Communities and Local Government

Local Environmental Quality

A New View on Measurement

sustainable communities

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A New View on Measurement

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1. Introduction

The research

1.1 In early 2006, a team from University College London's (UCL) Bartlett School of Planning, supported by Ipsos MORI, were commissioned to conduct research into the viability of establishing national standards for local environmental quality. The research team set out to provide a toolkit through which standards, indicators and approaches to measuring local environmental quality could be related in a more usable manner better reflecting local contexts and aspirations, and a holistic notion of local environmental quality.

1.2 Key questions included:

1. What acceptable local environmental standards might be?
    - What are people's aspirations for the quality of their local environment?
    - Which aspects are important and which are less so?
2. How standards – once defined – can be articulated in a useable form?
    - Does this vary from context to context and community to community?
    - How can such factors be reliably and consistently measured?
3. How, once articulated, standards can be used to inform the delivery of local environmental services?
    - How can they be articulated in a useful and suitably challenging way for policy and practice communities, and for local populations?
    - How can they be related to the diversity of different local services?

1.3 To provide answers, a research methodology was adopted that incorporated:

- A review of literature and research
- The mapping of available methodologies and indicators for measuring local environmental quality (see Annex 1.)
- Qualitative research using 12 focus groups of public aspirations and attitudes to local environmental quality (conducted by Ipsos MORI)
- Two workshops with professional groups involved in delivering local environmental services (conducted by Ipsos MORI)
- Synthesis and (if possible) the development of a hypothetical toolkit for defining and measuring local environmental standards

1.4 This report outlines how the key research questions have been addressed and suggests how measurement (and therefore management) in this field might be taken forward through the adoption of a proposed new toolkit. As such this report does not present the detailed evidence on which the proposals are based. That is available in full in the various detailed stage reports:

- Intermediate report – 05/06
- Ipsos MORI qualitative study – 07/06
- PLEQs and existing indicators and methodologies – 08/06

The report structure

1.5 This report is in four sections. Following this introduction, Section Two uses the key research questions as a means to structure discussion of the main research findings. In Section Three these are used to critique existing approaches to measuring quality in the local environment, and on that basis, to propose a new more holistic toolkit for the purpose. A final concluding section summarises the proposals and returns to the original research objectives to gauge whether, and to what extent, they have been adequately addressed by the proposals.

2. Summary of findings

2.1 In this section of the report, the three research questions outlined in Section One (above) are used to draw out a range of key findings from the research:

- What acceptable local environmental standards might be?
- How standards – once defined – can be articulated in a useable form?
- How – once articulated – standards can be used to inform the delivery of local environmental services?

2.2 The findings cut across the different stages of the research, and therefore bring together analysis from the literature and research review, as well as from the qualitative stages of the research, and from analysis of the existing methodologies and indicators currently used to measure local environmental quality.

What acceptable local environmental standards might be?

2.3 The analysis of the literature revealed that the concept of local environmental quality is broad, encompassing highly tangible elements such as cleanliness and personal security, and less tangible concerns such as visual quality and environmental pollution. It also revealed that the agenda extends across a wide range of local government responsibilities, and that a truly holistic notion of local environmental quality extends further than the 'Cleaner, safer, greener' agenda. This finding was supported in recent extensive research mapping the *State of English Cities*[1], whilst the importance of this agenda generally was supported in work examining the reputation of local government in voters' minds[2].

2.4 The result was the development of 12 Positive Local Environmental Qualities (PLEQs) that collectively summarised a broad range of inter-connected and inter-dependent dimensions of local environmental quality. The PLEQs were used as a tool throughout the qualitative phases of the research as a means to 'drill down' beneath the surface of headline environmental qualities, and to understand in some depth how the local environment is perceived.

[1] See pp 163-166 in Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *State of English Cities: A Research Study,* Volume 1, London, ODPM

[2] Research for the Local Government Association has revealed that action on the local environment can have the most direct and profound impact on whether local government is perceived positively or negatively by local voters – see LGA (2006) Local Government Reputation Campaign, Delivering for People and Places, London, LGA.

Table 1: The PLEQs[3]

Qualities	Description	Issues/Elements
Clean and tidy	well cared for	clear of litter, fly tipping fly posting abandoned cars, bad smells, detritus and grime; adequate waste collection facilities; provision for dogs
Accessible	easy to get to and move around	ease of movement, walkability; barrier free pavements; accessible by foot, bike, and public transport at all times; good quality parking; continuity of space; lack of congestion
Attractive	visually pleasing	aesthetic quality; visually stimulating; uncluttered; well maintained paving, street furniture, landscaping, grass/verges, front gardens; clear of vandalism and graffiti; use of public art; coordinated street furniture
Comfortable	comfortable to spend time in	free of heavy traffic, rail/aircraft noise, intrusive industry; provision of street furniture, incidental sitting surfaces, public toilets, shelter; legible; clear signage; space enclosure
Inclusive	welcoming to all, free, open and tolerant	access and equity for all by gender, age, race, disability; encouraging engagement in public life; activities for young people; unrestricted
Vital and viable	well used and thriving	absence of vacant/derelict sites, vacant/boarded up buildings; encouraging a diversity of uses, meeting places, animation; availability of play facilities; fostering interaction with space
Functional	functions without conflict	houses compatible uses, activities, vehicle/pedestrian relationships; provides ease of maintenance, servicing; absence of street parking nuisance
Distinctive	a positive, identifiable character	sense of place and character; positive ambience; stimulating sound, touch and smell; reinforcing existing character/history; authentic; individual
Safe and secure	feels and is safe and secure	reduced vehicle speeds, pedestrian, cyclist safety; low street crime, anti-social behaviour; well lit and surveilled, availability of authority figures; perception of security
Robust	stands up to the pressures of everyday use	high quality public realm, not repeatedly dug up; resilient street furniture, paving materials, boundaries, soft landscaping, street furniture; well maintained buildings; adaptable, versatile space
Green and unpolluted	healthy and natural	better parks and open space; greening buildings and spaces; biodiversity; unpolluted water, air and soil; access to nature; absence of vehicle emissions
Fulfilling	a sense of ownership and belonging	giving people a stake (individually or collectively); fostering pride, citizenship and neighbourliness; allowing personal freedom; opportunities for self-sufficiency

2.5 The focus groups revealed that people generally find it difficult to discuss qualities of the local environment in an abstract way, and found some qualities more difficult to understand than others, eg 'functional' (described for the purposes of the focus groups as 'can be used harmoniously for a variety of purposes'). Participants in the focus groups generally felt that many of the PLEQs overlapped, and often cross-referenced between the different qualities eg 'clean and tidy' and 'robust' (the latter described for the groups as 'well-maintained').

[3] PLEQs based on ten 'qualities' for public space originally derived for The Bartlett School of Planning (2004) Living Places: Caring for Quality, London, ODPM

2.6 The professionals had a similar reaction, with some concern that terms would be difficult for their user communities to comprehend. Again, they felt that the list of PLEQs could be condensed.

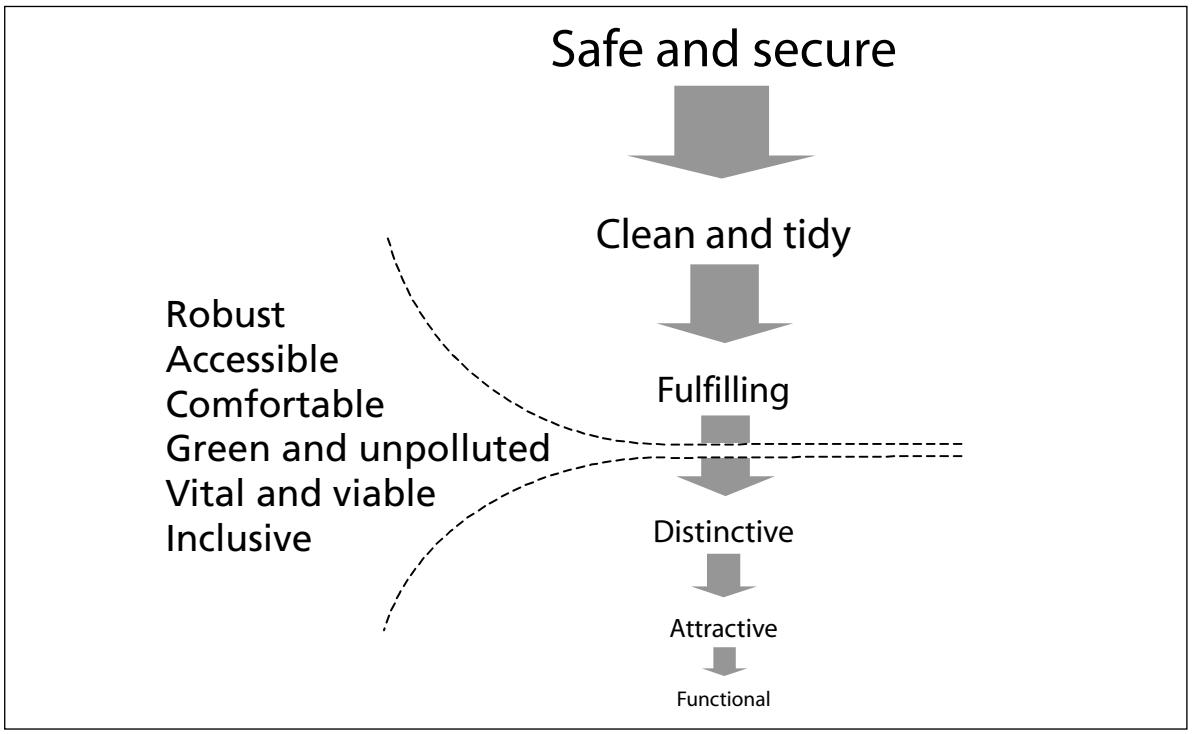
2.7 With prompting, however, both sets of participants (public and professionals) were able to grasp each of the PLEQs and understand their importance. Although they sometimes had a different take on the qualities, they were nevertheless able to identify and articulate a range of sub-qualities or issues that each PLEQ encompassed.

2.8 As such, there was not a quality that the participants regarded as unimportant, all qualities have some merit and contribute to a good environmental quality. All are also inter-related in complex and mutually reinforcing ways.

2.9 Nevertheless, some were regarded as particularly significant in helping to improve or undermine the quality of people's lives. 'Clean and tidy', 'safe and secure' and 'community and belonging' were of this type. The last of these was represented in the PLEQs by the term 'fulfilling'. At the other end of the scale, qualities such as 'visually pleasing', distinctive' and 'functional'[4] tended to be cited.

2.10 Focusing on the PLEQs singled out in the focus groups as either 'more' or 'less' important, a hierarchy of local environmental qualities might read as represented in Figure 1. Other PLEQs would sit somewhere in between.

Fig. 1: A hierarchy of local environmental qualities



[4] As described in the focus groups, 'Functional' was the least understood term, perhaps explaining its lowly rating

2.11 As a consequence, some qualities might be regarded as more fundamental than others, although:

- It was clear that lower order concerns were not considered un-important, simply lower priorities
- Each of the lower order concerns were, in different ways, understood to be intimately related to the higher order ones
- The more satisfied local communities are with their local environment, the more they focus on, and are critical of, the lower order concerns.

2.12 Therefore, the true test of a high quality local environment will be one in which each of the qualities is directly or indirectly addressed. Indeed, when asked about the qualities of their local neighbourhoods, and prior to prompting with the PLEQs, a wide range of issues emerged strongly from the focus groups as either positive or negative environmental factors. These included:

- Availability of local shops and services – questions of 'vitality and viability'
- Convenience of access to other areas and local facilities – questions of 'accessibility'
- Problems with parking and congestion – questions of 'functionality'
- Lack of activities for young people – questions of 'inclusion'
- The look and feel of areas – questions of 'attractiveness', 'greenness', and 'comfort'.

2.13 As such, in some form, all the PLEQs were spontaneously identified as significant during the focus groups, although some were considered more immediately critical than others, and some were considered harder to influence than others.

2.14 There was also a sense that some of the PLEQs related to the initial design of an environment, and therefore that aspects of these concerns were fixed and not open to influence (at least in the short-term). The aesthetic quality and distinctiveness of buildings fell into this category. Although it was recognised that such aspects contributed strongly to the quality of space, and residents either liked them or not, they did not feel able to change them, and therefore such concerns were not generally prioritised. PLEQs with aspects that (to a greater or lesser extent) might be included in this category were: 'distinctive', 'attractive', 'functional', 'green and unpolluted', 'accessible, 'comfortable', and 'robust'.

2.15 On the issue of achieving a 'fulfilling' local environment (one inspiring a sense of community and belonging), although the perceived role of the community varied, a feeling nevertheless existed that if the sense of community is strong, then everything else would fall in to place. A sense of community was therefore seen as critical to achieving local environmental quality.

How standards – once defined – can be articulated in a useable form?

2.16 Overall, professionals were sceptical about attempts to impose the same standards across socially and economically diverse areas. Great differences in physical context were also highlighted. For example, rural areas were identified by the professional audiences as having a different set of local environmental priorities.

