork and JRF, 2002, p. 6)

It finds that local Groundwork Trusts are represented on numerous LSP boards up and down the country and that local Groundwork project workers also often act as useful intermediaries between LSP boards and local people in neighbourhood renewal areas. The Environment Agency is now represented on 50 per cent of all LSPs in England. ENCAMS, Friends of the Earth and other environmental organisations have also been increasingly

involved in setting up and running environmental projects in deprived areas.

Ultimately, however, it is difficult to establish a firm view of whether LSPs are developing strategies to address local

environmental concerns in deprived areas.

Furthermore, our review suggests that there is little information about what would constitute good practice in this respect.

2 Study aims, objectives and methodology

Aims and objectives

Against the background of these preliminary findings, the key aims of the two case studies were to:

- 1 examine the extent to which the local strategic partnerships recognised the environmental concerns of the different (and in particular disadvantaged) local neighbourhoods they represent
- 2 identify good practices in this respect and develop recommendations for integrating local environmental concerns into neighbourhood renewal based on this evidence.

The study aimed to address the following issues.

- How is the environment represented within LSPs?
- Are the environmental concerns of local people and in particular disadvantaged groups represented?
- What mechanisms and barriers exist for the representation of such concerns?
- If such concerns are recognised, how are they acted upon?
- What are residents' views of LSPs? Are they aware of their existence? Do they feel that their concerns are represented within them?
- Do residents see evidence on the ground of the benefits of such formal participatory processes?

- Do LSPs empower local people or increase their confidence in public agencies?
- How might LSPs better represent and address local environmental concerns?

Methodology

The case study methodology involved:

- two-stage focus groups with local residents in six neighbourhood renewal areas
- resident representations to the two LSPs responsible for the renewal of these areas
- a further round of interviews, discussions and information gathering with key stakeholders in local policy delivery and those responsible for the wider environmental policy agenda
- a workshop with 'experts' in environmental policy
- follow-up interviews with a key officer from each LSP to determine subsequent actions at the local neighbourhood level.

Further details about methodology can be found in the Appendix, as the methods used will be referred to again in later chapters of the report and a fuller understanding of them may be useful to the reader.

Case study selection

The two case studies were selected from the 88 LSPs representing the most deprived local

authorities in the UK, as identified by the Government's Index of Local Deprivation. Following consultation with key informants and our Advisory Board, a shortlist of potential case study LSPs was compiled on the basis that:

- 1 local people in these areas had registered concern about the quality of their local environment in consultation exercises undertaken as part of the neighbourhood renewal process in their areas
- 2 the LSP had indicated a strong interest in addressing these concerns as an early aspect of their delivery agenda in their LNRS
- 3 the LSP covered an area with at least three neighbourhoods that were being targeted by NRF.

Tameside and Wolverhampton were chosen from this list, selected because they indicated, when contacted, that they were currently in the process of looking at how to deliver on this area of their LNRS and, thus, would be happy to actively engage with the research as part of this process. A brief background description of selected case studies follows.

Description of case study 1: Tameside LSP

Tameside

Tameside is in North West England, between Manchester city centre and the Peak District, with a population of around 225,000 people. There are nine towns constituting the borough: Ashton-under-Lyne, Audenshaw, Denton, Droylsden, Dukinfield, Hyde, Longdendale, Mossley and Stalybridge.

Tameside combines a mix of urban and rural landscapes, and the area includes historic market towns, a canal network and industrial heritage areas. As for the whole of the Greater Manchester region, the area has a strong manufacturing tradition, particularly in the areas of textiles and engineering, food industries and manufacturing of high-technology chemical, electronic and computer products. The now complete M60 Manchester ring road has added to the borough's strategic transport links.

Tameside has been the focus of three successful Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes, including an SRB 6 project to develop brownfield sites. This involves land reclamation, landscaping, dealing with contamination, site assembly and access, and enabling socially excluded communities across Tameside to take advantage of new job and training opportunities generated by the development of these sites.

Tameside Strategic Partnership

The first Tameside Community Strategy was produced in 1999, by the Tameside Community Forum, which became the LSP under the title of the Tameside Strategic Partnership Board (TSPB). The TSPB has a membership of over 25 local organisations, including local businesses, voluntary and community groups, and public sector organisations. It also includes a wider network of thematic partnerships and partner organisations.

The TSPB is currently producing its second Community Strategy, which will be closely linked to the policies and actions identified in its

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Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The Community Strategy will be divided into eight key themes, each of which has a series of key actions and targets, which the organisations involved in the partnership work towards, as follows:

- lifelong learning
- transport
- health and social care
- crime and disorder
- local economy
- environment
- homes
- community.

Selected neighbourhoods in Tameside

Deprivation in Tameside is borough-wide and the Tameside Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy identifies priority areas and neighbourhoods across the whole of the administrative authority. All areas have some ongoing area-based initiatives. The three neighbourhoods recommended to us by the TSBP as suitable for our fieldwork research were as follows.

Hattersley

Hattersley is a 1960s', semi-rural overspill estate for Manchester city, which is located about ten miles from its eastern border. The estate has suffered a cycle of decline over a number of years because of low housing demand, which has resulted in numerous empty and boarded-up properties. Although it comprises a mix of owner-occupied, housing association and council-owned properties, council homes are in the majority (more than 2,000).

Six out of the seven tower blocks that previously existed on the estate have already been demolished and the remaining block of flats is targeted for housing people of 55 years of age and over. Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) feels there is a need for housing stock rationalisation, but the proposed stock transfer to registered social landlords (RSLs) has proved very controversial with local people.

The opportunity for local employment is low, but transport links between the estate and Manchester city centre have improved with the development of the new M60 motorway link, offering Hattersley residents new employment opportunities. Tameside MBC recognises that people living on the estate also suffer from poor access to community and children's play facilities. Litter on the estate is also recognised as a common concern among local residents.

Hattersley Development Trust was established in 1997 under SRB 3 to focus on issues of health, education, young people and the local assets base (services). The estate has a Sure Start programme and is a national Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Area.

Haughton Green

Haughton Green is also a Manchester city overspill estate, located only six miles south east from the city centre. The estate falls under the remit of the Tame Valley Partnership (TVP), which oversees the redevelopment of six communities under an SRB 5 initiative.

The estate comprises approximately 3,000 properties of mixed tenure, of which 1,000 are still owned by Manchester City Council (MCC). This stock consists mostly of two- and three-bedroom houses, and tower blocks, and is located in the poorer part of the estate.

Local residents have demonstrated strong feelings against stock transfers to a registered social landlord (RSL); both the tenants' association and the local MP representing the area are active participants in the national movement to keep social houses in the public sector. Tameside MBC feels that this has held back regeneration of this part of the estate. It recognises residents' concerns about youth disaffection and community safety on the estate and identifies that, although the number of non-white residents and asylum-seekers moving onto the estate is relatively small, there is some tension between the newcomers and more established local residents.

Ashton (West End)

The West End area of Ashton-under-Lyne is one of two major residential neighbourhoods within the Ashton Renewal Project area (the other being Holy Trinity). While Holy Trinity has benefited from investment from the Ashton Renewal Project, there has been little investment in the West End to date. The major issues identified by the Ashton Renewal Project in the area include drug abuse and anti-social behaviour problems; a need for housing stock rationalisation; and improving the low skills base of local residents.

The West End neighbourhood has a mostly white population and is divided into three distinct communities (known as the 'Triangle') consisting of West Park Estate, West End Development Area and the West End. The majority of the housing in the area is owned by the local authority, although there has been some transfer of housing stock to RSLs, the first of which was in 1996. Demolition of several tower blocks and other houses has also taken place, and larger housing built in their place.

Description of case study 2: Wolverhampton LSP

Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton gained city status in 2000. It is one of the principal manufacturing centres of the West Midlands. The City Council owns nearly one-third of all residential properties in Wolverhampton, although this proportion has gradually decreased since the 1970s.

Approximately one in five people living in Wolverhampton comes from a minority ethnic background.

Employment in the manufacturing sector is twice as high as for the UK average; however, there has been a long process of industrial decline since the 1980s, accompanied by poor growth in service sector employment. This has led to high unemployment levels, well above the UK and regional averages, particularly in certain wards and among some minority ethnic groups.

Wolverhampton has been the focus of regeneration policy and programmes for more than 30 years including initiatives such as: Housing Improvement Area schemes; the Urban Programme; the Black Country Development Corporation; City Challenge; Single Regeneration Budget; and New Deal for Communities. These have addressed many localised problems and stabilised some neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, there are still significant areas of poverty and continuing decline.

Wolverhampton Strategic Partnership

The Wolverhampton Strategic (Regeneration) Partnership (WSP) was launched in 1999 to provide a strategic context for regeneration.

WSP acts as a focus for partnership activity across the different delivery sectors and geographical areas of the authority, and as a champion for projects and initiatives of strategic importance. WSP pre-dates the introduction of LSPs and was adapted to fit this new initiative, in preference to establishing a wholly new partnership. WSP has been responsible for developing and overseeing both the Wolverhampton Community Plan and the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. These two documents provide the overarching framework for all policy activities Wolverhampton-wide.

The partnership consists of a strategic 'core' group (the board) and six city-wide thematic partnerships as follows:

- the learning partnership
- the economic competitiveness partnership
- the crime and disorder co-ordination group
- the health and social care partnership board
- the children and young people's strategic partnership
- the neighbourhood renewal partnership.

The strategic partnership is informed by a variety of community involvement structures, including those representing communities of place, e.g. tenant and resident associations; communities of interest, e.g. Older People's Forum; voluntary and community network organisations, e.g. Wolverhampton Network Consortium; and partnerships based on cross-cutting themes, such as Local Agenda (LA21).

Selected neighbourhoods in Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton City Council has identified 85 separate neighbourhoods and grouped these into 13 clusters according to similar role and physical proximity from city and related patterns of need for the purposes of policy development and delivery. Twenty-nine neighbourhoods have been designated as 'priority areas' for neighbourhood renewal and six clusters have been selected by WSPs to act as their 'neighbourhood management pilots' (i.e. administration is devolved to the neighbourhood level), mostly consisting of these priority neighbourhoods. The three neighbourhoods selected for our fieldwork research were all both priority and neighbourhood management neighbourhoods.

Dovecotes

Dovecotes is one of a number of deprived localities within the western suburban fringe of the city, developed in the last 25 years as part of major peripheral housing redevelopment programmes. Despite ranking 15 out of 85 neighbourhoods in terms of deprivation, the estate is felt to have been overlooked for funding because of its relatively affluent neighbours, which tend to mask the intensity of its deprivation.

The estate is located on the north-west boundary of the city and is the most recently built large-scale council development in Wolverhampton. There are 1,387 households with a mix of property types. The majority of housing stock (nearly 80 per cent) is rented from the local authority, with approximately 15 per cent in owner-occupation. Properties have a high turnover rate of approximately 17 per cent

per annum. Although many council-owned houses now have central heating (85 per cent), there is still some concern among tenants that local authority housing requires significant investment on repairs and maintenance.

The area is very poorly served by public transport and over half of the residents do not have the use of a car, which means people feel isolated and cut off from the city. There are few shops and no access to a post office. Many of the shops that were on the estates have closed because of vandalism, an ongoing problem for remaining shops. Neighbourhood wardens have recently been introduced onto the estate.

Millfields (Bilston)

Millfields historically formed part of Bilston urban district (until 1966 when Bilston was incorporated into the district of Wolverhampton) and was developed as a neighbourhood of Bilston after World War I. The area is still referred to as Bilston by local residents. The estate is divided by a dismantled railway line.

