



Urban regeneration and sustainable development in Britain

The example of the Liverpool Ropewalks Partnership

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Despite the emergence of urban regeneration and sustainable development as parallel strands of British urban policy, there has been little co-ordination between them and an imbalance in action with greater emphasis given to achieving urban regeneration, especially economic regeneration, than to sustainability. It can be argued that all urban regeneration contributes to sustainable development through the recycling of derelict land and buildings, reducing demand for peripheral development and facilitating the development of more compact cities. But below this strategic level British urban policy has yet to fully address the requirement for more sustainable development. This paper addresses this question through an examination of policy in Liverpool and a case study of Duke Street/Bold Street (the Rope Walks Partnership): a mixed use area adjoining the city centre. It is important to place local action within the context of national policies and so the paper begins with some discussion of the extent to which the principles of sustainable development are included within national urban regeneration policies before going on to examine policy at the metropolitan scale in Liverpool and then at the more detailed level of the Rope Walks area. The conclusions suggest that it is economic regeneration and more precisely property redevelopment, that is the main driving force regenerating the area and that there is some way to go before the city or the case study area achieve an environmentally sustainable regeneration process. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved

Keywords: Liverpool, Sustainable development, Urban regeneration

Introduction

Regeneration has become a major element of British urban policy. Since the passing of the Inner Urban Areas Act in 1978 an array of initiatives has been introduced, culminating in 1993 with the introduction of the Single Regeneration Budget and the regeneration agency for England: English Partnerships. Since the early 1990s, environmentally sustainable development has also emerged as an important element of urban policy. In *Sustainable Development: the UK*

Strategy (1994) the Government recognised the importance of urban regeneration in contributing to a sustainable pattern of development that uses “the already developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive places in which to live and work” (Department of the Environment, 1994, p. 158). Despite the emergence of urban regeneration and sustainable development as parallel strands of urban policy, there has been little co-ordination between them and an imbalance in action, with greater emphasis given to achieving urban regeneration, especially economic regeneration, than to sustainability. It can be argued that all urban regeneration contributes to sustainable development through the recycling of derelict land and buildings, reducing

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demand for peripheral development and facilitating the development of more compact cities. But below this strategic level, British urban policy has yet to fully address the requirement for more sustainable development. In 1997, the incoming Labour government showed some recognition of this problem, appointing Lord Rogers to lead the "Urban Task Force" (UTF). With the recent publication of the UTF final report "Towards an Urban Renaissance" (Urban Task Force, 1999), it is timely to consider regeneration policies in a British city and their contribution to sustainable development.

This paper addresses this question through an examination of policy in Liverpool and a case study of Duke Street/Bold Street (the Rope Walks Partnership): a mixed use area adjoining the city centre. It is important to place local action within the context of national policies and so the paper begins with some discussion of the extent to which the principles of sustainable development are included within national urban regeneration policies before going on to examine policy at the metropolitan scale in Liverpool, and then at the more detailed level of the Rope Walks area. The conclusions suggest that it is economic regeneration and more precisely property redevelopment, that is the main driving force regenerating the area and that there is some way to go before the city, or the case study area, achieve an environmentally sustainable regeneration process.

National policy background

According to the UK Government's 1994 Strategy, sustainable development requires that decisions throughout society are taken with proper regard to their environmental impact in terms of minimising environmental pollution and conserving natural resources. However, there is an ambiguity about the Government's commitment to the environment that clouds the entire policy field. The definition of sustainable development provided by the Bruntland Commission is: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"; and that of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature is concerned with: "improving the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting systems". In contrast, the UK Government has chosen to state that: "sustainable development does not mean having less economic development: on the contrary, a healthy economy is better able to generate the resources to meet people's needs, and new investment and environmental improvement often go hand in hand" (Department of the Environment, 1994, p. 7). This attempt at a political compromise between economic development and environmental sustainability is at odds with the other definitions of sustainable development and creates an ambivalence and inherent weakness in sustainability policies that per-

meates through to the operational level. It is very much a "light green" approach.

It also implies that there are alternative views of what constitutes sustainable development. For us, however, it seems clear that one of the constants in policy making in this field is that: "cities must be made more attractive places in which to live and *their ecological footprint must be reduced* (authors' italics)" (Smith *et al.*, 1998, p. 213). Girardet takes a similar view, suggesting that a sustainable city is one in which citizens are able to meet their own needs without endangering the well-being of the natural world or the living conditions of other people, now or in the future (Girardet, 1999, p. 419). Thus while economic development may be a legitimate policy goal, to be sustainable it must be achieved within the context of reducing the ecological footprint. In the view of Smith, Whitelegg and Williams:

"achieving sustainability depends (in part) upon producing sustainable built environments from the cities and towns already in existence. In the short term, only limited changes can be made in a physical sense but more significant changes can be made in lifestyles. In the medium term, but starting immediately, the built environment can be changed in form to reflect and facilitate those lifestyles. The requirement is for steering rather than overnight radical change, whereby over a period of time gradual change to behaviour and action leads to substantial changes to the built environment". (Smith *et al.*, 1998, p. 213)

(A fuller theoretical discussion of what is required from planning and urban policies in order to achieve local sustainability can be found in a number of recent texts including Smith *et al.*, 1998, and also Selman, 1996.)

