Creating Successful Neighbourhoods

Lessons and actions for Housing Market Renewal
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Introduction

Today we are attempting to deal with the future of our towns and cities in perhaps a more comprehensive way than ever before, recognising that the social, physical and economic well-being of places is vitally important. A good example is the establishment of nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas in the North of England and the Midlands, and the commitment of resources by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to assist in the preparation and delivery of sub-regional strategies that tackle the problems of low housing demand.

The process of renewal has to deal with neighbourhoods and areas of housing market failure which have experienced decline in their economic base, their physical fabric and in the provision of social infrastructure (education, health and community relations). Central to the Pathfinder programme is the recognition that:

• the problem of low demand has to be tackled at both a sub-regional (beyond the local authority boundary) and neighbourhood scale
• it is about more than housing: combining homes with access to employment, transport and services in a high quality environment is vital
• the involvement of the private sector is crucial to lever the investment required to turn these places around.

In CABE’s experience, high quality design is an essential attribute of physical interventions, be they homes, streets, schools, health centres or open spaces. This is particularly the case in the Pathfinder areas, many of which face a dramatic restructuring of their physical environment. This presents a real challenge but as this report describes, much of the work emerging and many of the activities being undertaken both by individuals and organisations, are laying a good foundation for creating successful neighbourhoods for existing and new communities.

In the early days of the Pathfinders’ work, CABE, in conjunction with English Heritage, the Sustainable Development Commission, the Environment Agency and the Commission for Integrated Transport, published Building Sustainable Communities: Key Actions for Housing Market Renewal (2003). This paper highlighted what the five national agencies, with their specific remits, considered to be the key factors for successful housing renewal and creating places in which people and their communities would choose to live, work and stay. The actions outlined how the Pathfinders could put design quality, sustainable development and heritage considerations at the heart of their approach.
Since then the Pathfinders have developed their strategies and submitted them to Government for funding. They are now in the process of refining and progressing their strategies, delivering ‘early win’ projects, consolidating partnerships with the public and private sectors, and embedding processes for change designed to deliver sustainable communities. CABE has been privileged to be part of this process, in both a strategic capacity, through the Design Task Group which provides a mechanism for the Pathfinders and national agencies to share and develop best practice, and through on-the-ground input, working within individual Pathfinders on a range of projects, some of which feature in this report as case studies.

Two years on, it seems timely to reflect on the progress of the Pathfinder programme and to look forward to the challenges ahead. This report therefore:

- revisits the key actions outlined in the 2003 report and revises them to reflect the current status of Pathfinder proposals
- identifies the challenges remaining for Government, Pathfinders, local authorities and their partners in the context of the seven key actions
- through case studies, showcases good practice occurring in the Housing Market Renewal areas and shares the ideas and approaches put forward by the Design Task Group.

What is striking is that much of the work of the Pathfinders, particularly the best practice that has been developed, has a much wider application. There is therefore much in this report that will have great relevance to all those involved in delivering sustainable communities in the UK.

Urban regeneration is a fickle and challenging business – the issues being tackled are often multifaceted and ingrained, the time to make plans is often short, squeezed by a desire to see quick results, and the wait before tangible progress can be measured can seem long. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Housing Market Renewal areas. This report therefore shows the need for a continued commitment to the long-term objective of transforming neighbourhoods through good design, sustainable development and valuing heritage. This commitment must be embedded in policy and practice, and be given the appropriate resources (time, skills and money) if we are to succeed in creating truly sustainable neighbourhoods. The suggestions in this report hopefully provide food for thought for national and local government and all those who are charged with delivering renewal on the ground.
1 Realise the scale of the opportunity

Develop an understanding of the causes of and potential solutions to market failure, from the macro scale (sub-regional) to the micro level (the local community).

1.1 Key action points

- Housing supply should be tackled at sub-regional level. Where high demand is contributing to failure and abandonment elsewhere, local authorities should support Pathfinder objectives. Regional Housing Boards should review housing allocations.
- An understanding of the sub-regional economic projections should inform decisions to ensure Pathfinder strategies are not just about housing.
- Decisions about housing supply must be linked to the provision of public services – public transport, schools, healthcare and green space. Optimum population levels must be retained or consolidated to sustain the services. Service providers must respond and work across sectors to provide a holistic approach for the Pathfinders.
- It is essential to understand the social and economic fabric of neighbourhoods, in order to determine and tackle the root causes of the problems, rather than just the symptoms.
- A successful renewal strategy is not a set of compromises but is built on a solid understanding of the differing values and priorities of the community. Putting the community at the heart of the process provides a wealth of knowledge and insight. But difficult decisions will need strong leadership.
- Time spent at the outset on rigorous and consistent baseline analysis will provide a firm footing for strategies and provide a coherent approach to ‘early win’ projects.
1.2 Take the time to get it right
The Pathfinder programme is a pioneering approach that asks a range of organisations and agencies with normally clearly defined spatial and policy remits to think outside these traditional boundaries and work together.

Having been allocated significant funding, the Pathfinders are adopting a mixed approach by implementing 'early win' projects, commissioning masterplans and further design work, working with their local authority partners and engaging with the private sector.

Creating successful places takes time, skill, resources and commitment. This is the beginning of a long process and decisions taken now will determine the programme's direction and long-term success. The pressure to deliver quickly needs to be balanced against the need to develop considered strategies and invest wisely. In order to support the new ways in which things are being done, government, the Pathfinders and local authorities must address the skills required and the time it takes to develop coherent regeneration strategies.

The Oldham Vision project, Oldham Beyond, was commissioned by the Local Strategic Partnership and the North West Development Agency in the light of the Ritchie Report on the disturbances in 2001. The study successfully combined an examination of the social, economic, physical and political factors behind conditions in the town, and the specific issues associated with housing market renewal within the area and promoting the idea of a 'new Oldham'. At the strategic level it identified community cohesion as the most important 'liveability' issue (relating to the range and condition of housing, the performance of local schools, the cleanliness of the environment, the efficiency of local services, the quality of the town centres and the levels of crime).

Addressing these issues involves a large number of agencies and actions across different sectors and the Vision presents a route for Oldham's renaissance. At the local level, the study presents proposals for three demonstrator areas. Proposals for the site of the former deck access housing on the St Mary's estate, which had already been cleared, is described in case study 30.
1.3 Think about every physical scale
The Pathfinders need to strategise at different physical scales and are producing a series of documents that do so:
- the sub-regional strategy, programme and investment plan is outlined in a Prospectus, which is used to bid for funding from ODPM
- the strategy for the local authority, settlement or sector of a city, outlined in area development frameworks (ADFs)
- the neighbourhood or quarter strategy, outlined in neighbourhood action plans (NAPs)
- site-specific proposals or masterplans.

The thinking and analysis for each have to be interlinked and flow from one to the other, so that proposals in each area connect to adjoining neighbourhoods and support rather than counteract neighbouring interventions.

Individual projects should never be seen in isolation, nor should green spaces. For example, the relationship between the landscape of the region, borough-wide green space strategies and the landscape elements of masterplans should relate both to one another and to the overall physical strategy.

2 Responding to the different spatial scales – adopting the right tools: urban design and the North Staffordshire Pathfinder

Strategic urban design work was undertaken in North Staffordshire to provide a Pathfinder-wide analysis that complements the Neighbourhood Action Plans and Area Development Frameworks prepared at local level. It addressed the form and structure of the conurbation, its relationship with the economy and main transport arteries, and the need for a coherent green space strategy. It provided an outline spatial strategy for presentation to local authorities and key partner organisations at regional and sub-regional level. It led to a more focused study of the ‘commercial core’ of Hanley-Etruria, which benchmarked the conurbation core against other Midlands cities.

The Audit Commission said of this approach that “…the quality of its evidence base and its proposals in relation to urban design are both excellent and provide some useful practice which could be replicated elsewhere. Other Pathfinders are striving to achieve good quality design in new developments, but rarely look beyond their immediate milieu either to assess the quality of the broader environment, or to develop proposals to create a more coherent and sustainable urban form.”

Llewelyn-Davies/Renew North Staffordshire
### 3 Co-ordinating Housing Market Renewal with other strategies at sub-regional level: East Lancashire Regional Park

The development of East Lancashire’s Regional Park by the East Lancashire Partnership is a key element of a 20-year strategy with significant regeneration potential. It encompasses both rural and urban areas and will provide a clear focus for other projects such as transport, housing, economic development, education and health. Initially it will concentrate on a broad band of urban fringe land adjoining a number of disadvantaged areas. Priority will be given to the re-use of derelict sites, reclamation of brownfield land and diversification of agricultural land. It is anticipated that this will bring in new investment and create additional development opportunities, as well as adding environmental benefits for new housing and business relocations, stimulating tourism and promoting East Lancashire as a desirable place in which to live and work.

