

## Research Reports

### **Liveability in NDC Areas: Findings from Six Case Studies**

Research Report 22

# New Deal for Communities

## The National Evaluation

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit is currently sponsoring the 2002-2005 national evaluation of New Deal for Communities. This evaluation is being undertaken by a consortium of organisations co-ordinated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

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*Sheffield Hallam University*

# **Liveability in NDC Areas: Findings from Six Case Studies**

Research Report 22

**Author:**

**Keith Shaw** ~ *Sustainable Cities Research Institute,  
Northumbria University*

*With*

**Shawn Frazer** ~ *Geoff Fordham Associates*  
**Celia Robbins & Ian Smith** ~ *Cities Research Centre,  
University of West of England*  
**Crispian Fuller & Mike Geddes** ~ *Local Government Institute/  
Institute for Employment Research, Warwick University*  
**Craig Johnstone** ~ *European Institute of Urban Affairs,  
Liverpool John Moores University*  
**Alex Nunn** ~ *Centre for Public Services*

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## Executive Summary

1. The 'environmental' dimension has often been overlooked in contemporary regeneration policy and practice. However, recent statements and guidelines from a range of government departments and public and private organisations, suggest that the whole issue of liveable neighbourhoods is moving up the political agenda, and that it provides an accessible and multi-faceted approach through which an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental regeneration can be developed.
2. While the liveability agenda at the neighbourhood level is wide-ranging, it is likely that it would include (at the very least): neighbourhood clean-up initiatives; the maintenance of open spaces and green areas; renewable energy and waste management initiatives; 'designing-out' crime measures; and improvements in environmental service delivery. The liveability agenda also highlights the importance of involving and empowering communities, and reinforces the notion of active citizenship - liveability is 'where the community and the environment meet'.
3. The term, liveability is not widely used within the NDC cases studies, and when it is, it is confined to small groups of officers and professionals. However, while not formally adopting the government policy framework - aspects of the agenda were clearly identified. These particularly related to: Neighbourhood clean-up campaigns; waste management initiatives; open/green space development; improving Neighbourhood Management; and the promotion of community safety. Partnerships were less likely to identify with a focus on recycling, renewable energy, habitat and bio-diversity.
4. There was little evidence of the link being established between the global and the local, although the wider applicability of the agenda was highlighted in partnerships with a large transient population and high levels of cultural diversity. In partnerships with a clearer emphasis on liveability issues, there was also a link made with community empowerment, citizenship and education.
5. The case study partnerships were generally characterised by a run-down and degraded physical environment, with residents often having a low-level of satisfaction with the areas as places to live. A number of common factors 'challenged' liveability. These included: the poor quality of housing; litter, graffiti and dog-fouling; abandoned and burnt-out cars; lack of open and green spaces; and the poor quality of environmental service provision. Several opportunities for promoting liveability were also identified, particularly in relation to the development of public and green spaces.
6. There was a clear recognition in the case study partnerships of the, often complex, link between the nature of the physical environment and how people feel and behave, and that low-levels of self-esteem can have a negative impact on whether local people take responsibility for their environment.
7. Partnerships were slow to develop a focused approach to environmental regeneration, or even establish clear environmental outcomes. As such partnerships missed out on the opportunity to create highly visible, 'quick wins'. Where a stronger focus was developed earlier, partnerships have been able to develop a wide range of projects on the ground - although there is a tendency for such projects to develop in an incremental fashion, without a strong or co-ordinated strategic context.
8. There are now a wide range of individual projects addressing aspects of the liveability agenda across the case study NDC's. There is a particularly strong emphasis on areas such as neighbourhood clean-up and improvement; managing and developing open space; Neighbourhood wardens and 'designing-out crime' initiatives; Neighbourhood Management; and developing SLAs covering environmental service delivery. Some

potential agenda areas are, as yet, under-developed, including renewable energy, biodiversity, and linkages between environmental improvements and the social economy.

9. Following project and programme reviews, there is clear evidence of partnerships identifying opportunities for refocusing and strengthening interventions in this area, including developing separate environmental strategies; allocating additional resources and staff; strengthening the organisational emphasis of theme or issues groups; developing neighbourhood management initiatives; and improving environmental services and service level agreements.
10. A more strategic focus on liveability offers important opportunities for promoting effective neighbourhood renewal. Such a focus allows partnerships to:
  - directly address residents concerns about the negative features of the local environment and also to emphasise the importance of citizens taking responsibility for their environment
  - harness environmental improvements as 'visible' signs that the process of renewal is gaining momentum
  - utilise interventions on liveability issues as a key aspect of the wider emphasis on community capacity building and involvement
  - promote a holistic approach to regeneration, in which the necessary linkages between the economic, social and environmental are fully established
  - develop a more joined-up and co-ordinated approach to the management and delivery of environmental services, including the use of Neighbourhood Management and Service Level Agreements
  - enable the development of strong partnership working (including service delivery) with a range of public and private agencies
  - allow the alignment of NDC interventions with other local, sub-regional and regional strategies on sustainable development, environmental protection and regeneration
11. Several barriers to the effective promotion of the liveability agenda can also be highlighted. These include:
  - uncertainty over the precise meaning of the term - 'liveability' has not yet been adopted as part of the vocabulary of neighbourhood regeneration
  - the lack of a thematic and strategic coherence for environmental regeneration - the area is more associated with piecemeal interventions
  - the subsuming of particular environmental goals within housing-related master plans - which can result in slow progress in housing and a lack of environmental 'quick wins'
  - the absence of precise targets, indicators, or outcomes covering environmental regeneration in original delivery plans
  - the challenge of persuading residents to take responsibility for their environment - a challenge often made more difficult in areas where there is a larger transient population
  - problems of developing co-ordinated approaches to neighbourhood services with local authorities, particularly in relation to areas such as neighbourhood wardens, where NDC approaches can run, confusingly, in parallel with the local authority version
  - there is insufficient linkage between neighbourhood environmental strategies and related developments being pursued by other agencies, such as LSPs

12. Several lessons can be identified for NDC partnerships wishing to promote the liveability agenda:

- the importance of establishing a stronger thematic focus on liveability issues, with the development of an Environmental Strategy and a robust review of environmental indicators and outcomes likely to be central to this task
- the need to review how environmental issues are dealt with within the NDC Theme Groups, Sub-groups and Programme Teams and whether partnerships have a strong enough organisational capacity to deliver environmentally-based initiatives
- NDCs could also place far greater emphasis on developing a broader range of community-based indicators, in consultation with residents, but with reference to indicators that have been developed by other organisations including the New Economics Foundation and the Audit Commission
- in developing their strategies, partnerships should aim to develop and adequately resource an inclusive and integrated focus that encompasses: neighbourhood clean-up initiatives; designing-out crime approaches; improving environmental service delivery; recycling and renewable energy initiatives; open and green space development; bio-diversity; sustainable transport; and promoting liveability through educational interventions
- the strengthening of the complementarity between any NDC interventions and similar responses at other levels. These would include LA 21 initiatives, LSP Community Plans and RDA Strategies. Improved linkage could be achieved via NDC involvement in relevant LSP or RDA sub-groups or through developing a multi-agency sub-group within the NDC itself
- the continuing importance of maximising opportunities for involving residents in the liveability agenda. These could include: involvement in establishing key environmental outcomes; involvement in reviewing and setting service levels; and involvement in delivering projects. There is also an opportunity to review how the delivery of local environmental improvements can be linked to the creation of community businesses
- on several key issues, including the use of open space, protection of the environment and wider debates on habitat and bio-diversity, NDC partnerships have a real opportunity to develop educational programmes aimed at local schools and linked to components of the citizenship national curriculum
- given that some of the urban parks, open spaces and play/leisure facilities used by NDC residents may be located just outside the boundaries of the NDC itself, it is important that partnerships are able to develop interventions that can adequately encompass these assets and thus help re-establish links with the wider locality
- the NRU could also consider how NDC partnerships can be best supported in promoting the liveability agenda. This may involve: providing guidance on reviewing and developing precise environmental outcomes; encouraging the development of successful environmental projects that have wider social and economic impacts; increasing the importance ascribed to environmental performance within the Performance Management Framework; and providing support for this area of activity through the role of Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors

## Introduction

1. This case study is part of the national evaluation of New Deal for Communities (NDC) which is being carried out by a consortium of organisations led by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University.
2. In addition to the main NDC Partnership evaluations, which are being carried out across all 39 NDCs, case studies have been commissioned in six NDC areas: Radford and Hyson Green (Nottingham); Bristol; Seven Sisters (Haringey); Kensington (Liverpool); West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust; and Coventry. The case studies have, so far, focused on a number of specific research areas, including mainstreaming and the involvement of young people.
3. The subject of this report is the extent to which the 'liveability' agenda is being taken forward within the six NDC case study partnerships. Methods used to gather information about liveability included: detailed analysis of NDC strategies and delivery plans; partner strategies and other documentation; interviews with NDC project and theme managers; interviews with managers from other partner organisations; interviews with residents and members of community organisations. The report also draws upon relevant information produced for the 2003 NDC evaluation reports in the six case study areas.
4. The author, who also undertook the study on West Middlesbrough, would like to thank members of the evaluation team who have contributed individual reports on Liveability in the other NDCs: Crispian Fuller and Mike Geddes (Coventry); Craig Johnstone (Liverpool); Celia Robbins (Bristol); Shawn Frazer (Haringey) and Alex Nunn, (Nottingham).
5. The liveability agenda has been recently espoused by the ODPM, NRU and other agencies, such as Groundwork, amid some concerns that the environmental dimension has not been effectively incorporated into local regeneration strategies. The agenda also chimes with the concerns of many residents in renewal areas about the corrosive impact of a local environment characterised by fly-tipping, abandoned cars, poor lighting and environmental neglect.
6. The report provides an assessment of the relevance of the liveability agenda in the NDC area. It highlights the particular environmental problems in the case study partnerships and identifies the challenges that the partnerships have faced in developing a strategic approach to liveability. It identifies a range of NDC projects and initiatives that are making an effective contribution to promoting the liveability agenda, while also highlighting some of the barriers to promoting such an agenda. The report concludes by considering some of the overall lessons to be learned regarding the promotion of liveability at the neighbourhood level.