It is therefore pertinent to question the extent to which this approach is reflected in British urban regeneration policies and programmes. In recent years, the main policy drivers used by Government to fund urban regeneration were the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the agency of English Partnerships (EP). The early bidding guidance produced by Government for the SRB Challenge Fund paid scant regard to environmental issues, concentrating heavily on indicators of economic development, employment creation and social inclusion. Even highway building was included as a positive indicator on the basis of supporting economic activity. The priorities of Government can be seen in a research report produced for the DOE in 1995 and entitled "The impact of environmental improvements on urban regeneration". The research was limited to an examination of the extent to which environmental improvement projects (such as landscaping, removing physical development constraints and providing infrastructure) had stimulated economic regeneration but contained no consideration of environmental improvements for their own sake or for ecological reasons (PIEDA, 1995).

Another more recent evaluation of the SRB simi-

larly made little reference to the environment and in commenting on the impact of the SRB Challenge Fund noted only that achievements were being generated across a range of outputs in the labour market, enterprise development, housing, crime, safety, physical regeneration and community development. There was no mention of environmental benefits or impacts (Brennan *et al.*, 1998). The absence of such considerations in the research brief suggests that even at a strategic level, in relation to SRB, the DETR² did not consider environmental sustainability to be a high priority.

English Partnerships is the Government agency created in 1993 to facilitate land and property-based regeneration in areas of need throughout England.³ Its main objectives are to promote economic growth, employment opportunities and environmental improvements (English Partnerships, 1994). In relation to English Partnerships, it is difficult to find explicit reference to sustainable development at either the strategic or operational levels of policy making. The EP Annual Report 1998, for example, includes no explicit references to environmentally sustainable regeneration (English Partnerships, 1998). Although there is clearly a significant environmental aspect to many of the projects that are part-funded by EP (such as the re-use of brownfield sites, or bringing derelict buildings back into use), the broader approach which constitutes environmentally sustainable regeneration appears to be absent. This is in contrast to English Partnership's attitude to design issues which were seen as an important consideration from the beginning (possibly because the first chief executive had an architectural background). A key publication was "Time for Design": a glossy document aimed at informing property developers about EP's commitment to good urban design — laudible in itself but by no means central to sustainable development (English Partnerships, 1996).

A recent evaluation of English Partnerships, although mainly concerned with matters such as value for money, notes on the positive side that whilst EP is not excluded from developing greenfield sites, it has concentrated on brownfield land. However, the same report also comments in relation to the project appraisal and monitoring process:

"the research suggested that EP staff are sometimes unsure as to what factors to address when assessing the environmental impacts of projects"; "EP should examine more critically the environmental implications of all projects. To do this, EP staff require tools to help them evaluate project design from an environmental perspective, and must consult more

widely with other organisations. The environmental outputs of projects are often not understood by EP development managers and therefore will not always be maximised . . . EP staff should be encouraged to participate in Environmental Impact Assessments". (PA Consulting Group, 1999, pp. 5–9)

This is a clear indication that the organisation has not only failed to sufficiently consider environmental benefits and impacts but is inadequately equipped to do so. There is a strong implication that neither corporate policy nor organisational culture was at all concerned with environmental sustainability.

In the autumn of 1998, the DETR did publish a good practice guide on "sustainable regeneration", mainly aimed at SRB partnerships, noting that: "achieving sustainable development represents perhaps the most challenging of . . . cross-sectoral problems and it is the aim of this guide to assist in highlighting both strategic issues facing regeneration partnerships and some practical ways in which these issues may be addressed" (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998, p. 2). Continuing the approach adopted in the 1994 strategy, the guide offers a broad definition that gives at least as much importance to economic growth as to sustainability. Sustainable development is seen as: "Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone, effective environmental protection, prudent use of natural resources, and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment" (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998).

It is within the framework of this ambivalent commitment to environmental sustainability that a series of recommendations are made. The guidance is not detailed but seeks to promote environmentally and socially positive policies and actions under a series of headings including: business and the environment; local labour and purchasing policies; local savings and anti-poverty programmes; safe routes and accessibility; community based waste minimisation; energy; forestry and woodlands; parks and open spaces; educating for sustainability and town centres. The report also proposes a sustainability checklist, which is used later in this paper in our own evaluation. All SRB regeneration programmes and projects supported by EP are expected to take place within the context of a local strategy and to be complementary to local planning policies. Thus it is important to consider the nature of such policies as they affect the case study area. We examine these in Liverpool, a city with substantial experience of urban regeneration.

