



# **HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROGRAMME**

## **Technical Appendix No. 2: The Literature Review**

**Alan Middleton      Patrick Loftman  
GOVERNANCE FOUNDATION**

**David Kane  
BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY**

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# COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PROGRAMME HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLS COMMUNITY LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1. Introduction: The Context

### 1.1 National and Regional Policies for Sustainable Communities

The national context for this literature review is the Government's Statutory Guidance on creating strong, safe and prosperous communities<sup>1</sup>, the key components of which are:

- a recognition that every place is different, with distinctive strengths and needs
- a new approach by central government that creates space for distinctive local priorities and local innovation
- a commitment to widen and deepen the involvement of local communities in shaping their own future
- councils taking on the role of democratically elected strategic leaders and convenors of local partnerships in the wider governance of their localities
- a focus on coordinated action tailored to the distinctive needs and opportunities of each place and its people

The Government proposes that to achieve positive outcomes for people and places there needs to be a broadening of local government's remit. This includes responding to long-term challenges such as public health, climate change and demographic fluctuations, ensuring continued economic prosperity and environmental sustainability and building strong societies in which people want to live and work. Amongst other things, this means all key local partners working together to address the risks and challenges facing the areas and involving and empowering communities. It is acknowledged that services will be improved and communities strengthened only if local people are effectively engaged and empowered.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government (2008) *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance*, London

In the Foreword to the Report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, the Chair of the Commission pointed out that<sup>2</sup>:

“Integration and Cohesion is no longer a special programme or project. It is also not about race, faith or other forms of group status or identity. It is simply about how we all get on and secure benefits that are mutually desirable for our communities and ourselves”

The report shows that deprivation is a key influencer of cohesion but that the complexity of influences ‘means that improving cohesion is about addressing multiple issues at the same time’<sup>3</sup>. It is about ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘targeted interventions’ – multiple local actions and the fair allocation of public services. It is about creating sustainable and cohesive communities.

According to the Department for Communities and Local Government, (DCLG)<sup>4</sup>, for a community to be fully sustainable there are a number of important features, such as:

- Jobs for those who need them
- Less poverty and social exclusion
- A range of environmentally and affordable housing
- Good educational opportunities
- Frequent and affordable public transport
- Accessible and responsive health and social welfare systems
- Low incidence of crime
- Clean, productive and safe open spaces
- Facilities for children and young people
- High levels of public participation

The creation of these conditions has been adopted as aspirations for regional and local authorities and, as we shall see, they reflect the concerns of people who live in Handsworth and Lozells.

### *Regional Strategies for Sustainable Development*

The UK’s Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>5</sup> and the West Midlands Sustainable Development Framework<sup>6</sup> provide the national and regional context for the development of thriving sustainable communities. The Regional Housing Strategy<sup>7</sup> seeks to contribute to the national and regional

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<sup>2</sup> Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) *Our Shared Future*, London, CIC, p 5

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> ENCAMS, *Making Your Neighbourhood A Better Place To Live*.

<sup>5</sup> DEFRA (2005) *Securing the Future: Delivering the UK Sustainable development Strategy*, London DEFRA

<sup>6</sup> Sustainability West Midlands (2005) *A Sustainable Future for the West Midlands: The Regional Sustainable Development Framework*, Birmingham

<sup>7</sup> West Midlands Regional Housing Board (2005) *West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005*, WMRHB, pp.1-3.

sustainable development priorities by providing decent and affordable housing for all in clean, safe, pleasant and healthy local environments. Core aims include the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities, contributing to policies of urban renaissance and supporting the Housing Market Renewal Area Pathfinder, Urban Living. The West Midlands Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies reinforce the synergies between economic development, regeneration, housing and transport and support the links with health and education.

The vision of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) incorporates the key theme of the Bruntland definition of sustainable development and provides a context for all to work together to improve the quality of their lives, contribute to a diverse and thriving economy, participate in urban renaissance, live in a high quality natural and built environment and have access to efficient and high quality transport services<sup>8</sup>. The RSS provides a regional framework for an urban renaissance that would reduce the outward flow of people, help ensure that opportunities for growth are linked to reducing social exclusion and modernising the transport infrastructure in support of sustainable development.

This framework is consistent with the needs of the people of Handsworth and Lozells, in that it supports Urban Living's market renewal strategy and seeks to: tackle deprivation and create employment opportunities in the South Black Country and West Birmingham Regeneration Zone; protect and enhance the quality of the urban environment; improve the quality of transport networks to enhance social inclusion; improve economic performance and facilitate a more sustainable pattern of development<sup>9</sup>. The Government Office for the West Midlands proposes that local authorities and their partners should restructure land use and transport networks, undertake environmental improvements, raise the quality of urban design and public spaces and increase accessibility for those currently disadvantaged in accessing jobs<sup>10</sup>. These partnerships between local authorities and other agencies will have a key role in developing services in the fields of education, health, leisure, community safety, environment and housing.

These sustainable development aims for the region are also entirely consistent with the community cohesion objectives of Birmingham City Council and, taken together, they provide a policy framework that would allow the comprehensive regeneration of one of the most deprived parts of the United Kingdom. However, it is a fundamental assumption of this project, and of the Handsworth and Lozells Action Steering Group, that these broad strategic statements of policy need to be completed in detail through the participation of the local community. This raises the question as to whether the community is cohesive enough to agree what this detail might look like.

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<sup>8</sup> Government Office for the West Midlands (2008) *Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands*, Birmingham GOWM, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> GOWM (2008) *op.cit.*, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> GOWM (2008) *op.cit.*, p.18.

## 2. Community Cohesion

'Community cohesion is about everyone having a stake in society and being able to join in and influence the decisions that affect their lives'<sup>11</sup> The concept of social cohesion is multi-faceted, covering many different types of social phenomena and leading to many different definitions in practice. Access to the material conditions of life are thought to be fundamental for social cohesion – such as employment, income, health, education and housing<sup>12</sup>. A second dimension is order, safety, freedom from fear and tolerant relationships ('passive' relationships). A third refers to active social relationships involving mutual support and trust. A fourth dimension is about the extent to which people are integrated into the mainstream institutions of society, including their sense of belonging and shared experiences, identity and values. Fifthly, there is the dimension of equality of access to the opportunities or the material circumstances that determine quality of life.

Social cohesion can have positive and negative attributes and outcomes. Tight-knit communities can discriminate against other individuals and groups. It is often the case that the social exclusion of some can be the result of the social cohesion of others, such as white working class housing estates in some parts of the country that are no-go areas for BME groups<sup>13</sup>.

Communities can cohere to exclude other people from different backgrounds. Groups can also cohere around criminal activities. In some cases, gangs can be extremely cohesive, with murderous outcomes. In promoting community cohesion, therefore, it is important to be mindful of the potential for unintended negative consequences.

For Birmingham City Council, community cohesion means its residents living together positively, having a stake in society, building links and relationships and being proud of the City. There are three sets of indicators that enable it to measure change in social cohesion<sup>14</sup>:

1. People's perceptions of community harmony, safety and decision-making
2. The extent to which people experience economic and social inequality
3. The level of anti-social or intolerant behaviour

The causes of low community cohesion are seen to be<sup>15</sup>:

- Structural disadvantage related to poor life, health, economic, educational, housing and recreational opportunities

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<sup>11</sup> Cllr Alan Rudge, *Birmingham Post* 13.4.09.

<sup>12</sup> Parkinson, M. et al (2006) *The State of English Cities*, Vol. 1, London, DCLG, p. 109-110.

<sup>13</sup> Middleton, et.al (2008) *The Social and Economic Impact of Large-scale Housing Investment*, BCU/Governance Foundation.

<sup>14</sup> Birmingham City Council (2006) *Community Cohesion Strategy*, Birmingham BCC, p.7

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

- Service, information and resource issues, such as perceived inequities in public funding, the tendency of the media to focus on bad news and the lack of service cohesion across the public sector
- Inter-group tensions deriving from real or perceived differences between groups
- Incident escalation issues that lead to serious and damaging breakdown

To address these issues, the Council has identified the need to develop policy responses that address structural disadvantage, deliver joined-up services, prevent and resolve conflict, improve information and communication and ensure diversity in staffing and recruitment in public sector organisations. Its 'core policies' for community cohesion seek to address structural disadvantage, design community cohesion policies into the way the public sector works and change perceptions for the better.

The Council recognises that their work must impact on the causes of disadvantage that create potential disaffection and disharmony. This project addresses fundamental aspects of the core policies for building community cohesion. Removing structural disadvantage implies targeted action on<sup>16</sup>:

- Worklessness
- Housing
- Environmental Services
- Social care
- Education
- Health

The project addresses these themes, directly or indirectly, but also considers issues around community safety, traffic and transport. It seeks to inform the policy choices that may be available in Handsworth and Lozells, given the social and economic circumstances of the residents of the area. Before going on to look at aspects of these themes in more detail, it is necessary to consider the evidence of community cohesion in the area.

## **2.1 Community Cohesion in Handsworth and Lozells**

In October 2005, there were violent disturbances in Lozells, when members of the African Caribbean and Asian communities clashed after the circulation of rumours about an alleged rape of a 14 year old African Caribbean girl in a local Asian-owned business, the Beauty Queen shop. Following demonstrations and a call for a boycott of Asian shops, a 23 year old Black Council IT worker was murdered by a group of Asian youths as he made his way home from the cinema. In the violence, 347 crimes were committed,

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

including 12 firearms offences and 12 attempted murders and 80 people were injured<sup>17</sup>.

These disturbances were different from previous riots or 'uprisings' in the area, when the conflict was mainly based on tensions between the black community and the police. In 2005, the disturbances were based on tensions between the Asian and African Caribbean communities in the area. The catalyst was the rumoured rape, but the underlying conditions had to do with values, cultures and perceived inequalities in relation to access to material benefits and resources. When the community was asked what had created the disturbances, the answers were many and varied. Nevertheless, the two dominant responses were 'drugs and gangs' and 'community mistrust'. When asked what could have prevented them, the focus of responses was on better communication and a greater police presence<sup>18</sup>.

The Black Radley Report pointed to a number of issues that lay behind the fault lines between the communities at that time: persistent disadvantage, worklessness, housing and population change, democratic representation and the orientation of the statutory agencies<sup>19</sup>. Related issues included the changing ethnic population of the area; clashes of fundamental value systems including views of women; unashamed stereotyping by young Blacks and Asians; competition for commercial opportunities, access to jobs and public funds; the exclusion of young people from community participation; the growth of local gangs; statutory agencies that do not fully engage with the issues and the distribution of community funding in a way that undermines cohesion.

The way the disturbances were handled and calmed down by a combination of community representatives and facilitators, the police, city council officers and members, the youth service and others is potentially an example of good practice which has still to be written up. The immediate aftermath was then followed by a flurry of activity by partnership agencies, much of which either appears to have disappeared or to have developed into new actions and policies. It is difficult to trace the linkages through to the present time but, following the disturbances, Birmingham City Council's response was based on a partnership approach resulting in the Council co-ordinating and leading a partnership of key agencies to develop and deliver a strategic agenda for Lozells; it also commissioned two pieces of research on how local inequities contribute to the fracturing of communities<sup>20</sup> and on the work undertaken by the Lozells Partnership<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Black Radley (2007) *Lozells Disturbances: Summary Report*, Birmingham, Black Radley Ltd, p.5; Focus Consulting (2006) *Listening to Lozells: The Birmingham Dialogues*, London, Focus Consulting, p.4.

<sup>18</sup> Black Radley (2007) *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Black Radley (2007) *op. cit.*, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> Focus Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Black Radley (2006) *Community Relations in Lozells: An outline of Good Practice*, Birmingham, Black Radley.

The Lozells Partnership Group, which was set up in response to the disturbances included the West Midlands Police, GOWM, the Probation Service, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Community Safety Partnership, Birmingham University and various directorates and services of the City Council including Local Services, Equalities, Housing, Corporate Communications and PR, Youth Services and Regeneration. An action plan with six core activity projects was agreed. The projects were Community Consultation and Empowerment; Inter/Intra Community Relations and Community Engagement; Safer Environments; an Investment Plan; Youth Engagement and Services and Tension Monitoring.

The Community Consultation and Empowerment project considered how to improve communication with the voluntary sector and community groups and pointed to the need to bring some synergy and greater purpose to communication and information channels. The objectives of the Inter/Intra Community Relations and Community Engagement project were to research the area of community relations and bring forward proposals on best practice. The Safer Environments Project carried out an environmental audit to identify litter hotspots and recommend action to reduce environmental crime. The Investment Plan Project produced a ten year strategy for development in Lozells and East Handsworth, based on encouraging investment into North West Birmingham. The Youth Engagement Services Project set out to develop a multi-agency development group which strengthened the young people's sub-group of Birmingham Reducing Gang Violence in the City Council and develop key voluntary and community sector groups working in this field. The Tension Monitoring Framework Project set up a framework for analysing and reacting to rising tensions in the area.

In pursuit of community cohesion, a wide range of strategies, projects, priority working groups and sub-groups, task groups, inter-faith groups, service teams and commissions were set up both locally and at a city level. Although many of these groups appear to no longer exist, the setting up of the Community Team, the appointment of Neighbourhood Management Teams and the formation of the Handsworth and Lozells Action Steering group are all expressions of the public sector's commitment to resolving the cohesion issues in the area. However, recent information for Lozells suggests that the problem has not gone away.

In 2006, Focus Consulting reported that:

'Physical divisions are obvious along the Lozells Road. There are separate community and voluntary bodies, employment places, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks and this has resulted in many communities living "parallel lives"<sup>22</sup>,

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<sup>22</sup> Focus Research (2006) *op. cit.*, p30.

In the 2007 Local Area Agreement Survey, 80% of respondents from across Birmingham agreed with the statement that their local area was one where people from different backgrounds get along. This compared with only 11% who disagreed and 9% who were not sure. The net agreement (80% - 11%) with the statement, which is taken as a measure of cohesion in the report, was 69%. (This has increased from 61% in 2004<sup>23</sup>).

The survey also shows that the Perry Barr constituency has an 80% level of net agreement, the highest of all the constituencies in the city and an improvement of 5% on the previous survey of 2006<sup>24</sup>. Following the disturbances in Lozells in 2005, this would appear to be a remarkable result. It has raised the question as to why such a high proportion of the residents of the constituency are in agreement that they live in an area where people of different backgrounds get on well together. It has been suggested that it may be because the constituency is very diverse and has been so for a long time. People from different backgrounds have become accustomed to living together; neighbourhood management programmes in Handsworth and Lozells have addressed community cohesion issues in their neighbourhood plans and the introduction of neighbourhood policing has resulted in people feeling safer and more committed to their communities. It has also been suggested that, as each year passes following the disturbances, people's feelings of a sense of community and togetherness are increasing<sup>25</sup>.

In a household survey carried out for Urban Living in 2008, the results are rather different<sup>26</sup>. In the Urban Living area as a whole, only 62% of respondents agreed that 'people from different backgrounds get along well around here'. Net agreement with the statement was only 56%. In the Handsworth and Lozells area, only 54% agreed that people get on and 7% disagreed, giving a net agreement of just 47%. The balance of 39% would not commit to either agreeing or disagreeing. In contrast with the constituency, many people were not sure. Digging down further, the situation in the area where the disturbances took place is even bleaker. In Lozells and Birchfield West, only 45% agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well and 7% disagreed, resulting in a net agreement of only 38%. If net agreement is indeed a measure of community cohesion, this is a far cry from the celebratory 80% in the Perry Barr constituency. The best that can be said is that 48% of the people in Lozells and Birchfield West are not sure if people of different backgrounds get along well in the area. The most likely reasons for this is that people from different backgrounds do not mix with each other, do not know each other, and make no effort to get along.

The Urban Living survey also suggests that there is a poor sense of belonging in the area. While 21% of the population in the Urban Living area do not feel a bond with their immediate neighbourhood (that is, not a very strong sense of belonging or not at all), the corresponding figure in Lozells and Birchfield West

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<sup>23</sup> BMG Research (2008) *Local Area Agreement Survey*. BeBirmingham, p.26

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28. This compares with a 55% net agreement in Yardley, the lowest in Birmingham.

<sup>25</sup> E-mail correspondence.

<sup>26</sup> Vector Research (2009) *Urban Living Household Survey 2008: Handsworth and Lozells*, Vector Research, p.36.

is 29%. The authors of the report also point out that ‘a quarter of respondents [in the Handsworth and Lozells area] did not feel that bond with their neighbourhood, area, city or England’<sup>27</sup>. In Lozells and Birchfield West, around one third does not feel a bond with their local area, Birmingham or England.

These figures would caution against the application of the constituency figures to all localities within it. They also caution against complacency and raise questions about the interpretation of the good constituency figures, which appear to suggest that because the area has been diverse for a long time, people have become accustomed to living together and, as time passes, people’s sense of community is increasing.

The two constituencies that include the Handsworth and Lozells area are the most ethnically diverse in the city<sup>28</sup>. Of the 28,806 people who lived in the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward at the time of the Census in 2001, 83% were in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population. This compares with 30% in Birmingham as a whole<sup>29</sup>. However, the ethnic composition of these areas is changing over time. In Table 1, we can see that in the inter-census period 1991 and 2001, in addition to ‘white flight’, there was a substantial loss of people with an Indian background, despite the growth in numbers in the city as a whole. There was a growth of 20% in the Black population but, since this was much less than in the city as a whole, we might assume that segments of the Black population are also moving out. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are increasing substantially, but more or less in line with the increase in these populations in the city as a whole.

**Table 1: Change in Ethnic Populations 1991-2001**

% CHANGE IN % SHARE	% CHANGE						
	White %	Black %	Indian %	Pakistani %	Bangladeshi %	Chinese %	Other %
<b>Soho /</b>							
<b>Handsworth</b>	<b>-23.68</b>	<b>19.19</b>	<b>-12.77</b>	<b>51.42</b>	<b>63.25</b>	<b>1.06</b>	<b>59.19</b>
Birmingham	-10.35	34.06	7.41	54.82	60.98	51.72	54.57

Source: 1991 Census, 2001 Census – elaborated in Urban Living (2005) *Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Needs and Aspirations*.

A variety of sources provide different figures for the current ethnic profile of Handsworth and Lozells but by combining some of them we can get a reasonable picture of the current situation<sup>30</sup>. In Table 2, we can see that in Handsworth/Lozells the population is 48% Asian and 32% Black and that there is some minor variation across the area.

<sup>27</sup> Vector Research (2009) *op. cit.*, p.38

<sup>28</sup> BMG (2008) *op.cit.*, p.97.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.bebirmingham.org.uk>

<sup>30</sup> Sources include: BeBirmingham (2008) *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*; Vector Research (2009); BMG (2008); BeBirmingham (2008) *Neighbourhood Profiles*.