## 1. Liveability: The Policy Context

1.1. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal emphasised how local communities should be empowered to take the key decisions that would help turn around their disadvantaged neighbourhoods. While such a focus was widely welcomed, some commentators argued that the strategy underplayed the importance of the quality of the local environment in shaping people's attitudes about where they live and failed to highlight how environmental improvements could deliver opportunities for building citizenship and prosperity.

1.2. This partly reflects the problems in promoting a joined-up or holistic approach to regeneration. The Sustainable Development Commission has recently asked 'whether there is a missing link between environment and poverty in the way we approach regeneration on the UK?' The report, on Mainstreaming Sustainable Regeneration, goes on to argue that:

*'the link between the environmental and the social and economic goals of regeneration has been overlooked in recent regeneration policy and practice. ...this link must be made to create lasting improvements to the quality of life for communities.'* (SDC, 2003)

1.3. It may also reflect the resilience of the view that a concern with the environment or green issues is the preserve of the affluent middle classes, despite the recent evidence that it is disadvantaged groups who live in the worst environments and suffer most from environmental problems. According to research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

*'those on low incomes are the most likely to live near polluting roads or factories and to endure poor quality housing and amenities', while the environmental concerns of such groups often focused on the impact of local problems on health and well-being, with issues such as dog fouling and litter being of as much concern as pollution.'* (JRF, 2001)

1.4. The concern that the environmental quality of neighbourhoods (and the environmental concerns of local people) are central aspects of renewal has now been taken seriously within Government. In 2001 Tony Blair introduced the term 'liveability' to the lexicon of UK regeneration by outlining a number of measures designed to improve local environments such as schemes to tackle nuisance behaviour, increased fines for dog fouling and dropping litter and an expansion in the number of neighbourhood wardens - or 'super caretakers' as they have been dubbed.

*'We need stronger local communities and an improved local quality of life. Streets where parents feel safe to let their children walk to school. Where people want to use the parks. Where graffiti, vandalism, litter and dereliction are not tolerated. Where the environment in which we live fosters rather than alienates a sense of local community and mutual responsibility.'* (Speech to Groundwork Conference, April 2001)

1.5. In using the term liveability (with an 'e'), the Prime Minister set out a rather less visionary agenda for the UK than that associated with the original liveability agenda in the USA. The term was first coined in the 1970s by American academics and planners seeking to combat urban sprawl and the alienation produced in communities where there was environmental degradation. The American Local Government Commission then produced a set of liveability principles based on community planning, safe, high quality public spaces and the efficient use of natural resources. More recently, Vice - President Al Gore announced a billion dollar federal initiative to promote 'livable



communities' in the 21st century. The so-called Clinton-Gore 'Liveability Agenda' aimed to help citizens and communities preserve green spaces, ease traffic congestion, restore a sense of community and enhance economic competitiveness. In his efforts to explain liveability, Gore referred to the 'broken window' theory in which broken windows, or other physical manifestations of neighbourhood decay, actually invite crime (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). According to Gore:

*'When a criminal sees a community with broken windows, garbage strewn on the street and graffiti on the walls, there is a powerful but unspoken message: if you're looking for a place to commit a crime it's here because we have a high tolerance for disorder.'* (quoted in Groundwork, 2002)

- 1.6. In the UK, the liveability agenda is now emerging as an accessible, 'joined-up' approach to neighbourhood renewal through which the social and environmental agendas can be more effectively brought together. The term is now given prominence by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. As a recent NRU report argues:

*'There is a strong case for NRU giving greater focus to liveability issues. These are the building blocks of renewal. They need to be put in place quickly (alongside work on other, long term issues) so neighbourhoods are stabilised, confidence rebuilt and the foundations created for comprehensive, sustainable renewal and delivery of other priorities....Whatever is done must reflect the needs of individual neighbourhoods. But liveability issues are not just 'quick wins'. Once delivered, they need to be sustained.'* (NRU, 2003a)

- 1.7. The NRU have also added useful emphasis to the importance of the environmental agenda at the neighbourhood level, by publishing a Policy and Practice Guide, Achieving Environmental Equity through Neighbourhood Renewal (NRU, 2003b). For the NRU, the term environmental equity relates to three inter-linked aspects: Environmental Protection - 'air and water quality and waste management; Local Place - 'quality of, and access to, local public space'; Access to environmental 'goods' - 'warmth, shelter, food, transport, nature, justice, the countryside etc'.

- 1.8. The need to address the decline in quality of public space, particularly urban green spaces, and the need for investment to tackle the legacy of dereliction and backlogs of repairs in many areas are well documented. The NRU have also recently produced a good practice guide, 'Clean, Safe and Green - Approaches that work' (NRU, 2003c), while the maintenance and creation of Urban Green Spaces that are 'safe, accessible and sustainable is also emphasised in the DTLR document 'Green Spaces - better places' (DTLR, 2002). The more recent ODPM report 'Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener' argues that:

*'Successful thriving and prosperous communities are characterised by streets, parks and open spaces that are clean, safe and attractive - areas that local people are proud of and want to spend their time in. Tackling failure, such as litter, graffiti, fly tipping, abandoned cars, dog fouling, the loss of play areas or footpaths, is for many people the top public service priority.'* (ODPM, 2003)

- 1.9. Recently, the ODPM has also announced the creation of the Liveability Fund. The fund will provide grants to a group of pilot local authorities to deliver innovative and challenging programmes for creating new parks and public spaces, and improving the quality and effectiveness of their environment and liveability services. The Fund is worth £89 million over three years (to March 2006) and will provide a mix of funding - revenue (£12 million) and capital (£77 million).

1.10. In terms of renewal at the neighbourhood level, the promotion of the Liveability agenda can be viewed, at the very least, as an opportunity to focus on the importance of the environment - and environmental improvements - to sustainable regeneration. Thus, the emphasis on:

- a clean environment: e.g. tackling litter, dog waste, abandoned vehicles and graffiti/vandalism
- a pleasant environment: e.g. air quality, ambient noise
- a well-maintained environment: e.g. road, pavement, functioning utilities, soft and hard landscape green spaces and parks
- a well-managed environment: e.g. strengthening neighbourhood management, to ensure there are focal points for tackling problems promptly, including neighbourhood wardens
- a well-designed environment: e.g. new transport works, structures and facilities, other physical environments
- a safe environment: e.g. the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour through the use of CCTV, transport speed limits and restraints

1.11. However, liveability goes beyond a focus on the environment, to encompass ideas on community involvement, empowerment and even wider debates on citizenship. As the Groundwork Trust have argued:

*'Liveability is about much more than just keeping our streets clean and our parks green. It is about helping a community acquire the confidence, the skills and the resources to mend its own broken windows and begin to shape its own future. Liveability is where the environment and the community meet, where we respect our neighbours as much as our surroundings.'* (Quoted in Groundwork 2002)

1.12. In this section we have noted that:

- the 'environmental' dimension has often been overlooked in contemporary regeneration policy and practice - in a recent report for example, renewable energy issues came bottom of regeneration professionals' list of priorities (Brook Lyndhurst, 2004)
- the emergence of the liveability agenda (with its roots in America) provides for an accessible and multi-faceted approach through which an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental regeneration can be developed
- recent statements and guidelines from a range of government departments and public and private organisations, suggest that the whole issue of liveable neighbourhoods is moving up the political agenda
- while the liveability agenda at the neighbourhood level is wide-ranging it is likely that it would include (at the very least): neighbourhood clean-up initiatives; the maintenance of open spaces and green areas; renewable energy and waste management initiatives; 'designing-out' crime measures; and improvements in environmental service delivery
- the liveability agenda also highlights the importance of involving and empowering communities, and reinforces the notion of active citizenship - liveability is 'where the community and the environment meet'

## 2. NDC Partnerships and the Liveability Agenda

- 2.1. The term, 'liveability' was not widely used, and had not, as yet, become firmly established as part of the language of renewal in the case study partnerships. Where it was identified by those interviewed, professionals and officers were more familiar with the term than were residents and elected members. This could partly reflect the very recent application of the term to developments at the Neighbourhood level, including the development of a new funding stream, the Liveability Fund. It also may reflect the lack of a clear environmental focus within original delivery plans in the NDC partnerships, and, in some cases, the subsequent slow development of environmental improvement activities.
- 2.2. As with the earlier use of the sustainability framework for example, there was evidence of confusion over what the term actually meant. In the West Middlesbrough partnership, candidates who attended for a recent interview for an environmental co-ordinators post were asked by one member of the panel to describe the liveability agenda. None of the candidates were able to do this. There was also some criticism that the term was the latest in a long line of regeneration 'buzzwords' whose currency would be short lived. There was also some criticism that the government, in documents such as the Sustainable Communities Plan, had used the term in such a general way that there was a danger that it could mean all things to all people.
- 2.3. While there was not widespread awareness of liveability as a formal government policy agenda, there was a generally supportive attitude to the 'spirit' of the agenda, particularly in relation to the importance of focussing on the environmental dimension of regeneration. Indeed, one respondent felt that it was 'potentially a very useful term as it had, at its heart, an emphasis on making the link between the economic, social and environmental - something that the partnership had been slow to develop'.
- 2.4. Thus, in the case study partnerships, most people were able to identify a range of interconnected issues that would clearly fit neatly within the government's agenda (even if the liveability term was not directly used). While the partnerships varied in the exact range of issues identified - in some NDCs for example, renewables and recycling were not highlighted, while in another bio-diversity and the natural habitat was underplayed - there were signs of a common agenda emerging.
- 2.5. In the Nottingham NDC these related to:

*'the link between broadly environmental factors, such as the quality of the built and open environment, public and open space and other factors such as economic prosperity, crime and the fear of crime'*
- 2.6. While in Haringey, where there was a good level of awareness of the formal policy agenda, liveability involved providing linkages between the themes of housing, physical environment, community safety and transport, and the long-term goals of the partnership included better management of litter and rubbish, safer street and communities, better neighbourhood services and a sense of pride in the neighbourhood.
- 2.7. In the Coventry NDC, aspects of the liveability agenda were effectively embedded within the NDC, although not identified as 'liveability' per se. The approach adopted involved, on one level, ensuring that the streets were clean and not full of rubbish or litter. On another, it also involved making the place attractive for people to live, and helping people 'move from being victims of their environment to participants'. While on a higher level perhaps, liveability involved:

*'addressing the underlying social processes in the area. In terms of policy action this means changing the 'life worlds' of certain residents and helping them to address the problems and issues they face. Building people's confidence so that they believe that they have the power to change their lives is at the centre of this approach. This can be a difficult task as low levels of self-esteem and the feeling of powerlessness is endemic within sections of the community '.*

2.8. In Bristol, the NDC team has emphasised the 'clean, safe, green' agenda promoted by the ODPM. There was some concern, however, that the ODPM agenda fails to emphasise the importance of community involvement in cleaning up neighbourhoods. The NDC also views the provision and accessibility of local services, brought together through neighbourhood management, as an important component of the liveability agenda.