The area has 597 households and approximately 1,500 residents. Most of its housing stock is council owned, built between the wars, with one high-rise block. There has been a lack of housing investment, because of a lack of dedicated regeneration funding for the area, but central heating and double glazing have now been promised to all households over the next two years.

Millfields is identified as the eighth most deprived neighbourhood in Wolverhampton by the local authority and Ettingshall ward, which covers the neighbourhood, is listed as one of the 10 per cent most deprived wards nationally,

according to the Government's Index of Local Deprivation (ILD).

There is a strong sense of community and local identity on the estate, but only two residents' groups (one either side of the railway) and a more general lack of organised community groups. Local residents have expressed concerns about litter and fly-tipping on the estate, and there are also long-standing concerns about the street cleaning service.

Merridale

Merridale is located immediately to the west of Wolverhampton city centre and is part of the city's 'inner core' of neighbourhoods. It is ranked 21 out of 85 in terms of local neighbourhood deprivation by the local authority. Unemployment is a major problem within the area, with many individuals and families on low incomes. There is a large black and minority ethnic population (37 per cent).

The area is mainly residential, consisting mostly of large, private Victorian properties, many of which have been split and converted into smaller flats. Housing density is high, with little open space, and roads in the area are narrow. There has been little redevelopment and physical improvement, and any that has occurred has tended to be small-scale private development aimed at particular sections of the community. The high level of readily available, low-cost, rented accommodation within the area attracts short-term residents (such as asylum-seekers or students), who move away because of the poor condition of housing, among other issues. The transience of the population has recently been increasing.

3 What is the problem?

A series of focus group discussions were held with local residents in the six neighbourhood areas (see the Appendix for more information on the method for these). Using the broadest interpretation of 'local environment', these established that anti-social behaviour among young people and the impact of this on the local area was by far the highest priority issue raised by participants in all six neighbourhoods. This was closely followed by poor service delivery across a variety of sectors, but with an emphasis on rubbish collection, street cleaning and litter. There were also very specific concerns raised about what were perceived to be long-standing 'environmental hazards' or 'ills', such as the smell from a sewage plant, toxic smoke from a tyre-burning yard, and noise and air pollution from traffic, in some of the neighbourhoods.

Young people and anti-social behaviour

Many of the participants felt that a large number of environmental problems they experience locally stem from the anti-social behaviour of young people 'hanging about with nothing to do' and that, if this were to be tackled, it would allow other issues to be resolved more effectively. As one local resident explained:

We all said that there are problems with young people, that seems to be a common denominator there, maybe they are causing problems because they've got nothing to do.

(Dovecotes, Wolverhampton)

Several people felt scared to use their public spaces and other local environmental amenities, because of groups of young people 'hanging

around' in public spaces. Many people felt intimidated by the behaviour of these 'gangs'. They were described as abusive, foul-mouthed and threatening, and people said that they were often afraid to say or do anything about it because of the fear of retribution:

A lot of people are frightened to go to the shops, especially the older people, because there's always gangs of people round the shops and the same at the bus stop. They're frightened to go to the bus stops and stand there for a bus, they'd rather walk to the next bus stop where there's no people, because they sit there and they're smoking and they're swearing.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

This angered and upset residents because it undermined their basic right to move about freely in their own neighbourhoods:

We should be entitled to leave our house whenever we please and come back whenever we please without all this.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

A commonly held belief was that these young people were coming into the neighbourhoods from outside the area and that the young people who lived locally were not the ones causing the trouble:

[Young people come] from the other areas and they all come up here and hang about because nobody knows them so they can do what they like and then clear off.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

In many of the estates, the local shopping area appeared to be the main meeting place for groups of young people:

Around the shops, there's a lot of people that hang around there and ... I think for older people if they see gangs of lads or children hanging around, they think that they're going to be attacked and I suppose that will stop them going out to the shops.

(Ashton, Tameside)

In the Millfields group, one suggestion was that the shop should close earlier to discourage young people from hanging around and stop a lot of trouble for the shopkeeper. In Haughton Green, the 'late' shop was already closing early, because of problems with young people.

A number of the groups also noted that it was common to find groups of young people hanging around in local parks:

We've got a park for the little kids and there's always a group of youths that come ... they threatened a person on my estate with a bottle and when he reported it to the police they said 'take their name'. Are you going to say 'put your bottle down, can I have your name and address?'

(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

This problem was seen to contribute to the lack of suitable play facilities for younger children. Residents in Ashton gave particular examples of vandalism:

There's a playground for the little ones but it's been completely vandalised, when it was put in it was obviously very nice but now it's just a mess ... there's no point building these things if they're not going to be kept up because it just ends up looking a mess again.

(Ashton, Tameside)

In Haughton Green, residents talked about play equipment that had been damaged and had fallen into disrepair:

They had lovely swings and everything but that was vandalised and it's never been replaced.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Another resident felt that, despite the council efforts to redress the damage, the area had become a continual target for destruction:

It does get done up again, but it just gets vandalised the day after, as soon as it's been done. There's not much point, they're just wasting money doing it.

(Ashton, Tameside)

There was general agreement in the groups that many of the problems with young people appear to stem from a lack of appropriate youth amenities and activities. One participant noted with some sympathy:

Who wants to stand outside a shop all day long, it would do your head in wouldn't it. I mean even on Christmas Day, some of those kids were out weren't they.

(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

The young people participating in the groups agreed that:

There's nothing for us to do, there's nowhere for us to go.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Litter and street cleaning

All of the groups talked about problems with rubbish and litter in their neighbourhoods, including food litter, abandoned furniture, broken glass and dog mess. As residents in Hattersley stated:

Prioritising local environmental concerns

It is a disgrace in some places, it really is very bad. And it's not just bad to look at, it's bad for people's health especially the kids that have to play in those areas. I would like to see a lot of cleaning up because everywhere that you look there's always rubbish ... It does desperately need doing.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

For example, residents in Merridale talked about their concern with broken glass:

I'm worrying about the dog treading on the glass but I've got no choice, I've got to walk her out of my front door but I just watch where she steps.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

People also complained about rubbish near their houses:

Sometimes in my passageway you get people putting bags of bottles, so you've got to bring them in because children come and break them.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Residents in Haughton Green complained that their shopping area was full of rubbish:

And another thing is all the litter that is brought about with the shops here.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Once again, young people were seen to be the main cause of the problem. Residents identified that there were litter 'hotspots' on the estate and these often coincided with where young people were congregating in groups:

There's a lot of litter about and when kids have been drinking and things like that there'll be bottles all over the road.

(Ashton, Tameside)

But other reasons were also given for litter problems. In particular, residents in Ashton and Haughton Green mentioned a lack of litter bins as one of the main problems:

There's not enough litter bins. You walk down the street and you'll have to be holding your litter for about ten minutes before you get to another bin.

(Ashton, Tameside)

A major cause of rubbish in a number of the neighbourhoods appeared to stem from the fact that refuse collectors would not dispose of anything left beside a bin and refused to take excess rubbish in overfull bins.

I've seen them taking out a black bag [from the bin] because the lid won't close and just put it on the floor.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

This caused mess because, as a respondent from Ashton said:

Dogs rip it up and you get rubbish all over again.

(Ashton, Tameside)

Residents feel that the problem is made worse because of a lack of street cleaning. One resident's experience was particularly negative:

My next-door neighbour died and ... the street was in such a mess that quite a few of us got in the street with our brushes and cleaned it so we could come and have a good send-off. We asked the council two days before. 'Look', we told them, 'there's a funeral, is there any chance of coming, so we can have a good send-off?'

Nobody turned up.

(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

It appears that, although both authorities set out target times for clearing litter, these are not always adhered to. As one resident stated:

The streets don't get cleaned ... Probably about once every three months I've seen them ... They do the town centre but don't do the small streets off it.

(Ashton, Tameside)

Other residents agreed that, although some areas of their estate were regularly cleaned, with a noticeable improvement, other parts of the estate needed more attention:

I live right near the shops and we have a man that comes round every day and he comes and picks up every little bit of paper ... there is no rubbish and it is spotless ... But as soon as you move away from the shops it gets worse and worse.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

Participants in one group reported that rubbish collection in their area is irregular and insufficient. As one local resident put it:

You just don't know when they're going to come.
(Haughton Green, Tameside)

It was explained that this was because their area is classed as an 'overtime round', with no scheduled refuse-collection day or time:

We're only classed as overtime, we are not a regular run for the bin men ... they don't have to come and do us.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Pest control

Nearly all of the neighbourhoods talked about some problems with rats, largely associated

with the overflowing bins that resulted from inadequate and infrequent refuse collection and street cleaning:

When the bins are all overfull then there's rats ... there was a dead rat on my sister's street and there's kids running round kicking it, kicking it about and it was just mouldy and rotten ... that's a health issue.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

I live right near the woods down at the bottom there and they didn't empty my bin for three weeks and there was rats in the rubbish.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

We've got a valley on our estate on Stockport Road and many a time bags end up there and you wonder why they're riddled with rats.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

Dog fouling

Dog fouling was a commonly stated problem in most of the groups. Residents felt that, although there were warning signs about removing it, there were insufficient dog litter bins and their emptying was irregular:

There is only one [dog bin] and that's in the park, which is no good to people who are walking on the streets with their dogs. And then you have to ring them up to remind them to come and empty it because it gets overflowed.

(Ashton, Tameside)

Fly-tipping

In addition to rubbish on the streets, abandoned items of unwanted furniture and appliances were a regular occurrence in many of the

neighbourhoods. As a Dovecotes' resident pointed out:

There's all kinds of litter all over Dovecotes. There's people that leave furniture and stuff out on the streets and you've got piles of it. They just shove it out.

(Dovecotes, Wolverhampton)

The Merridale residents agreed, and talked about fridge freezers, cookers and washing machines dumped in the street:

I don't know if you've noticed but there's a fridge freezer in every street.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

Local residents feel that the council doesn't act quickly enough to remove the fly-tipped rubbish. As one Hattersley resident pointed out:

The council don't bother to come and shift all the fly-tipping ... I can take you to a place where it's settees, beds and the lot down there.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

Many of the participants felt that the reason fly-tipping was such a big issue in their areas was a lack of facilities to get rid of large unwanted items of furniture free of charge; items can only be removed with a payment to the council.

People in the groups felt that this charge was out of reach for people on low income:

One-parent families or pensioners can't afford to have it taken away and pay £15.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

The Merridale group perceived that there was a direct correlation between the time the council started to charge for the removal of large items and the time fridges started to be

dumped. They described street dumping as having reached 'epidemic proportions'.

Furthermore, the point was raised that, for those without cars (usually those with the lowest income), there was no other way to get large items removed and so they are doubly penalised:

I've just moved into a house and I've got the last tenant's rubbish, it's been there for months and months ... I haven't got a car and they're saying 'Oh well if you can take it to the tip it's free' ... [but] I've got to leave it to rot.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

Parks and safe outdoor play spaces

Residents in several of the groups felt that their neighbourhoods were lacking in parks and play areas. There seemed to be a few play spaces in Haughton Green, and everyone in this group agreed that open-air facilities for children and young people were generally inadequate:

You can go to Ashton, you can go to Hyde, they've got places all roped off for children to play, they've got swings and everything, we have nothing here.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

A resident from Haughton Green expressed her sadness and frustration at the situation her young grandchildren were in:

There's nothing for them [the children] ... they're just playing in the streets, there's a lovely field at the back of me but they don't go to it because it's just that little bit further away without parents.

There's nothing else for little ones at all.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Other groups, although they had parks in their neighbourhood, felt that these were either not adequately maintained or not easily / safely accessible:

There's lots of empty spaces. If it was kept up, there would be nice places to go.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

In Merridale, syringes were regularly found on the ground in the local park and respondents in Dovecotes also talked about a sand pit in which syringes were often found. There were wardens but they weren't always able to find the syringes in the sand, and so the parents didn't feel it was safe.

