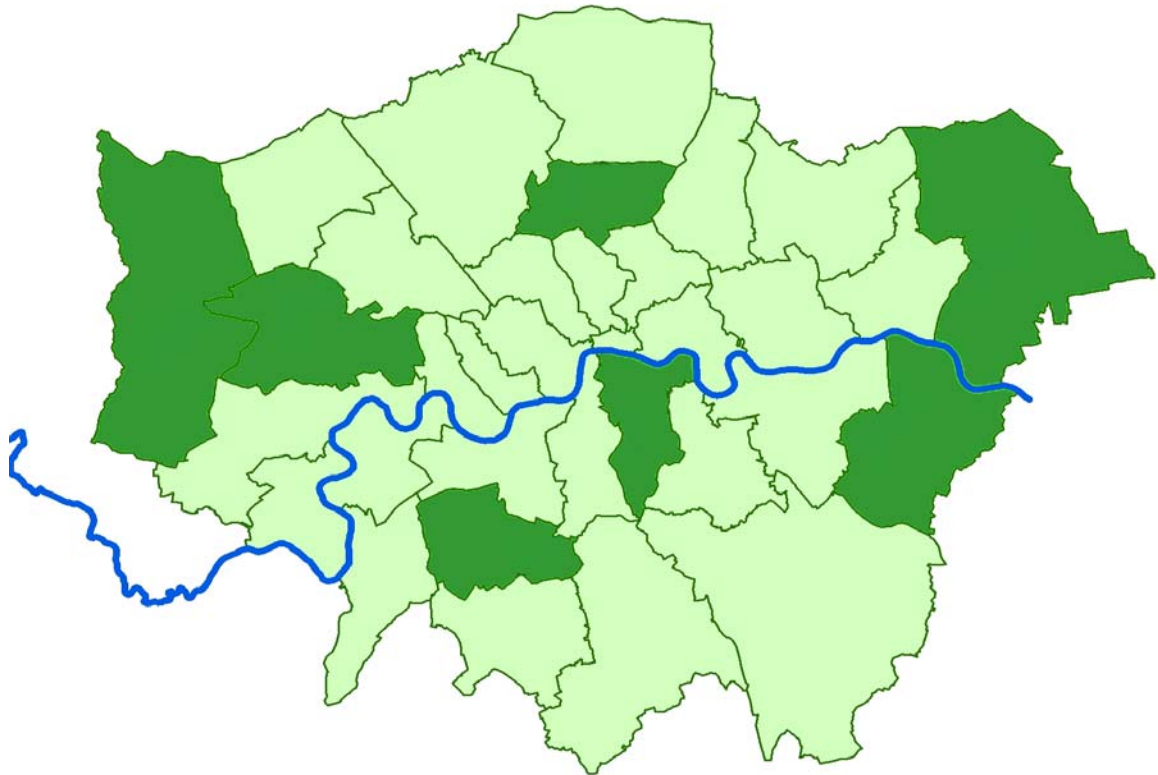


Piloting the Mayor's 'Tomorrow's Suburbs' Toolkit



MAYOR OF LONDON

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This report was prepared by Groundwork London and details the key findings of a project piloting the Toolkit previously prepared by URBED for the GLA and partners.

The project was guided by a Steering Group with representatives from the GLA, the LDA, TfL and Groundwork.



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1. Project Context and Methodology

As part of the preparation for the London Plan (the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy) the GLA commissioned URBED to prepare a report on London's suburbs, *A City of Villages*, which formed one of the Plan's background documents. Subsequently URBED was commissioned by a consortium of the GLA, LDA, ALG and TfL to develop *Tools for Making London's Suburbs More Sustainable*. This Toolkit has been published by the Mayor for formal consultation early in 2005.

The Toolkit has been designed as a source of practical information on ways of making London's suburbs more sustainable, in line with the Mayor of London's strategies. It could also be described as a handbook, a resource, a gateway, or a new approach to planning; but its aim is to provide ready access to information on a wide range of practical actions specifically relevant to suburbs. It does not deal with issues that would only be relevant to the whole of London or non-suburban situations, (although some of the tools could be used in other parts of the Capital).

The earlier URBED research identified seven key themes for London's suburbs, which now form the framework for the Toolkit:

- Reinforcing the role of local centres
- Making new development sustainable
- Improving the existing housing stock
- Promoting alternatives to travel by car
- Improving environmental sustainability
- Protecting and promoting suburban employment
- Improving design and the public realm.

From these, URBED has subsequently prepared a series of one-page tool sheets (in this version there are 67 in total) that provide basic information and pointers to other relevant sources, the policy context in the London Plan, and related topics. However, since every suburb is different, judgements about which tools could be relevant and what actions may be required can only be determined locally.

A more detailed introduction for the Toolkit, and an explanation of how to use it, is available from the GLA in hard copy form, and the tools themselves are available as a CD.

Purpose and outcomes of this pilot project

The purpose of this pilot project was to test the tools in practice with a selection of suburban areas across London over a period of approximately nine months (February – October 2005). The pilot has been developed and delivered by Groundwork in partnership with the existing consortium, and funded by Groundwork London, the GLA and LDA. The partners are indebted to URBED for the previous work, on which this pilot is based.

The Mayor's London Plan starts from the vision of an exemplary sustainable world city, a concept developed in the Plan itself and in other supporting strategies and good practice guidance. To achieve it, an integrated approach to the development of all parts of London will be crucial, and the suburbs – as the major focus for residential living, with related services and employment – have a central part to play. Consequently, while the primary aim of this project has been to test the Toolkit, its wider purpose was to make a start on encouraging, supporting and promoting sustainable suburban development in London.

Seven pilot areas were selected, covering a range of different circumstances that can provide an indicative test bed for the Toolkit approach. While each was seen as an individual case



study, there has also been a common framework based on the seven themes and a shared methodology, with a co-ordinated approach to the project as a whole, so that the opportunities for learning could be exploited – both within each pilot, and between them all. As a pan-London project, there is therefore a clear intention to use this as a model for future application throughout London, in this or a modified form.

The pilots are not seen as merely theoretical studies of which tool sheets can be used, and how they could be applicable. The intention was to use the tools to tackle the key issues in each case, and to generate practical solutions to local needs. Each was expected to progress at least to the stage of drawing up an agreed local action programme that has broad local support, and which could be implemented progressively following the pilot. In some cases, there was a wish to move on more rapidly to implementation of practical actions as a result of the learning process; and while this was considered to be beyond the scope of the resourced pilots, it has been encouraged as a demonstration of where this approach could lead.

The methodology (set out below) is based on partnership building, with the aim of developing the capacity of suburban communities to generate shared solutions to the needs of their localities. Achieving that objective was a key outcome in each case.