East Lancashire Partnership

### 4 Promoting communities’ willingness to engage with the process: Tyne View Primary School, Gateshead

Engaging with children can bring real insight. A pilot study at Tyne View Primary School successfully illustrates how children can be encouraged to engage with their local built environment within their curriculum. Ten and eleven year-old children have been empowered to form their own views and research the views of the wider community about their neighbourhood. Having identified key issues, the children were supported in taking these views to politicians and key service providers. Through this consultation, the children came up with a vision, including ‘less graffiti and rubbish’, ‘more leisure and play facilities’ and ‘improvements in health, safety and transport’. The work of the children has contributed to one of Gateshead’s first Neighbourhood Action Plans, and further plans include engaging the children and the wider community in the design and implementation of projects that affect their quality of life. Based on the success of this model, the Pathfinder is funding similar projects in seven schools in Gateshead.

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council/ Bridging NewcastleGateshead
1.4 Adopt a common approach
The Pathfinder programme challenges local authorities to develop cross-boundary strategies to tackle low demand. To facilitate these, Pathfinders need to agree with their local authority partners a common approach to developing policies and commissioning work.

At the scale of the settlement, Pathfinders should undertake a **spatial mapping** exercise to plot all proposed strategies, regeneration areas, physical interventions and planning approvals. Sometimes this will highlight the need to revisit existing policies that run counter to the objectives of Housing Market Renewal. This exercise should allow the Pathfinder to:

- determine the relationships between Area Development Frameworks
- understand where proposals and permissions support or undermine Housing Market Renewal objectives
- link into other regeneration initiatives and funding
- provide a basis to prioritise interventions, particularly in relation to clearance
- understand the physical relationships and transport connections between landscape and buildings, homes, jobs and local services.

Adopting a common approach to gathering **baseline data**, presenting information and expressing development proposals across each Pathfinder will help establish a comprehensive database and basis for prioritising and making investment decisions.

5 Using spatial mapping: NewHeartlands GIS Survey

The data collection, analysis and mapping carried out by the GIS teams of the three local authorities involved in the NewHeartlands Pathfinder will be invaluable when co-ordinating Housing Market Renewal with other proposed interventions, such as LIFT, educational provision and transport. It will improve the baseline data while the Housing Market Renewal programme is in its early stages, and reinforce the case for further funding in the second submission. It will enable the NewHeartlands board to monitor the performance of the programme and evaluate options for intervention. Through combining 3D and virtual reality packages, GIS offers a set of interesting, informative and innovative tools that may be used to aid communication and consultation.

NewHeartlands

1.5 Deciding when, where and how to intervene
Decisions on where to intervene in neighbourhoods must be undertaken through rigorous, transparent analysis. The ultimate objective should be to ensure that whatever is removed or retained will be replaced or enhanced in a way that will make a significant improvement to the viability of the community. An important factor to keep sight of is that early phases of the renewal process may not involve the development of buildings. Interim uses for land may therefore need to be identified and are most likely to rely on the development of good quality landscape and open space. A synthesis of sub-regional and neighbourhood analysis is required to make good decisions, as outlined in Box 6 and explored further in the following sections.
6 Issues to consider when thinking about housing market restructuring, particularly relating to clearance and retention of housing stock

At **sub-regional** level:
• Consider the relationship between: inner urban decline and the release of land for housing elsewhere; infrastructure subsidies on new-build/greenfield sites, when compared to upgrading existing homes; and regional housing policies.
• Aim to create compact neighbourhoods which have a density of development and population that can support integrated services, shops and transport, ensuring their economic viability.
• Consider wider economic projections and don’t base decisions solely on housing failure or management issues.

At the **neighbourhood** level:
• Understand the social and economic fabric of the neighbourhood and whether the failure of the physical form and type of housing is a symptom or cause of failure.
• Consult the community to understand their priorities and values.
• Factor in the real costs of clearance, including the social and environmental costs and benefits of retention verses clearance. The advantages of incremental change rather than wholesale clearance should be carefully considered. This is particularly critical where there are stable communities, and where options for the repair and improvements through management could be supported.
• Analyse when it is no longer viable to retain a house. This may relate to its physical form and structural condition, social reasons, or the quality and management of the surrounding environment. If these other factors were overcome would the house still be obsolete?
• Establish from the outset what is going to replace demolished housing. Leaving voids in the urban fabric can accelerate a cycle of decline and cause blight, which may drive more residents and potential investors away. Demolition should not proceed unless there is a strategy in place to ensure that cleared land contributes in a positive way to the community and urban form. Any open space that results from clearance must have a clear purpose and a management plan.
• Consider options for reinventing existing housing types and generating value, for example through remodelling homes and reconfiguring housing estates to make the public realm more coherent.
1.6 Work in partnership with national, regional and local agencies

Success will be underpinned by improving the quality of life of people living, or thinking of living, in these neighbourhoods by providing access to public services, open space, a safe and accessible environment and jobs. This can require rethinking about how public services are managed. Some of the investment required is already in place, with an unprecedented public buildings programme that includes building hundreds of doctors’ surgeries, nurseries and plans to refurbish or rebuild secondary schools across England.

These new facilities have the potential to be a real focus for change in a community, with schools opening up for use by the wider community and children’s centres providing opportunities for parents as well as caring for young children. Good quality buildings and their environs can create confidence in a neighbourhood and in the services offered. The programmes delivering these buildings – such as Sure Start, Building Schools for the Future, Local Investment Finance Trust (LIFT, for primary care) and lottery projects – should be fully integrated with the Pathfinders’ priorities. The process by which these projects are procured can be more complex and involve national and local agencies which may not be used to working together, but this should not deter the Pathfinder or local authorities from demanding fantastic buildings. Make sure every project is set in the wider urban design and regeneration context.

7 Integrating educational provision into design-led regeneration: Neighbourhood Nurseries – First Start, Sheffield and Hoyle Early Years Centre, Bury

The considered integration of educational and community facilities with other regeneration initiatives can have significant local and area-wide effects. The Neighbourhood Nurseries design competition, launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and CABE in 2001, has now produced two excellent new buildings:

• Hoyle Early Years Centre, Bury, a facility for children with special educational needs, is a high-quality building that makes a significant contribution to improving the physical environment, as well as enhancing perceptions of the local area. It was shortlisted for the Prime Minister’s Better Public Buildings Award in 2004.

• First Start in Sheffield opened in November 2004 and is an important new focal point for the regeneration of the adjoining Firth Park (the oldest public park in Sheffield). It makes a genuine contribution to the regeneration of the local area, as well as being an innovative new building. It incorporates a children’s centre and provides training courses, links to Job Centre Plus, parenting support, health visitors, park rangers’ offices and a community café.
2 Positively address heritage as an asset

Evaluate the physical assets of an area to inform decision-making about what to retain, enhance and celebrate.

2.1 Key action points

- The rich industrial and urban heritage of the built form of the Pathfinder areas can be used as a driver for recovery and change. Time and again it has been shown that the urban layouts, buildings and public spaces of the past have the potential to attract higher market values.
- The distinctive qualities of the historic environment can be used to attract private investors and residents.
- An appreciation of a neighbourhood's history can play a role in the creation of desirable neighbourhoods with a strong sense of place. This understanding should include the value that the local community places on its physical environment.
- Carry out evaluations to understand and classify the historic fabric across the Pathfinder area. For example, use the characterisation tool prepared by English Heritage to determine what is significant and what strategies should be adopted to maximise the benefits the historic fabric can provide.
- Reinforce the character of an area by understanding what makes it distinctive. Decisions about what to retain, refurbish or demolish should not occur until the physical, environmental, economic and social factors are understood.
This assessment examined the inherent value of existing places through a systematic analysis of urban form and community consultation. Heritage value was considered in the context of a wider urban design analysis, including the identification of landmarks and strategic vistas, and an understanding of connectivity and landscape character. Over 100 character areas were photographed, mapped and described through proformas. This information was then entered into a database and translated into graphic diagrams and descriptions to use in discussions with local people. The assessment, carried out in-house by Newcastle City Council at a cost of around £30,000, was undertaken to build up evidence to feed into the Area Development Frameworks. Gateshead Council has since adopted the methodology and is completing a full Pathfinder-wide assessment.

Newcastle City Council/Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

2.2 Know what you have got
Pathfinders must have a clear understanding of what they have got in order to make decisions about what to retain. Past mistakes must not be repeated – areas that were swept away in wholesale redevelopment are often the very areas which today are failing and undergoing significant change.

Housing should never be cleared without carrying out a rigorous analysis of the reasons for failure and having a suitable plan in place for what follows, both in the interim and long-term. Only when information on the physical, environmental, economic and social aspects of a place are understood and balanced against one another, can decisions affecting the physical environment be made.

