

Friends of Birley Fields

Response to Strategic Review



**Birley
Fields
Open
Not
Enclosed**



Prepared by Friends of Birley Fields, April 2006
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Executive Summary

- This report has been written in response to the Birley Fields Strategic Review, which was developed by consultants Jones Lang LaSalle, on behalf of Manchester City Council.
- It is a collaboration between local individuals and groups, who have formed the Friends Of Birley Fields (FOBF) group, as a direct result of the Review.
- It is the general opinion of FOBF that the ideas and contents proposed in the Review are inappropriate for the land in question, and the needs of local people in Hulme.
- FOBF are particularly concerned that the consultation that took place in the development of the Strategic Review was greatly lacking, and that local people have had nowhere near enough opportunity to express their views on future plans for the study area.
- We are also concerned that the ideas within the Review are based too much on a 20th century strategy, i.e. the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP), and that these ideas need to be updated to reflect the national 21st century sustainable communities agenda.
- We feel that as a result of the UDP, and insufficient community consultation, the ideas contained are too heavily biased towards the economic, and are lacking in social and environmental content.
- We are also concerned that the Review fails to realise the importance and economic value of Birley Fields as a green space and biodiversity resource, and is too heavily biased towards the built environment
- There are two main sections in this report:
 - A review of local authority and central government policies and strategies which support community engagement through consultation, and the sustainable communities agenda
 - A review of local authority and central government policies and strategies in relation to urban green space and biodiversity
- Finally we include a set of recommendations, which we hope that MCC will consider, in relation to future development of Birley Fields.

Recommendations

- It is our hope that this document will help convince the Birley Fields Executive group to **further review** the Birley Fields site, taking into consideration the **views of local people**, particularly in relation to **social and environmental issues**, before any resolution is made, approving land use strategies for Birley Fields.
- Furthermore, it is our hope to continue, by working in **partnership** with MCC, to fully **engage the community**, to develop a clear vision, plan, and integrated strategy, that are sensitive to the needs of the local economy, people and the environment.
- We would recommend that relevant authorities review the **Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN) model**, which was developed by URBED in 1999, and reconsider the ideas and principles contained, using LDF Sustainability Appraisal objectives and indicators, and in context with the Birley Fields study area.
- Take into consideration the results of the **independent FOBF consultation** in future plans for the development of the area
- Consider working in **partnership** with FOBF, to develop a prototype **Area Action Plan** for Birley Fields, providing a detailed planning framework, which will:
 - i. undergo a thorough community consultation, using consultation techniques as outlined in the **LDF Statement of Community Involvement**, and the Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit;
 - ii. be subject to a **sustainability appraisal** as specified in the Manchester LDF procedures.

SECTION I: Introduction and Context

This report has been written by our newly formed group in Hulme, the **Friends of Birley Fields (FOBF)**. We are greatly disturbed by the lack of democratic process, and continued ignoring of local residents' wishes, concerning redevelopment in Hulme, which seems to be going ahead in spite of contravening local and governmental policies.

FOBF decided to come together because we fear that we are about to lose some valuable, local green space and that this is being done without any genuine consultation with the local people.

South Manchester is undergoing a long-term process of regeneration currently, and Hulme is a part of this process. The land in question is made up of the as-yet undeveloped sites located as follows:

1. Birley Fields itself;
2. north of Birley Fields up to Bonsall Street, on both sides of Princess Parkway (A56);
3. between Stretford Road and Bonsall Street (known as '*Europan*');
4. on the other side of Princess Road opposite *Europan*;
5. between Leaf Street and Princess Road (known as '*Spider Park*').

The Birley Fields Strategic Review¹ has proposed the following land use:

2. Birley Fields – offices
3. north of Birley Fields – hotels/leisure/showrooms
4. *Europan* – housing
5. other side of Princess Road – housing
6. *Spider Park* – housing

Friends of Birley Fields came together with two principal concerns:

1. that local people should be consulted in depth about how the land should be developed;
2. that the proposals for land use under the Framework are not appropriate.

It appeared that the ideas in the Review for Birley Fields were going to be pushed through without any consultation whatsoever. The plan was not seen by anyone in the local community until Friday 3rd February. It was then seen by the Hulme Alliance residents' association on Tuesday 7th, only because Councillor Vanessa Hall took it along to their meeting. As a result of this, Friends of Birley Fields (FOBF) was formed, and some members attended the **Community Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee**² meeting at the Town Hall the next day. They put forward the views of FOBF, including some ideas for locally relevant, ecologically sustainable developments. The

Framework plan was nevertheless accepted and put to the Executive meeting the following Wednesday, 15th February.

In the light of representations from FOBF, the Executive postponed the final decision to the end of May, and in the meantime three “consultation” drop-ins took place between 21st - 23rd March. The questionnaire format of these drop-ins meant that there was little genuine consultation taking place.

Firstly, there was very little actual information about the Framework, other than a display outlining the history of the regeneration of Hulme, which included some misleading statistics (e.g. it claimed that housing in Hulme is 44% council-owned – in reality the figure is just 27%³). The *Executive Summary* of the report was available for people to read, but no attempt had been made to present the ideas contained in it in a readily accessible form (i.e. in concise summary, with plans and maps).

Questionnaire respondents were shown an aerial photograph of the area in question, overlaid with colours representing the proposed land use (i.e. offices, hotels, leisure, showrooms, and housing). *It was not a detailed plan*, showing, for instance, how much green space would be left in areas that are entirely green space at the moment. The questionnaire itself was seriously flawed in that it allowed no input from respondents on how they would like the land to be used. For example, one question asks whether local people are in favour of the creation of “highly-skilled jobs?”. We were told that if respondents answered ‘yes’ that meant that they were agreeing to the building of more offices. Most people in this area do not want more offices, especially since there are several office buildings on Birley Fields that have lain empty for years.

