

LOCAL VARIATIONS IN YOUTH DRINKING CULTURES

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This report examines the ways in which patterns of youth drinking are influenced by place and particular towns ('party cities') that have become associated with the rituals of heavy drinking, or the 'messy' night out. This study focused on three known types of place where young people drink: the home, the neighbourhood and the town centre.

The report investigates young people aged between 15 and 24 from two geographical areas with differing levels of alcohol-related harms.

Drawing on mixed methods of research, the report looks at:

- how and where young people drink;
- the role that drinking plays in the social life of over 18-year-olds;
- how locality impacts on 15- to 16-year-olds' leisure opportunities;
- the visibility of adult drinking; and
- local variations in policing and security.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the lives of young people, aged 15-24, in two places located in regions of England where the harm caused by alcohol is markedly different. These were an area in the South East with low levels of alcohol-related harms and an area in the North East with a higher level of harms. The aim of the research was to explore whether living in these places influenced young people's drinking. The researchers examined how and where young people below and above the legal age for drinking (15-24) spent their leisure time. They explored where they went, when, how often and who with. The study considered opportunities and constraints on drinking and other leisure activities, including issues such as the number and range of facilities, transport, policing and the influence of family and role models. The researchers drew on a mixture of methods, using physical mapping, direct observation, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and diaries to elicit a rich set of data.

Young people in both areas shared many similar patterns of behaviour. Home was where they spent the most time, watching TV and DVDs, playing computer games, social networking, listening to music and similar pastimes. Teenagers below the legal age for drinking spent leisure time in local parks, going to shopping centres and the cinema. 'Orange Wednesdays', a mobile phone company promotion (two tickets for the price of one at selected cinemas) was important for all ages.

Drinking was important to young people of all ages as a social activity; participants rarely drank alone. Teenagers below the legal age limit drank in parks and open spaces and at home/friends' homes. In the north-eastern area

drinking outside was more commonplace whereas in the south-eastern area teenage parties in people's homes were more significant. The study found little evidence of peer pressure in relation to under-18 drinking, although some peer selection, where teenagers chose friends based on whether or not they drank alcohol, was found. In the north-eastern area, for those above the legal age for drinking, bars, clubs and pubs became paramount although family celebrations were still important. In the south-eastern area drinking at home continued to be important, although some participants felt constrained if they still lived with their parents. Home drinking was often associated with saving money.

Going out with groups of friends (large and small) was common to both areas and nights out followed similar routines. Groups pre-drank at home or, more frequently in the north-eastern area, in a bar or pub with cheap prices. The pre-drinking phase was vital for friends to meet and 'catch up', reinforcing the bonds of friendship (although some participants also reported using pre-drinking to get intoxicated). Women, particularly in the north-eastern area, used the time to prepare for a night out; this required wearing short dresses, full make-up and high heels.

The 'night out' had elements of predictability and of spontaneity. Groups visited a number of bars, dance bars and nightclubs in succession, ending with fast food, a taxi, or a lift home. The choice of bars and clubs was spontaneous and groups would form and re-form. There was no evidence of an established circuit and little evidence of peer pressure to continue drinking; rather, groups of friends looked out for each other. A good night out was one that involved laughter, listening or dancing to music and avoiding fights, being ill or being thrown out of venues. The most enthusiastic period for going on a night out was around the legal age for drinking, but participants with young families still reported the occasional 'big' night out.

In both study areas young people sought out youth-oriented bars and clubs, travelling up to 25km in the South East for a night out, although 10km was more typical in the North East. 'Traditional' pubs or similar venues were visited, but for only for specific occasions, such as after a meal out with a partner, the cinema or playing sports. In the south-eastern area, young respondents were reluctant to visit venues with even slightly older (or younger) people on a night out, feeling that it was inappropriate.

Small towns with a street of youth-oriented bars and clubs were as popular for some participants as major centres, because they offered different opportunities, such as listening to a certain type of music. The north-eastern area had one major city with a high concentration of youth oriented-venues separated into different clusters within the 1km² area of the city centre. The close proximity and stiff competition between these resulted in flyers and boards advertising promotions and scantily dressed women trying to attract customers, adding to an atmosphere which was exuberant and uninhibited.

This experience was diluted in the south-eastern area. There was less choice and the layout of the urban area meant places were further apart. Public transport was often inconvenient and finished early, in contrast to the north-eastern area. Driving was more common in the South East, and some participants reported that the need to drive after a night out curbed their enthusiasm for going out. The need for a greater degree of organisation to arrange a night out also acted as a constraint.

Successful enforcement by the police and bar operators meant that for those below the legal age of drinking going into clubs and pubs was not an option. In contrast, the older age groups reported that when they were under 18 they had been able to get into mainstream bars and clubs.

The key difference in terms of leisure activity for the younger age group was the variety of hobbies and pastimes outside the home enjoyed by the south-eastern participants. In addition to mainstream activities (hanging out in parks, shopping centres and the cinema) they reported a host of activities such as drama groups, playing in bands, music lessons, volunteering and varied other pastimes. In the north-eastern area activities were more restricted. While some of the activities in the South East were related to greater household affluence, others were more readily ascribed to a higher general level of services and facilities. For example in the south-eastern area parks were praised for offering places for escape; in the north-eastern area there were complaints about parks being boring. Similarly, dedicated youth clubs and similar facilities were of higher quality in the South East than the North East.

Under-18 year olds were more likely to encounter adults drinking heavily in the north-eastern area. It was more commonplace to see young adults drinking in parks, streets and open spaces in local neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the most popular cinema for this age group was located among a set of crowded bars and clubs. A set of bus stops serving routes to the main out of town shopping centre was also located in a street of youth-oriented licensed premises. Both places started to attract customers from the late afternoon.

The research team concluded that place does have an influence over youth drinking behaviours, below and above the legal age for drinking. Many of the differences relate to urban layout and policy. The south-eastern study area comprised a relatively dispersed network of settlements. Here, young people travelled much further for a night out than in the more compact north-eastern city area. However, in both locations young people displayed a preference for youth-oriented clubs and bars and a reluctance to drink with other age groups. In the North East the number of clusters and the density of youth-oriented bars were particularly noticeable. This suggests that attempting to curb binge drinking by reviving traditional inter-generational pubs is unlikely to be successful. However, encouraging variety and entertainment within drinking clusters, for example by providing more space for dancing, may be a more positive approach.

Planning better youth clusters may seem irresponsible given the harm that excessive drinking can have. However, it is important to note the significance of alcohol as a basis for social interaction for young people. Social interaction is important in relation to both a sense of well-being and self-worth. This needs to be taken into account when devising policies to control the numbers, types and opening hours of licensed premises in urban centres. It further contrasts with the current focus of policy directed at controlling anti-social behaviour and drunkenness. Licensing and planning policies related to drinking clusters would benefit from review. The current emphasis on concentrating such developments in town and city centres may have the perverse consequence of making them more visible and thereby 'normalising' them; we would argue this has happened in the north-eastern area.

The study further supports greater expenditure on, and more support for, leisure activities for under-18-year-olds. In the North East young people were far more restricted in their choice and access to non-alcohol-related youth leisure. Future planning in our towns and cities should ensure land is clearly allocated for such facilities and separated from alcohol-based leisure. Moreover, the use of vacant premises for temporary 'pop up' youth facilities should be investigated. Finally the role of parks and shopping centres as the backdrop to young people's social lives needs more careful consideration. Young people spend a great deal of their leisure time in these 'public' spaces. It is important to ensure they feel welcome and safe and our research suggests this is not necessarily the case.

1 INTRODUCTION

Context

Drinking large quantities of alcohol continues to be a significant issue for certain sections of the young population in the United Kingdom (UK). The problems caused by overconsumption impact on the individual, public policy and society as a whole. A recent European survey found that binge drinking was more prevalent among 15- to 24-year-olds, compared with the over-55s.¹ The UK had a worrying incidence of excess, with the percentage of its population reporting drinking more than seven drinks per session being the highest in the European Union (TNS Opinion and Social, 2010, p. 24). UK national surveys have demonstrated that while harmful drinking among males in the 15- to 24-year-old age group has fallen since 2004, the proportion of females drinking at harmful or hazardous levels has risen in the same period (Smith and Foxcroft, 2009).

Excessive alcohol consumption might seem to have little to do with issues of place and by implication planning. Yet place does matter, not least because there are significant differences in reported alcohol-related harms across different parts of the UK. The North West Public Health Observatory has tracked alcohol-related harms across a number of different indicators, including alcohol-related hospital admissions, alcohol-related crimes, reported heavy sessional drinking and chronic liver disease. These indicators have been produced at local level and aggregated for area. Although there are significant intra-regional differences, the variations between regions are quite striking, with the North East and the North West faring particularly poorly (Deacon *et al.*, 2007; www.nwph.net/alcohol/lape/).

This study addresses the issue of the interaction of place with patterns of alcohol consumption among young people. It is worth pointing out at the start that while the springboard for the research project came from a concern about heavy drinking, the majority of young people aged between 15 and 24 do not drink regularly to excess and a minority do not drink alcohol at all (Plant and Plant, 2006). Therefore the study considers how different features, or attributes, of place discourage excessive consumption, as much as those that facilitate or encourage it.

Conceptual framework

Drawing on the authors' previous work on alcohol and place (Roberts and Eldridge, 2009), this study proposed three 'poles' that have been identified as critical in the academic literature relating to space, place and drinking. The

first – ‘the drinking or leisure environment’ – concerns the activities that are offered by the physical environment, for example the numbers of bars, sports facilities or youth clubs and people’s ability to access them (for example due to cost, location, opening times etc.). Newburn and Shiner (2001) found the home to be the most common place for younger teenagers to drink and teenage parties have been particularly highlighted (Demant and Østergaard, 2007). The second pole concerns ‘drinking cultures’. This includes people’s perceptions and attitudes towards their activities. This has a relationship to the drinking environment as previously defined. For example, if someone defines a good night out as going out to a sequence of bars followed by a nightclub, then this is difficult to achieve in a rural village. Attitudes and perceptions are also subject to other influences, as investigated in other research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, such as friends, family and the media (Valentine *et al.*, 2010; Sondhi and Turner, 2011; Sumnall *et al.*, 2011). The third pole is ‘regulation’. This includes all the external controls that are exerted over drinking, such as licensing controls, planning in determining where drinking places can be located, policing and interventions by youth services in offering ‘diversionary activities’ such as youth clubs and events.

Drinking/leisure environment (opportunities)

Three significant types of places have been identified where young people drink: the home, the neighbourhood and the town centre (Clarke and Uzzell, 2002). This study included all three of these places. The home, when supervised by adults, provided a controlled environment, although this was not uniform across all families (Valentine *et al.*, 2007).

Green spaces in the neighbourhood were reported as places within which teenagers could drink freely and potentially indulge in associated risky behaviours, such as underage sex. This was particularly true for the under 16s (Coleman and Cater, 2005). Here the extent to which the space is unsupervised is important. The alcohol consumed has to be purchased and previous research has exposed the extent to which teenagers congregate around convenience stores and other neighbourhood outlets, persuading adults to buy alcohol for them (Parker, 2007), termed ‘proxy purchase’. More traditionally, outdoor spaces provide facilities for sport and recreation (DCSF and DCMS, 2010), promoted as alternatives to drinking. Velleman’s (2009) meta-review of youth drinking highlighted the importance of sport and extracurricula activities among teenagers who drink moderately, or not at all. The number and types of green spaces, sporting facilities, their accessibility and costs were therefore examined.

Older age groups go to licensed premises outside the home once the age of legalisation has passed. The expansion in the number of venues and their association with a rise in youth drinking has been well documented (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Hobbs *et al.*, 2003; Hadfield, 2006; Roberts and Eldridge, 2009). Attention has been drawn to the increased size of venues and their anonymity and authors have identified micro-zones within town centres where an atmosphere of unrestrained hedonism prevails (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007), arguing that it encourages ‘determined drunkenness’ (Measham, 2006). More prosaically, Australian researchers have correlated the density of alcohol outlets with consumption and violence (Graham and Homel, 2008; Huckle *et al.*, 2008). The possibilities for variations between different places was, therefore, readily apparent. Issues such as the number and types of venue, whether they were ‘traditional’ pubs or more contemporary dance bars or nightclubs and their spatial layout and proximity were identified as issues for investigation.

Drinking cultures

Drawing on Leach (2005), it was also possible to consider the culture of a place in relation to youth drinking through examining the repetitive patterns of behaviour. Particular towns ('party cities') have become associated with the rituals of heavy drinking, or the 'messy' night out (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). The rituals of 'going out' for a night's drinking were therefore important for this study, that is, how often, who with, when and where. Drinking outside the home is more expensive in the UK and the practice of 'pre-loading', or pre-drinking, that is, drinking at home before going out, has become commonplace. Seamon and Ikegwonu (2010) highlighted that young people believed that it was cheaper and facilitated 'catching up' or socialising with friends. This new aspect of the ritual of 'going out' was also identified as significant for the present study. Although previous research has focused on drunkenness, other studies have suggested that young people do attempt a measure of control and have other motivations and this was explored too (Measham, 2006; Percy *et al.*, 2011).

According to Szmigin *et al.* (2008), the pleasure associated with drinking has been linked to more appealing venues and marketing practices that associate drinking with fun and social liberation. Variation between places would then depend on whether these new more 'appealing venues' had been able to be established in particular locations. By contrast, Winlow and Hall's (2006) study of young people in the deindustrialised cities of the North of England interprets heavy drinking as a kind of escapism; a rational response to lives limited by unemployment or routine jobs. This explanation also draws on a kind of historical memory, possibly even intergenerational patterns of drinking derived originally from masculinity defined by hard work in the steelyards or docks.

The emergence of the 'ladette', or young female heavy drinker, has been a relatively recent phenomenon (McRobbie, 2007). Holloway *et al.*'s (2009) characterisation of four different styles of drinking included the modern urban young woman who typically spends practically the whole weekend drinking. The emergence of the female drinker has been a particular concern for health policy-makers (Room *et al.*, 2005). Yet the incidence of heavy sessional drinking has been rising among the younger female age groups. Socially, young women transgress more societal taboos through getting intoxicated. While the loss of 'reputation' may no longer act as a constraint, the increase in vulnerability or ability to make rational decisions remains (Roche and Dehan, 2002). Noting gender differences, therefore, was significant for the present study.