Local policy background

During the 1990s Liverpool City Council prepared its first Unitary Development Plan (UDP). According to the City Council: "The Plan is primarily about the future development and other use of land. It will set

²In 1997 the Department of the Environment (DOE) became the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

³In 1999 English Partnerships was absorbed into the new structure of Regional Development Agencies.

the context for the Council's land use policies on issues such as housing, employment, shopping and transport, and the need to protect and enhance our environment" (Liverpool City Council, 1996, p. 5). The UDP claims an overriding aim of urban regeneration, sub-divided into three strategic objectives: economic regeneration; environmental improvement; and the reduction of inequality. These objectives are addressed by eight general policies that provide the framework for the detailed policy development in the remainder of the plan. These general policies are concerned with the reverse of economic decline (significantly the first policy); protection and enhancement of open space; protection and enhancement of the built environment; promotion of a good quality living environment (housing); securing qualitative and quantitative provision of shopping facilities; providing a balanced provision of transport infrastructure; promoting the satisfactory provision and distribution of community services; protection and enhancement of Liverpool's environment.

The main thrust of the plan is to encourage investment, particularly within the inner city and central area whilst restricting peripheral growth and protecting the natural and built heritage of the city. Although environmental considerations figure strongly in the plan, they are not its driving force. The evidence for this is firstly that the Council interprets "sustainable development" as: "sustainable development does not mean having less economic development, what it requires is that decisions throughout society are taken with proper regard to their environmental impact" (Liverpool City Council, 1996, p. 35). This is very similar to the view espoused by the DETR above. Secondly the "Primary objective of the Plan is to stem the decline in economic activity which Liverpool has experienced over many years" (Liverpool City Council, 1996, p. 31). Regarding environmental improvement the apparent role of the UDP is "to attempt to reconcile conflicts between facilitating beneficial development and protecting and improving the local and wider environment" (p. 31). Resource conservation and reduction in energy use is not stated as a strategic objective in its own right nor is it given any priority or prominence in the "strategy" chapter.

Since the early 1990s the Department of the Environment has required local authorities to integrate environmental concerns into their development plans. In particular, the DOE advised that plans should be subjected to an environmental appraisal as part of the plan preparation process. A good practice guide was published in 1993 (Department of the Environment, 1993). At the heart of this guide was the concept of a "policy impact matrix" in which each policy was to be tested against environmental criteria. A five point scale of impact assessment was suggested: no relationship or insignificant impact; likely but unpredictable impact; significant beneficial impact; significant adverse impact; uncertainty of prediction or knowledge. It was emphasised that all poli-

cies should be considered against all possible impacts; there should be no blank spaces in the matrix. On the basis of the results of this analysis policy makers would be better informed about the environmental impact of the development plan. Liverpool City Council was one of the first authorities in the country to attempt to apply the technique to the production of a UDP (although a small number of structure and local plans had been appraised by other authorities). In so doing, they took the decision to simplify the technique by modifying and reducing the criteria from 15 to 11 and using only three point analysis: positive impact; uncertain impact or no comment, instead of the additional inclusion of statements of adverse impacts as envisaged by the DOE. The reasons for these changes are unclear but it may have been hoped that this simpler analysis would show the UDP in a more positive light and be more politically acceptable. Table 1 shows an analysis that identifies the proportion of the 116 detailed UDP policies benefiting each environmental criterion.

The usefulness of Table 1 depends upon the assumption that the City Council has been accurate in policy assessments. With this proviso, this analysis suggests that the plan, with its overriding aim of urban regeneration, is likely to be most effective in benefiting local environmental quality (especially the built environment) and will offer some protection to natural resources but is much weaker in making a local contribution towards global sustainability.

As part of its urban regeneration strategy, the City Council identified a number of the most deprived parts of the city as "Partnership Areas" for regeneration activity. Established in 1995 with the award of European Union Objective 1 structural funding, there are 12 Partnership areas covering 55% of the city population. The intention behind their creation was to

Table 1 The proportion of UDP policies benefiting each environmental criterion

	Proportion of policies
1. Transport trips	7%
2. Transport mode	13%
3. Energy use and air quality	5%
4. Trees and vegetation	21%
5. Wildlife	22%
6. Water quality	10%
7. Minerals conservation	22%
8. Landscape, open space and public access	24%
9. Cultural heritage	35%
10. Built environment quality and character	39%
11. Quality of life	84%

The environmental criteria used by Liverpool City Council differ slightly from those used in the DOE guidance note. Criterion 11 "Quality of life" is described as the "combined impact of all the above factors. Impact on sense of safety and security. Equal opportunities — access to goods, services and facilities". This would therefore appear to involve an element of double counting. Source: Authors' analysis based on information from the Liverpool UDP.

assist the integration of excluded communities into the mainstream economy and society via “pathways” of EU-assisted initiatives. Claimed by the City Council to be an innovative approach “‘pathways’ puts emphasis on the local communities to develop their own approaches and action plans to solve local problems. This allows people to take advantage of opportunities in mainstream education, training and employment and complements EU-funded regeneration in other areas including economic development and environmental and infrastructure improvement” (Liverpool City Council, 1997). These Partnerships are semi-autonomous agencies only partially under the control of the City Council. The Rope Walks case study area is included within one such Local partnership: Duke Street/Cornwallis.