The inherent qualities of place should be analysed and understood through thorough, transparent analysis. These include:
• urban design analysis to understand how a place works
• a characterisation study to reflect the heritage value of an area
• landscape strategies to define how a place can accommodate change
• comprehensive consultation to define the value that communities place on their physical environment, using innovative ways to help people appreciate and convey their memories and connection to a place.
2.3 Understand character
In January 2005, English Heritage published its position statement *Low Demand Housing and the Historic Environment*. Central to the discussion is that, whilst English Heritage is not opposed to demolition where it has been shown to be the way forward, this must be based on a full and rigorous analysis which includes an assessment of the historic environment. In areas where the historic housing is distinctive, retains its coherence and is valued by the local community, English Heritage will favour an approach which promotes its repair and refurbishment as an alternative to new build.

An assessment of the historic environment should be undertaken as part of the wider baseline analysis and certainly before proposals are drawn up for the regeneration of an area. As well as identifying those assets which are protected through listing, scheduling and conservation area designation, the value of the wider historic environment must also be considered. English Heritage proposes two levels of analysis:
- an extensive and rapid (Pathfinder-wide) assessment which presents an overview of the historic environment, its significance and character, and
- a more detailed (neighbourhood-based) assessment in areas where major change or refurbishment is envisaged. This analysis can then be used to inform the regeneration of neighbourhoods, streets and associated buildings.

The specialist components required in the English Heritage characterisation approach could be included in the briefs for the masterplanning work that the Pathfinders are currently commissioning.

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9 English Heritage characterisation approach: Sandwell characterisation study

Characterisation work undertaken by Conservation Officers within Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has synthesised previous research in the area, analysing the origins and development of the urban areas and identifying and assessing the broad historic character of the industrial towns of West Bromwich, Smethwick and Oldbury. This study, jointly funded by English Heritage, ODPM and Sandwell MBC, has been particularly valuable for ensuring that new development respects the character of the local environment and recognises the value inherent in the streetscapes and buildings that form a backdrop to the everyday lives of local people. Beyond the immediate needs of delivering sustainable affordable housing, it provides an impetus for education and tourism initiatives and plays a role in the social and economic development of the Black Country.

English Heritage and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
2.4 Celebrate industrial and civic heritage

Most of the Pathfinders have areas which present a wealth of buildings, street patterns and landscapes, thereby creating a strong and robust urban form and character. This legacy should be retained and celebrated wherever possible. Many precedents exist for converting mills and other industrial buildings to residential and commercial uses and, by doing so, developing a more diverse market and turning areas of decline into areas of value. There is also a strong argument for conversion to achieve sustainability objectives.

Renovation and development of canals open up new arteries and routes of movement, and create opportunities for waterside development and biodiversity. Similarly, parks and open spaces should be included in any assessment of an area’s cultural and environmental heritage. Victorian parks are often among the most important civic amenities in their area. Their original function, to provide open space and recreational facilities to improve local people’s health and well-being, is as relevant to post-industrial society as it was to industrial cities.

10 Using existing industrial heritage: Weaver’s Triangle, Burnley

An impressive sequence of mills, weaving sheds and canal-related features encloses a canal corridor in the 34 hectare site of Weaver’s Triangle. However, a large investment in physical and environmental repairs is required before the buildings can be made safe and suitable for modern use. Despite the extensive dereliction, a partnership of English Heritage, Burnley Council, Lancashire County Developments Ltd and the North West Development Agency has entered into a new masterplanning exercise and is working on a detailed delivery strategy for the site, which was designated a conservation area in 1988. One of the objectives is to ensure that new residents and enterprises are welcomed, while the aspirations and needs of local people and existing investors are also met. There is now more confidence that Weaver’s Triangle can be made to work in conjunction with the wider Housing Market Renewal programme, and that it can contribute to making Burnley a strong and vibrant centre in East Lancashire.

Burnley Borough Council
Recognising the heritage value of green spaces: Saltwell Park, Gateshead

Known as the ‘People's Park’ and part of Gateshead’s heritage since it opened to the public in 1876, Saltwell Park is once again set to become a catalyst for regeneration. A five-year, £10 million, Heritage Lottery Fund-supported renovation project will recreate the landscape and other heritage features of this fine Victorian municipal park. As well as its potential as a tourist attraction, it is being developed as a community, social, cultural and educational facility guided by a community forum that includes Gateshead Visible Ethnic Minorities Group, Age Concern, user groups, local schools and Gateshead College.

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
See aerial photo, page 44

2.5 Remodelling terraces and reconfiguring Radburn layouts

The prevalence of smaller terraces and post-war local authority stock has led to a lack of housing choice in many Pathfinder areas, contributing further to the departure of people.

The layouts of terraced properties present many positive qualities, including definition of public and private realm, densities that support the provision of services within walking distance, connected street layouts and strong urban form and character. But there is less demand for some of this housing due to a variety of factors including: the size of rooms, lack of gardens or the condition of the housing. They are also not always suitable for accommodating diverse populations. Recognising that the layout of the terrace is a valuable asset that can be improved to meet market demand, many of the Pathfinders are undertaking research and demonstrator projects to test the potential of reconfiguring the external and internal layouts of terraced properties.

Radburn housing is less prevalent but presents Pathfinders and local authorities with a similar dilemma: the stock is deeply unpopular in many cases and demolition is considered to be the most desirable option. However, often relatively minimal interventions to address the street layout and urban design issues that make Radburn housing problematic have been shown to work and suggest that working with the existing stock can be preferable to comprehensive redevelopment. Recent experience shows that concentrating on public space, maximising or reintroducing connectivity and recreating the street as a meaningful part of a wider neighbourhood, can address some of the problems of this type of housing.
In a study of Blackburn terraces undertaken by CABE, EDAW and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council looked at options for the remodelling of terraced housing. The houses and their structure lent themselves to knock-throughs, both internally and through combining adjacent properties, while roof spaces could be opened up for extra accommodation. There were, however, some caveats. Remodelling would only be desirable if the external appearance of the properties was maintained (in terms of scale and window pattern, for example), and access problems, poor sound insulation, lack of storage and poor energy efficiency would all need to be resolved. Redesign, mock-ups and public consultation were felt to be desirable in order to test improvements and to suggest possible solutions.

Remodelling possibilities have also been taken up in a scheme by Urban Splash, in partnership with Salford City Council (using Housing Market Renewal funding) and English Partnerships. Here, at Seedley-Langworthy, 349 homes will be delivered, with as much of the existing built form (and urban character) retained as possible. In particular, the team has explored ways of inverting the traditional ‘two up, two down’ layout of the housing. Final terms are being agreed and the project is due to start on site in 2005.

EDAW/Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Salford City Council/Urban Splash
The issue of Radburn housing was considered by the Design Task Group with inputs from David Levitt (Levitt Bernstein). They analysed projects at: Woodside, Telford; Holly Street, Hackney; and Grahame Park Estate, Barnet. ‘Radburn’ is named after a 1920s American housing project, the layout principles of which were applied, with adaptations, to many housing developments in the UK from the 1950s to the 1980s. It is characterised by relatively low density semi-detached housing, with a layout designed to separate cars from pedestrians, often with front and rear access to housing and cul-de-sacs. In most cases the frontages of the homes are wide enough to allow a through-street to be created between the blocks of housing, creating a layout similar to that of a traditional block with clear fronts and backs. Behind the houses, the rear gardens and footpaths can be joined up if necessary to create communal gardens.

Rethinking layouts can also work at the level of whole estates. Grahame Park is a 1970s ‘urban village’, with only two points of entry and a central retail core surrounded by Radburn housing. Shops in the main street are cut off within the estate and are mostly empty and derelict, while car parking and garages dominate the public spaces. The idea is to remove what does not work and create a permeable, more conventional street pattern as well as moving the shops to the edge of the estate, closer to the local underground station and where more people pass by. Housing is to be made more dense with clearer layouts and there are to be many more access points to the new streets from roads and pedestrian routes outside the estate.

Levitt Bernstein/Llewelyn-Davies
3 Create places of distinction

Ensuring interventions, whether buildings or open spaces, enhance and develop places that are distinctive and improve their locality.