2.17 For their part, the focus groups revealed a strong tendency for levels of deprivation to influence local environmental quality priorities, with safety and security issues the top concern in deprived areas. However, with initiatives in place to deal with these issues in some locations, issues of community and cleanliness came to the fore, reflecting the overall priorities elsewhere. Indeed, different dimensions of the same basic problems were often evident in different socio-economic contexts.

2.18 Professionals were concerned that not all qualities could be measured at the same geographic scale, with some issues eg safety and litter, more easily measured at the national scale, whilst others, eg the PLEQs 'attractive' and 'robust', should be measured locally. Even locally, local authorities feature different types of areas and communities, with different issues and priorities side by side. Therefore, participants in the workshops argued that local authority-wide measures could still be problematic, with a finer grained level of measurement required in many places, and the avoidance of rigid standards that were not always appropriate.

2.19 The literature review had revealed that some local environmental qualities are inherently more subjective than others, requiring more qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies to assess them; typically the use of professional judgment or the canvassing of local views. The argument was made that the local environment agenda may require such a balanced approach to the definition and interpretation of standards.

2.20 The workshops seemed to confirm this, with professionals arguing that some factors eg 'inclusive', 'fulfilling', 'distinctive', 'comfortable', and 'attractive', would be difficult to assess through hard data. Concerns were expressed that such issues are open to too much interpretation, and that meaningful measurement would be difficult. There was also some concern that simply measuring skill levels (eg availability of design skills) as a surrogate for outcomes would not provide a sufficient guarantee that services would be delivered to a requisite standard.

2.21 Despite the professional's concerns, and general opposition to any 'new' measurement initiatives, the mapping of existing local environmental quality indicators and methodologies suggested that many dimensions of the local environmental quality agenda are already being measured. However, the different origins and purposes associated with each approach, means that they do this in different ways, with more emphasis on some qualities than others, and with a focus on different scales and contexts.

2.22 This suggested that in principle it should be possible to devise a system of measuring environmental quality in most of its complexity, based (largely) on existing indicators. To some extent this is already being done, albeit in a very fragmented and uncoordinated way, with significant gaps, omissions and overlaps.

How – once articulated – standards can be used to inform the delivery of local environmental services?

2.23 Answers to questions concerning what are or are not acceptable levels of quality were difficult to address during the qualitative work, with both the professional and non-professional audiences finding it hard to articulate what is or is not 'acceptable' in any given context.

2.24 For professionals, levels of acceptability are dictated by public expectations which differ between contexts, and which are dictated by levels of resource, consultation, and in some (more affluent) areas, by complaints. For them, receipt of complaints means that levels of unacceptability are being reached; conversely, a lack of complaints signifies levels of satisfaction.

2.25 However, the analysis of public aspirations and attitudes revealed the problematic nature of such assumptions. For many communities the research revealed that levels of quality are not satisfactory, but are not so unacceptable that they are driven to complain. In other words, they are resigned to accepting the level of quality they are used to. Instead of articulating what is an acceptable quality for a particular dimension of the local environmental agenda, they tend to simply prioritise one quality over another; prioritisation that varies between individuals.

2.26 Whether residents should be able to drive levels of quality was open to debate, with some concerned that such activity inevitably shifts resources to more affluent places; a finding strongly supported by recent Joseph Rowntree funded research[5]. Others argue that services should be more responsive to resident demands and perceptions. Overall, despite inherent difficulties, public consultation was seen by the professionals to be an essential tool for gauging levels of satisfaction with the local environment and the provision of local environmental services.

2.27 A strong message emanating from the professional groups was the concern that they were being over-measured and monitored by central government. Professionals argued that they did not want a new raft of standards, or, because of the rewards and penalties that often accompany them, what they saw as the inevitable diversion of resources away from core services to address measurement concerns. On the positive side, the reaction points to the powerful nature of nationally established standards, and to the strong feeling amongst local environmental professionals that their comparative and public nature means that they can not be ignored.

2.28 On the issue of service responsibilities, the professionals concluded that almost every local authority service had a part to play in delivering the PLEQs. For them, the responsibility extended to the multitude of agencies active in particular areas, and included the private companies to whom tasks are increasingly being outsourced, but for whose work final responsibility remains with the local authority. Attempts are therefore increasingly common to co-ordinate the assessment of services across different areas of responsibility, across departments, and in conjunction with other service providers and the private sector, for example between refuse and highways, or between the local authority and local NHS partners.

[5] see pp viii-ix, Hastings A, Flint J, McKenzie C, Mills C (2005) *Cleaning up Neighbourhoods, Environmental problems and Service Provision in Deprived Areas*, Bristol. The Policy Press

Moving practice forward

2.29 The evidence pointed to a complex picture, encompassing a wide range of local environmental qualities, a diversity of local contexts (human and physical) to which they relate, a surfeit of existing standards and methodologies for measuring different aspects of local environmental quality, and to a varied structure of local service provision. The analysis suggested a range of conclusions.

2.30 On community and professional concerns:

- Everyday public space users find it difficult to break their view of the local environment down into its constituent parts, because they do not think in that way. Instead, they take a holistic view of the environment, and equate local environmental quality directly to broad socio-physical constructs such as community.

- Certain factors emerge as key priorities for individuals using public space – safety and security, cleanliness and tidiness, and sense of community – but so do a wide range of other inter-related factors that they might not immediately associate with this agenda, for example, how attractive an area is, the levels of pollution, or whether retail units are in active use.

- Levels of deprivation influence these priorities and perceptions of local environmental quality, with some communities more accepting of the levels of quality they are provided with than others.

- Many professionals, by contrast, continue to think in silos, and find holistic, crosscutting concepts of local environmental quality difficult to engage with. There is little sense, for example, that the local environment is a product of a wide range of design, development and management processes, each of which is playing a part in what the public experience.

2.31 On questions of measurement:

- It will be very difficult and highly undesirable to attempt to measure all aspects of local environmental quality at a national scale. This is because local environments are infinitely varied and complex and possess both tangible (objective) and intangible (subjective) qualities that need to be measured and understood in the light of local circumstances. For example, it is almost impossible to compare a rural village with an inner city estate.

- Appropriate scales of measurement will vary between local environmental qualities, with some aspects lending themselves to national quantitative measurement (eg clean and tidy) whilst others will be more appropriately measured in a qualitative manner at the local level (eg sense of fulfilment)

- The range of services influencing local environmental quality is extensive, and every local authority divides its local environmental service provision differently. Therefore, attempting to define universal service standards that are applicable everywhere will also be difficult.

- Measurement methodologies and indicators that do exist cover much of the local environmental quality agenda, but in a fragmented manner, and as such are limited in their ability to influence policy and delivery agendas.

- Nevertheless, measurement generally, and specifically the ability to compare vertically from the local to national levels, and horizontally, between comparable authorities, provides a powerful tool to effect change.

2.32 The key challenge is to cut through the complexity whilst raising the game by extending the notion of holistic environmental quality across all services with a role to play in its delivery. The toolkit advocated in the next section of this report attempts to do just that.

3. A proposed toolkit

3.1 In this section of the report a potential new toolkit for measuring local environmental (or community) quality is devised. Five concerns structure the discussion:

- **Levels of acceptability** and relevance of each PLEQ, and the inter-relationships between the various PLEQs
- **Rationalising the PLEQs** in order to better reflect a holistic local environmental quality agenda and professional and public perceptions of it
- **Mapping existing methodologies and indicators** as a means to understand how they relate to local environmental qualities, and to consider questions of compatibility, and what gaps exist
- **Relating qualities across scales and contexts** by devising a meta-framework through which methodologies and indicators can be related in order to fully measure a holistic local environmental quality agenda
- **Relating to different service areas**, considering the policy relevance of the toolkit, and its relation to the range of local environmental services.

Levels of acceptability

3.2 Difficulties experienced by professionals and the public alike in articulating how they judge levels of acceptability in the quality of the local environment meant that it was not possible to clearly identify commonly held perceptions of quality from the qualitative work. Nevertheless, most of the non-professional participants were able to indicate the kind of factors that influenced whether they felt positively or negatively about their neighbourhood. By contrast, the professional audiences found this difficult to do, seemingly often preferring to discuss definitions of the terms rather than comparative qualities, and preferring to rely on user complaints rather than professional judgements to determine negative factors.

3.3 Table 2 summarises and compares views on acceptability across these two constituencies. It summarises the range of positive and negative factors that were identified as being important in determining perceptions of local acceptability.

Table 2: Perceptions of acceptability – positive and negative factors

	Public positive	Professional positive	Public negative	Professional negative
Clean and tidy	Small quantities of litter are to be expected (acceptable)	Absence of litter, fly-tipping, graffiti Well-mown verges	Traffic fumes leading to poor air quality and dirty walls Litter (of all types) Dog foul Needles Graffiti Chewing gum Rubbish from shops/takeaways Rubbish bags piled up	Commercial rubbish
Accessible	Accessible for less mobile Good signposting Access by foot Adequate parking Adequate public transport	Good signposting and access to information Barrier free environments Good lighting Disabled access Perceptions of safety	Traffic congestion Cracks and holes in the pavement Lack of pedestrian crossings Problems caused by bad parking Children playing in the street Lack of parking provision Problems caused by deliveries	
Attractive	Trees, greenery, planting, flowers Maintained green areas Christmas lights Architectural quality Building maintenance Clean and tidy Murals Coordinated signage/street furniture Good street lighting	Architecture and heritage Clean and well-maintained Public art Coordinated street furniture	Vandalism Graffiti New housing estates	
Comfortable	Better-maintained benches, shelters, public toilets Green, well kept and attractive Confident and safe Walkable space Good street lighting Police on the street Adequate parking and signage Traffic calming	Ease of living in an area Feeling at home Continuity of care eg dedicated police, street cleaners, etc. Transport access Parking convenience Sustainability	Poor quality benches, shelters, public toilets Graffiti problems Broken glass Traffic congestion and noise Litter and cleanliness Lack of parking Potholes	

Table 2: Perceptions of acceptability – positive and negative factors (continued)

	Public positive	Professional positive	Public negative	Professional negative
Inclusive	Adequate facilities for teenagers Tolerant of minority groups Welcoming to all users	Accessible for disabled Mixed communities Mixed age profile	Teenagers hanging around Poor integration of different groups Late night noise	Racism and ageism
Vital and viable	Variety of shops and services Availability of cash points High occupancy levels Building renovations Community spirit/interaction Events and activities Essential shopping available locally Healthy housing market Feeling of safety and community	Community satisfaction	Derelict buildings Litter, vandalism and fights Inundated streets	Level of dereliction
Functional	Use without intimidation or danger Separate facilities for young people Suitably calmed traffic Controlled parking, balancing different users	Easy parking Free flowing	Congestion Parking problems Lack of play space Illegal activities eg drugs dealing	
Distinctive	Socially distinctive eg friendly, ethnic mix, relative affluence Physically distinctive eg features, history, buildings Availability of facilities and amenities Well maintained historic fabric	Distinctive features, history, buildings Visitor satisfaction Distinctive landscape	Possessing a bad 'reputation' Physically bland	Levels of deprivation
Safe and secure	Perception of personal security Child physical safety Freedom from intimidation A well cared for place – looks safe Low level disorder is acceptable (eg drunkenness) Visible police presence	Feeling safe and secure	Discomfort and fear at night Poor lighting Obvious drugs paraphernalia Threatening groups Frequency/quality of road crossings Obvious illegal activities	High perceptions of crime Signs of anti-social behaviour Poor lighting Unkempt environment Speeding and traffic problems

Table 2: Perceptions of acceptability – positive and negative factors (continued)

	Public positive	Professional positive	Public negative	Professional negative
Robust	Parks in good condition Pavement and road condition (some wear and tear acceptable – small potholes/slightly uneven paving) Good lighting Tree and shrub maintenance Accessible paths Flower displays Condition of community facilities Safe, accessible and well signed Buildings well-maintained	Road and pavement quality Longevity of surfaces Resilience of street furniture Street lighting Building maintenance	Potholes and uneven paving (when it can cause an accident)	Roads being dug up Chewing gum Graffiti and vandalism
Green and unpolluted	Level of greenness Flowers and colour Fresh air Low traffic and congestion Open space in walking distance (eg 10 minutes) Well-maintained play areas Cycle lane provision Recycling facilities Well tended (but not like private gardens)	Keeping healthy Air quality Well-kept flowers and plants	Poor quality green space Rubbish, litter and dog foul Poor surveillance Poor lighting Visible air pollution Poor quality seating Anti-social behaviour Failure to replace trees/planting Overgrown foliage	Noise pollution
Fulfilling	Interaction with neighbours Feeling comfortable (at home) Community spirit Levels of involvement Events and activities Facilities for young people	Community engagement (all sections of society) Sense of belonging/ satisfaction Information in different languages	Intimidation leading to alienation Transient communities eg students, bedsit tenants Rapid in-migration Feelings of insecurity	Increased personal mobility

3.4 The analysis revealed that a number of factors are noticeable by the regularity with which they feature in different categories, particularly visual signals of how well a place is looked after:

- Anti-social behaviour
- State of repair eg roads, street furniture, etc.
- General cleanliness
- Levels of lighting
- Availability of facilities for young people
- Perceptions of security
- Parking/traffic problems
- Visual quality/greenery
- Walkability/ease of movement
- Feeling of community cohesion.