2.9. While there was evidence in the partnerships of a developing *understanding* of the necessary inter-relationship between the economic, social, and environmental, there were still scope for enhancing *actual* linkages between projects aiming to improve the quality of the local environment, tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, and those targeted at the economic and social regeneration of the local community.

2.10. In most of the case study partnerships, there was little evidence of the link being established between the local actions and the global environment. As one partnership reported:

*'very few links were made by interviewees, even when prompted, with the global or broader environmental agenda in terms of the need to reduce consumption, protect, reuse or recycle resources or the need to actively design a sustainable built environment'.*

2.11. While the use of liveability as a concept is useful if it helps raise the profile of some environmental issues within NDCs and other partnerships, there were some concerns about the extent to which the liveability agenda downplays the global and longer-term aspects of sustainable development and indeed over whether neighbourhood renewal should actually engage with these issues.

2.12. The exception to this view was in Haringey (Seven Sisters), where a number of those interviewed felt that many of the situations in the area were directly linked to global events. One highlighted the perceived transient nature of the population and the high level of cultural diversity as having a direct effect on the liveability of Seven Sisters. If there is the perception that you will not be staying in the area for long why would you feel a sense of belonging and therefore feel you have a stake in improving the area? While new immigrants from the third and second world (which may include refugees from an area that has been subject to war or famine and/or those from cultures where access to resources is very limited) may find it hard to relate to local messages to recycle, to not drop litter or that they should have pride in their new neighbourhood?

2.13. A number of respondents in Haringey thus felt that the challenge is to educate the broader community on how people and places relate. How actions have an opposite reaction and how the implementation of the liveability agenda should have long term benefits not just for those who are established in the community, but also for those who are new arrivals, those who work in the area, or even those who are just passing through. Education was also mentioned in the context of the school curriculum. One respondent in Haringey stated:

*'Awareness of the importance of environmental issues needs to be built into the education curriculum, so that there can be a change in the broader value system, and help combat throw away culture and consumerism.'*

Another felt that:

*'the inclusion of the Citizenship curriculum in our schools will have the effect of making young people more conscious of how they affect the planet and how they interact with their locale. Teaching them about their rights, but also about their responsibilities.'*

2.14. In this section we have noted that:

- the term, liveability is not widely used in the NDC case study partnerships - and when it is, it is confined to small groups of officers and professionals
- however, while not formally adopting the government policy framework - aspects of the agenda were clearly identified. These particularly related to: Neighbourhood Clean-Up, a focus confirmed in a recent research report (SHU, 2003); waste management; developing open/green spaces; Improved Neighbourhood Management; and schemes to promote community safety. Partnerships were less likely to identify with recycling, renewable energy and habitat
- there was a clear understanding of the contribution liveability could make to produce a more joined-up approach to regeneration
- in partnerships with a clearer emphasis on liveability issues, there was also a link made with community empowerment, citizenship and education
- there was little evidence of the link being established between the global and the local, although the wider applicability of the agenda was highlighted in partnerships with a large transient population and high levels of cultural diversity

### 3. NDC Partnerships and the Liveability Challenge

3.1. Evidence from both the original Delivery Plans and the 2002 household survey, confirm that the case study partnerships were characterised by a run-down and degraded physical environment, with residents often expressing a low level of satisfaction with the areas as places to live and identifying problems with a number of residential features particularly relating to the cleanliness and quality of the built environment.

3.2. In the Liverpool NDC area for example:

*'the streets tend to be treeless and green leisure space very limited...the harsh appearance of the urban environment is reinforced by the dereliction of underdeveloped waste land and the four busy main roads that physically sub-divide the NDC area into separate neighbourhoods'.*

3.3. While in Middlesbrough, NDC residents raised concerns in the original Delivery Plan that such problems as litter, fly-tipping, stray dogs, unsightly and unsafe back alleys, poor lighting and the number of vacant derelict buildings, all reinforced the image of an impoverished neighbourhood and contributed to the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

3.4. In Coventry, the quality of housing was considered to be a major factor that contributes to a poor physical/built environment and quality of life, encourages crime, fear of crime and joblessness, and underpins the economic and social lethargy of the local community. The NDC Delivery Plan argued that the:

*'unpopularity and condition of the housing stock in the area is a critical factor contributing to a poor environment and negative image, which in turn encourages crime, deters private investment and causes many employers to regard residents from the areas as 'no hoppers' when they apply for jobs' (Coventry NDC, 2001)*

3.5. While there are obviously some local variations in the scale of the problems identified, a number of common factors posed challenges to liveability in all of the six case study areas. These related to:

- the quality of the local housing stock - particularly boarded up and vandalised properties
- abandoned and burnt out cars
- the lack of - and poor quality of - local open and green spaces, for example, children's play facilities
- transport issues (traffic levels, speeding traffic or poor public transport)
- poor maintenance of properties, grassed areas, landscaping or street lighting
- dog fouling and problems with vermin
- poor road and paved surfaces - uneven and or with bad drainage etc
- litter in the streets and fly-tipping
- anti-social behaviour

3.6. Responsibility for the environmental problems identified in the NDC areas, was partly attributed to the poor quality of previous approaches to service provision in the neighbourhood. In Haringey for example:

*'information gathered via theme groups and community consultation with tenants and residents suggests that there are serious gaps and shortcomings in neighbourhood services. These include issues to do with waste management, grounds maintenance, estate cleaning and maintenance, maintenance and repair of communal areas in council blocks and council accommodation, enforcement to improve standards in private sector housing, and responses to anti social behaviour and housing benefits'.*

- 3.7. In all the case study partnerships there was also a clear recognition of the inter-relationship between the nature of the physical environment and how people behave and feel:

*'Derelict sites and abandoned houses are Aladdin's caves for children looking for new places in which to play; having 'fun' sometimes involves setting fire to them. However, adults also exacerbate the problem by using abandoned properties and derelict green spaces for fly tipping.'* (Liverpool NDC)

*'The large number of vacant properties fosters dereliction, decay and, in some instances, vandalism. More generally, it contributes to a community mentality that is often characterised by feelings of disempowerment, a lack of belief in their ability to influence their own lives, and fear of crime. The design and layout of estates and the transport infrastructure in the area facilitate crime by providing alleyways that allow criminals to move quickly from one place to another. These same alleyways have secluded areas where crimes such as mugging and drug taking can be committed.'* (Coventry NDC)

*'When an area looks more welcoming, has more trees, flowerbeds, hanging baskets, well maintained shop fronts and less rubbish, it makes people feel better about themselves and where they live.'* (Haringey NDC)

- 3.8. However this link (between environment and anti-social behaviour) was not always seen as being one way. In Bristol for example, it was recognised that:

*'One effect of anti-social behaviour was to prevent people from feeling free to use public spaces in the neighbourhood. This was particularly a problem for young women and older people. This same set of issues was again linked to vandalism and the poor appearance of parts of the neighbourhood'.* (Bristol NDC)

- 3.9. In some NDCs, it was argued that low levels of self-esteem (or a lack of community identification) amongst residents has had a negative impact on whether local people take responsibility for their environment. In Coventry for example:

*'While certain NDC officers believe that there is a strong sense of community, other commentators believe that this is restricted to the older generation and those that have been long established in the area. Some stakeholders also note that residents do not generally take responsibility for their environment. For example, they do not question fly-tippers as they believe this is the responsibility of statutory organisations'.*

- 3.10. In Haringey it was felt that such community attitudes were an entirely understandable response to living in the area. Factors such as the state of the built and physical environment, poverty, poor health, transience, crime and poor community amenities and facilities had created a perpetual cycle of deprivation and poverty of aspiration. For one observer, "Too many of the community feel helpless." While one local authority representative said, "Too many promises have been broken too many times."