The initial phase of this project formed part of Groundwork's pan-London SRB programme, *Changing Places, Changing London Lives*, which concluded in March 2005.

Suburban characteristics and pilot locations

The London Plan includes a commitment that...*"in collaboration with the boroughs the Mayor will prepare good practice guidance and a sustainable suburbs toolkit to guide development policies in suburban centres, employment areas, neighbourhoods and heartlands"*. The London Plan divides London's suburbs into these four types of areas, for which different policies may be appropriate:

- Town Centres – the district and local centres around which most of the suburbs are built (but excluding metropolitan and major centres)
- Neighbourhoods – the areas within easy walking distance of town centres (usually predominantly residential)
- Residential Heartlands – residential areas further away from town centres
- Employment Locations – places in the suburbs that have important concentrations of jobs.

At the outset of this pilot project, the selected locations had to consider how these characteristics were reflected in their specific cases, and how the seven themes should therefore be addressed as the framework for using the Toolkit, in order to achieve the Mayor's strategy that is set out in the London Plan:

- to look for intensification of development in town centres as a focus for retail and leisure, commercial activity and services
- to promote the neighbourhood areas around town centres with good access by foot or public transport for higher density and mixed use development
- to minimise resource consumption and waste, and encourage biodiversity, greener travel and environmental sustainability in all areas, including the heartlands
- to safeguard and expand jobs in employment locations.

Although any number of suburbs could have been chosen as potential pilots, the following were drawn in part from URBED's original research for *A City of Villages*, and their more recent seminars with Boroughs to test reactions to an earlier draft of the Toolkit, together with a need



to achieve a pan-London balance of different types and circumstances. With the exception of Myddleton Road, all pilots are classified in the London Plan as Major or District Centres

- Greenford (LB Ealing)
- Hayes (LB Hillingdon)
- Hornchurch (LB Havering)
- Myddleton Road (LB Haringey)
- Mitcham Village (LB Merton)
- Peckham (LB Southwark)
- Welling (LB Bexley)

The Project Methodology

The pan-London pilot project was managed centrally by Groundwork London (Groundwork UK's Regional Office) and co-ordinated by its Policy and Programmes team. A Steering Group of the sponsoring partners provided guidance and support.

Groundwork has been able to draw on its federal partnership of seven sub-regional Groundwork Trusts as the core team to plan, co-ordinate and facilitate each local pilot. Led by their Executive Directors and supported by other members of their teams, the Trusts have used the following common framework of actions and milestones.

Preparation phase

Using established partnerships with Boroughs, Trusts' Executive Directors have discussed the pilot project and the Sustainable Suburbs objectives from the London Plan with Borough Chief Officers, and agreed the principles of taking it forward in the selected suburban area, including the potential for applying the Toolkit. Among the questions to be resolved at the outset were the following:

- Agreeing the geographical boundaries for the pilot.
- Identifying the essential players and stakeholders for that area. These could include the range of Borough officers dealing with planning, housing, transport, environment, parks and open spaces, trading, economic development and other relevant services; Cabinet Members and Ward Councillors; the local MP; the chair of the Local Strategic Partnership; local businesses and employers, including property developers engaged locally; voluntary sector agencies; community representatives agreed by local residents; the Metropolitan Police; health, social services and representatives of other statutory agencies with a local interest.
- Identifying a lead officer or champion within the local authority, at a sufficiently senior level to achieve cross-departmental support.
- Where appropriate, the formation of a smaller representative local steering group to guide the pilot project locally, working with the Council and Groundwork, and developing the application of the Toolkit.
- An appropriate programme for consultation, to be tailored to local circumstances.
- An additional specific consultation element on engaging with children and young people was added to all pilots' work programmes a few months into the process.

Delivery phase

Once these questions had been addressed, the pattern of subsequent roll-out of the pilot involved most of the following ingredients:

- A stakeholders meeting to address the Sustainable Suburbs strategy from the London Plan, to introduce the Toolkit approach, and to identify local key issues for the area of the pilot which can subsequently be tackled by using the Toolkit.

- A series of workshop consultations with different groups and categories of local stakeholders, and where appropriate with individuals, to establish a range of opinions on these issues in greater depth, using the Toolkit as a resource.
- Arranging other kinds of participative methods and events to engage stakeholders as active players in planning and prioritising solutions to challenges.
- Exploration of the potential links and crossovers with other current framework initiatives for the Borough or sub-region, such as Neighbourhood Renewal programmes and LSPs, the work on Sub Regional Development Frameworks for the London Plan, other regeneration partnerships, Business Improvement District initiatives, town centre renewal programmes, the LDA's priority areas, the government's Sustainable Communities Plan and Housing Growth Areas, the Cleaner, Safer, Greener strategy, and any major transport infrastructure developments.
- Facilitating new partnerships and understanding between the Council and other stakeholders, in both the private and community sectors, in the interests of developing shared approaches to the needs of the pilot area and alliances for future action on the seven key themes.
- Harnessing the expertise and specialist knowledge of different stakeholders, and bringing those skills to bear on the identified priorities.
- Identifying the relevance and assessing the value of this inclusive stakeholder partnership approach, to the Borough's statutory obligations for preparing a future Local Development Framework under the new Planning Legislation, replacing the UDP.
- Sharing the results of this learning process with other local pilots through the co-ordinated pan-London programme.

Conclusion phase

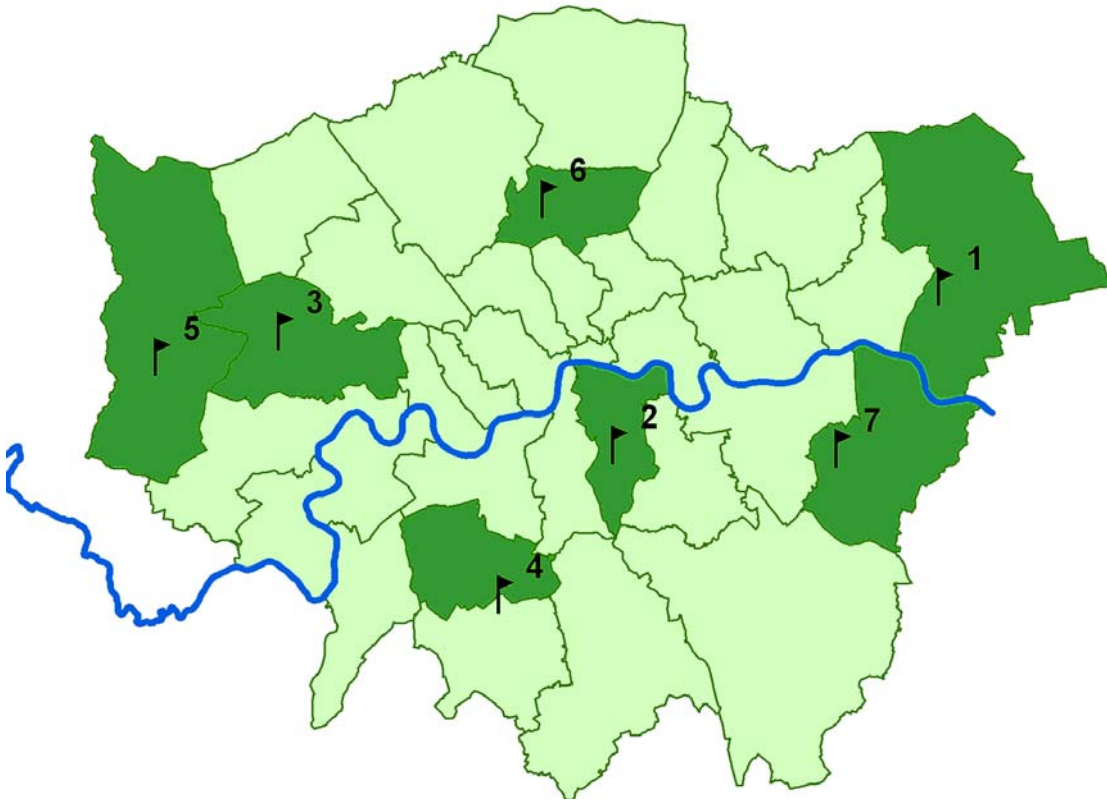
Consultation and active engagement phase concluded in October 2005. It involved the following activities:

- Preparation of a draft local action programme from the Sustainable Suburbs pilot, and discussion with a recall meeting of all stakeholders to secure support for the conclusions.
- Evaluation of the Toolkit as a whole, and any individual tools in particular, for their relevance and usefulness in the light of testing through the local pilot.
- Preparation of a case study report, within a common format to be agreed, which will be incorporated in a pan-London report on the pilot programme.

The Pan-London Conclusion

Groundwork London has prepared this draft report for discussion with the consortium Steering Group, which draws together the individual pilot experiences with their outcomes, and provide an overall evaluation of the Toolkit, including any recommendations for future development of the tools themselves. The consortium partners will agree a final report for the Mayor.

2. The Pilots



Selected Pilot Areas

- 1 Hornchurch, LB Havering
- 2 Peckham, LB Southwark
- 3 Greenford, LB Ealing
- 4 Mitcham, LB Merton
- 5 Hayes, LB Hillingdon
- 6 Myddleton Road, LB Haringey
- 7 Welling, LB Bexley



Introduction

As outlined in the project brief, the aim of the project was not only to test the Toolkit but also to build new or strengthen existing partnerships in the process and thus create 'real life' scenarios for the Toolkit's application. Where possible, the consultation on the Toolkit was also used to obtain participants' views on other topics of local relevance. The issues raised in this process were then linked to the Toolkit as a way of identifying possible solutions. This required tailor-made consultation approaches that reflected the existing fabric of partnerships, regeneration schemes, planning policies, economic characteristics etc. For example, it was intended that in each of the seven pilot areas, a local steering group be set up to support the process of testing the toolkit and to help develop a local action plan based on the results. Where it was not appropriate to do this, other approaches were adopted to ensure that the process had input from a range of partners and stakeholders. The approaches are described in the following section.

One finding that was common to all seven pilots was that it was not appropriate to hand out the Toolkit to consultation participants without any further explanations. All pilots therefore developed their own consultation materials such as one-page summaries and presentations on the Toolkit's contents and its relevance to the pilot areas. The latter proved to be particularly important for the consultation with young people a lot of whom felt that the Toolkit was too abstract and theoretical. The initial focus of the project was therefore on asking young people how they felt about their local area, what they rated as positive or negative, which facilities they were currently using and which ones they would like to see provided etc. as a way of establishing a context in which the Toolkit could be applied.

Although the local Action Plans for each pilot vary in terms of their focus and the level of detail agreed for the follow-up actions, they all provide evidence of the constructive local discussions that the process of testing the Toolkit has stimulated, in particular between statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. It can be seen as one of the strong messages confirming the relevance of the Toolkit that all pilots have agreed to take work on the Toolkit process further, even though the project did not provide any additional resources for implementing the agreed actions. Groundwork will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the tools and the impact of the pilot process in all pilot locations.



Pilot One:

Location: Hornchurch
LB Havering

Suburb Type: Residential
Heartland



Prior to the start of the *Tomorrow's Suburbs* pilot project, LB Havering had started work on preparing an Urban Strategy for Hornchurch, and consultation with stakeholders and local people was well under way. A set of proposals for Hornchurch town centre was being prepared, with a view to carrying out a second round of community consultation on the proposals in Autumn 2005. The Urban Strategy will comprise a 10-15 year vision for Hornchurch; a promotion and development plan; a physical framework for future development; an economic investment framework; an implementation and management strategy and a means to involve local people, businesses, investors, public sector agencies and the Council. It was therefore decided to link the work on the Toolkit with the work on the Urban Strategy. The findings could then feed into the work on the Urban Strategy as well as being used to test the relevance and value of the toolkit.

The first strand of the project consisted of detailed group discussions with members of the Hornchurch project officers steering group and the consultants appointed to prepare the Urban Strategy. The toolkit was presented to the steering group at one of its regular meetings, and initial feedback was collated. This was followed up with more detailed one-to-one meetings with project officers, in which the Toolkit was discussed in detail, covering which tools were applicable or already in use in Hornchurch, and overall views on the toolkit.

The second strand of the consultation, the work with young people, consisted of a series of workshops held with local youth groups. The workshops aimed to explore young people's views towards Hornchurch, focusing on a range of issues including transport, the physical environment, facilities for young people, arts and heritage and views on how Hornchurch should develop in the future. The findings from the workshops were then mapped against the toolkit, to identify tools, which could be used to address the issues raised. A report setting out the findings and suggested tools from the toolkit was prepared, and submitted to the consultants working on the Urban Strategy and the project officers at LB Havering.

The following twelve tools were identified as most relevant, with a majority of them relating to the transport theme.

- 1.01 Defining Smaller Centres
- 1.03 Policies for Local Centre
- 3.06 Neighbourhood Safety Programme
- 4.01 Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)
- 4.03 Quality Bus Corridors/ Bus Plus
- 4.09 School Travel Plan
- 4.10 Personalised Travel Planning
- 4.11 Encouraging Walking
- 4.13 Local Walking Strategy
- 4.14 Encouraging Cycling
- 4.15 Signage and Maps
- 7.08 Improving Parks and Open Spaces

So as not to duplicate any of the detailed proposals in Hornchurch's evolving Urban Strategy, it was not appropriate to prepare a separate Action Plan. However, the Toolkit process contributed vital information to the Strategy, in particular on young people's priorities for the future of Hornchurch, which would not have been available otherwise. The final version of the Toolkit will be used in implementing the Strategy, where appropriate.