Another question asked whether people wanted more leisure opportunities. Again, we were told that a positive answer would be taken to mean the respondent agreeing to the development of a gym or something similar. We are not necessarily opposed to such facilities, but we demand a voice for the people in the locality to share in the decision-making of what is built and where.

A third example is that if people said they wanted to see the provision of “affordable family housing” then they were agreeing to the use of the *European* (the section of land between Bonsall St and Stretford Rd) for this.

Where will there be any green space left?
What will be the density of housing?
Will it be built to environmental standards?

Other questions on the form were patronising, such as whether we want Hulme to be a “safer” or “more attractive” place to live. What is the point of asking such questions if we can’t have a say in the overall design or function of buildings that are going to be built?

It is evident that the whole process is being driven by a business agenda (as was made clear at the recent launch of the “**Manchester City Growth Action Plan**”⁴) and that the views of the local residents are not being counted.

FOBF are not mere nay-sayers: over the years local people have suggested many ideas for alternative uses of Birley Fields, which include social enterprises, a ‘town square’ or ‘village green’ area, workspaces, a managed wildlife area, a city farm, affordable housing, sheltered housing for older people, renewable energy systems – all of which would contribute both to the economic and community development of Hulme, and to the ecological sustainability of the area.

FOBF are concerned that our ideas are not being given the appropriate attention or consideration by the City Council, because we are not being offered real consultation. In our view, consultation comprises large public meetings at which ideas are invited and full discussion is allowed on all proposals put forward. In addition appropriate consultation for Birley Fields would involve in depth processes such as Planning For Real, for example, which is recommended in the Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit⁵. Finally it also involves full transparency of decision-making regarding what is being planned.

We respectfully request your comments on the above issue, and your support of FOBF in our very reasonable demand for **genuine** consultation with the City Council before the land is developed.

Time For A New Approach?

FOBF would like to see jobs created in Hulme, as much as anyone else, but if the current plan goes ahead these will not be local jobs for Hulme people:

- Since City Challenge in the 1990s, several million pounds of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) has been invested in the area of Hulme, and Birley Fields in particular, via Hulme Regeneration, then Hulme and Moss Side Partnership. The primary aim of this investment was to create up to 2,000 new jobs, largely through employing people in new office blocks sited on Birley Fields. However, several years down the line, far fewer jobs than this have been created, and many of the office blocks remain empty. More importantly for Hulme residents, virtually none of these new jobs have been for local people.

In addition to empty office blocks, there are other failed initiatives, which indicate that perhaps it is time to consider a new approach:

- In 1999 Hulme residents fought a sustained campaign on Birley Fields, to protect a Manchester Poplar tree known locally as the Birley Tree. The campaign was against the local authorities, and developers who wanted to build a hotel where the tree was situated. During the campaign, local people marched to the Town Hall, brandishing

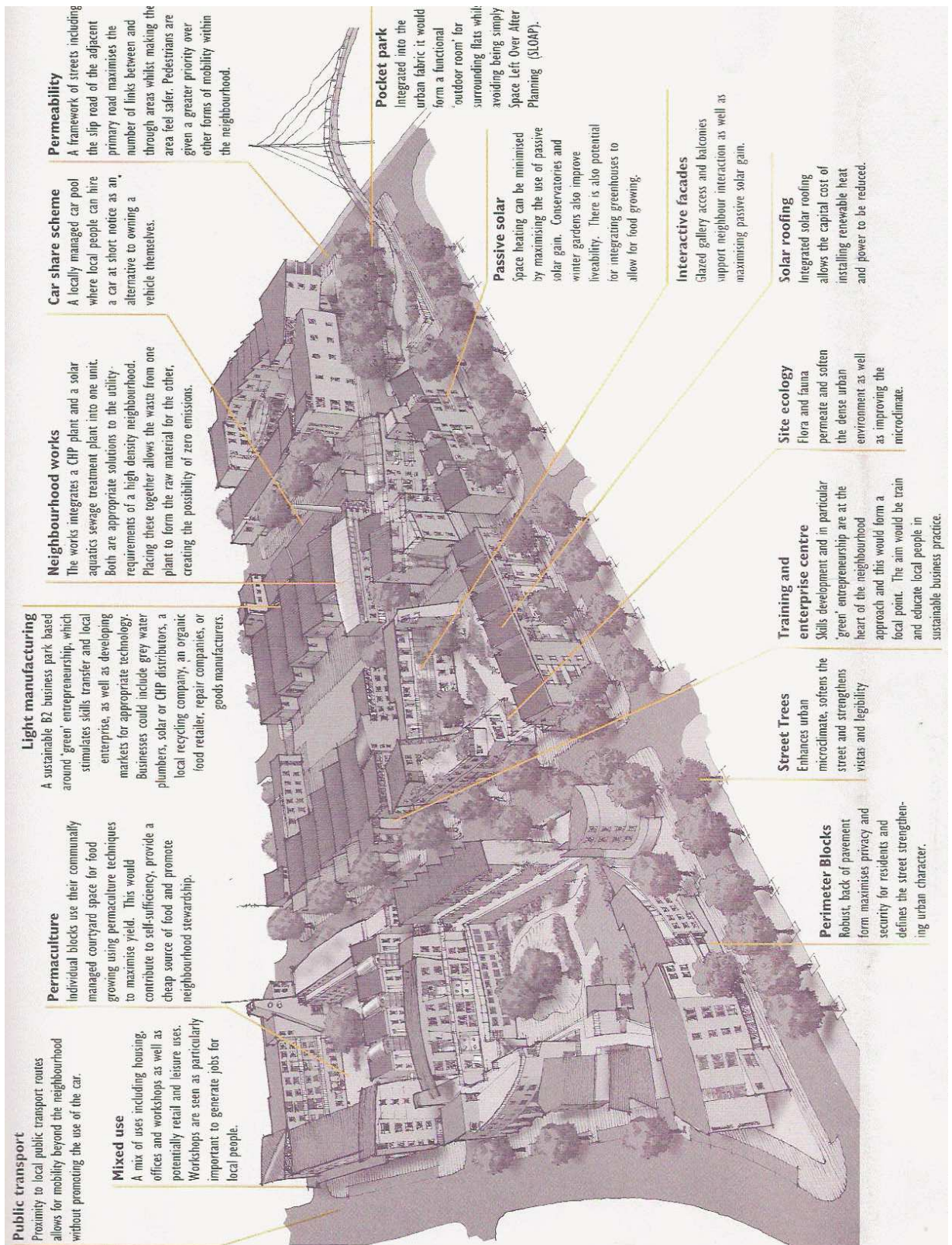
branches of the tree that had been chopped off by workers. The Birley Tree was the oldest tree in the ward, and was sadly felled against public opinion. After the campaign, the developers pulled out from the site, because they no longer thought that Hulme was an appropriate place for a hotel. Six years later the site remains vacant.