3.1 Key action points
- An understanding of how a place has developed over time and how physical development can restore and enhance the urban form will ensure that investors provide distinctive, attractive places in which to live.
- Consider the potential and capacity of the natural and urban environment to accommodate change. Neighbourhoods need unique selling points to be distinctive and attractive to a range of potential residents, whether it is proximity to a park, public transport or unique local heritage.
- Good design is not a matter of style – it is about the quality of the living environment, from homes and streets, to the neighbourhood and the city. It is also about living, working and building more efficiently.
- The established principles of good urban design, as set out in government guidance, are tried and tested. Use them to create successful neighbourhoods.
- Use landscape as a unique selling point by developing landscape, public space, environment and management strategies for the area from the scale of the settlement to the scale of the smallest park.
- Be aware of the blighting effect of clearance. Ensure that where cleared land will not be redeveloped immediately it has a positive function in the interim. And, wherever possible, recycle buildings and spaces, retaining as much of the existing infrastructure as is practical.
3.2 Looking good

Despite the fragmentation of the urban structure of Pathfinder areas, most still have a strong urban and physical form. Much of this is under-valued – it can provide a robust basis for delivering coherent and improved neighbourhoods.

The physical assets of the Pathfinder areas include:
- strong landscape quality – dramatic topography, rivers, picturesque canals (sometimes hidden)
- cohesive urban form – derived from mass building to accommodate industrial workers and the use of local materials in construction
- a clear relationship between built form and the landscape – visual and physical access to open countryside
- area-specific housing typologies – such as Tyneside flats in Newcastle and Gateshead, the court housing in Hull, the sweeping terraces of East Lancashire – that define the social history of the area
- industrial sites and buildings (mills, kilns, workshops, canals) which are strong landmarks, both physically and in the memory of the people in the area.

3.3 Connect people to places

Strategies for change must also understand and reflect the people who live in these places and how they have interacted and adapted the built and natural environment to suit their changing and diverse needs. The Pathfinders are home to a variety of communities with specific needs, customs and beliefs. These cultural differences should be understood, respected and celebrated, as they contribute and add new layers to the character of a place, with landmarks such as mosques, street markets and specialist shops.
Meeting particular cultural needs has been at the heart of a remodelling project in Whitehall Road, Bensham, Gateshead. Here, 22 Tyneside flats, vacant and in a poor state of repair, have been converted into 11 three-storey terraced houses to address a shortage identified in the 2002 Gateshead Housing Needs Survey of larger family accommodation, particularly for the large and expanding Jewish community. The conversions incorporate within each home a new kitchen and a *succeah* extension, which allows for the custom of sleeping under the stars at particular festivals. The success of the model is such that the registered social landlord, Home Housing, is building a new, complementary development of 15 five-bed family homes adjacent to the conversions.

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council / Bridging NewcastleGateshead

### 3.4 Changing perceptions

Across low demand areas the problem is often not the housing stock itself but negative perceptions of it and of its location. Re-branding and place-marketing strategies can play a role in reigniting interest in a place amongst both local people and the development industry. This is a tactic that many Pathfinders have been pursuing.

Place-marketing and issues relating to the image of an area are not just important in perceptual terms; they have significant material implications. Identity contributes to social cohesion and local community development which, in turn, impacts on economic development at a variety of levels. Changing perceptions allied to investment in a high quality built environment is essential to generate inward investment. The value of identity and image in sustaining economies is also now being recognised in the economic strategies of the Regional Development Agencies.

It is important to understand how people value their locality and its assets, in order to promote a real, rather than imagined, heritage. To achieve lasting results this requires a multi-disciplinary approach that analyses the place spatially and socially and (re)creates the links between them and the services that will sustain them.
A key project being undertaken by CABE in East Lancashire is the exploration of different ways to engage in debate about the future and engender deeper understanding about issues of heritage and identity. One aspect of the work uses artists to draw attention to the visual qualities of the environment (such as photography by Jason Orton see page 6 left, 10, 20, 42 left). It will be important to focus on aspects of the built environment that are robust and instrumental in constructing identity – housing, municipal parks and civic buildings that are not failing. An academic project, conducted by John Urry of Lancaster University, provides further support for rebuilding a vision, concentrating on the opportunities provided by the distinctive environments of town centres.

Elevate East Lancashire and Design East Lancashire also engaged professional artists to work with primary school children at six schools in areas earmarked for Housing Market Renewal. The pupils were asked to explore the importance of design in their environment and discover for themselves what makes a perfect town. The children then sculpted, painted, modelled or drew their perfect towns and twelve of the most creative designs were selected and presented in a calendar (see adjacent image and page 41).

(See case study 20).

Design East Lancashire/Elevate East Lancashire
3.5 It's not just buildings
Developing places of distinction does not always involve a built solution. Landscape, public realm and green spaces reinforce an area’s distinct character and identity, whether positive or negative, and therefore need to be planned and managed carefully. Green space can also play a critical role in managing the sites left after housing clearance, both in the interim and longer term.

Putting proposals and projects in place which make the most of a place’s individual character and which augment its inherent qualities can be helped by:
- undertaking a thorough urban design analysis
- combining thinking about tangible proposals and physical investments with thinking about marketing
- considering projects in the wider physical context
- considering the use to which public spaces are being put – for example design streets for people, not roads for cars
- working jointly across local authority departments – for example the parks and education departments
- appointing high quality designers and thinkers who can bring extra interpretation, understanding and ideas
- looking for innovative responses to areas that are shrinking – for example urban forests.

In parallel to thinking about the physical form of places, the economic function needs to be considered. For example, how can investment in the physical fabric impact on the desirability of the town or neighbourhood to potential residents, property investors or business owners, such as small-scale retailers?

16 Recycling previously used land, encouraging multiple uses of open space: Watergate Forest Park, Gateshead

Reclamation work in the 1990s transformed this space, located on the site of the former Watergate Colliery on the outskirts of Gateshead, into a haven for wildlife and a recreational site for surrounding residents. Owned and managed by Gateshead Council, it now provides the gateway to the Great North Forest, linking the town to the Durham countryside via a series of trails suitable for wheelchairs. The site is an important community resource, encourages recreation and is the venue for the annual Gateshead Flower Show.

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
4 Recognise the value of design and its role in renewal

Provide leadership to the public and private sectors by championing good design and delivering high quality projects to demonstrate a neighbourhood is on the up.

4.1 Key action points

- **Design quality** cannot be added at the last minute – it must be central to thinking from the earliest stage of the process. Good design is not a luxury: all people deserve to live, work and play in well designed, attractive environments.
- Emphasis should be as much about **the spaces between buildings**, the public realm, as the buildings themselves. To create successful neighbourhoods, good quality housing needs successful streets and public spaces.
- **Prioritise design quality** and advertise the fact to your partners in delivery. Ensure that you have the capacity to follow this through.
- Use demonstrator projects to set the benchmark for quality and use examples of good practice from around the country and abroad to illustrate what is expected.
- Good design can help raise the profile of an area, raising confidence among investors and people living in and moving to a place.
- Pathfinders should appoint a ‘**design champion**’ to ensure that design quality is prioritised. This person needs to be a senior member of the team or Board so that they can ask difficult questions and help make tough decisions about balancing design quality against time and cost constraints.
- Investing in design quality brings **proven returns**, which generally become apparent in the medium to long-term.
4.2 The case to invest in design

A great deal of research demonstrating the financial, social and environmental value of investing in design has been published. Pathfinders must proactively champion quality and ensure that their public and private partners know about its benefits and make decisions in favour of good design.

CABE’s publications on the value of design (see References) provide local authorities and Pathfinders with the means to persuade partners and demonstrate the outcomes sought. They can also be used to influence investors, illustrating that investment in design will pay for itself.

The statistics speak for themselves:
• 72% of house purchasers said well designed houses increase in value faster than homes of average design (CABE/MORI, 2002)
• volume housebuilders believe that higher quality design can expect to yield a residual value per hectare of up to 15% more than conventionally designed schemes (CABE/MORI, 2002)
• a Dutch study showed that bordering water can increase the price of a house by 11%; having a view of a park raised prices by 8%; and that proximity to a park added 7% to values (The Value of Public Space, CABE Space 2004).

17 Using design panels to promote and support design quality

There has already been interest in using design panels to promote design quality in Pathfinder programmes and projects. The range of panels that currently operate is summarised below.

1 Design Review Panel – a panel of design experts who review schemes before or during a planning application process, such as CABE’s Design Review Panel. Other organisations such as SEEDA and Urban Vision North Staffordshire (the Architecture and Building Environment Centre) also operate panels of this sort. There is potential in the Housing Market Renewal programme to use such panels at sub-regional and cross-Pathfinder level.

2 Design Support Panel – a panel that supports the local community in developing design awareness and skills and capacity-building, such as the SOAR neighbourhood panel in Sheffield (see case study 24).

3 Design Experts Panel – a panel of design specialists that supports client organisations in realising aspirations for quality or in assisting with procurement and selection, such as CABE’s Enabling panel.

4 Design Consultants Panel – a panel of shortlisted consultants invited to bid for work on a commercial basis or assigned to projects within an overall initiative. Yorkshire Forward’s Urban Renaissance Panel is an example.
4.3 Persuading people about the value of design

It is essential that the many people and organisations that contribute to significant urban renewal buy in to the vision for creating high quality environments.

