INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

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Case Study: The Litmus Programme

Outline
This paper looks at a programme developed by the London Borough of Southwark that seeks to monitor sustainability in urban estates: LITMUS – local indicators to monitor urban sustainability.

This paper discusses the use of local indicators beginning with the LITMUS programme developed for the London Borough of Southwark (LBS). It draws on the work of The New Economic Foundation (NEF). The authors acknowledge the assistance of Sanjiv Lingayah and Florian Sommer, both of NEF, and Julie Tallantire of LBS. in drawing up this Case Study.

Introduction
A key feature of UK regeneration projects focused on areas of multiple deprivation is the engagement of the local community in identifying the problems and helping manage the solutions with the aim of creating a more sustainable improvement in their living conditions. It is an approach that brings together the concepts of strategic partnerships and Local Agenda 21. Measuring the effectiveness of the approach has been difficult, especially in the most deprived areas with large numbers of residents from ethnic minority groups.

Background
Consulting the members of the public on development proposals is not a new phenomenon of the UK's town planning system. However methods of public consultation are moving towards a more participatory approach, adopting the models based around the innovative experimental public workshops of the '60's and '70's and bringing them into more mainstream planning. The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the main source of regeneration funding in the UK, requires public participation in the partnership programmes bidding for assistance. The Local Government Act of 2000 requires local authorities to produce Community Strategies, the key feature of which is the encouragement of active participation by the general public in shaping their environment by means of more overt partnerships with local government.

Sustainability
Sustainable development is concerned with both environmental and human welfare - the two need to be reconciled and integrated rather than simply traded off one against the other and present behaviour needs to be constrained for the sake of future generations. Many alternative definitions of sustainable development exist and there is not a ready consensus. Two of the best known are:

- "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).
- "Improving the quality of life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (Caring for the Earth, 1991).

Two further definitions began to show how these very general principles could be applied to settlements. The definition adopted by the International Centre for Local Environmental

Initiatives (ICLEI), can be paraphrased as 'meeting the social, environmental and economic needs of all residents while maintaining the social, environmental and economic systems on which those depend'.[i] The Albert Declaration, adopted at the first European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns put forward 'sustainable settlement as a self-regulating interconnected social, economic, and environmental system which meets its needs and manages its impacts internally, or by fair reciprocal arrangements, and not by dumping its problems on other places'.[1] Together, these definitions draw out further key concepts: 'equity between people; participation; and - especially from the Aalborg definition - the notion of the settlement as a dynamic self-maintaining system'.

The number of definitions is something of a problem as it obscures the understanding of the principles although the uncertainty is probably a fair indication of the lack of consensus over the action needed. The LITMUS project has adopted a simple and unambiguous definition:

> *Sustainable development can be defined as progress that provides 'for a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come - taking care of important issues like crime, unemployment and the environment'.[ii]*

Indicators
Indicators are used to measure, simplify and communicate important information such as crime and unemployment. They can help in different ways. They show where we are and help to define the direction in which we should be heading. They are particularly helpful in relatively unknown territory like sustainable development or when dealing with mixed communities in difficult circumstances. Some will help to galvanise political commitment; some are useful in monitoring change while others might stimulate public participation.

Indicators of sustainable development are used internationally, and NEF has developed a step-by-step guide to local indicators.[iii] Not all indicators involve the community. Community based indicators have been developed to enable local people to play a central role in identifying and measuring the things that they care about. The intention is to build on their expertise and encourage their participation.

The Litmus Programme
LITMUS was developed in the London Borough of Southwark and set up and managed by Southwark Council. It was a two-year action research project part funded by the European Commission 'LIFE' programme aimed at finding out more about the use and role of community indicators. In particular LITMUS sought to test the following hypotheses:

Community sustainability indicators are adaptable tools that can bring about increased environmental awareness and changes in behaviour in urban populations including those where there are high levels of unemployment and social exclusion. As a result people can take a more active role in the management of their neighbourhoods, which, in turn, can help to reduce social exclusion.[iv]

and

Community sustainability indicators can be used to monitor the effectiveness of urban regeneration programmes and provide clear direction for improvements to these programmes.
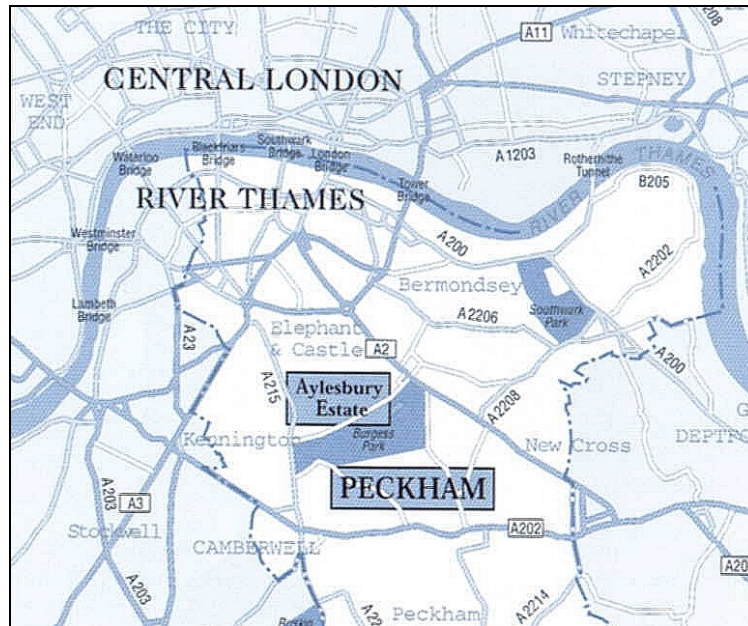
Southwark: Aylesbury Estate Peckham

The London Borough of Southwark is an inner London Borough with extremely affluent areas as well as very deprived neighbourhoods. The Borough incorporates Thames-side tourist areas such as the 'Millennium Mile' that covers a string of key visitor attractions for London including the London Eye, Design Museum, Tate Modern, the Globe and Vinopolis. Adjacent to them are Peckham and Aylesbury, which are targeted regeneration areas. Southwark abuts London Docklands Surrey Quays and Butlers Wharf, areas that were regenerated in the 80s and 90s.

Both regeneration areas of Southwark are densely populated, deprived urban areas with major social and economic problems. One in four households are reported to have an income of under £100 per week and single parents head almost 50% of families. The unemployment rate is about 11%, significantly higher than the British average of 5.9%. Each area is home to about 10,000 residents and 66% of the households are from black or other ethnic minority groups. Both areas contain a large amount of public housing, including high-rise developments.

In response to the socio-economic and physical problems of the area, Southwark Council has sought funding for regeneration programmes. The Peckham Partnership regeneration programme has to a large extent been completed with the help of SRB funding of £250 million over seven years. The Aylesbury Plus programme has been recently funded by the Government's New Deal for Communities.

The LITMUS Approach

While local sustainability indicators have frequently been developed in the context of the Local Agenda 21, the innovative feature of the LITMUS project is in the development of indicators through a community-led process. One key aim of the LITMUS project was to test how far indicators of sustainability developed and used by local people are a useful tool in the context of the regeneration and management of urban neighbourhoods. Such a community-led strategy is particularly appropriate in urban regeneration areas, where past experience has shown that local needs have not often been taken sufficiently into account during the planning and implementation processes.

Essentially used as a tool for structuring a scoping exercise to assess the needs of an area, the indicators are used to create tools that help modify action to make communities more sustainable. The community contributes to a series of data gathering events from which are drawn common threads or 'indicators' which may be incorporated in the future planning of an area via the Local Plan or directly into a development initiative such as the SRB partnership programme.

The LITMUS strategy includes five interlinked phases:

- Raising awareness in the community about LITMUS and sustainability issues
- Involving local people and local groups in the project; identifying priority issues for the community regarding sustainability; developing ownership over the process
- Developing indicators by addressing the priority issues identified in the first two phases; supporting local people in developing indicators
- Monitoring indicators; involving local groups in data collection
- Taking action as a response to identified trends in monitoring.

Raising Awareness

Before attempting to raise awareness of the project steps were taken to decide who needed to know. The community embraces a very diverse range of people of different racial, social and economic backgrounds all with something to contribute albeit with different skills and interests. Local people are seen as local experts. The benefits of getting them involved include:

- Ensuring *local concerns* are heard
- Enhancing *local capacity* and skills by getting people to work together
- Tapping into *local expertise* and skills
- Providing *better quality data* because people know what to count
- Developing *practical solutions* by building on local knowledge.