In Table 3, we can see that the Asian population, as a proportion of the total population, is 20% Indian, 19% Pakistani and 8% Bangladeshi. This, of course, is far from being a homogenous ethnic community. It is divided by a history of conflict in the Indian subcontinent, territory in Birmingham and religion - and there is anecdotal evidence that there is division not only between these groups but also within them. It is to the credit of faith and other community leaders that the historical conflict seldom finds its expression in Birmingham but, once again, it would be wrong to be complacent

**Table 2: Ethnic Diversity**

	BMG Birmingham	Ladywood	Perry Barr	H&L	Lozells & BW	Other H&L
	%	%	%	%	%	
White	67	29	43	14	13	16
Mixed	2	3	3	3	2	3
Asian	21	39	33	48	50	48
Black	8	25	18	31	32	30
Other	2	3	2	3	3	4

Note: H&L is Handsworth and Lozells, BW is Birchfield West  
Sources: BMG (2008), p.97; Vector (2009) p.6.

**Table 3: Ethnic Profile: Handsworth & Lozells, Lozells & Birchfield West (BW), and Other Handsworth & Lozells**

	H&L	Lozells & BW	Other H&L
	%	%	%
<b>White</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>15.6</b>
White British	10.4	11.1	9.9
White Irish	0.9	0.5	1.3
Other White	3.1	1.3	4.4
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>
White & Black Caribbean	1.3	0.0	2.3
White & Black African	0.3	0.5	0.1
White & Asian	0.3	0.3	0.3
Other mixed	0.7	1.4	0.2
<b>Asian</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>47.7</b>
Indian	20.2	13.1	25.5
Pakistani	18.6	21.0	16.8
Bangladeshi	7.8	14.8	2.7
Other Asian	1.8	0.6	2.7
<b>Black</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>29.9</b>
Caribbean	22.5	20.5	24.0
African	7.7	10.5	5.7
Other Black	1.3	2.8	0.2
<b>Other</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>
Chinese	1.1	0.6	1.5
Other Ethnic Group	1.8	1.1	2.4

Source: Vector, 2009, p.6

The issue that most of the literature ignores is religion. In Lozells and Birchfield West, the population is 34% mainly Christian Black, 36% South Asian Muslim and 30% of a variety of religions and origins. The 2005 disturbances were an expression of an underlying tension between young Christian Blacks and young South Asian Muslims that does not appear to have gone away. Social cohesion theory would suggest that in an area like this, with people of different backgrounds living closely together, we should expect high levels of social cohesion. We have seen that the opposite is the case. If we also have increasing Black middle class flight, leaving a residual and increasingly resentful Black population who are excluded from the material benefits of society, we have the perfect recipe for further trouble.

In order to increase social cohesion, promote inter-ethnic mixing and reduce the risk of further disturbances, it is important to understand the extent and nature of poverty and deprivation in the area, and how this compares with other parts of the city and the country. As suggested above, removing the structural disadvantage that causes low community cohesion is a fundamental aspect of community cohesion policy, which will not only enhance residents' quality of life but also improve both resident and external perceptions of Handsworth and Lozells.

### **3. Deprivation and Unemployment**

#### **3.1 Indices of Multiple Deprivation**

In 1997, the Indices of Deprivation showed that Handsworth was the 30<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward in the country, a position which was better than nine other Birmingham wards<sup>31</sup>. Following the introduction of Output Areas in the 2001 Census and changes to geographies of wards in 2004, the boundaries of the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are used in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in 2007 are not consistent with the boundaries of the new Lozells and East Handsworth Ward. Nevertheless, there are 18 LSOAs that are within or mainly within the ward. The IMD scores for these LSOAs for 2007 provide a fairly accurate picture of the level of deprivation in different parts of the ward and in the ward as a whole.

Of these LSOAs, two are amongst the one percent of the most deprived areas in the country, a further seven are in the worst three per cent and six have levels of deprivation that place them in the bottom 5%. That is, of the 18 LSOAs in Handsworth/Lozells, 15 (over 80%) are amongst the 5% most deprived areas in England and Wales.

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<sup>31</sup> Middleton, A., Loftman, P and Schaechter, J (1997) Birmingham – The International Convention Centre, *Urban Redevelopment and Social Polarisation in the City: Vol 1*, Lille, ILFRESI, p. 118.

The IMD are composed of seven indicators that are giving weightings to produce the overall score<sup>32</sup>. Analysing the relative importance of these indicators, it is clear that the main problem in Handsworth/Lozells is the income levels of its inhabitants. Six of the LSOAs are in the worst 1% in the country and a further eight are in the worst 3%. Put another way, around 80% of the ward is part of the poorest 3% of the country. If we remove the two most prosperous parts of the ward from the picture, the rest fall into the bottom 1.5% in the country.

Related to income, we might expect that the second most problematical aspect of deprivation would be employment, but it is not. The second biggest issue in Handsworth/Lozells is the quality of the living environment. Within this domain, three of the LSOAs fall into the bottom 1% in the country and a further seven are in the bottom 3%. That is, in more than half the ward, the quality of the living environment is amongst the worst 3% in England.

Nevertheless, the area does not fare much better on the employment indicator. There are indeed two LSOAs that fall into the bottom 3% with respect to the employment element of the IMD and a further five that are in the bottom 5%. All are in the bottom 20%. Lack of employment is certainly a major issue, but low paid employment may be a more important problem. The fundamental problem of the area, therefore, is low income, which is linked to benefits but may also be a feature of the type of employment that the people of Handsworth and Lozells have access to. When the residents of Handsworth/Lozells do find jobs, they tend to be low-paid, which will be a function of skill levels and the types of work that is available locally.

One aspect of the local economy which we know very little about, of course, is the importance of informal employment. Those working in the informal sector, usually for cash in hand to supplement their income from benefits, are a feature of the economies of poorer neighbourhoods all over the country. People do whatever they need to do, legal and sometimes illegal, to support themselves and their families. It may be a small part of the local economy, but it is hidden from statisticians. These activities are a rational response to exclusion from the formal labour market, which we will return to in a moment.

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The IMD 2007 was constructed by combining the seven transformed domain scores, using the following weights:

- \* Income (22.5%)
- \* Employment (22.5%)
- \* Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- \* Education, Skills and Training (13.5%)
- \* Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- \* Crime (9.3%)
- \* Living Environment (9.3%)

Another feature of the area is the importance of new migrant communities. Levels of international migration have risen significantly in recent years, particularly from the EU Accession States. Employers have generally welcomed new EU migrants, mainly because they have been filling jobs that were previously hard-to-fill. It is argued that if these migrants are seen to be displacing some indigenous people from employment, this could lead to resentment<sup>33</sup>. More important for Handsworth/Lozells, migration from the Indian subcontinent is still significant and, if the recent European migrants are seen to be replacing either earlier migrants or their British-born children in the labour market, this too could harm community cohesion. There is already some evidence that young black people are expressing such resentment<sup>34</sup> and that, within the migrant community itself, both Iranians and Kurds accuse the Poles of working for less than the minimum wage<sup>35</sup>. Almost all Polish respondents are employed, including Polish women. In contrast, the vast majority of refugees are unemployed – between 70% and 90% of each community and almost all women<sup>36</sup>. The main reasons for unemployment amongst this group are language and lack of UK work experience or qualifications.

### **3.2 Access to Income-Earning Opportunities**

Over the past 25 years, unemployment in Handsworth and Lozells has been well above the city average and there is evidence that the gap has been growing. There is also evidence that as the economy of the city and the nation improves, the relative performance of the area deteriorates compared to the city and the country as a whole. When the national economy picked up in the 1990s, the situation in the Handsworth ward improved more slowly than the rest of the city. In 1992, in the midst of the last recession, the unemployment rate in Handsworth was 1.8 times the city average but as the economy picked up the gap between the ward and the rest of the city grew<sup>37</sup>. By 1997, unemployment in the old Handsworth ward was 2.0 times the average. This is a reminder of what we might expect as the national economy recovers from the current recession, with all its implications for community cohesion, the image of the area and the image of the city as a whole. At 2.4 times the city average in 2008 (Table 4), the difference between unemployment in the ward and the city is already greater than it was in 1997, and it will inevitable grow as the economy moves out of the present recession. Lower levels of education, skills and work experience will ensure that this transpires.

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<sup>33</sup> West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008) *Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country City Region – Outline Strategic Economic Assessment*, Birmingham, WMRO, p.32.

<sup>34</sup> Darcus Howe, full reference

<sup>35</sup> Phillimore, et al (2008) *The Neighbourhood Needs of New Migrants*, University of Birmingham,

<sup>36</sup> Phillimore, et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.42.

<sup>37</sup> Middleton, A., Loftman, P and Schaechter, J (1998) Birmingham - United Kingdom Case Study, *Urban Redevelopment and Social Polarisation in the City: Vol. 1*, Lille, ILFRESI, p. 39.

**Table 4: Unemployment and Disability in Lozells and East Handsworth**

	Date	L&EH %	Perry Barr %	Birmingham %	L%EH/B'ham
Unemployment (claimant count)	May-08	19.9	8.7	8.2	2.4
Income Support	May-07	13.1	7.7	9.2	1.4
Incapacity Benefit & SDA	May-07	11	7.9	8.9	1.2
Long Term Unemployment	May-08	10.7	4.4	3.7	2.9
Youth Unemployment	May-08	21.3	14.7	15.8	1.3
Worklessness	May-07	30.4	19.8	21.6	1.4

Source: <http://local.bebirmingham.org.uk> [Accessed May 2009]

Across the city region and in the city of Birmingham, levels of worklessness<sup>38</sup> are high compared to the national average<sup>39</sup>. This is more concentrated in certain demographic groups than others – under 25s and over 50s, those with a disability and black and minority ethnic groups in particular. In central and east Birmingham, areas with concentrations of young people, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have the highest rates of worklessness, especially among women. The West Midlands Regional Observatory propose that ‘this suggests that there may be cultural issues to be overcome as well as other factors such as skills’<sup>40</sup>. This may be true, but whose cultural issues should we be looking at? Amongst women and new migrants, lack of English language presents a barrier to employment<sup>41</sup>. The traditional role of women in South Asian society is different from their role in British society, so perhaps this is what WMRO are alluding to. However, it is also the case that racism amongst employers and the stigma attached to where people live are also powerful issues that need to be considered when trying to stimulate employment for residents in Handsworth and Lozells. These are aspects of local culture that should be acknowledged.

In May 2008, 19.9% of the economically active population in Lozells and East Handsworth aged 16-59 were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, 2.4 times the city average (of 8.2%) (see Table 4). This showed a slight decline from May 2007, when the Lozells and East Handsworth figures were above the average for the Priority Wards and unemployment rates were almost seven times the national average for England and Wales (3.2%)<sup>42</sup>. The rates for the long-term unemployed are even worse, at 2.9 times the city average.

<sup>38</sup> Worklessness is defined as those of working age who are not employed, whether or not they are seeking work. The ‘Working Age Client Group’ includes those not seeking work but in receipt of at least one of a range of benefits that can be paid to people of working age.

<sup>39</sup> West Midlands Regional Observatory (2008) *Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country City Region – Outline Strategic Economic Assessment*, Birmingham, WMRO, p.22.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.24.

<sup>41</sup> Phillimore, et al (2008) *op.cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Be Birmingham (2008), *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, p.14

The proportion of the working age population in Lozells and East Handsworth who have no qualifications is 10% higher than in the city as a whole (47% against 37%) and 18% higher than the national average<sup>43</sup>. At the time of the last Census, the proportion of people in the bottom three occupational categories<sup>44</sup> was 54%, compared to 32% citywide<sup>45</sup>. This is reflected in below average earnings.

In June 2007, before the current recession, there were 22 applicants in Handsworth/Lozells for every vacancy notified to the Jobcentre<sup>46</sup>. In the Perry Barr constituency, the long-term unemployment rates were 3 times the rate for the city and, as is the case across the city, unemployment rates were lowest for the white population, followed by the Indian. The Bangladeshi population was six times more likely than the white to be long-term unemployed, the Pakistani more than four times and Blacks more than three times<sup>47</sup>. With an estimated 86% of the population belonging to BME groups, the unemployment figures are not surprising.

Other benefits associated with low incomes and worklessness are also higher in Handsworth/Lozells than elsewhere. The percentage of the population aged 16-59 claiming income support is 1.4 times the city average, as is the proportion of the working age population that is claiming out of work benefits<sup>48</sup>. The percentage claiming incapacity benefit or severe disability allowance is 1.2 times the city average. Incapacity benefit was being paid to 11% of the working age population (compared to 9% of the city as a whole and 7.4% nationally).

The percentage of young people aged 18-24 claiming job seekers allowance is 1.3 times the city average and NOMIS statistics suggest that youth unemployment rates are 1.6 times those in the city as a whole<sup>49</sup>. However, other figures show that young people, aged 16 to 18 years old, were only marginally more likely to be 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEETS) than people of the same age in other parts of the city (7.15% compared to 6.9%)<sup>50</sup>. This may to some extent reflect an improving educational performance in Handsworth/Lozells, to which we shall return. However, youth unemployment remains a considerable barrier to the future well-being of everyone in the area.

Out of the 2 million unemployed in the UK today, around 800,000 are under the age of 25. Overcoming the low levels of individual and household income

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<sup>43</sup> Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007) *Perry Barr Constituency: Economic and Employment Profile*, Birmingham City Council.

<sup>44</sup> SOC2000 - Sales and customer services; process, plant and machine operatives; and elementary occupations.

<sup>45</sup> [www.birmingham.gov.uk/community](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/community)

<sup>46</sup> Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007), *op. cit.*, p.9

<sup>47</sup> Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007), *op. cit.*, p.15. This population, defined as unemployed for one year or longer, have a similar pattern as Birmingham as a whole but the geography is not the same as for previous unemployment calculations.

<sup>48</sup> <http://local.bebirmingham.org.uk/datasets>

<sup>49</sup> Birmingham Economic Information Centre (2007) *op. cit.*, p.14.

<sup>50</sup> Be Birmingham (2008), *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, p.15.

will require the preparation of young people for employment that will pay more than is achievable at present. In areas like Handsworth/Lozells, the numbers of young unemployed will rise dramatically as young people leave school in June to find there are no jobs. Already, applications for further and higher education is rising, as young people decide to carry on with their education rather than be unemployed, but young people in Handsworth/Lozells, with their lower levels of school attainment, are less likely than teenagers from elsewhere to be able to choose this option.

The Chancellor may raise funding for FE, but this may have less impact on Handsworth/Lozells than other parts of the city. As unemployment rises towards three million, young people in areas such as Handsworth/Lozells will be disproportionately affected. This means not only higher unemployment during the recession, with divergence between the area and other parts of the city increasing, but also these differences in unemployment continuing to increase during the recovery because the young people in Handsworth/Lozells are least able to take advantage of the new opportunities. Unemployment while young causes permanent damage for future employment prospects. It increases the chances of unemployment later in life and reduces lifetime earning capacity.

The Chancellor may provide employers with incentives to hire people but, all other things being equal, will employers hire young people from Lozells and East Handsworth, an area that is highly stigmatised? If it is the case that employers outside Handsworth/Lozells are reluctant to employ people from the area, what are the opportunities in the local economy?

Given the situation of high unemployment and worklessness, we have to ask whether the local economy can be supported and improved to help residents and, in particular, young people into well-paid employment. What types of jobs exist in the local economy and what assistance can be given to support new businesses and protect existing ones?

Since 1999, the ward has lost almost 60 of its 700 enterprises, after new starts and closures are taken into account. This net loss of local firms represents a drop of around 8% at a time of economic growth in the economy, when the number of firms in the constituency grew by 5% and in the city by 6%. Business survival rates are also well below average. A new business in Lozells and East Handsworth has less than a 50% chance of surviving 4 years, compared to 60% in Birmingham as a whole.

From conversations with different people, there appears to be a general perception that there is a high rate of self-employment in Handsworth and Lozells. In fact, the level is lower than in Birmingham as a whole and much lower than is the case nationally (8.7%, 9.1% and 12.4% respectively, at the time of the last Census)<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> [www.birmingham.gov.uk/community](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/community)

These figures underline an argument for support to be extended to local businesses to help them survive and grow, but they also raise the question as to what types of employers there are in the area that would benefit from such support.

The size-structure of industry in the area is set out in Table 5 . Eighty nine per cent of firms in the area employ less than 10 people and only 20 organisations, all of them public sector, employ more than 50. Of the 480 firms who employ less than 10 people, around 200 (42%) are in retail and catering (which appear to be mainly fast food outlets).

Perhaps surprisingly, there were around 120 firms of all sizes in banking, finance and insurance in 2007. In terms of number of firms, this was the second most important sector. In the current climate, with the financial sector in crisis, there can be little potential for employment growth in this type of activity. However, as the economy recovers from the recession, close attention should be paid to opportunities in this sector.

To get people into employment within the area, the role of the public sector as an employer is critical. Birmingham City Council recognises that, through their staff and recruitment policies, the Council and other public sector agencies can improve the representative composition of their workforce at all levels and, through these employees, can deepen community engagement<sup>52</sup>. The City Council and its partner organisations in Handsworth and Lozells have a potential for making a major impact on employment in the area, if they can agree a recruitment policy for the area that prepares and allows residents access to public sector jobs.

With the above industry structure, there is little potential for employment growth without a major contribution from the public sector, both as an employer and as an awarder of contracts. There may be a need to look more closely at public sector recruitment practices in Handsworth/Lozells, to see if there may be an opportunity to employ more local people, particularly but not exclusively in the regeneration effort. At the moment, a large proportion employed in this sector are likely to live elsewhere, have their salaries paid into banks in other parts of the City, and spend their incomes far from their places of work. Retaining more public sector salaries in the local economy would support local businesses.

Encouraging contractors that are involved in the regeneration effort to employ local labour could also make a contribution. There may also be scope for the public sector supporting local social enterprises that can address some of the issues that concern local residents.

Attracting new investment into the area will not be easy at the present time. Nevertheless, with the development of the Asian economies and an expected growth of inward investment from India and China into the UK economy over the next 20 years, we might expect the cultural diversity of Handsworth/Lozells to be a positive feature when efforts are being made to

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<sup>52</sup> Birmingham City Council (2006) *Community Cohesion Strategy*, Birmingham BCC, p.10.

attract these businesses to Birmingham. The area's historical relationship with the Indian sub-continent should place Handsworth/Lozells in a good position to both export to South Asia and attract inward investment from the same part of the world. However, this is unlikely to happen without the allocation of a considerable amount of new land for industrial and commercial activity. Unfortunately, as we shall see, development land is in short supply. Other issues which are important, and to which we will return, are skills levels, the appearance of the local environment and the levels and perceptions of criminal activities.