From the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Summit) emerged Agenda 21, the plan for sustainable development for the 21st century. Much of the plan requires action at the local level and all local governments are therefore expected to produce a Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Liverpool City Council is in the process of setting up an LA21. Within the LA21 process, Liverpool City Council claims to be working towards sustainable policies. In order to make a qualitative assessment of sustainable development it is intended that in future Council policies will be assessed against a number of indicators of sustainability. These are expressed as a series of statements:

- resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised by closing cycles;
- pollution is limited to levels which natural systems can cope with without damage;
- the diversity of nature is valued and protected;
- everyone has the opportunity to undertake satisfying work in a diverse economy. The value of unpaid work is recognised whilst payments for work are fair and fairly distributed;
- people’s good health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments and health services which emphasise prevention of illness as well as proper care for the sick;
- access to facilities, services, goods and other people is not achieved at the expense of the environment or limited to those with cars;
- everyone has access to skills and knowledge. (Liverpool City Council, 1997b, pp. 4–5)

The Duke Street/Bold Street area

As with many older industrial cities, parts of Liverpool have been areas of concern to urban policy makers for decades. Duke Street/Bold Street is one such area. Adjoining the city centre and dockland, it grew as a relatively compact, tightly grained and densely developed area with some fine old warehouses and

housing of Georgian origin. Until the mid-18th century, the area was largely agricultural. Hanover Street was built first, followed by Duke Street and Bold Street. To meet the needs of the shipping industry, roperies or rope walks were developed, particularly parallel to Bold Street. Fine mansions and town houses were built for the merchant classes; large gardens faced on to Wolstenholme Square and Parr Street. The area between Duke Street and Bold Street grew quickly and commercial pressures intensified the use of land and scale of development. The gardens and some housing were lost to workshops and warehouse developments. By the middle of that century, Bold Street had developed into a thriving shopping street. There were reading rooms, libraries and a concert hall. In contrast, Duke Street had degenerated into a poor and overcrowded street, the merchants’ houses acquired other uses and the area became associated with workshops and warehousing, reflecting its proximity to the port.

Over the last thirty years, the decline of the port and the changing structure of industry has brought decay and dereliction to the area. Being on the fringes of the city centre and not forming part of the dock estates, the area was largely excluded from the city centre redevelopment process of the post-war years and the dockland regeneration of more recent times. However, the historic street pattern has largely been maintained and despite the neglect, there are some fine buildings of architectural and historic merit. This was recognised in 1988 when the City Council designated the Duke Street/Bold Street Conservation Area, to which the UDP has recently proposed further extensions. The present character of the area is of a mixed use zone of transition adjoining the city centre. It is estimated that the population of the Duke Street/Cornwallis Partnership, an area a little larger than the case-study Ropewalks Partnership itself, numbered only 1,265 people in 1991. Approximately 15% of the population are from ethnic minorities, divided fairly evenly between black and Chinese groups. In spite of the fact that the area contained 2,830 jobs in 1993, the 1991 census records the unemployment rate amongst the local population at 40% (Liverpool City Council, 1993a).

The main east–west axis is Duke Street, which is open to two-way traffic. Bold Street is one way west bound for half its length and pedestrianised at the western end. It is difficult for vehicular traffic to cross the area in the north–south direction with most of the few narrow streets being closed, or open in a single direction. On-street parking and in particular, parking on derelict sites is a feature of the area. During the day-time, the major pedestrian flows are along Bold Street and Hanover Street. In other parts of the area, the lack of pedestrian-attracting facilities, the poor environment and the fear of crime deters pedestrian traffic. The area is perceived as having a high crime level, especially in relation to car crimes and burglaries (Thompson & Partners, 1997). There are no cycle

paths or cycle parking facilities to encourage cycling to or through the area. There are about 680 properties in the area, a large proportion of which are in the hands of a small number of private owners. In 1997 some 26% of these properties were vacant and 14% derelict or semi-derelict (Liverpool City Council and English Partnerships, 1997).

Bold Street had experienced a rapid decline in retail and other activity between 1960 and 1990 with the number of ground floor vacant premises rising from 2 to 21. However, by 1995 the area was showing some signs of recovery with ground floor vacancies falling to only 14 (Fowles, 1997, p. 71). During the period 1990–95 “There has been a boom in the development of new bars, typified by the conversion of vacant warehouses on the side-streets off Bold Street” (Fowles, 1997, p. 77). Duke Street presents a contrasting picture, showing no let up between 1960 and 1995 in the decline of manufacturing, light industry and warehousing (the predominant land uses) and a continuing increase in the incidence of vacancy (Fowles, 1997, p. 88).