Pathfinders can encourage this commitment to design quality by using design panels with different remits to promote, scrutinise or advise on design to a number of stakeholders.

The design process can also act as a catalyst for community cohesion, providing an opportunity to discuss and help shape shared goals.

18 Involving communities in the design process: Maine Road, Manchester

As part of Manchester City Football Club’s move to the City of Manchester Stadium, Maine Road was handed over to the City Council in 2003. The aim is to transform the site into a new neighbourhood complete with homes, an attractive public space, community services and possibly a supermarket or shops. The current housing available in the area does not meet the needs of many existing or would-be residents. To address this, interested developers were asked to create plans which incorporate at least 350 homes, half of which must have at least three bedrooms, with affordable housing also a priority. Local residents were then involved in the shortlisting and selection process, meeting representatives from the shortlisted teams to comment on their plans. Their support and co-operation during an inevitably disruptive period is crucial to making the new community work.

Manchester City Council/Manchester-Salford Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder
4.4 The power of demonstration

There is nothing more powerful than a built project to demonstrate the quality of development expected and provide a benchmark for all future developments. Well designed, successful schemes can also generate market confidence in an area, acting as a catalyst in bringing investment to neighbouring sites and potentially helping create or change the market.

The Pathfinders' ‘early win' projects, whether buildings or open space, can provide an opportunity to champion good design. But in order to get these initial projects right:

• an understanding and commitment to good design may need to be fostered
• innovative or new approaches may be required, in terms of procurement and partnering
• upfront investment may be required from the Pathfinder to help the private sector invest and achieve the right quality
• a common basis for the desired quality must be established with key decision-makers by investigating and visiting existing projects (see CABE's digital library for ideas at www.cabe.org.uk/library).

Identifying benchmark projects on which to focus this investment, time and resource is critical. To help select the right project, undertake an audit of the sites that are coming to the market in the short, medium and long-term.

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19 The role of design in signalling a change in priorities towards areas:
Hulme and Hulme Park, Manchester

Design played an important role in the masterplanning process at Hulme in the 1990s, through strong and clear urban design guidance and demonstration projects. This helped tackle preconceptions about the area and market the project to private developers. The Hulme Arch, for example, helped to raise land values, as it signalled a change to the area and the creation of the 16-hectare Hulme Park helped work the area back into the urban fabric, connecting it to the city centre. The green space, with its different areas for sport and relaxation, is flanked by a range of established and refurbished homes, community and sports and leisure facilities. Public consultation and a willingness to listen on the part of both client and design team engendered the sense of ownership now expressed by local residents. The value of the amenity is reflected in the level of use of the park and rise in house prices.

Manchester City Council
4.5 Raising investor confidence

Without the active support and engagement of the private sector, Housing Market Renewal will not work. The Pathfinders must provide leadership and ensure a joined-up approach to creating high quality public goods – great parks, streets and public services – is adopted that will demonstrate that the quality of life in the area is increasingly attractive.

What is expected of the private sector, in relation to creating high quality neighbourhoods, should be made clear through design and planning guidance, the process of developer selection and financial incentives where appropriate. Ensure that there is clarity and commitment from the planning authority to the vision for quality, thus providing greater certainty to developers about the planning process and decisions.

CABE’s work with volume house builders and the House Builders Federation provides some useful mechanisms to set standards and reward successes (see case study 21).

In East Lancashire, CABE has set up a small team to place design quality at the heart of the Housing Market Renewal programme. Design East Lancashire comprises a number of different strands of work, including vision and identity projects (see case study 15). The focus is on bringing design to the fore in addressing the key challenges facing the Pathfinder. While the programme recognises the pressure for short-term impact, it also focuses on laying the foundations for lasting change.

Identity and demonstration projects aim to have immediate benefit, giving confidence that positive change is taking place, as well as providing exemplars for further high quality work. The longer-term capacity-building aspects include training for local authority professionals, creating a network of design champions in the sub-region, and working with schools to involve young people in practical design and environmental projects. One demonstration project involves engaging a group of young people to re-develop an area of public space; another involves running an architectural competition to encourage fresh approaches to the conversion of 19th century terraced housing.
Under the Building For Life programme, CABE is promoting, scrutinising and rewarding design quality among volume housebuilders. The *Building for Life Standards* (CABE, 2002) set out criteria against which the quality of housing schemes can be designed and judged. These standards are used to award and promote good housing schemes built by house builders and registered social landlords. They look at four areas: environment and community; design and construction; character; and roads, parking and pedestrianisation. Importantly they provide an incentive at point-of-sale by making awards while schemes are still in the construction stage.

The *Housing Audit* (CABE, 2004) assesses completed schemes using the Building for Life Standards. Phase one of the housing audit reviewed 100 new, volume housing schemes in London, the South East and the East of England. The audit shows where improvement is needed and common failings, particularly the tension between good urban design and highway standards. The audit identifies four priorities for action: the need for more urban design skills among developers, their advisors and local authorities; training and guidance to encourage highways authorities and urban designers to work together; promotion of contemporary design using local materials; and the need to connect policies on good design to practice on the ground.

The *Home Buyer’s Guide* (Black Dog, 2004) provides advice to people buying a newly built home. It suggests what to look for relating to architecture, the neighbourhood, interior design, sustainable design features, security and privacy. It aims to increase consumer awareness of the importance of good design and to equip people with the knowledge that will make them more demanding when buying a new home.
4.6 A question of process
Given that delivery will depend on partnering local authorities, the expertise of the local authority officers must be harnessed, supported and supplemented. It is important to be realistic about the time and budgets required to commission high quality consultants and manage the process. The Pathfinders should therefore consider what assistance local authorities may require, for example:
• creating dedicated urban design and planning posts
• preparing guidance to improve the quality of development
• restructuring the way development applications are assessed within the councils and the way the public and private sector interact through the planning process
• training to help the public sector respond proactively and knowledgeably to the programme
• encouraging the different departments in the councils to work together across professional boundaries, and understand their role in helping deliver Pathfinder objectives
• commissioning external consultants to undertake work
• promoting Housing Market Renewal objectives to develop local political support and interest.

22 Placing design quality at the heart of delivery: the design sub-group, Oldham and Rochdale

From an early stage, the Oldham-Rochdale Pathfinder identified design quality as a key element in its strategy for addressing housing market failure. A first step was to establish a design sub-group that would be responsible for promoting the design agenda. The appointment of a design adviser to liaise with and co-ordinate design input between the two authorities reinforced the profile being given to design quality issues across the Pathfinder area. One of the early outputs was the preparation of a 'model' brief to provide a template for other projects in the area and promote consistency of approach to issues such as seeking a high standard of design whilst fostering design innovation.

More recently the idea of a design panel for the Oldham/Rochdale Pathfinder area (or possibly a sub-regional group of Pathfinders) to review and/or advise on emerging schemes is being considered. Here the importance attached to creating places of distinction is reflected in a range of commitments – resourcing of staff, project procurement and other initiatives – that give design quality a high priority.

Oldham-Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder
5 Adopt policies and tools to deliver high quality urban neighbourhoods

Use all possible tools and strategies that will help design and deliver high quality environments on the ground. Embed design quality from the strategy level down into the individual built projects.

5.1 Key action points

- **Use all the tools available** to deliver design quality by: undertaking urban design studies; commissioning masterplans; preparing strong briefs for development partners; adopting design guidelines as policy; linking these policies to the development control process; and attracting new talent and investment into the area through competition and marketing.

- Develop **urban design strategies and guidelines** for places where investment is proposed. These will range from large-scale masterplans to detailed strategies for small-scale improvements. The preparation and management of specific design guidance for areas, issues or themes takes time, expertise and focus. Emphasise both deliverability and vision.

- **Act as a good client** when commissioning work by providing good briefs with clear outputs; reward quality and innovation in the selection processes for design work.

- Make sure thinking about housing management is **interwoven** with considerations about urban design.

- Address **investment in the public realm** in the round by considering quality, function and long-term management and maintenance.

- Ensure that the creation of streets and places **prioritises people not cars**, and encourages walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

- Make sure **delivery partners** (private and public sector) understand the need to prioritise quality and have the resources, skills and tools in place to do this. Help them adopt best practice and understand the commitment required.
5.2 The palette of tools and strategies
A great deal of innovative work is emerging about how to embed design quality into strategies and practices, drawing on lessons around the country and from other development contexts.