- 3.11. In several of the NDCs (including Coventry, Liverpool, Haringey and Nottingham), the transient nature of the local population was also viewed as a barrier to promoting liveability. In Nottingham for example:

*'The high numbers of students and the more recent refugee and asylum seeker communities means that the local population is highly transient, bringing difficulties in building long-term identification with a community identity, community cohesion/social capital or in delivering long-term change programmes and in evaluating them. High population turnover also raises the number of points at which households are cleared (by private landlords in particular) and therefore accentuates the problem of fly-tipping'.*

- 3.12. As well as 'challenges' to liveability, the case study partnerships also identified some of the 'opportunities' for promoting liveability. This particularly relates to the management of public space. Within the boundaries of some NDCs (Bristol and Haringey for example) there were several areas of open space and parks that constitute a key potential resource for the community to make use of. However, as was noted in Bristol the current quality of many open spaces leaves a lot to be desired:

*'Many people appreciate that the area is relatively rich in open spaces, but the maintenance and use of these spaces was a major issue. The spaces around the tower blocks in the centre of the Barton Hill part of the area are currently poorly landscaped, with a paucity of interesting features and ineffective system of footpaths. The Netham Park is a significant area of open space, and many people recognise it as a major asset. However, people feel it is currently misused by some, with mopeds and abandoned cars being particularly problematic. The park is currently rather featureless, and lacks any formal sports facilities or attractive planting'.*

- 3.13. In some of the other NDCs, such as Liverpool and West Middlesbrough, parks, open spaces and play areas were mainly situated just outside the partnerships boundaries. This clearly challenges NDCs to look beyond their own boundaries in terms of maximising the potential for environmental developments that would impact on their residents. According to a local authority employee in one of the case studies:

*'the NDC needs to be less squeamish about funding outside their boundaries, particularly where the facility would be used by NDC residents. Money could be spent on a Park which is used by NDC residents, but which is just outside the NDC area'.*

- 3.14. The management and development of open spaces are central to the liveability agenda, and clearly provide opportunities for NDCs to develop a strategic approach to the management of existing assets, such as open spaces, green areas, parks, children's play areas as well as assessing the opportunities to create new public spaces as part of any comprehensive development proposals.

- 3.15. In this section we have noted that:

- the case study Partnerships were generally characterised by a run-down and degraded physical environment, with residents often having a low-level of satisfaction with the areas a places to live
- a number of common factors 'challenged' liveability. These included: the poor quality of housing; litter, graffiti and dog-fouling; abandoned and burnt-out cars; lack of open and green spaces; and the poor quality of environmental service provision



- there was a clear recognition in the case study partnerships of the - often complex - link between the nature of the physical environment and how people feel and behave, and that low-levels of self-esteem can have a negative impact on whether local people take responsibility for their environment
- several opportunities for promoting liveability were also identified. These particularly related to the improved management and development of public and green spaces, inside and outside NDC boundaries

## 4. NDC Partnerships and Liveability: The Strategic Response

- 4.1. In general, the area of environmental regeneration has been slow to develop in the case study partnerships. The promotion of liveability in the majority of the case study neighbourhoods would have benefited from a much more co-ordinated and strategic approach in the first two years of the programme. This has resulted in some partnerships missing out on the potential to achieve environmental ‘early wins’ and reduced the partnerships ability to use such ‘visible’ schemes to boost support for the NDC amongst the community.
- 4.2. Partly this relates to open space and environmental issues not being prioritised by government at the outset of the NDC programme and partly to such issues being accorded a relatively low priority by partnerships in comparison to employment crime, education, health and housing. And while projects relating to the particular components of (what was to become) the liveability agenda were developed within other individual themes (including health, crime, housing) there was often an absence of an overall strategic framework through which to prioritise environmental improvements and to promote a joined-up approach to social, environmental and economic regeneration.
- 4.3. Even in partnerships where the original delivery plan did at least highlight some environmental challenges, the environmental response was often subsumed within (and dependant upon) developments within housing masterplans and was not usually linked to any specific indicators or outcomes. In Middlesbrough, according to one respondent:

*‘the environmental dimension wasn’t really identified in the original Delivery Plan, which was very housing-led, while resident’s capacity to develop such a dimension wasn’t well-enough developed’.*

- 4.4. While in Liverpool:

*‘The vision for housing and the physical environment outlined in the original Delivery Plan, the only significant environmental improvement advocated is that likely to occur almost as a by-product of sensitive, well-planned housing and retail regeneration, for example, the creation of attractive city blocks, sustainable housing and the formation of a new Civic Square. Moreover, “key baselines” listed under the heading “improving housing and the environment” are, with the exception of “recycling” and “traffic”, all housing-related’.*

- 4.5. In some of the NDCs, the subsuming of environmental improvements within housing-led masterplans has clearly ensured that the slow progress of the latter has held back progress in the former. Thus in Bristol, the development of initiatives, such as an allotment and community gardens were held up while land-use decisions associated with the masterplan were discussed. In Middlesbrough, the National Evaluation report for 2001/02 noted how the delays in redeveloping the Central Whinney Banks area had cast a long shadow over the wider agenda on environmental improvement:

*‘Many respondents expressed a belief that progress on environmental projects over the next year is critical, in order to demonstrate to residents that changes are being made’.*

- 4.6. There was a general acknowledgement that in retrospect, the underplaying of the environmental agenda in both the original delivery plans and emerging thematic strategies, resulted in partnerships missing out on the opportunity to harness the potential of environmental regeneration to produce visible ‘quick wins’.

#### 4.7. In Bristol, the NDC...

*'has learnt the lesson of failing to make these visible changes in the early months and years. Many within the partnership would acknowledge that relatively small-scale initiatives to improve the appearance, maintenance and cleanliness of the neighbourhood might have bolstered the community's support for the programme. The partnership's focus in the first two years was on organisational development to support its major projects; looking at more short-term liveability interventions was not a priority'.*

- 4.8. However, in Haringey, the issue of linking environmental improvements to 'quick wins' produced a difference of opinion. While some felt that the best way to tackle the factors was to look for short term 'quick wins' that would indicate that things are changing in the area, others felt that this would not work because 'capacity had never been fully developed in the community, and that this was a short-term approach that would be ultimately unsustainable'. Others advocated a more joined up strategic view looking at factors in a more holistic manner. They felt it would take longer but ultimately would provide greater long-term benefits. They felt that the danger would be that while things were developing behind the scenes the lack of perceived progress might alienate the community. One respondent likened it to watching a swan on a pond.

*'On the surface nothing appears to be happening, but under the water there is lots of activity to keep the swan moving.'*

- 4.9. In Coventry however, there was a stronger emphasis on environmental issues in the original delivery plan and within the housing and physical environment theme. At the centre of the NDC's vision statement is the desire to be a "normal community" where people "do not wake up to see boarded up houses or burnt out cars," "have the confidence to have a say in our area and its future" and "have quality services - both public and private" (Coventry NDC, 2001). The original strategic context thus involved capturing a number of environmental aims, actions and a small number of outcomes (see Figure 1).

#### **Figure 1: Coventry NDC ~ Environmental Issues in the original Delivery Plan**

##### *Aims*

- to provide safer more pleasant environment for people walking around the area
- to provide positive activities for young people which will encourage them to take a pride in their environment
- to improve the environmental quality of key community facilities such as shopping areas
- to monitor the delivery of local services and the standards achieved in order to ensure that the area does not receive a 'second best' service
- to ensure that local people feel more positive and proud of their area

##### *Actions*

- the provision of a range of positive activities for young people which will divert them away from crime, intimidation and vandalism
- the provision of a range of improvements to the living environment - focusing on prominent target areas in order to overcome the area's negative image - including shops, roads and pathways
- the provision of a "rapid response service" to remove rubbish, litter and weeds.
- the development of a system involving residents for setting appropriate standards for local service delivery, monitoring the actual performance of agencies against those standards and ensuring rapid action is taken if they fall short

### *Outcomes*

- within 3 years minimum service standards for all locally delivered services will be agreed and will be being regularly monitored by local residents. Within no more than 6 years standards of service will be better than the average for the City. Key priorities for early action include street lighting
- a reduction in the number of residents who think the environment of the area they live in is poor to from 28% to 25% in three years to 20% in 6 years and the City average (currently 12%) in 8 years

4.10. In Liverpool, greater clarity of the NDC's intent - with regards to the environment - was provided in 2001 by a separate Housing Delivery Proposal document. Included amongst specifics about the housing market, housing problems and funding requirements is a useful distillation of the area's environmental problems and the NDC approach to resolving them. The environmental targets of NDC are listed as being:

- removal of dereliction
- turning vacant and derelict land and buildings into viable and attractive uses
- creating a quality environment and image that makes people want to come, and to stay
- removing environmental conflicts
- providing quality amenities and services

4.11. This strategy document seeks to draw out the links more clearly between housing regeneration and the wider NDC programme. Its appendix also lists the outcomes that an integrated environmental improvement programme to support housing sustainability in the area will help to deliver by 2010. These are:

- no derelict land in the area without definite redevelopment proposals
- percentage of vacant dwellings reduced to city average
- no derelict buildings, except secured buildings in approved clearance programmes
- all Listed buildings in the area in good repair and productive use
- programme of installation of integrated street furniture, good quality street lighting and signage completed.
- programme of 'Home Zones' completed in sustainable areas, and integrated in design of new developments to improve physical safety and appearance.
- significant local buildings physically enhanced, and provided with floodlighting
- all green spaces under good quality management and maintenance
- measured level of feeling of community safety at same level as city average
- better integration of pedestrian routes with public transport routes and access points
- consistent resident involvement in monitoring and maintaining public areas and buildings.

4.12. A total budget of £22m including £11.9m of NDC funding was allocated to this environmental improvement work.

- 4.13. The 2002-3 Annual Review of Liverpool NDC conducted by the National Evaluation Team, observed that the aim of the environmental improvement programme being undertaken was to:

*'Overcome the overwhelmingly negative image of the area by improving the streetscape, creating attractive shopping areas, removing dereliction and bringing vacant sites back into use, creating good open spaces and enhancing the standard of neighbourhood services'.*

- 4.14. Perhaps the most explicit and co-ordinated development of an initial approach to environmental regeneration was in Haringey (Seven Sisters), where the Delivery Plan argued that:

*'the state of environment is a key priority for all Seven Sisters' communities. The poor quality of public space and environmental infrastructure adds to the sense of deprivation in the neighbourhood. This feeds the sense of division and alienation experienced by new and settled communities alike. Reshaping the way we design and manage the environment and transportation remains the corner stone for shaping sustainable communities in Seven Sisters.'*

- 4.15. The early development of an Environmental Strategy provided a clear vision for the NDC area and offered a holistic view of the neighbourhood environment. The strategy argued that:

*'Improving the environment for the communities of Seven Sisters is not simply a matter of street improvements or the appearance of buildings in the area. A range of physical issues relating to quality of life determines the quality of the neighbourhood's environment. For example all members of society should have safe and convenient access to learning, health, leisure, and community facilities. People should feel safe from crime when walking down the street or using public transport. Open space should be accessible to all, particularly in areas which are predominately urban, and most importantly people should be able to feel pride in their neighbourhood.'*

- 4.16. The strategy highlighted a number of key environmental priorities in the NDC area (see Figure 2), and divided the strategic response into four categories:

- improving Key Sites
- improving Where You Live
- greening the Neighbourhood
- safe Movement (encouraging walking, cycling and providing safe attractive connected routes)

- 4.17. In the last year there have been signs of a much more strategic approach to environmental regeneration emerging across some of the other case study authorities. While the initial slow response was highlighted in both earlier Government Office reviews and the National Evaluation reports, the three year review and the refocusing of delivery plans, in particular, allowed NDC partnerships to identify opportunities for strengthening their interventions in this area. This emphasis has been aided by the stronger focus given to the liveability agenda by government departments. In some cases, there was also a clear recognition, shared by residents, that not enough had occurred 'on the ground'.

