Phase I

Phase I - feasibility study toward adopting Birmingham Eastside as a regional demonstrator of sustainable urban redevelopment (May 2003 – November 2004)

The primary aim of the study was to identify the issues that act as enablers of and barriers to sustainability, and the trade-offs and synergies between the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainability, in a live urban regeneration project.

It was considered important to track the formation of these barriers and enablers in two areas of Eastside in which development was underway: Masshouse and City Park. Linked with this, the secondary aim was to extend the work to provide the basis of a case history site as a regional (or, as is now thought, an international) demonstrator of sustainable urban redevelopment.

Analysis was conducted at two levels: universal issues and specific issues. The specific issues covered four main elements of the urban environment: socio-economic aspects, infrastructure, the natural environment including biodiversity, and the built environment including open space. Four Research Fellows (an urban planner, an environmental geoscientist, an infrastructure engineer and landscape designer / chartered town planner) succeeded in investigating these elements in depth while combining it to produce a holistic, inter-disciplinary and higher-level strategic approach to the study.

Objectives

- To identify universal critical enablers of and constraints to the integration of sustainability, in its broadest sense, in the context of the Eastside regeneration
- To produce recommendations as to where and how sustainability issues might best be approached in operational urban regeneration projects
- To produce recommendations for further research on how best to exploit the enablers of and overcome the barriers to sustainable development
- To set in place a framework of cross-disciplinary knowledge and key partnerships with users from which to develop Eastside as a regional demonstrator of sustainable urban development

Findings

Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders concerning the barriers to and enablers of sustainability in the development of Eastside, together with specific work in the three theme areas, has revealed the following overarching results:

- Achieving ‘three-pillars’ sustainable urban development (i.e. environmental, social and economic) in Eastside requires innovation in the full range of policy and technical areas and, crucially, coherent integration of those areas to enable the complexity of achieving urban sustainability to be sufficiently grappled with
- The mechanism for achieving sustainable development lies in the variety of decision-making processes that together make up an urban redevelopment programme. Within such decision-making processes must be found the key enablers that will allow ‘three-pillars’ sustainability to become the central vision for the built environment. Currently, a lack of policy coherence in the full range of sustainability innovations is threatening to limit the overall success of the Eastside regeneration programme, particularly in relation to economic regeneration, the efficacy of biodiversity mitigation measures, and the inclusiveness of Birmingham’s culturally diverse communities in decision-making
- Much of the academic literature on the barriers to and enablers of achieving sustainability lacks coherence within a ‘three-pillars’ sustainability approach. New and truly interdisciplinary ways of conceptualising and implementing urban sustainability must therefore be developed

See also

- Phase II
- Phase III

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