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Birmingham Eastside: sustainable urban redevelopment

Feasibility study - adopting Birmingham Eastside as a regional demonstrator of sustainable urban redevelopment

Context

Located in the rapidly changing socio-economic and urban environment of Britain's second largest city, Birmingham Eastside is the largest current city-centre redevelopment scheme in the UK, and it presents complex challenges to a range of stakeholders in both the public and private sectors. Eastside's unique urban fabric, history, role in the life of Birmingham, physical condition and location all position it to be an ideal international demonstrator site.

The Eastside redevelopment scheme in conjunction with earlier redevelopment of Birmingham's Westside (e.g. Brindleyplace and the canal basin) is raising the profile of Birmingham and subsequently attracting considerable interest both nationally and internationally. Much of the £10b Eastside redevelopment programme was in the early planning and conceptual phases throughout the research period, and as such it provided researchers with a unique opportunity, within the field of sustainable urban development, to influence positively decision-making and test claims of sustainability concept integration in a real-life urban regeneration programme.

The research project

The aim of the Sustainable Eastside Project was to explore how sustainability is addressed in the regeneration decision-making process, and to assess the sustainability performance of completed development schemes in Birmingham Eastside against stated sustainability credentials and aspirations.

The incorporation of sustainability into an urban regeneration program, such as Birmingham Eastside, appears best conceptualised as a complex decision-making process carried out by stakeholders who are embedded within the development process. The barriers to and enablers of sustainability (as identified in Phase I of this project) appear at various moments or locations within this complex. The timing and context of decisions are critical (examined in Phase II), and can cause path-dependency which then limits how sustainability features in final development plans. Phase III explored how sustainability is addressed in decision-making processes, and then assessed the actual built form through interdisciplinary tools designed to analyse and conceptualise the sustainability impacts of developments.

The Sustainable Eastside project was active from May 2003 through June 2008, funded by the **Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/default.htm)** (EPSRC).

- Phase I (GR/S20482) ranked 'outstanding' with 'internationally leading' research quality following peer review, and the SUE Conference in Eastside (GR/C51115) held in 2005 also ranked 'outstanding'
- Phase II (EP/C513177) ended in December 2006 and also ranked 'outstanding' following peer review
- Phase III (EP/E021603/1) ended in June 2008; the Final Report has been submitted, but such reports are no longer sent out for peer review

Lessons learned

The **lessons learned flyer (/Documents/college-eps/civil/research/lessons-learned-flyer.pdf)** (PDF 272 KB) outlines a brief overview of the main lessons learned for implementing sustainability in urban regeneration areas. It highlights findings from four and a half years of research using a language that is relevant to practitioners and policy-makers.

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