There's needles there [in the park] and everything.

(Ashton, Tameside)

The issue of children and bicycles was also discussed in relation to the inadequacy of convenient, safe play space:

There's kids on bikes in the middle of the road ... because the nearest ground they've got if they want to go for a place to play is along here at Oxford Park ... which is completely out of any parents' reach.

(Ashton, Tameside)

General maintenance issues

Local residents in the groups felt that the areas in which they lived have potential but are neglected. The Hattersley group talked about the estate's cracked and uneven pavements:

You walk along and if you don't watch yourself you're head over heels ... because they're not being looked after.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

Residents saw this as a struggle between the council and housing associations, in terms of who should accept responsibility for maintenance of the area. Residents are left stuck in the middle having to battle to get things done:

This boils down to Manchester City Council and New Charter [the housing association] or Tameside [the council] because they argue as to who owns which pavements, who owns which roads and who owns which streetlights.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

Merridale residents also talked about dangerous barbed wire bollards:

Up by the government buildings [on Kimberley Street], there's lots of, like, bollards and there's barbed wire hanging off all of them and for the second time in two years my daughter's been cut open, and I've reported it to the civic twice, and it's still there for it to happen again.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

Local air quality

Several of the groups identified that their neighbourhoods suffered from poor air quality. The problems they identified ranged from foul smells from a sewage plant, to pollution from busy roads nearby:

The worst thing about health around here is the stink that comes from the sewage ... it comes right into the house, [the most] foul smell you've ever smelled in your life, you get it a lot especially in the summer. When you breathe, when you get the smell and you're just breathing it in – you can't open your windows at night.

(Dovecotes, Wolverhampton)

Prioritising local environmental concerns

The Millfields group identified that pollution and air quality in the area were a lot better since the factories had gone, but tyre fires, which occurred about once every three weeks, meant that there was pollution in the air, which lasted a whole day:

Smog out over everything
(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

Air pollution from the new motorway and busy Stockport Road (described as 'one of the fourth busiest roads in the country') was a concern in West End group.

Traffic noise

In Ashton, there was concern about noise from traffic, particularly lorries:

Pollution round the area off the new motorway ... plus the traffic coming on the Stockport Road as well ... terrible, the noise.
(Ashton, Tameside)

Night traffic was a particular irritation, causing interrupted sleep for many residents. Stockport Road was described as 'the easiest way to go to the motorway' and carried heavy goods traffic throughout the night:

Every night between half past two and four o'clock I see the big lorries, they leave the depot about two o'clock in the morning and they pass through the Stockport Road ... you can hear the noise because they're like the juggernauts, big lorries.
(Ashton, Tameside)

Because I live off Stockport Road, a pretty busy road, I hear it through the night and you can't get to sleep half the time because there's that much traffic on road even through night.

(Ashton, Tameside)

My bedroom window's right next to it so I hear it 24/seven, all the time.

(Ashton, Tameside)

The level of freight traffic was said to have significantly increased recently with the new road layout around Smith Street, now a one-way street. This meant that lorries travelling to or from the two bakeries had to 'go all the way round on a tiny road'. The new scheme was also seen as responsible for increasing traffic on Stockport Road.

One resident lived right next to a dual carriageway; she spoke of the plans for a bypass which was 'supposed to have been built ten years ago'. Another participant in the group described local traffic as being:

One behind the other from half past seven till nine o'clock and it's the same at night-time from half past four till about seven o'clock.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

Dangerous roads

Despite not being close to any major roads, the Haughton Green residents complained about the problem of speeding cars in their neighbourhood:

We have a problem with speed ... it's mayhem, it's terrible. There's been quite a lot of accidents with kids.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

It appeared that there are no traffic-calming measures in place on the estate and the 20 mph limit that has been set is not enforced. One woman told us that a child had recently been knocked down by a car:

I live at the bottom and they come round that corner like it was Brands Hatch and six weeks ago my neighbour's little girl got knocked over.
(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Millfields had unsuccessfully tried to get speed bumps around the school area and felt that speeding cars were a serious threat:

We're in a crescent and the cars start at one side of the crescent, they come speeding round and they come out the other side. The amount of years we've tried to get police bumps, ramps the lot.
(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

Some of the streets are narrow with double parking, there's an additional danger with cars speeding around corners and fear that children, animals and vehicles are in danger of being hit:

One day one of them hit my cat. He was going so fast that the cat was going round on his wheel as he went up the road.
(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

Dovecotes faced a slightly different problem in that speed bumps have been installed along the main roads on the estate, but the real problem was identified as motor bikes driving along the back alleyways, throughout the whole day. The alleyways also allowed crime to take place and were neat escape routes for people running from the police. Ashton also had problems with motor-scooters.

The lack of a pedestrian crossing to Oxford Park on the Stockport Road was seen as a major issue:

There's been so many accidents with kids trying to get across, now the bollard that was in the middle has been knocked down and that's not been replaced so we've been asking the council about building a crossing rather than putting the bollard back but no response.
(Ashton, Tameside)

The apparent lack of suitable crossing points was a major safety problem in the area and pedestrian lights were said to be 'in the wrong places':

You're worried about letting your kids play out near busy roads because there's no crossings.
(Ashton, Tameside)

Building community spirit

When asked if there was a single thing that could be done to really change the quality of people's lives in the area, a recurring theme across all the groups was building community spirit, as this extract from the Merridale group illustrates:

N: Community.

D: I think community spirit.

H: Community and people basically with each other.

E: More things to do for community altogether.

H: Helping people to take part.

E: I think that every single one thing on there all links back really to the community doesn't it because education's again it's the community, safety.

The rationale given for this was that it is only the people who actually live in an area that can really determine what is needed:

People, like council workers and staff, they're trying to sort out issues that they either know very little about or they haven't experienced first-hand.

There was a strong opinion in all of the groups that, ultimately, the impetus for regeneration must come from communities themselves, although it was recognised that expert help might be needed to get local people together to achieve this:

It comes from the people who live in the community basically but it's finding a link between them and getting it out and getting them together and stuff it's maybe, maybe a sort of special body of people who would know how to do that, I don't know.

Access to information

It also became evident from the group discussions that no one was entirely sure about who is responsible for addressing the problems that had been raised, the legal rights of residents in relation to these issues or where they could go to find such things out. In response to this finding, a desktop policy and legislative 'mapping exercise' was carried out by the researchers, in an attempt to identify the type and standard of service delivery that local residents are entitled to expect in response to the concerns they had raised. The outcome of this can be found in Chapter 5.

Summary of the key local environmental concerns of residents

In summary, the following eight key local environmental concerns were identified across the focus groups.

- 1 Environmental hazards and hazardous activities, such as tyre burning, abandoned and burnt-out cars, the smell from a local sewage farm, rats and fires in rubbish bins, busy and dangerous roads, and poorly maintained road and/or pavement surfaces (e.g. pot holes), etc.
- 2 A lack of facilities for children and young people, the latter being seen as part of the reason why young people on the estates hang around causing trouble and environmental damage.
- 3 Poor housing: long waiting times for repairs/improvements; poor-quality repairs; empty, boarded-up properties often leading to vandalism; some poor-quality stock; issues surrounding housing-stock transfer to registered social landlords (RSLs).
- 4 A decline in local shopping facilities, with the remaining outlets charging high prices.
- 5 Insufficient health-care facilities at a local level and a particular need for more dentists and GPs.
- 6 The presence of rubbish and litter, including fly-tipping. Irregular and insufficient street cleaning. Residents have to pay to get extra rubbish removed; no scheduled times for refuse collections in some neighbourhoods.

7 Lack of community spirit made worse by the lack of adequate and appropriate community facilities.

8 Lack of access to information about environmental rights and responsibilities.

4 Why addressing these concerns is important for neighbourhood renewal

None of the issues raised in the focus groups could be described as 'new' or startling; they are repeatedly identified in consultation exercises with people living in deprived neighbourhoods. They may seem trivial in comparison to the important problems that need to be addressed in these areas, such as structural unemployment, poorly performing schools and inadequate health-care services, but nevertheless they do matter to both local people and the neighbourhood renewal process.

It is unusual for a report of this nature to include long extracts from focus groups with residents, but the following discussions illustrate so clearly why it is important to take residents' concerns about their local environment seriously that we felt an exception should be made in this instance:

A: *This estate is like walking into the dark ages. It's like they're so behind it needs so much putting into it really when you think about it ... there's so much that could be done here that could be called regeneration, getting it built up into a nice estate, which isn't being done ...*

D: *You're not getting the same quality are you.*

A: *If I felt important to the people that mattered, as important as people in other areas in Wolverhampton, then these things wouldn't be a problem. If we were treated the same as people in other areas, we would have a lot of these things [amenities]. I don't feel like I'm important to the Government or to the council. I feel*

overlooked ... there's no sense of anything for the children here, you just feel like you're a nobody.

J: *And we're getting used to it, that's why the community spirit is lacking, we're getting used to suffering and having things difficult, it could be easier so why not have it easier. Instead of speaking out we just sit back and take it, let them do what they're going to do to us.*

A: *Yeah and it makes you feel like you're nobody ... Unimportant and isolated.*

J: *No hope.*

D: *There's no hope for the teenagers.*

F: *Unless there's something better.*

Facilitator: *So how do you feel about that?*

A: *Inferior ... Hopeless.*

D: *Scared.*
(Dovecotes, Wolverhampton)

As we have argued in previous research from the JRF (Lucas *et al.*, 2003), failure to address these 'little things' can undermine local people's confidence in the whole regeneration process. The evidence of this discussion in one of the focus groups suggests that, over a period of time, the negative feelings that residents have towards their immediate local environments undermine their ability to take control of their lives and add to their feelings of hopelessness and stigmatisation.

Why addressing these concerns is important for neighbourhood renewal

Those who can get out of the area:

They'd rather leave, they'd rather go, which they have, a lot of people have gone.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

People are reluctant to move into the area because of the stigma:

And nobody wants to come into the area do they. Nobody wants to come into a bad area.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

Adding to the general appearance of abandonment:

Housing ... empty ... run down and boarded up.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

All boarded up, they're a bloody eyesore aren't they ... they want flattening, I wouldn't let me bloody dog live in there.

(Hattersley, Tameside)

And this adds to feelings of frustration with the council because of a recognised need for more council accommodation:

I think myself that there's too many properties going left to pot in the area, boarded up and derelict when there's people desperately, desperately needing housing.

(Merridale, Wolverhampton)

Those who stay feel trapped:

Some people have bought their houses on this estate, they can't sell them.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

And many residents see themselves as under siege from 'immigrants':

Yeah but I'm on about Kosovans just speeding on the car park weren't they.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

'Outsiders':

It's what's coming in from outside ... coming in, and the council are not in any preference at all, checking them out, not a police check but a reference you know a personal reference.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

'Newcomers':

Yeah, they tend to be moving the rough people from the rough area into, it's like turning round and saying 'well, will one bad apple be cured by the rest of the good apples?', but I think it's turning the other way because one bad apple is starting to turn the other apples.

(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

This could be an absolutely lovely estate right, but what they've done is they've brought all the riff-raff in little pockets and you only need a little pocket of one and it spreads and that's what cancer is, they've brought the cancer in, now it's right the way and you ain't going to get it any better.

(Dovecotes, Wolverhampton)

Parents:

Well I mean I will mostly blame the families you see because they are not looking after their own kids after a certain time.

(Ashton, Tameside)

Young people:

It's the youth more than anything ... the youth have changed.

