



Building Communities

This short paper sets out some of the issues facing communities in the Thames Gateway and the actions required to make sure local communities are cohesive, active, strong, safe and sustainable.

Issues

The Thames Gateway is home to a diverse range of communities. Some communities are strong, enterprising and active, whilst others are isolated, demoralised, and lack cohesion and direction. There are a number of challenges facing communities, community leaders, public services and developers in the major growth and regeneration areas, including:

- Providing infrastructure for public services and community activity, for example through developer contributions and public sector investment
- 'Future proofing' of infrastructure, so that it can adapt to changes in the way services are delivered and communities live
- Responding to existing residents and anticipating the needs of future residents, for example by establishing neighbourhood management vehicles
- The development of mechanisms to promote community cohesion, for example by establishing asset based community groups that can play an active and independent role in the area
- Making the most of the opportunity the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics offers partners to promote participation
- Tackling deprivation and social inclusion.



Building Communities

Actions Required

Stakeholders are already working on Social Infrastructure Plans as part of their Regeneration Frameworks, and local partners are engaged in developing and delivering Local Area Agreements. Necessary next steps include developing action plans and programmes to deliver:

- A clear understanding of likely community and public service infrastructure needs
- Local models to fund the provision of infrastructure, as part of growth and regeneration activity
- Local models of neighbourhood management and governance to promote the development of sustainable communities and service improvement
- Improvements in public service providers' capacity to engage and respond to the demands of a changing local population.

Our Experience

We are working with the London Borough of Newham in order to identify **community infrastructure needs** as part of the Royal Docks development. The work includes identifying the location of a Community Cluster in the Thameside West Area of Change and establishing the range of services and amenities to be provided.

We have worked with the South East of England Regional Assembly to determine the **needs and costs of social infrastructure** to inform the development of the Sub Regional Investment Frameworks in the South East Plan. SQW has also worked with the Assembly and key stakeholders on the co-ordination of investment decisions in the region. This work has provided us with an understanding of the tools that are vital to planning community infrastructure.

We have an unrivalled understanding of **models of neighbourhood governance** and the **costs and benefits of the neighbourhood management**, based on our work for the Department Communities and for Local Government evaluating the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme and the New Deal for Communities programme, along with recent work on neighbourhood governance, which informed the Local Government White Paper. We are also conducting research for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs into 'what works' in integrating community and parish plans with wider planning and service delivery arrangements.

Contact: Scott Dickinson,
Associate Director, SQW
Tel: 020 7307 7152
Email: sdickinson@sqw.co.uk