3.5 Other factors were noticeable by their absence, particularly (in the professional responses) of any mention of existing nationally defined targets. Questions of sustainability were also infrequently raised, but were linked to notions of building welcoming, tolerant and pleasant communities, when they were. This might be explained by the overarching nature of the concept, and that in essence the whole local environment agenda is about building and managing sustainable communities.

3.6 The analysis also revealed that factors listed under the categories 'Comfortable', 'Robust' and, to a lesser degree, 'Distinctive' and 'Functional' largely reflect factors already covered under a combination of the other categories. To some degree this reflects misunderstandings about the true nature of these concerns, but critically it also reflects the fact that the consequences of some of these issues such as a distinctive environment, are reflected in assessments of other factors (eg distinctive buildings contributing to the overall attractiveness of public space). There was clearly room for some rationalisation of the PLEQs.

Rationalising the PLEQs

3.7 On the basis of the above, a key task was to rationalise the PLEQs to develop a usable and comprehensible framework for local environmental measurement whilst still reflecting a more holistic crosscutting quality agenda than has been the case in the past. A key issue was the relation to the well-established and accepted 'Cleaner, safer, greener' national policy agenda.

3.8 On this issue, the research suggested that the 'Cleaner, safer, greener' agenda may need some revision if it is to fully reflect the broad public perceptions of the local environment, and the complex service requirements necessary to deliver policy in this area. As argued in Section 2, this finding was strongly supported by the recent State of the English Cities[6] research.

3.9 In particular, although the 'cleaner' and 'safer' dimensions are clearly prioritised by communities everywhere, the 'greener' dimension (although important, and the focus of much recent good work) is not in the same category. Instead, a complex basket of factors under the broad heading 'community and belonging' seem to be critical to perceptions of local environmental quality and the liveability of places.

3.10 Recent qualitative research examining social relations in a deprived multi-ethnic setting supports this by demonstrating that green spaces are valued, although hard urban street spaces are equally or more important as social spaces[7]. It reveals that the real value of public space lies in the opportunities it provides for social mixing, social contact, cultural exchange and the simple enjoyment of being with others. The authors argue that policy now needs to move beyond the pursuit of design and management factors to the idea of public space as a positive container for public life which needs to be nurtured.

3.11 Returning to the current research, it is asserted that it is now time to move from a 'Cleaner, safer, greener' agenda, to one focussing on 'Cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' communities. This reflects the views of many that took part in the research that if a strong sense of community exists then other local environmental factors will quite naturally fall into place. It also provides the opportunity to bring cleaner and greener dimensions together into a closer and inter-dependent relationship, reflecting the fact that both are dimensions of public space management, and that green environments also need to be clean, whilst urban environments often benefit decisively from greening. Finally, it explicitly prioritises the vital importance of factors relating to the use and enjoyment of the local environment, as well as to its physical condition. These dimensions are represented in Figure 2.

[6] See pp 163-166 in Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *State of English Cities: A Research Study,* Volume 1, London, ODPM

[7] Dines N, Cattell V, Gesler W and Curtis S (2006) Public Spaces, *Social Relations and Well-being in East London*, Bristol, The Policy Press

Fig. 2: 'Cleaner, Greener, Safer, Stronger'

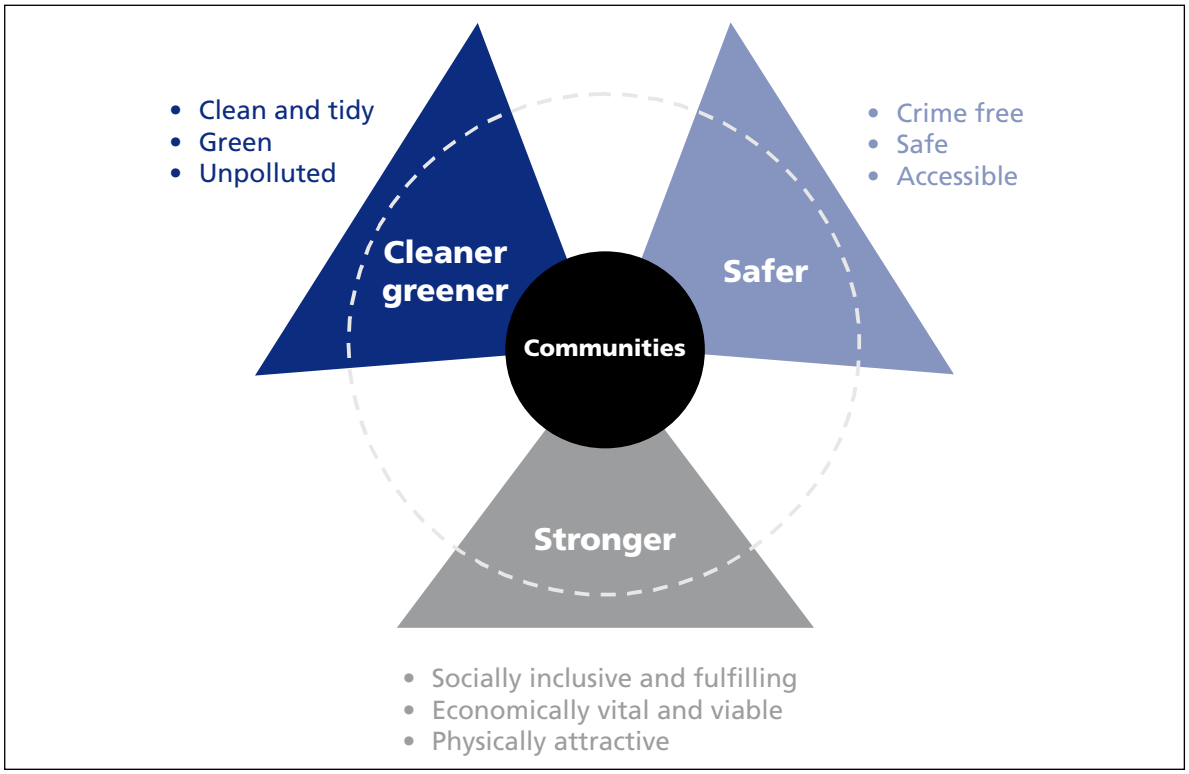


Table 3: The Positive Local Qualities (PLQs)

Qualities	Description	Elements	Dimensions
Clean and tidy	well cared for	litter, fly tipping, graffiti, dog foul, needles, chewing gum, rubbish, public buildings, road excavations, fly posting, abandoned cars, detritus and grime, general maintenance/ conditions	Cleaner/greener
Green	appropriately green and natural	verges, trees, planting, flowers, grass, greenness, open space, biodiversity, sustainable materials	
Unpolluted	healthy and comfortable	air quality, traffic noise, late night noise, noise pollution, recycling facilities, bad smells water/soil pollution, light pollution, energy efficiency	
Secure	crime and fear free	fear of crime, visible policing, anti-social behaviour, street fights, street crime, intimidating groups, surveillance	Safer
Safe	A protective environment	traffic speeds, traffic calming, street lighting, parking infringements, pedestrian/child safety, barriers and lights	
Accessible	easy to get to and move around	walkability, signage and information, car parking, servicing, public transport facilities, barrier free pavements, traffic congestion, potholes/trip hazards, crossings, cycle provision	
Socially inclusive and fulfilling	welcoming and cohesive	disabled access, play facilities, public toilets, benches and shelters, facilities for teenagers, user mix, sense of belonging, user interaction, community spirit, involvement, free, open and connected	Stronger
Economically vital and viable	well used and thriving	diversity of uses, retail variety, availability of key services (eg cash points), levels of occupancy/animation, dereliction, events and activities	
Physically attractive	visually pleasing	architectural quality, heritage, building maintenance, public art, coordinated signage/street furniture, amenity lighting, paving design, water features, seasonal decorations	

3.12 With some rationalisation, the PLEQs can be recast to relate to this new agenda. Combining the perceptions of acceptability (above) with the original PLEQs, it is possible to map out the critical factors for each dimension. These new qualities are termed Positive Local Qualities (PLQs), reflecting the broader notion of 'local quality' emanating from the research, in particular the emphasis on strong communities. They are summarised in Table 3.

Mapping existing methodologies and indicators

3.13 The next task is to understand how successfully existing methodologies and indicators map on to this agenda, and to consider questions of measurement, compatibility, and what gaps exist. Table 4 looks at how the PLQs and the issues they cover are being addressed by the key methodologies and indicators currently used by Government and local authorities. It tries to establish which issues are and are not covered, and whether those methodologies and indicators adequately cover the full range of spatial levels and contexts, from the national to the local, from residential areas to parks and town centres. The column on the right summarises the situation for each PLQ.

3.14 The range of methodologies and indicators covered in Table 4 is narrower than that reviewed during the course of the research (see Annex 1). The focus here is on those approaches that are already available as tools to assess and measure the qualities of the local environment. Some are the official sources of performance standards used by Government, such as the BVPIs, others are established national data-gathering systems, such as the British Crime Survey, others still are established tools to assess the quality of particular environments (eg Placecheck).

3.15 What unifies the approaches is that they are already used to measure the various aspects of local environmental/community quality at various levels, and the knowledge and skills to make use of them seem to be widely available. As the main purpose of the table is to see how the PLQs are being currently addressed, methodologies and indicators still not fully developed, or international methodologies with no current UK equivalent, have been deliberately excluded from the analysis. This is not to say that these are not useful or relevant, on the contrary, they might play a very important role in the revision and consolidation of existing approaches if the recommendations in this report are taken further.