Birley Tree, 1999

- More recently, the Big Life Company developed plans for a mixed use building on the open space on Leaf Street, known locally as Spider Park, which is site to one of the ward's few examples of natural woodland regeneration, and lies adjacent to the busy Princess Park Way. Although the woodland does not have any regional ecological significance, it has massive social significance to local people, as a pocket of natural vegetation. Many local people turned out for a public consultation, and told the Big Life Company that they did not want to see this land built upon, because it is a valuable green space. Despite this, Big Life were determined to develop the site, and only pulled out when they discovered that the land was contaminated, and that soil remediation costs were prohibitive to the project. This indicates that the Leaf Street site is generally inappropriate for building projects, and that green space usage should be examined.

Alternative Strategies for a Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN)



Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood model developed by URBED, 1998. The building on the left hand side of the picture is Homes For Change Housing Co-op (phases 1 and 2).

Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN)

In 1998 the urban and economic development consultants, URBED developed a model Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN). The model was developed in a series of newsletter called SUN Dial⁶, and also published in a book called Building the 21st Century Home⁷ (David Rudlin and Nicholas Falk).

The concept behind SUN is that it is an **autonomous neighbourhood**. That is to say that it is a neighbourhood that can provide a high degree of its basic services from within its own boundaries. As can be seen in the diagram, the SUN model neighbourhood is a mixed use zone, featuring housing, workspace, public space and open space.

In addition it has the facility to produce much of its own energy, through passive and active means,

Also open space is put to productive use, through the growing of food in permaculture gardens, and on street trees for example,

The kinds of ideas presented in this model are a good example of how a truly sustainable Urban Neighbourhood would look and function.

- It is the recommendation of FOBF that relevant authorities review the **Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN) model**, and reconsider the ideas and principles contained, using LDF Sustainability Appraisal objectives and indicators, and in context with the Birley Fields study area.

Hulme Regeneration Guide

At the beginning of the last regeneration phase of Hulme, URBED were commissioned to produce a Regeneration Guide⁸, which contained a design code for developers working in the area. Many of the principles in the Guide were followed by developers. However, because none of the developers were obliged to follow the code, some housing blocks in the area are developed to higher urban standards than others.

It would be useful to review the Hulme Regeneration Guide, and adopt a modernised set of design principles, with a view to the regeneration of the Birley Fields site.

Green Infrastructure and Services

In more recent times, URBED have written reports on green infrastructure and services, based on research in Denmark and Germany, who are more advanced than the UK in these areas. Green infrastructure lay down master plans for sustainable development at a neighbourhood or city scale.

SECTION II: Local Authority and Central Government Policies and Strategies

Manchester Sustainable Community Strategy and Community Engagement Strategy

Manchester Partnership

The Partnership is a citywide structure wherein different interest groups, or partners engage, discuss, and make decisions about how services are delivered within the City. The Partnership strives to make Manchester green and sustainable, and to improve the quality of life for local people. The various members of the Partnership include the City Council, the Community Network For Manchester (which represents the community and voluntary sector), and various agencies including GM Chamber of Commerce, GM Police, GMPTA, Jobcentre Plus, Learning and Skills Council, Manchester Enterprises, and the NHS for example.

The Manchester Partnership is guided by a document called the **Sustainable Community Strategy 2006 - 2015**⁹. The Sustainable Community Strategy is replacing the former Community Strategy, and is currently out for consultation until June 12. The consultation edition was launched at the Manchester Way conference on March 18. In addition, the various partners are bound by a Local Area Agreement (or LAA), which is an agreement with central government to provide 'Best Value' in service delivery for local people.

Within the Partnership there are seven focal areas of work, which have been identified by the government, and form part of a national strategy for the renewal of deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Seven '*Thematic Partnerships*' have been formed, in order to deliver on each of these focus areas. The seven partnerships are called:

1. Health Inequalities
2. Economic and Local Employment
3. Crime and Disorder
4. Culture
5. Sustainable Neighbourhoods
6. Children and Young People
7. Transport

For more information on Manchester Partnership, visit the web site at: <http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk>

Community Network For Manchester (CN4M)

CN4M is a citywide network of individuals, and community and voluntary sector groups and organisations. CN4M has partnership status within Manchester Partnership, and serves the purpose of **community engagement** – which is about supporting and encouraging local people to engage in decision-making

processes in the City. Put another way, it is about devolution and local governance. Since Manchester Partnership is the main arena for strategic decision making in the City, engaging local people and groups in the Thematic Partnership structures is a key objective for CN4M.

In order to facilitate the engagement of local people, CN4M has seven thematic '**Pools**' which relate to, and act as bridges, between the community and the seven thematic Partnerships that comprise Manchester Partnership. The Thematic Pools are typically comprised of local people and groups, and act to convey information downwards from the Partnership to the community, and also to help formulate collective thinking within the community, which can be fed upwards to the relevant thematic partnerships.