Regulation

In the UK, national legislation sets out the framework for policies on licensing, planning, policing and health in England and Wales. There are contradictions between the aims and objectives of these four 'planks' of public policy (Room, 2004). Hobbs *et al.* (2005) have used the term 'violent hypocrisy' to describe the rupture between the laissez-faire intentions of the Licensing Act 2003 and the increased powers of the police over individual drunkenness. The Licensing Act 2003 was formulated to provide a broad framework within which different licensing policies could be developed by licensing authorities in each local authority area. Enacted in 2005, this piece of legislation has statutory guidance attached – Section 182 – which has been regularly amended and updated, partly to give more controls to public agencies and local people over the numbers of licensed premises, their hours and conditions of opening.

The Licensing Act 2003 blurred distinctions between different types of licensed premises, particularly between bars that included dancing and nightclubs. Many pubs, bars, clubs and restaurants offer other activities besides eating and drinking, for example live music, dancing and watching sports on television and their location and times of offering are specified within the individual premise's licence. The classification of different types of venues has become more complicated and at the start of this study it appeared that there might be significant differences between categories of venue and the encouragement they offered for heavy drinking. Town planning is important in this context because local planning policies control the numbers and type of licensed premises in any given location. Planning can play a significant role in the shaping of a local town centre at night through policies that encourage certain types of premises, such as late-opening dance bars and nightclubs, to locate in one street or small neighbourhood. Planning can also control hours of opening, but the interrelationship with licensing legislation is complex (Roberts, 2009).

Most pubs, clubs and bars choose to open an hour or two later than the hitherto standard of 11pm for pubs and bars and 2am for nightclubs. A controversial provision of the Licensing Act 2003 was to require licensing authorities to grant licences unless there were strong objections. In the six years following the Act, the guidance has been altered to shift more powers towards local authorities to refuse a licence, but many late-night permissions had been granted before the Act was passed (Hadfield, 2006). The Act also allowed authorities to designate particular small areas within their town centres as Cumulative Impact Zones. These zones cover areas where there are a large number of licensed premises. Licensing authorities have more powers to refuse licences and to place stronger restriction on opening hours for new applications within a Cumulative Impact Zone under the amended guidance.

The necessity to tighten legislation against the proliferation and concentration of licensed premises arose because of the conditions of trade. Although the transnational providers within the drinks industry appear to be profitable, the 'operators', that is, the major chains of nightclubs, pubs and dancebars, have run within tight profit margins and are subject to frequent takeovers, mergers and acquisitions. The competition between individual venues has led to them adopting a variety of strategies to attract customers. These have included reducing the cost of certain drinks at certain times, advertising through handing out fliers, contacting customers through text messages or social networking sites and other more dubious measures. In 2010, the government introduced a mandatory code for alcohol retailers, which banned irresponsible promotions such as 'all you can drink for £10' and ensures that all licensed premises have an age verification policy in place.

Although permissive, the Licensing Act 2003 continued and strengthened previous licensing legislation to protect minors. Any licensed premise, either on-licensed or off-licensed, which allows underage drinkers (i.e. under 18) to buy or drink alcohol risks its licence being revoked for a period and being fined, in addition to the staff involved facing sanctions depending on their position and the circumstances of the purchase. Since 2003, the Home Office has run a series of enforcement campaigns against underage sales through local police forces. At the local level, community safety partnerships and local licensing authorities do 'spot testing' using accompanied young volunteers. It is an offence to buy alcohol for an underage drinker ('proxy purchasing').

The powers that police and police community support officers (PCSOs) have to control drunken behavior have increased over the last decade and a half. The 'designated public place order' (DPPO) allows the police to ban the open consumption of alcohol within a designated area and to confiscate or

pour away any open cans or bottles of alcohol. A more individualised control, which came into force under Section 27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006, is the 'drink banning order' (DBO). These can be applied to individuals over the age of 16 and can prevent them from buying alcohol, entering licensed premises within a defined area or drinking in public and be applied for up to two years. In addition, Section 27 gives uniformed police officers the power to make a 'direction to leave' a specified locality. This can be applied to any individual over the age of 16 and can be in force for up to 48 hours. This power was amended in the Policing and Crime Act 2009 (Section 31) to allow police to apply the direction to young people between the ages of 10 and 16 and it gave them powers to take them home or to a place of safety if they suspected that they were under the age of 16 (Home Office, 2010). The direction was a successor to the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, which gave the police powers to disperse groups of people who are causing disorder either immediately or within a given timeframe.

These powers sit in addition to the longer-established police powers to restrain individuals who are drunk and disorderly or acting in an aggressive or threatening manner. The Police and Criminal Justice Act 2001 also gave the police and PCSOs powers to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) or on-the-spot fines to individuals who are drunk and disorderly in public. Although all of the powers mentioned are part of national legislation, they are subject to different local enforcement strategies. Issues such as police resourcing, days of the week and time of evening or night can play a part in whether they are used or not (Hadfield *et al.*, 2009; Hadfield and Measham, 2011).

The police are not the only agency that shapes alcohol-related behaviour. Central government has encouraged partnership working at the local level since 2005, through the operation of community safety partnerships, town centre management and other types of organisation that bring together key stakeholders from different sectors. These might include representatives from the local authority, the police, local licensees, youth officers, drug and alcohol action teams and transport providers. Initiatives that originated in the private sector, such as Best Bar None and Pubwatch, are now given official recognition and support by central and local government. Door staff are regulated by the Security Industries Association Act 2001 and their numbers and gender can be specified in the individual premise's licence. There are also voluntary agencies that work in certain town and city centres at night, such as church groups who run a 'street pastor' service to help young people who might be suffering from the effects of drink or drugs.

In and beyond the physical location of town centres, the youth service operates in association with volunteers and the voluntary sector to provide services for young people. They may cooperate with drug and alcohol action teams in working proactively with young underage drinkers in parks and other public places. The extent to which the youth service is funded in each local authority area varies, as does the availability of local volunteers. The activities of locally provided voluntary services, such as church youth groups, are also place specific.

Discussion

The academic literature offered some intriguing clues as to why there could be interregional and intraregional variations in young people's drinking. One further point was identified, derived from the investigators' backgrounds in planning and urban design. The quality of place is highly significant for understanding how people behave. This investigation therefore needed

to consider not only where different amenities and facilities are located and how they were accessed, but critically how attractive they were to the groups in question. Public policy has now accepted that dirty, ill-kempt spaces accommodate antisocial behaviour in contrast to well-maintained and attractive spaces (ODPM, 2004).

Methods

A multi-methods approach to address each of the three 'poles' – drinking culture, leisure environment and regulation – was incorporated into the research project. The researchers' backgrounds and the place-based nature of the study led to a mainly qualitative method of analysis. The study investigated drinking behaviours in three different age groups in two different places in England – one in the North East, which we have called 'River City', and the other involving two adjacent towns in the South East, which we have called 'Technotown' and 'Market Town'. The places were chosen because they were located in contrasting regions with respect to recorded levels of alcohol-related harms. The three age groups were 15- to 16-years olds, 18- to 19-year-olds and 22- to 24-year-olds. In addition, the views and activities of 'stakeholders' as identified in the section on regulation were investigated. The methods used were focus groups, individual and small group semi-structured interviews, individual diaries, geographic information system (GIS) mapping and direct observation. A fuller description of methods can be found in the Appendix. Both the interviewees and the maps have been anonymised for ethical reasons.

Initial findings

One outcome of the mapping exercise was the finding that participants drank, shopped and found their entertainment in a larger number of sub-centres across a wider area than had been anticipated. As explained in the Appendix, the north-eastern area had a more compact urban structure than the South East. The team had expected a degree of dispersal in the South East, but were surprised by its extent. There was a similar element of surprise in the north-eastern area too. After the initial focus groups in both areas, the areas included in the mapping exercise had to be extended. Travel to alcohol-based entertainment in the North East was often around 10km, but in the South East it occasionally extended to 25km. Unfortunately, there is no national source of data for travel to licensed premises to refer to. The most detailed study, the National Travel Survey, records only journeys for aggregate leisure and entertainment (DfT, 2010). The spread of drinking clusters has implications for licensing and planning policies. These are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

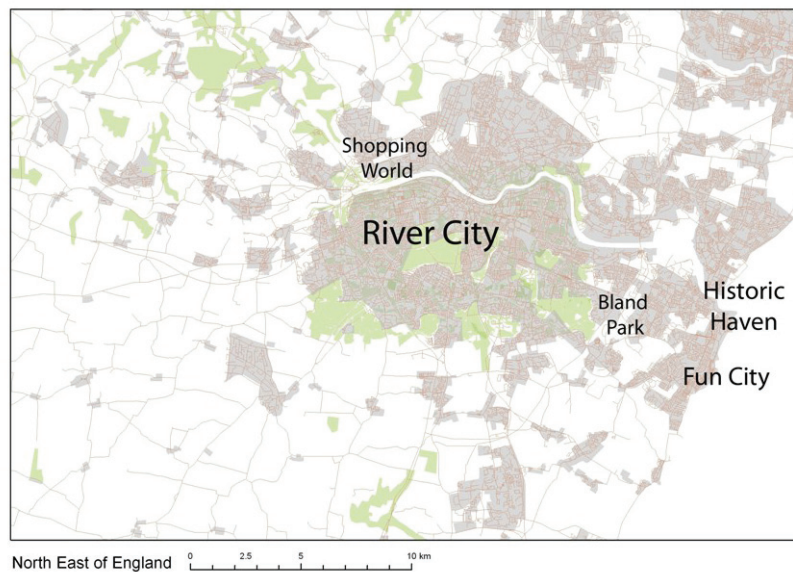
In the South East a nearby town, 'Edge City', was included in the research design as the most probable destination for nights out. Not only did this prove to be so, but the mapping exercise had to be extended to include a historic town that had small narrow streets full of clubs and bars (Castletown) and a smaller sub-centre (Small Town) with two significant dance bars (see Figure 1). In the North East, the area was extended to include two coastal resorts (Fun City and Historic Haven), a large out-of-town shopping centre (Shopping World) and another smaller out-of-town shopping centre with a cinema (Bland Park) (see Figure 2). The implications of these findings are discussed in full in Chapter 4.

Figure 1: Market Town and Technotown surroundings



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Figure 2: River City and surroundings



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Out-of-town shopping and entertainment centres are developed on the basis of their regional/subregional 'pull'. The research team had been made aware from previous studies that many major nightclubs also have wide catchment areas. One anticipated consequence of the Licensing Act 2003 was that people would drink more locally, since local pubs and clubs would open later. However, the team had not anticipated that this would mean that local centres, rather than individual pubs or clubs, would be so significant.

2 FRIENDSHIP, SOCIABILITY AND FUN

Cultural practices

This chapter explores the varying drinking practices across the different age groups and locations. Respondents in the study reported drinking in three main types of location: outside (mainly parks, streets and in the north-eastern area, the beach), inside their/their friends' homes and in licensed premises (mainly bars and clubs). In River City there was a progression between these locations, with outdoor drinking at the ages of 11–15 giving way to teenage house parties until approximately 17/18, then a move to bars, pubs and clubs. One 18-year-old explained (please see the Appendix for an explanation of the coding for interviewee quotes):

'We used to always go to the park on a Friday and Saturday ... about 15 it was like ... like we had older friends and they started having their house parties so we used to go to them and then when we went 18 ... got 18 we went to town.'

NEYAF-FG1

In Market Town and Technotown, there was much less importance placed on drinking outside, with many teenagers emphasising the supposed 'safety' of house parties as the best place for early, experimental drinking. Moreover, while clubbing was also prominent among the 18- to 19-year-olds in the South East, already a more varied pattern of nights out was discernable, with some preferring quieter nights with a partner or small gatherings in each other's homes.

In the 22- to 24-year-old age group, work and family life had started to place more constraints on going out and there was a shift back towards the home, although 'a good night out' remained an important and regular feature of many respondents' lifestyles. However, it was clearly a more important part of the River City's culture than the south-eastern towns where definitions of a good night out were more varied and often included lower levels of alcohol consumption.

Importantly in both places, drinking was associated with friendship, fun and, above all, sociability. However, in the north-eastern area this included a level of expected exuberance and even rowdy drunkenness, which was much less in evidence in the south-eastern towns.

A good night out

The clearest difference between definitions of 'a good night out' between the two areas was the level of consistency in the North East compared to a much more varied response in the South East. In the north-eastern area, respondents in both the older groups (18–19 and 22–24) spoke enthusiastically and affectionately of the features of 'a good night out'. In the focus groups it was striking that the response to the question 'What is the drinking culture of this place' came back emphatically as 'binge' drinking, whereas in the south-eastern towns the responses were more varied and confused.

In River City, the night out could have different starting points: for example home/a friend's home or a football match. However, it mostly followed a loose set of stages. The gathering point generally included some drinking, with a further meeting of the friendship group usually in a suitable bar providing cheap drinks. The group would then visit different bars and dance bars, sometimes in the same 'cluster' of venues, sometimes in another cluster, a short walk or taxi ride away. The culmination of a night out was frequently a club with dancing, after which most of the group looked for fast food and taxis home. Some might continue on to a friend's house for more alcohol and/or a sleepover.

This pattern was similar to some South East respondents' definition of nights out, although there was more emphasis on the home pre-drinks and the cost:

'You drink as cheap as you can, so you drink as much as you can at home and then when you go out you drink as much as you can in the cheaper place and then eventually you end up in the place where you have to pay top dollar for it ...'

SE.AM-FG1

The cost of drinks was observably more expensive in the bars and clubs of the South East. For example, one mainstream dance bar that had venues in both River City and Edge City advertised pitchers of spirits for £1 less in its north-eastern location. There were also more promotional offers on its north-eastern website. The research team carried out an observation of the significant drinking clusters in both areas on a Friday and a Saturday night in both places. The Friday night was a relatively 'quiet' night in the summer and the Saturday night was during the autumn when the students were back. The drinks promotions in River City were more aggressive, with fliers, 'A' boards advertising treble shots of spirits for £5 and scantily clad women trying to attract clientele.