The various approaches being pursued by the Pathfinder teams can be characterised as:
• **programmes set up specifically** to put design at the heart of Housing Market Renewal and other strategies (see case studies 20 & 33)
• increasing standards and expectations by commissioning **demonstrator projects**, or using high-profile design competitions (see case studies 23 & 32)
• preparing and adopting **design guidance** for specific issues, character areas or sites (see case study 25)
• using **design panels** at various scales, from regional to neighbourhood level (see case studies 17 & 22)
• undertaking comprehensive **urban design analysis** to derive development principles for different areas and assist in the evaluation of development proposals (see case studies 2, 8 & 9)
• preparing **green space strategies** – as outlined in Green Space Strategies (CABE Space, 2004) – to inform the investment and regeneration strategies within the Pathfinder area and beyond (see case study 28)
• **revisiting standard procedures** for disposing of public sector land, retaining freehold to retain control throughout the development process (see case study 23)
• developing new mechanisms or ways of working for large-scale housing or landscape projects that **cross local authority boundaries** and link policy, development control and delivery of projects
• using **design charrettes** to progress development proposals, combining the different departments within the council in a development team for difficult sites (see case study 27)
• programmes that **encourage housing providers** (both public and private) to raise specifications (see case study 33)
• **education and engagement programmes** with the local community, sometimes working with other agencies to deliver programmes, for example Architecture and Built Environment Centres (see case studies 4 & 24).
In January 2003, The SOAR Design Panel was established to advise council officers and local groups on briefing, appointment and management of all design consultants, ensuring that all capital projects engaged with the design quality agenda. Community representatives were involved in the eventual appointment of a panel of four, including a landscape architect, a masterplanner and two architects. The panel has empowered those involved in the procurement and selection processes by providing comment on briefs, assisting with tender lists, preparing scoring sheets for review of submissions, preparing for interview and supporting groups during the interview and appointment process. It also offers a review service at sketch proposal, masterplan and detailed design stages.

While the panel has taken time to administer, it has greatly developed SOAR's ability to be a good and confident client. The initial nervousness of involving local people so closely in the process has been assuaged by building capacity from the start, ensuring a more structured approach to later design discussions. Design champions have emerged who are really engaged in the process and take ideas back to the wider community. Most importantly, the process has made people excited about design, giving them higher expectations of professionals. It has also demonstrated to the council and other partners the ability of neighbourhood groups to contribute positively to the process of design.

Sheffield City Council/Transform South Yorkshire

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For some time Sheffield City Council has had an ambition to refurbish the Grade II* Listed Park Hill estate in order to meet government decent homes standards for its 1,000 properties, by 2010. In association with English Partnerships and with the assistance of Pathfinder money, it has now been able to make positive progress towards this. Given the iconic nature of the building and the City's tradition of housing innovation, it decided to encourage ambitious and creative proposals and embarked on a developer competition to facilitate this in early 2004, taking advice from English Heritage and CABE.

The project team held a full open day with bidders to help brief and inspire them. Submissions were required to address a technical brief, indicate a design approach and respond to five key design criteria. Emphasis in the technical brief was on meeting best practice standards such as Housing Quality Indicators and Building for Life criteria, as well as balancing the needs for conservation, regeneration, tenure change, innovation and public realm.

Sheffield City Council and English Partnerships are now negotiating with the proposed developer team of Urban Splash and Manchester Methodist Housing Association. They will work with the clients and residents to develop the proposals.

Sheffield City Council/Transform South Yorkshire
5.3 Housing Market Renewal and the planning system
The introduction of *The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* (PCP Act) provides Pathfinders with the opportunity to strengthen their approach to design by integrating it into the formal planning process. In this transition period, local authorities and Pathfinders must ensure that they understand the implications of the changes to the planning system. At a strategic level *Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1)* establishes that the planning system must deliver the well designed development needed to secure sustainable communities, and *PPS12: Local Development Frameworks* identifies that Local Development Documents must include policies on design.

Tools for delivering design quality at local level, within Local Development Frameworks, include:
- **the core strategy**, which establishes the spatial vision, strategic objectives and core policies
- **area action plans**, which provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed and can provide guidance on layout and design requirements
- **generic development control policies**
- **supplementary planning documents**, which can cover a range of issues, both thematic and site-specific
- **design statements** to accompany planning applications will be required for certain types of development and will describe and justify the design principles and concepts being proposed.

This guide defines and explains a set of principles that Manchester City Council expects to be applied to all new developments in the city. It is adopted as part of the formal planning process, ensuring that all planning applications respond to the issues identified. The original guide was produced by an independent advisory panel and seeks to give developers a clear sense of the quality and type of development expected, and residents a sense of certainty about the future of their neighbourhoods. It is currently being revised to meet present needs, reflecting Manchester's growth and status, and to reflect national guidelines and local policy objectives.

In the revised guide, each of the seven key objectives identified in *By Design* is expanded to relate to the Manchester context. Although the general principles cover the entire city, character areas and their particular development issues, priorities and types of development that will be welcomed in the different areas are also described. The guide makes direct links to the supporting planning policy framework and the emerging Pathfinder documents.

Manchester City Council
Design coding is currently being tested as a potential tool to deliver better quality homes and neighbourhoods. Two of the seven pilot projects are in Pathfinder areas. A design code is a form of three-dimensional, site-specific design guidance which sets rules or requirements for development. It is informed by a spatial masterplan and describes the rules through words and graphics. It can be used in the design and planning process, but goes further and is more regulatory than other forms of guidance commonly used. For more information see the Reference section.

The pilot at Newcastle Walker Riverside aims to revitalise an area of 5 sq km of inner east Newcastle. The masterplan proposes the renewal of existing houses and 2,500 new dwellings and improved public transport, local employment, open spaces and community safety. Design workshops have successfully brought together technical experts to develop the design code.

The Rotherham Town Centre River Corridor project aims to revitalise the town centre and increase the population living within or adjacent to it, by developing 600 dwellings, together with retail and commercial uses on the 12 ha site. A broad masterplan and vision for the town centre has been developed. The code designer is refining this vision through a characterisation study and scenario testing, which will lead to a design code.

Newcastle City Council/Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
In Blackburn with Darwen, the Council has set up design charrettes (workshops) to discuss projects prior to a planning permission being submitted. Those present, representing the council, replicate the skills of a development team and include development control and forward planners, Housing Market Renewal housing officers, highway engineers, landscape architects and tree protection officers, who jointly outline their standard approach to a particular site. This provides a constructive opportunity to establish joint positions relating to development proposals. In this way, the council is able to present a unified front to developers while bringing design considerations forward to the beginning of the process. A lot of preparatory work is undertaken before bringing the key people together and clear outputs are expected from each session. In CABE’s experience, it is valuable to bring a skilled facilitator to these sessions, to provide an objective view and so that the local authority officers can focus on providing their specialist input.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

This is an example of how borough-wide green space planning can contribute effectively to an area’s regeneration. Following a budget review in 2001 and the recognition that the quality of green space provision and maintenance had deteriorated in recent years, investment in public space was significantly increased and resources were better prioritised. This included the creation of a local delivery agency for public space management (Community First) and a substantial increase in section 106 funding from new developments.

The subsequent approach means that priority areas requiring new or improved green space are identified and funding bids are submitted in line with this. Over the five-year improvement plan period, it is estimated that in excess of £65 million will have been invested in things such as major reclamation creating new community woodland, park improvements, a comprehensive plan for play area improvement, targeted improvements to sports facilities and small neighbourhood projects.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Invest in and design neighbourhoods so that they use resources efficiently and encourage sustainable lifestyles.

6 Place sustainable development at the heart of thinking and action

6.1. Key action points

- Integrate sustainable regeneration into policies and practice on land use and urban form, transport, energy, waste, buildings, natural resources, ecology, community and business.
- Look to the communities to play a role in local environment action, empowering them to take responsibility for their neighbourhood and providing the benefits of improved community cohesion.
- Make decisions about clearance and retention of housing by weighing up the real environmental costs in relation to the environment, social fabric and economy.
- Understand the environmental impact of development and the capacity of the landscape to accommodate change. Focus on previously used sites, alleviate land contamination on site and design open spaces as places for people, for the promotion of habitats and for sustainable drainage.
- Plan neighbourhoods that encourage residents to adopt sustainable and healthy lifestyles, for example by providing access to services, green spaces, shops and public transport within walking distance from their homes, and opportunities to recycle.
- Adopt high standards in policies and practices in building design and construction to encourage the prudent use of resources.
- Integrate the planning of housing, transport, and public services to ensure there is equitable access to public goods.
- Investing in a neighbourhood is just the beginning of improving the community’s quality of life; commit to putting in place the necessary management structures and resources to ensure that a high quality urban environment is maintained.
The Government has a new target to “help make public spaces cleaner, safer and greener, and improve quality of the built environment, in deprived areas and across the country”. ‘Cleaner’ addresses issues such as street cleansing, fly-tipping, graffiti and dog-fouling; ‘safer’ refers to street maintenance, lighting, traffic calming and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour; and ‘greener’ is about environmental services, play areas, gardens, playing fields and the quality of the public realm.