**Table 5: Number of Employers by Size-Band in 2007, Rounded to the Nearest 10.**

Industry	1-10 employe es	11-49 employees	50-199 employee s	200 or more employee s	Total
Agriculture and fishing	0	0	0	0	0
Energy and water	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	30	0	0	0	30
Construction	30	0	0	0	30
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	200	10	0	0	200
Transport and communications	20	0	0	0	30
Banking, finance and insurance	110	10	0	0	120
Public admin, education & health	70	20	20	0	100
Other services	30	0	0	0	30
Column Total	480	40	20	0	540

Source: Birmingham Economic Information Centre

### 3.3 The Local Economy and Employment

The issues of low levels of participation in the labour market and high levels of unemployment are only partially related to the existence of jobs in the area. It has been recognised for a long time that it is not uncommon in inner city areas to find high levels of unemployment and high numbers of jobs existing side by side in areas characterised by poverty and exclusion<sup>53</sup>. The problem in these areas is not that there are no jobs, for in some cases one can find twice as many jobs as there are people seeking jobs. A major issue in these places is that the people of the area cannot access the jobs that exist locally. In Handsworth/Lozells, there is no abundance of jobs, but a further problem is that the residents have difficulty in accessing jobs wherever they are to be found. The lack of jobs locally distracts from the difficulty that residents have in accessing jobs across the city or, indeed, in neighbouring metropolitan boroughs.

<sup>53</sup> Middleton, A. (1987) 'Glasgow and its East End' in Donnison, D. and Middleton, A. (eds.) *Regenerating the Inner City: Glasgow's Experience*, London, Routledge & Keegan Paul.

It should be clear from the above discussion of the local economy that solving the jobs issue in Handsworth/Lozells will depend on the economic development of the wider travel to work area. Dealing with the unemployment issue in Handsworth/Lozells is a matter of ensuring that the residents have the skills that are going to be required for the jobs in the wider area that will emerge in the future. This implies education and skills training for a future jobs market. But generating the employment that will serve both the needs of the wider economy and the local population will need a broader geographical perspective.

The Birmingham Economic Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy highlight the need to stimulate new industrial and commercial activity and employment in North West Birmingham<sup>54</sup>. The Regional Spatial Strategy points out that there is a 'direct link between economic performance and quality of life, particularly for disadvantaged groups and communities who may suffer from high rates of unemployment and poor access to employment opportunities'<sup>55</sup>. We have seen that this strategic framework is entirely consistent with the needs of Handsworth and Lozells and we will argue in this section that a broad sub-regional perspective is needed to tackle the issues of worklessness in the local area.

Birmingham's Council Plan for 2008-2013<sup>56</sup> proposes that, over the period, more people will be in work and that unemployment and worklessness will be reduced significantly. Important objectives are that 'economic inequalities between communities will reduce and disadvantaged people will have more opportunities; educational performance and adult skills will continue to improve; and more young people will be in education, training and employment'. These objectives are particularly important for the people of Handsworth and Lozells, particularly the commitment to reduce inequalities between communities, for it implies that additional resources will be targeted towards the area to address its levels of deprivation.

North-West Birmingham has been ignored as an area for inward investment, presumably because demand for industrial and commercial locations in the north-west of the city from potential incoming businesses has been low. There are other parts of the city that are more attractive for mobile companies and, in order to encourage them to locate in Birmingham, the Council and its partner organisations have to present what these businesses would consider to be the best available opportunities.

Nevertheless, North West Birmingham<sup>57</sup> received £39.9 million of SRB6 funding between 2000 and 2007, with the aim of working with the local community to bring about the long-term sustainable regeneration of the area. This focussed on the key corridors of Soho Road, Dudley Road and Midland

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<sup>54</sup> Birmingham City Council, *The Aston, Newtown and Lozells Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report*, p.9.

<sup>55</sup> GOWM (2008) *op.cit.*, p.45.

<sup>56</sup> Birmingham City Council (2008) *Council Plan 2008-2013*, Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, p10.

<sup>57</sup> Soho and parts of Lozells and East Handsworth, Aston, Handsworth Wood and Ladywood Wards

Metro Line 1, along with the local centres of Lozells Road, Villa Road and Rookery Road.

The Regional Spatial Strategy requires the council to identify a series of Regional Investment Sites (RIS). Aston East, at the boundaries of the East Birmingham and North Solihull Regeneration areas, has been proposed as a site for an RIS<sup>58</sup>. This would include office development, research and development activities, light industrial and high quality general industrial activities.

Across the City – Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country, Skill levels are lower than the national average and the proportion of individuals with no qualifications is higher. Worklessness rates are also higher, with significant concentrations in disadvantaged communities, particularly in the areas of multiple deprivation in Birmingham<sup>59</sup>. We have seen that this is particularly true of Handsworth and Lozells. The City-Region bid promised to measure success through ‘agreed targets for a reduction in benefit claimants, an increase in employment rates and increases in the number of people achieving NVQ Level 2 and NVQ Level 3 qualifications’<sup>60</sup>. If key weaknesses that need to be addressed in the City-Region are low levels of skills and high levels of worklessness<sup>61</sup>, focus on the needs of the people of Handsworth/Lozells would help achieve these objectives through reinforcing the momentum in education that is already improving.

The economic issues that the region needs to address include the need for better infrastructure to attract new businesses and help indigenous businesses to grow; a relatively low skills base, the need to diversify the economy and the need to connect housing growth to job growth<sup>62</sup>. Connecting Urban Living to areas of development for new and indigenous business through improved infrastructure fits the bill. There is little commercial and industrial land within Handsworth/Lozells to support the growth of indigenous companies and if the diversity of the communities can be linked to the diversification of the economy through the international connections in the area, investment in NW Birmingham and Sandwell makes sound economic sense.

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<sup>58</sup> Birmingham City Council, *The Aston, Newtown and Lozells Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report*, p10.

<sup>59</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al, (2009) *City-Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country, Draft*, p.12.

<sup>60</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al, (2009) *City-Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country: Proposal for a Pilot City Region*, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al, (2009) *City-Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country: Proposal for a Pilot City Region*, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al, (2009) *City-Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country: Proposal for a Pilot City Region*, p. 21.

### 3.4 The North-West Birmingham Investment Plan

There is a shortage of land for economic development in Handsworth/Lozells. The Birmingham Investment Plan<sup>63</sup> identifies 16 potential sites in this segment of the city, only one of which falls within the ward boundary. There are a further three lying just outside, in adjacent wards, but in localities that local people might refer to as being in Handsworth and Lozells.

The site located within the ward is at the junction of Soho Hill and Villa Road (1 hectare) which is appropriate for mixed use development. The sites immediately outside the ward are in Soho and Aston, but within a few hundred yards of the ward. There is a 6.3 hectare site close to Lozells Road and Birchfield Road, 'which offers a major opportunity for transformational change and a landmark building'<sup>64</sup>, but is currently identified for housing development; another one in the same location of 0.55 hectare has potential for a residential-led mixed use development; and a third (2.6 hectares) is to be found at the opposite end of the ward close to the West Bromwich Albion football ground, just off the Soho Road and located in the Soho ward. The development of the two sites adjacent to the Birchfield Road are part of a proposed radical change for the area, according to the Aston, Newtown and Lozells Area Action Plan. They could also contribute to the transformation of Handsworth/Lozells.

The North West Birmingham Investment Plan is an important development for this part of the city, breaking with many years of piecemeal thinking and neglect. Nevertheless, it is clear that the employment and income problems of Handsworth and Lozells cannot be resolved by promoting economic development within the ward or even in the surrounding area. Even if some of the other sites in the north west of the city were to be developed, three of which are of 15ha or more, this is likely to have little impact on Handsworth/Lozells, as the local labour force does not have the skills to compete effectively for the employment created.

In addition to an effort to increase education and skills levels, there is a need for a wider view to be taken of the geography of economic development in this part of the conurbation, which in turn raises questions about the infrastructure of the area and the governance of future development. We would argue that the situation in Handsworth/Lozells needs to be part of the debate about the future of the City-Region.

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<sup>63</sup> Birmingham City Council (2009) *Birmingham Investment Plan*, Birmingham City Council

<sup>64</sup> Birmingham City Council (2009) *Birmingham Investment Plan*, Birmingham City Council, p.61

### 3.5 The City-Region and Accelerated Development Zones

The implementation of an Accelerated development Zone (ADZ) approach for the City-Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country has been proposed as 'a way of improving connectivity and transport infrastructure, improving the accessibility of employment opportunities for local people'<sup>65</sup>. The proposal to Central Government for City-Region funding identified seven specific investment opportunities. The planned EDZ for Birmingham is in the Eastside area. A cheaper option may be in the NW of the city, close to the M5/M6 junction. Another proposed ADZ is along the West Bromwich – Oldbury and Dudley – Pensnett Growth Corridor. Based on the growth of West Bromwich town centre and along the corridor to Oldbury, this proposal would reconfigure Junction 2 of the M5, unlocking development opportunities in the surrounding area. There is currently an estimated funding gap of £40 million.

A question for Birmingham is whether such a development would benefit the residents of the city, particularly the residents of Handsworth and Lozells. Would current proposals represent a stimulus to the north west of the city, or could they be modified to facilitate business and employment growth in North West Birmingham, unlocking investment opportunities and, in addition, generating substantial employment in the local construction industry? As part of such a proposal, would it be possible to divert through traffic away from the A41 and the Soho Road – without threatening the viability of this local shopping centre? Such a proposition would relieve congestion, reduce environmental pollution and have added health benefits for the residents of Handsworth/Lozells. These are questions that must warrant further examination, for if Birmingham, Sandwell and Dudley could collaborate on such a development it would create modern infrastructure, stimulate economic growth and employment and improve the quality of life for the people of Handsworth/Lozells.

The longer term aim must be to ensure that the residents of Handsworth gain access to well-paid employment in, for example, the knowledge economy. At the moment, there are very few of these workers in Lozells and East Handsworth, although there are more in the surrounding wards of Handsworth Wood and Perry Barr<sup>66</sup>. On the other hand, if the aim is to retain higher earners, it may be that these are amongst the workers who are moving out of Lozells and East Handsworth, into the surrounding areas and who should be targeted. Past educational performance might suggest that this is not a ward that one would invest energy and resources in trying to achieve the levels of further and higher education that are needed to gain access to this sector. More recent performance, however, along with the aspirations of a growing number of young Asians would suggest otherwise.

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<sup>65</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al (2009) *City Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country: Accelerated Development Zone Proposition*, p.2.

<sup>66</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al (2009) *City Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country: Economic, Social and Cultural geographies*, Birmingham, p.9.

## 4. Education

Educational performance in Lozells and East Handsworth is worse than the city average in all areas of attainment, particularly in Early Learning where the gap has been widening as performance in the rest of the city has been improving in recent years<sup>67</sup>. However, performance at secondary level has been improving, with the percentage of children gaining 5 or more GCSEs A\*-C including English and maths increasing by 7.3% between 2006 and 2007.

In Table 6, we can see the performance of pupils who live in Handsworth, as distinct from the performance of the schools that are located in the area. There are three schools in Handsworth that attract pupils from all over the city and many children in the area attend schools that are outside the area. The performance of two selective schools in Soho / Handsworth (Handsworth Grammar School and King Edward VI Handsworth School) and one selective school in Aston / Lozells / Newtown AIP (King Edward VI Aston School) create a bias in the school statistics for the area<sup>68</sup>. These schools select pupils on the basis of ability, and are not bound to accept pupils solely from Birmingham, far less the local area. Focusing on the performance of pupils who live in the area gives us a better understanding of the potential of the young people who live there.

There are much larger numbers of children with speech and language difficulties in schools in the area<sup>69</sup>. This may be linked to the fact that 39% of residents were born outside of the UK<sup>70</sup> and a very high proportion of households do not have English as their first language. This may be compounded by the fact that Handsworth/Lozells is an important reception area for asylum seekers and refugees, over 50% of whom are unable to speak English<sup>71</sup>. The lack of English in a home environment creates early educational disadvantages for not only the children who are directly affected, but also may affect other children in the early years of education. For those schools attended by pupils resident in the ward, the proportion of pupils whose language community is English declined between 2005 and 2008, from 27.4% to 25.6%<sup>72</sup>.

Linked to the fact that in many households English is not the first language, many of the young children in the area start with an educational disadvantage and the efforts that are needed to overcome this may also have an impact on the education of other younger children. As the children move through the educational system, however, the gap between the ward and the city as a whole decreases. This may be in part due to the children adjusting to and adopting the English language, but it may also reflect both the contribution of

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<sup>67</sup> Be Birmingham (2008), *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, p.15

<sup>68</sup> Urban Living (2007) *Educational Attainment and Attendance Indicators 2005*, Sandwell, Urban Living, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> HESC (2009) *Holte Extended School Cluster Action Plan 2008-9*, p. 22.

<sup>70</sup> Be Birmingham (2008) *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, Birmingham, p.4.

<sup>71</sup> Phillimore, et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.14.

<sup>72</sup> Birmingham City Council (2005), *Education Profile: 2004/2005 Lozells and East Handsworth*; Birmingham City Council (2009), *Education Profile: 2007/2008 Lozells and East Handsworth*.

teachers and the aspirations of parents. The improvement in GCSE performance between 2004/05 and 2006/07 of 8.2 percentage points also suggests that by this year or next, standards at this level may move above the city average for the first time.

**Table 6: Educational Performance in Lozells and East Handsworth (Pupil Home Postcodes)**

	Ward Baseline (1)	Ward Latest (2)	Constituency Latest (2)	City Latest (2)	Latest diff Ward- City
Early Learning (2005-07)	29.9	20.0	33.4	40.0	-20
Key Stage 2 English & Maths	57.2	59.0	66.3	65.1	-6.1
Key Stage 3 English & Maths	44.5	53.2	58.5	58.5	-5.3
5+ GCSEs A*-C inc Eng & Maths	30.8	39.0	42.0	41.7	-2.7

Source:<http://local.bebirmingham.org.uk>  
[Accessed May 2009]

Notes:

1. 2004 and 2005
2. 2006 and 2007

This improving educational performance can have important implications for the future of attracting investment to the area and, if the more educated can be encouraged to stay, for the other key indicators of well-being.

A major issue for the area is the future of faith schools. Whilst there is evidence that faith schools create unequal access to education through sorting children along lines of class, ability and religion, there is no evidence that they result in improved standards across a local area<sup>73</sup>. The theory that competition between secondary schools in a local market for education will raise the standards of all the schools in that area has no basis. The only result is a more socially fragmented system with higher levels of pupil sorting across schools. In areas with high proportions of children in faith schools, there is no evidence that standards are higher. Across the country, faith schools get better exam results because the pupils who attend them had good results at primary schools and are from less disadvantaged backgrounds.

Anecdotal evidence for Handsworth/Lozells suggests that some catholic primaries now have a majority of pupils professing other faiths. Given the historical conflicts that are related to separate education in faith schools in, for example, Northern Ireland, this is a trait that might be encouraged in the interests of social cohesion.

<sup>73</sup> Vignoles, A, et al (2009) paper presented to the Royal Economic Society, Guildford.

The future of educational attainment is crucial for the development of the area and equalising educational opportunities through to further and higher education is essential for the longer term vitality of Handsworth and Lozells. Birmingham has been identified as a Wave Two Authority for the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, which will lead to the re-building of Holte School in Newtown<sup>74</sup>, one of the secondary schools used by school pupils who live in Handsworth/Lozells. This and other secondary schools in the area are performing better than they were in the past, but we also need to ensure that those who succeed at this level have opportunities to continue with their education to higher levels if they are to make a contribution to the knowledge society. The local Further Education College and University should have a role to play in this. We also have to ensure that they stay in the area, or return to it after university. The local view of what makes an area an attractive place to live in and the provision of the right kind of housing, addressing BME needs, is of central importance for this.

## **5. Handsworth and Lozells: A Good Place to Live?**

When asked to identify what makes an area a good place to live in, the five most important issues that residents of Lozells and East Handsworth identified were levels of crime, health services, shopping facilities, job prospects and affordable decent housing. All of these were mentioned by more than 40% of respondents, but crime levels were by far the most important, with 72% identifying this issue (Table 7). The proportion mentioning crime, health services and shopping facilities was far higher than in the city as a whole (column e), but it is significant that L&HE residents were also more than twice as likely to identify job prospects and wages/cost of living as people across the constituency or city. In Lozells, crime and clean streets were seen as being much more important than was the case in the ward as a whole.

In contrast, when asked what aspects of the local area were most in need of improving, clean streets was by far the most important issue. Sixty five per cent of residents in the ward mentioned this, as did 73% of those living in Lozells. People in Lozells and East Handsworth were 1.4 times as likely as people from across the city to say that the cleanliness of the streets was most in need of improving (Table 8, column e). This was followed by the level of crime (46%) and road and pavement repairs (32%). In 2006, crime and clean streets were the issues that needed to be dealt with, particularly in Lozells. Again, it should be noted that, with regards to the issue of job prospects, respondents in Lozells and East Handsworth were 1.4 times as likely to mention this as people from across the city or from the other priority wards (Columns e and f).

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<sup>74</sup> Birmingham City Council, *The Aston, Newtown and Lozells Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report*, p11.

We shall return to deal with the issues of cleaner and safer streets in more detail later. These are clearly fundamental issues for the people of Handsworth/Lozells and we might expect that they might have an impact on levels of satisfaction with the area as a place to live.

**Table 7: Aspects That Are Important In Making A Place A Good Place To Live**

	a	b	c	d	e	f
	L&EH	Lozells NEA	Priority Wards	City	Relation- ship L&EH/City	Relation- ship L&EH/PW
Level of crime	72	74	60	61	1.2	1.2
Clean Streets	38	63	43	35	1.1	0.9
Affordable decent housing	41	32	36	39	1.1	1.1
Parks and Open spaces	31	16	32	34	0.9	1.0
Facilities for young children	22	28	32	29	0.8	0.7
Health services	53	47	32	32	1.7	1.7
Shopping facilities	45	27	28	29	1.6	1.6
Job prospects	43	40	21	19	2.3	2.0
Activities for teenagers	10	17	20	19	0.5	0.5
Education provision	31	30	19	19	1.6	1.6
Sports and leisure facilities	6	7	13	13	0.5	0.5
Public Transport	4	4	12	13	0.3	0.3
Community Activities	8	14	12	11	0.7	0.7
Level of congestion	3	6	9	10	0.3	0.3
Wage levels cost of living	14	17	6	6	2.3	2.3

Sources: LAA 2006 Survey; LAA Baseline Survey 2006,Neighbourhood Element Areas Report

**Table 8: Aspects That Most Need Improving In Local Area**

	a	b	c	d	e	f
	L&EH	Lozells NEA	Priority Wards (PW)	City	Relation- ship L&EH/City	Relation- ship L&EH/PW
Clean Streets	65	73	59	48	1.4	1.1
Level of crime	46	51	45	43	1.1	1.0
Road and pavement repairs	32	22	32	39	0.8	1.0
Facilities for young children	30	36	28	27	1.1	1.1
Activities for teenagers	23	28	22	23	1.0	1.0
Parks and open spaces	19	15	22	22	0.9	0.9
level of traffic congestion	17	9	22	30	0.6	0.8
Health services	12	14	9	10	1.2	1.3
Affordable decent housing	8	11	8	9	0.9	1.0
Community Activities	8	8	8	9	0.9	1.0
Job Prospects	11	16	8	8	1.4	1.4
Level of pollution	9	18	5	7	1.3	1.8

Sources: LAA 2006 Survey; LAA Baseline Survey 2006,Neighbourhood Element Areas Report

Despite these issues, the people of Lozells and East Handsworth are slightly more satisfied than people in the city as a whole with their area as a place to live. This would imply that there are other aspects of living in the area which are positive and are perhaps not being captured in the range of responses being presented in the above table. The results are not statistically significant but external perceptions of Handsworth and Lozells would lead one to believe that residents of the area would be less satisfied than the average for the city. In fact, they are much more satisfied than people in other priority wards. The residents of Lozells, on the other hand, express the same lower level of satisfaction as the residents of these other wards. In this case, crime and rubbish in the streets may be outweighing any positive impact from other factors.