Overall in Market Town and Technotown there was generally a much wider set of definitions of a good night out, with some professing a preference for quieter nights, particularly among female respondents:

'When I was younger I used to drink a lot more ... but now I work long hours, it's more social drinking than getting drunk drinking so, in terms of what I do socially probably what I do the most is to go out for dinner.'

SE.A.FG1.9

Importantly in both areas the characteristic of 'a good night out' was not necessarily the extent of drunkenness: "I've had some really good nights completely sober and some really good nights absolutely wasted" (SE.YA.F-FG1.7), but was more closely related to the interchange between friends and the fun

that they had. In the North East, staying together as a group and 'having a laugh' were highlighted as significant:

'[T]here have been nights when I went out and I just laughed from the start to finish and it's just all the lads having a good time together and no one getting into trouble ... just enjoying yourself, I don't know, having a drink helps as well because everyone sort of gets a bit silly as well as long as everyone is having the same sort of drink then you have a really good night.'

NEAM-FG1.1

For women who liked dance bars and clubs, the opportunity to dance often characterised a good night out as well, as well as the opportunity to wear different clothes and make-up:

'Just being with my friends, people that I want to be with, and just having a dance and having a good conversation about what the week has been about, just, not so much the drinking, getting drunk or anything just meeting everybody and getting dressed up, just going out and enjoying yourself, really.'

NEAF-FG1

Dressing up was emphasised less in the South East, but even here one respondent commented: *"It's nice to get dressed up and go out and have a little bit of a dance and just feel a bit more glamorous"* (SE.AF.FG1).

Respondents in River City often described their outings as including the loosening of inhibitions:

'[L]ike the next thing my friend's texting us saying 'let's go to Themebar there's a bouncy castle and a hot tub' and I walked in and there was a big bouncy castle, people were jumping on it and then people were in like a hot tub with their clothes on ... [laughter] so I had like ... well I had like a leotard on so I was like oooh I'm going in ... so my hair extensions were hanging by the time I got home. It was horrible!'

NEAF-FG1

'Friendliness' was identified as part of River City's, and indeed the north-eastern area's, drinking culture: *"I would say so because the people are friendly and that"* (NEAF-FG.1). Young people in the 18–24 age range made disparaging comparisons with other cities and areas such as Liverpool and Scotland, making the point that the North East was friendly and sociable. As one female respondent explained: *"I mean you'll ... just be standing at the bar and you can end up having full conversations with someone you don't know. It's that kind of place, it is dead friendly"* (NEAF.FG-1).

In contrast, the emphasis in Market Town and Technotown generally seemed less enthusiastic and with a sense that 'clubbing' was a more short-lived activity. As this respondent put it:

'There is a very big difference between 22+ to just turning 18, when you are just turning 18 you are like "oh my God I can go out" and when you get close to 21 you go out once or twice but it's more to socialise with people, and to see people, than to go out just to get drunk and go a bit mad.'

SEAF-FG1

Avoiding fights or getting into other kinds of trouble was a common theme: *"A good night out would be when everyone has had a laugh, no one has thrown up, no one has been kicked out of a club"* (NE.YA. M.FG1.2). Watching over your friends,

stopping fights and getting home safely were part of a memorable experience of a pub/club night out.

Although being drunk was not a prerequisite for a good night, some did go out with that intention: *"You go to town and you know you are going to have a good night but you're probably going to have to be drunk to enjoy it because everyone else around you is going to be"* (NE.A.M-FG2). Whereas others got 'carried away' by the night out, *"I get drunk even though it's not my intention, and I'd say most of my friends have the sort of mentality they would organise a night out to get drunk ... it's just to have a good time"* (NE.A.F-FG1.9). Both these comments were drawn from River City.

Reported drinking on a big night out involved heavy consumption of alcohol in both study areas. The questionnaires issued at the start of the focus groups gave some idea of the quantities that people in the different areas might drink on a night out. For men this generally involved either beer or lager first and spirits after, or the reverse, and for women it involved wine followed by spirits or alcopops. At the upper end of the scale this reached in excess of 35 units (15+ pints) for men in River City and 20 units (10 pints) for men in Market Town and Technotown; for women the corresponding units were up to 30 units in the North East, but a maximum of 9–10 being more typical for female drinkers in both areas. To characterise consumption in one area as harmful and the other as 'safe' would be mistaken, however the evidence suggested that the upper end of heavy drinking on a night out involved drinking more in the north-eastern case study, especially for men. Clearly, consumption in both areas exceeded safe drinking guidelines and indeed current definitions of binge drinking (NHS, 2011).

Drinking at home before going out

Drinking at home before going out occurred in both areas. In Market Town and Technotown there was more of an emphasis on saving money: *"We mainly pre-drink around a friend's house to save money ..."* (SE.Y.A.M-FG1), but generally this activity was part of socialising and getting in the mood for the night ahead. For women this was often about chatting, listening to music and getting dressed. In River City the perceived need to dress appropriately for a night out, that is, in a short skirt with full make-up and high heels, meant that drinking together could help to produce the right mindset:

'I don't know, just gets us in the spirit, put the music on, have a quick vodka and ... I don't know. When I do go out, I do have a drink while I'm getting ready, I just ... don't know ... I just ... like it gives you a bit more confidence ... [gets you in the mood as well doesn't it?] ... and you don't feel as silly all dressed up.'

NE.A.F-FG1

Although this seems to be following a stereotype, the research team's observation confirmed that there was a greater extravagance in the type of clothes young women wore for a night out in River City. The focus group discussions also included jokes about the shortness of skirts and how it would feel 'wrong' to be out on a Saturday night in flat heels and tracksuit bottoms.

Men's pre-drinking included watching television and playing drinking and computer games together: *"well my house has Xbox as well so we just sit doing that, have a laugh"* (NE.Y.A.M-FG1.1). However, it was also the ability to talk together that was emphasised: *"Everyone is speaking to everyone and you can actually hear someone speak to you back ..."* (SE.A.M-FG1).

Some respondents did admit to getting drunk before going out: "I will usually meet my friends at around six and then when we feel really drunk, we will go out after that, usually around 8pm" (NE.AM-FG2). However, socialising was undoubtedly more important and even those not particularly interested in drinking joined in his activity: *"In general I never drink at home but just if I'm going out I would drink with my friends before we go ... in general I don't particularly like the taste of it"* (SE.A.F-FG2).

House parties

House parties for middle-range teenagers, aged between 14 and 18, were widely reported in both areas. Most parties include alcohol and in River City one boy's diary marked out a 'dry' one as an exception. Generally held on birthdays, or sometimes if parents were away, in Market Town and Technotown in particular there were many comments about house parties being a 'safe' environment in which to experiment with drinking: *"Wherever the alcohol is, I prefer to do it in someone's house because then you know that you are not going to do anything stupid ..."* (SE.Y.P.M.18, 19 and 20). This sometimes contrasted with the perceived risk of drinking outside – see also Chapter 4: *"[I]f I got in trouble in a field and there isn't much people to help me, whereas if I'm in a house at least there would be people like with a phone who could get help"* (SE.Y.P.M.1). Some of the young adults mourned the passing of house parties and the transition to going out once the legal age for going out had passed.

For the older age groups, while home drinking was mainly a weekend activity, there was some divergence in reported emphasis. In Market Town and Technotown, home drinking seemed again about socialising while saving money, and orientated around friendship groups:

'Pretty much all of them [friends] enjoy drinking to excess, they don't enjoy to pay for it but they do enjoy the results, so this may be why we have got a lot of people saying they like to stay home, you go to Sainsbury's, get a big bottle of vodka each maybe, maybe one between two.'

SE.A.M-FG1.6

In River City, home drinking was, however, often orientated around family celebrations:

'Now with the summer I only see my family, my close family on a Saturday, so now there is a lot of barbecues happening and different friends' houses, so on a Saturday I tend to drink quite a lot from 12 o'clock all the way through to the night.'

NE.A.F-FG1.4

The reduced cost of drinking at home, as opposed to 'out', was reported in both areas, however.

There were few reports of young adults or adults drinking at home during the week. Drinking was generally associated with a minimal level of sociability, for example, an 18-year-old having one or two beers, 'cans', with a parent. Those who did have a drink alone admitted it with a measure of embarrassment: *"I sound like an alcoholic but I do drink at home, I'd have a glass of wine in front of the TV, that kind of stuff, I just find it relaxing, just a glass of wine"* (SE.A.F-FG2).

Drinking, friendship and family

Accounts of going out in the city centre with family for a night's drinking and dancing were rare. Families drinking together were more likely to meet at specific celebratory occasions, although barbecues in the garden were mentioned quite frequently in River City too, or, for a meal and a "few" drinks in a locale outside of the city centre. In Market Town and Technotown, many of the respondents still lived with their parents and here there often seemed a determined effort to separate off their drinking life and their parents, as this 22- to 24-year-old woman pointed out in a focus group:

'I don't usually drink at home just because my parents are normally there and I don't really see the point of it if it's just me, like, sitting and having a glass of wine just I don't know [group laughs], doesn't really do it.'

SE.AF-FG2

'A good night out' in both areas could involve groups of friends, with reports of numbers going from three up to 10 or more. One 18- to 19-year-old from River City commented: *"I think maybe five would be a good number to have a good night out, but if you go to a club then it's got to be 10 or 15"* (NE.YAM-FG1.7). The groups might be single sex, or not, and could involve a partner, or not. Sometimes groups and/or partners would meet up later as part of the structure of the evening.

The North East is often characterised as a 'hard-drinking' area with drinking cultures formed by its industrial past of ship building and steel production. The implication is that 'heavy drinking' is a learned part of the region's history, and habits are passed from one generation to another. However, while the reported total amount consumed in a big night out did seem to be slightly greater among the River City interviewees, particularly among men, there was no evidence from the young people we interviewed that their drinking patterns were consciously influenced by this collective memory. Nevertheless, the evidence that they did drink more, spoke about their nights out with greater gusto and enthusiasm, with a fondness for having a 'good laugh' and were happy to describe the drinking culture of their area as 'binge drinking' suggests that an association with heavy drinking continues a part of the identity of River City.

Drinking/not drinking

Not all of the respondents in the study drank heavily; indeed, our methodology explicitly included a range of self-professed drinking styles, from interviewees who never or hardly ever drank alcohol to those who claimed that they drank heavily. Some were quite happy to socialise without involving drinking, particularly at home, or in friends' homes, for example:

'I'm quite happy to take it or leave it, if I go to a friend's house ... we'd probably watch films, chat, possibly make dinner for each other, just general catch up and thing, but we normally wouldn't drink unless we are going out afterwards.'

SE.YAF-FG1.7

Of course, respondents' understanding of what was meant by 'not drinking' (one respondent in the North East reported drinking a full bottle of wine on a 'non-drinking' night) or 'drinking heavily' varied greatly.

Others among all groups who did genuinely drink in moderation or hardly at all did not find it a barrier to friendship, however. One option, for example, was to be the designated driver for nights out with friends. One River City respondent suggested that not drinking “wouldn’t necessarily stop me from seeing them. I think even now people still go out drinking and they know if I take the car places, they will ask for a lift as I usually have one glass or something” (NE.YAF-FG1.1). This was even more common in Market Town and Technotown: “it’s more of an incentive to drive as well because you make money on a night out” (SEAF-FG1). Others socialised more through going out for meals and then drinks with friends and partners: “I don’t drink at all, but I go out and I go to like a lot of restaurants and pubs with my friends, but I’m pretty much teetotal, I think I have a drink or two once a year ...” (NE.AFG-1). The implication of this is that ‘a good night out’ did not have getting drunk as its primary objective. Rather, the object was to meet up with friends, chat, have a laugh, listen to music, dance and, as such, non-drinkers could enjoy themselves as well.

Summary

In young adulthood, a good night out is often structured around pre-drinking at home and then going out from bar to bar, sometimes ending the night in a club or sometimes going on to a friend’s house to carry on drinking. Although this type of behaviour was common in both study areas, there were differences in reported behaviour. In River City, ‘a good night out’ seemed more firmly established as the ritual against which individuals defined their personal attitudes and behaviour. It was discussed with enthusiasm and affection and could be considered a significant attribute of the identity of the area. Moreover, while the big night out continued to provide the primary point of reference, there was a broader range of definitions of a good night out in evidence in Market Town and Technotown.

The key message to emerge from this part of the project, however, was that while ‘big nights out’ often include binge drinking and people admitted that they drank more than they intended, the paramount motivations were ones of laughter, friendship and social solidarity. Moreover, non-drinkers or light drinkers were still able to accompany the group and join in. It was still possible to have fun even on a ‘messy’ night out if you were sober, in both case study areas.

3 LACK OF LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (UNDER 18)

This chapter highlights the lack of leisure opportunities that many of the young participants in this study experienced, particularly in River City. These young people were below the legal age at which they could enter bars, pubs and clubs. Key differences between the areas were highlighted by evidence from young people's diaries and interviews. With regard to open space, it was not only the quantity of provision that mattered but its quality. Some young people made a direct link between a lack of things to do and underage drinking. This theme is taken up in a discussion of 'diversionary activities'; that is, activities and events that are offered as an alternative to drinking.

Young people's (15–16 years) leisure activities

The research team used the diary exercise and interview material to map and log the activities that 15- to 16-year-olds in both case study areas actually engaged in. These are set out in Table 1. There was a strong congruence between the most popular activities in both areas. These were going to parks, which included, especially in the North East, playing informal games of football, visiting shopping centres and going to the cinema. The numbers of

visits provided a record of the number of times specific places were visited outside the home. Two 'Wordle' diagrams highlight the activities that were most popular (see Figures 3 and 4). Most respondents recorded time spent on home-based activities, using computers for social networking, watching films and television and playing interactive games such as Xbox. Some also played musical instruments, such as the guitar. It was in the activities outside the home that the greatest place-based differences were identified.