## Figure 2: Haringey NDC ~ Environmental Strategy - Identifying Key Priorities

- safe quiet roads
- green spaces
- uncluttered
- attractive built environment, (clean and maintained)
- good quality affordable housing
- good range of shops in the neighbourhood
- everything in easy access
- good schools, (extended schools as the centre of the community)
- community facilities
- a sense of community
- cleanliness

4.18. In West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust for example, the new Delivery Plan noted that 'internal evaluation confirms limited progress in treating sites and a limited impact on the appearance of the open spaces in the area', this is despite setting up a grants scheme to pursue environmental improvements. While the 2003 National Evaluation report comments:

*'WMNT has to do more to deliver visible change throughout the NDC area. Board members and staff are well aware that this is of prime importance. Environmental improvements can be particularly effective and small promotional efforts (such as sign boards on WMNT projects) could be useful. To retain community credibility and sustain impetus, WMNT must demonstrate that positive change is taking place and publicise and promote that more effectively'.*

4.19. Thus, the 2003-2006 delivery plan in West Middlesbrough, gives greater emphasis to environmental improvements by:

- setting up an 'Improving Housing and the Living Environment' Theme Group
- committing the Trust to the production of an Environmental Improvements Strategy (the draft was submitted to the Trust board in December 2003 - see Figure 3)
- earmarking resources to support environmental improvements - £2m between 2003 and 2010 with £650,000 also earmarked from EU funding (ERDF). Around £300,000 is earmarked for 2003-4

### Figure 3: West Middlesbrough ~ Environmental Strategy (Draft)

*'Over the remaining 7 years of the NDC programme we will do everything possible to improve the appearance and facilities of all the neighbourhood surroundings to make the area a better place to live'.*

#### *Key Steps*

1. develop an environmental strategy for each neighbourhood
2. introduce a programme of wide scale improvements for all areas of external space (including open/green space, play areas, street lighting etc)
3. develop Service Level Agreements to improve maintenance and cleanliness standards

#### *Possible Achievements*

- every household will have reasonable access to a kiddies play area by 2010
- all lighting to public areas including pedestrian crossings and public open space should be adequately lit for the purpose
- all raised planters will have been considered within Neighbourhood Improvement Schemes on an individual basis for their removal or other corrective actions
- all footpaths, roads and cycleways will be considered for refurbishment in partnership with the local council
- through a combination of extra resources, re-education, enforcement and awareness raising there will be an improvement in the state of cleanliness
- the Trust will develop and grow its own Grounds Maintenance Company in order to ensure a continuity of good quality maintenance to the plants, shrubs and trees
- wherever necessary we will install dog fouling bins, ensure they are fully equipped and are emptied regularly
- we will carry out an intensive regime of spraying with acceptable chemicals to permanently eradicate the weeds on footpaths and other public areas
- we will work in partnership with the local council to create a better enforcement process against all forms of neighbourhood nuisance with particular attention to environmental infringement. And we will instigate a Name and Shame campaign of offenders successfully prosecuted
- we will work in partnership with the councils' Street Scene team to raise the standard of cleanliness in all the public areas
- all Alleyways will be considered within Neighbourhood Improvement Schemes on an individual basis for their amenity value or usefulness to the residents who use them

- 4.20. There is also an emphasis in West Middlesbrough on developing a more strategic approach to prioritising environmental improvements rather than merely responding to a resident's 'wish list' of projects:

*'a more structured approach is required to environmental improvements to create a greater impact. Better maintenance and cleanliness of the environment is needed to encourage a better perception from the residents of their living environment' (Neighbourhood Trust, 2003)*

- 4.21. In Liverpool, the 2003-4 Delivery Plan recapped the challenges faced by the area and highlighted the limited nature of the improvement delivered so far, before outlining some specific projects that were to be taken forward during the year. Environmental improvements proposed were, again, closely tied-in with housing regeneration aims.
- 4.22. In Coventry, all NDC Task Groups are in the process of developing 'Ladders' detailing mainstream service provision, existing issues, desired outcomes and future and present NDC projects. The 'Environmental Ladder', aims to outline the main physical/built

environment factors that the NDC believes would make the area a good place to live. These desired outcomes directly relate to actions that are planned or presently being undertaken by the NDC, and they set the framework for joining-up action between different task groups, such as environment and crime (e.g. neighbourhood wardens). The intention is to move the area up this 'ladder' through masterplanning and other projects that address physical and social regeneration.

4.23. There is also evidence in Haringey of further positive developments in the overall approach to promoting liveability. These include:

- the low aspirations of the local community are beginning to change - more are now aware of what can and cannot be achieved and are demanding better service delivery
- accord, the company responsible for waste collection and management services in Haringey are adapting their structures to work with area based initiatives
- more recycling projects are now underway, and Citizenship programmes are now being adopted across local schools
- there have now been a number of successful community engagement events, and a community clean up has taken place on at least one local estate
- the Housing Renewal Area and the proposed remodelling of some of the local estates will give the opportunity for community consultation on how the area can be made more liveable
- the imminent opening of the NDC Neighbourhood Management Office should offer the opportunity to provide better waste management, more joined up working with environmental projects, ASBO, enforcement and a focal point for the local community
- a number of respondents felt that the biggest opportunity for greater implementation of the liveability agenda is the various forms of funding available. They highlighted funding available from ERDF for shop fronts renewal, TfL for implementation of the Pocket Parks Programme, National Lottery funding aimed at public open spaces, NRF and NRU funding streams for the implementation of neighbourhood wardens and management
- in the near future the NDC aims to appoint a dedicated resident participation officer (jointly funded by Haringey) to work with residents to begin to discuss and agree basic neighbourhood service standards with the main providers, which will lead to Estate Agreements and/or Neighbourhood Compacts

4.24. As a more strategic approach to liveability emerges, this clearly provides opportunities to integrate and co-ordinate neighbourhood-level approaches with a wider set of initiatives at the local, sub-regional and regional levels. These would include: LSP Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Strategies; LA 21 Strategies; Climate Change Community Action Plans; Green/Open Spaces Plans; Plans developed by local Health or Community Safety Partnerships; and Sustainable Development strategies developed at the sub-regional or regional levels.

4.25. There are several examples of attempts to integrate strategies and develop effective partnership working in this area:

- in Coventry, the NDC area has been identified as one of the cities 31 priority neighbourhoods. The NDC is also involved in other local partnership groupings, including the Health Forum, Health Improvement Strategy Group, Area Strategy Group and Health Action Group



- in Liverpool, the latest delivery plan, lists the other local strategies within which the environmental improvement work of the NDC is being situated. These are: Liverpool's Unitary Development Plan; Liverpool Retail Strategy; Liverpool Open Spaces Study; and Liverpool Parks Strategy
  - in Haringey, a number of resident board members are developing links with the LSP (via the Community Empowerment Network), although the links are related more to their membership of the tenants' association, than board membership of the NDC. Members of the delivery team in Haringey were also involved in the development of the Unitary Development Plan, and significant input was given in developing the Community Strategy and particularly Haringey Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. In the wider context they have been involved in the development plans for Tottenham International, Lea Valley City Growth Strategy, and the review of the Single Regeneration Budget
  - in Middlesbrough, the Housing and the Living Environment Theme Group includes representatives from several council departments, Middlesbrough Environment City (a local charity) and the Groundwork Trust
  - in both Middlesbrough and Bristol, the Local Authority has involved the NDC in its initial bid to the new Liveability Fund. In Middlesbrough, the Council bid aims to improve several Parks in the town, one of which, Westbourne Park, is particularly close to the NDC area. The total bid (£4m) includes revenue (community landscape architect, park ranger, parks project officers) and capital (£300,000 each on the main parks and more on play areas). According to one council officer, *'there are opportunities for the NDC to provide funding to go alongside the liveability fund application. One potential area of joint working is in appointing architects/landscape designers with expertise in community consultation'*
  - there are also examples of joint-working between: NDCs and Local Authorities (via the use of Service Level Agreements covering environmental services in Middlesbrough); between NDCs and other agencies, (such as the joint approach to Neighbourhood Wardens between the NDC and an RSL in Liverpool) and a shared Home Zone initiative (between Bristol NDC, the City Council and SusTrans - see section 5 for further information)
  - in Haringey, a number of respondents saw the NDC as an opportunity to test out new ideas and new ways of working. One respondent called the NDC "the pilot zone" because so many programmes have been piloted within the NDC area and then gone borough wide. The improved street lighting programme has been taken up by the council, as have the Clean Teams, and pilots for Wardens, Neighbourhood Enforcement and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- 4.26. However, the evidence suggests that progress towards effective partnership working in the area of liveability has been slow, and that there are still considerable opportunities to more effectively integrate neighbourhood developments within a wider context of activities. These particularly include links with LSP environmental theme groups, LA 21 strategies, with sub-regional partnerships and the relevant RDA strategies.
- 4.27. This slow progress may partly relate to the difficulties of working through, and within, broader socio-spatial scales - there has been a general problem linking NDCs with sub-regional and regional levels - and partly to the time required to get partners together and establish adequate systems and procedures. According to one respondent in Middlesbrough,

*'there hasn't been a great deal of joint-working with the local authority - while there is a will to work together, capacity problems and the different demands on a small team is partly to blame for lack of activity'*

4.28. While in Coventry,

*'the demands of having to be involved in all these various bodies is a concern for the NDC. A great deal of time is spent on establishing relations, systems and procedures before progress can be made in terms of integrating and co-ordinating strategies. The NDC is also not sure how these different groupings are linked together.'*

4.29. There was also evidence, in Nottingham, of the (historically) problematic relationship between the NDC and the local authority restricting effective partnership working in this area. Indeed, a number of 'liveability' related projects, such as a funded project to carry out gating, cleansing and maintenance to alleyways behind shops in the NDC area, were being undertaken within the NDC area without any apparent input or mention of the NDC. There was also conflict over the street wardens initiative, where the lack of a joint approach has led to the employment of two sets of wardens (NDC and Local Authority) ostensibly providing the same service at public expense but being funded from different streams, being dressed in noticeably separate uniforms and operating in strictly defined geographical areas so that each does not cross into the other's 'patch'.