Over the last ten years, a number of initiatives have been proposed for the regeneration of the area. In the late 1980s the City Council sold many of its properties in the area to Charterhouse Estates Ltd (CEL). In partnership with the City Council, CEL intended to transform the area into a “creative industries quarter”, a place where people associated with such industries could live and work. In this radical mixed-use proposal, that pre-dated even the URBED report on “Vital and Viable Town Centres” (URBED, 1994), the development of housing, specialist retailing, business uses and studio space would be facilitated through bringing back into use empty and redundant buildings and through the protection and enhancement of the many listed buildings in the area. It was hoped that such a regeneration strategy would attract creative forces in media, music, design and fashion to form the backbone of an economic revival of the area (Morris, 1992, p. 8). The City Council transferred the freeholds of over 300 properties to CEL who were to manage the estate. Unfortunately the property recession of the early 1990s claimed Charterhouse as a victim; the firm went into receivership and the regeneration project was brought to a temporary halt. The City Council nevertheless continued to promote the area as a “creative quarter” and maintained a separate profile of the area in the City Centre Plan (Liverpool City Council, 1993). “To some extent the more imaginative vision of the early 1990s was diluted in the promotion of a more general mixed use area, including more residential development than was perhaps originally envisaged” (Fowles, 1997, p. 62).

In 1994, Liverpool City Council and English Partnerships commissioned the Duke Street/Bold Street Regeneration Strategy, published in October that year. This strategy suggested that the area provided the “missing link” between the city centre and the sur-

rounding districts and that the key to unlocking the area’s full potential is its historic and architectural quality and distinctive character. It was proposed that the regeneration of the area should be based on a partnership between the community, the public sector and private investors, and that the buildings, streets and spaces that make up the fabric of the area would require careful stewardship.

English Partnerships and Liverpool City Council subsequently commissioned Thompson & Partners (a London-based firm of architects) to facilitate a participatory planning initiative for the area. In March 1997, a Planning Weekend was held with the aim of providing a basis for an action plan and implementation strategy. A steering group formed from local organisations and agencies formulated the key issues which provided the agenda for the weekend workshops. Two thousand leaflets were distributed and two hundred and fifty people participated in the event. “The prevailing view at the Weekend was that the area was beginning to regenerate itself without the benefit of a Masterplan or major public funding, albeit at a pace too slow to meet the expectations of many stakeholders” (Thompson & Partners, 1997). For example, Bold Street had been repaved and provided with new street furniture by the City Council in 1994 and the redevelopment of Concert Square had been successfully promoted by the local development and design firm Urban Splash in 1995. The results of the Weekend were subsequently developed into a formal strategy for the City Council and English Partnerships by consultants led by the Building Design Partnership in the summer of 1997. This strategy, known as the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) was agreed by the Duke Street/Cornwallis Partnership, English Partnerships, Liverpool City Council, the Government Office for Merseyside and other interested parties.

In order to co-ordinate the complexity of such a large spending programme a new regeneration organisation was formed in 1997 and became known as the “Rope Walks Partnership”, so named because of the area’s historic associations with rope making and chandlery. This organisation is a partnership between the agents of regeneration and the local community. The accountable body is Liverpool City Council, which has ultimate responsibility for the partnership’s management and resources. The major decisions are made through a Partnership Board comprising 17 members from the City Council, English Partnerships, the voluntary sector, the Granby–Toxteth Pathways partnership (whose area adjoins the Rope Walks) and the Duke Street/Cornwallis Pathways Partnerships (Rope Walks is entirely within this area) and the local Chinese community. Responsible to the Partnership Board is an Executive Team of seven officers working from offices in the heart of the area.

The IAP is mainly based on ideas and strategies first established by CEL in the late 1980s supplemented by ideas from the Planning Weekend held in March 1997. The regeneration strategy tries to

build on the range of existing businesses in the area with an emphasis on creative industries and the night-time economy. The strategy has also been informed by other long established proposals and the opportunities provided by character of the building stock. The programme's mission is to ensure that the benefits of regeneration accrue locally. The IAP concentrates on three main issues: Business Support and Training; the Public Realm; Priority Investment Areas (Development Projects). The aim of the Business Support and Training is to secure access to new employment opportunities for local residents. Specific proposals include the enlargement of Chinatown; the use of construction projects as employment generators; encouragement for the use of new technologies to enhance business competitiveness and a focus on "creative industries". In the Public Realm the Partnership hopes to tackle the present environmental degradation and poor visual appearance that they perceive as a barrier to private investment. Resources have been allocated for expenditure on a variety of environmental improvements to the area's streetscape, existing and proposed squares, building refurbishment and security measures in order to create an attractive, safe and "sustainable" environment in which people will choose to live and work. The physical regeneration of the built environment is targeted in a number of projects where it is intended to create a series of vital and viable mixed use foci of activity. The location of these projects is shown in Fig. 1.