**Pilot Two:****Location:** Peckham
LB Southwark**Suburb Type:** Town Centre

The Peckham pilot was developed with a view to build on previous work of successful SRB-funded regeneration programmes in the area. A first meeting of local authority stakeholders led to the formation of a Steering Group for the pilot project, which included staff from the borough's Peckham Programme (a dedicated programme within LB Southwark's Regeneration department), Planning, Transport and Property teams. One of the overall objectives of this pilot was to establish a project focus group made up of local residents and members of the Peckham Youth Forum. The group would use its involvement in the Tomorrow's Suburbs project as a capacity-building opportunity that would enable its members to act as a sounding board for future proposed developments in Peckham. In order to ensure that young people felt confident to contribute to the discussions but also in order to strengthen the work of the Peckham Youth Forum, a series of seven workshops was held, which included sessions on team building, mapping exercises to find out about young people's perceptions of the area and the Forum's opportunities to contribute to the regeneration agenda for Peckham, using the Toolkit.

The Steering Group organised two workshops during August and September 2005, which focussed on Peckham's emerging Area Action Plan, improvements to Peckham Town Centre and wider local transport and environmental challenges. In addition to this, consultations with individuals were carried out on the street and via an email list of residents who had expressed an interest in the area's regeneration. Another round of consultations was carried out by participating in a series of thematic Peckham Walks, organised by the Peckham Programme. Throughout the whole process, specific topics flagged up by local residents were linked to the most relevant themes covered by the Toolkit and within these to ten tools that could help to address the issues (see list below).

- 1 Reinforcing the role of local centres
- 2 Making new development sustainable
- 4 Promoting alternatives to travel by car
- 5 Improving environmental sustainability
- 7 Improving design and the public realm

Tools:

- 1.01 Defining Smaller Town Centres
- 1.02 Town Centre Health Check
- 2.06 Sustainability Checklists
- 4.01 Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)
- 4.05 Safe Routes to Stations
- 4.06 Equal Access to Services
- 4.12 Encouraging Walking
- 4.14 Encouraging Cycling
- 5.01 Changing lifestyles and choices
- 7.01 Placecheck

The local Action Plan is currently being agreed. Its key actions are

To continue to facilitate the involvement of a group of residents (incl. young people) in progressing the new planning framework for Peckham and build the group's capacity to work with LB Southwark on all future regeneration schemes for Peckham.

To agree a timetable for delivering the projects identified in the Toolkit process. This includes a pilot project on education for local environmental sustainability.

To continue capacity-building work with Peckham Youth Forum in order to ensure young people's involvement in local regeneration activities.

**Pilot Three:****Location:** Greenford
LB Ealing**Suburb Type:** Town Centre

The pilot was seen as an opportunity to contribute to the LB Ealing's emerging Local Development Framework. Although no formal Project Steering Group has been set up, regular briefing meetings with key local authority contacts have taken place throughout the duration of the project. An initial presentation on the Toolkit's contents and to invite stakeholders' involvement in the project was given at the Greenford Area Committee meeting in February 2005. Updates on the progress of the project were provided at subsequent Area Committee meetings.

Key community stakeholders were identified, using Groundwork West London's borough contacts. In a series of telephone interviews, the contacts were asked to identify up to four issues that were of particular significance to Greenford and its residents. These were Waste and Recycling, Garden Biodiversity and Sustainable Town Centre Development. Groundwork West London then conducted one-to-one interviews with a sample of the respondents that focussed on the Toolkit (using a printed version) and identified specific tools to address the key issues. The Toolkit also formed the basis for two workshops for residents that encouraged further discussion of the key issues and whether they could be addressed through using the Toolkit. In addition to the structured workshops, a stall at Greenford Carnival provided an opportunity for residents to find out about the Toolkit and comments on it on display boards. The stall also exhibited some examples of the school project on Toolkit issues.

In Greenford, the Toolkit was tested with Year 5 pupils from a local school. The main theme chosen for this element of the project was Waste, as this was one of the key issues flagged up in the main consultation that children had not only got direct experience with in their daily lives but where the application of some of the tools could also lead to raised awareness and behavioural change. The project was also seen as an opportunity to establish useful links with the Greenford Waste and Recycling Depot, which borders on to the pilot area.

The project focussed on the concepts of sustainability, how it relates to people's lifestyles in general and residents of Greenford in particular. An action project consisted of a survey of local shops in order to assess the amount of waste they generated and whether their goods met sustainability standards. The results were then transferred onto a green map of Greenford highlighting the most environmentally friendly businesses. The pupils then produced posters to promote waste reduction, recycling and other relevant measures.

The consultation on the Toolkit flagged up a need to develop better mechanisms for local residents to get involved in the re-development of Greenford. This has prompted 15 local Tenants and Residents' Associations to form a network, which will develop new initiatives for Greenford by using the Toolkit.

Due to the success of the school project, work with young people is expected to continue on other issues related to sustainability of suburbs.

**Pilot Four:**

Location: Mitcham
LB Merton

Suburb Type: Town Centre

In 2004/05, LB Merton commissioned a programme of public consultations leading to an urban design brief for Mitcham Urban Village to inform any future developments, which is expected to be adopted by the council as Supplementary Design Guidance. It was therefore seen as important to promote the work of the pilot as a way of taking the findings of these earlier consultations further in order to avoid 'consultation fatigue'.

Key statutory stakeholders were identified in the Council through Groundwork's Link Officer. Key community, political and business contacts were identified through Groundwork's existing contacts with the local Chamber of Commerce, community organisations and individuals. The main part of the consultation was carried out through one-to-one meetings with key statutory and non-statutory stakeholders in which each tool and its local relevance were discussed briefly. A number of smaller focus groups were held with members of the community, which focussed on wider sustainability issues for Mitcham and how these could be addressed through the Toolkit. The Toolkit was also presented at relevant public meetings such as the Merton Safety and Environment Forum.

In order to engage young people in the project, two consultations methods were used. One was to encourage young people to fill out a general questionnaire through detached youth workers in Mitcham. The other was through workshops using participatory appraisal techniques, primarily mapping Mitcham with focus groups at a youth facility within Mitcham Urban Village and relating the findings to relevant tools in the Toolkit.

Local projects ideas generated through the Toolkit process were collated and submitted to LB Merton and all participants for comment. More detailed follow-up actions will be agreed at a forthcoming stakeholder meeting.