4.30. While some individual links have been made with LSPs, there is still considerable potential for more effectively integrating the development of liveability indicators and outcomes at the neighbourhood level, with the emerging frameworks being developed by LSPs. In Coventry for example, LSP environmental outcomes for 2010 include:

- by 2010 Coventry will make more sustainable use of natural resources - less energy and water will be used, less waste and pollution will be produced, and more waste will be recycled, the city will be a better place for wildlife
- by 2010 people will see their neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces as more attractive and enjoyable places to be. These improvements will be more rapid in our priority neighbourhoods and communities
- by 2010 people will have a greater awareness and understanding of how they can contribute to a better environment

4.31. While in Middlesbrough the LSP has produced a short paper on sustainability which identifies a number of issues that should be considered by the individual LSP theme groups and includes a useful list of 43 indicators that could be used to monitor sustainability. It also notes that Forum for the Future will be offering advice to the LSP as the Middlesbrough are part of that organisations' partner scheme.

4.32. In this section we have noted that:

- several partnerships were slow to develop a focused approach to environmental regeneration, or even establish clear environmental outcomes. As such, partnerships missed out on the opportunity to create highly visible, 'quick wins'
- where a stronger focus was developed earlier, partnerships have been able to develop a wide range of projects on the ground – although there is a tendency for such projects to develop in a rather incremental fashion, without a strong or co-ordinated strategic context
- following project and programme reviews, there is clear evidence of partnerships identifying opportunities for refocusing and strengthening interventions in this area, including developing separate environmental strategies; allocating additional resources and staff; strengthening the organisational emphasis of theme or issues groups; developing neighbourhood management initiatives; and improving environmental services and service level agreements

- while there are some emerging examples of effective partnership-working and increased co-ordination in the area of Liveability, progress remains slow. There are clear opportunities to develop stronger integration with strategies at the local, sub-regional and regional levels

## 5. Liveability Projects in the NDC Partnerships

- 5.1. Despite the relatively slow development of a strategic response to environmental regeneration in most of the case study areas, there is evidence of a growing number of individual projects across the main themes. Building on this largely piecemeal approach however, partnerships have responded to the more recent prioritisation of the liveability agenda, by developing a more co-ordinated (and creative) approach to environmental regeneration. In this section, the report aims to capture this growing momentum by illustrating the wide range of projects now being delivered in the case study partnerships. The projects are grouped within six main themes.

### Neighbourhood Improvement

- 5.2. In Liverpool, major renovations are planned in consultation with the communities that will benefit. This process is most advanced in Kensington Fields, where an Urban Design Group, established by local residents as an offshoot of the Kensington Fields Neighbourhood Planning Group, received training on aspects of urban design and worked with an architect to draw up a blueprint for the improvement of the neighbourhood. Their proposals, which are being implemented, include the installation of new Victorian-style street lighting, traffic calming, the restoration of boundary walls and the creation of pocket parks. Other residents groups have started to work on improvement plans for their neighbourhoods or have expressed interest in doing so.
- 5.3. In Coventry, the physical/built environmental factors which contribute to the liveability of the area are embedded within the main aims of the partnership's masterplanning exercise. The brief for the exercise is to bring about a massive change in the quality of the urban space. Their approach involves the creation of a better looking and creative space, and bringing more green space into the public sphere to make it more usable to the local community. At the centre of this programme is the Masterplan Urban Design Vision which wants to foster a community which is composed of: distinct places and not estates; safe and attractive to walk around - with clearly defined parks and well lit streets; accessible with improved linkages to the surrounding areas and a better pedestrian environment; supporting mixed uses so that work, leisure, community and shopping facilities and accessible to all residents; supporting a stable and balanced community capable of sustaining a range of facilities and services. There is concern amongst some stakeholder, however, that masterplanning overemphasizes physical structures rather than 'people poverty, and that masterplanning could become another area 'makeover' which does not address underlying social issues. The National Evaluation has found, however, that Board members and senior NDC managers express this same concern, and are determined for this not to happen.
- 5.4. In Bristol, the Dings part of the NDC neighbourhood is benefiting from a liveability initiative that started up independently of the partnership, but which the partnership is now part funding. The sustainable transport NGO, Sustrans, is implementing a Home Zone scheme as part of an EU-funded transport project of which Bristol City Council is a partner. Sustrans have conducted extensive consultation for a plan that will reshape the Dings' streets to minimise the impact of cars and create more space for walking, cycling and recreation.
- 5.5. In Haringey, a strong team has been built up to deliver neighbourhood environmental and enforcement services. The team now includes: a Clean Team; an Abandoned Vehicle Office; an Environmental Health Officer; a New Deal Police Team; Crime Prevention Officers; Anti-Social Behaviour Officers; and the Neighbourhood Warden team (4 wardens, 1 supervisor). A wide range of environmental improvements are being undertaken including: improving play areas (including junior kick about areas and ball courts); refurbishing shrub bedding; introducing traffic calming measures; and improving street lighting.

## Environmental Services

- 5.6. In Nottingham, one of the most successful projects to date has been a (now completed) project to replace the existing street-lighting in the NDC area. A range of interviewees commented on the beneficial impact of the scheme, saying it provided better quality lighting, helped to improve community safety by lighting previously unlit alleyways and pathways and had resulted in local input into the placement of individual lights to better reflect the needs of the community. The project is also a good example of joint working, with the capital for the project being provided by the NDC and revenue by the local authority.
- 5.7. In Middlesbrough, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been drawn up with Middlesbrough Council's environmental department, Streetscene Services. This provides details of the street cleaning and other environmental services that the Council provides in the NDC area, and it is intended that it will be used as a basis for monitoring services and identifying potential improvements. The SLA sets out clearly the services that residents can expect regarding the levels of cleaning and rubbish removal. Once the agreement is formally adopted it will become an enabling document to allow the trust and Streetscene to better allocate funding for improved services. A key part of the arrangement is the appointment of a dedicated officer for the trust area - the Clean and Green officer (CGO) is funded by the council but managed by the trust with support from ENCAMS (until March 2005). The development and utilisation of the SLA will help to test this approach to neighbourhood management, and could also provide a mechanism for mainstreaming and sustaining environmental improvement.
- 5.8. In Bristol, a waste management initiative, Project Pathfinder, has been developed which brings together refuse collection, street sweeping and bulky waste collection through a team of staff dedicated to the neighbourhood. It has been operating since late in 1999, and has attracted national attention as an innovative neighbourhood management model of service delivery. The key feature of the project is that its staff (of 4 or 5) are permanently based in the NDC neighbourhood, and are accessible to residents through the New Deal Shop and through regular open meetings. Project Pathfinder fits closely to the concept of liveability, since it addresses cleanliness, quality of service, and community involvement. The Project Pathfinder team also liaise with the council's grounds maintenance service. The NDC have also recently provided funding for a dedicated grounds maintenance worker to serve the neighbourhood.
- 5.9. In Coventry, the Rapid response street cleaning and rubbish removal project provides a quick response to environmental problems, including clearance of overgrown gardens, tidying borders and cutting back hedges. The project started in October 2001, and will end in April 2004. Total project funding is £323,504, with £203,506 coming from the NDC, while £119,998 derives from external funding. The project has acted to show what the problems are and where they occur, thereby further deepening the knowledge of the NDC, Coventry City Council and other organisations. Moreover, it has made a difference by showing residents that action can be taken when requested.
- 5.10. In Liverpool, the rundown state of open spaces within Kensington that is a result of vandalism, graffiti, fly-tipping and general neglect sends out strong negative signals about the area and is a highly visible sign of decline. Some work to clean up the area has already been undertaken by teams of 'Diggers', an ILM based elsewhere in Liverpool. Now, an Environmental Taskforce with 10 staff has taken on this role. The Taskforce is an ILM scheme part-funded by ESF that will clean up and secure public spaces and vacant land and undertake limited landscaping work. A large rat population is a major problem in the area and Liverpool City Council Environmental Services has agreed to undertake additional sewer baiting in an attempt to try and reduce it.