Table 1 illustrates that young people in the Market Town and Technotown sample were engaged in a greater variety of pursuits and hobbies. Often young people were involved in multiple activities. Although the following respondent provided an extreme example, it illustrates the point well:

'Yeah, I have quite a busy lifestyle really. Sort of on a Monday night I help run a football team, then I run the youth cafe at the local youth centre and then Tuesdays I have meetings for youth committee ... and then we go on to helping run the D of E [Duke of Edinburgh's] award that night and ... then Wednesday I do dodge ball sessions for young people at the leisure centre next to my school and then ... and then Thursday I have a music lesson for clarinet after school ... and then Friday I usually attend XXXX youth club ... on a normal weekend I work at an animal rescue centre from 8.30 in the morning until 1.00, helping adopt animals, clean out and walk them and stuff, and then I go to play badminton ...'
SE.YPF4 and 5

For those who were involved in a variety of activities, one particularly positive aspect was the opportunity to broaden social contacts and make different friends other than those from school, for example through youth clubs.

Table 1: 15- to 16-year-olds' leisure activities

North East	South East
Parks (football, hanging out)	Parks
Shopping centre	Shopping centres
Cinema	Cinema
Local shops (hanging out)	Local shops
Restaurants	Restaurants
Fastfood	Fastfood
Under-18s clubbing	Under-18s clubbing
Skate park	Skate parks
Streets (hanging out)	Streets (hanging out)
Youth club	Youth club
Ice skating	Bowling
Sports centre	Sports/leisure centre
Beach	Lakes
Swimming	Swimming
Horse riding	Trampolineing
Music (band)	Scouts
	Music/drama
	Dance
	Football (team playing)
	Horse riding
	Library
	Go-karting
	Gym
	Museum/science centre
	Boxing
	Volunteering (shops)

Figure 3: 'Wordle' diagram of young people's favourite activities in River City



Figure 4: 'Wordle' diagram of young people's favourite activities in Market Town and Technotown



In River City, many of the sample were drawn from a more deprived neighbourhood and their activities were more limited. Nevertheless, respondents based in the more affluent neighbourhoods in the city made similar complaints about boredom as the young people from lower-income households. The harsher weather in the North East also played a part in restricting movement outdoors in the winter months. Visits to indoor shopping centres in River City and Shopping World featured as ways to get out of the cold. A large hypermarket, the size of six football fields, provided shelter for young people in the more affluent neighbourhood, providing a half hour's respite where they could wander round and buy some sweets. Fastfood restaurants met a similar need, as this young person explained:

'... usually either the park or just walk around or sit in McDonalds. Just depends, if it is not a nice night we usually just sit in McDonalds, get a drink or something, if not we will just walk around the park.'
NEYPM.12

Parks

The evidence suggested that outdoor spaces such as parks were important to young people. There were differences, however. In River City, playing football was popular with the boys while the girls either watched or walked around. Sitting and talking was important for both sexes.

Respondent 1: *'Summer, but like if it hasn't been raining we will just go to the park anyway even if the grass is wet.'*

['And is that always with a group of lads?']

Respondent 1: *'Yes.'*

['And do any lasses go to that?']

Respondent 2: *'There is some.'*

Respondent 1: *'Just sitting there; they don't play football.'*

NEYPM.18 and 19

There were complaints from some that these innocent activities were restricted. One boy told how he and his friends cannot play football in a local park when they like: *"Even the police sometimes come down ... I don't see why they are throwing you off, you are doing your own thing – like some kids go out causing trouble – but we are just playing football"* (NEYPM.17). There were also clashes between the different age groups who wanted to use the parks. Young people complained that they had to give way to young children:

['W]e just want to sit and listen to our music and stuff but no one was there so we couldn't be told to get off the swings or whatever [okay and does that happen quite a bit?] ... especially in xxx park because you have got all the little charver mams and stuff like telling you to get off the swing because their kid wants it and their kid is top priority because we are not young no more.'
NEYPF.12

In Market Town and Technotown, going to the park and socialising, sometimes in groups of up to 20, was similarly important for young people:

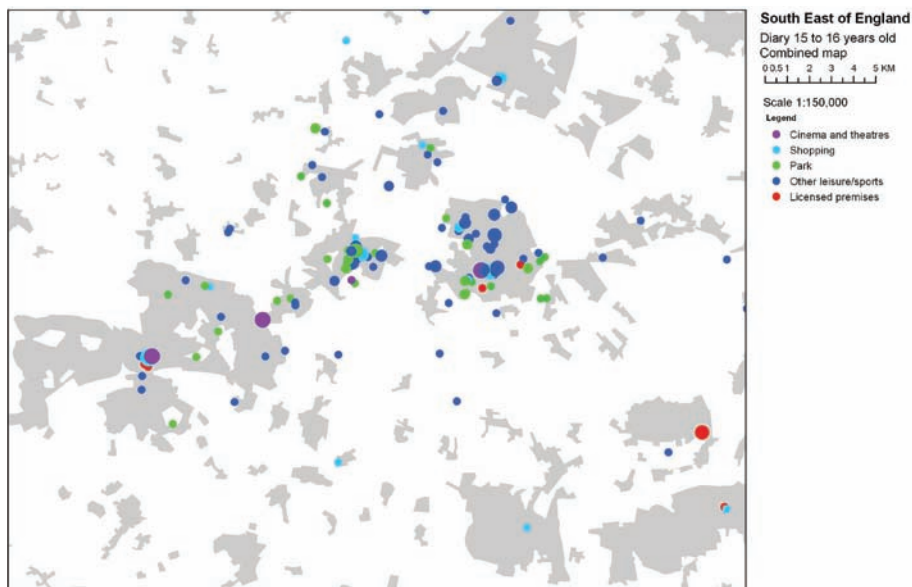
'My favourite thing to do in my spare time is probably just sort of go down xxx park and just relax with my mates. Just sort of ... [what will you do?] ... sometimes we cycle round, just talk, sometimes we'd sit down. There's been times when I've done a bit of photography when I up there because it's been nice, I find that quite relaxing.'
SEYPM.11

The terms 'peaceful' and 'relaxing' came up in a number of discussions. These themes were mentioned as much as opportunities for activity, football, skateboarding etc. The issue of the park being for the respondents or their age group was significant: *"it's like there's hardly any people go there so it's just us and our mates like playing football"* (SEYPM.14, 15 and 16).

The spatial distribution of leisure activities of the young people is illustrated in Figures 5 and 6. Non-park-related leisure activities (sports clubs, youth clubs etc.) were relatively dispersed in both areas. There were three main cinemas accessed by the young people in the South East (in Edge City, Technotown and an out-of-town location) and three in the North East (River City, Bland Park and Shopping World); while shopping was slightly more dispersed for respondents living in Market Town and Technotown, reflecting the number of

sub-centres – it was concentrated in two main clusters in River City. However, the greatest difference was related to park/greenspace use. Although the parks and greenspaces used by the young people were dispersed in both areas, the number of spaces accessed by young people was higher in Market Town and Technotown. More importantly, however, were the attributes of those spaces, which were not apparent in the mapping exercise. Direct observation by the team established that spaces around Market Town and Technotown were of higher quality, better maintained and contained provision that was specifically targeted at the participant age group. For example, one of the parks adjacent to the most deprived neighbourhood in Technotown was extensively landscaped with a lake, a skate park and even a drive-through fastfood restaurant.

Figure 5: Market Town and Technotown leisure facilities accessed by 15- to 16-year-olds



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Figure 6: River City leisure facilities accessed by 15- to 16-year-olds



Note: The licensed premises visited ran special non-alcohol events for the under 18s
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This was in sharp contrast to the park within the more deprived neighbourhood in River City, which although substantial, attractively landscaped and generally well maintained contained little to attract this age group and this was reflected in some young people's comments: "the park gets a bit boring" (NE.YPM.18 and 19). More than one group of friends claimed that the lack of things to do and places to go encouraged them to drink. This pair of friends lived in one of the most deprived areas in the area:

Respondent 1: *'No that is why we drink on a weekend and that.'*

Respondent 2: *'Aye because there is nothing to do and when you walk on the streets the police will tell you to get off the streets and stuff.'*

NE.YPF.35 and 43

This theme was repeated by others from the more affluent area too: "Maybe it's because we're bored we go out drinking" (NE.YPF.3, 4 and 7).

The presence of 'trouble' and people drinking discouraged some of the respondents in River City from going to certain parks: *"It is like a park thing but there are loads of desperate people that go there, there is always trouble on a Friday night and Saturday there is people drinking and always police and that"* (NE.YPF.15, 18, 25 and 27). Other interviewees in the other over-18 age groups corroborated these complaints. One of the stakeholders commented that there had been initiatives recently to improve the parks, in the centre of the River City and in the areas suffering from the most significant deprivation. Direct observation confirmed this, but again even in the large newly landscaped park in the deprived neighbourhood, the skate park facilities were less attractive and imaginative than in the Technotown example. Of course not having enough to do does not only relate to parks. Issues such as access and costs are also important.

15- to 16-year-old's leisure opportunities

As has been noted, 15- to 16-year-olds in Market Town and Technotown were engaged in more activities outside the home than their counterparts in River City. Stakeholders generally acknowledged that there were a large number of opportunities for young people in the South East: *"there are [sic] a huge level of leisure facilities that young people can access, mostly relatively young people in the area although there are pockets of significant deprivation within that ... but, yeah, it's ok"* (SE.S.10). Respondents confirmed this view. While some of the 15- to 16-year-olds felt that their activities were restricted, *"I think there could be more things around, because the main things you have got is bowling, ice-skating and shopping, and the cinema, and once you have been here for a while these four things get really boring ..."* (SE.YPF.7), others felt well provided for: *"I'd say it's quite good, I think I'm quite lucky to live where we do in terms of things to do for like young people"* (SE.YPF.11).

The reasons for the lack of engagement in activities outside the home in River City were various and related to individual preferences as well as actual opportunities. Two issues that dominated the interview material and that applied to some respondents in the South East as well were transport and costs. These issues were also relevant for the over-18 age groups, as will be noted.

Transport

Public transport in River City was generally regarded as good in comparison with much of the UK. The bus network is extensive and there is a good local rail service. The network is radial, with most services fanning out from the compact city centre, serving areas of around 10km from the city centre. It takes about approximately an hour for a bus to reach the furthest point of the network.

Transport was more problematic for those from the most deprived area in our sample. Fares were apparently low for the under-16s, with a £1.10 day pass on some routes, but this nevertheless was a drain on a low income. The fares almost treble in price once young people attain the age of 16: *"I only pay £1 for a day pass and go anywhere I like really; in July I'm going to have to start paying £2.80"* (NE.YP.M.6, 7, 8 and 9). Because the system is radial, access to the city centre is easier than travelling across town to Shopping World, which can involve taking three buses. Figure 7 maps the network provision of buses and light rail.

Many of the young people told interviewers that they walk to parks and friends' houses, with journeys that take up to 40 minutes:

Respondent 1: *'We walk everywhere, we never get the bus.'*

Respondent 2: *'We get the bus if we go to town.'*

Respondent 1: *'But we walk everywhere.'*

NE.YP.F.17, 19, 20 and 23

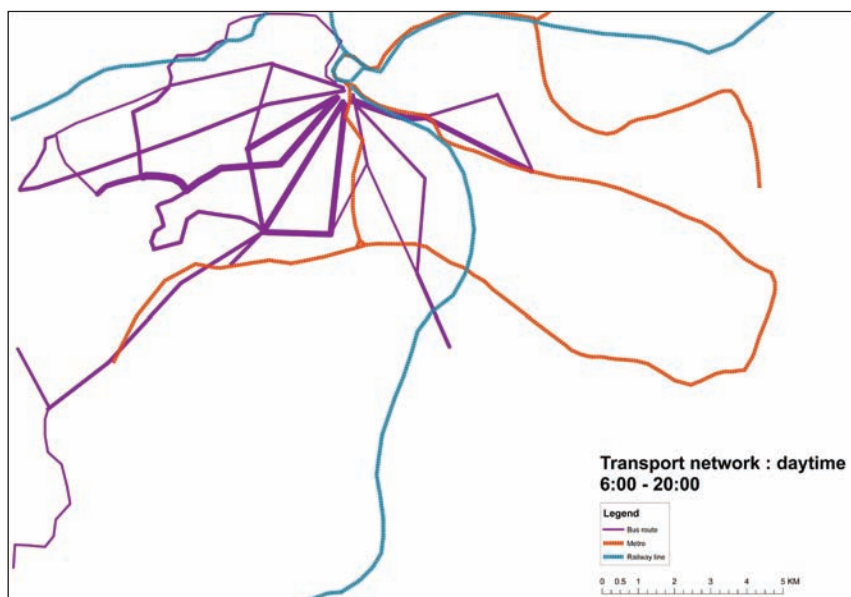
Walking poses restraints on mobility, as the following comment explains:

'We don't go out of [the neighbourhood], we don't go far because you normally have to walk back or something and like by the time you get out there and you go where you are going it is that cold you just want to go back in again.'