Community Engagement Strategy

The Manchester Community Engagement Strategy¹⁰ was written in June 2003 and adopted by Manchester Partnership. It sets out what community engagement is, why we do it and what aims and objectives we have. The Strategy is for 2003-2008. Community Engagement, as specified in this strategy, is now intrinsic to Manchester Partnership, the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the workings of Manchester City Council. In addition, community engagement is intrinsic to Manchester's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) planning process. Within the LDF, community engagement will be enacted through effective consultation processes. Since the Community Network For Manchester (CN4M) is the organisation within Manchester Partnership, which is primarily responsible for engaging community and voluntary sector groups in the Partnership, and other decision-making processes in the City, it also has an intrinsic role to play in the delivery of the Community Engagement Strategy.

For more information on the Strategy, visit the City Council web site at:

<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/bestvalue/ward/communityengage.htm>

- From here you can download a copy of the Strategy.
- In addition you can download a copy of the **Community Engagement Toolkit**, which is a manual that has been developed to assist local groups and organisations engage in decision-making processes in the City.

For more information on community engagement, contact Patrick Hanfling, Community Engagement Development Officer:
phone - 0161 234 4093 / email - p.hanfling@manchester.gov.uk

Central Manchester Single Regeneration Framework (SRF)

The Central Manchester SRF district forms an arc around the south of the city centre, including Hulme and Moss Side in the west, and wrapping round the City Centre to include parts of Gorton in the east. The Framework, amongst other things:

- provides a 10-15 year vision for the area;
- a spatial development strategy; and
- reflects Manchester's Sustainable Community Strategy.

In principle the vision and spatial development strategy, contained within the SRF support the preservation of urban green spaces such as Birley Fields. For example there are a number of themes within the Framework's **vision** for Central Manchester, one of which is that neighbourhoods are 'liveable':

"They must be attractive places with high quality environments, and although Central Manchester has some high quality parks and open spaces, a greater emphasis on green and open spaces is required to strengthen neighbourhoods." ¹¹

In addition, the **spatial development strategy** contained within the SRF is based upon three core principles, which are:

1. connected communities;
2. an improved residential environment; and
3. employment accessibility

The second core principle of "**improved residential environment**" means amongst other things, "a general uplift in the environmental quality of the area", and the SRF states that improvement of environmental quality should be achieved in part through:

- Major parks or open spaces being maintained and improved to enhance the character and desirability of adjacent areas; and
- Green links being created through environmental improvements, to provide improved access to parks and enhance attractiveness of residential areas. ¹²

Despite the fact that the SRF emphasises the importance of urban green space, Birley Fields is cited as a special case on numerous occasions within the Framework, and is clearly identified as a strategic site for the development of office space. The third core principle in the SRF of "**employment accessibility**", identifies four **radial activity corridors**, which are the:

1. Parkway Office Corridor (Princess Rd)
2. Knowledge Corridor (Oxford Rd / Wilmslow Rd)
3. Enterprise Corridor (Stockport Rd)
4. Big Moves Corridor (Hyde Rd)

The four activity corridors have been named according to the dominant economic characteristics associated with them, so Princess Road has been branded the 'Office' corridor because it links the City Centre with the airport, and is seen as a prime office location. Oxford Road has been branded the 'Knowledge' corridor because of its obvious association with institutions such as the university and the BBC, and Stockport Road is the 'Enterprise' corridor because it is seen as having great potential for locating small scale enterprises.

The problem with this strategy is that the local economy of neighbourhoods located within the vicinity of the Office Corridor will be dominated by offices and associated businesses, and there is little or no scope for alternative activities such small scale enterprise.

The implications of this for Hulme people, and Birley Fields, are that the kind of sustainable neighbourhood initiatives that we are asking for, which seek to develop diverse local economies, and mixed-use land strategies, are precluded by the broader spatial development strategy for the area. All this is despite the fact that Hulme is already full of empty office blocks, and is full of enterprising people, desperate for affordable local work space.

In fact a priority objective for the Parkway 'Office' corridor within the SRF, is to, "Create a strong compelling case for further development at Birley Fields".

This suggests it is already known, that a strong and compelling argument exists, that further office development is not altogether appropriate. This is hardly surprising since the majority of expensive office blocks that have already been developed on Birley Fields have remained vacant for a number of years since they were built. In the Birley Fields Strategic Review, consultants Jones Lang LaSalle account the failure of these office blocks to "the global office market slow down following September 11th 2001", and to the rise of .com industries. Yet 9/11 was a long way-away, and a long time ago, and in the meantime, the office market has remained consistent within the city centre.

Within the SRF, the projected future office market is based upon the expansion of the city centre, and in particular the BBC, right into the heart of residential areas in Hulme. It would seem therefore, that in the case of Hulme and Birley Fields, the Central Manchester SRF core principle of an 'improved residential environment' is being sold out at the expense of the other core principle of 'employment accessibility'. Looked at from the community perspective, it would seem that business interests are being put forward, ahead of those of local people. In fact, this is contrary to the vision of the SRF that local neighbourhoods should be 'liveable'.

The SRF states that, "... Birley Fields has the capacity to further add to the Manchester offer and benefit significantly from the city growth strategy as a potential major hi tech/science or business/enterprise park. Further development work is underway to bring forward plans and investment which

capitalise on this key location. It will be important that key stakeholders recognise the importance of this development and provide appropriate support.”¹³

The question is who are the key stakeholders? Will the Birley Fields land ultimately capitalise external commercial interests, as is indicated in the SRF, and in the Birley Fields Strategic Review, or could it possibly be developed as an enormous chunk of social capital, to bond the disparate communities of Hulme into a sustainable urban neighbourhood?