## Urban Parks/Open Spaces

- 5.11. In Liverpool, Newsham and Wavertree Parks are just outside the NDC area but are, nevertheless, important leisure spaces for NDC residents. Renovations along with improvements to security provision are, therefore, being funded by the NDC. Wavertree Park once contained Liverpool's Botanic Gardens and the restoration of its remaining Victorian features is part of this project.
- 5.12. In Nottingham, the NDC has a commitment to not removing parks and open spaces. They have also organised annual events in the parks as a way of distributing literature and information, training those that volunteer to help organise the events and to encourage people into the parks as well as running a consultation on the future of the parks.
- 5.13. In Bristol, improvements to Dings Park were one of the earliest physical interventions made by the partnership, being completed in November 2001. The provision of play and sports equipment has been successful in providing safe recreation facilities for young people. The amenity of the park has been increased through the provision of a shipping container that is being used as a makeshift youth centre, run by young people. The Dings Park scheme also demonstrates successful co-ordination between the Health and Youth theme areas of the NDC partnership. In Netham Park, the neighbourhood's main area of open space, the NDC funded a development project in 2001/2002, which produced a plan proposing; improved accessibility and sports facilities, new play, leisure and relaxation areas, planting and wildlife conservation, better safety and security. To date, Sport England has funded work to drain and prepare new sports pitches, and the NDC and Bristol Council have provided a temporary BMX track. Funding to complete the development plan is now being sought from a variety of sources.
- 5.14. Also in Bristol, the 'Groundforce' community gardening project, involves working with local people to improve public and private spaces around the neighbourhood. The focus is on small-scale projects carried out by local people, rather than on larger projects that would require external resources. As well as fostering participation and improving the appearance of the area, the project aims to improve safety by promoting the use of public spaces, and to promote health through walking and gardening. The project employs one full-time worker who runs a family of groups; a weekly gardening club at the primary school, a gardening group with the Youth Inclusion Project, a walking group and a 'Guerrilla Gardeners' group. Each group is well established, with a small number of regular volunteers. The project also holds one-off events, although it has proved difficult to engage local people on this basis. The project worker is employed through Bristol City Council, enabling the NDC to access expert advice on landscaping issues through the parks department. In its first two years, the project has met its targets for area of green space improved and number of events held. It has exceeded targets for participation and volunteering. A recent evaluation study (Brellisford, 2003) was extremely positive, highlighting qualitative successes in relation to the health and well-being of participants and their sense of pride in the local environment.
- 5.15. In Coventry, Grounds Plus (1 and 2) were a response to the failure of some areas to receive regular ground maintenance, resulting in overgrown gardens and areas, and culminating in problems with letting properties. The project involves a grounds maintenance service to NDC residents and the area through clearing rubbish and overgrown gardens and communal areas. The Project assists the most disadvantaged, including the elderly and disabled. Grounds Plus 1 ran from January 2003 until June 2003 and had funding of £37,720. Grounds Plus 2 started in July 2003 and finished in December 2003. Total spend was £37,720 from the NDC, with additional external

funding of £4,480. Monitoring and evaluation by the Council's Area Co-ordination Northeast office indicates that all targets have been exceeded.

## Community Safety Measures

- 5.16. In Liverpool, further adjustments to the urban environment are being made for the specific purpose of reducing crime and disorder. Alleygates that can be locked have been installed across the entrances to all of the alleyways running behind houses in order to prevent breaking and entering through rear doors and windows. The initiative started with the aid of Home Office funding in Kensington Fields. It is being gradually rolled out across Liverpool by the city council, with areas where the risk of victimisation is highest being gated first. The NDC injected its own funding to speed up the process in Kensington, and to allay the concerns of residents that they would become the victims of crime displaced from elsewhere. A sharp reduction in burglary without any obvious displacement to undefended streets has been recorded since Alleygates were introduced. There has, however, been a slight increase in the number of burglaries where access to houses is gained by kicking down their front doors. Households in Kensington have been offered free door security upgrades as a result.
- 5.17. Also in Liverpool, plans to 'design out' crime have been drawn up, in collaboration with the police, by residents of the Crosfield Estate in the Edge Hill area of Kensington. A social housing estate of about 160 properties completed in the mid 1980s, Crosfield suffers from a range of crime and anti-social behaviour problems and many residents are afraid to go out at night. Cars left in a communal car park are vandalised, waste ground used for drug dealing and also as a place to hang out and cause trouble by teenagers who do not live in the area. The remedies agreed by the community will see car parking relocated to the front of houses so owners can exercise natural surveillance over their vehicles. Alleyways that encourage non-residents to take a shortcut through the estate will be blocked off. Meanwhile, waste ground is to be cleaned up and incorporated in to the back gardens of surrounding houses, which will be enclosed by walls that are higher than at present.
- 5.18. In Bristol, a number of projects are aimed at promoting community safety through developing the urban environment. These include the Housing and Security project, which aims to both address housing need and to design-out crime. Initiatives include the installation of CCTV and the creation of defensible space around high-rise blocks in the central part of the NDC area, and the creation of a Home Zone in the Dings area (see 5.4. earlier). There is also a locks and bolts project (well-used and valued by the community) that fits locks and other security fittings to homes that are at risk from burglary.
- 5.19. Neighbourhood, Community or Street Wardens have also been introduced in many of the NDCs:
- in **Coventry**, a team of wardens have the responsibility for supporting and assisting residents in a number of different aspects of their lives. This includes reporting on housing repairs, identifying and reporting on environmental issues, providing a link between the community and relevant organisations, providing assistance and support for home security and a number of tasks relating to crime and anti-social behaviour. Initial comments from National Evaluation focus groups and various stakeholders suggest that the wardens have been well-received by local residents and are starting to make some progress in various aspects of their lives
  - in **Nottingham**, while the Street Wardens project had only been operational for a short period of time, it attracted universal support from interviewees. The wardens

themselves felt that they were 'making a difference' and all agencies interviewed felt that they were contributing to the area. They have access to the CCTV system installed in the area by the NDC and interviewees reported that they thought the two projects together had made a positive impact to community safety in the area. There were also examples of some partnership working between the wardens, the police and the neighbourhood management service and other stakeholders. The wardens had proved a useful source of additional intelligence to the police and had helped to make police responses more rapid. The wardens had also begun to work with the local authority to deal with the problem of discarded hypodermic needles by carrying needle boxes themselves and undergoing training in the safe collection and handling of needles, therefore avoiding a costly call out of collection services for every instance. In addition the wardens have begun to work with local schools on a long-term 'Junior Wardens' project. In addition to staging additional patrols around the schools at the beginning and end of the school day, the wardens are keen to engage in educational functions around the citizenship curriculum and had attended national street wardens training events on this issue

- in **Haringey**, there are a variety of Warden schemes around the borough funded from a number of regeneration sources, including the NDC. The council has appointed a Wardens Supervisor to provide a common link and to allow common monitoring of activity and impacts - effectively to join things up. While the warden's scheme is relatively new in the NDC area, it has shown good signs of development and innovation. The wide range of initiatives supported by wardens include: neighbourhood clean-up (including local garages; industrial factory units); anti-graffiti initiatives; traffic surveys; crime prevention work; visiting vulnerable residents; tree trimming initiatives; youth activities; and partnership with local schools (including work experience programmes)
- in **Liverpool** a full complement of 10 neighbourhood wardens and 2 supervisors, employed by the local RSL, C7, but again co-financed by the NDC, began work in January 2004. Coverage will be provided between 10am and 10pm Monday to Friday and 2pm to 10pm at weekends. The primary aim of the scheme is to enhance community safety so, pairs of wardens will patrol a predetermined 'patch', get to know residents, gather intelligence, engage with young people and provide reassurance to the vulnerable. As well as passing on information to the neighbourhood police team, mechanisms for sharing information with other organisations including Business Crime Direct and Liverpool Anti-Social Behaviour Unit are being developed. The wardens will also function as additional eyes and ears for the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, relaying problems and identifying issues requiring action. The co-ordinator is also responsible for directing the work of the area's new Environmental Taskforce and an opportunity clearly exists for the wardens to assist in the shaping of its work programme
- in **Bristol**, a community warden scheme has recently been developed in the NDC area. It is an NDC-funded project, and is distinct from others in Bristol in being managed by the police rather than the council. It was felt that the scheme would have a better chance of long-term sustainability if run by the police, and it would also take advantage of access to equipment and information. The scheme will employ four wardens and one manager, and will aim to free police time from dealing with small matters
- in **Middlesbrough**, improvements to the environment throughout the area have been achieved as a result of the work of the Community Caretakers. The Caretakers patrol the NDC area and tackle environmental problems such as fly-tipping and abandoned cars. The Caretakers also do small household jobs for elderly and vulnerable people. The role of the caretakers is currently under review and is set to change, especially in light of both the increased provision of, and potential overlap with, the council's Street Wardens initiative and the Trusts increased emphasis on improvements in the environment. The new scheme could



take responsibility for some of the more irritating aspects of cleanliness that will not be tackled by the local council's Street Scene environmental services. These could include the following on an 'as and when needed' basis, rather than any scheduled plan:

- washing of badly soiled pavements
- chewing gum removal
- sweeping and litter removal above the Street Scene standard
- pressure washing around benches, or other stained areas
- fly poster removal & reporting
- graffiti removal

## **Neighbourhood Management**

5.20. While Boroughs with NDCs were not eligible for the first round of NM Pathfinders, several NDCs have pushed ahead with their own approaches. In Liverpool, a form of neighbourhood management was introduced to Kensington in December 2003 to:

- ensure all the different services and initiatives that enhance liveability are integrated effectively
- minimise the impact of the restructuring of the area on residents
- manage the expectations of the community

5.21. A Neighbourhood Co-ordinator (or Manager), jointly funded with NDC, has been appointed by the local RSL, C7, to undertake a wide-ranging role. One of his principal tasks will be to ensure that the mainstream resources flowing into the area are used effectively, targeted where they are most needed and that duplication is eliminated. At the same time, it is his job to ensure that service providers do not use the presence of regeneration funding as an excuse to reduce their commitment to the NDC area. It is important, for example, that the new Environmental Taskforce does not do work that should be undertaken by the street cleansing provider contracted to the city council. The intention is that responsibilities will be clarified through the negotiation of Service Level Agreements. Liverpool City Council is establishing its own city-wide neighbourhood management scheme that will see managers appointed to oversee service provision across large districts. However, it is yet unclear how compatible and complementary the approaches of the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator and the Manager of the wider district will be.

5.22. In Haringey, the partnership plans to move towards a neighbourhood management model, and has excellent links with the neighbourhoods department of Haringey council. The delivery of approach directly contributes to National Strategies being driven by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to bend mainstream services. The project also makes a clear link between the policy framework for New Deal for Communities and Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. In particular this project continues to develop working models for neighbourhood and environmental management services. Key to the success of this is building community engagement in setting service priorities for delivering neighbourhood services. An empty derelict unit on the Tiverton Estate has been refurbished and will act as the NDC Neighbourhood Management Office. The office will act as a base for the NDC Wardens team, NDC Environmental Enforcement Officer, the Clean Team and the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer.