Testing the sustainability of the Rope Walks Partnership Integrated Action Plan

This discussion is based upon information gathered from interviews with key actors in the area's regeneration process and the authors' own analysis. It uses the framework provided by the Government's Sustainable Regeneration: Good Practice Guide (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1998) to test the Rope Walks strategy against a series of sustainability indicators. The findings are set out in Table 2 and are discussed below.

Community participation

The events leading to the production of the Integrated Action Plan were a mixture of top-down and bottom-up processes. The initial interest in the area came from the City Council and from Charterhouse, a private developer. With the collapse of that firm, English Partnerships together with Frenson and Cruden, both property developers, became major players shaping the future of the area. The City Council carried out some streetworks and some redevelopment took place in the Concert Square area, with public subsidy. There is little evidence of grass roots community action here for there is only a small, and probably fairly transient, local population. Although the City Council was proactive in stimulating community involvement in each

of its Pathways Partnerships including the Duke Street/Cornwallis Partnership, most of the local population live in the Cornwallis area to the south of the Rope Walks. More recently, after the major strategic decisions had been taken, the local community has been invited to become involved, through the Planning Weekend and through representation on the Partnership Board. This is commendable but still leaves local people with extremely limited power over the regeneration process. It has been argued elsewhere that "community groups have power in partnerships only at the operational level . . . recent reviews of the Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund schemes suggest that in Round 1 at least, community and voluntary groups were rarely involved at a strategic level during the bidding phase and were only incorporated into the scheme when participation became necessary for implementation" (Foley et al., 1997) (quoted in Duffy and Hutchinson, 1997, p. 352). It would seem that there is little in the Rope Walks community experience that would challenge this view, see Fig. 2.

Economy and work

The notion of linking local production with local consumption is a concept that is more appropriately considered at a sub-regional or regional scale rather than at the scale of a few street blocks. Undoubtedly the regeneration process will create local construction jobs for a period of time. However, some of the sectors where growth is expected (leisure, tourism and retailing) are characterised by low skilled, low paid jobs which will do little to increase the spending power of the local community, even though such activity may yield substantial profits to property owners, developers and entrepreneurs. Except in the field of urban design and townscape awareness, there is no evidence that the IAP or the Rope Walks Partnership will improve the environmental awareness of local businesses.

Transport

At the strategic level, it can be argued that the very concept of urban regeneration creates a more compact city and therefore reduces the demand for transport, but at the local level the contribution of the IAP to sustainable transport policy is weak. Reducing car usage and increasing the attractiveness of public transport, cycling and walking are national policies that are repeated within the Liverpool UDP and LA21 so it would be reasonable to expect positive moves towards these objectives within the IAP. However, there are no detailed proposals for improvements to public transport or the collection and delivery of freight. It might be suggested that public transport provision is beyond the scope of the Rope Walks Partnership but it is already acknowledged that much of the strategy is to be implemented through negotiation and persuasion and it is difficult to see that the promotion of improvements in public transport are differ-

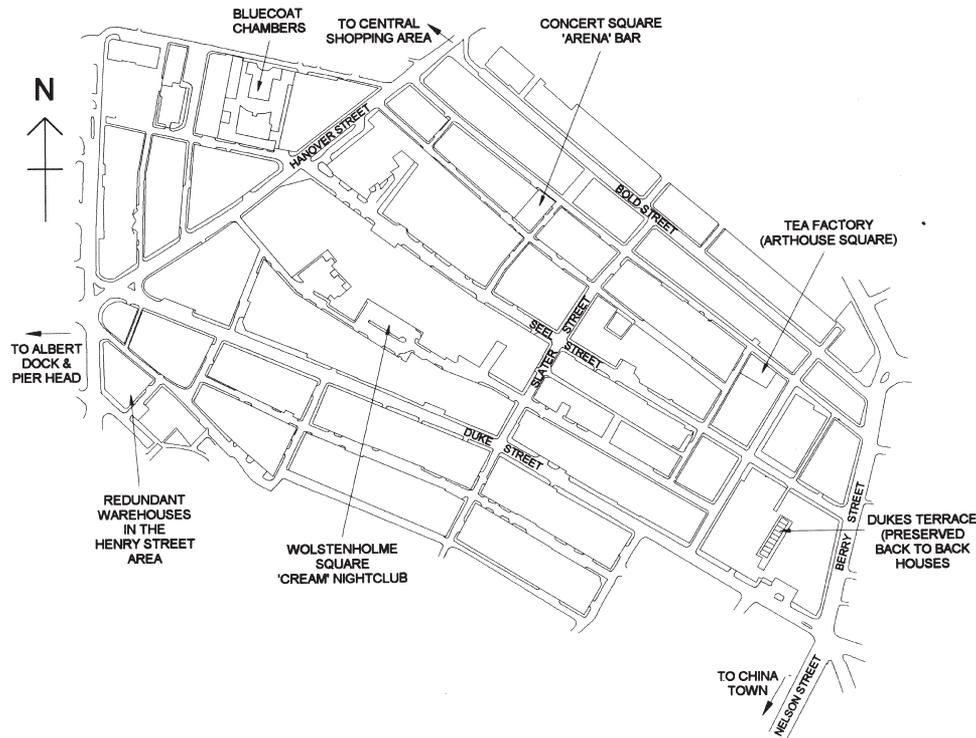


Figure 1 The Duke Street/Bold Street area, with current regeneration projects

Concert Square—one of the original catalytic developments in the area in the early 1990s.