NE.YP.F.28, 32

By contrast, public transport around Market Town and Technotown is more dispersed and patchy, as is illustrated in Figure 8. It caters for a group of towns in the area, which are approximately 5km apart. Edge City is about 5km from

Figure 7: River City daytime transport



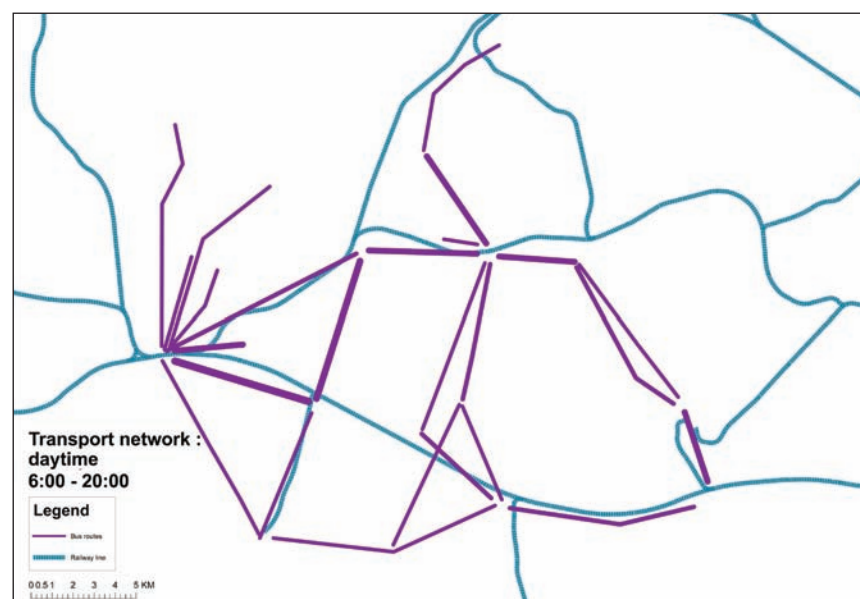
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Market Town and 10km from Technotown. The train service provides a fast and frequent route between Market Town and Edge City, but the service is less frequent in the evening and stops at night. The service to Technotown is less frequent and again reduces considerably in the evening. The bus service is limited in some parts of the area. The fares are not as low as in the River City but are comparable for the 15–16 age group. A local day pass for a child in Technotown is £2.20 and £3.20 for an adult. A child's (under-15) off-peak return ticket between Technotown and Edge City costs £2.70. Rail cards are available for 16- to 25-year-olds. More households in the South East have access to cars than in the North East. Department for Transport statistics record average car ownership in the South East as being 1.29 cars per household compared to 1.10 in the North East in 2008/9 (DfT, 2010). Car ownership would have been lower in built-up metropolitan neighbourhoods in River City than in the urban fringe neighbourhoods of Technotown, or Market Town.

Despite these apparent difficulties, young people in Market Town and Technotown generally had many facilities within walking or cycling distance – *"I cycle everywhere 'cos I love my BMX!"* (SE.YPM4 and 5) – and for trips further away either lifts from parents or public transport, particularly trains, were most often discussed. One respondent enthused that it was *"one of the best places to grow up"* and *"everything is either in walking or train distance or bike distance"* (SE.YPM.18, 19 and 20). However, not all young people were well served by public transport and there were complaints about having to walk for an hour to the town centre. This meant that some young people *"have to rely on parents to take us places and stuff. We can't be independent, which is pretty annoying actually"* (SE.YPF.12 and 13). The accessibility of public transport appeared to vary markedly between precise locations and the ability to walk or cycle some routes was also highlighted by stakeholders. Travelling around in the late evening and at night was more difficult because of the lack of services. Safety was an issue and at the time of the study, young people in Technotown were being warned to be careful of a rapist who was active in the area.

Access to facilities and activities was therefore an issue for teenagers in both areas. These constraints on opportunities for leisure seemed to be less restrictive than those of the price of facilities.

Figure 8: Market Town and Technotown daytime transport



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Costs

Young people in River City made more frequent complaints about not being able to take part in activities outside the home because of their costs. For some, this was a function of the lack of their own personal disposable income. For example, one girl commented: "I get £40 a month on the 25th and I have to use that for everything so it is usually like all the time I haven't got enough money" (NE.YPF.9 and 11). Other young people also mentioned that although they liked going to the cinema, they could only go infrequently because of the price of the tickets.

This was a problem for some of the young people in Market Town and Technotown too:

'We go to the cinema occasionally. The problem is the cinema's quite expensive, 'cos the tickets are kind of like £6 and you've got to, you know, by the time you've bought food and stuff, but we do go to the cinema occasionally ...'
SE.YPF.11

Interestingly, the £6 mentioned in the South East was less than the price of tickets in the North East.

There are three multiplexes in the North East area: one in an entertainment centre in River City, one in Bland Park and the other in Shopping World. It is complicated getting to Bland Park and Shopping World by bus and involves changes. The mapping exercise demonstrated that the River City complex was by far the most popular in our sample group. Its pricing scheme was complex and varied between performances, times and days: "different days it charges different things: sometimes it can be a couple of pounds and sometimes it can be up to a tenner" (NE.YPM.25, 26). In both areas visits to the cinema involved buying food, which also had to be factored into the costs of the trip. The 'Orange Wednesday' scheme, which was operating at the time of the study, proved popular in both areas because it effectively offered half-price tickets to couples and pairs of friends.

Trips to shopping centres were also popular in both areas, either with friends or with family. This was particularly true for young females in the South East, who were able to take advantage of a new and attractive shopping centre that had opened in Edge City:

'Well, I usually go with a group of my friends, most of the ones which come from this school, there's about five to six of us and we just basically go around ... There's no specific sort of plan when we go to Edge City, we basically just look around the shops and buy things if we need things.'
SE.YPF.8

The differences between the two areas were more marked when it came to accessing other types of leisure and sporting facilities. As has previously been noted, 15- to 16-year-olds in the south-eastern case study took advantage of the many leisure and sporting facilities that the area offered, including the discount schemes for young people: "they [swimming centre] had ... under 16s for free, so now I've been slightly put off going swimming because it costs me £2.50 for each session" (SE.YPF.8). Although young people in River City went swimming for similar prices, there were some criticisms of the quality of the baths. Some of the commercial leisure centres near to Market Town and Technotown offered reductions for the under-16s, which meant that, for example, a trip to a water-themed leisure venue cost £4.25 for the under-16s

whereas a trip to a similar, but more lavish, venue in River City was priced at £10.95 and it was more difficult to get to.

Young people in Market Town and Technotown benefited from more subtle advantages due to the affluence of the area. Our mapping exercise found that three destinations were sporting facilities at different independent fee-paying schools in the area. Access to these was arranged through clubs or other special schemes because all of our respondents were at state schools. There were no reports of similar arrangements in River City. Indeed, in contrast, one group of boys complained that they had been asked to stop playing on the football pitch belonging to their local academy school.

The evidence from the interviews and mapping exercise suggested that 15- to 16-year-olds in the River City sample had a more restricted choice of leisure activities outside the home in comparison to their counterparts in the Market Town and Technotown sample. A number of the River City interviewees listed the sports and leisure activities that would improve their lives. These included many activities that were more easily accessed in Market Town and Technotown, such as improvements to the football pitches, improvements to the swimming pool, more spaces for football games, organised football teams, an agreement to be able to use the Academy school's football pitch, another skate park, daytime use of the youth club during weekends and holidays, more places to ride bicycles, a local ice-skating rink, more sports facilities, a running club and gyms for teenagers. The young women were keen on places to sit and socialise with friends, for both winter and summer.

Alternatives to drinking for the underage group

Both case study areas had examples of 'diversionary activities' for young people at the weekends, which provided opportunities for them to meet, talk and have fun, which did not include alcohol. In both Technotown and Market Town there were regular events at two youth clubs, the former at a faith centre and the latter at a youth centre, both on Friday nights. In River City weekend activities were less permanently established and more experimental. One stakeholder commented: *"We're doing these crime action plans at the moment on a Friday and Saturday night. We'll take them to activities like basketball, football, take them to them on Friday, Saturday night and we've been very successful"* (NES.4). Another experiment, on a housing estate outside the study area with notable problems with alcohol abuse, was to run a music event on a Saturday night in the summer. This event was organised by young people themselves, with security, a DJ, lights and a strict ban on alcohol. The future of these experiments was uncertain because of funding cuts. There were also concerns about staffing these events with a lack of adult volunteers prepared to work on a weekend night. Another area in River City had provided the location for an extremely successful scheme, which was directed at providing both diversionary activities – a whole range from kick-boxing to zumba dancing to nail art – in addition to a voluntary scheme to combat 'proxy purchasing' (see Chapter 4). The funding for the diversionary activities had come to an end by the time this study was conducting interviews, but the scheme had achieved national recognition for its effectiveness.

Commercial operators offered alcohol-free club or gig events in mainstream nightclubs. In fact, one of the major nightclub operators offered similar nights in River City and in Castle Town. Another operator in River City ran music events for both under- and over-18s, using a system of wrist bands to regulate the purchase of alcohol. Long queues outside this venue demonstrated its popularity. The price precluded it from being a regular outing

for more than a handful of the sample of River City respondents, although those who could afford to go spoke of it enthusiastically. In Market Town and Technotown, one operator who was located just to the outskirts of the centre in Edge City ran under-18s nights. The council and police were not enthusiastic about these because they argued that they had the issue of dispersal after the events: “How do you disperse 2, 3, 4, 500 kids at 11, 11.30 at night?” (SE.S.6). Despite these difficulties, stakeholders and young people in both areas were clear that opportunities for 15- to 16-year-olds to meet and talk was an important part of the transition to adulthood and providing safe places and spaces where young people could do that was important.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed evidence from diary and interview material and the subsequent mapping exercises in both areas. This demonstrates that young people in Market Town and Technotown were able to access a wide range of activities and pastimes outside their homes that did not involve the consumption of alcohol. By contrast, young people in River City were more limited in their non-alcohol-based leisure pursuits. Young teenagers in the samples experienced constraints on their leisure from issues associated with access and costs, but costs were a more significant factor in River City. Young people in Market Town and Technotown benefited from the affluence of their area, especially with regard to a higher quality of parks and open spaces, a higher standard of facilities and easier access to a wider range of activities. Stakeholders highlighted a need for more substantial public investment in opportunities for young people to meet each other and have fun in River City, without alcohol, particularly at weekends.

4 THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF DRINKING CULTURES

This chapter explores the differences between the drinking cultures of River City and Market Town and Technotown with regard to some of their most negative features. Despite strong similarities between the areas, there were variations in where and how young adults drank to excess. We argue that the spatial structure of each area amplified these variations, and that differences in spatial layout also had an impact on the younger age group. With regard to outdoor and underage drinking, we found similarities in policing tactics, but different types of initiatives directed at different problems.

Spatial layout and adult drinking

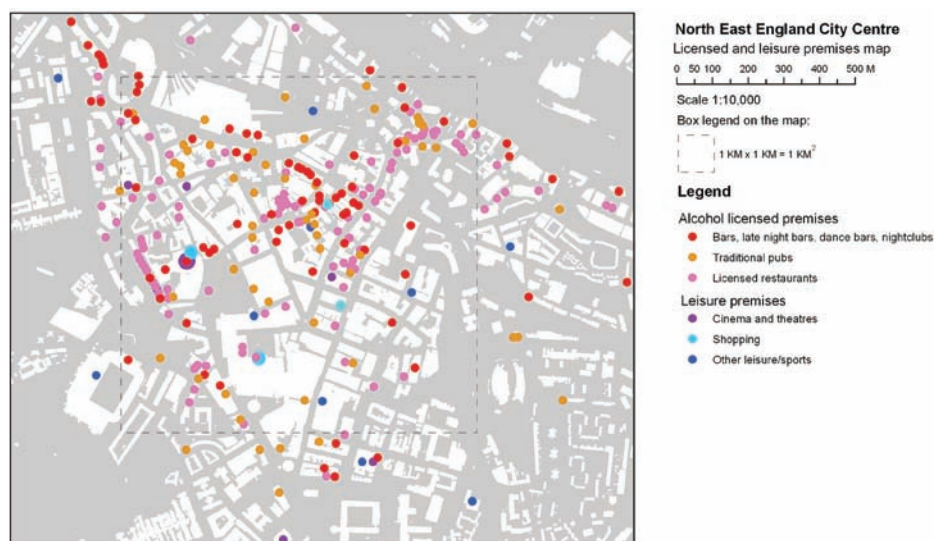
In Chapter 2, we suggested that the enthusiasm and exuberance with which the River City sample approached their 'good night out' went some way towards providing an explanation for the disparity between the study areas. A further consideration was the spatial layout and accessibility of the licensed premises, as related to the 'compact city' form of River City in comparison to the dispersed and polycentric urban area around Edge City. Two key issues emerged relating to place, location and licensed premises and these are illustrated in this chapter by maps logging leisure activities gleaned from the adult and young adult focus groups. Figures 9 and 11 illustrate the spread of licensed premises in River city and Edge City respectively. These have been classified by the researchers into three main types: late night bars, dance bars

and night clubs; 'traditional' pubs; licensed restaurants. These Figures should be read alongside Figures 10 and 12 which map where respondents actually went. The size of the dots reflects the frequency with which they were mentioned.

The spatial layout of bars, pubs and clubs is dependent on three main factors in England. The first is the historical legacy of previous centuries. This means that places that are near to each other can have quite different numbers and types of licensed premises. For example, because of their different histories of urban development, Market Town has an abundant supply of pubs, some of which have been converted into bars or restaurants. Technotown, by contrast, has very few. Similarly, in the inner suburbs of River City, there are two neighbourhoods with very few pubs. Second, the more recent licensing and planning policies have an impact on the number and types of premises. The centres of both River City and Edge City are designated as Cumulative Impact Zones and indeed the centre of River City is also designated as a 'stress area' in its licensing policy. Third, the economic climate and the operation of the property market have had an impact on planning with regard to development control. For example, an entertainment complex in River City that was popular with study respondents had originally been intended for retail in the local development plan. It failed to attract sufficient interest and planning permission had to be determined in favour of leisure and entertainment uses. The need to acquiesce to alcohol-related uses was also felt in a separate development near the centre, originally intended for knowledge-based businesses and leisure, which now accommodates a large nightclub, frequently mentioned by 18- to 19-year-old respondents. Edge City had a different experience, in that here the new shopping complex had originally included some bars. Many of these had changed hands to become more 'family'-style themed restaurants with a food offer. Similarly, in Market Town, one of the largest historic pubs had changed use to a family-style chain restaurant. These examples highlight the difficulties that planners and licensing officers face in shaping town centres.