5.23. In Bristol, a neighbourhood management project is being run as a pilot with the local authority, using NRF money, and has been written into the council's corporate plan.

Consultants have been recently employed to conduct research for a neighbourhood management model. Neighbourhood management in the NDC area is mainly concerned with council services in the clean, safe, green area; roads, parks, waste, crime and housing management. In waste services, this would take forward the work already being done by the Project Pathfinder. The key elements are establishing service standards and having a person in post to co-ordinate neighbourhood services. The aim is to implement neighbourhood management in Year 6, using some NDC funding to see if it works. There is some concern however, that the NDC area may be too small to support neighbourhood management post-NDC. There is also a debate about whether it should be part of the council, or independent.

## Recycling

- 5.24. In Haringey, the NDC recycling project has been running a relatively short time; however it should be noted here because it will potentially have a long lasting and sustainable effect. The commitment and need for recycling is clearly identified in the Delivery Plan priority and meets the needs of a number of NDC themes. The level of recycling within the NDC is very low. By introducing a universal collection service, they aim to increase the recycling rate to 10% in 2003 - 04 and 20% by 2005. The rate should eventually rise to 50% when successive measures to increase recycling will include both the collection of green waste and the recycling of white goods and furniture. Recycling will contribute to the raising of waste management and cleansing standards in the NDC. A respondent said, "Taking responsibility for the production of waste creates a strong link with the process of sustainable waste management, particularly recycling and waste minimisation." As the level of recycling goes up, the amount, frequency and cost of refuse collected will go down. A recycling scheme, in the NDC area, will create at least 6 jobs in bulking and reprocessing activities as well as providing a range of work experience and training opportunities for local people.
- 5.25. Recycling in the NDC area will also contribute to the tackling poverty reduction strategy by creating links and working in partnership with organisations such as Create to provide free (or low cost) repaired appliances. The project will contribute to the environmental sustainability agenda, as local reprocessing of secondary materials economy develops. Finsbury Park Community Trust (FPCT) are exploring further options for building local sustainable waste management services. This project provides the development of supported routes to employment for some of the most disadvantaged groups in the community. FPCT already provides Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) opportunities that meet the needs of many of the client groups living in the NDC.

## Environmental Grants Schemes

- 5.26. In Bristol, Direct Action Fast Track (DAFT) is a fund of £400,000 designed to offer easy-access grants of up to £20,000. It was launched in summer 2003 in response to the need to by-pass NDC bureaucracy in realising small projects. Responding to resident criticisms of the NDC over the lack of visible projects and the complexity of the project information form, DAFT aims to start tackling this perception by delivering fast action that is responsive to local need. Applications are considered by a panel of residents according to the proposal's contribution to:
- quality of life in the neighbourhood
  - community safety
  - increasing use of open spaces and parks
  - improving the neighbourhood

- community involvement
  - regeneration of the area
- 5.27. DAFT is establishing itself as a community resource and has so far funded a wide range of liveability-related projects including: training and equipment for Project Pathfinder, tree work and park improvements, disabled access to Bethesda Church, equipment for a fish pond, motorcycle barriers, and the Lawrence Hill subway clean up.
- 5.28. In Middlesbrough, the Community Environment Chest (CEC) was set up in the first year of the programme and was administered on behalf of the partnership by the Groundwork Trust. Over the three years some £300,000 was spent on over 20 projects. Environmental schemes included: Archibald primary school's playground refurbishment; environmental arts and drama projects, including the Forest Education Initiative's 'yew wood wouldn't you' which explored the link between trees and people and involved story telling, puppetry and music to in 13 schools. However, the recent delivery plan noted that a number of small grants have been widely distributed across the area and have 'failed to make a visible impact'. Young people consulted felt that more resources should be allocated to making the area cleaner and more presentable, while other community groups felt that more emphasis should be placed on the visible regeneration of the Neighbourhood. The chest for small scale environmental improvements has now been integrated into the broader Community Chest Scheme.
- 5.29. The wide range of 'liveability' projects makes it hard to isolate a comprehensive selection of success factors. However three in particular stand out:
- often small-scale environmental interventions can be used to engage a wide range of agencies - a focus on liveability can help push forward a partnership agenda
  - highlighting highly visible issues and using these interventions to publicise the NDC's approach and activities
  - prioritising issues held by residents to be important - 'liveability' is not only important in its own right; it can provide a kind of 'Trojan horse' through which to engage the interest of local people
- 5.30. In this section we have noted that:
- there are now a wide range of individual projects addressing aspects of the liveability agenda across the case study NDCs
  - there is a particularly strong emphasis on areas such as neighbourhood clean-up initiatives; managing and developing open space; Neighbourhood wardens and 'designing-out' crime initiatives; Neighbourhood Management; and developing SLAs covering environmental service delivery
  - some areas of the liveability agenda are, as yet, generally under-developed. These include renewable energy issues; habitat and bio-diversity initiatives; educational projects; and linkages between environmental improvements and an emphasis on the social economy

## 6. Liveability and Neighbourhood Renewal: Some Emerging Lessons

6.1. Reviewing both the main components of the emerging liveability agenda and the range of environmental regeneration initiatives being developed in the NDC case study areas, it is clear that a more strategic focus on liveability offers important opportunities for promoting effective neighbourhood renewal. Such a focus allows partnerships to:

- directly address residents' concerns about the negative features of the local environment and also to emphasise the importance of citizens taking responsibility for their environment
- harness environmental improvements as 'visible' signs that the process of renewal is gaining momentum
- utilise interventions on liveability issues as a key aspect of the wider emphasis on community capacity building and involvement - the agenda allows for activities that address the low self-esteem and confidence of some communities in NDC areas, particularly in terms of the lack of belief in their ability to change the environment for the better
- promote a holistic approach to regeneration, in which the necessary linkages between the economic, social and environmental are fully established
- develop a more joined-up and co-ordinated approach to the management and delivery of environmental services, including the use of Neighbourhood Management and Service Level Agreements
- enable the development of strong partnership working (including service delivery) with a range of public and private agencies
- allow the alignment of NDC interventions with other local, sub-regional and regional strategies on sustainable development, environmental protection and regeneration

6.2. However, as the experiences of the six case study partnerships suggests, several barriers to the effective promotion of the liveability agenda can also be highlighted. These include:

- uncertainty over the precise meaning of the term - 'liveability' has not yet been adopted as part of the vocabulary of neighbourhood regeneration
- the lack of a thematic and strategic coherence for environmental regeneration - the area is more associated with piecemeal interventions
- the subsuming of particular environmental goals within housing-related masterplans - with the result that the subsequent slow progress in the latter has militated against 'quick wins' from the former
- the absence of precise targets, indicators, or outcomes covering environmental regeneration in original delivery plans
- the challenge of persuading residents to take responsibility for their environment - a challenge often made more difficult in areas where there is a larger transient population
- problems of developing co-ordinated approaches to neighbourhood services with local authorities, particularly in relation to areas such as neighbourhood wardens, where NDC approaches can run, confusingly, in parallel with the local authority version
- there is insufficient linkage between neighbourhood environmental strategies and related developments being pursued by Local Authorities, LSPs and RDAs

6.3. Building on this identification of opportunities and barriers, several lessons can be identified for NDC partnerships wishing to promote the liveability agenda:

- the importance of establishing a stronger thematic focus on liveability issues, with the development of an Environmental Strategy and a robust review of environmental indicators and outcomes likely to be central to this task
- the need to review how environmental issues are dealt with within the NDC Theme Groups, Sub-groups and Programme Teams and whether partnerships have a strong enough organisational capacity to deliver environmentally-based initiatives
- NDCs could also place far greater emphasis on developing a broader range of community-based indicators, in consultation with residents, but with reference to indicators that have been developed by other organisations including the New Economics Foundation and the Audit Commission
- in developing their strategies, partnerships should aim to develop and adequately resource an inclusive and integrated focus that encompasses: neighbourhood clean-up initiatives; designing-out crime approaches; improving environmental service delivery; recycling and renewable energy initiatives; open and green space development; habitat and bio-diversity; sustainable transport; and promoting liveability through educational interventions
- the strengthening of the complementarity between any NDC interventions and similar responses at other levels. These would include: Local Authority environmental services; LA 21 initiatives; and LSP Community Plans and RDA Strategies. Improved linkage could be achieved via NDC involvement in relevant LSP or RDA sub-groups or through developing a multi-agency sub-group within the NDC covering environmental issues. There is an opportunity for example, for NDCs and eligible local authorities to discuss bids to the new Liveability Fund
- the continuing importance of maximising opportunities for involving residents in the liveability agenda. These could include: involvement in establishing key environmental indicators and outcomes; involvement in reviewing and setting service levels; and involvement in delivering projects. For example, there is an opportunity to review how, through the use of ILM schemes or the creation of community businesses, local environmental improvements can be delivered
- on several key issues, including the use of open space, protection of the environment and wider debates on habitat and bio-diversity, NDC partnerships have a real opportunity to develop educational programmes aimed at local schools and linked to components of the citizenship national curriculum
- given that some of the urban parks, open spaces and play/leisure facilities used by NDC residents may be located just outside the boundaries of the NDC itself, it is important that partnerships are able to develop interventions that can adequately encompass these assets and thus help re-establish links with the wider locality in which the neighbourhood is located

6.4. While there has been a number of useful documents recently published by different government departments and other agencies on the liveability agenda (NRU, 2003b, 2003c) there is perhaps still scope for the NRU to consider how NDC partnerships can be best supported in promoting the liveability agenda more strongly than hitherto. This may involve: providing guidance on reviewing and developing precise environmental indicators and outcomes; highlighting the importance of developing successful environmental projects that have wider social and economic impacts; increasing the importance ascribed to environmental performance within the Performance Management Framework; and providing additional support for this area of activity from Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors

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