Local Development Framework (LDF)

The Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for Central Manchester will influence Manchester’s emerging **Local Development Framework (LDF)**. Local Development Frameworks are the replacement for Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) under changes brought about in the government’s new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A LDF is a ‘suite’ of documents which will collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the city. (SRF p.156)

The LDF will consist of a suite of **Development Plan Documents (DPDs)**, including the core spatial strategy for the area, Area Action Plans (AAPs), site specific allocations, proposals and maps. Within the new planning system, any new DPD is subject to:

- a. community consultation
- b. sustainability appraisal

Community Consultation

The LDF **Statement of Community Involvement**¹⁴ lays out in detail how the community will be engaged in consultation processes, in the development and update of DPDs. The ‘Statement’ refers to the Manchester **Community Engagement Strategy and Toolkit**, and outlines various processes and techniques, from the Toolkit, which will be used in future consultation. The following is taken from the introductory text to the Statement of Community Involvement, which can be downloaded from:

<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/planning/development/sci/>

This Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the community and other stakeholders will be involved in planning processes in Manchester. The Council intends, through **early involvement of the community**, to ensure that the Local Development Documents that make up the Local Development Framework reflect the aspirations of the people who are stakeholders in Manchester’s development. This is in line with the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which sets out new standards for community involvement in the planning process including a requirement to **‘frontload’ consultation**. This means that

the Council will involve communities from the very beginning, before any policies are written.

Being “Community Focused” is one of the City Council’s Corporate Values, which states “We recognise that a successful city relies on the success of its neighbourhoods and communities. We want to meet the aspirations of all Manchester citizens by empowering communities and embracing their diverse identities”. Community involvement in the preparation of Local Development Framework policies will help to implement this value.

The emphasis here is on community involvement in early stages of development, with community focus being a corporate value of the City Council. This however is unlike our recent experiences at Birley Fields, where community involvement and consultation has been minimalist, and only after intervention from FOBF and supportive local councillors.

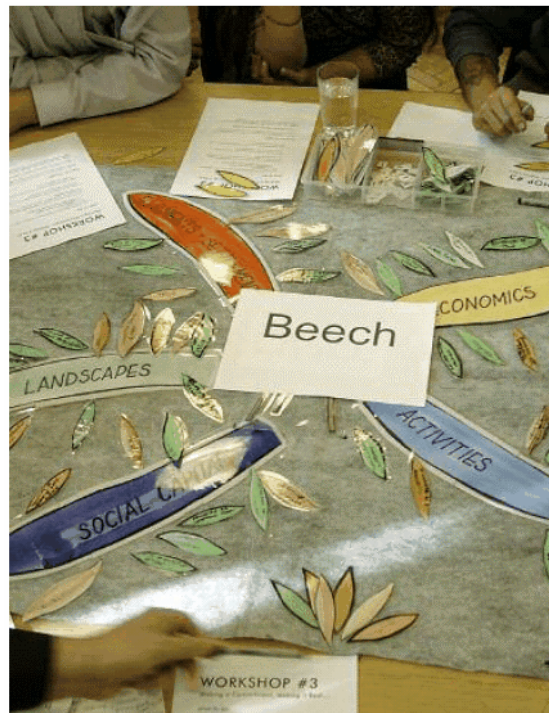
Sustainability Appraisal

The following is taken from the introductory text to the Sustainability Appraisal on the MCC web site at:

www.manchester.gov.uk/planning/development/sustainability/background.htm

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is now a mandatory element of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) process under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It must be carried out on all Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. The Sustainability Appraisal must also meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC.

The purpose of sustainability appraisal is to assess the social, environmental and economic effects of policies to **ensure that the plan is as sustainable as possible**. It is an integral part of good plan-making and should not be seen as a separate activity. The sustainability appraisal is an iterative process and should influence policies at each stage of the plan



preparation process. It will also be used in developing the arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the plan, which will lead to the identification of issues to inform the need for action or the revision/replacement of a policy.

The sustainability appraisal will play an important role in demonstrating if a local development document is '**sound**', by ensuring that it reflects sustainable development objectives (PPS12, p25). The following definition of 'sustainable development' was approved by Planning Policy Committee in May 2005;

"For Manchester, **Sustainable Development** means development that enables basic needs to be met and leads to a better quality of life for people living now and for future generations. This means living within environmental limits, in a healthy and just society, underpinned by a strong and stable economy"

The LDF Sustainability Appraisal has not yet been fully adopted by the City of Manchester. The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report¹⁵ is currently out for consultation. The consultation report includes a detailed set of sustainability objectives, and associated indicators, which will form the basis of the Appraisal. Although these have not been finalised, the report states that the Council does not anticipate that any additional sustainability issues or objectives will be required.

It is the opinion of FOBF that the ideas presented in the Birley Fields Strategic Review, completed by Jones Lang LaSalle, are not as **sustainable as possible**, and are not **sound**, because they fail on many of the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives in the draft report.

For example we believe that the ideas in the Strategic Review fall short on the following objectives:

Social:

- S4 Improve Health of the Population
- S5 Improve the qualifications and skills of the resident population
- S7 Reduce crime and perceptions of crime
- S8 Encourage a sense of community wellbeing and engagement
- S9 Ensure people's needs are met locally

Environmental:

- En1 Reduce the effects of traffic on the environment
- En2 Reduce air quality
- En4 Maintain and enhance the quality of the environment
- En5 Maintain and enhance biodiversity habitats and species
- En7 Ensure the prudent use of natural resources
- En8 Reduce contribution to climate change
- En9 Reduce impact of climate change

Economic:

- Ec1 Encourage a (strong &) stable economy
- Ec3 Encourage and accommodate both indigenous and inward investment
- Ec4 Encourage socially and environmentally responsible business

We can expand on our reasoning for questioning the above objectives, but this is beyond the scope of this report.

A Birley Fields Area Action Plan?

An **Area Action Plan** (AAP) is “a type Development Plan Document (DPD) which will be used to provide a **planning framework for areas undergoing significant change**.”¹⁶

AAPs will sit within the emerging Manchester LDF, alongside other physical plans throughout the city, and will be subject to community consultation, and a sustainability appraisal, in the same way that other DPDs are.