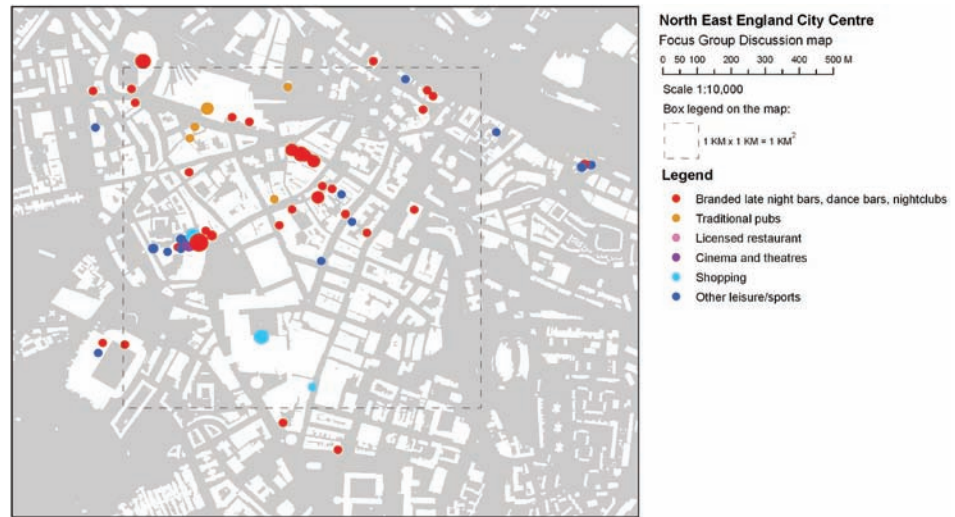
The strong demand in the two clusters distant from River City – Historic Haven and Fun City – led to the formation of significant clusters of bars and clubs located near to residential areas. In both of these, residents were beginning to mount a campaign for a designation of a Cumulative Impact Zone. The concentration of bars and licensed premises in several 'clusters' in the centre of River City allowed for easy bar-hopping between venues and this

Figure 9: River City licensed premises



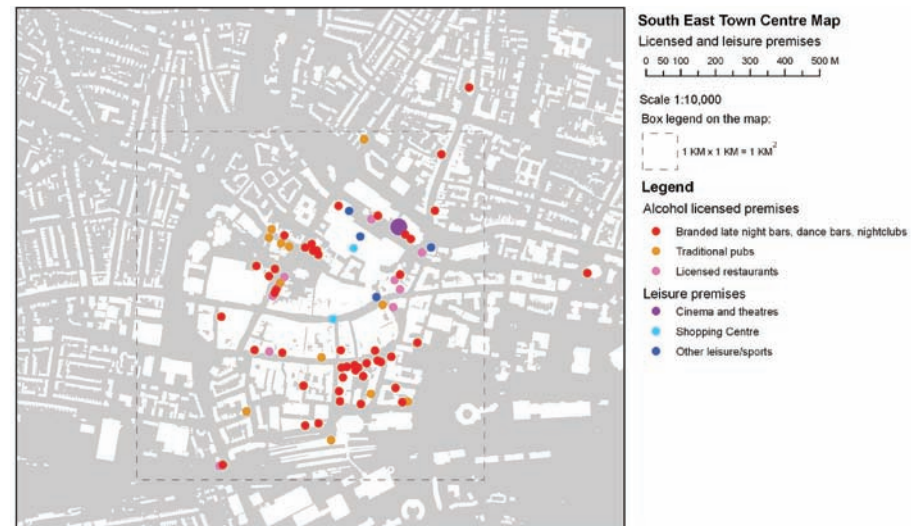
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Figure 10: River City licensed premises visited by young adult and adult respondents



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Figure 11: Edge City licensed premises



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Figure 12: Edge City licensed premises visited by respondents



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was seen as part of the attraction of a good night out: *"All the bars are so close together it's easy to have a good night. I think that is the appeal because it is so close and everyone wants to come"* (NE.AM.FG1). This was particularly true of the indoor entertainment venue, whose smooth surfaces and cover from the weather provided an easy transition between venues:

'It is so boring sitting in one bar so if it is raining it is fabulous because you don't have to bother taking a broly you can just go around all the bars. You're not staring at the same people and there are different types of music and scenery but your hair doesn't get wet and your tan doesn't streak.'
NE.A.F-FG2

The interview material revealed that the definition of a "good bar" was one that was busy and rowdy. The manager of one of the dance bars that was popular with the study respondents described how its atmosphere was conducive to purchasing alcohol: *"[Stakeholder's bar] is a 1,300-person capacity venue and when it is very, very full and very loud and very exciting that whole atmosphere probably encourages you to have one more drink"* (NE.S.18).

Given these conditions it was not surprising that a small number of respondents reported that they drank more than they had intended to at the outset of a night out:

'If I do drink, I do drink quite heavily. I don't know, I don't like to, it just happens, I have all the good intentions to just have a couple, get home early, get some food, but before I know it I'm at the next bar, the next drink, so I'm quite a big drinker.'
NE.AM-FG1.2

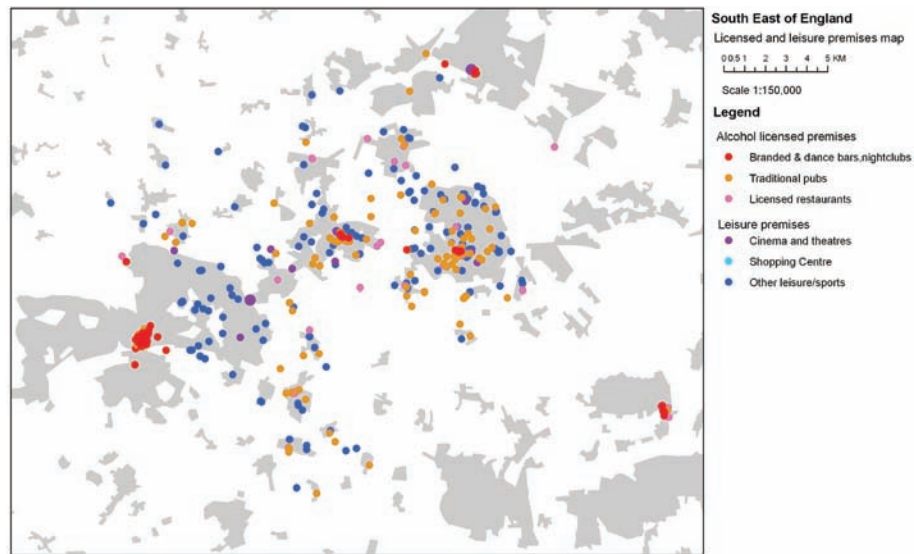
This applied to the younger adults too, who were drawn in by the offers of cheap alcohol:

'I'll try not to, but if we go to a club or something, as I said, they have offers on ... stuff like that where it's really cheap to drink and you just think, well, you don't set off at the beginning of the night thinking "I'm going to get really [drunk]" ...'
NE.YAM-FG1.2

Another impact of spatial structure in Market Town and Technotown was the need to drive. Driving the next morning was a deterrent from excessive drinking: *"I mean I never normally drink during the week because I've been pulled over once still for being drunk the following morning"* (SE.AM.FG2). And this was supported by discussions about nights out, for example, in response to the question: *If you go out to drink, how do you get there? "Designated driver nine times out of ten. There will always be one person who doesn't drink as he is working the next day"* (SE.AM.FG1).

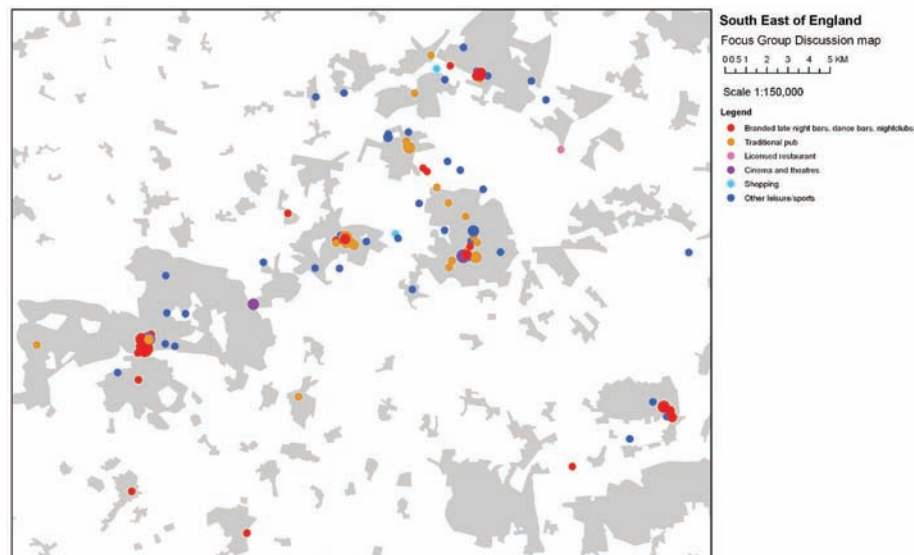
In both regions there was a clear contrast between actual numbers of licensed premises and those accessed by participants. This is mapped out for Market Town and Technotown and their surroundings in Figures 13 and 14. They particularly illustrate the clustering of young people's night-time leisure and access of licensed premises. Dance bars and nightclubs feature prominently, traditional pubs much less so and only those adjacent to or in between dance bar/nightclub clusters. These patterns are replicated at the scale of individual centres (Figures 10 and 12) and are a visualisation that this group are age sensitive and largely only frequent establishments patronised by their own age group. Although intergenerational drinking has been highlighted

Figure 13: Licensed premises in and surrounding Market Town and Technotown



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Figure 14: Licensed premises visited by young adult and adult focus group respondents in and around Market Town and Technotown



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as a moderating influence on young people's alcohol-related behavior (Valentine *et al.*, 2007) the resistance of young people to this as a mechanism was an important finding of the study.

Unfortunately it was not possible to map the all the licensed premises between River City, Historic Haven and Fun City due to lack of accessible data (see the Appendix); however the same principles apply.

Visibility of adult drinking

A comparison of the location of licensed premises in River City to the places where young people said they spent their leisure time, revealed locations that are concomitant, that is, young people above and below the legal drinking age mingle in a common public or semi-public space. This is much less the case in

Technotown and Edge City, where the shopping centres tend to be separate from the drinking clusters. In Market Town, while the uses are mingled, they are separated by opening times. In River City this is illustrated by the indoor leisure complex, which contains one of the most popular cinemas for young people, yet also contains a cluster of eight separate chain-style bars. More generally, several of the key drinking clusters are juxtaposed to the main shopping area and central railway station, each key interchange spaces for buses to and from Shopping World and the residential neighbourhoods. As discussed in Chapter 2, the bars are often highly visible, with 'A' boards placed prominently on the pavement as well as colourful window displays and some have personnel on the street from the early evening.

It is the contention of this study that this constant 'backdrop' exposure normalises the drinking culture of River City, in a way that is not evident in the south-eastern town centres. We can speculate that seeing people out drinking in River City impacts on the aspirations of young people to join in, once legally able to do so. This assertion is based on evidence from the interviews with 15- to 16-year-olds in River City. When asked how their lives would change in a few years, that is, beyond the legal age for drinking alcohol, many responded by discussing whether or not they would go drinking in the city centre. By contrast, young people in Market Town and Technotown discussed a variety of issues connected to their home, family and career aspirations.

The visibility of adult drinking in River City centre, combined with its popularity as a destination for shopping and going to the cinema for the under-18s, provides a contradictory 'message' to the local alcohol strategy. One stakeholder explained that a health campaign was aimed at parents to discourage them from drinking in front of their children. In the River City, these same young people were regularly exposed to the spectacle of other adults drinking, often to excess. One group of young females, when asked how their neighbourhood could be improved, commented: *"Probably not as many drinking on the streets as what they do"* (NE.YPF.21, 22).

Underage drinking

Young people aged 15 to 16 years old drank outside in parks and other spaces. The practice was more widely reported in River City and commented on by young interviewees and stakeholders. In Market Town and Technotown it appeared to be only a small minority of respondents who either did drink, or had drunk, outside whereas in River City a larger proportion of the sample discussed how and where they drank outside. They reported drinking in a wider variety of public spaces, again suggesting that it was more common. One stakeholder commented that it was a common practice and not just for underage drinkers: *"[I]n the North East often people drink in parks, open parks ... they may drink just walking around the streets, in small groups or big groups"* (NES.10).

Young people tended to drink outside in the warmer seasons of the year, particularly at weekends. The most common spaces chosen were in parks and on the streets and in River City, on the beach. One or two respondents in each area mentioned drinking in fields. In River City there was much discussion about groups of young people gathering to drink in a disused quarry. The extent of drinking there had been so severe that the 15- to 16-year-olds reported that the police had had to install CCTV cameras.

The numbers who gathered in parks and open spaces could become quite large, with groups of 50 or more recorded in both areas. Smaller gatherings of 10 or more young people were more frequently recorded in River City.

These were arranged casually and spontaneously, normally through using text messaging. A typical pattern would be to meet in the early evening at around five or six o'clock and to stay out until 10 o'clock or so, drinking cheap cider or vodka. Both sexes would do this, in mixed or single-sex groups. Again in River City some groups mentioned that they met in the park anyway on weekday nights, but would only drink on a Friday or a Saturday and then not every weekend.

While young people in River City would take care to avoid the police, they seemed not to be overly anxious about being observed by other people. When questioned about where they would choose to go in a particular park, they responded vaguely, taking their cue about where to gather from other people who were already there. While some spaces mentioned afforded a high degree of privacy, such as at the rear of a leisure centre, others were highly visible, for example in front of a small parade of shops. It appeared that, for some, drinking outside continued until people were older. Young people discussed how they might meet friends from an older age group in the park and this was how the alcohol was purchased. This pattern was corroborated by one of the stakeholders: *"My experience has been that you get 13-year-olds and 19-year-olds, so it's quite mixed, they are a friendship kind of group and it's generally geographically based"* (NE.S.9). In Market Town and Technotown, more concerns were expressed about remaining hidden: *"[When] you turn 18 you don't have to hide anymore. You may just go into proper places instead of sitting in a park"* (SE.YAM-FG1).

Youngsters were scared of the consequences of drinking outside, from being left on their own, to being physically attacked, mugged or sexually assaulted or simply getting accidentally injured: *"A couple of my friends have had like injuries, you know at parks. One of my friends like broke his nose"* (SE.YP.F.18). One young woman in River City, who continued to drink outside, commented that she now restrained herself from getting "mortal", that is, 'dead' drunk: *"because I do things I regret ..."* (NE.YP.F.35, NE.YP.F.43).