**Pilot Five:****Location:** Hayes
LB Hillingdon**Suburb Type:** Employment
Location

The Hayes pilot focussed on two main consultation strands. One strand was aiming to promote the Toolkit to a wider audience by presenting it to a number of local groups such as the Hayes Town Centre Partnership, the Hillingdon Community Safety Partnership and the Hayes & Harlington Community Development Forum. This was then followed up with in-depth one-to-one interviews with stakeholders from the business and community sectors and relevant local authority teams in order to identify the key issues for Hayes and link them to relevant tools in the Toolkit.

A round-up meeting for all consultees to agree the next steps was held in September 2005.

Young people's views on the Toolkit were gathered through outreach work at a youth event, 'Party in da Park', where they had an opportunity to find out about the Toolkit in an informal setting and complete a questionnaire on their visions for the future of Hayes and how these could be translated into reality by applying some of the tools.

The following 12 tools were consistently referred to by the majority of contacts as the most relevant to Hayes

- 1.02 Town Centre Health Check
- 1.05 Community Hub
- 2.04 Reusing Redundant Buildings
- 2.06 Sustainability Checklists
- 3.03 Neighbourhood Energy Plan
- 3.06 Neighbourhood Safety
- 4.15 Signage and Maps
- 5.03 Recycling Champions
- 6.02 Triple Win Redevelopment
- 6.03 Business Incubators
- 6.04 Live/Work Accommodation
- 6.07 City Growth Strategy
- 7.03 Design Guidance
- 7.06 Improving Buildings

All participating organisations have agreed a timetable to take forward the Toolkit process and integrate relevant tools in their existing work. For example, the Toolkit approach has been used in LB Hillingdon's work on developing their LDF and the West Sub Regional Development Framework. The Borough also agreed to present the Toolkit for discussion at a Comprehensive Performance Assessment meeting.

**Pilot Six:****Location:** Myddleton Road
LB Haringey**Suburb Type:** Neighbourhood

In 2001, Haringey Council formally introduced an integrated management approach to the Bowes Park / Myddleton Road area, as a pilot project to demonstrate how mainstream services, external agencies and the local community can work together to tackle challenges in an area that is not eligible for mainstream regeneration funding. This resulted in a number of initiatives agreed by the Council and the local community. In 2003, the Council adopted the Myddleton Road Neighbourhood Plan to build on this work by introducing policies to plan change and proposals that required co-ordinated action and the refocusing of mainstream services in a sustainable way.

The pilot project was seen as an opportunity to test if the Tomorrow's Suburbs Toolkit could be used to provide a framework and an impetus for the revision of the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly, as the original version had not considered the sustainability of the proposed interventions.

The main aims for the project were to assess the achievements of the existing Neighbourhood Plan and map the contents of the Toolkit against it in order to identify tools that could be applied to support its implementation. This was achieved through one-to-one consultations with statutory and community stakeholders and a workshop with members of Bowes Park Community Association. Young people's feedback was obtained through outreach activities in the area and a youth event in Myddleton Road Community Garden. Feedback from these consultations formed the basis for a revised 2-year Neighbourhood Plan that also suggests relevant tools for its implementation. The revised Plan has been circulated for consultation to all relevant stakeholders and is currently awaiting sign-off and will be available shortly.

**Pilot Seven:****Location:** Welling Town Centre
LB Bexley**Type of Suburb:** Residential
Heartland

One of the recommendations of the URBED report *A City of Villages* was that the local 'Town Centre Partnership could provide a mechanism for developing and disseminating ideas for making Welling more sustainable.' (p. 91). The pilot built on this recommendation by using the process of testing the Toolkit as an opportunity for Welling Town Partnership to review the existing Town Centre Action Plan and strengthen the role the Partnership could play in its implementation. Following briefing meetings with key local authority contacts, a questionnaire containing further information on sustainable development, the Toolkit and its main themes was sent to all Partnership members. The responses identified the following tools as most relevant for Welling:

- 1.02 Town Centre Health Check
- 1.08 Business Improvement District
- 3.04 Environment Performance Ratings
- 3.06 Neighbourhood Safety Programme
- 4.07 Workplace Travel Plan
- 4.11 Personalised Travel Planning
- 5.05 Waste Minimisation Club
- 6.06 Local Labour Scheme
- 7.01 Place Check
- 7.06 Improving Buildings
- 7.07 Improving the Public Realm
- 7.10 Civic Pride and Pride of Place

These were then discussed in more detail with the Partnership's Town Centre Action Plan sub-group.

The second strand of the programme consisted of consultations with young people through a focus group at Welling Youth Centre and two outreach sessions in Welling High Street and a nearby open space in East Wickham. During the outreach work, a simplified version of the 'Placecheck' tool was used to get young people's views on Welling town centre and possible improvements. They were then introduced to the Toolkit and individual tools that could address the highlighted issues. In a last step participants were asked for their comments on the user-friendliness of the Toolkit itself. The consultation with young people focussed on the following tools:

- 1.05 Community Hub
- 1.06 Community Warden
- 3.06 Neighbourhood Safety Programme
- 4.12 Encouraging walking
- 4.14 Encouraging cycling
- 5.06 Controlling noise
- 5.07 Promoting Healthy Eating

The pilot stakeholders identified the following tools for further action:

- 1.08 Business Improvement District
- 3.06 Neighbourhood Safety Programme
- 4.07 Workplace Travel Plan
- 4.11 Personalised Travel Planning
- 5.05 Waste Minimisation Club
- 7.10 Civic Pride and Pride of Place



Implementation of the tools will be part of the revised Welling Town Centre Action Plan. As a first step, funding will be sought to carry out a business survey to establish businesses travel patterns and waste disposal practices as well as to identify key issues around crime and safety.

Welling Town Centre Partnership also agreed to discuss the potential for a borough-wide implementation of tool 3.04 Environment Performance Ratings with LB Bexley.

Groundwork South East London is going to review the potential for developing a Youth Hub in conjunction with the refurbishment to the library and public toilets currently being undertaken in Welling.

3. Consultation Responses

Despite the different characteristics of the seven pilots, consultation responses on the Toolkit were largely consistent across the different stakeholder groups and individuals involved – evidence for its relevance and timeliness in a number of different local contexts.

The process of testing the Toolkit stimulated productive discussions between key stakeholders in each of the seven pilot areas. However, it would be beyond the scope of this project to provide a detailed record of all the local workshops and interviews or an assessment of the relevance of each of the currently 67 tools. The following sections provide an overview over the general feedback received on the relevance of the Toolkit as a whole, followed by more specific comments on individual tools, suggestions for additional topics that could be addressed and the user-friendliness of the Toolkit in terms of its language and design.

The consultations also resulted in a large number of very specific comments relating to the respective local context, for example the need for traffic control interventions in a particular suburban street, which were considered to be too specific to be relevant to the wider audience of this report. These comments were captured and fed back to all relevant local stakeholders. Where appropriate, they were also translated into more general messages of wider relevance.