(Haughton Green, Tameside)

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Things have gone I think bad or even to the point where I can say it's worse, there's too many gangs of young people not going to school and staying out all hours of the days and evening.
(Dovecotes, Wolverhampton)

The white population:

Since these riots [the 2002 Oldham riots] I do feel that, you know, people ... I see them looking at you and they're just like 'oh move away from here, move your, move your, go back to your country' and things like that you know.
(Ashton, Tameside)

Essentially, any visible group can be singled out and blamed for the problems that undermine residents' quality of life in the area and that people feel are outside their abilities to affect. This generally leads to fears about personal safety:

I don't feel, personally, don't feel safe in Bilston in my street when I walk down there, even going to a cash point, it's just a different feeling than any other high street and I mean I come from London, you can't get much more drastic than that but I don't, I just don't feel safe.
(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

Ultimately, it creates divides between different sectors of the population and a 'them and us' mentality, which erodes community spirit:

So community is split then isn't it, that means community is split.
(Millfields, Wolverhampton)

On a more positive note, small and seemingly incidental improvements to the local area can often serve as a catalyst for bigger

changes. A participant in one of the groups talked about the 'domino' effect of an improved environment:

The whole area just wants a facelift doesn't it. Change the environment and therefore you're bringing new blood in and, when you start bringing in people, that's when you start getting the interest to build things ... and it really works as well.

Others suggested that the removal of litter and abandoned furniture from their estates would feel like an achievement, would look like people cared and were willing to make the effort, and that it would be a general boost to people's morale. This in turn might encourage them to get involved and take an interest in other activities on the estate.

Frontline workers described community involvement as essential to the regeneration process and both LSPs acknowledged the difficulties they have encountered in involving local residents in the decision-making process. Part of this may be down to an unwillingness to commit to regular attendance at meetings, combined with a discomfort about their formality. The above discussions demonstrate that at least part of the problem also arises from frustration that even the little things are not being put right. This suggests that working directly with local people to find effective and locally accountable solutions to these local environmental concerns might help to encourage a wider cross-section of local residents to become more involved in, and engaged with, the wider neighbourhood renewal process in their areas.

5 What can be done?

Using a technique called 'Six Thinking Hats' (see the Appendix), residents in the focus groups were asked to think laterally and creatively to suggest potential solutions to the local environmental concerns they had raised. The method is specifically designed to encourage 'blue-sky' or 'out-of-the-box' thinking and thus often results in identifying innovative ideas.

Following the fieldwork exercises, a desktop mapping exercise was also undertaken by the researchers in an attempt to establish rights and responsibilities in relation to the issues that had been raised by residents. This was augmented by a seminar with policy officers from the key government departments and other environmental 'experts' to identify any new or emerging national and strategic policies in this area.

The powers and duties of local councils

A full list of the powers and duties of local councils in relation to each area of their service delivery responsibilities can be found on the National Association of Local Councils website. This also identifies the relevant statutory provision under which these are allocated and the relevant supporting policy documentation.

This can be found at: www.nalc.gov.uk/members/legal/

Access to environmental information

Rights and responsibilities

Under the Environmental Regulations Act 1992, the public has a right of access to the environmental information held by public authorities and certain other bodies. Requests

for information can be refused only in certain limited circumstances and the basic presumption is that information will be released unless there are compelling and substantive reasons to withhold it. The DEFRA website provides more information on this issue: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/pubaccess.htm.

Public space legislation

In December 2003, the Government set up a new website to support the work of organisations responsible for the management and maintenance of public spaces. This brings together all the relevant legislation and guidance, as well as offering examples of good practice. It covers topics such as allotments, litter, dog fouling and more general land-use issues and can be found at: www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge/.

The local environmental quality section of the DEFRA website also provides information on many of these topics: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/index.htm.

Ideas from local residents

Residents said they get the majority of their information from the television or radio and most did not have access to, or know how to use, a computer. They did not generally read the newsletters posted through their door and would be more likely to read notices about what is happening in their area if they were posted in the local shop, the school, the doctor's surgery or the post office. Most would not feel happy attending formal meetings, but enjoyed the

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focus group and suggested that more consultations like this would help them to get involved in local activities.

Addressing anti-social behaviour

Rights and responsibilities

The 2003 Anti-social Behaviour Act provides the local authorities and other local agencies, such as crime and disorder reduction partnerships, new powers and flexibilities to address anti-social behaviour without having to go to court. The main tools now available to local authorities are identified in the box below.

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

The Act contains measures drawn up from across five government departments and builds on existing legislation to clarify, streamline and reinforce the powers that are available to local practitioners.

The new powers include:

- widening the use of fixed penalty notices – e.g. noise nuisance, truancy, graffiti – and applying them to 16 to 17 year olds
- new action to close down ‘crack houses’
- powers to disperse groups in designated areas suffering persistent and serious anti-social behaviour
- extending powers to deal with aggravated trespass
- simplifying powers to deal with unauthorised encampments (provided alternative sites are available)

- restricting the use of air weapons and replica guns; banning air cartridge weapons that are easily converted to firearms
- new mechanisms for enforcing parental responsibility for children who behave in an anti-social way in school or in the community
- a new offence to sell spray paints to under 16s and stronger powers for local authorities to tackle fly-tipping, graffiti and fly-posting
- widening powers to shut down establishments that create noise nuisance
- powers for local authorities to tackle graffiti on street furniture
- powers to social landlords to take action against anti-social tenants including faster evictions and removing their right to buy their home
- courts to consider the impact of anti-social behaviour on the wider community in all housing possession cases
- improving the operation of Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/antisocialbehaviour/legislation/asbact.html)

Ideas from local residents

In the focus groups, residents tended to place far greater emphasis on the need to provide young people with activities to reduce boredom

and keep them from hanging around on the streets than any actions to punish them for anti-social behaviour. There was a general sentiment that, with the right incentives, young people could be encouraged away from anti-social behaviour towards activities that could also benefit both the community and themselves. This was seen as essential to the creation of a positive and productive community where adults and children could socialise together.

Some of the ideas put forward at the LSP board meetings by the resident groups were:

- play centres held in the local school buildings where young people could spend some of their free time in supervised activities
- providing weekend and holiday activities
- something for all weathers, a cinema or swimming baths, instead of the ubiquitous football pitch
- a youth-run facility, with young people taking responsibility for providing their own leadership, with local adult volunteers helping out
- using a disused railway for a 'scrambler' track
- converting a closed local pub into a jungle gym.

The importance of directly involving young people in the development of activities was identified as the key to success. Participants also noted that local people may be prevented from setting up such activities themselves because they lack the required qualifications to supervise them. There was general agreement in

the groups that providing facilities for young people is not enough in itself and that youth training and other support mechanisms need to be in place to help young people to become more involved with their communities. Several people in the groups noted that it is not only young people who should be targeted and that adults also need advice and education in order to become more involved in regulating their children's behaviour.

Rubbish collection, street cleaning and litter

Rights and responsibilities

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 is the main legislation in relation to waste collection and disposal, street cleaning and other issues of public cleanliness, such as dog fouling.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Section 45 and 46 – rubbish collection

Section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a statutory duty on local authorities for the free collection of household waste. Section 46 of the Act sets out the requirements for the provision of waste-refuse containers. There is no specific legal requirement regarding the regularity of refuse collection or to state that it needs to be collected on the same day every week. www.hms.gov.uk/acts/acts1990

Part IV – litter

Legislation regarding the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to litter and refuse is clearly set out under the

Continued overleaf

Environmental Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. Under the Act, local authorities have statutory responsibility to (so far as is practicable) clear litter and refuse from public places for which it is responsible, such as streets, parks, playgrounds, tourist beaches and pedestrianised areas. The Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse sets standards of cleanliness for public spaces throughout the UK and provides practical guidance to local authorities. www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/litter/code/pdf/1-12.pdf

The Litter (Amendment) Act 2003

Under section 5B of the Litter (Amendment) Act 2003, local authorities are only required to provide and maintain litter bins, and make arrangement for them to be regularly emptied where it appears to them 'reasonably necessary to do so'.

However, under section 5C of the Amendment, every local authority is required to designate one or more litter officers to ensure that it properly exercises its enforcement functions under section 2. www.gov.im/infocentre/acts/pdfs/laa2003.pdf

The Litter (Animal Droppings) Order 1991 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

This places a duty on local authorities to keep public walks or pleasure grounds, gardens and other areas used for recreation clear of dog faeces (as far as is practicable).

In addition, the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 allows local authorities to designate any land in their area as a poop-scoop area where dog owners must clean up after their pets. The penalty for failing to do this can be up to £1,000 and there is provision for a fixed-penalty scheme with a spot fine of up to £50.

www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si1991/Uksi_19910961_en_1.htm

Ideas from local residents

The groups put forward a number of additional suggestions for tackling litter and street cleanliness, including:

- educating young children as part of the school curriculum not to drop litter
- a poster design competition organised by the school, council, volunteer groups and parents
- bins that provided incentives to encourage younger children not to drop litter, e.g. with a message/song/tokens/swipe-card points when litter was dropped in
- bins made out of non-combustible material/with locks on the top to prevent fires being started in them
- making local businesses and shops more responsible for removal of litter and provision of recycling services
- a free phone number for reporting syringes and other rubbish problems.

Improving the physical fabric of the area

Rights and responsibilities

Fly-tipping

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that the local authority must provide a service to collect other rubbish from homes, such as old sofas, fridges and waste for gardens but a charge may be made for this. In line with this, both of the case study local authorities provide a service for collecting large items of furniture, with a charge.

Graffiti

Section 43 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act gives local authorities and police civilians (e.g. neighbourhood wardens) a new power to issue fixed-penalty notices for minor graffiti and fly-posting offences (those that it would not be cost-effective to pursue through the courts). The offender can be given the opportunity to pay an on-the-spot £50 fine or to pay this within 14 days of the notice being served before court proceedings are brought against him/her.

Ideas from local residents

The main ideas from local residents for improving the physical fabric of their environment were in relation to removal of large items of rubbish, housing improvements, addressing safety and security concerns, and better local services and amenities.

Removal of large items of rubbish

In Wolverhampton, the local authority imposes a fixed charge of £10 for up to five items. In

Tameside, the local authority will collect up to five items for a charge of £15. Residents reported that this charge is too expensive for people on low incomes and suggested that at least part of the problem could be solved if large items of rubbish left behind by previous tenants could be removed for free. It was pointed out that, for those without cars, there is no way to get large items removed for free, but that richer people with cars can get their rubbish disposed of for free at the local dump and that this is unfair.

Housing

Respondents felt that housing associations, private landlords and council housing should work more closely to ensure that they can house people with a range of different needs. It was suggested that several one-bedroomed flats could be combined to provide housing for families and that housing exchange schemes need to be put in place so that people can upgrade or downsize as required. Physical improvements to the housing stock, whether occupied or not, were seen as a high priority. It was felt that, once houses were modernised and looked 'a bit nicer, people would appreciate them a bit more and look after them better'. Several people thought that the council should check on prospective tenants by taking up a reference. One respondent in the Merridale group suggested that empty houses could be converted into drop-in centres, solving at the same time the problem of derelict housing and the lack of community facilities on the estate.

Safety and security

Several residents wanted to see more policing of their estates, putting special emphasis on the value of community policemen, caretakers,

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security guards and wardens to 'keep the riff-raff out'. Park wardens were considered a real deterrent to would-be vandals. In general, technical interventions, such as CCTV cameras, were less popular because of concerns about their cost and fears that this might lead to increases in council tax charges.

Local services and amenities

Ideas about local services that could be restored to, or prevented from closing on, the estates were not forthcoming in any of the groups. This is because people feel that, even acting as a community, it is beyond their ability to affect such issues.