Narrowing Down Stakeholders

It may be necessary to prioritise the involvement of certain sections of the community such as young people, single mothers and so on. Alternatively a sample section of the community might be chosen to test the approach. The boundary of the exercise can extend beyond the estate to include local businesses, the health and education authorities. The choice of stakeholder groups is important in terms of ensuring future action.

- Who or what groups are most important?

- Does involvement need to be statistically representative? Is it a case of broad involvement for the many or deep involvement for the few?
- Are there people and groups who always get involved – should efforts be made to attract new stakeholders?
- Who are the people most likely to influence the indicator project in terms of gathering information or taking action – should they be involved?
- Who you want involved affects how you reach them. Different groups will need to be reached in different ways.

Involving People and Identifying Issues

Identifying and agreeing on issues of local concern utilises a number of strategies most of which are well known – informing, asking, working together and supporting. It is critical in any exercise of this sort to be honest about the degree to which local intervention can influence the programme. The project engaged four full-time staff, seconded from Southwark Council, who spent about ten months involving local people and organisations in the two target areas of Peckham and Aylesbury. They carried out 27 broadly 'public involvement' activities ranging from provision of information to local people to training and delegation of authority for parts of the project to individuals and local organisations. These 27 activities and techniques established baseline information on the extent of the public participation activities that were then assessed.

More than 100 different languages are spoken in the Borough and working with so many different ethnic groups might have been considered a problem. The experience was that language was not a problem; most people spoke English or were used to working with community leaders or their children if translation was needed.

Identifying Indicators

LITMUS consulted around 1800 local residents and 55 organisations regarding quality of life, resulting in the identification of eleven priority areas:

1. Community safety and antisocial behaviour
2. Clean environment
3. Future generations and young people
4. Building and streets
5. Work and economy
6. Transport
7. Neighbourhood and community empowerment
8. Equality/fair and just community
9. Health
10. Open spaces, gardens and wildlife
11. Amenities, culture and leisure.

Each priority area contained sub-issues. The list below illustrates those relating to community safety and antisocial behaviour.

1. Crime and fear of crime
2. Security guards
3. Active policing/enforcement

4. Drug dealers/users
5. Personal harassment
6. Entryphone systems
7. CCTV
8. Improved lighting and maintenance
9. Noise
10. Graffiti
11. Dog fouling
12. Littering

Developing Indicators

From the list of concerns one or two indicators were sought for each issue. The project used a set of criteria with the acronym AIMS.

Criteria	Example
Action focused	Indicators inform action. If you can't imagine what to do with the indicator once you have the information on it, then it is not action focused.
Important	It is only worth measuring what people care about and is relevant to them. What emerges as important depends on who is involved.
Measurable	The data for an indicator needs to be collectable. Surveys are costly but important ways of gathering information. Measurability will impact on cost effectiveness of the indicator.
Simple	Everything should be as simple as possible but not simpler. In Santiago, Chile, a widely used pollution indicator is the number of days that the peaks of the Andes are obscured by fog.

Workshops were organised in each target area. At the workshops people voted for the most important quality of life issues and these were grouped under different headings:

- Community empowerment
- Open space and clean environment
- Transport
- Building and streets
- Health
- Waste recycling
- Burgess Park (local open space).

Each issue had a task team assigned to it. The teams met several times after the workshops and started to develop indicators for measuring changes in the quality of life issues. The frequency of the meetings differed for different teams. Some task teams disappeared completely as people lost interest. In total 36 indicators were developed by different task teams during the second year of the project. Of these, 16 were monitored. Set out below are examples of the 'open space and clean environment' task team.

Issues	Indicator
Community gardens	Number of people actively involved
Derelict open space	Number of sites

	Total area of sites
Advice/education on green issues	Number of sources of information
	Number of users
Rubbish/litter	Number of bins
	Litter survey
Rats and vermin	Number of rat/mouse sightings
	Number of rat complaints

Monitoring and Communicating Indicators
NEF was engaged by the Council to support the LITMUS process through local awareness raising, training and support of volunteers. An international panel was developed to discuss and guide progression of the project, providing a forum to share experience and information. It was not only advisory but also helped disseminate the results of the programme.

