

# **Sustainable Neighbourhoods - a UK urban perspective**

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# Sustainable Development

## – the UK perspective

- The new UK SD Strategy was launched in March 2005 – entitled ‘Securing our Future’.
- Four key areas:
  - Sustainable consumption & production
  - Natural resources protection
  - Sustainable communities - *global to local*
  - Climate change

Changing behaviour is a common theme

Environmental inequalities are also discussed

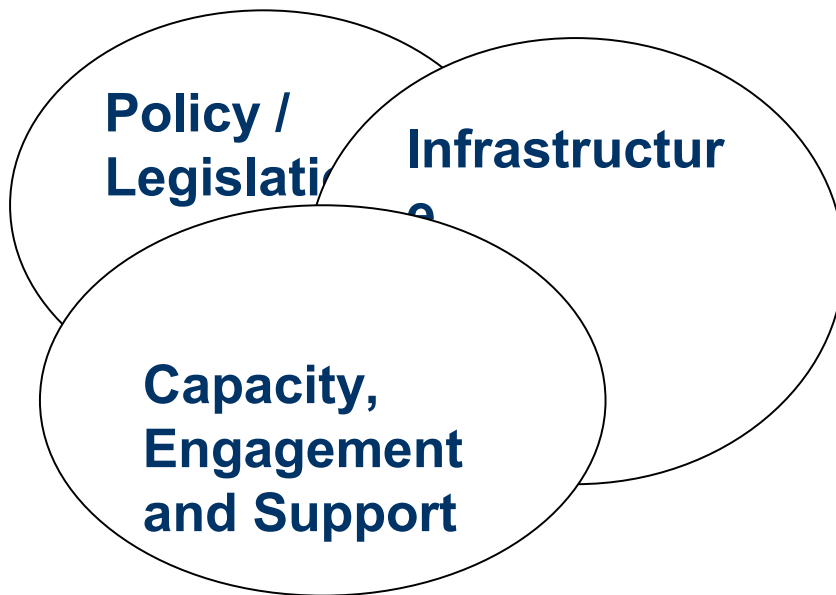
# A focus on local engagement

**Why does this matter? One answer:  
Lasting and sustainable change  
requires action on:**

- **Policy**
- **Infrastructure (locally and nationally)**
- **Community engagement and capacity**

# The value of local action for SD

- These three are all linked: it is difficult to deliver change without action on all three.



# Making it work – action at the local /neighbourhood level

The Neighbourhood? – defined as:

- A district or area with distinctive characteristics:
- The people who live near one another or in a particular district or area:
- The surrounding area; vicinity:

Place, People, Characteristics.....

# Sustainable communities and neighbourhoods

- ‘Sustainable Communities’ now central to UK development policy
- Much work using this phrase was done by LA21 groups in the 1990s
- The ‘new version’ emerges from work on urban regeneration
- This now the central focus of work by the ODPM (Ministry responsible for local government and regeneration)
- Many are asking ‘where’s the sustainable development?’

# **Sustainable communities should be:** **(the official version from the SD Strategy)**

- 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.

## **Sustainable communities (2) also:**

- 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

# So what does this look like?

- A neighbourhood has got people
- This implies houses and transport system
- **What else should there be in a 'sustainable neighbourhood'?**

# The ODPM view

For communities to be sustainable, they must offer:

- Decent homes at prices people can afford
- Good public transport
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Shops
- A clean, safe environment

# **So how big is a neighbourhood?**

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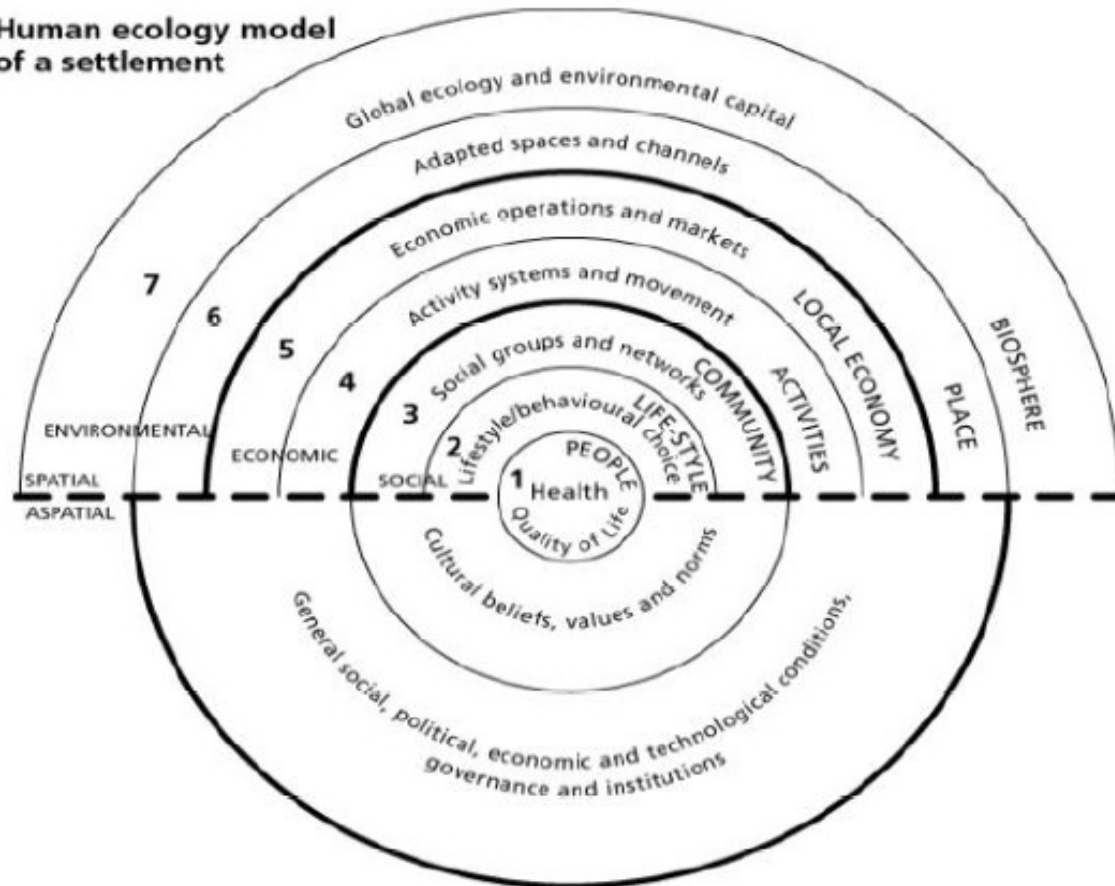
**The estate? The village?**