Drinking at home, especially at teenage parties, was seen as a safer option, particularly by interviewees from Market Town and Technotown. Generally held on birthdays, or sometimes if parents were away, there were many comments about house parties being a 'safe' environment in which to experiment with drinking: *"Wherever the alcohol is, I prefer to do it in someone's house because then you know that you are not going to do anything stupid..."* (SE.YP.M.18, 19 and 20). This sometimes contrasted to the perceived risk of drinking outside – see also Chapter 3 – *"[I]f I got in trouble in a field and there isn't much people to help me, whereas if I'm in a house at least there would be people like with a phone who could get help"* (SE.YP.M.1). Most parties included alcohol and in River City one boy's diary marked out a 'dry' one as an exception.

Parents in both areas also provided a source of alcohol. This might have been through a direct request, which seemed to have been more common in River City: *"I ask my Mam sometimes ... [And she buys it for you?] If she knows that I am not going to be stupid with it, if she knows I am going to drink it sensibly"* (NE.YP.F.29, 31 and 44). Most often in Market Town and Technotown, alcohol was obtained from the family home with or without consent:

'I never normally have money to buy it so I end up taking a bottle or two out of my parent's fridge [and they don't know] ... I'm surprised they haven't noticed yet, but they probably have, just don't mention it ...'
SE.YP.M.13

Drinking to excess for 15- to 16-year-olds, however, was also associated with house parties and the complicit actions of adults: *"[M]ost of us got drunk*

'cos their parents let us all have alcohol, so we had loads of it, we just thought free alcohol, drink!' (SE.YPM.23, 24). It was also associated with degeneration into trouble with arguments and fights. Although 'trouble' seemed a rarity, drinking to inebriation was more widely reported.

Tackling underage drinking

In both areas, there was very little evidence that there was currently significant underage drinking in pubs or clubs. In Market Town and Technotown, stakeholders admitted that underage drinking had been a problem in certain locations in the recent past and that failures for test purchasing had been very high. In River City, many respondents in the adult focus groups commented that they had been able to go to pubs and clubs when underage. Young adults and adults in the focus groups commented on how they either had done, or had observed, underage drinking in the River City centre when they were younger. There was strong sense, however, in both areas that this was something that had been brought under control.

Stakeholders in River City reported that regular test purchasing takes place several times a year, both in licensed premises and in off-licence sales. Few of the young people in the sample discussed being able to go into licensed premises. When they did, it seemed to be with older siblings and there was only one mention of not being asked for identification (ID). They also reported being asked for ID in off-licence sales in local shops and that all the major supermarkets demanded ID. This provided support to a statement made by one of the stakeholders: "So like pubs and things, you are going to get kids going in underage but I don't think it is a major problem in the area I work in, it is more the off-licences" (NE.S.14).

In Market Town, Technotown and Edge City centre, an initiative called Challenge 25, although voluntary and not universally adopted, had helped. Licensees who adopted Challenge 25 asked for proof of identity for any customer who looked under 25, so that door staff could be clear that they were not allowing underage entry. The major clubs had also introduced machinery to scan passports and other forms of ID. Licensees did not think that underage drinking was a current issue: "Yeah, I couldn't tell you the last time I thought someone was under 18" (SE.S. 19). And there was general agreement in the young adult focus groups that it was almost impossible to drink in a pub underage.

Underage drinking was, however, certainly associated with house parties and drinking outside. Obtaining the alcohol was achieved by a variety of means. In River City, enforcement campaigns meant that very few shops did not check ID, although determined individuals did go to some lengths to find them. Police had mounted a campaign whereby retailers marked bottles and cans so that any drink confiscated from underage drinkers could be sourced. Although retailers had resisted the proposal at first, later they came to support it more enthusiastically because it meant that they could use it to refuse a sale to any customer they were suspicious of. Police in River City found the scheme to be working well in the city centre but harder to resource on estates in the suburbs. In Market Town and Technotown, the issue of 'corner shop' retailers was mentioned by stakeholders:

'I think the biggest problem here is the small shops that sell alcohol so, you know ... there are certain shops in Technotown that are known not to check and so that's where young people go and buy their alcohol.'
SE.S.10

Further, the proximity of these shops to parks was mentioned by a number of stakeholders.

The issue of 'proxy purchase' was identified as a problem by stakeholders and discussed by young people. Young people used the technique of waiting outside a shop and approaching different people to ask them to buy alcohol for them. Sometimes older friends would oblige, but in both areas young people reported that they asked strangers. People who were already drunk were targeted as potential purchasers. Stakeholders admitted that proxy purchase was a real challenge and very difficult to police. Coordination was seen as the key in Market Town and Technotown: *"Licensing, if it coordinates its actions with Trading Standards ... Police, and potentially others and some of the smaller trade associations and what have you, for off-licences, I think it can have a significant impact"* (SES.2).

In River City, a joint project between the Department of Health and the police had been launched to combat street drinking in a localised area in the north of the city. This project also combined the offer of 'diversionary activities' for young people (see Chapter 3 for more details). Retailers had been asked to join a voluntary scheme to refuse to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 21 at the weekends. The aim was to prevent proxy purchase by siblings and friends of underage drinkers. In return the retailers received a weekly visit from the police to see how the scheme was working. Reports were favourable and one shopkeeper was quoted in a press release as saying that he had extended the scheme for the whole week. He also noted that there were less visible signs of antisocial behaviour near his shop, for example much less glass from broken bottles in the bus shelter. At the time of our study, the project had come to an end and the funding was finished.

Underage drinking and the police

In both areas the police made concerted efforts to combat underage drinking, using powers of dispersal and confiscating and pouring away alcohol as discussed in Chapter 1. Police regularly dispersed and moved on groups of young people in the North East case study, whether they were drinking or not. City centre police in River City drew on the powers of direction to leave (Section 27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006), imposing a 48-hour ban on return straightaway. More recently this had been undermined by the courts demanding that an eight-hour ban be used in the first instance.

Police in both areas joined in a special operation in association with the local authority youth service, using the direction to leave powers. They responded to calls complaining of antisocial behaviour, then moved in on the hot-spots in large numbers, dispersed the miscreants, confiscated alcohol and, where appropriate, escorted young people home in a specialist vehicle and spoke to their parents: *"[We'll] say well why is your child out at this time of night, why are they in this area?"* (NES.2). The effectiveness of the direction to leave led this same stakeholder to remark: *"The Section 27, that is the best thing the government have ever given us and that is bells and whistles on."*

In Market Town and its surroundings, a special operation was mounted each Friday and Saturday throughout the year. Here the help of residents was enlisted more formally. Residents who were aware of antisocial behaviour could register on a database and act as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the police and at the time of our study, 2,000 had joined the database. Police would focus on particular hot-spots where they received most complaints and use powers of confiscation. They recorded the names of youngsters who were in possession of alcohol and sent the parents a warning letter as a method of

'early intervention'. If the young person was caught again, a letter with a higher level of warning was sent – a 'yellow' letter. A final 'red' letter would warn of a subsequent conviction. This initiative was taken to avoid a "yo-yo type situation" (SE.S.2) whereby the young people ran away until the police left and then returned. Another advantage was that intervention by the police helped to protect the parks and open spaces from vandalism. Officers were trained to be proactive and ask the young people to clear any rubbish they had created and to behave responsibly:

'You have to be quite firm and educate and it seems to work, 'cos we don't want to keep chasing them away, 'cos it's better that they are in the park, they just need to know how to use it.'
SE.S.2

Summary

The differing spatial structure of the two areas either facilitated or discouraged certain behaviours that were common to both. In River City, its compact nature, combined with the concentration of bars and clubs, heightened the emotional states associated with 'having a laugh'. This, combined with the high visibility of its exuberant drinking culture, caused one stakeholder to reflect: "that's got to influence young people" (NE.S.8). Certainly its spatial concentration of vertical-drinking, rowdy bars encourages having 'just one more drink'. Conversely, the dispersed character of the different clusters in the South East combined with the necessity to drive provided a level of discouragement to drink to excess. Further, the functional separation of different leisure pursuits, such as shopping, the cinema and restaurants also reduced the visibility of excessive drinking.

The theme of visibility continued with drinking outside in open spaces, which in the South East was more hidden and appeared to be less prevalent than in the North East. For older age groups in the South East, drinking outside was seen as a short-lived "phase" that people went through and was often viewed with regret and/or embarrassment: "When I was 14 or 15, going to a field and trying to get drunk on cheap cider was acceptable but now I can't believe I did that ..." (SE.YPF-FG1.8). More hidden from view, stories of house parties, some of which became uncontrolled, were recounted. These were common to both areas.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found many similarities between the study areas in terms of how, what and where young people drank. The differences between the two areas relating to binge drinking and excessive consumption were variations within these common behaviours rather than entirely different customs or styles of consumption. The differences are summarised in Table 2. In this report we focus on three main topics: the significance of sociability; young people's opportunities to do non-alcohol-related leisure pursuits; and the subtler variations in drinking between the two areas relevant for public policy. We discuss the implications of these findings and finally make some detailed recommendations.

Policy implications

Spatial planning, licensing and town centre management

This study found that in both study areas, drinking was associated primarily with sociability for young people. Concentrations of youth-orientated dance bars and clubs were in demand and young people were prepared to travel miles to visit them. These clusters of alcohol-related entertainment were not compatible with residential uses. In the South East in particular, the interviewees felt uncomfortable going to venues that accommodated a demographic a little older than them. The respondents, particularly in River

Table 2: Differences between the case study areas

North East case study	South East case study
'Big night out' the norm for 18- to 24-year-olds	'Big night out' one of a range of possibilities
Exuberance and friendliness	Varied emotions
Spatial concentration of bars and clubs intensifies experience and facilitates excess consumption	Spatial dispersal of centres requires greater use of designated driver; limits possibilities; dilutes opportunities for excessive consumption
Greater visibility of drinking in urban centres and outdoors	Lesser visibility in streets and parks, limited visibility in town centres
House parties for underage drinkers significant	House parties for underage drinkers important
Restricted range of leisure opportunities for 15- to 16-year-olds	Wide range of leisure opportunities for 15- to 16-year-olds

City, commented that they liked noisy, rowdy bars and clubs where the music was important in contrast to the quieter conversations they could have in the pre-drinking phase of a night out. Dancing was also important, particularly for young women. Dancing itself is good exercise and a healthy activity.

The encouragement of 'diversity', that is, a variety of different types of evening and late night entertainment is now a typical part of local authorities' planning and licensing policies. The central government-supported Purple Flag award sets out to be a gold standard for night-time leisure in towns and city centres. One of the assessment criteria for the award is demonstrating a broad appeal 'across ages, lifestyles and cultures'. Live music is seen as attractive because it could attract a broader demographic (ATCM, 2009). This policy advice is at odds with the findings from the present study, which found a clear preference for concentrations or clusters of youth-orientated venues.

While it may seem irresponsible to plan for such concentrations, given the negative consequences for health and antisocial behaviour, this study has highlighted that the impetus for going out for most of the respondents was to be convivial with other people. There are health benefits that arise from pleasurable social interaction with regard to sense of well-being and self-worth, the formation of identity and the production of social solidarities. In a period that many sociologists characterise as being dominated by individualism and in which traditional solidarities arising from work and family life are subject to change (Baumann, 2000), the support of new types of sociability rises in importance. If drinking outside the home is discouraged, then it is predictable that more unregulated drinking will take place in the home. Some participants stated that they drank at home before a night out because of the cost. Further 'push' factors could exacerbate this. Drinking only in a domestic setting closes down opportunities to meet new people, interact with different sections of the community and to live a full public life. Furthermore, the issue of drunkenness is merely removed from the public realm and there is no evidence that domestic drunkenness is less harmful. The type of spontaneous interaction, where disparate groups of people meet, re-form into new groups and interact in a free manner is impossible in a residential setting. From this point of view, public policy could begin to consider how the sociability that 'a good night out' affords could be encouraged, albeit without the disbenefits.

One way into this could be the offering of incentives for youth-orientated night-time leisure premises that had dancing, live music and other pleasurable/alternative activities as their primary purpose, albeit with the offer of alcohol in the background. Some of the interviewees from the North East, which had a

wider choice of entertainment and hospitality, enjoyed going to Historic Haven for an alternative night out to listen to music and there were complaints from other respondents about the restrictions surrounding dancing. The incentives that could be offered by local authorities might be waivers or rebates on business rates or the late night levy and the purposes specified in planning and licensing conditions. These incentives would need to be decided at a local level, in planning and licensing policies, depending on the specific make-up of existing town centres and resources for enforcement. The idea could also be 'built in' to proposals for new entertainment quarters, plans for regeneration and new clusters.

Encouraging new clusters of youth-orientated premises outside of existing centres runs counter to the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The present study concludes, however, that a perverse impact of concentrating retail and leisure in city centres is to make excessive, exuberant drinking more visible and hence normalise it. Arguably, this has happened in River City where the most popular cinema for 15- to 16-year-olds coincides with bars and clubs in the same complex, and this and other clusters of bars and clubs are adjacent to the city's shopping centre. Here the NPPF's insistence on the 'sequential test', whereby the most profitable retail and leisure uses are concentrated on primary frontages in a hierarchy of centres, will perpetuate this outcome. We would recommend that this element of the NPPF be reconsidered. Local development frameworks could intervene to separate out youthful adult drinking from spaces and places where young teenagers are likely to gather.

Planning has a further role. This study has demonstrated the importance of access to youth facilities. While planners cannot provide the facilities themselves, they have a role in guiding local communities to allocate land and allow for such facilities to be provided. Planning obligations in the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and provisions made in Community Infrastructure Plans could be used to ensure that young people have access to sports facilities or leisure centres. The study has also highlighted the significance of parks and other green spaces to young people. Here the NPPF does support provision and planners have a role in ensuring that young people's needs become a significant part of the 'balance of consideration'. Furthermore, it is not the simple allocation of 'green space' or 'amenity space' that requires attention, but the qualities of that space and more particularly the activities that it supports.