Arthouse Square (The Tea Factory), where through the conversion of redundant factory premises and other buildings it is hoped to establish a new arts centre, restaurants and residential uses.

Wolstenholme Square, based around the successful “Cream” nightclub, it is hoped to create a public space in use 24 hours a day.

The Bluecoat Triangle contains the historic Bluecoat Chambers but adjoining derelict land provides an opportunity to open up a new avenue between the Mersey and the city centre.

Chinatown, where the IAP hopes to build on the strengths of the local economy to stimulate further investment and expand Chinatown as a community and tourist destination.

Dukes Terrace provides an opportunity to refurbish a small listed group of 18th century merchants’ houses and back-to-back dwellings.

Henry Street is an area of historic, largely redundant warehouses which are earmarked for conversion to residential and other uses. To the west of Hanover Street is the site of the proposed National Discovery Park: a themed tourist attraction; although at the time of writing this project seems unlikely to proceed

ent from any other kind of negotiation. The promotion of public transport is important in this area because it is not particularly well served by buses at present, especially around the Duke Street/Slater Street core; and because the generation of car borne traffic and questions of personal safety at night caused by these property development proposals justify a response in improvements to public transport provision. Several of the regeneration proposals will be heavy traffic generators if they are successful. The National Discovery Park, proposals for creative industries and the exploitation of tourist and leisure potentials will all generate traffic, yet there has been little attempt to encourage visitors away from the motor car towards other modes of transport.

The IAP strategy includes a number of measures that should improve conditions for pedestrians. A number of roads will have pedestrian priority and further streets will be fully pedestrianised. Beyond

this, there will be few changes to the pattern of motor vehicle circulation through the area. There is an ambiguity in the proposals for Duke Street: on the one hand it is proposed as a main gateway to the area and main transport corridor, yet there are also calls for speed control measures to prevent its use as a through route. At the same time on-street parking is apparently to be retained on Duke Street and some other through routes. At present there are no cycle routes through the area nor any secure cycle parking facilities but the Sustrans Millennium Cycle Route, proposed in 1985, should pass along Duke Street. Given the confused traffic proposals for this street it is possible that conflicts could arise between the safety of cyclists and provision for motor traffic and parking.

Pollution

The main planned reductions in pollution in the area will be in the removal of dereliction and contaminated

Table 2 The sustainability of the Rope Walks Partnership Integrated Action Plan

Sustainability Indicator	Positive impact (+)	Neutral/mixed impact (*)	Negative impact (-)
1. Community participation			
(a) encourage local action and decision making	+		
(b) involve the community in developing the proposal	+		
(c) take into account under-represented groups		*	
2. Economy and Work			
(a) link local production with local consumption		*	
(b) increase employment	+		
(c) improve environmental awareness of local businesses		*	
3. Transport			
(a) encourage walking and cycling		*	
(b) encourage use of public transport			-
(c) discourage use of cars or lorries			-
4. Pollution			
(a) reduce local pollution (noise, air, water, land)		*	
5. Energy			
(a) maximise energy efficiency		*	
(b) generate energy from renewable resources or waste		*	
6. Waste and Resources			
(a) reduce waste		*	
(b) encourage reuse and/or repair		*	
(c) encourage recycling or recycled products		*	
7. Buildings and Land Use			
(a) provide local amenities		*	
(b) improve access for disabled		*	
(c) reuse/conservate buildings	+		
8. Wildlife and Open Spaces			
(a) encourage use of open space for community benefit		*	
(b) encourage natural plant and animal life			-

Source: authors' analysis.

land through the property redevelopment process. Without the implementation of counteracting measures an increase in noise pollution is the likely outcome of more traffic generation and a growth in the night-time leisure economy. Growing traffic levels will also add to air pollution. This pollution could be mediated through a policy of greening the area. Although there are some proposals for tree planting these seem to be for townscape effect, with little consideration of their contribution towards the removal of pollutants from the atmosphere and the prevention of global warming.

Energy; waste and resources

There are no local policies to maximise energy efficiency or to generate energy from renewable resources. The City Council does have policies to support improvements in the insulation and energy efficiency of housing. But the IAP could, through advocacy, promote more adventurous energy saving designs. Indeed it has been suggested that past Government subsidies, with their obsessive emphasis on value for money, had a negative effect on energy efficient design. There is little in the strategy to suggest that energy efficient buildings will be encouraged in the area and there is no mention of renewable energy being used. There is little in the IAP to suggest any concern with waste and resource use, other than the re-use of buildings discussed below.