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Clean and tidy (well cared for)	litter, detritus and grime, dog foul, needles, chewing gum, fly tipping, fly posting, graffiti, abandoned cars, road excavations, general maintenance/ conditions	BVPI 89 and BVPI 119 (e): user satisfaction indicator on cleanliness of public land (BVPI 89) and parks and open spaces (BVPI 119 (e)), based on weighted responses to 600,000 national survey questionnaires. Indicators based on 5-point satisfaction scale measuring satisfaction with Council services.	National coverage, data at LA level. Survey conducted every 3 years. Both used in CPA and PSA8	*All dimensions of 'Clean and Tidy' are currently covered by an array of indicators and methods, with both objective and subjective measurements, in spite of some overlap and some incompatibility between different indicators.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in all key issues. (eg the PSA8 targets.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in all key issues (although often based on sampling techniques, with varying size and significance).* • *Methodologies available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts, mostly user satisfaction-based (eg Placecheck, individual Green Flag Award inspections, Street Audit, Town Centre Healthcheck), but with issues of comparability across areas.*
		BVPI 199: measures cleanliness of street and local environment: 199a: litter and detritus, 199b: graffiti, 199c: fly-posting, based on LEQSE methodology (visual surveys of 300 transects of roads and open spaces, 3 times per year), 199d: fly-tipping, based on the Flycapture system. Indicator based on 4-point grading system backed-up by grading photos.	National coverage, data at LA level. Survey done 3 times/ year, indicator issued yearly. Used in CPA and PSA8	
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. 'Upkeep' part of the survey cover most of the 'clean and tidy issues'. Run on a continuous basis.	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8	
		BVPI 178, 186 and 187: measure ease of use (BVPI 178) and condition (BVPI 186 and 187) of footways based on technical inspection. Results as percentage points of length of footways in sample of total for Local Authority area.	National coverage, local data aggregated at LA level.	
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with 6 'liveability' issues: traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Local Environmental Quality Survey of England; wide-ranging and detailed survey of standards of environmental quality across England (sample of 54 Las with 230 sites each, divided into 12 types of land use). 32 indicators covering 10 aspects of environmental quality (inc. cleansing and cleansing-related). Areas are assessed in a 4-point scale.	National coverage, data aggregated at LA and Region level. Yearly survey. Used as a basis for BVPI 199	
		Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Awards given on ratings on a 10-point weighted scale for 8 criteria, including clean and well maintained. Assessment includes field inspection and desk inspection (management plan).	Voluntary scheme, 3-year cycle, only for public parks and green spaces, national coverage , data at local level, No. of awards at local authority level used as part of PSA8	
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity	
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories, inc. footway surfaces, maintenance and aesthetic.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Waste Data Flow: Not an indicator or standard setting mechanism in itself, but a comprehensive web-based data collection system on waste management, including quantitative data on fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles removals, which can be compared to targets. Run on a continuous basis	National coverage, data at LA level, aggregated at local authority level and upwards. Used in PSA8 (abandoned vehicles)	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Issues of cleanliness are assessed under 'first impressions', 'car parks' and 'streets'.	Voluntary scheme, covering tow centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	
		GreenSTAT: On-line consultation tool for assessing user satisfaction with parks and green spaces and (in a limited way) parks services. Questionnaire covers cleanliness and maintenance of parks.	Voluntary questionnaire, covering parks and green spaces. Data at individual park level, with limited comparability. No periodicity depends on user engagement.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Green (appropriately green and natural)	verges, trees, planting, flowers, grass, greenness, open space, biodiversity, sustainable materials	BVPI 119 (e): user satisfaction indicator on parks and open spaces based on weighted responses to 600,000 national survey questionnaires. Indicator based on 5-point satisfaction scale measuring satisfaction with Council services.	National coverage, data at LA level. Survey conducted every 3 years. Used in CPA and PSA8	*All dimensions of green covered by a variety of methods and objective and subjective indicators, although problems with compatibility of indicators seem to be bigger that with 'Clean and Tidy'. Some contexts are much better covered than others: most indicators and methods focused on public parks and green spaces, esp. at national level. 'Greenness in other contexts seems to be subsumed into 'Physical Attractiveness'.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in all key issues in public parks and green spaces, less so in other public spaces* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in all key issues although use of mostly user satisfaction-based methods and standards creates problems of comparability and aggregation*
		Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Awards given on ratings on a 10-point weighted scale for 8 criteria, covering the overall quality of parks and open spaces and their management regimes, including the natural environment and biodiversity. Assessment includes field inspection and desk inspection (management plan).	Voluntary scheme, 3-year cycle, only for public parks and green spaces, national coverage , data at local level, No. of awards at local authority level used as part of PSA8	
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. Survey of aspects needing improvement explicitly includes local amenities, parks and leisure facilities. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes natural features of place (39), green corridors (40), large scale planting for shelter or shade (42), planting of spaces and buildings (66).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories (greening issues under 'aesthetics').	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	• *Methodologies available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts, mostly user satisfaction-based (eg Placecheck, individual Green Flag Award inspections, Street Audit), with limited comparability across areas.*
		Natural Green Spaces Standards: minimum standards for access to natural green spaces in urban areas, based on maximum distances between any dwelling and natural green spaces of various sizes. Standards should guide LA in identifying current levels of provision and develop local targets	Indicative national standard, more useful in new developments and limited application to existing urban areas .Should produce data with many levels of aggregation and allow for comparability across Las.	
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Under 'first impressions of town centre' the checklist looks at the condition of trees and flora	Voluntary scheme, covering tow centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	
		GreenSTAT: On-line consultation tool for assessing user satisfaction with parks and green spaces and (in a limited way) parks services. Questionnaire covers quality of parks, including natural environment and biodiversity.	Voluntary questionnaire, covering parks and green spaces. Data at individual park level, with limited comparability. No periodicity depends on user engagement.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Unpolluted (healthy and comfortable)	air quality, traffic noise, late night noise, noise pollution, bad smells, water/soil pollution, light pollution, energy efficiency	Air Quality Strategy (Air Pollution Standards): Measures air quality through the presence of particular polluters in the atmosphere. Standards are based on scientific and medical evidence for each pollutant.	EU scheme, national coverage, separate data for individual pollutants collected locally and aggregated at a variety of levels, from local to EU.	*All dimensions of 'Unpolluted' are covered by a variety of methods and subjective and objective indicators. Compatibility problems between indicators do not seem to be a significant problem as often different indicators are based on the same raw data source. However, some dimensions are covered by both hard data and user satisfaction data (eg air/water/soil pollution), whereas others – particular noise pollution, are only covered through user perception surveys at local level.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in all key issues, either through hard data or through sampling of user perception.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in all key issues, some through both hard and satisfaction-based date, some only through the latter with the associated problems of aggregation and comparability.*
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. Inspection measures air, soil and water pollution, interviews include questions on air pollution. Run on a continuous basis.	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with 6 'liveability' issues including noise. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	
		Local Quality of Life Indicators: set of indicators set by the Audit Commission to monitor and compare the performance of Community Strategies. 45 indicators measure the quality of life in an area covering environmental, economic and social issues. Indicators depend on data already available from a variety of sources. Some indicators are linked to BVPIs. Some rely on hard, quantitative data, some on user satisfaction surveys. Air and water pollution assessed by indicators 24 (air pollutants), 25 and 28 (river quality).	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at LA-wide and national level for comparative purposes. Linked to the CPA process.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: measure 68 different dimensions of sustainable development (20 'framework' indicators + 48 for 4 priority areas). Results expressed in a traffic-lights system (green, amber, red and white), based on comparison with baseline data for 1990 and 1999 (medium-term and short-term change). Source of data varies; some data is quantitative, some based on site surveys, some on user satisfaction. Indicators 2, 7 and 61 refer to air quality ($C0_2$ emissions, road transport emissions, air quality and health respectively); indicator 30 refers to river quality.	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at national level to show progress over time. Used in PSA1.	• *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts, mostly user satisfaction-base (apart from air/water/soil pollution, for which hard data can be more readily aggregated at sub-LA level).*
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes local agenda 21(23), ground contamination (67), air and water pollution (68).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Secure (crime and fear free)	fear of crime, visible policing, anti-social behaviour, street fights, street crime, intimidating groups, surveillance	Best Value User Satisfaction Survey: general survey collecting data for user satisfaction-based BVPIs. Based on weighted responses to 600,000 national survey questionnaires, on a 5-point satisfaction scale, or on a 3-point scale of improvement over time. For the 2006-07 survey, section 1 on satisfaction with local area includes questions on what most needs improving, with specific mention to crime and anti-social behaviour, and how much these are a problem for the local area.	National coverage, data at LA level. Survey conducted every 3 years. Used in CPA , as it collects data for 14 BVPIs	*All dimensions of 'Crime Free' are covered by a variety of methods and subjective and objective indicators. Compatibility between indicators does not seem to be a significant problem. Good coverage of different contexts with specific needs in terms of crime and perception of crime (such as public parks and green spaces, town centres and residential neighbourhoods).* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in all key issues, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in all key issues, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.* • *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.*
		British Crime Survey: Household survey of levels of crime and public attitudes to crime and safety, bases on experience of crime (victimisation), Sample of 50,000 households, with at least 1,000 in each Police Force Area. Relevant blocks in survey questionnaire include 'Household grid' (feeling safe at home and walking in local area); 'night-time economy' (feeling safe in town centre, high street and public transport in the evening); 'anti-social behaviour' (noisy neighbours, teenagers, vandalism and graffiti, drug dealing and drunkenness in public spaces); 'crime & disorder on public transport'; 'crime and disorder on town centres and high streets'.	National coverage, yearly survey with rotating samples, data at Policy Force areas and aggregated at Government Office regional level.	
		Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Awards given on ratings on a 10-point weighted scale for 8 criteria, covering the overall quality of parks and open spaces and their management regimes. Presence of anti-social behaviour, lighting and surveillance, perception of safety are addressed in the 'healthy, safe and secure' module. Assessment includes field inspection and desk inspection (management plan).	Voluntary scheme, 3-year cycle, only for public parks and green spaces, national coverage , data at local level, No. of awards at local authority level used as part of PSA8	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. 'Satisfaction with neighbourhood' part of the household interviews addresses presence of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Perception of safety covers the home and surrounding area at different times of the day. Survey run on a continuous basis.	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with local area. Under 'safe and secure' there are questions about the incidence of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	
		Local Quality of Life Indicators: set of indicators set by the Audit Commission to monitor and compare the performance of Community Strategies. 45 indicators measure the quality of life in an area covering environmental, economic and social issues. Indicators depend on data already available from a variety of sources. Some indicators are linked to BVPIs. Some rely on hard, quantitative data, some on user satisfaction surveys. Crime and perception of crime are assessed by indicators under the 'community safety' theme: percentage of residents who safe outside, during the day and after dark (5), incidence of burglaries, thefts and other offences (6), percentage of residents who think that vandalism and damage to property and vehicles is a problem (7).	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at LA-wide and national level for comparative purposes. Linked to the CPA process.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: measure 68 different dimensions of sustainable development (20 'framework' indicators + 48 for 4 priority areas). Results expressed in a traffic-lights system (green, amber, red and white), based on comparison with baseline data for 1990 and 1999 (medium-term and short-term change). Source of data varies; some data is quantitative, some based on site surveys, some on user satisfaction. Indicators 38 refers to incidence of crime, 39 to fear of crime.	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at national level to show progress over time. Used in PSA1.	
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes 'safety and security', such as gardens backing on to side roads or service lanes (51), ground floors providing active uses for surveillance (57) and specifically a question about measures to make the place safer and more secure (58).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories, inc. personal security which looks at lighting levels, sightlines, natural surveillance, anti-social behaviour and escape routes.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Heading 'security' assesses daytime and night-time violence, theft, vandalism, drunkenness, begging, visible police presence, CCTV, radio link, lighting, etc. in various component elements of the town centre, such as car parks, facilities, etc.	Voluntary scheme, covering tow centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Safe (a protective environment)	traffic speeds, traffic calming, street lighting, parking infringe-ments, pedestrian/ child safety, barriers and lights	Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Awards given on ratings on a 10-point weighted scale for 8 criteria, covering the overall quality of parks and open spaces and their management regimes. Child safety, safety of the elderly and lighting are addressed in the 'healthy, safe and secure' module. Assessment includes field inspection and desk inspection (management plan).	Voluntary scheme, 3-year cycle, only for public parks and green spaces, national coverage , data at local level, No. of awards at local authority level used as part of PSA8	*All dimensions of 'Safe' are addressed by existing methods and indicators, although there are gaps in coverage, and some overlap with 'Crime Free', esp. on street lighting. Traffic speed and its consequences for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and children is a well covered topic, measured by subjective and objective indicators at various scales. Other issues, especially those related to street/public space layout and furniture are only covered at local level, mostly through subjective indicators, with reduced comparability.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in issue of traffic safety, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in issue of traffic safety, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.*
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with local area. Under 'attitudes towards local services' there are questions about street lighting. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. Survey run on a continuous basis. Topic 'upkeep' deals with nuisance from street parking. An additional category covers visibility reduction for pedestrians from street parking	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	
		Local Quality of Life Indicators: set of indicators set by the Audit Commission to monitor and compare the performance of Community Strategies. 45 indicators measure the quality of life in an area covering environmental, economic and social issues. Indicators depend on data already available from a variety of sources. Some indicators are linked to BVPIs. Some rely on hard, quantitative data, some on user satisfaction surveys. Indicator 8 measures accidents with pedestrians and cyclists.	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at LA-wide and national level for comparative purposes. Linked to the CPA process.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: measure 68 different dimensions of sustainable development (20 'framework' indicators + 48 for 4 priority areas). Results expressed in a traffic-lights system (green, amber, red and white), based on comparison with baseline data for 1990 and 1999 (medium-term and short-term change). Source of data varies; some data is quantitative, some based on site surveys, some on user satisfaction. Indicator 58 refers to road accidents in general and involving children.	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at national level to show progress over time. Used in PSA1.	• *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts through user perception, but problems of comparability across local areas..*
		Local Environmental Quality Survey of England; wide-ranging and detailed survey of standards of environmental quality across England (sample of 54 Las with 230 sites each, divided into 12 types of land use). 32 indicators covering 10 aspects of environmental quality. Areas are assessed in a 4-point scale. Indicators cover the condition (maintenance) of street furniture, including street lighting.	National coverage, data aggregated at LA and Region level. Yearly survey. Used as a basis for BVPI 199	
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes safety and traffic speed (99) and a question on taming traffic..	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories, inc. maintenance and enforcement, personal security, crossing points and desire lines, road layout and traffic, all of which deal with road safety.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Accessible (easy to get to and move around)	walkability, signage and information, car parking, servicing, public transport facilities, barrier free pavements, traffic congestion, potholes/trip hazards, crossings, cycle provision	BVPI 100, 102, 165, 178, 186 and 187: measure road closures (BVPI 100), local bus services (BVPI 102), pedestrian crossings for the disabled (BVPI 165), ease of use of footways (BVPI 178) and condition of footways (BVPI 186 and 187), based on technical inspection. Data from LA sources and from the BV User Satisfaction Survey, which has questions on local public transport, congestion and the state of repair of roads and pavements. Survey based on weighted responses to 600,000 national questionnaires, on a 5-point satisfaction scale, or on a 3-point scale of improvement over time.	National coverage, local data aggregated at LA level. Survey element of the indicators conducted every 3 years	*All dimensions of 'Accessible' are covered by a variety of methods and subjective and objective indicators. Compatibility between indicators does not seem to be a significant problem. Some overlap with ''Safe' for indicator addressing conditions of roads and footways for pedestrians and cyclists. Good coverage of different contexts with specific needs in terms of accessibility (such as town centres and residential neighbourhoods).* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in all key issues, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in all key issues, both through hard data and through sampling of user perception.* • *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts, mostly through sampling of user perception.*
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. Survey run on a continuous basis. Topic 'traffic' deals with presence of heavy traffic; an additional category cover the condition of roads and pavements; 'satisfaction with neighbourhood' part of survey covers walking to facilities and local transport.	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	
		Local Quality of Life Indicators: set of indicators set by the Audit Commission to monitor and compare the performance of Community Strategies. 45 indicators measure the quality of life in an area covering environmental, economic and social issues. Indicators depend on data already available from a variety of sources. Some indicators are linked to BVPIs. Some rely on hard, quantitative data, some on user satisfaction surveys. Indicators 42, 43 and 44 ('transport and access' theme) measure percentage of residents travelling to work by public transport, foot or bicycle (42), distances of journey to work (43), user perception of congestion (44).	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at LA-wide and national level for comparative purposes. Linked to the CPA process.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: measure 68 different dimensions of sustainable development (20 'framework' indicators + 48 for 4 priority areas). Results expressed in a traffic-lights system (green, amber, red and white), based on comparison with baseline data for 1990 and 1999 (medium-term and short-term change). Source of data varies; some data is quantitative, some based on site surveys, some on user satisfaction. Indicator 55 on mobility covers walking, cycling and public transport; indicator 57 refers to accessibility.	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at national level to show progress over time. Used in PSA1.	
		Local Environmental Quality Survey of England; wide-ranging and detailed survey of standards of environmental quality across England (sample of 54 Las with 230 sites each, divided into 12 types of land use). 32 indicators covering 10 aspects of environmental quality. Areas are assessed in a 4-point scale. Indicators cover the condition (maintenance) of paved areas and traffic flows, existence of obstruction, etc.	National coverage, data aggregated at LA and Region level. Yearly survey. Used as a basis for BVPI 199	
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories, inc. footway surfaces and obstructions, crossing points and desire lines, road layout and space allocation (pedestrian flows, conflicts between modes) and traffic.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Checklist covers most matters of accessibility, such as: ease of getting there (on foot, by car, by public transport), free flow of traffic and free movement of people, traffic flow/ congestion, bus lanes, cycle paths, parking, quality of road surfaces, coverage/ availability/ frequency of public transport, condition and width of pavements, pedestrian/ traffic segregation, crossings, subways and bridges, car park quality, ease of finding car parking space, ease of pedestrian flow.	Voluntary scheme, covering tow centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes a section on 'connecting movement', which includes public transport, connected spaces for pedestrians, cycling, barriers to movement.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with local area. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration. Questions cover traffic, availability of parking, problems associated with parking, ease to get to basic facilities.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	
		GreenSTAT: On-line consultation tool for assessing user satisfaction with parks and green spaces and (in a limited way) parks services. Questionnaire covers accessibility of parks.	Voluntary questionnaire, covering parks and green spaces. Data at individual park level, with limited comparability. No periodicity depends on user engagement.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Socially inclusive and fulfilling (welcoming and cohesive)	disabled access, play facilities, public toilets, benches and shelters, facilities for teenagers, user mix, sense of belonging, user interaction, community spirit, involvement, free, open and connected	BVPI 119 (e): user satisfaction indicator on public parks and open spaces (BVPI 119e), based on weighted responses to 600,000 national survey questionnaires. Indicators based on 5-point satisfaction scale measuring satisfaction with Council services. Specific questions in the survey include the importance of activities for teenagers and young children, community activities and race relations.	National coverage, data at LA level. Survey conducted every 3 years. Both used in CPA and PSA8	*Most dimensions of 'Socially Inclusive and Fulfilling' are covered in all contexts by a variety of methods, mostly involving user satisfaction-based indicators. Not all issues are covered at all levels: national indicators tend to focus mostly on race relations, community activities and involvement of young people, whereas indicators based in local checklists tend to have a wider coverage, looking at a broader range of issues of social inclusiveness and fulfilment. Problems of aggregation and comparability between indicators and levels.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in some key issues, mostly through national samples of user perception.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in most key issues, mostly through samples of user perception.*
		Citizenship Survey: Biennial household survey of perceptions of the community, based on a total sample of 15,000 questionnaires. Questionnaire module 'neighbourhood' covers how people feel about their neighbourhood, feelings of belonging to a neighbourhood and community spirit	Biennial survey, national coverage, data at Government Office regional level.	
		Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Awards given on ratings on a 10-point weighted scale for 8 criteria, covering the overall quality of parks and open spaces and their management regimes. Assessment includes field inspection and desk inspection (management plan). Under section 'welcoming place', item 'something fro everyone' looks at usage by all sectors of the community; section 'community involvement' looks at participation in the management of the park	Voluntary scheme, 3-year cycle, only for public parks and green spaces, national coverage , data at local level, No. of awards at local authority level used as part of PSA8	
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with local area. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration. Survey questions address opportunities and facilities for children and young people.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: measure 68 different dimensions of sustainable development (20 'framework' indicators + 48 for 4 priority areas). Results expressed in a traffic-lights system (green, amber, red and white), based on comparison with baseline data for 1990 and 1999 (medium-term and short-term change). Source of data varies; some data is quantitative, some based on site surveys, some on user satisfaction. Indicator 37 addresses active community participation, 60 addresses environmental equality.	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at national level to show progress over time. Used in PSA1.	• *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts through objective data and user perception.*
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes a section on 'people', covering the participants (1), stakeholders (2), collaboration (9), developing networks of people with common interests who can shape a place (33) and involving young people in environmental issues (34). The section about 'processes', covers new stakeholders (14) and action/continued involvement (15).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories. It addresses provision for all users reflected in dropped kerbs, tactile paving, no steps, etc. and the need to avoid obstructions (permanent or temporary).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Checklist covers the availability of disabled bays in car parks and condition of lifts as well as facilities for the disabled, disabled access and access ramps, tactile paving and lowered kerbs. Under 'leisure and tourism' it covers the availability of teenage entertainment.	Voluntary scheme, covering tow centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. Survey run on a continuous basis. The 'satisfaction with neighbourhood' part of the interview questionnaire includes questions on whether respondents feel they can influence decisions affecting their neighbourhood and whether people in their neighbourhood can be trusted.	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	
		Local Quality of Life Indicators: set of indicators set by the Audit Commission to monitor and compare the performance of Community Strategies. 45 indicators measure the quality of life in an area covering environmental, economic and social issues. Indicators depend on data already available from a variety of sources. Some indicators are linked to BVPIs. Some rely on hard, quantitative data, some on user satisfaction surveys. Under section 'community cohesion and involvement', indicator 2 deals with race relations and indicator 3 with the quality of community activities. 'Other indicators' (for which there is no national data sources) cover people's of racial harmony in their local area and perception of ability to influence decisions affecting the local area	National coverage, data collected at local level and aggregated at LA-wide and national level for comparative purposes. Linked to the CPA process.	
		GreenSTAT: On-line consultation tool for assessing user satisfaction with parks and green spaces and (in a limited way) parks services. Questionnaire covers play facilities, facilities for children.	Voluntary questionnaire, covering parks and green spaces. Data at individual park level, with limited comparability. No periodicity depends on user engagement.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Economically vital and viable (well used and thriving)	diversity of uses, retail variety, availability of key services (eg cash points), levels of occupancy/ animation, dereliction, events and activities	English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. Survey run on a continuous basis. Physical inspection looks at 'utilisation', which includes abandonment (vacant/derelict sites and buildings).	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	*Scant coverage of most issues under 'Economically Vital and Viable'. Established national indicators address this quality only indirectly. Methods that do address it more directly are essentially voluntary, local assessment exercises, with little comparability across areas and problems of aggregation of data. Relevant statistical data might be available at LA level, but currently it is not used to assess the vitality and viability of local areas.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring national standards in only a few key issues.* • *Methods available for setting and measuring LA-wide standards in only a few key issues, although some aggregation of local data at that level might be possible. Other sources of LA-wide data might exist which are not currently incorporated into existing indicators.*
		Survey of English Housing: factual and user satisfaction survey of households and their environment, sample of 20,000 households. User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with local area. Reponses based on a grading system and perception of improvement/deterioration. Diversity of uses is covered in the survey by questions addressing accessibility to corner shop, supermarket, post office, doctor and hospital.	National coverage, data aggregated at national level. User satisfaction on issues of traffic, noise, vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs used in PSA8	
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes gap sites (49), activities/ uses facing the street (50), living over shops to encourage evening activity (56), unused open space (60), street life (65), events, markets and festivals (78) and mixed uses (81).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Checklist covers general atmosphere/ ambience under 'first impressions of town centre'; good overall retail variety, balance between multiples and independent retailers, range of specialist shops, post office, financial services, market, ancillary services, free from empty units under 'shopping and services'; pubs and cafes, choice of restaurants, street entertainment, museums, theatres, cinemas, concert halls, leisure/ sports centres, children's playgrounds under 'leisure and tourism' and events under 'action and activities'.	Voluntary scheme, covering town centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	• *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all relevant contexts through objective data and user perception, but issues of comparability across areas might exist.*