Addressing environmental hazards

Rights and responsibilities

Pollution Control

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 established a system of 'Integrated Pollution Control' to address local noise and other environmental nuisances, and to prevent and control pollution from industry. Between 2000 and 2007, this is gradually being replaced by a new regime to ensure that operators use the best techniques available to them to control pollution from their activities to land, air and water. The DEFRA website lists a series of legislative and guidance documents as well as identifying the various public bodies responsible for industrial pollution control:
www.defra.gov.uk/environment/ppc/index.htm.

The Environment Agency is the primary body responsible for pollution control in England. The Agency has a corporate commitment to engage with LSPs on issues connected with the local environment and is currently developing national guidance for its area staff working on this. Further information about the work and responsibilities of the Agency can be found at:
www.environmentagency.gov.uk.

Odour and other nuisance from sewage treatment works

A government review of the statutory control of odour and other nuisance from sewage treatment plants is currently under way. Information about the public consultation and other issues can be obtained by contacting:
odours@defra.gov.uk

Noise and nuisance

A dedicated Noise and Nuisance team at DEFRA is responsible for developing and promoting initiatives to address noise and other statutory nuisances covered by the 1996 Noise Act, such as dust, smells, bonfires and rubbish burning. The DEFRA website provides information on each of the specific topics covered by the team:
www.defra.gov.uk/noise/index.htm

The Noise Act is currently undergoing review following public consultation. Specific queries about the outcome of the review and other aspects of noise nuisance can also be addressed to: noise@defra.gov.uk

Ideas from local residents

Local residents living in close proximity to hazardous activities expressed the opinion that their area would always remain an unattractive place to live unless these 'environmental bads' were addressed. It was recognised that such problems were largely out of the control of the local authority or any other local agencies and would require government intervention. Residents anticipated that this would not be forthcoming 'in their lifetime' and that they would just have to 'put up with the problem' or move away if they ever got the opportunity to do so.

Building community spirit

Rights and responsibilities

In 1998, the UK signed the UNEC Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. This is commonly referred to as the Aarhus Convention. The EC also signed this Convention in its own right. The EC has produced a new law (EC Directive) to implement the Convention. The Directive will create a requirement to consult the public in the drawing up of plans or programmes on waste, hazardous waste, battery disposal, packaging, agricultural nitrate disposal, ambient air quality and waste landfill. DEFRA's Sustainable Development Unit is the lead policy section in the UK for the proposed Directive. The DEFRA website provides more information on this issue: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/pubaccess.htm.

How to Make Your Neighbourhood a Better Place to Live (ENCAMS, 2002)

ENCAMS has produced a handy guide to help local communities wishing to get involved in improving their local environment. It is specifically designed to help people with little experience in this area decide what needs to be done and how to do it.

It offers practical ideas about getting hold of information and professional help, skills training and funding support, and makes some useful suggestions about the type of projects local people might want to consider setting up.

Section 3, detailing techniques, processes and skills needed to get things moving, is particularly useful, as is the list at the back of the book of contact details of organisations that can offer help.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) 'Local matters' website

The WWF is well known for its wildlife protection campaigns, but has also been offering local authorities resources and support to engage with communities on environmental issues.

It has set up a new dedicated website to help people working in or with local government on improving local environments and other health and sustainability issues. The website offers news, training and information and networking facilities.

Further information can be found at www.wwf.org.uk/local_matters, or by calling the WWF Local Sustainability Unit on: 01483 426409.

Ideas from local residents

Local area clean-up projects

Residents were keen on bringing the local community together to tidy up the local neighbourhood and undertake other local environmental activities. They felt this could be a positive and achievable way to help build community spirit, as well as offering the potential for personal and community wealth creation.

In particular, involving young people in local clean-up projects was seen as one way to encourage them to take more pride in their local areas. It was felt that this would then help to curb acts of vandalism.

One group became particularly enthusiastic about the idea of forming 'a People's Union'. It was stressed that this should include people of all ages and could act as a management committee for the local regeneration of their area.

Local enterprise from the environment

The Merridale group discussed the possibility of creating the opportunity for community enterprise from their litter problems. It was felt that this would help to build both personal and local wealth in the area, as well as raising people's self-esteem. Some of the ideas they had included:

- recycle broken glass into jewellery
- can-collection schemes

- making sculptures from scrap materials (including fridges)
- recycle fridges as planters/garden ponds/rat-proof dry-feed stores for farms or to be turned into bins.

A respondent in another group suggested setting up a local salvage yard, 'a tatty yard', for recycling unwanted items of furniture.

Conclusions on rights and responsibilities

The desktop review identified that information is available at the national level in relation to local environmental rights and the responsibilities of key service agencies in relation to these. The focus groups suggest that this information is not generally available to local people, as it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to access it without a computer and internet skills, and it is not in a format that they would feel comfortable about interpreting. In numerous instances, the information that is available is anyway unclear on precisely what level of service can be expected in relation to the concerns that were raised.

It can also be noted that the emphasis of the information that is available is on prosecution and litigation, whereas the suggestions from local people tended to focus on creating opportunities for participation and other prevention tactics.

6 Feedback from the case study LSPs

Two mechanisms were used to obtain feedback on the research findings from the case study LSPs.

- 1 The key concerns of residents and their ideas for change were presented to the Environmental Sub-group of each of the case study LSPs to elicit their responses to the research.
- 2 A representative from each LSP was also contacted ten months later and asked to report on whether any new mechanisms or policy actions had been introduced following the research. A full list of the actions for each neighbourhood area are detailed in the tables at the end of this chapter.

General observations

At the feedback meetings with the two LSP boards, officer representatives reported that the concerns raised by residents in the focus groups are not new to them, but rather:

Have opened a different window in the same room.

They felt that it is not difficult to come to some sort of 'idealised shared vision' about what can be done to resolve the problems that had been identified. For them, what is far harder, and in many instances can appear to be virtually impossible, is to make the necessary step changes in policy delivery to bring about visible and sustained environmental improvements in these areas. Officers felt that at least part of the problem lies with a kind of long-standing inertia among the resident population, which means they don't report

incidents. An officer from the Wolverhampton LSP noted:

If there is a rubbish bag dumped in the western [more affluent] part of the city, then that is seen as almost a national crisis but in poor neighbourhoods it is seen as such a common occurrence that it does not rank on people's attention scale. The solution is, therefore, partly about raising people's aspirations for their own neighbourhoods.

It was suggested that this could best be achieved through 'ownership of the public realm by everybody'.

Both LSPs recognised that formal mechanisms, such as community contracts, need to be in place to ensure that service providers are far more accountable to communities for the services that they are responsible for delivering. One suggestion was that facilitated forums could be used to bring the providers of services together with local residents, so that they could be directly challenged on their delivery failures and the consequences of these on people's lives. This might serve to make the service providers feel more accountable.

Building 'environment' into the delivery structures of the LSP

Both authorities believe that they are able to respond to local environmental concerns in the context of their neighbourhood renewal strategies because the 'environment' has been, or is being, built into the key structures and delivery mechanisms guiding the LSP.

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Tameside already has a structure in place whereby environmental concerns, monitored via a set of Quality of Life indicators within the Community Strategy, are embedded within the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The latter acts as the overarching floor target against which the authority measures its performance over time. Together, the two strategies provide the borough with a common framework for environmental performance management.

Over the next 12 months, the authority is looking to review all the Tameside partnerships borough-wide. This may include setting up a separate Environmental Partnership, with three core elements: environmental sustainability, transport and the built environment. However, as these themes are common with those of the existing Economic Forum, the two may be combined. The main drivers for this have been from the 'bottom up' – talking to local people and responding to their needs through residents' meetings and the Neighbourhood Managers.

Over the last six months, Wolverhampton City Council has seen a re-energising of its Green Group. The LSP is now leading on an Environmental/Green Group, as a result of this. The main membership of the group will be key local service delivery agencies plus some cross-representation from the other theme groups under the LSP, e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal. It is being seen as a local delivery group rather than a strategic or national body.

This is reported to have arisen from the activities of the Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams. Neighbourhood Managers were given the opportunity to influence council policy at the highest possible level, giving presentations to directors and senior politicians.

One of the key areas they selected was street scene and environmental concerns, which had emerged as one of three key issues raised by residents.

As a direct result of this, the council has 'bent the mainstream' and targeted an additional £1 million of funding in the current financial year, supported through funding from NRF and SRB 3, for streetscape and recycling. This has meant a fundamental change to delivery on recycling, waste and streetscape issues.

Phase II of the LSRN raises key issues and challenges, for a range of different subject areas, in which environmental and streetscape issues are a core concern. The LSP has its audit inspection in May and, as a result of that, a number of issues that impact on the environmental theme are being brought together.

New environmental delivery mechanisms

A variety of new environmental delivery mechanisms have been put in place in each of the community areas by both LSPs over the last year to 18 months. The tables at the end of this chapter give a full list of action that is currently under way in each neighbourhood area pertinent to the environmental concerns raised by local residents in the focus groups. It can be seen from these that both LSPs are either already actively responding to the concerns raised or are at the planning stage of delivery, with projects planned over the next two to three years.

Both LSP boards particularly recognise the problems of inadequate youth activities and the link with anti-social behaviour. Where the LSPs

(e.g. the Young People's Centre in Haughton Green) have responded to this need, they have found new schemes to be so popular that there is now a need to review the resources available to accommodate this demand.

Clearly, those issues that are least likely to be resolved in the short to mid term relate to the quality of housing stock where no funding is available to upgrade this, or where the council is still negotiating a transfer of stock to an RSL. It also appears to be more difficult for the LSPs to effect changes where the private sector is involved, e.g. in the case of taxis refusing to serve the Merridale estate in Wolverhampton and the closure of shops in Haughton Green, Tameside.

Barriers to delivery on environmental improvements

The lead council officer for the Tameside LSP identified that there are no real barriers to delivering environmental improvements in neighbourhood renewal areas because it is what is required by local people and, in the main, the money is there to pay for the necessary improvements. The big issue for Tameside is mainstreaming and rolling these activities out across other parts of the borough. He noted that in Tameside, as for most other ex-industrial communities, these problems are widespread and need to be addressed across the whole of the authority area. Mainstreaming needs to come 'from the top' in terms of government policy and direction. If providers were told they must demonstrate how they are delivering better and differently in deprived areas (rather than expecting local regeneration partnerships to try and bring about the change), this would help.

The officer representing Wolverhampton LSP concurred with this assessment. She also noted that there may be some fundamental structural issues in relation to the environmental quality of neighbourhoods, for example severance by railway lines, pollution from road traffic and odours from the sewage plant, which mean, in reality, overall quality of life is not going to change much in some neighbourhoods. She recommended that the only real way forward in these instances is to remodel the whole area. Where Wolverhampton City Council has the public funding to do this, it is doing so. The key barrier in this respect is the huge level of finance needed and its limited supply.

Information and communication

Residents reported to the LSP boards that they find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find out precisely who is responsible for different areas of service delivery and what the rules and regulations on environmental health, protection against environmental hazardous substances and pollution, and environmental service delivery actually are. Both LSP boards concluded that more readily available information about people's environmental rights and the responsibilities of the appropriate delivery agencies is needed, but that is really an issue for national government.

The problem of local information exchange and dissemination was recognised as an issue that they should be addressing, however. Both LSPs are clearly proud of the extensive and highly active community involvement structures they have already set up to 'get to the heart of the community' in these neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, the research had

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identified that virtually none of the residents participating in the focus group exercises was even aware of the existence of these. Of course, this was only a small minority of the people living in these neighbourhoods; but, it was clearly a shock and disappointment to both officers and resident representatives of the two boards. The officers from both LSPs firmly believe that the more local engagement and transfer of ownership and responsibility the LSP gives to local people, the more successful neighbourhood renewal programmes will be. Because local environmental issues are important to local people, and because it is often the most visual problem in a neighbourhood, it is vital that they are seen to be properly addressed by the LSP.