**Table 9: Satisfaction With The Local Area**

	Lozells NEA %	L&EH %	Priority Wards %	Perry Barr %	City %
Satisfied	76	83	77	n/a	81
Neither	10	7	9	n/a	9
Dissatisfied	14	10	14	n/a	10
Net	62	73	63	76	71

Sources: LAA 2007 Survey; LAA Baseline Survey 2006, Neighbourhood Element Areas Report

Another piece of research, carried out by Vector Research in 2008<sup>75</sup> confirms the lower satisfaction levels in Lozells and Birchfield West and suggests slightly lower levels in the broader Handsworth and Lozells area<sup>76</sup> (Table 10).

**Table 10: Satisfaction With The Local Area 2008**

	H&L %	Lozells and BW %	Rest of H&L %	Urban Living %
Satisfied	78	71	82	82
Neither	7	10	5	7
Dissatisfied	15	17	14	11
Net	63	55	68	71

Source: Vector Research, 2008

<sup>75</sup> Vector Research 2008, op. cit.

<sup>76</sup> Because of the different years and the different geographies, care must be taken not to read too much into these figures, but they do confirm the differences between Lozells and the rest of the area.

The lower levels of satisfaction in Lozells, however, are not reflected in a desire to move away from the area. Lozells' residents are actually less likely than those living in Lozells and East Handsworth to want to move and only slightly more than residents in the city as a whole. Ward residents, however, are 1.6 times more likely than city residents to want to move out of their locality and they are almost twice as likely as constituency residents to want to move out (Table 11).

**Table 11: Resident Intention To Move Out of Area In The Future, 2006**

	<b>Lozells NEA (%)</b>	<b>L&amp;EH (%)</b>	<b>Priority Wards (%)</b>	<b>Perry Barr (%)</b>	<b>City (%)</b>
<b>Intention To Move Out of Area In The Future</b>	19	28	23	15	17

*Sources: LAA 2007 Survey; LAA Baseline Survey 2006, Neighbourhood Element Areas Report*

Vector Research asked about plans to move in the next five years and discovered that the residents of Handsworth/Lozells are much more likely than the rest of the Urban Living area to want to move out. The residents of Lozells are much less likely to commit to staying in the area (more don't know) (see Table 12 overleaf).

**Table 12: Plans to move within the next five years**

	H&L %	Lozells and BW %	Rest of H&L %	Urban Living %
Definitely/likely	29	28	29	22
Unlikely/definitely not	36	28	42	42
Don't know	35	43	29	37

*Source: Vector Research (2009) Household survey 2008, Handsworth and Lozells*

Around 22% of those in Handsworth/Lozells who say they are likely to move, that is just over 6% of respondents, say the main reason they want to move is to live in a better or more suitable area. More than twice as many say they will not move because they like the area. Urban Living's activities to improve the properties and the housing mix in the area will have a clear impact on people's decision to stay, since half of those who say they will move say that the reason is to get a better or different property. Those living in Handsworth/Lozells are slightly more likely to want to move for reasons relating to the property, so the impact will be greater in this area than in the rest of Urban Living. The impact of housing renewal in encouraging people to

stay is potentially greater in Handsworth/Lozells than in the rest of the Pathfinder. In Lozells people are less likely to say they will not move and those that say this are less likely to say it is because they are happy where they are. Nevertheless, there is an apparent contradiction in that they are more likely to say they positively like the area than people in other neighbourhoods. They are twice as likely to say they cannot afford to move than people in Urban Living as a whole.

**Table 13: Local Resident Reasons For Moving / Not Moving Out of the Area**

	H&L %	Lozells and BW %	Rest of H&L %	Urban Living %
<b>Reasons for moving</b>				
Better/different property	49	46	51	43
better/more suitable area	22	23	21	25
Personal/family	15	12	17	16
Other	14	19	11	16
<b>Reasons for not moving</b>				
Happy where I am	52	44	56	60
I like the area	14	18	12	11
Don't need to move	15	17	14	15
Can't afford it	12	18	10	9
Other	7	4	9	6

Source: Vector Research, Household Survey 2008, Handsworth and Lozells

We have seen above that the propensity to move varies across ethnic groups. The needs of those who stay, along with the needs of new arrivals, will have considerable impact on the future demand for housing in the area. Family structures, cultural needs and affordability will undoubtedly condition the future of housing supply.

## 6. Housing

Recent information suggests that home ownership in Handsworth/Lozells stands at 56%, compared with 71% the rest of the city and the same percentage in the Perry Barr constituency<sup>77</sup> (Table 14). In contrast, 21% of housing in the city is social housing, compared with 27% in Lozells and East Handsworth and 33% in L&BW. This balance of tenures is to some extent a reflection of the social class composition of the ward, but it is the importance of private renting that distinguishes it from other parts of the urban area and helps explain some other features of the area. Seventeen per cent of the households in Lozells and East Handsworth rent from private landlords, compared to just 7% across Birmingham.

<sup>77</sup> Vector (2009) *op. cit.*

**Table 14: Housing Tenure**

	Birmingham	Perry Barr	Urban Living	H&L	Lozells& Birchfield	Rest of Handsworth
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Owned outright	47	46	33	35	33	35
Buying with mortgage	24	25	18	21	15	25
Shared ownership			1	1	1	1
TOTAL OWNERSHIP	71	71	52	56	49	61
Rented from Council	15	11	22	11	17	8
Rented from RSL/Trust	6	8	10	16	17	15
TOTAL SOCIAL HOUSING	21	19	31	27	33	22
Rented Private landlord	7	10	17	17	17	17
Other	<0.5	1	1	0	0	0

Sources: Birmingham City Council; Urban Living

Because of the way that the statistics are presented in different surveys, we cannot compare length of residence of respondents in Handsworth/Lozells with respondents across Birmingham. However, it would appear that residents in Handsworth/Lozells may be just as likely as others in Birmingham as a whole to have been living in their area for more than 10 years and more than 20 years. This requires further analysis and verification but these figures suggest that there is a substantial long-term residential population co-existing with significant short-term churning.

This raises the question of who is leaving and who is staying. We have seen that in the inter-census period 1991 and 2001, in addition to 'white flight', there was a substantial loss of people with an Indian background, despite the growth in numbers in the city as a whole. There was a growth of 20% in the Black population but, since this was much less than in the city as a whole, we might assume that segments of the Black population is also moving out. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are increasing substantially, but more or less in line with the increase in these populations in the city as a whole.

The complexity of the changes that are taking place in the ethnic composition of the area are compounded by changes in other aspects of social demographics that will be confirmed by the 2011 census. These changes relate to class composition of the area; anecdotal evidence suggests that the Black middle class is moving out, that family sizes may be getting larger and that the numbers of young people are increasing. We might also anticipate future changes in the importance and nature of the joint or extended family system as young British Asians continue to move into the housing market. All of these issues and other socio-economic factors will have an impact on housing demand that we cannot fully analyse here, but there are some aspects of the local housing market that we ought to highlight.

The fact that the private rented sector is so important has implications for the stability of the population of Lozells and East Handsworth. This housing tenure is characterised by relative ease of entry and exit, contributing to the rate of immigration and out-migration in the area. Irrespective of the cultural attraction that Handsworth and Lozells might have for new migrants, with its high proportion of stable residents who were born outside of the UK, the ease of entry into housing in the area confirms Lozells and East Handsworth as an accessible destination for new arrivals. Once they find a niche in the city's employment market, if they decide to stay in the city, they are able to identify locations where they would rather live, and they move on – leaving residential space for other new migrants.

In 2008, 34% of new migrants to three Neighbourhood Management Areas in north-west Birmingham were living in the private rented sector, many in shared accommodation<sup>78</sup>. Some, such as asylum seekers, had little choice of where to live when they arrived in the UK but stayed on because the area was familiar to them and they had local friends and family in the community. For others, the point of arrival was a starting point, before moving on. Some, such as the Kurds, initially settled with friends around them but moved on later because the area was seen as unsuitable for families. People come for the cheapness and accessibility of housing, to enjoy the multi-cultural aspect of the area and absence of racism, and move on for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, initial impressions were mainly negative: they had difficulty in accessing information and were confused by the complexity of bureaucratic systems; they thought the housing was of poor quality and that landlords did not fulfil their responsibilities; they noted the dirtiness of the streets and thought it was unsafe. Like the indigenous population and longstanding migrants, they were deeply concerned about violent crime and the poor environment<sup>79</sup>. Lack of English was an issue in their difficulties with negotiating the systems and communicating with others around them.

Anecdotal evidence from around the country suggests that as councils and housing associations improve the quality of life of their tenants by the removal of problem tenants from their estates, these families are moving into the housing that is being snapped up cheaply by private landlords in Housing Market Renewal and NDC areas. We don't know for certain if this is happening in Birmingham but, if it is, it will be having a direct and negative impact on the lives of the people of Handsworth and Lozells. The numbers may be so small that they are not picked up in official statistics, but the local impact of small numbers of anti-social residents can be immense.

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<sup>78</sup> Phillimore, et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.33.

<sup>79</sup> Phillimore, *op. cit.*, p.34.

## 6.1 Housing Stock

A large minority (39%) of private housing stock within the North West Birmingham and Sandwell Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area fails the decent homes standard<sup>80</sup>. Accompanying issues in the pathfinder area include overcrowding, problems of image and low house price growth.

The most recent data from the Annual Birmingham Local Area Agreement Survey indicates that affordable decent housing is one of the major areas of concern for people in Lozells with 47% considering the issue important and 33% believing that it requires improvement<sup>81</sup>.

Housing stock within the pathfinder area is varied. Although the majority of stock consists of terraced housing, 'the area also has an above average number of flats and maisonettes at 25.2% of the stock, with greater concentrations in certain neighbourhoods, such as Lozells, Newtown and Aston'<sup>82</sup>.

In Handsworth, the housing predominantly comprises Edwardian terraces although there are larger Victorian properties in the south eastern corner of the area<sup>83</sup>. As Dargue notes, in Lozells the Victorian streets and houses were of good quality construction and therefore escaped 'the 1960s redevelopment of neighbouring Newtown'<sup>84</sup>.

However, housing in Lozells and the immediate surrounding areas is currently the subject of significant investment via the Urban Living Pathfinder programme. The over arching aim of this 10-15 year programme is to<sup>85</sup>:

...ensure the housing market remains strong and [makes] the right types of homes available for existing residents and those who wish to move into the area...provide more homes; connect housing improvements with the regeneration of local commercial centres and economic programmes; increase housing choice; transform the quality of housing and neighbourhoods and make the area a safe, convenient and popular place to live, work and invest'.

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<sup>80</sup> Latchford, P (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board (2008): *Lozells Neighbourhood Management Plan 2008/9*, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Vector Research, *op. cit.*, p.3.

<sup>83</sup> Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) *Handsworth Neighbourhood Plan 2008/9*

<sup>84</sup> Dargue, W (2009): A History of Birmingham Places & Placenames . . . from A to Y – Lozells/The Lozells. Online: <http://billdargue.jimdo.com/placenames-gazetteer-a-to-y/places-l/lozells/> [Accessed 20/04/09]

<sup>85</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) Invest in North West Birmingham. Online: [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf?MEDIA\\_ID=27708&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf?MEDIA_ID=27708&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf) [Accessed 20/04/09]

The targeting of resources at the housing market in the area indicates recognition of significant changes in community requirements. The literature suggests that there has been a decline in the total net stock of dwellings in the Pathfinder area over the last ten years and an accompanying significant change in tenure patterns.

There has been a decline in the social rented sector, most notably as a result of the clearance of the least desirable housing stock, whilst the private rented sector has made ground on the owner occupied sector as a result of the strong growth in buy-to-let investment<sup>86</sup>. The growth in private renting has, to some degree, occurred as a result of the shortage of 'affordable housing for sale and a reducing/static social housing stock at a time of strongly rising demand'<sup>87</sup>

An additional problem is that overcrowding is evident in both the social rented sector and older private rented properties where, 'there is also a concentration of families living in unsuitable accommodation'<sup>88</sup>. This is reinforced by Latchford who notes that<sup>89</sup>:

At 10%, the level of private renting in the Urban Living area is significantly higher than the wider Birmingham [and Sandwell] average. Over 80% of dwellings in the private rented sector are in the pre-1919 stock. With just over half of all tenants moving within a year and three quarters within three years, churning in these neighbourhoods is high, adversely impacting on neighbourhood stability.

Latchford concludes that without significant intervention, a potential scenario for some residents in the area will include greater overcrowding, further hardship for those on lower incomes as demand for private rented accommodation increases and some families 'forced to live in the least desirable, crime-ridden areas, further undermining social cohesion'<sup>90</sup>.

In Handsworth, this view is reinforced by anecdotal evidence and data gathered during the 2007 Keith Newell consultancy exercise, which suggests that 'double renting of rooms (day and night shift)' is taking place in respect of individuals from newly arriving communities<sup>91</sup>. This double-renting phenomenon has been confirmed by local public sector workers in the area.

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<sup>86</sup> Urban Living (2008): Affordable Housing Policy for Urban Living 2008-11; ECOTEC (2006): *Future Demand for Affordable Housing: Final Report*.

<sup>87</sup> Urban Living (2008) *op. cit.*, p.2.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Lachford (2007), *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid*, pp.11-12.

<sup>91</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2007) *Perry Barr District. Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Initiative. Baseline Assessment*, p.22.

A further complication, and one that much of the research undertaken to date does not address, is the likely impact of the credit crunch, which has slowed new building by the private sector and resulted in restrictions on mortgages in the buy to let sector. As Urban Living forecast ‘the demand/supply imbalance is set to worsen and affordability and related problems of overcrowding will increase unless supply side blockages can be addressed’<sup>92</sup>.

As the above illustrates, there are a number of factors that combine to influence appropriate interventions and determine policy in respect of housing in the area. These factors will now be addressed in turn.

## 6.2 Community Requirements

Affordable, decent housing has been identified as a requirement for the communities in Lozells and the surrounding areas. Achieving this goal, however, is also seen as one of the major challenges facing the area<sup>93</sup>. The Keith Newell Consultancy report<sup>94</sup> noted that in the Lozells and East Handsworth area, four of the five Egan<sup>95</sup> components in respect of housing and the environment had not been developed<sup>96</sup>.

The make-up of the community in the pathfinder area has been identified as contributing to the pressure on the housing market. The area, as identified in the last census (2001), is diverse. Lozells and East Handsworth has a greater diversity of population than both the rest of the constituency and the city, with the Pakistani community forming the largest ethnic group<sup>97</sup>.

This diversity and the social and cultural conventions that accompany it, translate into variations in demand for housing. ECOTEC identified that the ‘Demand for larger properties (3, 4 and 5+ bedroom) is likely to increase substantially over the period 2006-2021’<sup>98</sup>. If this forecast is accurate, there is likely to be a concomitant rise in affordability issues. Urban Living concurred,

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<sup>92</sup> Urban Living (2008) *op. cit.*, p.5.

<sup>93</sup> Be Birmingham (2008): Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile; Be Birmingham (2008a): Birchfield Neighbourhood Profile; Be Birmingham (2008c): Lozells Neighbourhood Profile; Be Birmingham (2008d): Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Profile.

<sup>94</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006): Perry Barr District. Lozells and East Handsworth. Baseline Assessment.

<sup>95</sup> The Egan Review identified a number of components and sub-components necessary to achieve sustainable communities. In respect of housing and the built environment these are:

- Creating a sense of place (e.g. a place with a positive ‘feeling’ for people, and local distinctiveness)
- Well-maintained, local, user-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people
- Sufficient range, diversity and affordability of housing within a balanced housing market
- A high quality, well-designed built environment of appropriate size, scale, density, design and layout that complements the distinctive local character of the community
- High quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings (*The Egan Review*, 2004; 21)

<sup>96</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy, 2006. *op. cit.*, p.9.

<sup>97</sup> Be Birmingham (2008) *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>98</sup> ECOTEC (2006) *op. cit.*, p.8.

noting that ‘most research supports the need for a much greater investment in 3, 4 and 5 bed units...’<sup>99</sup>. Correspondingly, a fall in the number of White households and only marginally increasing numbers of Black households is likely to result in a fall in demand for ‘smaller (1 and 2 bedroom) properties and a mismatch between future demand and the size profile of existing SRS (Social Rented Sector) stock generally’<sup>100</sup>. This point was emphasised by Leather and Nevin, who noted that ‘There is an imbalance between the type of housing on offer and the needs of the growing communities and the needs of the new economy’<sup>101</sup>.

A further complication is that forecasts for the likely future ethnic composition of the area indicate that, particularly in Lozells, Newtown and Aston, the existing White and Indian populations are largely replaced by Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups. As ECOTEC<sup>102</sup> note, these groups tend to have the lowest of average household incomes. This change could also lead to increased demand for larger properties but insufficient wherewithal to purchase, resulting in the exacerbation of existing overcrowding problems. There is indeed recent evidence of difficulty in selling larger houses, which is related to affordability and which may or may not be associated with the current credit crunch.

The requirement for larger properties to meet existing and future demand was also identified in the M.E.L. report<sup>103</sup>, compiled following a series of focus groups with six key BME community sub-groups from the Pathfinder area. The distinct needs of the different BME groups will be considered in greater detail below, but it should be noted that in their focus groups the views of young Asian women may have been under-represented. There may be an assumption by the older generation, men in particular, that there will be continuing or growing demand for larger houses to accommodate the joint or extended family. This is far from certain.

### 6.3 Social Housing

An Urban Living report produced in 2006 concluded that demand for social housing ‘is not particularly low’ and is in fact substantial in the Soho/Handsworth and Aston/Lozells/Newtown areas<sup>104</sup>. Although applying the caveat that existing data was not subject to a rigorous examination, the report concluded that ‘demand is high for social housing in the Birmingham side of the pathfinder area’ suggesting that ‘there is a large pool of Urban Living residents who are keen to move into social housing, but who have so

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<sup>99</sup> Urban Living (2008) *op. cit.* p.3.

<sup>100</sup> ECOTEC (2006) *op. cit.*, p.8.

<sup>101</sup> Leather, P. and Nevin, B. (2007) *Housing Market Change in the Urban Living Area*, Nevin Leather Associates, p.3.