3.1. General Comments

One of the first key findings when introducing the Toolkit in the seven pilot locations was that respondents were either not familiar or did not agree with the London Plan's concept of place hierarchies and the role of suburbs within it. Most of the pilot areas did not see themselves in relation to central London and therefore as suburbs, but rather as places in their own right that happened to be located within Greater London. This perception made it necessary to spend considerable time on interpreting the concept of suburbs and the relevance of the Toolkit for each location. This was also felt to be important in order to overcome the perception that the Toolkit was a top-down instrument that would be imposed to control development in suburbs centrally.

Feedback overall was that the seven themes were appropriate. It was felt that the breadth of issues covered by the toolkit would encourage those who use it to take a holistic view towards suburban areas, by making the links between, for example, housing and transport. However, a number of participants suggested that the Toolkit should place more emphasis on the London Plan's commitment to providing an 'integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future development of London' (*London Plan*, p. vi.) and emphasise the contribution of London's suburbs to this.

It will be important to stress that, for example, an economically successful suburb might well be a failure environmentally or socially. Re-enforcing the necessity of a triple-bottom line approach could help to address this and enable suburbs to develop their full potential. Moreover, a failure to provide an integrated approach for sustainable development in the suburbs would make the sustainability of the Toolkit as a whole questionable thus affecting its credibility. The tools should therefore not be promoted as stand-alone tools but as part of a strategic approach based on a vision shared by local stakeholders. This could be strengthened by emphasising the need to identify existing local or borough-wide regeneration initiatives and other projects that the Toolkit approach could be linked with.

The consultation on the Toolkit demonstrated that local knowledge is invaluable when attempting to tackle issues faced by London's suburbs. This requires locally agreed processes that enable local stakeholders to develop these solutions in partnership. It was felt that the Toolkit as a whole could be used as a framework within which effective communication and co-



operation between local stakeholders could take place. In this context it was seen as essential that themes that underpin all tools and are essential for their successful implementation should be addressed in separate sections of the Introduction or as specific tool sheets. These include partnership working (including some information on different partnership models) and sustainable development. References to other cross-cutting themes such as health could be included on relevant tool sheets, for example as one of the benefits of a *Walking Strategy*.

Most of the initial feedback received focussed on the name 'toolkit'. A majority of participants suggested that this was misleading, since it did not provide comprehensive 'how-to' information on implementing most of the tools but was mostly descriptive. Suggestions for alternative names included, for example, a 'manual', a 'resource' or a 'reference guide'. This would reflect its potential to act as a framework for discussion of locally relevant issues.

Because of the wide range of topics covered, the Toolkit was seen as potentially very helpful in encouraging joined-up working across different local authority departments by providing information that is easy and quick to absorb. Local authority participants in particular felt that it could assist officers in considering the wider impacts of planning decisions that would go beyond their own area of expertise. This would make it easier to deal with the complexity of planning and other interventions taking place in areas at the same time and assess the level of their interdependency. One example was the perception that transport planning needed to be linked more closely with housing issues. It was therefore suggested that the tool sheets should contain more cross-references to other tools and themes.

A number of respondents saw the Toolkit as an opportunity to promote the importance of areas of specialist expertise such as conservation or biodiversity by providing comprehensive and easy to absorb information. It was suggested that the Toolkit could contain general briefing sections on these and other relevant issues in addition to the actual tools.

In this context it was also felt that the Toolkit would benefit users by providing information on initiatives that do not necessarily fall under any one department's remit and that therefore many authorities would not address as a matter of course. One example cited was *Car Sharing*.

Equally, it was seen to challenge some users' conventional planning solutions, for example by advocating the planting of trees as a more sustainable parking control measure instead of the installation of bollards.

The breadth of topics covered was seen as useful in helping users to identify local priorities in a structured way and to make the case for investments in suburban locations, which are frequently outside boroughs' designated regeneration areas.

Related to this, a number of comments were centred around the fact that there was no clear distinction between large-scale strategic interventions such as *Housing Intensification* (tool 2.02), *City Growth Strategy* (tool 6.07) or *Policies for Local Centres* (tool 1.03) which would have to be instigated by the local authority and more specific practical tools such as *Car Sharing* (tool 4.19) that could be initiated by local groups. Others, such as 'Park & Ride' were simply not applicable on a neighbourhood level. Consequently, a number of participants felt initially that most of the tools, although they provided interesting background information, were not relevant to their pilot area and needed further tailoring to the local context. Comments also flagged up that only a few tools such as *Town Centre Management* (1.07) contained sections on 'Getting Started', although this kind of information was seen as vital for assessing their usefulness in the individual pilot contexts. In general, the more specific tools were, the more useful they were rated. Feedback suggests that some of the more general tools, for example *Improving the Public Realm* or *Parks and Open Space Improvements*, could be broken down into a number of more specific ones.

A majority of participants also raised concerns that the Toolkit in its present form was likely to raise false expectations, in particular with non-statutory stakeholders and that it was important to be realistic in terms of the potential for some of the large-scale implementations to be implemented in specific suburban contexts. It was felt that it was important to point out that each of the tools constitutes an extensive project in itself, but also that the tools needed to be adapted to the local context. This also prompted comments on the time and resources required to implement the tools, and it was suggested to include some guidance on this on the tool sheets. For example, funding for some of the tools such as *Neighbourhood Warden Schemes* tends to be restricted to designated regeneration areas.

It was therefore suggested that a matrix should be included in the introductory section that would give a quick overview over the nature of each tool (strategic or practical, i.e. for information only or also for practical implementation), whether it was relevant for local implementation or needed to be introduced on a larger, e.g. borough-wide scale to be effective and what the resource implications of this were likely to be.

There was overall consensus that the Toolkit as a whole and the case studies in particular were very topical and up to date, although the Introduction was frequently regarded as too lengthy and technical. It was suggested that it should focus on explaining the use of the Toolkit and that some of the more specific information, for example on the London Plan, should be moved to a tool sheet. A number of participants also emphasized the importance of regular updates in order to incorporate new case studies, references to changes in legislation relevant to suburbs or simply to check whether the listed websites and links were still available. It was suggested that provision for the maintenance of the Toolkit needed to be made once it had been published in its final form.

However, a number of participants pointed out that in order to maximise its potential, the Toolkit needed to be promoted widely, which would require for it to be championed across a network of statutory and non-statutory partners rather than being associated with a single local authority department.

Key Recommendations:

- **To emphasise the Toolkit's role as an integrated framework for social, economic and environmental development and therefore the inter-relatedness of the tools**
- **To change the title 'toolkit' to better reflect the document's contents**
- **To promote the design of local processes through which the Toolkit can be applied in partnership**
- **To include a matrix that enables a quick overview over relevant tools by distinguishing between strategic and practical tools and includes information on time and resources required for implementation**

3.2. Specific Tools

Feedback on the information covered by the Toolkit was generally very positive. The following section gives an overview over comments received on specific tools.