Residents advised the LSP boards that they are daunted by the prospect of attending formal meetings and this means they are prevented from stating their views. It was suggested that 'a more flexible and fluid flow of information exchange is needed outside these formal structures'. Leaflets in local shops, GPs'

surgeries and the local pub were identified as one useful approach. Exchanging information at informal community events was seen as another possible way forward.

In the follow-up interviews, Wolverhampton advised that the LSP is currently in the process of developing a Phase 1 Area Arrangements Brief, which will review the existing plethora of local involvement structures authority-wide and recommend ways to streamline these without losing the benefits and breadth of coverage of the current arrangements.

The LSP also wants to involve local people in the delivery of local environmental services through its Social Enterprise Networks, but is keen to avoid developing a plethora of local structures and arrangements that bear little resemblance to those offered by its mainstream delivery agencies. In theory, these agencies are already legally accountable to the local resident population but it is questionable how much people see of this in practice. The LSP is hopeful that, in future, local people can play a greater role in checking service quality.

Tables of neighbourhood-level actions in relation to issues raised

Tameside

Table 1 Ashton

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
1 Park and playground vandalised	First phase under way involving refurbishment of building in the centre of the park for community use, works to tennis court, healthy walks with new pathways.	New three-year phased plan for Oxford Park involving wide range of improvements. Second phase will involve a new Community Park Worker to develop a programme of activities in the park. Work led by local residents through Oxford Park Sports Association.	
2 Pollution from new motorway – air quality and noise – 24 hours		Extensive tree planting as part of the Ashton Moss Scheme to screen motorway.	
3 No secondary school – children have to travel miles on bus			Lack of land, existing schools, etc. May become part of a Public Finance Initiative.
4 Streets don't get cleaned enough – once every three months	New street-cleaning regime in place through District Assembly (DA) – street cleaning now takes place on two-weekly cycle. Large parts of the West End now reporting significant improvements.	Discussions under way with DA and local RSL about the possibility of a new Estate Warden scheme being rolled out to wider West End.	Main area where nothing done is the Homezone where streets are as yet 'unmade'.
5 No dentist locally in West End – used to be one in neighbourhood		Planned primary care centre through LIFT scheme – Ashton is a priority area for the scheme.	
6 New housing – 'lego houses' – quality not as good		LSP disputes this perception. However, new developments are planned with Bellway and the Curzon Ashton Site. Also, EDAW housing commission will look at ways of improving the design and quality.	

Continued overleaf

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Table 1 Ashton - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
7	Not enough new houses and no gardens/fences for new houses		As before, plus have gone back to some of the new houses and are putting in fences as part of the Homezone.
8	Need to make more effort to bring people together	Extensive efforts already under way. Examples include Homewatch (72 co-ordinators), Oxford Park work, residents' association, planned street carnival in July, street reps, Doorstep Green attended by over 100 local people etc.	
9	Child pedestrian accidents – no crossing to local park		Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative has a scheme that includes safer access to the park. Consultation began in May 2004 – scheme completed end of Summer 2004.
10	Shops – young people hanging around and intimidating behaviour	Bike project, youth club, Oxford Park activities and new Football Association scheme, all aimed at involving young people in positive activities.	Meeting in May 2004 with key stakeholders to look at how to plan a better range of activities for young people and also ensuring use of more enforcement for those prolific offenders. Local residents involved in the meeting.

Table 2 Hattersley

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
1 Expensive shops/ leisure facilities	<p>Masterplanning retail feasibility study.</p> <p>Active Hattersley going strong promoting sport and activity.</p> <p>Range of leisure groups active, e.g. walkers' group.</p> <p>Development of bowling group.</p> <p>Development of three play spaces.</p>	<p>New retail and leisure facilities.</p> <p>Redevelopment of Pinfold playing-field site.</p>	
2 Lack of education for basic skills	<p>Stepahead Centre opened and has secured jobs and training for local people.</p> <p>Basic skills co-ordinator established.</p> <p>Range of training opportunities with number of partners.</p> <p>Improved links with Tameside MBC basic skills unit.</p> <p>Ongoing work at primary and secondary schools to improve literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Feasibility study for proposed community enterprise.</p>		
3 Council don't bother and MCC and Tameside argue about who owns what	<p>Stock transfer.</p>	<p>Hattersley GIS land ownership map established.</p>	
4 Big problem with fly- tipping	<p>Hattersley Clean Sweep team cleaning public spaces.</p> <p>Hattersley Empty Homes Management Scheme established to manage voids and litter therein.</p> <p>Joint work with range of partners on clean-up events.</p>	<p>Environment Sub-group established to develop local strategies and carry out enforcement.</p> <p>Educational events with schools by Patrollers.</p>	

Continued overleaf

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Table 2 Hattersley - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
	Better links with Patrollers to promote enforcement strategies.		
5	Must pay to get rubbish removed – bin men empty bins but leave bin bags	Environment Sub-group established to develop local strategies.	
6	Only three doctors on estate – need more	Fledgling Healthy Communities theme group started to address such issues. Chief Executive Officer of primary care trust (PCT) supports this Rep. from PCT on theme group plus local practitioners.	
7	Boarded-up housing (being demolished) – children rip off the plastic shutters	Hattersley Empty Homes Management scheme established to manage voids and void security with improved methods and new technology.	

Table 3 Haughton Green

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
1	Lack of amenities – four shops open – other shops have closed down	Neighbourhood Manager has met with Manchester City Council (CC) to discuss ways of stopping young people hanging around the shops. Agreed that landscaping the area in front of the shops, demolishing the walls and creating open spaces rather than hidden corners would help.	Manchester CC will not fund this work – awaiting stock transfer. Local residents are reluctant to use the shops because of the large number of youths hanging around and therefore shops close because of lack of trade. Police dispersal powers are helping to reduce some of the nuisance (see No. 5 below)
2.	Lack of playgroups – no group for mums and tots – waiting list	The new Haughton Green Community Centre will provide a group for mums and tots.	
3	More parks/ play areas needed – nowhere for children to play – fields not roped off	£310,000 has been secured from a wide range of funding sources to invest on the playing-field site in the centre of Haughton Green. The works are due to start on site in June – the funding will create a new games area, improved amenity area, under-eights’ play area, and upgrade the current football pitches and provide a woodland area. The newly refurbished Young People’s Centre is putting in bids to the Football Federation to invest in the upgrade of its football pitches.	
4	Play areas vandalised	Youth Service to work with young people in Haughton Green around a ‘respect project’.	

Continued overleaf

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Table 3 Houghton Green - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
5	<p>Children hanging around outside shops – no curfews and parents not interested.</p> <p>Operation Thurso is a pilot project being delivered in the area. The project is a joint initiative between Greater Manchester Police and Tameside MBC to implement the new dispersal powers the police have. The pilot ran for three months and ended in May 2004.</p> <p>The newly refurbished Young People's Centre is proving extremely successful.</p>	<p>There is a need to urgently review the resources available by agencies to accommodate the demand for activities at the Young People's Centre.</p>	
6	<p>Damp houses because no heating in flats – bad for health</p>	<p>Stock transfer to RSL.</p>	
7	<p>Badly maintained housing</p>	<p>Stock transfer to RSL.</p>	
8	<p>Long wait for central heating</p>	<p>Stock transfer to RSL.</p>	
9	<p>Quality of roads – speeding – 20 mph but no enforcement</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Manager will raise this as an issue at the next Agency Action Plan meeting – this has not been raised previously by residents at consultation events.</p>	

Wolverhampton

Table 4 Dovecotes

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
1	Need safe accessible facilities for all children – not just problem young people.	£6,000 from Neighbourhood Management has been invested in holiday activities for all young people to access.	A programme is being developed for summer, which will be well advertised. The Youth Work group pulls together all providers in the neighbourhood to develop activities for young people.
2	There is a lack of local amenities, e.g. local pub closed; no post office		The pub, which can act as a focal point for drug dealing, should be sold shortly to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Neighbourhood Management is working with a number of partners to develop the building as a learning centre to form part of the Dovecotes Children's Centre. This will provide a 48-place, full-day care nursery and family support services as well as improved access to health care.
3	Need for more community activities – but these need to be well advertised	Neighbourhood Management has supported both the Dovecotes Fun Day and Pendeford Fun Run, as well as smaller community events. Rubbish Action Zones are also held and the YMCA organises a number of community projects. The Pendeford Pages is a mechanism for promoting the activity that takes place.	Worked with the YMCA and Neighbourhood Wardens to launch a Healthy Walk scheme in the neighbourhood.
4	Smell from sewage plant	The Pendeford Neighbourhood Panel agreed in December that this would be a priority for 2004.	

Continued overleaf

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Table 4 Dovecotes - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
	<p>It was discussed at a Local Area Forum meeting in March, where the manager from the works was present to provide information and answer questions. The local MP organised a visit to the works in early June and Barnhurst hopes to invest up to £1 million in the plant to remove the odour.</p>		
5	Walls too thin (plasterboard) – noisy – no sound insulation		While nothing definite has been planned, the condition of properties will be improved if Wolverhampton obtains arms length management organisation status.
6	Housing poor quality inside		As above.
7	Litter on street – glass, dog mess, syringes	Neighbourhood Management has taken issues about environmental management to Directors and Cabinet. Extra resources are to be invested to improve the Street Scene service, which will include a more frequent street cleanse in residential areas.	In Dovecotes, Neighbourhood Management will be installing two extra dog-fouling bins and working with the Neighbourhood Warden and other groups to educate dog owners, by providing poop-scoop bags and leaflets. This was implemented in June 2004.
8	Safety concerns and fear of crime – especially in back alleys	28 drying areas have been removed in Pendeford – these were focal points for fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.	Plans are being developed to improve security of parking areas – many at the rear of properties are causing concern in regard to criminal activity.
9	Taxis expensive and some won't come onto estate		Nothing has been taken forward on this issue. It has not been flagged up generally as an issue and there are a number of taxi firms seen on the estate.

Table 5 Merridale

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
1	<p>Need more community spirit in area but difficult to get people to take part</p> <p>Summer BBQ with residents on the Graiseley estate, the first such community event the estate had experienced, giving residents their first opportunity to celebrate their community.</p> <p>Summer festival – helped a range of community organisations hold a summer festival for the area in 2003, bringing together a range of residents with a range of local service providers.</p> <p>Road Shows Team carried out a number of road shows in 2003 taking neighbourhood management to the people. Using display material in community languages, and visiting a range of venues from a local pub to a Buddhist community centre, we checked out with residents that we were doing the right things for them and weren't leaving any big gaps.</p> <p>Household survey – local community groups and residents were paid to carry out our household survey, which provides a 2003 baseline for the team's effectiveness; 218 surveys were completed and we will ask the same people the same questions in 2005/06 to help gauge what difference we have made.</p>		

Continued overleaf

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Table 5 Merridale - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
	<p>Newsletter containing news of neighbourhood activities and a list of useful phone numbers is delivered to over 3,000 households every six months. It is written in four languages including English.</p>		
2 Information isn't available about local education	<p>The Neighbourhood Management Team is working with partners, particularly Wolverhampton College, to upskill people with employment and remove any barriers to learning and employment. Work closely with the Employment Services' Jobs Zone, which provides a support package and one-to-one support for people seeking work.</p> <p>Learning and Jobs in Pennfields Steering Group, which brings together statutory and voluntary education providers and consumers, is driving the Learning and Jobs Plan. Current activity has been mapped, courses have been held to increase participation in learning, work on early years provision is continuing, a Guidance Worker is to be employed, and Jobs Zone is actively getting people into training and employment.</p>		
3 Rubbish – includes glass, syringes and fridges	<p>Rubbish Action Zones – Pride in Pennfields and the council's Waste Management Service have carried out six Rubbish</p>	<p>Greening of Graiseley – this project is driving improvements to the green spaces in the area.</p>	

Continued

Table 5 Merridale - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
	<p>Action Zones (RAZs). The team has helped by publicising RAZ days to encourage participation and to target which areas should be treated. We've even been known to throw a lot of rubbish into the wagons ourselves.</p> <p>The team has worked with Pride in Pennfields and the City Council to carry out miscellaneous environmental work in the neighbourhood, including rubbish removal, fencing repairs, graffiti removal and the clearance of fly-tipped sites.</p> <p>Oak Street Garages – worked with the Housing Service to have this neglected site cleared of rubbish and later redeveloped for family housing.</p>	<p>Working with Groundwork, Pride in Pennfields and the City Council, the team has carried out consultation exercises to determine future uses for green spaces, as well as carrying out short-term improvements.</p> <p>Substantial improvements will be made in the next two years using funding secured by Groundwork and the City Council.</p>	
4	Lot of health centres but can't see GP – lack of surgery hours		Discussions with local primary care trust to be established.
5	Mental health – people feel isolated		Work with Health Service and Supporting People to provide support services for people with mental illness and substance misuse difficulties.
6	Too many run-down and derelict houses – need to be renovated quicker	Graiseley Estate – working closely with the local tenant and residents' association, we have secured investment of over £5 million to transform this estate, as well as improving security through window and door locks, CCTV and modernised door-entry systems.	Develop support through Housing Market Renewal and Kickstart Initiative.