The evaluation stage examined effectiveness of the public participation stage of the LITMUS project. However the team recognised that provision of information is not sufficient in itself, the information must be understandable by the target audience. 'Good practice in public participation requires that information is designed according to the level of understanding of the target group (NEF, 1998, LGMB 1998). LITMUS achieved mixed results on this point with about 30% finding the information not easy to understand.'

At the end of the LITMUS project CRISP, a community voluntary sector organisation provided a forward strategy for the Community Consultation and Indicators work undertaken by the project in the Peckham Partnership and Aylesbury Plus regeneration areas. CRISP has also been asked to support the indicator work currently undertaken by the European funded PASTILLE project on the Elephant and Castle Single Regeneration Budget programme area.

Sustainability alias 'Quality of Life'
Although the main thrust of the project was to improve sustainability, the programme of awareness raising found that individuals and groups had little time or interest to grasp the concept of sustainability. This is a common problem in projects where there is either no single 'burning issue' or where the community is so depressed that comparatively few people will turn out to events, even where financial incentives are offered

The LITMUS team found that the term 'quality of life' was more readily understood and proved a useful substitute in facilitating discussion of sustainability issues. From this basis the LITMUS team found that a number of voluntary groups had already started to do this and the LITMUS team were able to utilise these connections.

Agenda 21
The UK Government places great emphasis on the environment and expects all local authorities to plan for sustainable development. Each local authority is required to submit an action plan. Southwark's was produced December 2000. Such policy, packaged under Local Agenda 21, recognises that 'caring for our surroundings is of the utmost importance as a damaged environment will eventually lead to social decline, increased crime and disorder,

more unemployment and lack of investment. In the longer term, action to reverse these trends could cost immense sums of money and require massive resources'. [4]

Sustainable development issues at the core of Local Agenda 21 have an impact on all activities and are a key factor in Southwark's strategic plans for the future.

Southwark is one of the recognised leading local authorities in the UK and Europe in developing the sustainable development agenda. It has been selected as a pilot authority to participate in a number of new initiatives including those covering environmental management systems, energy management, waste recycling, environmental purchasing and sustainability indicators. The authority is also a member of Forum for the Future, Sustainable Wealth London, Car Free Cities, Energie-Cites and the European Sustainable Towns and Cities Campaign.

Testing the Mix is a project investigating black and ethnic minority involvement in environmental, regeneration and sustainable development initiatives. It was managed via the Agenda 21 departments of London Boroughs, including Southwark.

Single Regeneration Budget
The Peckham Partnership is a seven-year regeneration programme, now in its final year. The project's total designated funding is £260 million, including £60 million from the Government's Single Regeneration Budget.

The project aims to regenerate Peckham by:

- Replacing old estate flats with new homes and gardens
- Constructing a new library and healthy living centre
- Introducing town centre developments, such as traffic management schemes, a new civic square, new lamp columns, banners and traffic management improvements.

Other improvements include employment and training schemes, educational projects in schools, community safety schemes and community development initiatives. Currently the housing programme is on target and the healthy living centre and square have been completed. The new library, designed by award winning architects Alsop and Störmer, opened officially in May 2000. As at May 2001:

- 424 jobs have been created
- Over 42,000 pupils have benefited from projects designed to improve attainment levels
- 1,140 people have been trained and gained qualifications
- 82 people have entered self-employment
- 1,069 new properties have been completed
- 1,390 individuals are employed in voluntary work
- 1,260 children are accessing childcare places.

Learning From The Exercise

The LITMUS team found that the management of information and consultation practices was perceived positively by the target population and that contact with their team, over the long term, had altered some initially hostile impressions. However the response was very constrained by the following factors:

- Problems of understanding
- Lack of familiarity with the process
- Problems of credibility and trust
- Lack of control over the process
- Lack of certainty of benefits and the distribution of costs and benefits
- The structure of benefits.