<sup>102</sup> ECOTEC (2006) *op. cit.*, p.4.

<sup>103</sup> M.E.L. (2006): *Urban Living BME Communities Housing Aspirations. Focus Group Research Report.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

far not had the opportunity'<sup>105</sup>. As mentioned above, the majority of this demand is for houses that have three bedrooms or more.

The same report suggests that 'careful consideration be given to policy' in specific locations in the Pathfinder area where the existing stock of three bedroom houses does not appear to be meeting the needs of prospective residents<sup>106</sup>.

#### **6.4 Private Rented Sector**

The private rented sector (PRS) stock in the Urban Living area is estimated at approximately 13.5% of total housing stock, representing a 39% increase since 2001<sup>107</sup>.

Urban Living noted that the:

...significant growth and absolute size of the private rented sector gives rise to concern in relation to Urban Living's objective of stimulating the conditions for a sustainable housing market – because a large private rented sector tends to concentrate individuals and families on low incomes and can be characterised by high levels of churn and housing management problems<sup>108</sup>.

Concern regarding the PRS sector is also noted by Tribal who identify 'risks associated with the sector given the ability of landlords to disinvest if demand slackens and rental and capital yields are at risk'<sup>109</sup>. The high turnover, or churn, of tenants is confirmed by Tribal, who indicated that 44% of tenants in their survey had been resident for less than a year. The Tribal study identified that the PRS market within the pathfinder area 'continues to be influenced by international migration – 58% of respondents were born outside the UK'<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> Urban Living (2006) *op. cit.*, p.5.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>107</sup> Tribal (2008) *Research into the Private Rented Sector within the Urban Living Pathfinder HMRA: Final Report*, Birmingham, Tribal, p.ii.

<sup>108</sup> Urban Living (2008): *Affordable Housing Policy for Urban Living 2008-11*, p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> Tribal (2008) *op. cit.* p. ii.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ii.

## 6.5 New Arrivals

This influx of new arrivals has important implications for the area. Lozells, East Handsworth and the surrounding areas have a history of diversity and immigrants have a tendency to gravitate to areas for 'support, security and access to material necessities, including housing'<sup>111</sup>. Phillimore et al<sup>112</sup>, drawing on the work of Travers et al<sup>113</sup> note that areas with a tradition of diversity can sometimes act as escalator areas for new arrivals i.e. the areas accommodate new arrivals when they first arrive 'and invest heavily in them before they move on and are replaced with other new arrivals who also require significant investment'<sup>114</sup>. A corollary of this can be additional costs incurred as a result of increased demand for services often in respect of accommodation and increased demand for housing including administrative costs associated with temporary households, increases in council tax registration costs and increases in homelessness.

Drawing on the work of Staniewicz, Phillimore et al also note that it is important to have accurate information regarding the long-term aspirations of new arrivals in order to accurately plan service and housing provision<sup>115</sup>. Economic migrants who are dependent on employment can be susceptible to exploitation and anecdotal evidence suggests that this is happening in the Handsworth area, where the phenomenon of 'hot-bedding' i.e. 12 hour letting to cater for both day and night shift work is said to be occurring.

Phillimore et al observe that the majority of new arrivals to the UK tend to live in poor quality housing. Cook<sup>116</sup> notes that two migrant housing markets have developed, one catering for permanent settled migrants and another for the transient or those intending to stay on a temporary basis<sup>117</sup>. It is also evident that the majority of migrant workers find out about accommodation from an agency or friends and family and that few new migrants access social housing<sup>118</sup>.

Previous research has indicated that the majority of economic migrants and refugees find accommodation in the private rented sector and that much of this accommodation is likely to be shared. In a study of the West Midlands, Green et al<sup>119</sup> found that 68% of respondents occupied private rented housing,

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<sup>111</sup> Robinson, D and Reeve, K (2006) Neighbourhood experiences of new immigration: reflections from the evidence base. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Phillimore et al (2008) *op. cit.*

<sup>113</sup> Travers, T, Tunstall, R, Whitehead, C and Pruvot, S (2007): Population Mobility and Service Provision: a report for London Councils. London, LSE.

<sup>114</sup> Phillimore et al (2008) *op. cit.*, pp.10-11.

<sup>115</sup> Staniewicz, T (2007): A critical evaluation of factors inhibiting A8 Polish Migrants' full participation in civil society. Centre for Rights, Equality and Diversity; Phillimore et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.12.

<sup>116</sup> Cook, L (2008): Housing Report for the Migration Impacts Forum.

<sup>117</sup> Phillimore et al, (2008) *op.cit.*, p.15

<sup>118</sup> Phillimore et al (2004) *op.cit.*, p.8.

<sup>119</sup> Green, A, Owen, D, and Jones, P (2007): *The economic impact of migrant workers in the West Midlands*, Coventry, University of Warwick.

often with friends or family. MEL Research reported that some asylum seekers and refugees in the Urban Living area were living in overcrowded accommodation<sup>120</sup>.

As Phillimore et al note, much of the available literature indicates 'high levels of overcrowding and poor living conditions' amongst new migrants<sup>121</sup>. They observe that while some take action to remedy the situation, others accept the conditions as part of a cost minimisation strategy and/or because they are so poorly paid.

In conclusion, it is clear that asylum seekers and refugees can form quite negative first impressions when arriving in the Pathfinder area. Some of these relate to difficulties in accessing information and environmental concerns. However, poor quality housing and lack of access to housing support are cited as significant contributory factors<sup>122</sup>. As noted by Phillimore et al, the presence of a large number of refugees, who are often unemployed, will have implications for the housing market in the area, due to their lack of buying power and demand for low cost accommodation. It is also evident that this group have low levels of knowledge relating to housing and that large numbers live in temporary accommodation. The majority of refugees would choose council housing if available although it is evident that they have insufficient knowledge of alternatives to this choice of tenure. It is clear that this group need access to information to enable them to make informed choices about where, and in what sort of property, to live<sup>123</sup>.

## **6.6 Housing Requirements of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Community**

As noted previously, the area has a history of diversity. Figures from the 2001 census indicate that the Urban Living area had a BME majority population of 65%<sup>124</sup>. The largest ethnic groups in the Pathfinder area are Black, Indian and Pakistani, which together comprise more than half the population. As we have seen, the white population is declining and, to a lesser extent, the Indian population, while all other groups are growing.

The challenge is to provide housing that meets the current and future needs of the growing BME communities and which contributes to the aim of creating sustainable communities. The following section will report on the housing requirements of the discrete BME communities, which are not homogenous and which will need to be taken into account if the expressed aims of achieving sustainable communities and offering housing that provides suitable

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<sup>120</sup> MEL Research (2006) *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>121</sup> Phillimore et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.17.

<sup>122</sup> Phillimore et al, (2008) *op. cit.*, p.34.

<sup>123</sup> Phillimore, J, Fathi, J and Ferrari, E (2004) *The housing needs and aspirations of asylum seekers and refugees living in the Birmingham Sandwell Pathfinder Area*, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham, pp.25-27.

<sup>124</sup> Urban Living, (2005) *op. cit.*, p.3.

options at all stages of life are to be achieved. Although most of the information refers to studies carried out across the Urban Living area, we can assume that the housing needs of the BME communities will not vary significantly across the area and that the findings are therefore for Handsworth and Lozells.

### *Black Residents*

Urban Living note that the Black population have one of the lowest levels of owner-occupation and the highest percentage of people in social rented housing<sup>125</sup>. The 2005 survey undertaken by Urban Living indicated that there was an interest in shared ownership amongst the Black population, a finding replicated by MEL<sup>126</sup>. It is also apparent that Black residents are relatively loyal to the area; Urban Living noted that '65% of Black participants had always lived in the Urban Living area, compared to 40% of White'<sup>127</sup>

There are concerns expressed for the elderly including strong support for sheltered accommodation and a need for financial assistance to improve and adapt existing homes to make them suitable for the elderly community. Finally, 'the needs and aspirations of all ages of the Black population will have to be considered' in order to reflect the current age profile<sup>128</sup>.

### *Indian Residents*

There is evidence to suggest that the Indian population is moving away from the area. For example, 'Aston Lozells Newtown has seen a 7.6% reduction in the Indian population and Soho Handsworth a 12.8% decrease'<sup>129</sup> The Indian population have the highest levels of home ownership in the Pathfinder. MEL<sup>130</sup> reported that most of their respondents were content to remain in their current homes although a desire for improvements was evident.

Both the Urban Living and MEL reports recommend that consideration should be given to designing housing to appeal to Indian residents. Homes with sufficient space to cater for larger families, or the possibility to extend would be particularly welcome. A concern was also expressed for future generations as it was felt that financial barriers were preventing younger members of the community from achieving their aspiration of home ownership<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> Urban Living (2005) *Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Needs and Aspirations*, Birmingham, Urban Living, p.28.

<sup>126</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*

<sup>127</sup> Urban Living (2005) *op. cit.* p.29.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>129</sup> Figures based on 1991 and 2001 population census; *Ibid.*, p.33).

<sup>130</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*

<sup>131</sup> MEL, (2006) *op. cit.*, p.18.

### *Pakistani Residents*

Home ownership amongst the Pakistani community is the second highest of all ethnic groups with home ownership an aspiration of the younger generation, although financial barriers are a concern. Urban Living expresses the view that home ownership at current levels 'may not be viable into the future without assistance'<sup>132</sup>.

As Urban Living note, '[the Pakistani population] is clearly a group that is increasing in significance in the Pathfinder and therefore, its needs and aspirations for the future, have to form a central part of the Urban Living programme'<sup>133</sup>. Between 1991 and 2001, the Pakistani population has increased by 53.5% and the group makes up nearly a quarter of the overall population in the Aston Lozells Newtown area. The Pakistani population, along with the Bangladeshi group, have the lowest age profile in the Pathfinder. This could have implications in terms of future demand for housing including meeting a demand for starter homes and providing larger accommodation for extended families.

One important finding is that both Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are more likely to live in households with more people than other ethnic groups. As with the Indian group, this could have implications for future housing demand as larger properties will be required to cater for extended families. There is also a potential issue of overcrowding to consider and the likelihood of poor quality housing as a result.

### *Bangladeshi Residents*

With the Pakistani population, Bangladeshis are the dominant group in the Aston Lozells Newtown area, comprising 14% of the total population; they are also the ethnic group that has grown most significantly in the Pathfinder area between 1991 and 2001<sup>134</sup>. The Bangladeshi population also has the youngest age profile compared to other ethnic groups in the area, a factor that will need to be taken into account when determining housing policy in respect of the group. Another issue of some concern is that economic activity in respect of the Bangladeshi population is the lowest in the Pathfinder area. These two factors could potentially lead to reduced choices in respect of housing and a 'dependence on social housing and government assistance'<sup>135</sup>.

A slightly lower than average number of Bangladeshis own their property while the poor supply and condition of social housing was identified as an issue arising from the consultations carried out by MEL<sup>136</sup>. It is also evident that, like the Pakistani population, the proximity of family and extended families are important to the Bangladeshi population. This is likely to result in

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<sup>132</sup> Urban Living, (2005) *op. cit.*, p.44.

<sup>133</sup> Urban Living (2005) *op. cit* p.39.

<sup>134</sup> Urban Living, (2005) *op. cit* 46.

<sup>135</sup> Urban Living, (2005) *ibid.*,p.48.

<sup>136</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.* p.27.

a demand for larger properties or housing that can be appropriately extended and/or modernised<sup>137</sup>. Easy access to mosques, shops and local transport is also very important<sup>138</sup>. The importance of community amongst younger members of the Bangladeshi population was identified by Urban Living and this could have implications in respect of housing policy for this population. The importance of full community consultation in respect of housing interventions appears to be more important for the Bangladeshi group than any of the other ethnic populations<sup>139</sup>.

It is evident from the above that there are a number of factors that will need to be taken into consideration when designing and implementing housing policy. The diverse history of the area continues to be influential today, with each identifiable group expressing needs and aspirations that are individual to them and their community. What is also apparent is that there is no homogenous location within the area that will benefit from a single intervention. Instead, it appears that there are 'pockets' of communities who live in close proximity to each other but who have different housing requirements.

It is also evident that consultation with the various communities who make up the area is necessary to determine future housing policy. This will involve negotiations not only with community leaders but also groups including women, old and young people, who all have different hopes and aspirations relating to housing in the area. What these groups do share, however, is the experience of the quality of their immediate environment.

It was also clear from the above housing reports that, for the BME populations, there were considerable concerns about the quality of the social and environmental conditions that surround them. Environmental concerns were apparent amongst Black residents and there is a demand for better social facilities, such as a community centre that could be used by Black people of all ages. This is partly an expression of Black resentment deriving from a perception that they have not benefited equitably from community investment in the area. For the Indian population, traffic problems were an issue for some respondents, as were a number of environmental concerns, including street cleaning, litter and vermin. Drug-related crime, property damage, vandalism and theft from vehicles were also identified as issues of concern<sup>140</sup>. For Pakistani residents, environmental concerns similar to those expressed by the Indian respondents were apparent. Litter, vermin and the need for better street lighting are examples drawn from the MEL survey. There is also a desire for facilities to cater for the needs of Pakistani women including a women's centre and gym<sup>141</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> Urban Living, (2005) *op. cit.* p.48.

<sup>138</sup> MEL, (2006) *op. cit.* p. 32.

<sup>139</sup> Urban Living (2005) *op. cit.*, pp.48-49

<sup>140</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>141</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, p.22.

These are common issues about different neighbourhoods which are important determinants of quality of life in Handsworth/Lozells. We will now go on to deal with the issues of the local environment, community safety, transport and health before returning to the needs and aspirations of young people.

## 7. Environment and Neighbourhood

We have already noted that the people of Handsworth/Lozells think that the two aspects of their local area that are most in need of improving are the cleanliness of the streets and the levels of crime. The City's Council Plan for 2008-2013 commits the Council to 'making our city a cleaner, greener and safer place to live' as a key priority. This implies that more people will judge their neighbourhood to be clean and safe and that satisfaction with waste management services will improve<sup>142</sup>. The importance of 'clean, safe, healthy and attractive environments' to a thriving community is highlighted in the spring 2009, Vision Lozells Residents' newsletter<sup>143</sup>. Environmental issues have been recognised as one of the major issues in the area, Urban Living noting that 'many neighbourhoods have a degraded and unpleasant environment'<sup>144</sup>.

This section will discuss the environmental concerns of the residents of the area, as identified in the literature and assess the impact of interventions to address these issues. We will not concern ourselves here with the Council's aims with respect to renewable energy and carbon neutrality, important as these issues undoubtedly are. Birmingham City Council's 'Vision for North Birmingham' describes how prospective developers will be expected to minimise impact on the environment and incorporate 'renewable energy sources in their design to help attain a sustainable, carbon-neutral future for Birmingham'<sup>145</sup>. Whilst this is a laudable objective, it is evident from the literature that environmental issues of a more immediate and practical nature are exercising the minds of the community in the Handsworth/Lozells area.

The Keith Newell Consultancy report observed that litter, rubbish and speeding cars were ranked third in the top five responses when residents were asked 'What do you think are the current problems in Lozells?'<sup>146</sup>. Similarly, correspondence supplied by a residents association in East Handsworth documents a 12 year dialogue with the City Council in an effort to achieve 'a sustained effective rubbish collection and cleaning service from the

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<sup>142</sup> Birmingham City Council (2008) *Council Plan 2008-2013*, Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, p.12.

<sup>143</sup> *Vision Lozells Residents' Newsletter*, p.2.

<sup>144</sup> Urban Living (2006) *op. cit.* p.4.

<sup>145</sup> Birmingham City Council, 'Vision for North Birmingham' (2007) p.8)

<sup>146</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *Perry Barr District. Lozells and East Handsworth. Baseline Assessment*, p.27.

local authority'<sup>147</sup>. The Handsworth Neighbourhood Plan 2008/09 identifies levels of detritus and litter as serious concerns noting that<sup>148</sup>:

41% of sites are unsatisfactory, compared to the city-wide target in 2007/08 of 12%. Smoking, confectionary, alcoholic and non-alcoholic related litter were significant issues within the area.

The Plan also reports that 'Environmental issues...have consistently registered in local consultations as a critical concern for residents'<sup>149</sup>. This is confirmed in the survey information we have referred to above and, although the City Council has responded to some of these concerns, there are clearly environmental issues that still need to be addressed in the area.

## 7.1 General Cleanliness

The Birmingham City Council Aston, Newtown and Lozells: Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Report concedes that<sup>150</sup>:

General neighbourhood environmental conditions are categorised as poor with more than half of dwellings suffering from poor environmental conditions. This is reinforced by higher than average rates of resident dissatisfaction with the area.

Fly-tipping is a major problem across Birmingham<sup>151</sup> and it is a particular problem in Handsworth and Lozells. A series of Be Birmingham reports<sup>152</sup> suggest that the environment, particularly detritus, litter and fly tipping, are issues of concern and this observation is corroborated by other research conducted with residents from the Pathfinder area<sup>153</sup>.

The research undertaken by MEL, involving representatives from the many BME communities in the area, reported recurring issues including<sup>154</sup>:

- Properties not adequately maintained
- Litter in the streets
- Vandalism
- Pet litter
- Rats and vermin

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<sup>147</sup>Correspondence with Grove Residents Association, 2009.

<sup>148</sup> Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) *Handsworth Neighbourhood Plan 2008/9*, p.7.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) *Aston, Newtown and Lozells: Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Report*, p.8.

<sup>151</sup> Birmingham Strategic Partnership and Birmingham City Council (2007) *Community Strategy for Birmingham: Strategic Assessment 2006/07*, p. 39.

<sup>152</sup> Be Birmingham reports (2008, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d) *op. cit.*

<sup>153</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*; Urban Living (2005) *op. cit.*

<sup>154</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, pp. 7-42.

- Bulky waste left in streets

The general cleanliness of the immediate environment is a recurring theme and one that is echoed by the Keith Newell Consultancy report, which reported 'litter and rubbish and 'the dumping of bulky rubbish' as the top two issues reported by respondents when asked 'What do you think are the current problems in Handsworth'?<sup>155</sup> An earlier Keith Newell Consultancy report noted that one item of concern for residents was the area occupied by the Black Cat Café, which was identified as neglected and 'a constant reminder /enforcer of the area's bad image and reputation',<sup>156</sup>

The Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board Strategy and Action Plan Update 2008-10 reports that progress has been made in respect of environmental issues in the area. Improvements include the introduction of a Ward Cleaning Team and other measures to address litter and rubbish and a more effective rubbish collection service<sup>157</sup>. The Action Plan Update lists 'cleaner public spaces' as a desired outcome during the next two years<sup>158</sup>. It is evident however, that work still needs to be done to achieve a satisfactory outcome in this area. Personal correspondence from a resident in the area suggests that an effective waste collection and street cleaning service has yet to be established with, it is believed, resources re-allocated to Lozells resulting in a reduced service.