Continued overleaf

Prioritising local environmental concerns

Table 5 Merridale - continued

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
	<p>Private sector best practice workshops – the Park/Graiseley Area Forum awarded the team funding to carry out a series of best practice workshops intended to improve landlords' management of their properties. The team is implementing these workshops with the help of the City Council's Private Sector Housing Team and the Global Awareness Partnership Project.</p> <p>Land Registry Direct – to enable the team to establish ownership of properties reliably and quickly, we have established a connection with Land Registry Direct. This facility is particularly useful when dealing with privately rented property and fly-tipped land.</p>		
7	Better housing facilities needed for sick and elderly		
8	Young people have nothing to do – empty properties could be drop-in centres	<p>A skate park at Penn Road Island is now complete and well used by local people.</p> <p>Bantock School sports pitch open for supervised youth activities from May 2004.</p>	Youth shelter may be included in the 'Greening of Graiseley Estate' proposals.
9	Bollards and barbed wire on street – dangerous		No identified action.

Table 6 Millfields

	Delivered	At planning stage	No action (barrier to delivery)
1	Nothing for young people – too far away and out of price range	Additional temporary youth worker recruited to work in neighbourhood. Summer holiday scheme is currently being planned. Neighbourhood Management Team is funding the programme.	
2	People abuse environment – but they are not local people	Police undertaken ‘designing out crime’ audit in the neighbourhood. Recommended actions being undertaken in part, e.g. hedge-trimming.	
3	Good nursery and primary school but secondary school has bad reputation		Impending Bilston Urban Village development may provide new or enhanced secondary schooling.
4	Hospital – A+E long waiting times – overstretched		Out of remit of LSP to deliver.
5	Difficult to get GP/ dentist in area		NHS LIFT programme – phase one being undertaken in the wider Bilston area.
6	Overcrowded housing and long waiting list for housing repairs	Housing repair waits and quality improved.	
7	Divided estate – railway line – two tenants’ and residents’ associations	Two tenants’ / residents’ associations meeting together regularly now.	
8	Young people (not local) hanging around by shop – shop should close earlier		A number of inter-agency meetings have been organised by Neighbourhood Management and co-ordinated by the police. Issues identified and solutions being sought by all parties.
9	Cars speed around corners – dangerous		No identified action.

7 Recommendations

The two case study LSPs were specifically selected to participate in this research project on the basis that they were *already* strongly committed to addressing local environmental concerns as an integral part of the neighbourhood renewal process in deprived areas. It was anticipated that they would be pioneers and innovators in this respect. A key aim of the research, therefore, has been to learn from their example in order to develop a set of key recommendations in order that the value of such an approach can be more widely recognised and adopted elsewhere.

Building local environmental concerns into policy practice

Clearly, a first step is to ensure that transparent and accountable structures and process are in place for building local environmental concerns into all the key LSP delivery structures. These are required in four key stages, as follows:

- 1 generating issues and ideas
- 2 transferring and translating these into policy
- 3 ensuring that policies are delivered and have a visible and sustainable impact on improved service provision
- 4 ensuring that service delivery is accountable to local people by monitoring outputs and outcomes, and resident satisfaction with decision-making processes and delivery outcomes.

New environmental delivery mechanisms

A variety of new environmental delivery mechanisms, which directly address the

majority of the concerns raised by residents in the focus groups, have been put in place in each of the community areas by both LSPs. It is recommended that these and local environmental good practice initiatives by LSPs elsewhere should be collated by the SDU and NRU, and made available nationally to assist in the transfer of knowledge to other LSPs. LSPs' performance on local environmental issues should also become an additional key theme in the ODPM/DfT five-year evaluation in recognition of the importance of this issue to local communities.

Both LSP boards particularly recognise the problems of inadequate youth activities and the link with anti-social behaviour. Where the LSPs (e.g. the Young People's Centre in Haughton Green) have responded to this need, they have found new schemes to be so popular that there is now a need to review the resources available by agencies to accommodate demand. It is recommended that greater statistical evidence is needed of the link between improved youth activities and facilities and reduced anti-social behaviour. If a robust positive relationship is identified, both national and local government need to review their arrangements for funding such activities in deprived areas and to identify the potential to enhance resources through joint funding across the various agencies that benefit from reduced anti-social behaviour.

Local residents in all six neighbourhood areas were keen to create local capacity-building activities and community-enterprise schemes from local environmental clean-up and maintenance activities. Currently, the two case study LSPs appear to have overlooked the potential for this. It is unclear whether LSPs elsewhere have been successful in this area of

activity, but some considerable experience of creating community-based local environmental enterprises has been gained through Local Agenda 21. This should be collated by the SDU and made available nationally to assist in the transfer of knowledge to LSPs.

Addressing the gap between policy and action

Both case LSPs have made a strong commitment to addressing local environmental concerns as part of the neighbourhood renewal at the macro-policy level. In practice, however, it takes some time to get things through the system. The research suggests that, currently, there is a 'gap' between policy intentions and the actual delivery of visible improvements on the ground. This is a common problem across all areas of neighbourhood renewal activity. The problem is exacerbated because people living in these areas feel that they have already waited long enough to have their concerns addressed and are frustrated by having to wait even longer.

It was also clear that a number of the environmental concerns raised by residents were outside the area of influence of LSPs, e.g. calming major roads, reducing pollution from hazardous activities, addressing odours from sewage plants, etc. Even where national agencies and organisations have responsibilities in these areas, it is often difficult for LSPs to know how, and with who, to engage to bring about effective changes at the local level. It is recommended that more evidence of the incidence and severity of such 'environmental bads' in neighbourhood renewal areas, together with national guidance and a national policy action framework, are needed in relation to this issue.

There are also numerous tensions between what people want to see happen and what LSPs are actually able to deliver. Tameside Council's attempts to transfer housing stock to a private RSL is a classic example of this. The residents do not want the transfer to go ahead because they believe it is against their long-term best interests. The council sees no other way to raise the finance to deliver the extensive housing refurbishment necessary to regenerate the estate. In the meantime, there is an impasse between a recognised need for action and the ability to move forward with this issue, as witnessed in relation to a number of the concerns raised by residents in Haughton Green and the LSP response.

The research has shown that appropriate and timely information about what is planned, disseminated through a range of far-reaching formal and informal communication networks, is needed in order to overcome such problems.

Dissemination and communication

The problem here is two-fold. On the one hand, the research demonstrated that local people do not know what type and level of environmental clean-up service they are entitled to, or where to go to get information on local environmental issues. Second, even where neighbourhood management structures are in place and there is a strong commitment within the LSP to engage local people in the regeneration process, present lines of communication are inadequate for communicating planned actions and resolving conflicts between these and local people's expectations and aspirations.

Better information on environmental rights and responsibilities

Making environmental information publicly available and accessible is essential for achieving sustainable development. It also means that local people are able to participate more effectively in decision-making processes that affect their local environment. Openness also promotes greater public accountability in the agencies that are responsible for delivering on the local environmental issues.

Although the new DEFRA information website is some help in this respect, a set of national guidance is clearly needed. This should set out the following.

- What constitutes a local environmental problem, i.e. levels and limits, how these can be measured and recorded and what agencies might be called in to undertake these assessments.
- Which agency is responsible for addressing these problem and their legal and statutory duties in this respect.
- How to approach the relevant agencies, what evidence is required, how this can be presented and who might be called on to help prepare this evidence.
- What further actions local people can take where the designated agency is not responding, their legal rights and what agencies might be brought in to help support them in promoting their case.
- Legal courses of redress and how to pursue these.

Better communication between LSPs and communities

Local residents participating in the research made a strong plea that information about community events and council services needs to be distributed in places that local people visit on a regular basis, such as local shops, the post office, pubs, schools and GP surgeries.

Generally, community newsletters are not seen as an effective means of communication and most people either simply do not want to attend, or are daunted by the prospect of attending, meetings.

There is always a risk that the local people who are engaged via these mechanisms represent the 'usual suspects' and/or over-time become 'insiders' themselves and thus fail to represent the views of the wider communities. The formal structures that have been set up by the two LSPs specifically to engage and involve local people are eyed with suspicion by some non-participating local residents, who feel too intimidated to break into them and state their views. This suggests that ongoing, ad-hoc, informal community-liaison techniques need to be developed in order to encourage inclusion of the wider community in neighbourhood renewal areas. Involving residents of all ages in highly visible local environmental projects in their neighbourhood could be one way of achieving this.

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Appendix

Methodology

The case studies took place in three key stages as identified below.

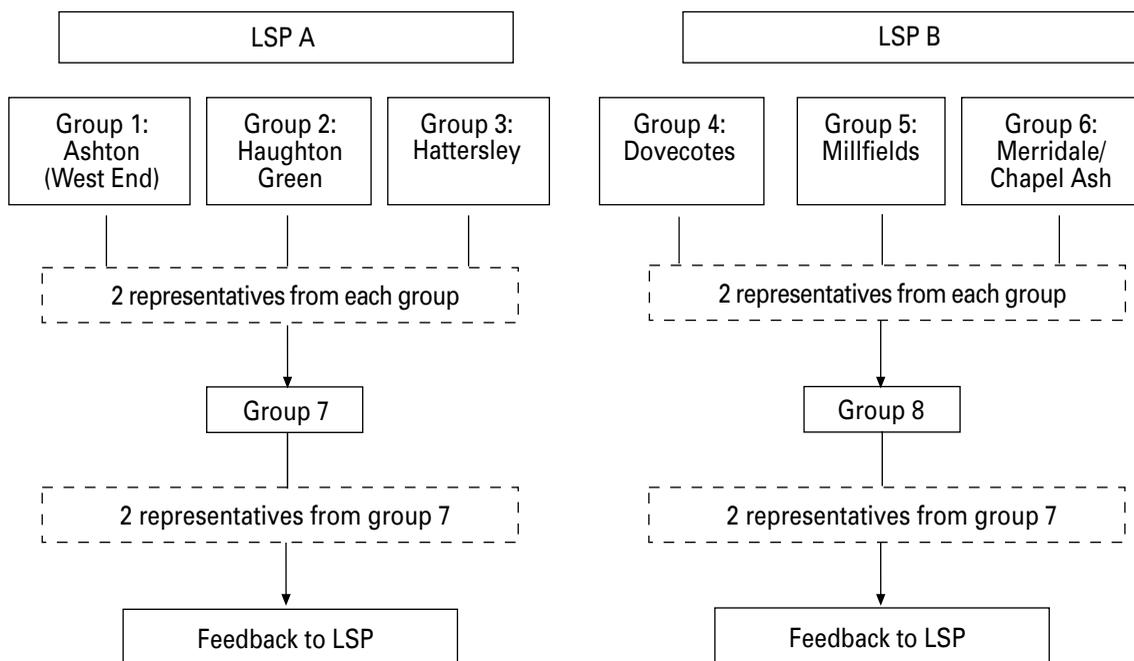
- *Stage 1:* discussion groups with local residents in each of the six selected neighbourhoods to identify environmental concerns and priorities at the neighbourhood level. Two representatives were elected from each group to go forward to the second-round groups.
- *Stage 2:* a further discussion group to identify common concerns and transfer ideas across the three neighbourhoods in each LSP area and/or consider potential conflicts or tensions between areas and to

take a more strategic look at how LSPs could better access and represent local environmental concerns borough-wide. Two representatives were elected to go forward and present the findings of the focus group exercises to a meeting of the Environment Sub-group of the two LSP boards.