It is clear that Birley Fields is an area which is destined to undergo significant change, and although the Manchester LDF has not yet been adopted, we believe that FOBF can work in **partnership** with MCC as **early adopters**, and **champion** the LDF process, by **test piloting** the procedures.

We recommend therefore that MCC consider working in partnership with FOBF, to develop an AAP for Birley Fields, providing a detailed planning framework, which will:

- a. undergo a thorough community consultation, using consultation techniques as outlined in the LDF Statement of Community Involvement, and the Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit;**
- b. be subject to a sustainability appraisal as specified in the Manchester LDF procedures.**

We believe that this approach will work well for local people, and for the city as a whole. In addition it will benefit the emerging LDF, by acting as a test case for the various processes under development.

Manchester Green City

In March 2005, Manchester City Council resolved to become the UK's greenest city, and a year later, on March 13 2006, launched the high profile Manchester Green City campaign. More information on this can be found at:

www.manchestergreencity.co.uk

FOBF see Birley Fields as an excellent opportunity for the City Council to walk their talk, by working with local people, to develop an exemplar Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Area Action Plan for the site.

In order to achieve this however, we believe it is essential that there is less emphasis on the economic, and more focus on social and environmental design.

Manchester Strategies

In addition to the Manchester Green City campaign, there are an increasing number of strategies and campaigns being initiated by the City Council, which reinforce the vision and social and environmental aspirations of FOBFs.

These include:

- Wild About Manchester biodiversity strategy
- Manchester Tree Strategy
- Manchester Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Food Futures
- Manchester Energy Strategy
- Hulme and Moss Side Energy Action Zone

... to name but a few.

More information can be provided on how we see Birley Fields relating to these strategies, but this is beyond the scope of this report.

ODPM Sustainable Communities strategies

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) launched their Sustainable Communities Five Year Plans¹⁷, at the national Sustainable Communities Summit, which was hosted at Manchester GMEX, in 2005.

The Five Year Plans can be obtained from the ODPM web site at: www.odpm.gov.uk (follow links to 'About ODPM' and 'Five Year Strategy')

ODPM's five year plans represent the next phase in creating sustainable communities. Together they offer greater choice and opportunity in housing, promote prosperity for all, and help local people create communities they feel proud of. The Plans include:

- **Sustainable Communities: Homes for All**
(A five year plan offering everyone the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford.)

- **Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity**
(Shows how, working across the whole of Government, the ODPM will promote prosperity for all and help local people create communities they feel proud of.)

People Places and Prosperity

Creating sustainable communities is about more than just housing. Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity sets out action to revitalise neighbourhoods, strengthen local leadership, and increase regional prosperity to create places in which people want to live and work.

It outlines the ODPM's plans to help people shape their communities to provide safe, clean and green environments and offer security, opportunity and choice for all, building on two key principles:

- **putting people in control and giving them the tools to shape their future**; and
- acting at the right level, with good governance and strong leadership, to get services right.

According to the ODPM vision, sustainable communities should be:

- **Active, inclusive and safe** - fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
- **Well run** -with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- **Environmentally sensitive** - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- **Well designed and built** - featuring a quality built and natural environment
- **Well connected** - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- **Thriving** - with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- **Well served** - with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
- **Fair for everyone** - including those in other communities, now and in the future.

Community Engagement is at the heart of the ODPM Sustainable Communities strategy:

“Neighbourhoods are the areas which people identify with most. They are the places where they live, work and relax. We intend to put more power in the hands of local people and communities, supported by local, regional and national government, to shape their neighbourhoods and the services they rely on - including housing, schools, health, policing and community safety.”

SECTION III: The Case for Managed Green Spaces and Biodiversity



The focus of the Birley Fields Strategic Review, is on the development of the study area primarily as an “employment opportunity”. Birley Fields is cited for land uses including: offices, hotels, leisure, showrooms and housing, all of which, it is felt would add to the density of an already highly built-up urban area. Although there is reference in the Review to “ecological development”, and “biodiversity”, there is no reference to **how much** green space would be maintained, or to any **expansive** of green space, which would have a significant effect in reducing the impact of the envisaged very-high-density built environment.

It is the general feeling of FOBF that a significant amount of the study area should be developed as **well managed green space**, and that within this an **expansive area** should be maintained, in order to avoid the impacts of over-development. MCC along with every other local authorities in the country, have a duty to maintain and enhance local biodiversity, in context with regional and national biodiversity strategies. Wild About Manchester, the local strategy, sets out how biodiversity will be maintained within the city, and well managed green spaces are a key to this.

The following sections summarise research by local group – Hulme Green Spaces, concerning:

- National Policy Perspectives
- City Wide Policy Perspectives
- Local Hulme Perspectives

National Policy perspectives

“The value of accessible greenspace, managed in a more informal naturalistic way, within and around towns and cities, has long been recognised for people and wildlife.” Manchester City Council (Parks for All Seasons -Manchester Leisure’s Parks Strategy)

With the introduction of the Local Government Act (2000) all local authorities are committed to the principle of sustainable development, which means that development strategies must include a coherent and balanced approach that balances social economic and environmental factors. Alongside this, Local Community Plans mean Councils have a statutory responsibility to ensure their services meet the needs of the community.