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
Physically attractive (visually pleasing)	architectural quality, heritage, building maintenance, public art, coordinated signage/ street furniture, amenity lighting, paving design, water features, seasonal decorations	Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Awards given on ratings on a 10-point weighted scale for 8 criteria, covering the overall quality of parks and open spaces and their management regimes. Assessment includes field inspection and desk inspection (management plan). Under section 'welcoming place' the design should be attractive to the eye and make adequate use of art and of furniture.	Voluntary scheme, 3-year cycle, only for public parks and green spaces, national coverage , data at local level, No. of awards at local authority level used as part of PSA8	*Most dimensions of 'Physically Attractiveness' are covered, albeit in part, in all contexts and by a variety of methods using either physical inspection or user satisfaction-based indicators. There is some overlap with indicators related to 'Clean and Tidy' on maintenance issues, and with 'Green' on landscaping issues. Dominance of local assessment-type methods and user-satisfaction-based indicators suggest problems with aggregation of data and comparability across areas.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring broadly-defined national standards in some key issues, through national samples of user perception.* • *Data/methods available for setting and measuring broadly-defined LA-wide standards in most key issues, mostly through samples of user perception.* • *Data and methods available for setting and measuring local standards in all key issues in all contexts through inspection data and user perception.*
		English Housing Condition Survey: comprehensive, dwelling-based survey of the condition of a sample of 12,000 properties and their immediate environment. Made-up of four parts: physical inspection, interviews with households, landlord survey and market value survey. Results graded according to 5-point system. Survey run on a continuous basis. Under 'visual quality of the area', survey covers some of the matters related to 'attractive'. Specific questions address presence of scruffy gardens and landscaping.	National coverage of housing areas and their environment, data at local level, aggregated at national level. Overall indicator of environmental quality used in PSA8.	
		Local Environmental Quality Survey of England; wide-ranging and detailed survey of standards of environmental quality across England (sample of 54 Las with 230 sites each, divided into 12 types of land use). 32 indicators covering 10 aspects of environmental quality. Areas are assessed in a 4-point scale. 'Street furniture' and 'landscaping' examine the design, maintenance and use of public spaces and include the visual appearance of adjoining buildings and boundary structures. Under 'highway infrastructure' it covers the physical condition of paved areas.	National coverage, data aggregated at LA and Region level. Yearly survey. Used as a basis for BVPI 199	
		Placecheck: participatory method for assessing qualities of places, identifying areas for improvement and building partnerships for delivery. Based on 3-part checklist of 100 questions. It does not define or measure standards, but it identifies what is good and what needs improving. Checklist includes 'connecting places' (planting, local style, public art) and 'places' (maintenance).	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	

Table 4: Mapping methods and indicators to the PLQs (continued)

PLQs	Issues	Key existing methods and indicators	Coverage, level of aggregation, periodicity	Compatibility between existing indicators and PLQs
		Community Street Audit: participatory method for evaluating the quality of public spaces from the pedestrian point of view and identifying areas for improvement. Walk-about audits based on 8 categories. Under 'aesthetics', it includes 'beauty and interest', 'local distinctiveness', 'coordinated street furniture' and 'location of benches'.	Voluntary scheme, local coverage, data aggregated at local (street) level, not suitable for comparison, no periodicity.	
		Town Centre Healthcheck: method for measuring the performance and improvement of town centres. Checklist of 12 headings assessed by a combination of hard and soft (perception-based) data on a 5-point based scale. Under 'first impressions of town centre' the checklist looks at the condition of street furniture. Under 'streets', the checklist covers general ambience/ appearance, quality of street furniture and landscaping.	Voluntary scheme, covering tow centre contexts. Data collected at local level for local usage. Overall scores can be used for comparison between town centres. No periodicity	
		GreenSTAT: On-line consultation tool for assessing user satisfaction with parks and green spaces and (in a limited way) parks services. Questionnaire covers attractiveness of parks.	Voluntary questionnaire, covering parks and green spaces. Data at individual park level, with limited comparability. No periodicity depends on user engagement.	

Note: Since conducting this analysis the English House Conditions Survey and Survey of English Housing have combined

3.16 With the proviso that the mapping covers only a selected set of methodologies, the analysis suggests that there is an unequal match between the most widely used methods and indicators and the nine PLQs. Not surprisingly, the dimensions of local environmental quality that more directly fit into the 'cleaner/greener' and 'safer' dimensions of the proposed framework are more fully covered than those that deal with 'stronger' communities. Partly this is because the national emphasis so far has been more on the former set of concerns than the latter, but also because the latter concerns are often less tangible and therefore less easy to measure than the former.