Most of these factors are common to indicator programmes and to public participation exercises. The LITMUS team made the following recommendations to encourage more effective public participation in the context of developing local indicators that can be applied to programmes generally:

- Clarity and transparency throughout the process
- Design and promote the process on the basis of an appraisal of the level of understanding and trust within the community
- Focus on partners with appropriate skills and a high level of acceptance in the community
- Make use of existing local networks and knowledge
- Foster the community's control over the process and benefits by delegating authority over the process (including funding) to the community where appropriate
- With indicator selection, focus on issues where benefits are visible at local level
- Develop, formalise and advertise the link to action to highlight the benefits of indicators
- Keep costs of participation low (by payment of expenses, short meetings, effective communication) and consider payment for participation.

Results suggested that participants' perception of the costs and benefits inhibit effective engagement on a larger scale. It was demonstrated that there were two types of incentive for participation: first, more direct incentives such as learning skills, meeting other people, and doing something for the community; and second, incentives derived more indirectly from developing and monitoring indicators (e.g. using indicators to illustrate the needs of the community and to monitor the actions of the council).

Many of the benefits derived from indicators are quite abstract (e.g. more influence on decision-making). Local people were keen to see more visible actions or visible improvements arising from their involvement. Indicators that illustrate community priorities can act as an interface between local people and the local authority. They have the potential to illustrate and measure how far the local authority is acting according to the community's needs especially in the context of urban regeneration programmes.

Public involvement can also enhance the quality of information used to make decisions. Top down approaches tend to ignore local knowledge and bureaucracies in local authorities can often act as a barrier to innovative ideas. Local experts and organisations can offer a range of

valuable information and skills that can enrich the debate and quality of decision-making.[v] In general, community indicators can improve understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the community with regard to sustainable development. New understanding and evidence can lead to improved decision making in local authorities.[vi]

If We Did It All Again (LITMUS)
The LITMUS team found mixed impact: strong on process and weaker on direct impact of the indicators. Below are a number of things that LITMUS accepted might have been done or recognised with perfect hindsight:

- Action can be intertwined with steps of the indicators process to build the momentum essential to getting and keeping local people actively involved
- The purpose determines the nature and use of indicators. The criteria of 'quality' indicators need to be stated explicitly and the indicators tested against these – e.g. importance, measurability etc. This should be done by local people and by drawing on local indicator expertise
- Where sustainability indicators are to be linked to regeneration programmes, tying into the planning process is vital
- The success of community-based indicators is as much about the social energy from the participatory process as the effects of the indicators themselves.

Onward Programme
LITMUS has now finished and data is being fed into a wider programme – PASTILLE (Promoting Action for Sustainability Through Indicators at the Local Level in Europe), a European comparative research project. The project is being undertaken by a consortium drawn from four European countries; Austria, France, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. For the UK, the partners are the London School of Economics and Political Science and the London Borough of Southwark. Each country team is a partnership between a municipality and one or more research competences. The aims of PASTILLE are to:

- Define the range of roles that local sustainability indicators can play and the variation in processes of indicator development
- Examine how sustainability indicators are developed and used in the four participating cities, relating this to the individual contextual factors
- Identify the role of local sustainability indicators in specific case studies in each city and to assess their impact and effectiveness
- Disseminate the results of the project in order to assist with future urban planning and with the setting of more relevant European policies.

Although municipalities across Europe have begun to adopt local sustainability indicators as a tool in urban planning, PASTILLE is designed to research the gap into the impact that indicators are making on actual decision-making at a local level. The project aims to contribute to the debate by focusing on the current use of local sustainability indicators as a tool to achieve sustainable city planning and resource management. It will address the key problem of how to ensure that the adopted sustainability indicators really 'make a difference'. At the end of the project, a major international conference will be organised to disseminate the research results and to discuss best practice for policy-makers. A Practitioners Guide and

a Citizens' Briefing document will also be produced, with the aim of assisting in local policy-making and practice in municipalities across Europe.