Hulme's Community Plan, like all those in the country must include biodiversity as a core aspect (CROW Act 2001). In addition, in order to assist this process, DEFRA has issued “Life Support” which advises local authorities on how to incorporate biodiversity into local Community Strategies. The Local Government Association, in their statement on biodiversity, (200??) referred to the key role local authorities have in conserving and enhancing biodiversity through a sustainable approach to development, appropriate management of parks and the vital role of partnerships in delivering this process. All local authorities are obliged to conduct an audit of open space, and assess the provision of natural greenspace and potential for improvement.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM) and the government created advisory body Commission for the Built Environment (CABE) have, since 2003, delivered a series of policy documents on the multiple benefits of urban green spaces, and stressed the UK government’s commitment to reversing the decline of urban green space and flagging them up as assets to communities and local authorities. Over the last 18 months CABE Space has commissioned new research into the economic value of green spaces and the way that cities around the world use green spaces to generate inward investment and economic prosperity.¹⁸

In “Living Spaces, Better Places” the government’s Urban Green Spaces Taskforce reported on the integral role of public green space in providing local communities with places to come into contact with the natural world. Government guidance PPG 17 obliges all local authorities to audit open space in order that a green-space network **which meets the needs of the community** be developed.

All this intensive research and policy guidance highlighted several common themes, which unite under the overarching theme of **quality of life**. Urban green space had significant positive effects on existing communities and in

regeneration in terms of economic value, physical and mental health, social cohesion and inclusion and benefit for wildlife. Aside from the intrinsic value of having nature in our cities, urban wildlife habitats also provide a focus for local communities, who often become very attached to them, involving communities to create a shared vision. CABE outlined evidence to show that people use their local public spaces more, and are more satisfied with them, if these include natural elements: even more so if they were 'natural' than if they were man-made.

In 2005 Government minister Yvette Cooper spoke at a flagship conference "Urban Green Spaces" - sustaining the renaissance – a one day conference on the support government could give to local authorities to improve green spaces. That conference was sponsored by Regeneration and Renewal magazine, which has focused regularly on the significance of urban green space over the last two years, highlighting the economic, social, community and conservation value of green space.

Manchester – policy perspectives

Manchester City Council has been a lead partner in several key strategies developed over the past 5 years highlighting the importance of green space, aimed at improving the quality of life in the city. These include "Parks for All Seasons -Manchester Leisure's Parks Strategy" (referred to throughout), "Greening Manchester" and the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy.

Manchester Green City - Campaign to make Manchester Britain's Greenest City. www.manchestergreencity.co.uk

The Manchester Biodiversity Strategy was adopted in April 2005, the delivery of which is facilitated by a group of lead agencies, including Manchester City Council. It includes urban green space as a 'priority habitat', and makes extensive reference to sustainability as expressed through concern for wildlife and habitats.

"Building vibrant sustainable communities means involving people in all aspects of development, including biodiversity." It makes specific provision for the role and importance of biodiversity in regeneration and development, which is worth stating in full:

"Large regeneration schemes such as New East Manchester and the North Manchester strategic framework will reshape communities and their environment. Biodiversity can be integrated into these development plans. In turn, through a number of different funding sources, biodiversity can be a means of leveraging more funds into regeneration."

Objective 5 of the strategy states that partners signed up to the aim to "ensure that biodiversity is integrated into the wider sustainable development agenda, as well as incorporating biodiversity into new build, opportunities will arise to secure funding for biodiversity related projects."

In 2005 the partners delivered a workshop which produced 5 further objectives which included the importance of a sustainable development agenda being adopted across Manchester and noted the need to provide information about the value of 'wild' or 'unkept' green spaces to the public.

Local Hulme Perspectives

In 2006 the consultants Jones Lang La Salle (JLL) delivered the Birley Fields Review. This report made several definite recommendations about the future of the land currently not occupied by built structures. It also recommended that a Land use Strategy and a Master plan for the site be devised. It stated that “a significant amount of background research was undertaken including an assessment of all issues associated with town planning, accessibility and the characteristics of the site”.

It concluded that “The Development Strategy over the first ten years has involved limited greening” and refers to a “stark landscape”. There is mention of the “potential to build upon the broad theme of sustainability particularly as it relates to innovative approaches to the built environment. This would link to Hulme’s role as an Energy Conservation Area pilot”.

It remarks on the European site - “Linked to the findings of the University of Salford Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) report, it has the potential to be brought forward with high Sustainability and Eco Standards as a model of Best Practice. However, the reference is not expanded. JLL conclude that the right approach for the Birley Fields Study Area is based around the following key components:

- **clearer Vision**
- **better Plan**
- **more Integrated Strategy**

In 2002 the University of Salford SURF undertook the “Hulme, Ten years on - final report to Manchester City Council” (June 2002). The report set out to assess what had been achieved by the Hulme regeneration programme and to look at outstanding challenges. It used focus groups to reveal the attitudes and opinions of local people. Key findings were that “All wished to see more market facilities and services, and a more interesting, greener and safer environment”. It stated that “adult residents were more interested in retaining sites for public uses, and the development of less polluting forms of transport”.

The report recognised that 80% of objectives had been achieved but that a reappraisal was needed to create a new vision, which balanced the various development agendas with the retention of open space (not specified) and delivered an integrated strategy to improve life opportunities of local people.

APPENDIX I - Friends of Birley Fields Consultation

1. Did you take part in the consultation that took place in March 2006 concerning the future redevelopment of Birley Fields and other parts of Hulme?

(tick one)

Yes No

- 2.a) If no, would you now like to be consulted on the future redevelopment of Hulme? (tick one)

Yes No

- 2.b) If yes, would you like to be *further* consulted on the future redevelopment of Hulme? (tick one)

Yes No

3. Please arrange the following in order of importance for you regarding priorities for the future redevelopment of the Birley Fields area, between Asda and Stretford Road.

(Indicate **10** to **1**, with **10** being the *most important*, down to **1** being the *least important* to you personally – blank/zero indicates *zero priority* – will be scored zero.)