Similarly, the Lozells Neighbourhood Management Plan 2008/9 indicates that 'Clean streets' is the second most important issue for people living in the area<sup>159</sup>. Desired outcomes for 2008/09 include:

- Less litter and rubbish on the streets
- Less fly-tipping
- Fewer un-adopted sites/un-developed sites
- Improved lighting
- Better maintained hedges, trees and verges
- More re-cycling centres

The Plan lists a number of activities designed to address this issue including working towards the development of a Neighbourhood Charter, development of environment education programmes aimed at residents, children and young people, working with fast food outlets to encourage customers to dispose of litter responsibly and to target and tackle neighbourhood 'grot spots',<sup>160</sup>. The Vision Lozells Residents' newsletter notes that street cleansing has been supplemented with an extra beat sweeper and that leaflets and literature relating to environmental services have been distributed. In addition, schools

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<sup>155</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2007) *op. cit.*, p.31).

<sup>156</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.39.

<sup>157</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *Strategy and Action Plan Update 2008-10*, p. 9.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>159</sup> Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board (2008): *Lozells Neighbourhood Management Plan 2008/*, p.1.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2).

have taken part in programmes to raise awareness of environmental issues and 'local landholders have been required to clean up areas of derelict land'<sup>161</sup>.

The issue of litter is clearly a concern to many in the community and examples of interventions in other areas of the UK have been offered as examples for the area to follow. One local trader has noted that a concerted effort is needed to engage the community in this respect and has called for a campaign similar to that undertaken recently in London<sup>162</sup>.

## 7.2 Other Environmental Concerns

Although the general cleanliness of the area appears to be the overriding concern of residents, the literature does highlight other environmental issues including lighting, the quality of pavements, parking issues and community spaces.

The research undertaken by MEL highlighted concerns, specifically from Indian residents about the state of pavements and problems relating to parking in the area. The dangers for the elderly and families with pushchairs were particular concerns<sup>163</sup>.

The Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board also identify parking as an issue noting that interventions have had a positive impact but that 'a longer term strategy is still required'<sup>164</sup>. In the same report, it is noted that more progress is needed in respect of 'street lighting, street scene improvements [and] traffic calming'<sup>165</sup>.

Another issue of concern to residents is the desire for community spaces. Birmingham City Council note that the Pathfinder area lacks 'good and positive design particularly in much of the post-war housing' and a 'lack of public open space in certain areas and some poorly designed open space'<sup>166</sup>. The City Council recognise that improving open space in the area would improve residents' quality of life and list a number of 'opportunities' that could be taken to help in this regard<sup>167</sup>:

- Develop a network of open space across the area including parks and waterways
- Improve existing open space by upgrading and refurbishment

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<sup>161</sup> *Vision Lozells Residents' Newsletter* (2009) p.12.

<sup>162</sup> ENCAMS, 2009.

<sup>163</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>164</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>165</sup> (*Ibid.*, p.12).

<sup>166</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) Invest in North West Birmingham. Online: [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf?MEDIA\\_ID=277088&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf?MEDIA_ID=277088&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf) [Accessed 20/04/09] p.11

<sup>167</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) *op. cit.*, p.21.

- Where appropriate and possible reconfigure or relocate open spaces to allow for greater use and natural surveillance

However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the process of utilising existing open, vacant or derelict spaces for community use is subject to considerable bureaucracy. As the Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) report, 'change of use issues with land (in relation to playing areas) is a relatively long process'<sup>168</sup>. In addition, the housing development work of Urban Living seeks to build over existing green spaces with new housing, something that is particularly noticeable in Lozells.

Finally, air quality in Handsworth is a particular problem that is related to the traffic congestion on the Soho Road. The Council has identified nitrogen dioxide as a key pollutant in the city and, while levels have been declining in areas such as the city centre and Bristol Street, they increased in the Soho Road between 2004 and 2005. Road traffic is responsible for 80% of nitrogen dioxide and the city objective is 40ug per cubic metre. By 2005, the level in Soho Road was 1.4 times this target, 1.9 times the level in Bristol Street and 1.6 times the level in the city centre<sup>169</sup>.

From the above, it is evident that the problem of environmental cleanliness is a particular issue for residents and one that has been recognised by the local agencies. There is evidence to suggest that interventions are in place to tackle some of the problems identified and that some improvements have been realised. It is also clear however, that the issues are multi-faceted and will require an on-going programme of community engagement and education. We note that there are interventions with school children in Lozells, but there may be scope for adopting the robust methods of social marketing to not only influence the behaviour of young children but also to reach their parents.

The City Council recognises that the creation of community spaces will improve the quality of life for local residents. Currently however, the process of re-assigning such spaces appears to be problematic in a number of ways. An investigation and subsequent reform of this process might assist in delivering the improvements to the area requested by the community.

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<sup>168</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, p.12.

<sup>169</sup> Birmingham Strategic Partnership and Birmingham City Council (2007) *Community Strategy for Birmingham: Strategic Assessment 2006/07*, p. 39.

## 8. Community Safety

The vision of the West Midlands Police is to 'reduce crime and disorder and make our communities safer'<sup>170</sup>. Birmingham boasts the lowest overall crime rate of the major English cities, with a 25 per cent reduction in crime since 2004. Birmingham's Council Plan promises to reduce crime, particularly violent crime, and reduce the fear of crime<sup>171</sup>. Its focus on young people stresses the need to reduce their numbers as offenders and as victims of crime. It will protect vulnerable young people, and tackle domestic violence, public-space wounding and the impact of guns and gangs.

Along with housing and the environment, a primary concern of residents in the area is safety. Crime, anti-social behaviour and the visibility of drugs in the area are reasons residents give for wishing to move away from the area<sup>172</sup>.

The need to reduce levels of crime is viewed as one of the key requirements in improving 'the quality of life for people living in disadvantaged areas'<sup>173</sup>. The area attracts negative perceptions in terms of safety, probably as a legacy of the disturbances of 1985 and 2005. The Be Birmingham profile of the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward reports a 'mixed picture' in respect of crime statistics<sup>174</sup>:

- PSA 1 crime<sup>175</sup> reduced in 2007/9 at a rate better than the city as a whole
- Burglary Dwelling (BDH) increased in 2007/8 however reductions have been massive since 2003/4
- Common Assault levels increased between 2006/7 and 2007/8
- Vehicle Arson has reduced significantly over the past few years

The same report indicated that 'the highest proportion, nearly half, think crime has stayed the same in the past three years' and 'consider the same ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) issues as major problems as the rest of the City'<sup>176</sup>. Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board report that 'Crime has fallen considerably within the NM area' as a result of interventions introduced in response to issues identified as priorities by residents and service providers<sup>177</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> [www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk)

<sup>171</sup> Birmingham City Council (2008) *Council Plan 2008-2013*, Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, p12.

<sup>172</sup> (Birmingham City Council, 2005)

<sup>173</sup> (DCLA, 2006; 1)

<sup>174</sup> (Be Birmingham (2008) profile of the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward p.4).

<sup>175</sup> PSA 1 Crime Definition – The British Crime Survey Comparator Crime defines the following offences as PSA 1: Theft or Unauthorised taking of vehicle (incl. attempts); Theft from a vehicle (incl. attempts); Vehicle Interference; Domestic Burglary; Theft or Unauthorised Taking of Cycle; Theft from a Person; Criminal Damage (excl.59); Common Assault (incl. on a PC); Wounding (serious and other); Robbery of personal property (Safer Birmingham Partnership, 2008).

<sup>176</sup> Be Birmingham (2008) Profile of the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward, p.4.

<sup>177</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) op. cit., p.7.

As illustrated in Table 15, the most recent crime and anti-social statistics for the area are encouraging. Between 05/06 and 07/08, reported crime in Handsworth/Lozells fell considerably. All crime, except common assault and theft from individuals, has been declining and in 07/08, total recorded crime was the same as for the city as a whole. The rates for hate crime, wounding and theft of vehicles are similar to the rates across the city (1.1 times the city). Domestic burglary and theft from individuals is slightly higher (1.2 and 1.3 times), while the rates for criminal damage, theft from vehicles, vehicle arson and other arson are substantially lower. The rates for common assault are low across the city. Robbery which has been declining in Handsworth/Lozells nevertheless remained almost twice the city average in 2007/2008.

**Table 15: Crime Statistics (1)**

	Ward Baseline (05/06)	Ward Latest (07/08)	Perry Barr Latest (07/08)	City Latest (07/08)	ward/city ratio (07/08)
Total Recorded crime	134	105	87	106	1.0
Domestic Burglary	47	24	18	20	1.2
Criminal Damage	20	13	12	18	0.7
Common Assault	2	4	2	2	1.9
Robbery	10	7	4	4	1.9
Wounding	22	16	11	15	1.1
Public Place wounding	10	7	5	7	1.0
Hate Crime	7	2	2	2	1.1
Theft from person	2	2	1	1	1.3
Theft of Vehicle	7	5	4	5	1.1
Theft from Vehicle	6	6	7	10	0.6
Vehicle Arson	146	39	55	82	0.5
Dwelling arson	39	57	26	26	2.2
Other Arson	123	63	88	154	0.4

(1) Rates per 1000, except Arson which is rates per 100,000

Source: Be Birmingham

More recent figures on crime are even more encouraging. Over the past three years there has been a 10% reduction in total crime per annum and between 2002 and the present time, the number of crimes committed per month has fallen from around 1,000 to 650. The period between January and March 2009 has seen the lowest recorded crime for a three month period since records began. Serious Acquisitive Crime saw an 18% reduction last year and robbery fell by 22%. Over the last two years there has been a reduction of 32% in street crime.

The most recent figures show that the overall improvements continue to be sustained. In Table 16, we can see that overall crime rates for Handsworth and Lozells are considerably lower than the city average for 2008-2009, particularly in Lozells. In this area, overall rates are 20 crimes per 1000 lower and only the figure for assaults remain above the city average. In East

Handsworth, overall crime rates are 10 per 1000 lower, but the figures for both wounding and assaults remain above the city average.

A similar situation exists for anti-social behaviour (Table 17). Overall rates are lower than in the city as a whole, with the figures reported for Lozells being remarkably low. For all types of anti-social behaviour, reported incidents are much lower than in the city as a whole. In Handsworth, the only figures that are above the city average are for nuisance neighbours and hoax calls. Since all of these figures refer to reported crimes and anti-social incidents, we need to be careful about how we interpret them. The low figures in Lozells could be the result of greater under-reporting for a variety of reasons – a history of poor police-community relations in this area, a fear of reprisals for reporting crime, a greater tolerance of certain types of activity, etc. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the figures are improving over time.

**Table 16: Crime Rates per 1000 Population, 2008-2009**

Crime Type	Lozells	East Handsworth	Birmingham
All Crime	70.8	88.9	98
Residential Burglary	18*	17.3*	18.5
Non-Residential Burglary	2	3	5.2
Criminal Damage	10.2	12.2	15.8
Wounding	11.4	16.9	13.3
Assault	3.7	2.7	2.3
Robbery (Person)	2.6	5.9	3.6
Theft from Person	0.5	1.2	1.3
Robbery (Business)	0.5	0.3	0.4
Theft of Motor Vehicle	2.8	4.3	4.3
Theft from Motor Vehicle	4.5	5.1	9.7
Other Crime	27	31.7	34.8

Source: [www.west-midlands.police.uk/](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/)

**Table 17: Anti-Social Behaviour Rates per 1000 Population, 2008-2009**

Anti-social behaviour Type	Lozells	East Handsworth	Birmingham
All Anti-Social Behaviour	50.3	70.6	78.8
Rowdy Behaviour (Alcohol)	2.2	4.7	6.5
Rowdy Behaviour (Youth)	8.7	9.3	20.3
Rowdy Behaviour (Alcohol & Youth)	0	0.1	0.8
Rowdy Behaviour (Other)	11.5	15.8	18.1
Nuisance Neighbours	8.3	10.6	9.1
Vehicle Nuisance	2.5	4.8	5
Hoax Calls	7.4	10	8.3
Other	9.8	15.3	10.7

Source: [www.west-midlands.police.uk/](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk/)

The Police's main focus in Handsworth/Lozells is on creating 'safer places' through dealing with the most serious violence, the activities that cause substantial injury. The key activities, therefore, are concerned with tackling gangs and guns in particular, along with other violent crime. Last summer, a number of key figures were arrested and the statistics since September 2008 point to an overall reduction of 12% in violent crimes for the year. However, although the media focuses on the conflict between gangs, there is inter-gang and intra-gang violence. The composition of the gangs is not permanent and there are inter-gang and internal power struggles to control the drug trade.

Despite the gains made in reducing crime, the area is still perceived as challenging in terms of personal safety. Urban Living defines the whole Pathfinder area as characterised by 'high levels of crime' and identifies the need for safety as one of its five strategic objectives (Urban Living, 2008; 9).

## **8.1 Community Concerns**

In an assessment undertaken by Keith Newell Consultancy in Lozells and East Handsworth, the prevalence and visibility of drugs and the perception of high crime levels were identified as the top two issues that respondents liked least about the area. Similarly, 42% of respondents indicated that they did not go out after dark, while 18% reported feeling unsafe after nightfall<sup>178</sup>.

When asked what they thought the current problems in Lozells and East Handsworth were, four of the top five responses related to crime and safety issues<sup>179</sup>:

<sup>178</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, pp.25-26).

<sup>179</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.27.

- Drug dealing (72%)
- Young people hanging about in groups (62%)
- Gun crime (58%)
- Burglary (homes) (56%) (p.27).

An assessment exercise undertaken by the same consultancy in the Handsworth district in 2007 revealed perception of high crime levels as the issue that respondents liked least about the area. In the same report, 28% of respondents revealed that they did not go out after dark and 14% reported that they felt unsafe after nightfall<sup>180</sup>.

These findings were corroborated by the Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board who noted that the level of crime was the item of most concern to local people<sup>181</sup>.

The Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) identified a number of key themes relating to community safety in the area. Echoing the statistics above, they noted that most crime figures were decreasing but fear of crime was still apparent<sup>182</sup>. The need for residents to feel safe in the streets was recognised as was the need to change the perception of crime and address the area's reputation.

It was also recognised that 'a disproportionate amount of crime takes place in particular areas'<sup>183</sup>, a finding echoed in the Keith Newell Consultancy report that identified 'a proven crime hot spot' and recommended that a specific response be implemented to address the problem<sup>184</sup>.

Safety problems in the area have been highlighted as a particular problem for newly arriving populations. Phillimore et al (2008) report that some new arrivals did not realise that it can sometimes be unsafe to go out at night and suffered physical attack as a consequence<sup>185</sup>. This is corroborated by MEL Research who reported that refugee and asylum seekers experienced safety issues in the area including violence, issues resulting from tensions between other BME groups, drug problems and concerns about their children's safety<sup>186</sup>.

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<sup>180</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2007) *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>181</sup> Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, p.1.

<sup>182</sup> Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) *op. cit.*, p.11.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy report (2007), *op. cit.*, p.23.

<sup>185</sup> Phillimore et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.35.

<sup>186</sup> MEL Research (2006) *op. cit.*, pp. 33-39.

## 8.2 Policing

In 2005, Birmingham City Council (2005) identified 'significant levels of concern about current ways in which the police interact with local people'<sup>187</sup>. In respect of the Handsworth area, the Keith Newell Consultancy reported that 40% of local resident respondents were 'fairly satisfied with local policing while the same number indicated that 'More visible policing – especially foot patrols in the evening' would make policing more effective'<sup>188</sup>. Two of the recommendations of the report suggested greater interaction between the police and the community to assist in 'a structured re-assurance programme'<sup>189</sup>.

In respect of the Lozells and East Handsworth area, the Keith Newell Consultancy reported in 2006 that residents were unconvinced that the police understood local problems. More visible foot patrols in the evening, foot patrols by regular officers and greater enforcement in respect of prostitution and drugs were volunteered by respondents as interventions that would make policing more effective'<sup>190</sup>.

The Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board report that targeted and high profile policing has resulted in 'a marked reduction in drug dealing offences,' while an additional policing team 'has had a significant impact upon public reassurance'<sup>191</sup>.

## 8.3 Other Factors

As well as the overt problems posed by violent crime, burglary and drug-related offences, other safety concerns relate to environmental design. Birmingham City Council recognises that design has contributed to safety issues in the area, particularly in respect of pedestrian underpasses 'and generally poor passive surveillance' that currently exists'<sup>192</sup>.

Urban Living has responded to issues of this nature with interventions including the installation of CCTV cameras and provision of increased security features for properties in the area'<sup>193</sup>. The Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board also report that deployment of CCTV cameras has been effective as a 'tool to provide public reassurance, to provide a visual deterrent and to gather evidence'<sup>194</sup>.

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<sup>187</sup> Birmingham City Council (2005) *op. cit.*, p.6.

<sup>188</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2007) *op. cit.*, pp.30-31.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, pp.22-23.

<sup>190</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.27.

<sup>191</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>192</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) *op. cit.*, p.13

<sup>193</sup> Urban Living, 2008 Urban Living (2008) *Affordable Housing Policy for Urban Living 2008-11*, p.18.

<sup>194</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, p.8.

The overall picture therefore is one of an improving situation but with significant ongoing concerns. These concerns can be partly dealt with by the police continuing to deal effectively with crime as it arises, but longer-term improvements will also depend on tackling some of the conditions that contribute to the high crime rates in the first place, particularly issues that affect young people.

A key issue is raising the aspirations of the young people who are vulnerable. This points to the need for a long-term approach. Recently, the police have created three additional neighbourhood teams, with a total of 27 staff. The neighbourhood police teams work with the communities, neighbourhood managers, schools, traders, etc. There is a healthy neighbourhood management picture in Lozells and community meetings are well-attended and they address local priorities. To some extent, issues of violence have become less obvious and current issues are litter, dumping and boarded up houses.

Nevertheless, there is a high rate of re-offending amongst young men who are sent to prison. Work with the probation service is important but these young people come out of prison and return to the context that they were in when they were arrested – the same roads, with the same people, and the same low levels of alternative opportunities. Even if they want to get out of the gang culture, it is not easy for them to do so. There are also many young people who are associated with gangs, but who may not be too deeply embedded in them, who need realistic alternatives. We will return to this issue when we discuss issues around young people in general.

A related recurring theme is that of the underpasses on the Birchfield Road. These are unsafe areas that are related to traffic and transport issues.

## **9. Travel and Transport**

As a major city, Birmingham is well served by a network of road, rail and air links. The pathfinder area is situated close to the city centre and it could be assumed that transport and travel is not an issue for the community. The literature, however, indicates that the various elements of the community have different expectations and requirements in this respect.