Buildings and land use

The strategy emphasises the protection of the built heritage, historic townscapes and cultural links and makes a major contribution to recycling through its proposals for building refurbishment and the re-use of derelict sites. This will have an influence on reducing the amount of new land used for housing and other uses elsewhere and a positive effect on the re-use of building materials. However, action so far has put only limited emphasis on the re-use of the upper floors of buildings, which are all too often left in a derelict and neglected state whilst the ground floor is put to profitable use. The Rope Walks area was historically a high density mixed-use area with little open space. Today, much of the area is derelict or underused and the resident population and amount of economic activity is low although rising. Even within the wider area of the Duke Street/Cornwallis Partnership the 1991 population was 35% less than it had been in 1981. If the current strategy is to reverse this decline and make a serious contribution to the compact city, the number of dwellings provided will have to be substantial.

Wildlife and open spaces

The Public Realm section of the IAP refers to "townscape and landscaping schemes as well as the creation of walkways and security measures". Whilst these are perfectly reasonable aims the strategy appears to pay



Figure 2 The Ropewalks Partnership offices in refurbished premises on Slater Street. Note the derelict building beyond

little attention to natural issues such as habitats for vegetation and wildlife, water balance and “greening” of the area. It seems entirely possible that the development and public realm proposals will increase hard surfaces in the area rather than facilitate water run off and that the redevelopment of derelict land will remove some existing (albeit unsightly and unprofitable) wildlife habitats.

Conclusions

From the national to the local level there is an ambivalent attitude to sustainable development and a constant attempt to compromise and reinterpret the concept to support the aim of economic development. Even those parts of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and English Partnerships responsible for urban regeneration policy have only a limited commitment to sustainable development. The first priority of the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan is clearly to tackle the city’s economic problems. Although the UDP offers some protection to local environmental quality, townscape, landscape and built heritage, it is much weaker in making a contribution towards global sustainability. Whilst Liverpool’s LA21 espouses sustainable prin-

ciples there is little evidence of them being implemented in the regeneration of the Rope Walks area.

Within the city, the urban regeneration process has been devolved to a series of agencies. Regeneration spending has become the responsibility of a multitude of agencies ranging from private developers and privatised water companies; Railtrack, rail and bus operators; through government agencies and voluntary sector housing associations to the short-life quasi-public partnerships, including the Rope Walks Partnership. Each agency has its own agenda; its own management system; its own financial imperatives and its own priorities. The key to implementing the environmental agenda in this situation is the ability to negotiate, to search for synergies and to build coalitions and partnerships for action. Unfortunately, just as partners in coalition governments have to forfeit some of their political agenda, so, in the regeneration process, agencies have little choice but to make compromises that weaken their ability to promote sustainability.

The Rope Walks Partnership represents one of the agencies through which regeneration policies are being implemented. Its strengths with regard to sustainable development lie in the reclamation and reuse of derelict land and buildings and the conservation and preservation of buildings of architectural and historic interest. These are politically robust policies that have become deeply embedded in the mainstream of British urban policy over the last thirty years. Locally, the experience of the Merseyside Development Corporation, City Challenge, EP and other agencies have provided the area with a wealth of knowledge and experience of the reclamation process. Liverpool City Council has a long tradition of strong policies in the fields of building conservation and design control. EP showed a commitment to good urban design through its early publication “Time for Design” and one of the most interesting features of the CEL proposals was their formal use of urban design analysis to inform their proposals for the area. So there was a commitment to good urban design from the history of the area and the actors working in the area that made it likely that aesthetic considerations would be important.

Although there was no strong history of community involvement or action in the area, Government concern to promote stakeholder involvement, for whatever reasons, and the city council’s commitment to partnership through its Pathways initiatives were enough to secure a modest commitment to public participation. Nevertheless, this remains a top-down state and developer led rather than a community-led programme.

Other aspects of environmental sustainability (transport, pollution, energy, waste reduction, recycling, and greening) do not have the same level of local historical development or commitment. The lack of commitment to sustainable transport can be traced

back to the Thatcher era and national policies of deregulation and privatisation and to the culture of the City Council that continued to propose the building of an inner ring road as late as 1998, long after a fundamental change in national government attitude to such schemes.

In a city that is eligible for EU Objective One status, where GDP per capita is less than 75% of the EU average, where the main political concerns are with poverty, unemployment and other aspects of social exclusion, it is not surprising that there is little political leadership for environmental sustainability. For sustainable development to be placed firmly on the regeneration agenda, it seems that there either needs to be a fundamental change in the culture and priorities of the private developers, government agencies and short-life regeneration organisations concerned, or the process has to be put back into the hands of democratically elected local planning authorities who can be expected to take a broad and longer term strategic view of their areas.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Philip Langslow, Carole Parker, Peter Legg and Charles Willis, postgraduate students at Liverpool John Moores University, for their contribution to the section on national policy.

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