Another important place for teenagers is the shopping centre. Our study, in common with others, highlighted its importance. Again, planners and town centre managers have a role to play in making young people welcome in shopping centres, major supermarkets and other retail complexes, wherever they might be located.

The study found that going to the cinema was one of the most popular leisure activities outside of the home for 15- to 16 as was watching DVDs at home. The recession has meant that many retail and commercial premises are now vacant. Given the ease with which film can now be screened and the popularity of cinema it would seem that there will be many opportunities to create local, temporary youth cinemas in vacant premises. An example that is similar to this suggestion is the Copenhagen Youth Project in North London, which includes films among its cultural activities and is funded by the Meanwhile Project (2011). Town centre managers, planners, property agents and landlords could facilitate the use of vacant premises for such schemes.

With regard to licensing, the recently introduced mandatory controls over irresponsible promotions within venues seem to have been effective, as we neither observed nor did any of our respondents comment that this

type of promotion was encouraging them to drink more than they intended. Nevertheless, some interviewees chose the first in their sequence of bars attended on a night out on the basis of the price offers they were alerted to by flyers, text messages or social networking media.

The study found that non-drinkers could accompany their friends on a night out and enjoyed their role as designated driver. Licensees have been encouraged to recognise designated drivers by offering them free soft drinks. Town centre managers and planners could offer recognition too through careful consideration of parking at night and safe routes.

Policing

The study provided evidence from the two case study areas that the latest amendments to the powers that police officers have to direct individuals to leave a defined locality are effective (Section 27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 and Section 31 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009). In particular, the partnerships that the police are able to form with officers from the local authority to remove children between the ages of 10 and 16 and take them either home or to a place of safety are also working well. Useful as these powers may be, their impact will clearly be diminished by reductions in the numbers of police and local authority officers. Similarly, the successful crackdown on underage drinking in bars and clubs has clearly required major resourcing and coordination between Trading Standards, local councils and police. It must be a concern that at a time of increased pressure on public spending the momentum behind this success will not be maintained; this issue was raised by a least one stakeholder.

There were variations between the two case study areas in terms of experiments with other types of intervention. In River City, a joint health service and police project had tackled proxy purchase and diversionary activities and in another project the youth service had joined with the police to provide a summer-time programme of diversionary weekend events on a problematic estate. Both of these initiatives relied on extra funding. In Market Town there was a programme to use the public as a resource to report antisocial behaviour, a project that could be sustainable in the long term. However, the early intervention that was associated with using local authority officers and a hierarchy of 'yellow' and 'red' letters to alert parents to problems was sensitive to budget cuts. These examples suggest that strategies and interventions tailored to the locality are worthwhile and that partnerships between different agencies should continue to be funded.

In both case study areas there had been experiments with the private sector in laying on alcohol-free youth discos and club nights in town centres. In both areas the police expressed reservations about dispersing the young customers after the event. A follow-up interview with a stakeholder from Fun City commented on how these nights had had limited success because some of the young people stayed on and attempted to gain admission to the regular bars and clubs; addressing this issue might usefully be built into future schemes by for example coordinating with street pastors to encourage dispersal and forewarning door staff.

Health, youth and other aspects of public policy

None of the authors of this study came from a health policy or youth service background, so the observations on these points are limited. Our findings about

the importance of alcohol for sociability coincide with a number of other studies (Seaman and Ikegwuonu, 2010; Percy *et al.*, 2011; Sondhi and Turner, 2011). The extent of this evidence suggests that public policy could recognise the prosocial aspects of youth drinking in a more constructive way rather than condemning the behaviour as a whole. Shrill government statements, a rhetoric about 'binge Britain' and websites focused on drinking as an addictive behaviour risk alienating an audience that would benefit from more nuanced advice.

All of the interviewees in the present study wanted to avoid 'trouble' and getting so drunk as to be completely out of control. Measures such as 'drunk tanks' and 'booze buses' were largely irrelevant to their habits and behaviour. On the other hand, some did admit to drinking more than they intended on a night out. Website information could usefully alert young people to the strategies that operators deploy to get them to drink more. These include increasing the volume of the music so that it is impossible to speak at all, removing seating to encourage vertical drinking, only offering salty snacks and reducing the size of the dance floor. There is also room for further restrictions on promotions as it was noticeable that aggressive promotions were more visible in River City, where competition was fiercer.

Health professionals have complained more of the higher alcohol content in beers, lagers, cider and wines today compared with 20 or more years ago. While two members of the Portman Group have experimented with marketing weaker drinks, this does not seem to have been taken up more widely. The issue of the strength of any particular brand of drink did not feature in our focus groups and interviews with young adults. This suggests that there is more that could be done to produce and market weaker versions of these mainstream drinks. There is also room to experiment with incentives such as a reduction on the duty attached to weaker drinks.

Youth services have been underfunded for a many years, even prior to the current round of budget cuts. This study has demonstrated the need for dedicated youth workers and activities that are attractive for 14- to 18-year-olds. Further, and this is speculative, it may be that the success of preventing underage drinking in bars has had the perverse effect of increasing unregulated and more risky drinking outside in parks and at people's homes. At the very least, it has placed increased pressure on youth provision and quality public spaces, again at a time when such services are under threat.

The private sector has a role to play too. Our study found that 'Orange Wednesdays', a scheme whereby the mobile phone company offered two-for-one cinema tickets to their customers on a Wednesday to be very popular in both localities. This type of discounting could be extended into other activities. The age at which concessionary reductions stop also needs attention. Sixteen-year-olds in both localities complained that their bus fares rose considerably once they reached 16.

Recommendations

Reorientate public policy to recognise that alcohol can play a positive social role with regard to young adults' leisure and entertainment. This means moving away from the rhetoric of 'binge Britain' and relying on policing and regulation to change behaviour.

Planning and licensing policies to recognise that clusters of youth-orientated bars and clubs are now part of a common culture but measures to discourage excessive alcohol consumption should be taken:

Policy implications and recommendations

- Planning authorities to separate out youth drinking clusters from other types of uses where children and underage young people might gather (e.g. cinemas, bowling alleys, ice rinks, transport hubs and bus stops).
- Encouragement for variety within youth drinking clusters: specifically tax breaks (business rates or the proposed late night levy) might be offered for properties that have a substantial area for dancing, live music and/or alternative 'fun' entertainment activities. Moreover, ensuring that venues are meeting their responsibility to provide for dancing etc. could be managed by the licensing team supported by planning policy, for example with space for dancing using the grant of licensing conditions (i.e. permission will be granted provided at least a certain percentage of the floor space is given over for dancing). This to be part of local planning and licensing policies inside or outside Cumulative Impact Zones dependent on local circumstances.
- Positive planning in local development plans for new 'clusters' outside of existing Cumulative Impact Zones in locations that are attractive, can be policed, do not disturb local residents and provide variety rather than volume drinking.
- Greater recognition of the role of 'designated driver' in providing a way for non-drinkers to socialise with drinkers. This applies to the managers of licensed premises, town centre management teams, local planning and the police.
- Exploration at a national and European Union level of 'levers' to offer weaker/low alcoholic drinks and soft drinks (i.e. reductions in excise duties and taxes).

With regard to young people below the legal age for drinking alcohol:

- Providing more funding for, rather than cutting back on support to, youth services, voluntary groups, sports and other types of non-alcohol provision aimed particularly at 12- to 18-year-olds. Continuation of experiments in non-alcohol-based entertainment for this age group. Exploration of more ways in which private service provision can be opened up to this age group.
- Given contemporary screening technology in particular, new local 'cinemas' catering primarily for the under-18s could be located in vacant retail/commercial property through initiatives such as the 'Meanwhile Uses' projects and/or encouraged through tax and business rate breaks or rebates.
- Channelling more funding to local government to raise the quality of parks, green spaces and shopping centres as places for activities or simply to 'hang out' for young people. This can be included in the Community Infrastructure Plan and the Community Infrastructure Levy for each Development Plan area to raise funds from the private sector.
- The continuation of funding for partnership working between local authorities, the police and the health service to combat underage drinking, through early intervention, directions to leave and ChildSafe schemes, ID schemes, and enforcement campaigns on underage and proxy purchasing. Encouragement of variations in these targeted campaigns tailored to the locality.

- Giving incentives to public and commercial organisations to provide concessionary 'deals' to under 18-year-olds in terms of non-alcohol-related activities outside the home.

NOTE

- 1 There are a number of terms for drinking too much alcohol in a short period of time. 'Binge drinking' (popular press), 'harmful or hazardous drinking' (health professionals) and 'heavy sessional drinking' (sociology) capture the different contexts in which the activity is discussed.

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APPENDIX: METHODS

The chosen contrasting regions were the North East and the South East of England, whose aggregate scores of alcohol-related harms diverged, with the North East being above average and the South East being below average using the indicators produced by the North West Public Health Observatory's figures (LAPE scores). Specific places in each region needed to be identified for study. This proved more difficult than it first appeared. An illustrative case study approach to research in the social sciences normally suggests that each case study is as like the other as possible. The problem with built environment research is that places, by their nature, are unique. A further issue is that the researchers found intraregional differences, such that the South East, while being below England on average, had some towns and cities with above England averages. These places tended to be the most comparable to towns and cities in the North East. The presence of higher education institutions was also associated with higher alcohol-related harm scores in major cities and conurbations. After much deliberation, the team chose two places of a similar total population, approximately a quarter of a million. Ethical considerations meant that the places had to be anonymised as well as the people. Actual place names have been replaced with made-up names.

Respondents were drawn from a city in the North East (River City), with below average LAPE scores, that is, higher rates of alcohol-related harms, and two adjacent towns (Technotown and Market Town) in the South East that had the highest LAPE scores and which were most densely populated. To assist in making the comparison, an adjacent large town in the South East, Edge City, that had many of the facilities of River City, was included as an object for study because it was a destination for youth drinking. Interviewees were only drawn from Market Town and Technotown. As explained in Chapters 1 and 4, further geographical extensions were made to the place-based part of the study as it progressed.

Four groups of participants were identified for the study in each area. The first of these were adults aged between 22 and 24. The second were groups of 18- to 19-year-olds who had just passed the legal age for drinking alcohol. The third were 15- to 16-year-olds, under the legal drinking age, but thought to be entering the phase of experimenting with alcohol. The methods used to investigate the views of the adults and young adults were similar. Twelve single-sex focus groups of about 10 people were held in suitable local venues (39 22- to 24-year-olds and 20 18- to 19-year-olds in River City and 38 22- to 24-year-olds and 17 18- to 19-year-olds in Market Town and Technotown). Participants were recruited by a professional agency that specialises in social research and marketing. They were instructed to find respondents in socioeconomic groups C and D and to include a mixture of (self-assessed) heavy drinkers and light drinkers. The groups were composed of approximately half and half of each. Splitting the groups by gender allowed comparison and

reduced the potential for showing off. Each participant filled in a questionnaire about their leisure habits while they were waiting for the group to gather. The focus groups started with a mapping exercise, with non-drink-related leisure first followed by drink-related leisure and a topic guide that was the same for all groups. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with participants who were selected for their willingness to talk and who represented a range of the views and habits exposed in the focus groups (30 in River City and 29 in Market Town and Technotown).

It proved time consuming and difficult to recruit young people to the study. The initial sampling profile for recruitment – that the young people would be drawn from two housing areas with similar socioeconomic profiles and housing types in the two areas – had to be abandoned. Participants were eventually drawn from different sources in each area, from a further education college, a school and youth centres in Market Town and Technotown and from different schools and youth facilities in River City. The River City sample included a high proportion of interviewees from a more deprived neighbourhood. One of the schools and the further education college in Technotown drew from a catchment neighbourhood that had a similar deprivation score to the more affluent neighbourhood in River City. It was difficult to model the impact of the differences between the two case study areas in terms of relative deprivation with regard to young people's alcohol consumption. Housing costs, for example, could reduce levels of disposable income in the south-eastern region.

Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, semi-structured interviews with young people were held either singly or in small groups of up to four. Again they were single sex. Prior to the interview, each young person filled in a diary outlining their activities the previous weekend. The reason for doing this was to avoid sensationalising their drinking habits and to gain a better understanding of their everyday leisure activities. The diary also provided an effective starting point for the interviews. Seventy-one young people were interviewed in River City and 54 in Market Town and Technotown.

The final group of interviewees were described as 'stakeholders'. These included youth workers, Pubwatch chairs, licensing officers, police officers, drug and alcohol action team workers, local licensees, planners and transport providers. This group provided information about local initiatives and how legislation was interpreted. The research team also consulted local policy documents with regard to planning and licensing. Nineteen stakeholders were interviewed in River City and 22 in Market Town and Technotown.

The places that interviewees told us they went to were mapped using GIS. GIS mapping was used to identify the opportunities for non-alcohol- and alcohol-related leisure in each locality. This process was hampered by the reluctance or inability of licensing authorities to release GIS 'shape' files for licensed premises in their area. The researchers had to obtain the material in the form of Excel spreadsheets, clean the data, reclassify it into types of venue and then map it. In some cases members of the team had to go and look at a venue to find out if it was a traditional pub or a youth-orientated bar. Due to the distance between River City, Fun City and Historic Haven, it was not possible to map and categorise all the licensed premises that lay between them, although the premises in each of these centres were analysed. Direct observation visits were also made to the 'clusters' of licensed premises in each locality to triangulate the information given by respondents and stakeholders. Two night-time visits were made in each locality, one on a Friday night and one on a Saturday at busy times of the year. The parks and other spaces that young people reported spending time in were also visited to ascertain their quality.

The interview material was digitally recorded, fully transcribed and analysed using NVivo software. A coding system was used to identify each interviewee.

the place where they came from, their age and their sex. Interviewees from River City have the prefix 'NE' and those from Technotown and Market Town have the prefix 'SE'. The 22- to 24-year-olds are identified as adults 'A', the 18- to 19-year-olds as young adults 'YA' and the 15- to 16-year-olds as young people 'YP'. 'M' is used for male and 'F' for female. The generic initial 'S' is used for stakeholders. Where more than one interviewee joins in a response they are indicated as Respondent 1, Respondent 2 etc.

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