Blackburn with Darwen Council’s liveability programme aims to provide access to good quality open space within dense housing areas by creating neighbourhood greens, and tightening up enforcement against environmental crimes with a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to fly-tipping and littering.

Sheffield City Council's liveability programme has established a joined-up client group, with representatives from housing, parks and 'streetforce' departments, to investigate and overcome key barriers to service delivery. It also includes a sustainable horticultural training programme.

From the outset, the partners on the St Mary’s redevelopment (Gleeson Regeneration, Oldham MBC, English Partnerships, Contour Housing Group and Oldham Rochdale Housing Market Renewal) emphasised the role of sustainable urban design in reducing whole-life costs, including improved performance in building specifications and energy consumption. This was a large component of the development brief which, combined with the key objective of achieving an EcoHomes excellent rating, balanced the requirement for environmental performance with the need for a high quality of life and a safe and healthy internal environment. With such a big commitment to sustainable living, environmental design consultants were commissioned to support the work of lead architects, Triangle. The masterplan for the site includes proposals for excellent levels of thermal efficiency, renewable energy sourced from solar water heating, wind power and combined heat and power. Green roofs will also support biodiversity as well as improving insulation and rainwater run off. Particular emphasis will also be placed on reducing the embodied energy of materials created during manufacture and transportation.

Oldham-Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder
6.2 An integrated approach
Sustainability must be embedded into the processes and tools that Pathfinders and their partners use in this time of significant change. Good design is based on principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development, like design, must be pursued at the macro and micro scale and include consideration of economic, social, environmental and physical factors. Sustainable development is a synthesis of many of the issues discussed throughout this document.

The Sustainable Development Commission has identified four measures which are essential to building sustainable communities:
• **Planning, design, density and layout** influence the shape of a community, the level of services and the way people interact with each other and their environment. Low-density sprawl makes public transport and local shops unviable, whereas higher densities – around 50 homes per hectare (well designed, four storey, semi-detached and terraced family homes with medium-sized gardens) – support shops, buses, neighbourhood schools and a sense of community.

• **Minimising energy use and environmental impact** contributes to sustainability, helps combat global warming and encourages ‘long-term stewardship’ of communities. Recycling buildings reduces resource use and encourages low impact approaches.

• **Viable local economy and services** provide the rationale and underpinning for community development and survival. Loss of manufacturing has made many traditional urban communities unviable and a major economic shift is required, with new uses for existing infrastructure, if they are to flourish again. They also require transport links to wider job markets and education and training facilities for new skills.

• **Community organisation and neighbourhood management** are essential to social networks and urban viability, ensuring well maintained, secure conditions which are the prerequisite of stable, long-term, participative and cohesive communities. Regeneration companies, local housing companies and neighbourhood management organisations can transform basic street conditions, community safety and security, social contact and youth engagement, by acting as a local conduit for decisions, co-ordinating supervision and frontline service delivery.
In October 2004, Elevate East Lancashire published its draft Sustainable Development Framework for consultation. The framework signals the Pathfinder and its partners’ commitment to ensuring that all development is planned and implemented along sustainable principles. It sets out the importance of sustainability and how to achieve specified key objectives under four headings: local economic opportunity, social progress and justice, high quality local environments and efficient use of natural resources. The framework consists of a web-based resource (at www.elevate-eastlancs.co.uk), a guide based on the *Building Sustainable Communities: Actions for Housing Market Renewal* (CABE, 2003) and a sustainability checklist, which will be used by Elevate to assess proposals for funding. Elevate is also proposing to introduce minimum sustainability standards with the aim of obtaining an Excellent Eco-Homes Standard in all development by 2007.

If the interventions are of poor quality or respond to only one issue (such as taking out street trees to reduce fear of crime, or removing grassed verges based on maintenance budgets), the impact can be negative and reinforce the perception of an area. Equally, if the interventions are part of a neighbourhood-wide strategy and respond to community aspirations, the effect of the improvements can raise the quality of the urban environment and assist in changing a negative perception of an area.

Where new housing is proposed, masterplans and proposals should be vetted carefully to ensure they are creating public spaces of quality and purpose, including spaces that encourage play and informal recreation, routes to promote cycling and walking, as well as supporting biodiversity. There may also be opportunities for Sustainable Urban Drainage systems.
This project is an example of a high quality scheme addressing community needs and increasing confidence in the area. A survey conducted in 2002 by the Rochdale Housing Initiative analysed the needs for people living in the Hamer area. It found that there was a general desire to remain in the area but that much of the current (terraced) stock did not meet their particular needs. Focus groups with local Asian residents revealed a preference for owner-occupation and a need for flexible use of spaces (for prayer, eating and home working).

This information fed into the brief for a national design competition for 83 units on the 1.8 ha site of Dale Mill. The brief required a high proportion of affordable units, ambitious environmental standards and quality design. The winning scheme was presented at a public exhibition: ‘Where We Live Matters’ in July 2004. Detailed housing layouts have now been worked up by the successful entrants, Proctor and Matthews and Battle McCarthy, which prioritise internal flexibility and joining up properties. House types have been developed for one to four bedrooms which, if combined, could provide up to seven bedrooms. The masterplan also allows for better links to the existing neighbourhood and recreational facilities along the River Roch.

Oldham-Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder/
Rochdale Development Agency
7 Get ready to meet the challenge

Make sure quality is embedded in the delivery of renewal by committing resources – time, skills and funding – to enable public sector partners to work with developers.

7.1 Key action points

• Successful change at this scale is dependent on many individuals and organisations. Skills and capacity issues need to be addressed in both the public and the private sectors to ensure they will deliver the quality that will bring a change in the housing market.

• Focus on choosing and supporting the right ‘early win’ projects to demonstrate the benchmark of quality expected in the Pathfinder areas. If delivered to a high quality, these projects will generate follow-on investment. They should also be used to build capacity and skills. Demand the best – don’t accept second best.

• If there are successful neighbourhoods within the renewal area, build on their success.

• Pursue robust and transparent decision-making, taking the elected members and communities with you to ensure key stakeholders understand and are committed to the proposed extent of change.

• Access good advice about design, heritage, environmental protection and sustainable development.
7.2 Invest in design, heritage and sustainable development

In the first round of proposals and funding bids, each of the Pathfinders took a different approach to the agendas set out in *Building Sustainable Communities: Actions for Housing Market Renewal* (CABE, 2003). Some are more piecemeal than others, some have in-house expertise, while others rely more on the resources of the local authorities.

What is apparent from all the approaches is that there is real opportunity for the Pathfinders to be groundbreaking in how they address design, heritage and sustainable development. They can mainstream these issues into policy and action and provide resources (funding and skills development) and encouragement to partners, which can ensure that they create places – homes, neighbourhoods and spaces – of real lasting quality. The approach being taken by Transform South Yorkshire is perhaps the most comprehensive in this regard (see case study 33).

Housing Market Renewal challenges nearly all agencies and individuals to take a new and more holistic approach than perhaps we have been used to in recent decades. This is positive, but can also be daunting. The complexity of the issues should not be under-estimated. The range of agencies that will have to bring in expertise and often think outside their normal professional boundaries also presents real opportunities. It may be important for key individuals to develop new skills, tools and insights into the myriad of issues that they will be asked to deal with. Bringing together people from different departments or organisations to discuss issues can provide an opportunity to share best practice and develop common objectives.

33 A comprehensive strategy: Delivering design quality in South Yorkshire

Through its unique Design Quality Project, and in partnership with the House Builders Federation and CABE, Transform South Yorkshire (TSY) is investing over £4 million between 2004 and 2006 to ensure that the Pathfinder programme succeeds in creating communities of choice and opportunity.

- Housebuilders will have access to technical expertise to work with their design and procurement teams and, in return for achieving the nationally accredited Building for Life standard, an Innovation Fund will help bridge differences between cost and value. Each year, those housebuilders who have contributed to the success of TSY’s programme will be eligible for an award in recognition of their efforts.
- Local authorities will benefit from clear and consistent advice on the appropriate design response to individual development sites, which will help speed up the planning system, and regeneration organisations will have the services of a design panel to increase their awareness and understanding of the value of good design.
- Housebuyers will be made aware of the importance of good design when choosing where to live and of the opportunities within the Pathfinder, through a sustained and structured marketing programme using the media and estate agents.