One tool in particular, *Placecheck* (tool 7.01) was frequently rated as very helpful and was used by several pilots in order to identify key issues that needed to be tackled locally. The tool was seen as an easy and cost-effective way to identify simple interventions that could improve the local quality of life. For example, one pilot used the tool to consult elderly residents on the location of drop kerbs and parking bays.

The popularity of this tool also illustrates a point made earlier: that participants could relate more easily to practical tools that enabled them to take action and provided information on getting started. In this case this was facilitated by a simple free guide that could be downloaded from the *Placecheck* website. In contrast, the very similar *Town Centre Health Check* (tool 1.02) was regarded as less helpful because it places an emphasis on quantitative data, and the links provided directed users to a website that was difficult to navigate for non-experts.

Most of the transport-related tools received very positive comments, in particular tools 4.11 *Personalised Travel Planning*, 4.10 *Walking Bus* and 4.07 *Workplace Travel Plan* as they were seen to offer low-cost solutions to challenges such as congestion that were easy to implement by local partnerships.

Another set of comments related to the fact that a few tools seem to be duplicating each other. Examples cited were tool 2.03 *Housing Density Matrix* and tool 2.02 *Housing Intensification*; also tools 6.02 *Triple-Win Redevelopment*, 6.03 *Business Incubators / Start-up Space* and 6.04 *Live/Work Accommodation*.

Tool 1.05 *Community Hub* was considered to be very useful both by local authority staff and members of the community, as it provides comprehensive informing about hubs, which play a key role in most boroughs' current plans for innovative approaches to service provision. Members of the business community also suggested that some consideration should be given to environmental and business services that could be provided by a hub.

A number of respondents commented on the usefulness of Tool 4.01 *Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)*, although there were also concerns that its application seemed to be restricted to town centres and did not relate to their wider catchments. It was felt that this carried the risk of reinforcing current patterns of designing public transport and other traffic solutions for suburban centres in isolation rather than in a borough-wide context.

With regards to tools that require formal designation to be implemented, e.g. tool 7.04 *Conservation and Planning Areas*, participants felt that it was important to stress that these policies would need to be enforced to be effective. For example, many of the issues contributing to the decline of suburban areas are largely due to breaches of planning legislation such as unauthorised development and changes to the use of buildings. The tool sheets should therefore make reference to the need for appropriate processes and resources to make these policies effective.

Key Recommendations:

- To merge similar tools
- To stress the importance of appropriate processes and resources to make the tools effective

3.3. Missing Tools

The Toolkit was widely regarded as an innovative framework for instigating change in suburban areas. However, most comments made it clear that it could not be successful if it was exclusively used by local authorities in top-down processes. Instead, partnership working was considered to be key to its successful application. Many comments therefore suggested a specific tool on this topic. This should also contain information on how to set up new partnerships and different models of partnership working.

Given the changing social fabric of most suburbs, for example through the influx of new communities or changing age profiles, many comments also focussed on the need to develop tool sheets on diversity and how to engage with the wider community through new approaches and networks that reflected these changes. A specific focus should thereby be on engaging with young people and BME communities.

A number of participants felt that topics such as economic diversity and the strengthening of local markets were not given a high enough profile in the Toolkit. In some cases, these comments were also linked to wider local skills and employment issues. It was therefore suggested to include tool sheets on, for example, Intermediate Labour Markets and other relevant schemes that were aiming to build the capacity of local people to enter the labour market. Skills gaps could be identified for example by applying one of the Toolkit's Placecheck-type tools.

The built heritage and architecture were seen as vital to the sustainability of suburbs. As the consultations in all of the pilots have shown, most of the participants were not familiar with the history of their suburb. However, because it is a very accessible subject that builds on individuals' sense of place, it can be used as a building block to address most of the other themes of the Toolkit, especially when working with children and young people. There is also low awareness among professionals of how heritage could promote sustainability. This could be improved by including tool sheets on historic buildings and how they had been designed to last or on promoting specialist building skills and local craftsmanship.

A number of comments flagged up the need for tool sheets on waste minimisation and recycling on a larger scale. Similarly, tool sheets on different forms of renewable energy generation, for example through Combined Heat and Power Systems, should be included and their relevance to all seven themes be emphasised

Other suggestions for topics that ought to be included were anti-social behaviour, licensing and the night-time economy and the importance of affordable leisure and culture facilities.

A majority of participants also identified the need for information on sustainable development as the concept underpins all of the tools and is also central to the London Plan.

Key Recommendations:

- **To include information and tools on themes that underpin the whole of the Toolkit, such as Sustainable Development, the London Plan, different types of Suburbs and their roles in implementing the London Plan**
- **To emphasise the importance of partnership working for implementing the Toolkit and to include tools on this topic**
- **To include specific tools on**
 - ▶ **Engaging with different sectors of the community, in particular young people and BME communities**
 - ▶ **Strengthening of suburban economies through the creation of training and employment opportunities for local people**

- ▶ **Built heritage and architecture**
- ▶ **Tackling anti-social behaviour**
- ▶ **Licensing and the night-time economy**
- ▶ **The creation of affordable leisure and culture facilities**
- ▶ **Methods to create renewable energy, for example through CHPs**

3.4. Target Audiences

While consultees from all seven pilots welcomed the Toolkit's inclusive approach and commitment to addressing a wide range of stakeholders, a common response was that the target audiences for the Toolkit needed to be more clearly defined and that, consequently, its 'one size fits all' approach may not be appropriate.

As noted earlier, consultees of all ages and from a wide range of different backgrounds felt that the main themes covered by the Toolkit were relevant to all stakeholders in suburban areas. But there was also consensus that it required the user to have a fairly well developed understanding of development issues and policy.

Some respondents commented that many of the tools marked as being relevant to community groups would in fact require a high level of organisation, links with partners and funding to implement. Examples cited include Tools 1.05 *Community Hub*, 3.06 *Neighbourhood Safety Programme*, 7.08 *Parks and Open Space Improvements*. It was felt that it was important to point this out so as not to raise any unrealistic expectations. Many of the elderly people interviewed or who took part in the workshop were not proficient at using computers and saw this as a barrier to their involvement.

Overall, comments from young people on the relevance of the Toolkit and its main themes were very positive. However, without any exception this feedback could only be collated by designing specific contexts for engaging with young people. In most cases this was achieved through focus group-type facilitated general discussions on relevant suburban issues, for example waste or transport. The Toolkit was then used to develop possible solutions to the identified challenges. Because of the technical nature of most of the tools, which require a fairly high level of knowledge, young people's feedback on specific tools was limited.