3.17 To summarise:

- Existing approaches suffer from problems of data, context and scale incompatibility and over-lapping remits
- Most dimensions of the nine PLQs are adequately covered by existing nationally collected and collated methods/indicators, with the exception of urban (as opposed to park) greenness, some aspects of social inclusion and fulfilment, some aspects of physical attractiveness, and most aspects of economic vitality and viability
- At the local authority-wide level, coverage is again comprehensive, with the exception of some aspects of social inclusion and fulfilment, some aspects of physical attractiveness, and most aspects of economic vitality and viability
- At this level, methods for assessing different quality dimensions are often based on sampling techniques with varying size and significance
- At the sub-authority level, methods are available for analysis of all PLQ elements
- At this level, approaches are based on professional assessment and/or user satisfaction, but are largely voluntary and are therefore used infrequently. They are well suited to look at quality variations over time, but with particular problems of comparability across areas.

3.18 For issues relating to economic vitality and viability, new or revised measurement approaches may be required. In other areas, some aspects (according to attendees at the professionals workshops) are more appropriately assessed at a sub-authority level, and so the absence of data at higher levels is unsurprising.

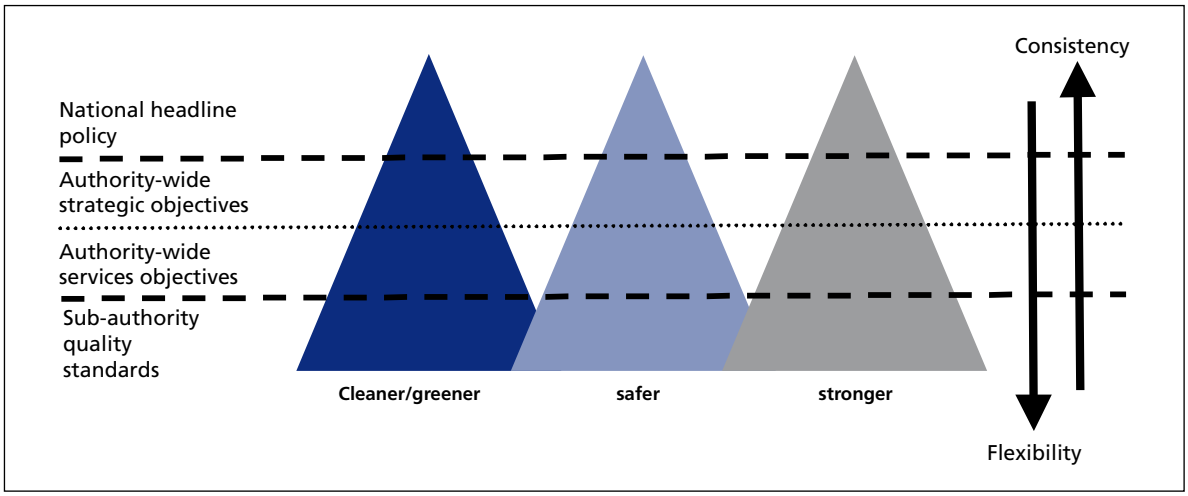
Relating qualities across scales and contexts – a new toolkit

3.19 The challenge was to devise a framework through which the existing approaches can be related, and (if necessary and desirable) new approaches devised in order to fully measure the local environmental quality – or more accurately the local community quality – agenda. In doing so it was necessary to consider how questions of context relate to this as well as questions of scale, encompassing which issues are measured at which level (national, authority-wide, sub-authority).

3.20 To succeed, different local services need to feed into the achievement of strategic objectives in a seamless and consistent manner, whilst offering increased flexibility as priorities move from national to authority-wide, to sub-authority levels. For example, a national policy might be to reduce child pedestrian road casualties, an authority might decide to deliver this (and other objectives) by increasing the percentage of 20 mph zones in their administrative area, a resulting service priority could be the introduction of traffic calming measures in a proportion of existing residential neighbourhoods each year, whilst success at the neighbourhood level could be measured through the percentage increase in children walking to school.

3.21 Ideally, the basis of such an approach might be a cascade of PLQ priorities, with national headline policy setting the holistic agenda. This agenda would be interpreted at the local level by strategic objectives set at the authority-wide scale cutting across service areas, and, if different, by authority-wide service objectives establishing how each strategic objective can be met at the service delivery level.

Fig. 3: Cascade of Positive Local Environmental Priorities

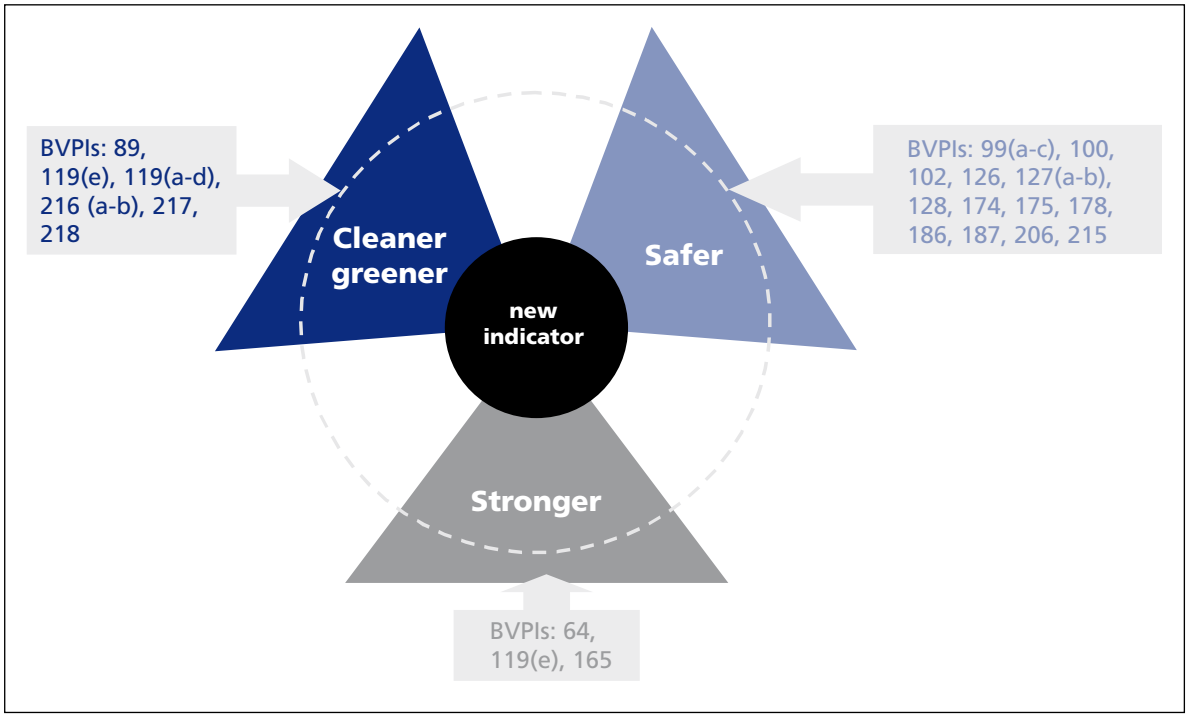


3.22 In turn, these would cascade down to the range of sub-authority (neighbourhood or community) contexts, with service standards appropriately adjusted to be more or less challenging in different contexts, depending on area characteristics and local priorities. Pragmatically, this idea of a cascade of approaches should build on approaches and tools already in place. A three-part tool-kit is envisaged at national, local authority, and sub-authority – community – scales, to do just that.

i) National level – rationalising the web of BVPIs

3.23 The tool kit should begin with the national indicators, and with a rationalisation of the web of existing BVPIs that currently relate to this agenda. This might result in three separate, but linked, indicators dealing respectively with the 'cleaner/ greener', 'safer', and 'stronger' dimensions of the agenda. Ideally, however, just one multi-dimensional national indicator would be adopted dealing with the full 'local environmental quality' remit. Such an approach would help to overcome the tendency to divide service responsibilities without regard to the whole, as the crosscutting challenges would be more explicit.

Fig. 4: Rationalising the BVPIs – 23 to 1



3.24 As there is great resistance amongst frontline professionals to new changes imposed from the national level, the new indicator(s) should reflect existing national priorities and most of the measurement approaches already in use. Nevertheless, by subtly shifting this agenda (or at least the reporting of it) towards the 'Cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' remit discussed above, the new holistic view of local environmental/ community quality will slowly infuse local practice.

Table 5: The web of BVPIs

PLQs	Current BVPIs	Possible Additional National Indicators	
Clean and tidy (well cared for)	BVPI 89 and BVPI 119 (e): user satisfaction indicator on cleanliness of public land (BVPI 89) and parks and open spaces (BVPI 119 (e)). BVPI 199: measures cleanliness of street and local environment: 199a: litter and detritus, 199b: graffiti, 199c: fly-posting, 199d: fly-tipping. BVPI 218: measures identification and removal of abandoned vehicles.	English Housing Condition Survey: 'Upkeep' part of the survey cover most of the 'clean and tidy issues'. Survey of English Housing: User satisfaction with issues of vandalism, graffiti, litter and rubbish, dogs. Local Environmental Quality Survey of England: 32 indicators covering 10 aspects of environmental quality (inc. cleansing and cleansing-related). Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Waste Data Flow: comprehensive data on waste management, including quantitative data on fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles removal.	Cleaner/greener
Green (appropriately green and natural)	BVPI 119 (e): user satisfaction indicator on parks and open spaces.	Survey of English Housing: survey of aspects needing improvement explicitly includes local amenities, parks and leisure facilities. Green Flag Awards: benchmark for excellence for parks and green spaces. Natural Green Spaces Standards: minimum standards for access to natural green spaces in urban areas, based on maximum distances between dwellings and natural green spaces.	
Unpolluted (healthy and comfortable)	BVPI 216a and 216b: indicator for identification of and action upon contaminated land. BVPI 217: measures efficiency of pollution control of existing installations.	Air Quality Strategy (Air Pollution Standards): Measures air quality through the presence of particular polluters in the atmosphere. English Housing Condition Survey: Inspection measures air, soil and water pollution, interviews include questions on air pollution. Survey of English Housing: User satisfaction survey measures satisfaction with noise. Local Quality of Life Indicators: Air and water pollution assessed by indicators 24 (air pollutants), 25 and 28 (river quality). Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: Indicators 2, 7 and 61 refer to air quality (C02 emissions, road transport emissions, air quality and health respectively); indicator 30 refers to river quality.	

Table 5: The web of BVPIs (continued)

PLQs	Current BVPIs	Possible Additional National Indicators	
Secure (crime and fear free)	Best Value User Satisfaction Survey: Section 1 on satisfaction with local area includes questions on what most needs improving, with specific mention to crime and anti-social behaviour, and how much these are a problem for the local area. BVPI 126: measures domestic burglaries. BVPI 127a and 127b: measure incidence of violent crime and robbery respectively. BVPI 128: measures vehicle crime. BVPI 174 and BVPI 175: measure racial incidents. BVPI 206: measure deliberate fire in vehicles	British Crime Survey: Relevant blocks in survey questionnaire include 'Household grid' (feeling safe at home and walking in local area); 'night-time economy' (feeling safe in town centre, high street and public transport in the evening); 'anti-social behaviour' (noisy neighbours, teenagers, vandalism and graffiti, drug dealing and drunkenness in public spaces); 'crime & disorder on public transport'; 'crime and disorder on town centres and high streets'. Green Flag Awards: Presence of anti-social behaviour, lighting and surveillance, perception of safety are addressed in the 'healthy, safe and secure' module. English Housing Condition Survey: 'Satisfaction with neighbourhood' part of the household interviews addresses presence of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Perception of safety covers the home and surrounding area at different times of the day. Survey of English Housing: Under 'safe and secure' there are questions about the incidence of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Local Quality of Life Indicators: Crime and perception of crime are assessed by indicators under the 'community safety' theme: percentage of residents who safe outside, during the day and after dark (5), incidence of burglaries, thefts and other offences (6), percentage of residents who think that vandalism and damage to property and vehicles is a problem (7). Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: Indicators 38 refers to incidence of crime, 39 to fear of crime.	Safer
Safe (a protective environment)	BVPI 99 (a, b, c): measures road safety. 99a covers serious road accident casualties; 99b covers children casualties of serious road accidents; 99c covers slight injuries in road accidents. BVPI 215: measures the percentage of street lights that are operational.	Green Flag Awards: Child safety, safety of the elderly and lighting are addressed in the 'healthy, safe and secure' module. Survey of English Housing: Under 'attitudes towards local services' there are questions about street lighting. English Housing Condition Survey: Topic 'upkeep' deals with nuisance from street parking. An additional category covers visibility reduction for pedestrians from street parking. Local Quality of Life Indicators: Indicator 8 measures accidents with pedestrians and cyclists. Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: Indicator 58 refers to road accidents in general and involving children. Local Environmental Quality Survey of England: Indicators cover the condition (maintenance) of street furniture, including street lighting.	