- *Stage 3:* report back of key research findings to a meeting of the Environment Sub-group of the two LSP boards and to receive their responses to this.

The number and sequence of these groups in each area are described in Figure A1.1.

Figure A1.1 The number and sequence of the groups in each area



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Stage 1

For the first round of groups, approximately eight participants from different 'communities of interest' within each of the three neighbourhoods were recruited at key neighbourhood locations, e.g. parents at the local primary school, young people at a youth club, older people at the post office, young people outside the chip shop, etc. The aim was to have a cross-section of the local population in each group, so that a range of opinions could be represented. A key aim of the first round of discussions was to expose and discuss the *differing* needs, concerns, aspirations and priorities of different groups living in the *same* neighbourhood.

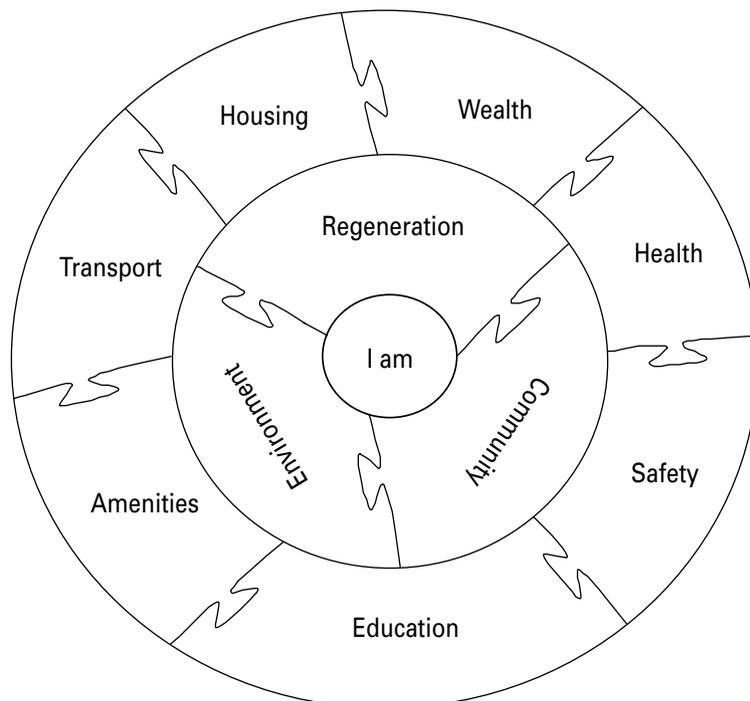
Each group lasted for approximately two hours, the time being divided into three key stages:

- 1 a neighbourhood puzzle exercise to help explore concepts of the environment
- 2 structured discussions on local issues and concerns
- 3 de Bono's (2000) 'Six Thinking Hats' method for creative thinking and problem solving.

The neighbourhood puzzle

The first stage of the group involved a neighbourhood puzzle (adapted from a 'diversity puzzle' created by Anthony Psaila and used for training purposes). The puzzle was made up of ten key components as follows: environment, housing, safety, wealth, education, regeneration, amenities, transport, community and health. These are illustrated in Figure A1.2.

Figure A1.2 The ten components of the neighbourhood puzzle



Each participant was asked to select one word at random and to come up with three 'ownership statements' about that word. For example, if the word was 'double-decker buses' they should use the phrase 'I am' before their descriptions of the bus to the rest of the group, e.g. 'I am able to carry lots of people, I am expensive for short-hop journeys', etc. The puzzle thereby allows people's *differing* perceptions to be explored – for one person the bus might be cheap, for another expensive – without the need for disagreements and tension. It also brings a comedy dimension into the game and acts as a good ice-breaking exercise.

Table A1.1 gives the ten components of the puzzle, and lists three potential ownership statements and a series of keywords for each. Each keyword appears in only one category; however, links can and should be made, e.g. the subject of empty housing could appear under the 'housing' as well as 'regeneration' section of the puzzle; healthy living centres could appear under 'amenities' as well as 'health'. As the game progresses, this helps to demonstrate how interchangeable and interdependent different individual aspects of the neighbourhood are to each other.

Structured discussion

Once the attributes of each piece of the puzzle had been discussed, a more traditional structured discussion was used to investigate in more detail how different attributes of the local environment interact and impinge on everyday life in the local area and which are the areas of priority concern.

The reason for using this technique, as well as helping as an 'ice-breaking' exercise, was to allow participants to explore their experiences,

both positive and negative, in relation to themselves and their own personal perceptions. This helped to avoid disagreements between participants about different aspects of their neighbourhood.

At the end of the exercise, the group were asked to identify whether they felt there were any elements missing from the puzzle. Each participant was also asked to draw a boundary on a local map to define what they perceived to be the extent of their 'local neighbourhood'.

Edward de Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats' method

In the final stage of the group discussion, de Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats' method was introduced (de Bono, 2000). By now, the participants were used to game playing and were enjoying the whole process, making it easier to explain the rules of the game and secure their active participation.

A recognised benefit of discussion groups is that they allow interactions between a group of people. However, it is our experience that this can lead to tension and arguments between opposing parties and can be especially difficult where controversial topics are being discussed or where people with directly opposing views are in a group. The 'Six Thinking Hats' method was chosen by us because it was *specifically designed* to promote lateral thinking in problem solving without conflict. The method has been employed in some of the world's largest corporations, such as IBM, DuPont, Shell, Ericsson and Ford, and in schools and local communities worldwide, to specifically assist in conflict resolution and consensus building around differing needs and aspirations.

Broad definitions for the six hats can be seen in Table A1.2.

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Table A1.1 Examples of ownership statements and keywords for the neighbourhood puzzle components

Puzzle component	Examples of ownership statements	Key themes
Environment	I am local, rural, urban, national or global. I am your surroundings – where you live. I am able to impact your health and well-being.	Pollution, farming (GM crops), landfill sites, incinerators – health, landscape, litter, dog mess, waste disposal.
Housing	I am something everybody needs. I am a place you call home, or somewhere you hate to be. I am safe and affordable or extortionate and inadequate.	Heating – energy, repairs, voids, overcrowding, infestation, council tenancies.
Safety	I am lots of lighting and proper road crossings. I am able to walk around my area without fear and harassment. I am not welcoming of drug dealers and criminals and vandals.	Crime – drugs and vandals, traffic accidents, anti-social behaviour, street lighting, policing.
Regeneration	I am derelict houses and dilapidated buildings. I am unemployment and boredom. I am surveys that no one does anything about.	Dereliction, decay, demolition, job creation, unemployment, corporate employers.
Amenities	I am local shops, leisure, libraries, local offices. I am often too far to walk to. I am able to make it more pleasant for people to live here.	Shops – supermarkets and local, schools, local health care, leisure, open space – nature, parks and recreation, recycling facilities, park benches.
Transport	I am dangerous road situations. I am able to make your life difficult if you don't have a car. I am a contributor to pollution.	Cars – abandoned, traffic, pollution, public transport – cost and availability, taxis, walking – safety, access, mobility, roads.
Community	I am filled with a network of family and friends. I am the heart and soul of the place. I am something that people take pride in.	Neighbours, family and friends, allotments, social networks, quality of life, racism, prejudice, community facilities, council – government, local pride.
Health	I am access to good services. I am clean air and good exercise. I am decent housing.	Food, diet, local health care – GPs, Family Planning Centres, hospitals, healthy living centres.
Wealth	I am affluence and poverty. I am new jobs in the area. I am long-term unemployment.	Cost and quality, home ownership, rural poverty, employment/unemployment.
Education	I am schools and colleges. I am lifelong learning. I am leaflets in all the languages spoken in this community.	Schools, community classes, community centre, public meetings, information, literacy and numeracy.

Table A1.2 Definitions for de Bono's 'Six Thinking Hats'

Hat	Description of hat
White	Used to feed in pre-existing information, e.g. from reports, newspaper articles, previous discussions with the group, also to identify missing information and how to get it – direct focus on facts/ information.
Red	Used to express gut feelings about a situation; intuition; emotions – no need to explain or justify what is being said.
Black	Expresses caution; risk assessment; critical hat. Easy to over-use as is the most useful and natural hat for many people.
Yellow	Positive thoughts – look for benefits, values, how to make things work. More difficult to use than black hat.
Green	Creative solutions; new ideas; alternatives; possibilities; lateral thinking.
Blue	Organising – acts like conductor/orchestra for managing the session.

A relevant statement, question or area of concern is first devised, based on the priorities identified in the first two stages of the discussion, for example:

All poor-quality houses in this neighbourhood should be demolished.

The six hats are then used in a sequence, which is either predefined by the facilitator or is decided by the group, to address the question. When one colour hat is in play, *everybody* is wearing the same hat and must think from that perspective. When the hat changes, everybody changes and must think from the new perspective. Each hat is strictly time limited but can be revisited.

The method recognises that most people come to a group with their own personal interests to the fore; this may prevent them seeing something from another point of view and can block creativity. Arguing with others in the group may allow them to put across this point of view and may sometimes allow a consensus to be reached, but it will tend to favour the most dominant and vociferous.

A further advantage of using the 'Six Thinking Hats' is that, because it is a form of

role playing, it allows people to think and say things that could not otherwise be said without risking egos. The method allows the 'personal' to be set aside and lets participants look creatively at the concerns and ideas of others, as well as having their own ideas assessed and evaluated in this way. Consensus may not always be reached but, when this happens, it is easier to identify where the main tensions lie and come to a group resolution on how these can be constructively taken forward and addressed.

Stages 2 and 3

Stage 2 of the fieldwork involved reconvening two appointed representatives from each of the three first-round groups in each case study area for a further discussion group. These groups followed a similar structure to the first-round groups, using the neighbourhood puzzle and the 'Six Thinking Hats', but focused on the more *strategic*-level issues affecting the borough as a whole. The group explored the differences and similarities in concerns between the three neighbourhoods in each LSP area, and tried to reach a degree of consensus across

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neighbourhoods about priorities and appropriate actions. The aim was to arrive at some practical recommendations that could be put forward to the two LSP boards as potential ways forward in addressing the priority issues and concerns raised by the group discussions.

The key outcomes from these second-round groups were then formally presented to the LSP

by two appointed resident representatives acting on behalf of the whole group and with the support of the research team.

A final aim of the research was to come back to the resident participants with a set of policy actions or intentions that had taken place as a result of the issues they had raised with the LSPs.