On the other end of the spectrum were comments from local authority officers who were familiar with most of the Toolkit's key themes and therefore felt that some of the information it contained was too simplistic and did not provide any learning opportunities for them.

A related set of comments regarded the 'Who For?' sections as too prescriptive and suggested that it should instead emphasise opportunities for partnership working. For example, tool 4.10 *Walking Bus* does not mention local authorities although the tool sheet contains a reference to the Local Authority's School Travel Advisor.

These comments suggested two different approaches for making the Toolkit relevant and usable for different target audiences:

One would be to develop different formats or versions of it that could be tailored to different audiences' levels of familiarity with its contents. For example, one version could focus on the role of non-statutory bodies making suburbs more sustainable, which could also contain information on funding opportunities etc.

However, another solution that would reflect the Toolkit's inclusive approach better by enabling different stakeholders to use it in partnership, would be to keep it in its present format, but add detailed guidance on methods for using it in different settings, for example in focus group-type



workshops, presentations to large meetings, in Local Strategic Partnership meetings, as a briefing tool for individuals or at community events such as festivals etc. This should also include guidance on designing materials that are geared towards different users' requirements such as large-print versions or the use of graphics etc.

The only additional Toolkit version that was frequently suggested, was one geared towards children and young people, as most participants (including the young people themselves) felt, that whilst its themes were highly relevant, it would be too difficult to adapt the existing version to become more appealing to users between the ages of 10 – 21. This version could be developed in co-operation with schools to reflect some of the themes of the National Curriculum and therefore ensure wider applicability.

Key Recommendations:

- **To remove the tool sheets' 'Who for?' sections and instead emphasise opportunities for partnership working**
- **To include guidance on organising effective and inclusive settings for applying the Toolkit**
- **To develop an additional version of the Toolkit for children and young people**

3.5. Language

Most participants were very realistic about the fact that a resource like the Toolkit that covers such a wide range of topics, was bound to be text-heavy and technical in its language. This did not provide too much of a difficulty when used in a facilitated process or one-to-one interviews, but would make it difficult to access for users less experienced with the technical terms of planning and sustainable development.

It was therefore suggested that abbreviations and acronyms such as LSPs and UDPs should be explained in a glossary. This could also contain links to more detailed information such as policy documents etc.

Key Recommendation:

- **To add a glossary explaining key technical terms**

3.6. Design & Layout

Participants overall commented positively on the design of the toolkit. In particular, the one-page format of the tool sheets was seen as an advantage, since it allowed users to absorb basic information on many topics quickly. This made it easy to consult on the entire document on a one-to-one basis, using the Toolkit's structure as an interview framework. The links to relevant websites, policy documents and case studies were also rated as very useful.

In this context, a number of comments suggested the introduction of colour-coding and icons that would allow to distinguish between policy and practical tools at a glance and therefore help to identify appropriate tools for each local context without having to read through the whole document.

In order to address this, it was also suggested to create a short slideshow for the electronic version and a hard-copy summary sheet to introduce the Toolkit and possible areas for its application.

Some comments suggested that the Toolkit should be made easier to navigate. For example, where a tool sheet contains a link to another tool sheet, there should be an easy way for the user then to return to the original tool sheet after looking at the link. Another function that was considered to be useful was one that would allow users to carry out keyword searches for relevant tools rather than having to browse the whole document.

The web-based format chosen to make the Toolkit accessible to a wider audience proved to be challenging to use in a group context, as it did not allow individual participants to browse it at their own pace. The same difficulty occurred when consultations took place at community events such as outdoor festivals etc.

However, there was consensus that the electronic version of the Toolkit was appropriate in order to make a vast amount of information portable and widely accessible. The fact that it would be easy to update and allow easy navigation through and links between the tool sheets was seen as the main advantage of this format.

Although many contacts initially found the size of the Toolkit in hardcopy off-putting, when guided to look at the tool sheets in detail, through one-to-one meetings and presentations, all contacts fed back that the format and information covered was helpful.

Young people in particular expressed a clear preference for the hardcopy version of the Toolkit and gave as a reason for this the fact that the online version was too bland and lacked graphics and colour to make it more appealing.

A large number of stakeholders also felt that the Toolkit required a clear introductory diagram (see 3.1.) to explain the links between different themes and tools visually, thus supporting the tool sheets' cross-references.

Key Recommendations:

- **To introduce colour-coding and icons to distinguish between policy and strategic tools and to make the document visually more appealing.**
- **To develop a slideshow and a hard-copy summary sheet as a quick introduction to the Toolkit.**
- **To improve navigation throughout the Toolkit by improving the existing links.**
- **To introduce a keyword search function.**

4. Wider Recommendations

4.1. Contexts for the Toolkit's local application

One of the key findings from the consultation process was that the Toolkit should be promoted as a framework that can help facilitate planning for sustainable development in London's suburbs rather than as a stand-alone tool. The following section considers some of the contexts in which it could be applied in more detail:

The Toolkit as a **Strategic and Partnership Tool**

- To provide a thematic structure to inform the development of local policies such as LDFs or Neighbourhood Management Plans.
- To act as a catalyst for generating project ideas.
- To review the focus and impact of existing regeneration programmes in suburban areas and identify additional issues that need to be addressed.
- To help make the case for investment in London's suburbs, particularly those that are outside designated regeneration areas.
- To help compare different approaches for tackling challenges to sustainability in suburbs.
- To help set up partnerships with a focus on one or more of the themes covered.
- To strengthen existing partnerships by providing a thematic framework to review their focus and achievements.
- To help partnerships develop a holistic vision for their suburb.

The Toolkit as a **Briefing Tool**

- To provide comprehensive and easy to absorb information on specialist topics, for example to elected members, for cross-departmental co-operation within local authorities or when working with external partners with limited knowledge of planning issues
- To provide background information on specific projects in suburbs
- To disseminate examples of best practice for planning in suburbs through case studies
- To promote the concept of sustainable development in suburban areas to the wider community

The Toolkit as a **Training Tool**

- For local authority staff inductions and training courses
- In capacity-building processes for different sections of the community, for example for new board members of regeneration partnerships

4.2. Opportunities for a pan-London application

All the above recommendations are geared towards a local application of the Toolkit in suburban areas. In addition to that, participants' comments suggested that the Toolkit has got the potential to promote the importance of making London's suburbs more sustainable on a pan-London level and to a wider audience. This could be achieved by considering the following recommendations:

- To develop a series of Sustainable Suburbs Action Programmes for London, targeted at different audiences, in particular children and young people (through schools and youth clubs etc), using the Toolkit's themes as a framework for activities



- To develop a series of workshops for professionals and information events for the wider community focussing on each of the Toolkit's seven main themes. These could tie in with relevant local and pan-London festivals and activities such as London Sustainability Week.

To promote the Toolkit for use in university-based or professional training for planners and other regeneration professionals.