Table 5: The web of BVPIs (continued)

PLQs	Current BVPIs	Possible Additional National Indicators	
Accessible (easy to get to and move around)	BVPI 100: assesses road closures. BVPI 102: assesses use of local bus services. BVPI 178, 186 and 187: measure ease of use (BVPI 178) and condition (BVPI 186 and 187) of footways. BVPI 223 and 224: assess the condition of principal (223) and non-principal (224) roads.	English Housing Condition Survey: Topic 'traffic' deals with presence of heavy traffic; an additional category cover the condition of roads and pavements; 'satisfaction with neighbourhood' part of survey covers walking to facilities and local transport. Local Quality of Life Indicators: Indicators 42, 43 and 44 ('transport and access' theme) measure percentage of residents travelling to work by public transport, foot or bicycle (42), journey to work distances (43), user perception of congestion (44) Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: Indicator 55 on mobility covers walking, cycling and public transport; indicator 57 refers to accessibility. Local Environmental Quality Survey of England: Indicators cover the condition (maintenance) of paved areas and traffic flows, existence of obstruction, etc. Survey of English Housing: Questions cover traffic, availability of and problems associated with parking, ease to get to basic facilities.	Safer
Socially inclusive and fulfilling (welcoming and cohesive)	BVPI 119 (e): user satisfaction indicator on public parks and open spaces (BVPI 119e). Specific questions in the survey include the importance of activities for teenagers and young children, community activities and race relations. BVPI 165: measures number of pedestrian crossings for the disabled.	Citizenship Survey: Questionnaire module 'neighbourhood' covers how people feel about their neighbourhood, feelings of belonging to a neighbourhood and community spirit. Green Flag Awards: Under section 'welcoming place', item 'something fro everyone' looks at usage by all sectors of the community; section 'community involvement' looks at participation in the management of the park. Survey of English Housing: Survey questions address opportunities and facilities for children and young people. Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators: Indicator 37 addresses active community participation, indicator 60 addresses environmental equality. English Housing Condition Survey: The 'satisfaction with neighbourhood' part of the survey asks whether respondents feel they can influence decisions affecting their neighbourhood and whether people in their neighbourhood can be trusted. Local Quality of Life Indicators: Under section 'community cohesion and involvement', indicator 2 deals with race relations and indicator 3 with the quality of community activities. 'Other indicators' (for which there is no national data sources) cover people's of racial harmony in their local area and perception of ability to influence decisions affecting the local area.	Stronger

Table 5: The web of BVPIs (continued)

PLQs	Current BVPIs	Possible Additional National Indicators	
Economically vital and viable (well used and thriving)	BVPI 64: measures amount of vacant non LA dwellings returned to occupation or demolished.	English Housing Condition Survey: Physical inspection looks at 'utilisation', which includes abandonment (vacant/derelict sites and buildings). Survey of English Housing: Diversity of uses is covered in the survey by questions addressing accessibility to corner shop, supermarket, post office, doctor and hospital. Footfall indicators for retail centres produced by private consultancy firms.[7]	Stronger
Physically attractive (visually pleasing)		Green Flag Awards: Under 'welcoming place', designs should be attractive, making adequate use of art and furniture. English Housing Condition Survey: Under 'visual quality of the area', survey covers some of the matters related to 'attractive'. Specific questions address presence of scruffy gardens and landscaping. Local Environmental Quality Survey of England: 'Street furniture' and 'landscaping' examine the design, maintenance and use of public spaces and include the visual appearance of adjoining buildings and boundary structures. Under 'highway infrastructure' it covers the physical condition of paved areas.	Stronger

[8] As an example, consultants Footfall produce a monthly retail footfall index (RFI), based on 150 million shopping visits to 200 retail centres and over 12,000 retail outlets across the UK. Results are shown at national and regional scale, but can be tailored to target smaller geographical areas.

3.25 Analysis of the existing BVPIs and other nationally available local community quality data demonstrated the surfeit of data in some areas, and the comparative absence of data in others. The opportunity provided by rationalising the BVPIs might also be taken to better relate the existing range of data sources, to dispense with overlapping approaches, and to fill gaps where they exist, particularly around the 'stronger' dimension.

3.26 In the process it may be that some of the burden of data collection can be removed from local authorities, if, for example, data is collected independently by third parties such as ENCAMS. Currently this is done for some of the data used in monitoring the achievement of the Government's own PSA8 target, and this could be extended to other aspects of the agenda.

3.27 At this level the extent and range of data collected would largely be determined by national government, in consultation with their local government partners. Such an indicator could also include a provision that parts ii and iii (below) are adequately undertaken at the local level.

ii) Local authority-wide – a model local area agreement (or LAA theme)

3.28 As the second element of the toolkit, a model Local Area Agreement (or model LAA theme), could be devised to define and agree key authority-wide strategic objectives and authority-wide service priorities for the local authority as a whole. This model agreement or theme would not attempt to define the standards, but would instead establish the dimensions of what should be measured and how, cascading the 'Cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda down from the national to the authority-wide level. In devising such an agreement it would be important to consider and reflect existing work in the area that attempts to establish a performance management framework.[9]

3.29 The precise standards would be a matter for negotiation between national and local partners to the agreement (national partners most likely represented through the Regional Government Offices). They might include achieving certain nationally defined targets, as established in the BVPIs or elsewhere (eg in PSA8), but would also include a range of more detailed local aspirations and targets, the achievement of which would be measured at the next level in the hierarchy – the sub-authority or community level (see below). This would represent a major advance on existing LAAs that cover the 'cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' field, where targets tend to be defined solely by national indicators, and therefore measure little more than is already being measured through the BVPIs. The range of mandatory and optional targets laid out in the LAA Outcomes Framework issued in March 2006 demonstrate the limitations of the existing approach.[10]

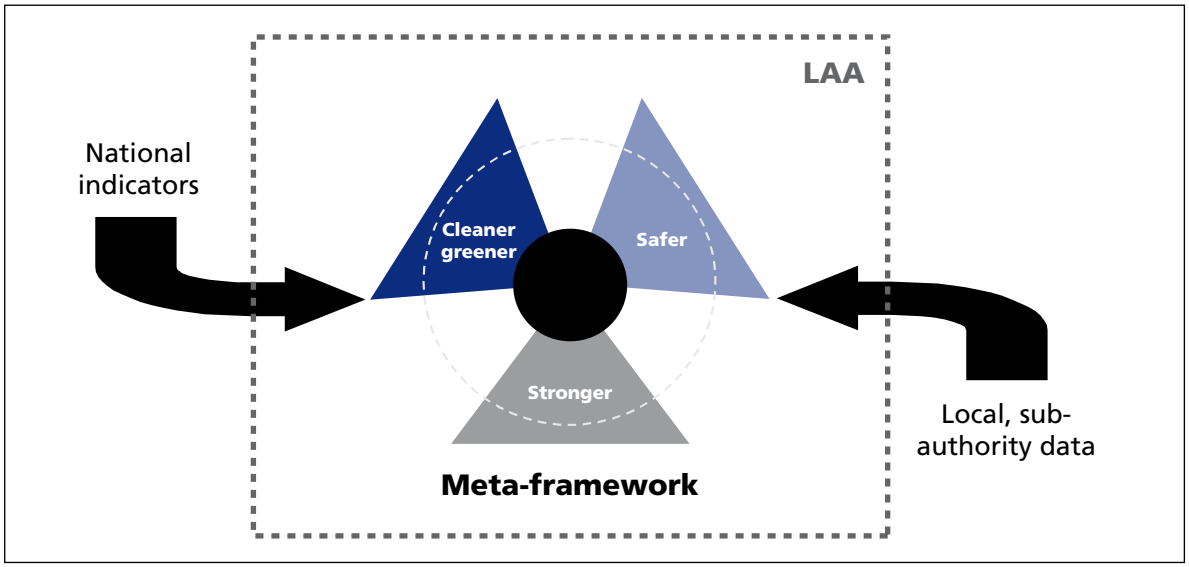
[9] Examples include CABE's (2007) *Towards an Excellent Service; A Performance Framework for Parks and Open Spaces*, http:www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/5624240

[10] See Annex A of ODPM (2006) *Local Area Agreement, Guidance for Round 3 and Refresh of Rounds 1 and 2*, London, ODPM

3.30 What is required is a model that moves aspirations beyond what can be measured nationally, to what is achievable (and measurable) locally. The approach would:

- Create the vehicle through which these forms of data can be brought together and related through adoption of the 'cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' meta-framework across the scales
- Provide the opportunity to encourage the measurement of those parts of the liveability agenda that cannot be measured nationally, and which, if not addressed locally, will fall through the gaps
- Offer a much more sensitive management tool for those issues that are currently well measured at the national level, for example litter and detritus, but which vary dramatically at the local level because of local contextual factors.

Fig. 5: Relating data across scales



3.31 Such an LAA could be one of the 'next generation' of LAAs advocated by the Local Government Association[11] as a means to encourage cooperation across service areas and amongst all parties to the LAA, particularly the local authority. As such it would constitute a contract between the service delivery partners and the local community. This broad approach is strongly supported in the 2006 Local Government White Paper[12] that continues the emphasis on providing local government with greater freedom and flexibility to deliver local services whilst also emphasising the importance of mechanisms for local government to be held accountable by their local communities.

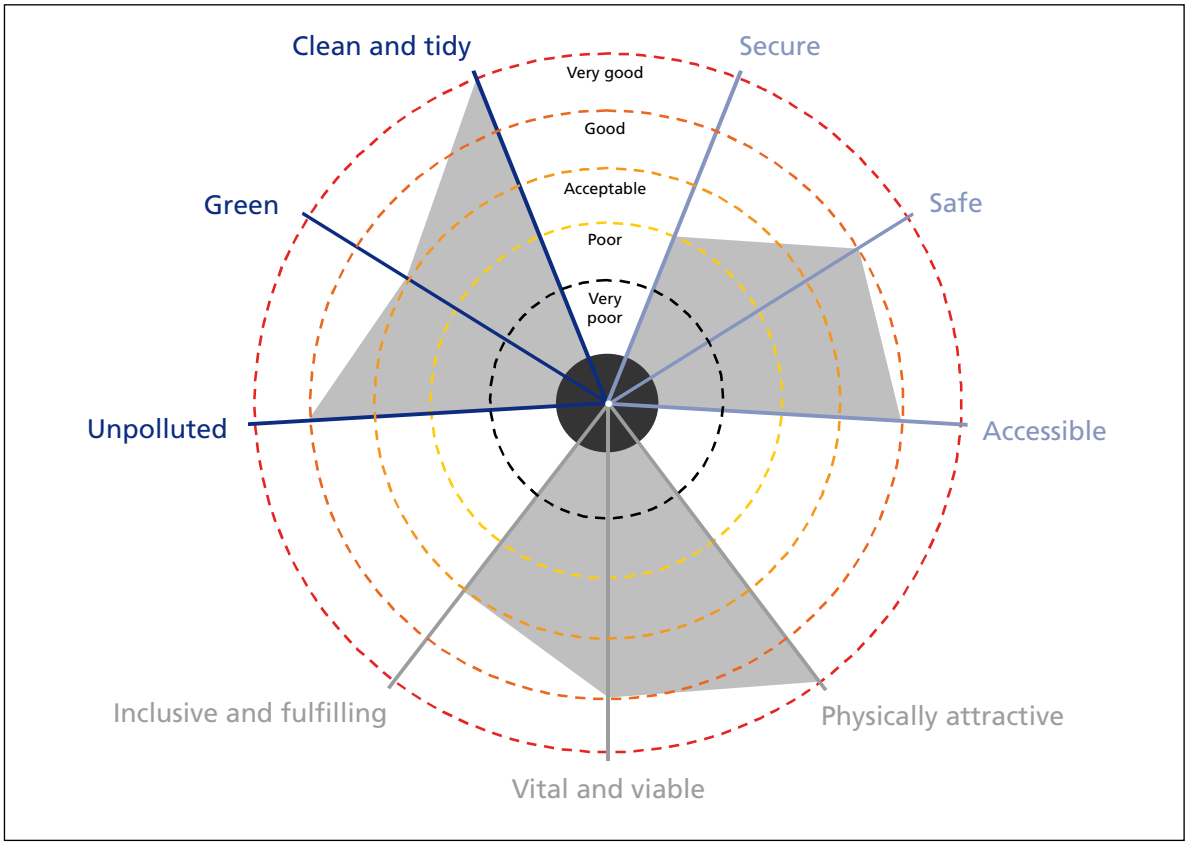
iii) Community context – a community quality profile

3.32 As the third element of the toolkit, a Community Quality Profile (CQP) is envisaged at the sub-authority – community (or neighbourhood) – scale, encompassing all forms of local environment and public space within that realm.

[11] Local Government Association (2006) *Closer to People and Places, A New Vision for Local Government*' London, LGA

[12] See Chapter 5 of Department of Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities, The Local Government White Paper*, London, Communities and Local Government

Fig. 6: A possible CQP framework



3.33 Modelled on the Design Quality Indicator (DQI) approach to measuring design quality developed by the Construction Industry Council, and on other related methodologies[13], the technique is an example of the most common approach used to compare unvalued costs and benefits, namely, weighting and scoring, or multi-criteria analysis (MCA). The basic MCA approach involves assigning weights to criteria, and scoring options in terms of how well they perform against those weighted criteria.

3.34 DQIs, for example, are used to get stakeholders, both professional and amateur, around a table to talk about the design quality of the built environment – both before and after project completion. There are three main headings for valuing building design: Functionality (usefulness); Build quality (building fabric) and Impact (sense of place), and within these are ten further headings. Initial weightings of 1-3 are set for a wide range of different indicators within the ten headings before designs are rated using a Likert scale (agree strongly through to disagree strongly). These marks are then weighted using the initial weighting to give an overall DQI – for each individual and collectively. Individuals can see where they are getting or not getting what they want and the co-ordinator of the DQI exercise can assess what the group as a whole needs.