The Handsworth/Lozells area, as part of the Pathfinder, is defined by Birmingham City Council as having ‘excellent locational advantages including good transport links [and] proximity to the city centre’<sup>195</sup>. This is corroborated by a further city council document that describes the area as ‘strategically

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<sup>195</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007a): Aston, Newtown and Lozells: Area Action Plan – Issues and Options Report. Online: [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/Issues%20and%20Options%20Report.pdf?MEDIA\\_ID=280852&FILENAME=Issues%20and%20Options%20Report.pdf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/Issues%20and%20Options%20Report.pdf?MEDIA_ID=280852&FILENAME=Issues%20and%20Options%20Report.pdf) [Accessed 28/04/09], p.9.

located' offering 'a great network of transport links and connections'<sup>196</sup>. The Keith Newell Consultancy report, referencing the Egan recommendations for developing communities, notes in respect of the area that 'the transport dimension looks promising at this point...'<sup>197</sup>. The same report noted that the majority of respondents consulted felt that public transport in the area was either very good, good or ok.

While it is recognised that the city offers a comprehensive road, rail and air service that provides excellent links both nationally and internationally, the transport needs of the community are often predicated on more mundane requirements driven by the determinants of the area including low incomes, worklessness and diversity.

From the literature, it is evident that a many people resident in the area are reliant on public transport to travel to and from work, to go shopping and to maintain contact with friends and relatives. The MEL survey corroborates this, noting that Indian and Bangladeshi respondents identified good transport links as attractive as they provide access to buses and shops<sup>198</sup>.

Problems with traffic and transport are evident however. The Keith Newell Consultancy reports that speeding cars were identified as the third most important issue by respondents who were asked what they thought the current problems in Handsworth were<sup>199</sup>. Other problems caused by vehicles include instances of noise pollution attributed to loud stereo systems in cars<sup>200</sup> and issues relating to parking identified by respondents in the MEL survey<sup>201</sup>.

The MEL survey also notes that African refugees and asylum seekers are concerned about traffic and road safety although they also consider the area to be well served by local transport. The Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board includes 'Traffic congestion, parking [and] speed' as one of their key environmental issues<sup>202</sup>.

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<sup>196</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007b) Invest in North West Birmingham. Online: [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf?MEDIA\\_ID=277088&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf?MEDIA_ID=277088&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf) [Accessed 20/04/09] pp. 12, 26.

<sup>197</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.9.

<sup>198</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, pp.17, 29.

<sup>199</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2007) *op. cit.*, p.31.

<sup>200</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.45.

<sup>201</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, pp.14, 24.

<sup>202</sup> Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 7.

## 9.1 The Eastern Periphery

The A34 Birchfield Road is a major infrastructural feature that creates a physical divide between Lozells and Aston/Birchfield - part of a 'fractured urban form caused by road severance and poor pedestrian links'<sup>203</sup>. While the road offers excellent access to the north and centre of Birmingham<sup>204</sup>, it divides communities and is a vehicle dominated environment. The pedestrian underpasses lead to perceptions of poor safety, a lack of overlooked crossing points and poor surveillance. This dual carriageway, which extends to three or four lanes in places, 'acts as a significant pedestrian barrier, due to its width and the use of barriers along the central carriageway'<sup>205</sup>. The road is also below grade where it passes under the roundabout at Perry Barr. The pedestrian underpasses are perceived as unsafe and are seldom used as pedestrians prefer to walk through the heavy traffic around the Perry Barr junction.

The A34 is a potential metro route<sup>206</sup>. According to the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan of 2005, the development of such a light rail extension would further the city's strategy for economic and urban regeneration. As part of Phase 2 extension proposals, the Varsity North corridor would take the tram system north of the city centre towards the Scott Arms or Junction 7 of the M6 on the Walsall Road. A proposed Park and Ride facility close to the M6 or at Perry Barr would potentially reduce traffic congestion on the A34<sup>207</sup>. This would be a long term proposal, to be implemented around 2016.

Through collaboration with other authorities in the region, the City Council has signed up to the West Midlands Local Transport Plan of 2006 (LTP), which is committed to 'a safer community with fewer road accidents and with environments in which people feel secure'<sup>208</sup>. Other objectives include a thriving, sustainable and vibrant community where people want to live and where business can develop and grow; equal opportunities for everyone to gain access to services and facilities and to enjoy a better quality of life with travel choices that are attractive, viable and sustainable. The priorities for the LTP include the regeneration of communities and the identification of new opportunities for economic development and employment. Consistent with other regional strategic documents, it seeks to promote social inclusion and help disadvantaged groups to access the opportunities that will improve their life chances.

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<sup>203</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) *The Aston, Newtown and Lozells Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report*, p11.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p52-53.

<sup>208</sup> Birmingham City Council et al (2008) *West Midlands Local Transport Plan: Delivery Report 2006-2008*, Birmingham, p.9.

Birchfield Road offers the possibility of creating an enhanced living and shopping space, upgrading the shopping experience, improving the quality of life of local residents, getting rid of dangerous underpasses, removing the physical divide between young people, and extending and upgrading the shopping offer. Developing Birchfield road as a retail and leisure hub is a longer-term option which would, of course, require considerable resources.

The concept of an urban boulevard has been suggested for the stretch of the Birchfield Road that runs from New Town Row to the Perry Barr shopping centre, pointing to the possibility of an improved environment for business and leisure - an improved public realm, new mixed use development with tree planting, attractive open spaces and a new landmark development. The concept is based on<sup>209</sup>:

- Humanising the impact of this major highway corridor, without reducing capacity
- Exploring the potential for developing a network of open spaces
- Providing a pedestrian-friendly environment
- Linking access to a new high capacity public transport system
- Encouraging safety and security through human activity, active frontage and overlooking of public spaces
- High quality design
- The development of community pride and neighbourhood identity

There are examples elsewhere, where similar types of development have been implemented. In the case of Barcelona, the intervention undertook the partial covering of the highway and introduced a tram system, reducing noise pollution and creating new pedestrian routes that border public plazas. Dropping the Birchfield Road below ground level, remodelling the approaches to the One Stop shopping centre and creating a new public realm would be expensive, but if Lozells is thought to be a priority neighbourhood for the city, a redesign of this area could be a priority for infrastructure resources. Its impact would be more than an infrastructural improvement. It would create new spaces for social interaction and raise the quality of the environment for the people of Lozells and the other surrounding areas.

## **9.2 The North Western Periphery**

We have already discussed the potential of the north western periphery of the city in terms of its economic importance and the possibility of redirecting through traffic off the A41 Soho Road. We have also noted the pollution that is generated by this traffic and have alluded to the health consequences of this pollution. The general health of the residents of Handsworth/Lozells is another issue of concern, as is access to health services.

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<sup>209</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007) *The Aston, Newtown and Lozells Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report*, p56.

## 10. Health

The City Council is committed to working closely with health service providers to help improve the health of the people of Birmingham and tackle the inequalities in health, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas<sup>210</sup>. It will intervene to improve the health of those in most need, narrowing the gap in life expectancy between the least healthy wards and the city average, encouraging people to adopt more healthy lifestyles, and improving people's mental, physical and emotional well-being. The city will develop policies that will allow older people to live independently for longer, in environments that encourage activity and promote well-being.

The Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust serves the people of Lozells and East Handsworth and surrounding wards. The main hospital serving the area is City Hospital. The PVT is committed to 'serving our impoverished and diverse community'<sup>211</sup> through providing both better access to quality health care services and encouraging individuals, families and communities to take more responsibility for their own health and well-being. It seeks to deliver care closer to home and 'to reduce health inequalities, to close the health gap in a generation through people, partnership and transformation of health care'<sup>212</sup>.

The PCT are implementing the 'Towards 2010' programme, which should result in health and social care services being delivered jointly and in a more accessible way to local communities. Latest estimates suggest that just under 70% of the community it serves are members of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population. Of the 13,300 economic migrants to Birmingham in 2006, 65% are located in the PCT's area and, in the same year, there were nearly 2000 asylum seekers in the area, bringing new challenges for the delivery of health care.

The PCT have opened a new primary care centre in Lozells in 2007-08<sup>213</sup>, which means that there are now two Primary Care centres in Lozells and East Handsworth ward, with another four sitting just outside the boundary. There are, however, no PCT health facilities within the Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Area, although there are several on the periphery. There is a planned development for a new health centre just outside the area, in Handsworth Wood, for which a site has yet to be identified.

Recent figures for mortality and morbidity have therefore to be viewed in the context of these even more recent improvements to the service. Mortality rates in the ward have improved over the years since 1995-97 and the gap between the city and the ward has almost closed<sup>214</sup>. Lozells and East

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<sup>210</sup> Birmingham City Council (2008) *Council Plan 2008-2013*, Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, p14.

<sup>211</sup> Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust (2008) *Strategic Plan*, Birmingham, p.5.

<sup>212</sup> Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust (2008) *Strategic Plan*, Birmingham, p.6.

<sup>213</sup> Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust (2008) *Annual Report 2007-08*, Birmingham., p.13.

<sup>214</sup> Be Birmingham (2008), *Lozells and East Handsworth Ward Profile*, p.13

Handsworth is ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of the 40 Birmingham wards and female life expectancy has been improving<sup>215</sup>, although male life expectancy does not appear to have changed. Although infant mortality has been improving, it is worse than in the city as a whole<sup>216</sup>. Satisfaction rates with how hospitals and surgeries are being run are similar to rates across the city<sup>217</sup>.

A higher proportion of residents in Handsworth/Lozells are new migrants than is generally the case across the city, and there are some concerns about the provision of health services amongst this segment of the population. New Migrants found it difficult to register with GPs and negotiate the various parts of the healthcare system. The registration process was thought to be intentionally difficult; they struggled to get appointments when they needed them and they went to hospital when they were unable to get GP appointments. GPs were dismissive and unable to understand their symptoms; children were left un-inoculated because of a lack of understanding of the compatibility of Polish and UK inoculations; and many went home when they needed either medical or dental treatment.

In Table 18 (overleaf), we can see that Perry Barr Constituency is a relatively healthy place to live. It fares better than the city as a whole on all the main health indicators except female life expectancy. In contrast, Lozells and East Handsworth ward fares worse than the city on all indicators except deaths by cancer. It is not clear why the incidence of deaths by cancer should be better in the ward than in the constituency and the city, but the rate does appear to be rising rather than falling. Historically, hospital admissions for older people have been relatively low in Lozells and East Handsworth, but this has increased dramatically recently.

Exercise levels in the ward are much lower than in other priority wards and the city as a whole. Only 5% in Lozells and East Handsworth exercised at least three times a week, compared to an average of 16% across all priority wards. The impact of the introduction of the Gym4free scheme, whereby over-60s can access leisure facilities free of charge, is not yet known in the ward.

According to the Council Plan for 2008-2013, a key objective for the quality of life of older people are that they should remain active and involved in the community, with the people who provide their informal care receiving better support<sup>218</sup>. A commitment to locating the proposed new PCT Facility (ref 2B122) within the Handsworth NMA would be a practical demonstration of the PCT's commitment to the ideals contained in their Strategic Plan.

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<sup>215</sup> Now 80.5 years, compared to 72.7 for men.

<sup>216</sup> 10.1% compared to 8.5%.

<sup>217</sup> There is 62% net satisfaction with hospitals and 68% net satisfaction with surgeries.

<sup>218</sup> Birmingham City Council (2008) *Council Plan 2008-2013*, Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, p16.

**Table 18: Health in Lozells and East Handsworth**

	Baseline	Latest	Latest	Latest
	L&EH	L&EH	Perry Barr	City
Low birth weight	11.6	12.8	12.1	11.3
Life expectancy	75.5	76.1	77.6	77.1
Male life expectancy (1)	72.8	73.9	75.8	75.2
Female life expectancy (1)	79.5	80.2	80.4	80.5
Deaths Circulatory Disease	173.7	157.5	112.4	119.6
Deaths (Cancer) (2)	109.6	115.3	124.8	129.6
Deaths (suicide) (2)	15	8.1	7	7.8
Infant mortality (3)	13.6	10.1	7.7	8.5
Child Hospital admiss. (4)	57.1	64.2	52.2	53.2
Over 65 Hospital admiss (falls) (4)	99.8	149.5	139.3	149.3

**Notes**

- (1) Three year averages 2004  
06  
(2) 2003-05  
(3) 2004-06  
(4) 2005-06

Source: Be Birmingham

**11. Young People**

A recurring theme in the literature on Handsworth/Lozells is the issue of young people. At the time of the Census in 2001, 30% of the 28,800 population of the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward were under the age of 16<sup>219</sup>. This is in the context of the City itself having 'the youngest population of any European city'<sup>220</sup>. The Be Birmingham profiles of the different neighbourhoods all suggest that the population has a younger age profile than the city as a whole<sup>221</sup>.

It is evident that there are concerns relating to providing facilities for both children and youths, improving educational results, diverting youths from becoming involved in gang culture and providing opportunities for young people to work and obtain housing in the area. There is a danger that, because of issues relating to Guns and Gangs, that the young people of the area could become demonised. As we discuss the difficulties that affect them, we need to remember that these young people are the future of Handsworth/Lozells.

<sup>219</sup> <http://www.bebirmingham.org.uk>

<sup>220</sup> Birmingham City Council (2007): Invest in North West Birmingham. Online: [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf?MEDIA\\_ID=277088&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008\\_11\\_07.pdf](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf?MEDIA_ID=277088&FILENAME=North%20West%20AIP%2008_11_07.pdf) [Accessed 20/04/09], p.15.

<sup>221</sup> Be Birmingham (2008, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d) *op. cit.*

The relatively young age profile of the area does bring attendant problems. Birmingham ranks 347<sup>th</sup> out of 354 local authorities for child well-being. The question of support for children and youth is highlighted by the Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board who identify the need to provide facilities and support for children and youth as a key issue<sup>222</sup>. Similarly, the Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board report that the need to provide ‘activities for teenagers’ and ‘play facilities for young children’ are key priorities for local people<sup>223</sup>. Let us deal with some of the issues relating to young children before turning youth issues.

## 11.1 Young Children

We have noted above the issues around the educational performance of young children. This is confirmed by the Keith Newell Consultancy report, which points to the poor performance in Handsworth in respect of children achieving their early learning goals and highlights the need for improvement in Early Learning and Key Stage 2<sup>224</sup>. A similar picture emerges in the Lozells and East Handsworth Ward, where achievement of early learning goals are described as ‘50 per cent below the threshold levels...’<sup>225</sup>. We have seen this confirmed by the educational attainment figures referred to earlier and we suggested that these children may be at an early disadvantage because of the very high proportion of households where English is a second language. These same statistics show that, although children’s performance improves as they go through school and secondary school performance is also improving, they have been unable as yet to overcome this early disadvantage.

In terms of the provision of facilities for young children, the Keith Newell Consultancy report indicated that more free nurseries were required as well as stay and play facilities<sup>226</sup>. These results were echoed in the Handsworth baseline assessment conducted in 2007<sup>227</sup>.

Issues with schooling are also identified by Phillimore et al in their work relating to the neighbourhood needs of new migrants. Participants in this research reported difficulty in locating nursery spaces for young children and they pointed to other problems, due to a lack of local knowledge, which hampered them in their efforts to identify the most appropriate schools for their children.

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<sup>222</sup> Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>223</sup> Lozells Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, p.1.

<sup>224</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy report (2007) *op. cit.*, p.12.

<sup>225</sup> The Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.16.

<sup>226</sup> It should be noted however, that the majority of respondents answering this question did not have children of pre-school age and therefore did not have an opinion on the issue. Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p.25.

<sup>227</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy, (2007) *op. cit.*, p.29.

Further problems were experienced in providing curriculum support for their children when a school place was identified. They complained of bullying and a lack of understanding from schools of the particular issues of children from this background. The report also references research that identifies that 'some refugee children truanted from school because they could see little point in remaining'<sup>228</sup>.

The research conducted by MEL in 2006 revealed that Indian residents and African asylum seekers and refugees believed that there were not enough safe facilities for children to play<sup>229</sup>. This report also highlighted the problems experienced by older children and this will now be considered in greater detail.

## 11.2 Older Children / Youth

Latchford identified that the higher proportion of younger people in the area, combined with other factors such as worklessness, could have been a contributing factor to the 2005 disturbances; 'high levels of young men with insufficient to occupy their time – is an incendiary mix'<sup>230</sup>. The literature emphasises a lack of opportunities for young people, coupled with a distrust of the statutory agencies. One could postulate that these factors could contribute to draw young people towards the gang culture that exists in the area and a continuation of the problems that helped to ignite the 2005 disturbances.

The Keith Newell Consultancy report (2006) canvassed the views of young people in the Lozells and East Handsworth area and reported that the majority of respondents felt that there was little or nothing for young people to do in the area to occupy their time<sup>231</sup>. This response was echoed in a similar assessment carried out in Handsworth in 2006.

The failure of the statutory agencies to understand the area and deliver adequate services to young people is a recurring theme. The Keith Newell Consultancy held discussions with mothers who had lost children to gun crime and young men who had become involved in gang activity<sup>232</sup>. The group criticised educational provision, noting that greater care should be given to issues such as curriculum design, Black history, identity and stereotypical labelling, an opinion echoed by Black respondents canvassed by MEL, who felt that 'Afro-Caribbean children are labelled badly in local schools'<sup>233</sup>.

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<sup>228</sup> Philimore et al (2008) *op. cit.*, p.38.

<sup>229</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, pp.8,36.

<sup>230</sup> Latchford (2007) *op. cit.* p.19.

<sup>231</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> MEL (2006) *op. cit.*, p.10).

The gang members taking part in the former discussion identified their lack of life chances and consequent long-lasting involvement in crime<sup>234</sup>. An interesting corollary of the discussion was that the gang members identified that 'many young people want to kick gang membership and crime but...there are no people and programmes to help them'<sup>235</sup>.

As we have seen above, the police have been effective in reducing crime in the area, but the policing of the area has attracted criticism including the following observations<sup>236</sup>:

- The police do not understand the culture
- Stereotypes fuel police harassment
- Post code policing
- Police/Black youth relationships are poor

Although it is recognised by respondents that Black and Asian officers have been recruited to work in the area, a feeling that the officers have become assimilated into a particular way of thinking persists. Suggestions to help in this regard include allowing the community to be involved in police training and having an opportunity to shadow or undertake work experience with local police officers<sup>237</sup>.

It is evident that the local agencies have taken note of residents' criticisms. The Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board recognise the importance of delivering services 'that respond appropriately to marginalised youngsters' and 'provide facilities [and] development opportunities [and] socially productive routes to achievement to meet their needs...'<sup>238</sup>.

The Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board<sup>239</sup> reports successful consultation exercises with 13-16 year olds but has also recognised that provision of improved facilities and activities for children and young people is a priority area.

It is evident from the literature that the needs of children and young people are not currently been met on a number of levels. Although perceptions of the area might contribute to a certain extent in this regard, the aspirations of both the council and the residents of the area will only be met by identifying needs and responding to them in consultation with the community. Although there is evidence to indicate that this approach has been adopted, there is clearly more work to do.

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<sup>234</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy (2006) *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>236</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy, (2006) *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>237</sup> Keith Newell Consultancy, (2006) *op. cit.*, p.42.

<sup>238</sup> Handsworth Neighbourhood Management Board (2007) *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>239</sup> Soho Finger and Gib Heath Neighbourhood Management Board (2008) *op. cit.*, pp.11-13.