Social/affordable housing		Larger/national businesses (e.g., hotel or showroom)	
Green space (managed or wild)		Private housing	
Commercial leisure (e.g., bowling alley or gym)		Outdoor community/leisure (e.g., city farm/allotments)	
Community businesses (e.g., timber/furniture recycling)		Smaller/local shops	
Offices/office space		Community space/ event venue	

4. Regarding the whole area of land in question, between and next to the Hulme Arch and towards the ASDA supermarket, how much of these fields would you like to see remain as green space (e.g., as public parks, wild, or both)? (*Please tick one of these options*)

None apart from small gardens	About one third	About half	More than half	All

Name: Postcode.....

(For verification purposes only)

APPENDIX II – Local Ideas For Birley Fields

The following is a list of alternative ideas for Birley Fields, from local people who are involved with FOBF. It is just a small cross-section of Hulme, and the list should not be considered as a consultation in any form. The ideas are included here for interest only.

- A City Farm - Sheffield City Farm does training, work with people with learning disabilities, conservation work and gets 100,000 visitors per year. It's also home to the national Community Composting Network (which incidentally might form part of what we could do on Birley Fields, perhaps alongside TRIM and the recycled fridges idea somebody had?). Oh and there are animals too... – Jeremy Davies
- Horses on the farm – Hannah
- I think a farm would be great but more little, useful shops would be better – Elric Melnibone
- I loved the town square idea - and I think it needs more services for people. We've got our regulation post office, corner shop, library, doctor, dentist and meeting halls, but what would be the things that we need to do regularly or irregularly that you'd rather do (or it would be more convenient to do) in Hulme?
- Rather than a farm, where's Manchester - or even Cheshire or Lancashire's - organic food places or *weekly* farmer's markets? Something like that could serve a wide area and bring money into Hulme. That could be spun into a collection of shops that would be something unique - like Manchester's equivalent of the famous Borough Market and its surrounding shops and so on...
- there's no earthly reason why a farmer's market (which would, I agree, be lovely) couldn't be held on the site, and sell our homegrown stuff (which would also be used in the on-site cafe) alongside other producers' stuff. The farm would also, in time, provide employment opportunities, plus vocational training, and perhaps most importantly strong educational links with the local schools - to help raise expectations of what Hulme kids can achieve and offer. This is not about what we fancy having, but about genuinely trying to make this regeneration experiment into something tangible and real, rather than a bunch of piles of bricks – Jeremy Davies
- an IT centre with state of the art facilities which provides training for local people in all aspects of IT (I've actually enquired about a course there myself). In addition, there are on site facilities that provide advice for people wishing to start their own business, and incubator and early years premises are also provided to help fledgling businesses through their formative years - Ruffyndmond

- a Combined Heat and Power plant. Where you have a power source generating electricity and the exhaust gases are then used to heat water which then can be pumped around a district to provide hot water and heating – Patrick
- What about an art gallery then we could have local artist showings. Here's the first one, all go round taking pictures of the parking problems in Hulme and get them displayed in the gallery. Craig
- How about a car park? – Chris Dabinett
- Maybe an astroturf 5-a-side pitch for youngsters or something most of them are bored so take to crime, there are less places than when I was growing up. – mike-huntsnr
- Paul Miller:-
 1. A Sports School with multi-use pitches, training facilities and national level coaches.
 2. An Environmental Research Centre [This is supposed to be a 'Science Park' after all].
 3. A covered tropical garden, Birmingham has a Botanical Garden, Sheffield has a winter garden where's Manchester's Kew?
 4. A working Orchard/Fruit garden.
 5. Year round Flower Market.
 6. Combined BMX and skate park, subsidised and supervised.
 7. Debating Chamber, community function rooms and local Government Surgery. Free access to all, incorporates courtyard with community café and BBQ space.
 8. Combined Restaurant and Farmers Market, - let Hulme do its bit to support local Cheshire Farmers. Every Sunday Birley fields is transformed into a sea of tweed, turnips and cheese, while during the week a new restaurant uses locally grown produce to prepare superb quality food
- Patrick:-
 1. a business unit to carry out Manchester council's responsibility towards WEEE (Waste Electrical Electronic Equipment) directive
 2. an Energy from Waste plant.
 3. wind-turbines –
- Community Centre
- city square/green – Derek McAuley
- a green enterprise zone, including businesses like a timber recycling firm – Vanessa Hall

Notes and References

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2. Birley Fields Report to Community Regeneration and Overview Scrutiny Committee
3. There are 2,046 Council properties in Hulme, out of a total of 7,435
4. <http://www.manchesterknowledge.com/> (These plans have been formulated in line with the theory of “growth clusters” devised by Professor Michael Porter, *who attended the launch along with Richard Lease.*) See <http://www.manchesterknowledge.com/press.asp?action=view&id=61572>
5. Manchester Community Engagement Toolkit
<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/bestvalue/engage/index.htm>
6. Sun Dial – newsletter for the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Initiative, URBED, 1998. www.urbed.co.uk
7. The Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood – Building the 21st Century Home, Rudlin and Falk, 1999, Architectural Press.
8. Hulme Guide to Development, URBED.
9. Manchester Sustainable Communities Strategy 2006-15, Manchester Partnership. <http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/>
10. Manchester Community Engagement Strategy
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- 11, 12, 13. Central Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework Final Draft pages 27, 35 and 49, October 2005, Manchester City Council
14. Local Development Framework Statement of Community Involvement, Manchester City Council, 2006.
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15. Local Development Framework Sustainability Appraisal, Manchester City Council, 2006. <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/planning/development/>
16. LDF Statement of Community Involvement page 39
17. ODPM Five Year Plans, 2005.
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18. The Value of Public Space - How high quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value CAFE, March 2004; Green space strategies - Making the most of your parks and green spaces (CAFE, 01 May 2004); Streets of Shame - Summary of findings from ‘Public Attitudes to Architecture and the Built Environment’. London, CAFE, 2002. Also, Countryside Rights of Way Act (HM Government 2000), “Life Support” (Local & Regional Strategy Implementation Group of the England Biodiversity Group, DEFRA; “Living Spaces, Better Places” Urban Green Spaces Taskforce