Transform South Yorkshire
In order to meet a demand from Gateway, Hull City Council and East Riding Council for assistance with skills and capacity building, CABE provided two bespoke workshops focusing on masterplanning processes and building procurement. Bringing together key people from these public sector organisations over a limited geographical area allowed the principles and theory to be related to real examples in the Pathfinder area. The first workshop concentrated on commissioning masterplans and urban design projects, giving advice on methods of reviewing proposals, the relationship between masterplans, planning policy and development control, and on working with developers and other partners. The second workshop dealt in detail with ‘how to be a good client for a building project,’ embedding design quality in the procurement process, relating the brief to the budget, working with design teams, and using design quality indicators.

For more information see CABE’s guides for clients in *Creating Excellent Buildings* and *Creating Successful Masterplans*, details of which are included in the Reference section.

7.3 Get ready for development

When there is a weak market and limited demand from private investors, it can be tempting to accept any development, irrespective of its quality. This is a false economy. Pathfinders should ensure that they have clear criteria for facilitating and promoting investment. This entails identifying sites that are at the right scale to attract market interest, strategic in terms of location, and prominent and able to change people’s perceptions of the area.

To support this strategy, resources should be directed to the local authority to prepare briefs that promote high quality development. Projects that are already in the development pipeline may be difficult to influence, but must be watched carefully as they will be perceived as the first outputs from the Pathfinder. Such projects can provide an opportunity to discuss a common approach to design between the Pathfinder and their local authority partners. However, it will be important to focus energy on projects that can be influenced more fully and that mark the change in quality that the Pathfinder programme brings.

Local authority officers need to share Pathfinder objectives and be armed with the tools that will support their negotiations. Developers, for their part, look for certainty and guidance that outlines the expectations of quality. A clearly defined process for submission and review of planning applications can provide this.
In response to a need to co-ordinate the activities of over 50 registered social landlords (RSLs) who own stock within the Merseyside Pathfinder, and to avoid confusion and duplication of effort, Liverpool’s Strategic Housing Partnership has developed a new framework to facilitate neighbourhood renewal delivery.

RSLs have been classified according to four categories, which give rise to the acronym LIFE: ‘Lead’, for those which are well-resourced and heavily involved in Housing Market Renewal; ‘Influence’, where an RSL has significant commitment to a given area or an acknowledged expertise; ‘Follow’, for those which are focusing on offering quality service to existing tenants and are less involved in regeneration; and ‘Exit’, to describe those which may take a strategic decision to leave an area through stock exchange or transfer.

There are four ‘Leads’ in Liverpool, five in Sefton and three in the Wirral. The structure has led to significant collaboration between local authorities, RSLs, key stakeholders and residents, greater use of shared data to inform investment decisions, and better co-ordination with Housing Market Renewal and other renewal investment. The model is supported and enhanced by a Pathfinder-wide forum that enables RSLs to contribute at a strategic level to the NewHeartlands programme, and has been recognised with a ‘good practice in partnership working’ award at the UK Housing Awards 2004.

7.4 Engaging house builders
The bricks and mortar of renewal – the homes – will ultimately be delivered by local and national developers and registered social landlords (RSLs). Engaging with them early to explain plans and aspirations will bring benefits. It will be important to find ways of ensuring that they can deliver places and space of real and lasting quality.

Open days can provide a means to highlight the opportunities that exist in the area, demonstrate the level of public sector investment being undertaken and tell them about the expectations about design quality. Clear design guidance will also help, and give greater certainty where linked to local and national planning policies. Developers may also need support to adapt to the new quality agenda in early projects, whether that is in the form of pre-application consultations with the planners or access to the other public agencies investing in the locality.

Consider how the public sector can use its influence to promote design quality through landownership or the planning process. It may be appropriate to consider incentivisation schemes to kick-start developer interest in an area. These schemes must be considered in the context of the typical schemes expected, market analysis, the needs of the community and existing consents in the area. There is little point in investing in schemes where the design uplift is marginal.
7.5 And finally...

What has been shown in this report is that the Pathfinders are at the cutting edge of new thinking about how we manage and change our urban environments. But there is still some way to go, with strategies being refined and strengthened, some early projects being delivered and the pressure for early wins and expenditure driving progress.

The allocation of the first round of funding is therefore the first step on a long journey towards renewal. The work prepared so far has laid the foundation, but these strategies must be seen as evolving and iterative. There will be a need to constantly restate a commitment to create places of lasting quality which are truly sustainable. As the market begins to respond to change, the Pathfinders must be prepared to know when to be flexible, learn lessons and adapt their approach without compromising what is important.

The belief that design, heritage and sustainable development should be at the heart of creating sustainable communities is unequivocal. What is clear is that if the lessons and actions outlined in this report are applied much more widely, the years ahead have the potential to bring lasting and sustained positive change to the neighbourhoods and communities going through renewal.
Pathfinder names and local authorities in each Housing Market Renewal area

**Bridging Newcastle-Gateshead:** includes Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC).

**Elevate East Lancashire:** Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils, and Lancashire County Council.

**Gateway:** Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

**Manchester-Salford HMR Pathfinder:** Manchester and Salford City Councils.

**NewHeartlands:** Liverpool City Council, Sefton MBC and Wirral MBC.

**Oldham-Rochdale HMR Pathfinder:** Oldham MBC and Rochdale MBC.

**RENEW North Staffordshire:** Stoke City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire County Council.

**Transform South Yorkshire:** Barnsley MBC, Doncaster MBC, Rotherham MBC and Sheffield City Council.

**Urban Living:** Birmingham City Council and Sandwell MBC.

**Images and credits**


Pg 8 Blackburn (Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council). Pg 9 Hoyle Early Years Centre, Bury (Martine Hamilton Knight). Pg 12 Walker Riverside, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (CABE). Pg 13, 14 (left) Sandwell Characterisation Study (English Heritage/Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council). Pg 14 (right) Weaver's Triangle, Burnley (CABE).


Pg 42 (right) Gorse Hill Estate, Stretford, Manchester (Paul Pugh/Red Rose Forest). Pg 44 Saltwell Park, Gateshead (Aerofilms).

Pg 48 Staiths South Bank, Gateshead – under construction (CABE).

Pg 49 Design Task Group, East Lancashire (CABE).

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Case studies

1. Re-visioning through masterplanning: Oldham Beyond
2. Responding to the different spatial scales – adopting the right tools: urban design and the North Staffordshire Pathfinder
3. Co-ordinating Housing Market Renewal with other strategies at sub-regional level: East Lancashire Regional Park
4. Promoting communities’ willingness to engage with the process: Tyne View Primary School, Gateshead
5. Using spatial mapping: NewHeartlands GIS Survey
6. Issues to consider when thinking about housing market restructuring, particularly relating to clearance and retention of housing stock
7. Integrating educational provision into design-led regeneration: Neighbourhood Nurseries – First Start, Sheffield and Hoyle Early Years Centre, Bury
8. Community-led characterisation approach: Newcastle Urban Landscape and Townscape Assessment
9. English Heritage characterisation approach: Sandwell characterisation study
10. Using existing industrial heritage: Weaver’s Triangle, Burnley
11. Recognising the heritage value of green spaces: Saltwell Park, Gateshead
12. Options for converting terraces; projects from Blackburn and Salford
13. Remodelling Radburn layouts: lessons from existing projects
14. Meeting a community’s needs in remoulded homes: Bensham, Gateshead
15. Vision and identity projects: Design East Lancashire
16. Recycling previously used land, encouraging multiple uses of open space: Watergate Forest Park, Gateshead
17. Using design panels to promote and support design quality
18. Involving communities in the design process: Maine Road, Manchester
19. The role of design in signalling a change in priorities towards areas: Hulme and Hulme Park, Manchester
20. Design-led Housing Market Renewal strategies: Design East Lancashire
21. CABE’s work to promote better quality volume housing
22. Placing design quality at the heart of delivery: the design sub-group, Oldham and Rochdale
23. Developer competitions: Park Hill, Sheffield
24. Neighbourhood based design panels: Southey Owerton Area Regeneration (SOAR) Design Panel, Sheffield
25. Development guidelines: a guide to development in Manchester
26. Design coding pilot projects: Newcastle upon Tyne and Rotherham
27. Design charrettes: Blackburn with Darwen model
28. Public space management: Doncaster’s green space strategy
29. Cleaner, safer, greener: examples from Blackburn and Sheffield
30. Adopt design solutions that encourage sustainable lifestyles: St Mary’s, Oldham
31. Sustainable development guidelines: Elevate East Lancashire
32. Designing for diversity: Dale Mill, Wadsworth, Rochdale
33. A comprehensive strategy: Delivering design quality in South Yorkshire
34. Addressing skills issues: Hull & East Riding client guide workshops
35. Partnering with housing providers: NewHeartlands LIFE model
36. Engaging with the industry’s capacity to fund and deliver development: Gateway (Hull & East Riding) developer forum
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