For a sizeable minority of young people in Handsworth/Lozells, there is a cycle of low educational attainment, youth unemployment, gang membership, alienation from mainstream society, unstable low income employment throughout their lives, children born into disadvantage, low educational attainment ..... and the cycle continues. It is beyond the scope of this literature review to deal with all of these issues, but it is clear that they need to be tackled simultaneously.

Part of the solution could be to build on the cultural diversity of the area by creating employment that is linked to the development of the arts. There is a rich history of performing arts in Handsworth and Lozells, reflecting both the history of the area and the international roots of its residents. There is scope for more support to turn this into income-earning opportunities for young people.

## **12. Culture and the Creative Industries**

The City-Region bid, referred to above, was seeking funding for the establishment of a dedicated Cultural Lottery Fund, along with additional powers to support the development of the City-Region's cultural infrastructure<sup>240</sup>. In its Plan for the period 2008 to 2013, the City Council intends to provide residents with 'the opportunity to access the very best cultural and sporting activities and events, locally and city-wide'<sup>241</sup>.

This is an admirable aim, but by the way in which this commitment is conceived, it does not allow for support to locally produced cultural activity and events. The Council Plan says that the Council will continue to improve and expand cultural opportunities, but this appears to refer only to staging first-class cultural events and ensuring that people will take part in cultural activities such as libraries and museums. In support of areas like Handsworth and Lozells, the Council could go further with respect to a commitment to community arts and their relationship to the cultural industries.

In Handsworth, Lozells and the surrounding area, there is a cultural narrative that could be celebrated more effectively. Information about cultural activities is fragmented, but the potential role of culture in the regeneration of Handsworth and Lozells is immense. With its diverse population, the diversity of culture could be promoted by investment in the cultural infrastructure. There are opportunities to bring together young people through three-tone, an amalgamation of art, music and minority theatre.

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<sup>240</sup> Birmingham City Council, et al, (2009) *City-Region of Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country: Proposal for a Pilot City Region*, p. 16.

<sup>241</sup> Birmingham City Council (2008) *Council Plan 2008-2013*, Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, p16.

The Cultural Narrative for the area includes:

- The Beyond Bricks community arts programme<sup>242</sup>, which is being funded by Urban Living.
- The Drum<sup>243</sup> is renowned as a national centre for black arts and culture. Located in Aston, it is an important focal point for the cultural identities of the British African, Asian and Caribbean communities in Handsworth and Lozells.
- Nu Century Arts<sup>244</sup> promotes the artistic development of the African Caribbean community by supporting new writers, musicians, directors and actors.
- Punch Records<sup>245</sup> have been investigating the history of Bhangra music and the role that Handsworth and Lozells have played in this. Based in Birchfield Road, it is a major, ideas-led cultural resource for the city of Birmingham and the West Midlands through its advocacy, advice service, productions, festivals and artist development.
- The work of photographer Andrew Jackson in Handsworth and Lozells, exploring issues of identity and diversity.
- The Connecting Histories web page identifies the work of photographer Vanley Burke<sup>246</sup>, who has been recording the people of Handsworth and Lozells since the 1960s. It also highlights the work of the Banner Theatre company<sup>247</sup>, which has produced documentary-based shows using a range of multi-media techniques around drama, folk music, slides and oral history recordings, providing support for amateur groups such as the Handsworth Community Project, to produce their own work. Derek Bishton<sup>248</sup> is a journalist and photographer who worked in the Handsworth area of Birmingham during the 1970s and 1980s alongside other photographers, journalists and designers, including John Reardon and Brian Homer, on photography and community projects.
- The Centre for Music and Arts Technology<sup>249</sup> provides quality training, education and production resources for people from diverse ethnic backgrounds who share a passion for music and other performing arts. It is a social enterprise which supports local groups and provides facilities and services for the creative industries. Run by Dr Bob Ramdhanie, who has been involved in promoting black arts for over 40 years and nurturing

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<sup>242</sup> <http://www.beyondbricks.net>.

<sup>243</sup> <http://www.the-drum.org.uk>

<sup>244</sup> <http://www.nucenturyarts.co.uk>

<sup>245</sup> [www.punch-records.co.uk](http://www.punch-records.co.uk).

<sup>246</sup> [http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/collections/vanley\\_burke.asp](http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/collections/vanley_burke.asp)

<sup>247</sup> <http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/collections/banner.asp>

<sup>248</sup> <http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/collections/bishton.asp>

<sup>249</sup> <http://www.cmatltd.co.uk>

the talents of hundreds of local artists, its events and training draw on the experience of local musicians such as David Hinds (Steel Pulse), Zirak Hamad (Infusion), Carlos Munoz (Caliche), Dennis Seaton (Musical Youth) and Pritam Singh.

The importance of recognising this cluster of activity is not only the contribution it makes to the cultural life of the community, although this is extremely important. All of the above are income-generating opportunities in the cultural industries. There is a significant cluster of media activity in Birmingham, which is supported by AWM. There is scope for involving AWM in the funding of the creative industries in Handsworth/Lozells, thereby contributing to the well-being and quality of life of young people in the area.

Where this activity takes place is also important. The most difficult part of the area is also the location where impact could be greatest. The Villa Road is a rundown stretch between the Soho Road and Lozells Road shopping areas that is a hotspot for crime, gangs and drugs. An ambitious programme of regeneration and renewal in this area could change the nature of Handsworth/Lozells, contribute to social cohesion and fundamentally alter people's perceptions of the area. It is difficult to see how the image of Handsworth/Lozells can be changed without such an effort.

This, of course would only be one part of an overall programme of work that sees the young people of Handsworth/Lozells as the main resource for a better future for the area. The overall programme should seek to raise their aspirations with respect to their place in the developing knowledge economy and support them in achieving these aspirations through education and training. There are already people involved in this and there has been a commitment of resources for this purpose. The future of Handsworth/Lozells depends on their success.

### **13. Empowering the Community**

One of the aims of the Dialogue process, if not this project, is to enable and empower citizens, stakeholders and communities to contribute to building cohesion by engaging and being active. Empowerment assumes that people wish to be involved in the first place. Enabling people to become active citizens requires that there is a latent desire to become more involved in the delivery of the services that affect the quality of residents' lives. If there is no willingness to participate, there can be no empowerment. The evidence suggests that in Handsworth and Lozells, for whatever reasons, there is less desire to get involved beyond the affairs of the family than in other parts of Birmingham.

In Lozells and East Handsworth, residents are far less likely than those in other parts of the city to help people other than their relatives. Only 11% of respondents in the 2006 Local Area Agreement Survey<sup>250</sup> said that they had undertaken unpaid activities to help people other than relatives in the previous year, compared with 23% citywide. They are also only half as likely to undertake voluntary activities as residents in the other priority wards in the city<sup>251</sup>. When they do, it is mainly to keep in touch with people who have difficulty in getting out and about and/or collect pensions and shop for others.

When asked if they had sought to increase awareness of local issues they were also less likely than others across the city to get involved. Only 7% had tried to raise awareness, compared to 10% citywide, and only 4% had contacted an appropriate organisation (5% citywide).

On the other hand, participation in local groups, organisations or clubs is much higher than the city average. In the Lozells and East Handsworth ward, 31% had participated in local groups, compared to 21% across the city and 22% in priority wards as a whole. Twelve per cent of people in the ward participated in children's education, religious, and/or sports and exercise groups.

This implies that bonding social capital is low, bridging social capital is high, and linking social capital is lower than, but closer to, the city average<sup>252</sup>. Empowerment is about increasing linking social capital. The question, then, is about whether this can be increased. Would local residents be interested or, what would make them interested? There appears to be a great deal of cynicism about whether that City is serious about involving people, listening to them and following up with action<sup>253</sup>. This attitude will only be overcome if issues around local governance and resources are addressed.

When asked about their satisfaction with the opportunities for participation in local decision-making provided by local public services, satisfaction levels are once again much lower than across the city (44% satisfied compared with 56%)<sup>254</sup>. The same is true of net satisfaction rates - 12 percentage points lower. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they were able to influence decisions that affect the local area, only 29% agreed. Across the City 37% agreed. Twenty one per cent disagreed, the second lowest of the city wards, leaving a net positive balance of 8%<sup>255</sup>. However, a full 50% said 'neither' or were unsure<sup>256</sup>. This suggests that for many respondents, this was not a meaningful question. One interpretation of this is that for a large

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<sup>250</sup> BMG (2008) *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>251</sup> Only Kings Norton had a lower level of activity.

<sup>252</sup> For a Discussion of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in neighbourhoods that work, see Middleton, A., Murie, A and Groves, R. (2005) Social Capital and Neighbourhoods that Work', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 10, pp. 1711-1738.

<sup>253</sup> Handsworth and Lozells Community Advisory Group (March 2009) Summary report on the work and outcomes from the Handsworth and Lozells Community Advisory Group.

<sup>254</sup> Only Sparkbrook and Washwood Heath come out lower.

<sup>255</sup> In Lozells, however, more people were dissatisfied than satisfied. See: BMG (2007) *LAA Survey: Neighbourhood Elements Report*, *op. cit.*, p.30.

<sup>256</sup> In Lozells it was 55%. *Ibid.*, p32.

proportion of residents in Handsworth and Lozells, this is not something they think about.

These figures would caution against putting too much emphasis on net satisfaction rates when dealing with these questions. However, it is worth noting that net satisfaction with ability to influence decisions fell right across the city between 2006 and 2007 and in the Perry Barr Constituency they fell from 37% to 14%<sup>257</sup>.

When asked if they would like to become more involved in decision-making in the future, only 6% in the ward said that they would, compared to 11% in the city and 14% in all priority wards. A further 24% said it would depend on the issue, compared to 19% citywide.

With social relations based on the family rather than the community, with little inclination to address local issues, with a low level of consciousness about influencing decisions and a lack of motivation to participate, encouraging local people to 'be empowered' will not be easy. Nevertheless, two potential areas to explore are the Canadian concept of Citizens' Assemblies<sup>258</sup> and the possibility of a local version of a Youth Parliament<sup>259</sup>, which would operate more as a Youth Assembly.

The Citizen Assemblies concept involves a random selection of residents, from which a quota sample is selected to reflect the social composition of the area. The assembly would complement the work of elected representatives, acting as a consultative group and sending their recommendations directly to Councillors for debate and Council ratification. It would be larger than Citizen's juries and panels and a revolving membership would not necessarily be representative of any local interest groups.

Rather than being directly elected, the Youth Assembly would follow similar selection principles and would lock young people into the future of the area. It would enable youths to use their energy to change their local area and would be constantly renewed by new young people coming through.

Finally, these mechanisms will only work if resources flow from the advice that is offered, raising the question of participatory budgeting<sup>260</sup>. Participatory budgeting has many forms and can be adapted to local circumstances. Many local authorities claim to be operating participatory systems when in fact they are referring to the devolution of budgets to local areas through, for example, constituency committees. Linked to a Citizen Assembly or a Youth Assembly, parts of the City's budget would be seen to be locally owned and they would create a new local social dynamic.

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<sup>257</sup> BMG (2008) op. cit., p.35. We requested but were unable to obtain 2007 figures for the ward.

<sup>258</sup> Dowden, O. (2009) *Sorted: Civic lotteries and the future of public participation*, Toronto, MASS LBP.

<sup>259</sup> <http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk>

<sup>260</sup> <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk>

These concepts tend to be based on the idea of a homogenous and cohesive society, rather than a diverse and at times tense community. They work best when there is common purpose. They are proposed here because they are thought to be worthy of further investigation as a potential means of enhancing linking social capital in areas such as Handsworth/Lozells.

## **14. Conclusion**

In the variety of documents we looked at, there have been many discussions of issues and problems relating to rubbish, rats, crime, unemployment, education, health, the needs of young people, community cohesion, and access to services. The historical burden of these issues has led to a significant image problem for Handsworth/Lozells but, behind the image, the problems are real.

Recent surveys have shown that, for the residents of Handsworth and Lozells, the level of crime is seen as the most important aspect of a place when judging if it is a good area to live. Crime in Handsworth has been historically higher than in the rest of the City, particularly violent crime and robbery. Crime rates have been falling all across the country in recent years and in Handsworth and Lozells the rates of decline for most crimes are much higher than average. Violent crime remains an issue, but the gap in crime rates between the ward and Birmingham as a whole, has been closing. Nevertheless, local community concerns about crime remain high and many people leave the area because of concerns about criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Recent reports by consultants also show that residents think that the local police are out of touch with residents and that more visible policing was necessary. The police appear to have responded by becoming more engaged with the community and by putting more community officers into the streets, but it is not clear that the historical lack of trust between the police and sections of the community have been overcome. This may be particularly true of young people, who are seen as are the source of fear of crime for many older people.

The problem of young people having nothing to do is a common complaint in urban and rural areas across the country. From local reports, it is clear that young people hanging around the streets are perceived by many people in the community as a major challenge facing Handsworth and Lozells. It is linked to both crime and anti-social behaviour, above, and to opportunities for employment, below.

Hanging around on street corners is, of course, not only a result of lack of social and leisure activities for young people; it is also related to a lack of opportunities for employment and training. The statistics point to youth unemployment as a continuing and serious problems that reinforces the

segregation of communities and contributes to a lack of cohesion within different ethnic groups across the Handsworth and Lozells area.

Previous surveys have indicated that people in Handsworth and Lozells are much more likely to be concerned about unemployment as a local issue than others across Birmingham. This reflects the extremely high levels of unemployment in the area. Their concerns about high rates of unemployment are supported by statistics which show that these rates are not only high but that, relative to the Birmingham average, the situation has been deteriorating over the past 17 years. However, in addition to unemployment, the levels of other benefits and disability are higher than average and the overall levels of income are much lower, when compared with the city average. Part of the reason for the higher incidence of low income levels across Handsworth and Lozells, appears to be that those who have jobs may be over-represented in low-income employment. The largest group of employers in the area are small firms in retail and catering (mainly fast food outlets) and people are concentrated in low-paid occupational categories.

Educational performance in Handsworth and Lozells has been well below the Birmingham average in all areas of attainment, from pre-school to secondary school. Historically, pupils living in Handsworth and Lozells have performed very much worse than children from across the City and nationally, and there is still some evidence that in early years of education this is still the case. The most recent statistics show that there are lower levels of performance in both primary and secondary education and few local young people go on to attend college and university. However, the gap between the ward and the City average narrows as children progress through school and there have been recent improvements in pupil attainment, particularly at secondary level.

Local people's concerns with rubbish, rats, dumping and run-down properties are a constant feature of previous consultations in Handsworth and Lozells. Calls for less litter and rubbish on the streets are reinforced by a community view that this is the most important aspect of service delivery in Handsworth/Lozells that needs improving. Recent surveys show that fly-tipping and the dumping of bulky rubbish are major problems in the area, as is the number of properties that are not being adequately maintained. Recent improvements in the cleaning of the area appear to have been insufficient for many residents.

This issue of the environment is a major determinant of the quality of life in the area and it contributes considerably to the negative image of the area. It is also a deterrent for individuals who might otherwise stay and invest in the area, and it reduces the morale of those who remain in Handsworth and Lozells.

Home ownership is well below the Birmingham average and the private rented sector is large and growing. The area is currently benefiting from a large-scale investment by Urban Living as much of the private stock fails decent homes standards. Some of the social housing is in a state of dereliction. There is a rapid turnover of people, particularly in the private rented sector and, at the same time, a group of long-term residents with particular housing needs.

Different people from the locality's various Black and minority ethnic groups have different needs, based on cultural influences, on family size and the way in which houses are used. Furthermore, the demographics of the area generate particular demands from the elderly and the large numbers of young people who will soon enter into the housing market.

Local business is dominated by small firms employing less than 10 people, and over the past ten years Handsworth and Lozells has been losing enterprises, whilst the rest of Birmingham has been gaining them. Larger employers based in the area are all in the public sector. New businesses established in Handsworth and Lozells have a less than 50% chance of surviving four years, a situation that is much worse than in Birmingham as a whole.

Surveys have shown that residents of Handsworth and Lozells think that the area has good transport links, both to the city centre and to other parts of the city. There are long-standing issues of congestion on the Soho Road, where health-damaging pollution is higher than in the city centre; and although the A34 Birchfield Road is a main route into the city centre, there are issues in relation to the safety of the pedestrian underpasses and the quality of the physical environment adjacent to it.

Health statistics relating to Handsworth and Lozells are almost uniformly worse than for the City as a whole. They should be seen in the context of the investment that is being made by The Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust to reduce health inequalities and there have been recent improvement in mortality rates and infant mortality rates. Nevertheless, Handsworth and Lozells fare worse than the City average on all major health indicators except death by cancer. Levels of exercise undertaken by local people are also much lower in the area. Some groups, such as new arrivals, have difficulties in gaining access to GPs and this group also have particular language support needs.

City Council policy documents have identified improving early learning and providing play facilities for young children as key priorities; and a key objective is to address the quality of life of older people. Nevertheless, at the present time, a number of problems still remain in the area.

Lack of community cohesion in Handsworth and Lozells remains a serious issue, particularly in the Lozells area. While across the Perry Barr constituency people say they get on well together, the different ethnic groups in Lozells and West Birchfield may be living together in close geographic proximity, but they are leading separate lives. The underlying tensions that lay behind the 2005 Lozells disturbances do not appear to have gone away.

One of the aims of the Dialogue Programme is to empower citizens to contribute to building cohesion by being active in their local community. However, the evidence suggests that in Handsworth and Lozells there is less desire to get involved in community affairs than in other parts of Birmingham. Handsworth and Lozells residents are far less likely than those in other parts

of the city to help people other than their relatives. When local residents were asked if they had sought to increase awareness of local issues, they were also less likely than others across the city to get involved. On the other hand, participation in local groups, organisations or clubs is much higher than the city average.

This broader evidence implies that in Handsworth and Lozells, bonding social capital is low, bridging social capital is high, and linking social capital is lower than, but closer to, the city average. There appears to be a great deal of cynicism about whether the City is serious about involving people, listening to them and following up with action.

With respect to satisfaction with the opportunities for participation in local decision-making, satisfaction levels are much lower in Handsworth and Lozells than across the city. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they were able to influence decisions that affect the local area, half of the area's residents said they did not know. It would appear that their ability to influence decisions is not something that residents in Handsworth and Lozells think about a great deal.

Depending on the issue, dealing with the problems may require different types of approaches. The range of policy options that will be needed to address the issues will include both short-term and long-term solutions. For example, the question of rubbish on the street appears to drive an approach that concentrates on cleaning up the mess, rather than dealing with prevention of litter being dropped in the first place - the longer term and more intractable challenge of changing people's behaviour.

With respect to the underlying issues of low income and unemployment, these are unlikely to be resolved by focusing on employment creation in the immediate or surrounding locality. Given the number of firms, the size of these firms, the type of businesses in the area and the occupational structure of the inhabitants, local support can only make a small contribution to solving the problem. It may require collaboration across local authority boundaries and public sector organisations may need to review their recruitment policies.