Appendix 1: The LITMUS Indicators

Priority issue	Indicator definition	Monitored?
1. Cultural identity	No. of multi-cultural events and no. of people attending	No
2. Disabled access	No. of buildings with disabled access	No
3. Community support	Funding allocated to community resources	No
4. Transparency	Availability of information	No
5. Community involvement	No. of people attending meetings of Sumner Tenant Association	Yes
6. Community gardens	No. of members actively involved in gardening club	Yes
7. Derelict open space	No. of derelict sites	Yes
8. Environmental education	No. of information sources	No
9. Litter	Amount of litter	Yes
10. Water use	Amount of water per person	Yes
11. Rats	No. of rat complaints	No
12. School transport	No. of pupils walking or cycling to work	Yes
13. Access to information	Awareness of transport issues	Yes
14. Flat size	Floor space per inhabitant/ Average room size	No
15. Complaint about noise	No. of noise complaints per quarter of a year	No
16. Accessibility for disabled	No. of buildings with ramps, lifts, accessible toilets &doors for disabled	Yes
17. Safely designed estate	No. of elderly who feel safe outside after dark	Yes
18. User-friendly design	No. of ground/first floor windows with full net curtains	No
19. Quality of pavements	No. of complaints for pavement accidents	No
20. Pollution	Noise levels at Old Kent Road	No
21. Pollution	No. & level of pollutants at Old Kent Road	No
22. Gardens and allotments	No. of allotments within easy reach of people's homes	No
23. Gardens and allotments	Amount of green space per person	No
24. Gardens and allotments	No. of private gardens/window boxes per person	No
25. Litter	No. of bins overflowing with rubbish	No

26. Biodiversity	No. & diversity of bird species	Yes
27. Use of park	No. of users and uses in Burgess Park	Yes
28. Health	Obesity rate (information from health authority) and range of food in the local area	No
29. Health	No. of people in the Peckham Pulse and the rate of heart disease in local people (health authority) Total number of visits to doctor	No
30. Health	No. of people who know about the Peckham Pulse and the range of activities offered	No
31. Health	No. of people who find the Peckham Pulse too expensive	No
32. Waste & recycling	Cleanliness of streets, walkways and open spaces (including under-use and dereliction) and the frequency of cleaning	Yes
33. Waste & recycling	Cleanliness of common stairs, lifts and lobbies and the end frequency of cleaning	Yes
34. Waste & recycling	Recording incidents of vandalism and graffiti and the frequency of cleaning	Yes
35. Waste & recycling	The number of litter bins on the streets and the frequency of emptying	Yes
36. Waste & recycling	Use of on-street recycling facilities, their cleanliness, and the frequency of emptying and cleaning of the sites	Yes

Appendix 2: Selected references relating to the development of the indicators

Environ, *Community Indicators for Sustainability: A European Overview,* 2000. Highlights the experience of various community indicators projects across Europe.

DETR, *Local Quality of Life Counts: A handbook for a menu of local indicators of sustainable development,* 2000. Illustrates 29 local quality of life indicators and describes how to measure them. The handbook is based on the experience of 30 local authorities, which have used the indicators.

DETR, *Local Quality of Life Counts: Indicators for a strategy for sustainable development for the UK: a baseline assessment,* 1999. Set of 15 national headline indicators of sustainable development plus around 135 supplementary indicators. The indicators support and monitor the UK's sustainable development strategy.

NEF*, Communities Count! A step-by-step guide for community sustainability indicators, 1998.* Describes in detail how to develop and use community sustainability indicators. Can be downloaded at www.neweconomics.org

New Economics Foundation and Southwark, *Council Communities Count: The LITMUS test,* (May 2001)

DETR, IDeA, LGA, *Local Quality of Life Counts,* (2000)

Audit Commission, *Performance indicators for measuring quality of life,* www.audit-commission.gov.uk/ac2Plfirst.htm.

Endnotes

[i] European Campaign for Sustainable Cities and Towns, *Millennium Villages and Sustainable Communities,* 1994

[ii] Lingayah, Sanjiv and Sommer, Florian, *Communities Count: The LITMUS Test – Reflecting Community Indicators in the London Borough of Southwark*, New Economics Foundation and London Borough of Southwark, May 2001.

[iii] New Economics Foundation *, Communities Count: A step-by-step guide to sustainability indicators,* 1998.

[iv] The final Monitoring and Evaluation Report is available on the LITMUS website: www.southwark.gov.uk/litmus

[v] Fife (1997; Glasson et al, 1994; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999; South Lanarkshire Council, 1998.

[vi] Forshaw, 1998; Hart, 1995; LGMB 1998a; New Economics Foundation, 1998.