**The electoral ward? The street?**

**And what kind of measures  
should we use?**

# Bringing it all together

Human ecology model of a settlement



Source: Hugh Barton 2003

# The neighbourhood – a 'nice place to live'?

A place where the residents should be able to meet most of their needs?

## What's in a neighbourhood?

It is useful to consider four types of 'neighbourhood assets':

- fixed capital (such as buildings, plant, machinery and roads);
- human capital (the skills and knowledge people hold, and also their personal health);
- environmental capital (equated with neighbourhood amenity); and
- social capital (social norms and networks which promote co-operative behaviour).

*(Geoff Green et al., JRF, 2004)*

# And why aren't neighbourhoods sustainable?

Many neighbourhoods face serious problems.

Neighbourhood Renewal programmes aim to improve the quality of life for those living in the most disadvantaged areas by tackling:

- Poor job prospects
- High crime levels
- Educational under-achievement
- Poor health
- Problems with housing and their local environment

**Environment is often neglected as an issue – should there be more of a focus?**

# Delivering Sustainable Communities

The ODPM Sustainable Communities plan: the Plan consists of several key elements:

- Addressing the housing shortage.
- Addressing low demand and abandonment.
- Decent homes.
- Liveability.

This Plan is widely criticised: is there a better way?

# Turning a neighbourhood around

Consider the area of Walford:

- 12 minutes by train from Liverpool St. station
- 12,000 people, little industry
- 45% social housing, 30% private rented, 25% owner occupier
- Poverty and health stats make it a Neighbourhood Renewal area
- It's been selected for a 'sustainable neighbourhood flagship programme'

***Where would you start?***

# First action points...

The slide features a light green background with a white rounded rectangle in the top-left corner. The text 'First action points...' is written in a dark teal font within this white area. A thick, dark blue horizontal bar spans across the slide below the text. The left edge of the slide is a solid green vertical bar.

**And who would you want to engage with?**



# Working in neighbourhoods – who's involved?

Many professions will have an interest in any major development:

- Housing
- Planning
- Health
- Environment
- Community Development
- And?

# Inter-disciplinary work – a problem and challenge

Neighbourhood work is inherently inter-disciplinary - as is work on sustainable development. This can lead to a number of problems which need to be tackled:

- Different disciplines see and evaluate similar projects in quite different ways. This may include how they evaluate as well as the criteria they use.
- Knowledge gaps and language barriers exist but may not be obvious to participants.

# Towards effective inter-disciplinary work

- Inter-disciplinary work involves the transfer or sharing of power. This needs to be made clear and agreement reached over who has the power and responsibility.
- Each discipline has core areas of knowledge and expertise. Joint working should help expand these areas rather than challenge them.
- Barriers to joint working seem to come mostly from disciplines with highly qualified professionals and traditions (This problem may be inherent in our education system).

# From 'cleaner & greener' to genuinely sustainable

## *Looking for 'pretty good practice'*

- Housing
  - From Decent Homes to Eco-Homes
- Transport
  - ...?
- Green spaces
  - ...?

# New and old neighbourhoods

- Much of the focus is on new build, yet most people will never live in a new house
- New settlements – new opportunities, such as ‘Transit-oriented developments’ (Calthorpe)
- Old settlements – build on what’s there, though e.g. ‘walking circles’ - these may be based on the historical development of an area (Barton et al.)

# Changing neighbourhoods

- Sustainable development provides a valuable interdisciplinary frame of reference
- Finance for high-quality work is often a limiting factor
- Engagement of those living there is crucial
- Neighbourhoods are people's homes: given an adequate opportunity and support they will engage vigorously as long as they think they can help make real change happen....