[13] The basic approach is well tried and tested in tools such as Arup's SpeAR housing sustainability measurement tool, or the Systemic Sustainability Analysis (SSA) protocol developed by Bell & Morse (1998) to bring together different types of sustainability indicator (see Appendix 1. of Carmona M & Sieh L (2004) *Measuring Quality in Planning, Managing the Performance Process*, London, Spon Press for further details). More recently the VALID research project at Loughborough University has adopted a similar approach (see VALID (2005) Valid Practice Manual, Loughborough University, Loughborough.

Table 6: Characteristics of DQIs

Subject	Measurement	Analysis	Use	Visualisation
Construction projects, analysed under three main headings: Functionality; Build quality; Impact. Under each headings there are two further levels. Focuses mainly on building quality, less on the impact of a building on its locality (although some questions address these aspects).	Building is rated according to the dimensions set out in the questionnaire. The scale is 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) and 7 N/A or don't know. range of data, some already collected, analysed and aggregated (such as heating data), others generated simply from direct reflection on building characteristics (such as extent to which it 'raises your spirits').	Data collection and 'analysis' is mostly simultaneous, stakeholder concerns are inbuilt and reflected in the mechanism through weighting. It is possible to arrive at an overall DQI score which is the sum of the relative weights of each DQI section multiplied by the relative weight of that section.	It can be used by a wide variety of people from brief setting through to post-completion evaluation. Allows for a transparent discussion. Comparisons can be made concerning the relative importance of each dimension. Any comparison between buildings or over time will need the same stakeholders.	Represented in a disaggregated 'spider diagram' that shows the performance of the sections and subsections. A more aggregated doughnut diagram can display the score of each section of impact, function, building quality.

3.35 The benefits of such an approach include:

- The ability to value intangible and hard to measure concerns
- Ease of use, by professional and non-professional audiences
- Clear visual representation of outcomes allowing interpretation and comparability
- Opportunity to build in weightings to reflect different project briefs and aspirations
- Opportunity to inform decision-making, and to evaluate the impact of decisions already taken
- Decisions based on a comprehensive picture of quality and value
- Ability to drive improvement if used over time, for example by analysing areas on an annual or bi-annual cycle
- Suitability for use online.

3.36 Adopting such an approach to measure local environmental/community quality would provide both a measurement tool for local analysis of the PLQs, but also a tool through which professional service providers could engage local communities to help set appropriately challenging local standards. Some PLQs could be measured (in whole or part) through hard quantitative data whilst others would rely on qualitative methodologies to measure progress, for example community consultation. This is a feature of the DQI, where some aspects can be primarily measured through hard data, such as energy efficiency, whilst others rely on qualitative inputs; in essence the judgements of those involved in scoring the DQI. Like the DQI, the CQP would be primarily a technical management tool, and therefore its use would most likely be instigated and coordinated by trained professionals. However, actual scoring could involve a wide range of actors, including the local community.

3.37 By establishing the approach around the 'Cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda, the CQP would allow a cascading of outcomes up to the service and authority-wide levels, and from there, to the national level. As the approach would require greater local interpretation of the agenda as users moved back down the scale, from national to authority-wide to sub-authority levels, it would also reflect the principles inherent in double devolution, and the emerging Lyons agenda[14]. It would provide a tool to agree locally appropriate standards, and to monitor whether those standards are being met.

3.38 Technically the CQP would amount to a single measure or indicator of local environmental/community quality. This is possible as MCA operates by scoring each aspect in order to establish an overall quality profile.[15] These scores could be aggregated to give an overall score for each of the three dimensions of the CQP, or for each CQP area – or community – evaluated. In turn, scores could be added and divided by the overall number of CQPs undertaken in a local authority to give a single aggregated CQP, or even a simple numerical score, for each local authority.[16]

3.39 The question is, would this be desirable? Experience from the DQI has shown that it is not necessarily the overall score that is important, but instead the scores for the constituent elements and the overall quality profile. By understanding these, it will be possible to focus on areas of weakness that may otherwise be obscured if scores are summated. Moreover, because the proposed CQP reflects the double devolution principle that local areas should be subject to their own locally agreed standards, it may not be appropriate to compare scores, unless comparing like with like.

[14] Lyons M (2006) *National Prosperity, Local Choice and Civic Engagement, A New Partnership Between Central and Local Government for the 21st Century*, London, Lyons Inquiry into Local Government

[15] DQI operates on a 1-7 scoring system. It is suggested that this be extended in the CQP to a 1-15 system (1-3 very poor, 4-6 poor, 7-9 acceptable, 9-12 good, 13-15 very good). This would provide a finer grade of analysis with greater scope to encourage improvement. Guidance, including pictorial examples, could be provided to illustrate typical scores for each element. This approach has been used with some success in Groningen in the Netherlands, where the 'Beheer Openbare Ruimte Groningen' (BORG) system of management information for green spaces links management options for green spaces directly to criteria and to visualised target scenarios (for more information see Carmona M, C De Magalhães, R Blum and J Hopkins (2004) *Is the Grass Greener … ? Learning from International Innovations in Urban Green Space Management*, London, CABE Space

[16] In the opposite direction scores could be disaggregated and sorted by categories of user, so for example, perceptions could be sorted by stakeholder group, or by categories of local resident, for example by age, gender, income, etc.

3.40 Aggregation at the community (individual CQP) level is therefore not recommended. However, because the final diagram for each CQP exercise would be the modified 'spider' diagram represented in Figure 6, all the qualities (or lack of them) for any particular place would be visible. As a minimum, therefore, the representation will be a valuable tool to compare similar areas, thereby establishing a powerful improvement tool. This could be used, for example, as a means for comparable authorities to establish peer review groups in order to benchmark their CQP results, and to discuss the processes that gave rise to them.

3.41 By contrast, at the authority-wide scale, aggregation of CQP data into one authority-wide CQP is recommended as it would have two clear advantages:

- Allowing authorities to establish an overview of these issues across the administrative area; in turn helping to inform strategic policy and resourcing decisions

- More easily allowing improvement to be tracked.

3.42 Aggregation at this scale should occur at the level of the nine PLQs, and not beyond that to the three dimensions or to establish a singe authority-wide CQP score. This proviso would ensure that the holistic nature of the 'cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda remains intact at all levels of analysis, and would prevent poor scores in one area being obscured by better scores elsewhere. The objective must remain to seek improvement across all dimensions. For this reason also, and to retain the ability to compare between community and local authority areas, the tool would not allow users to drop one or more of the PLQs or to substitute them with others.

3.43 To enhance the sensitivity to context, like the DQI, it should also be possible (within limits) to give weightings[17] to the different PLQs in order to establish which are the most important concerns in different areas. This could be done in consultation with local communities and other stakeholders. Different approaches to weighting are possible, providing different sensitivities to local context and local user input.

3.44 Weighting within nationally or regionally defined bands would seem to offer the greatest promise to deliver a contextually sensitive tool that still allows explicit comparison (with alike areas) and, possibly, some degree of additional local weighting (see Table 7). An appropriate approach to weighting, as well as the development and refinement of the tool generally, could be achieved during field trials. Trials would also provide an opportunity to test whether existing tools that focus on the very local – site specific – level might be also be used as feeds into the CQP model. Such tools include Placecheck, developed by the Urban Design Alliance, Transport for London's Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS), or, most promisingly, CABE's Spaceshaper[18] tool that adapts the DQI technique to focus analysis on individual urban spaces –squares, parks or streets.

[17] The DQI weightings are controlled by a fixed weighting algorithm, allowing users to weight the importance of the different dimensions and the overall categories relative to each other, but only within fixed limits. The weightings are reflected in the final spider diagrams, all generated through the DQI software.

[18] Previously known as Place Consultation Tool, the Spaceshaper uses ten criteria to focus attention on the design of particular spaces, and is particularly suited to analyse the qualities of parks, involving different user groups in the process. Data from reviewers can be aggregated using specially designed software and, like DQI and the proposed CQP, is presented in the form of a spider diagram.

Table 7: Possible approaches to weighting for context

Approach to weighting	Responsiveness to context	Comparability between contexts	Local control/input
No weighting	No regard for local contextual factors	Would allow total comparison between all areas regardless of context	No reflection of local priorities/aspirations
Locally determined weighting within defined limits	Allows some responsiveness to local context whilst maintaining a balance between the different CQP dimensions	Allows a degree of comparison, although some limited variation in CQP readings due to weighting	Allows local priorities to be established and reflected within limits, say 20% on each CQP dimension
Locally determined weighting without limits	Maximum responsiveness to local contextual factors	No comparability between areas as each exercise reflects different weighting assumptions	Total local control over the importance of different dimensions relative to each other
Weighting within nationally or regionally determined contextual bands	Responsive to set context types – eg socio-economic, density, urban/suburban/rural, etc.	Would allow total comparability within bands, although not between bands	Might still offer some scope for additional local weighting, but limited if good comparability is to be maintained

3.45 Overall, the CQP offers the potential for comparison across scales of measurement (community, to authority-wide, and from there up to national scales), between different contexts, and over time. It can do this whilst preserving the notion that local contexts are different and therefore that different standards will be appropriate depending on local qualities and priorities.[19]

Relating to different service areas

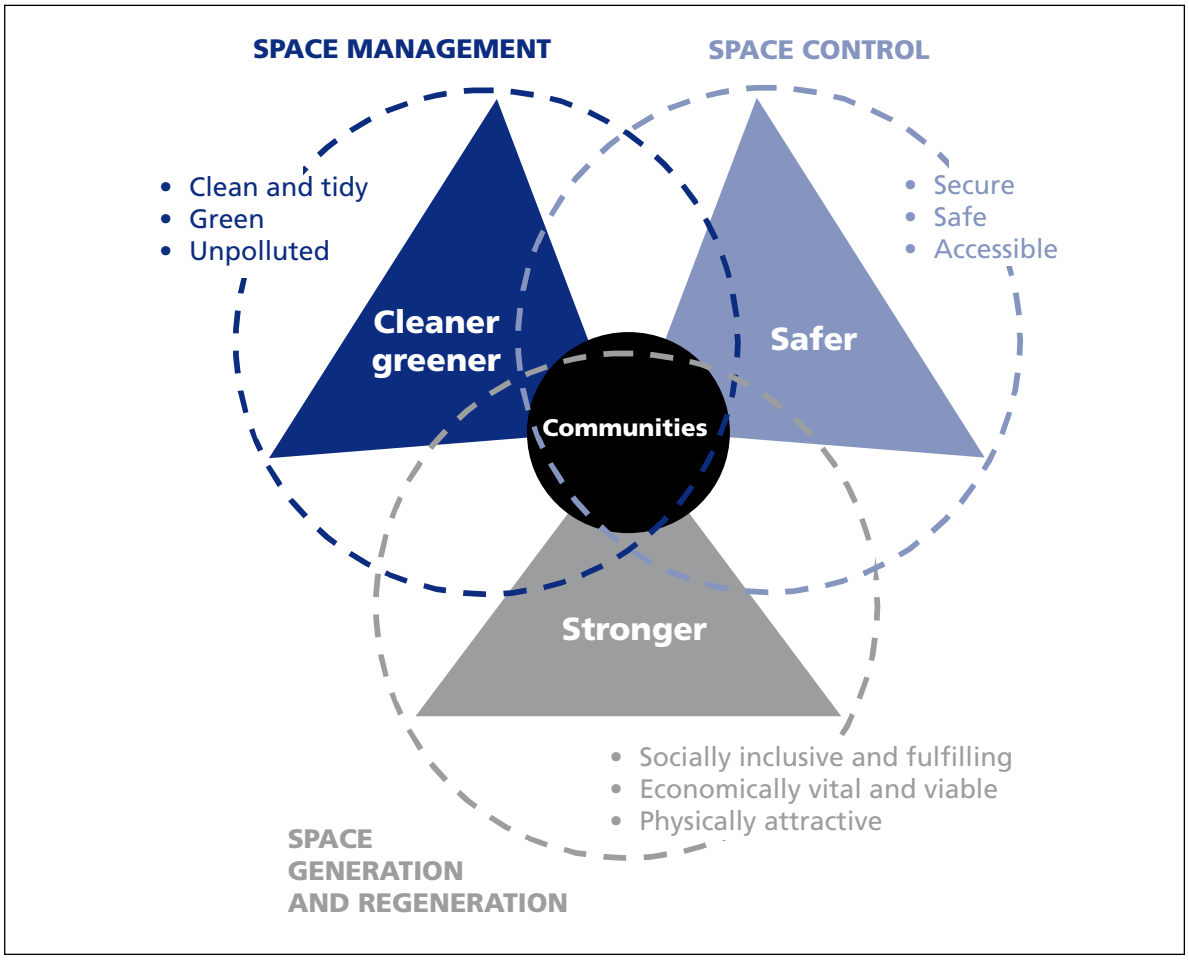
3.46 The ability of such an approach to more fully involve communities in making judgements about the qualities of their local environment should not to be underestimated, particularly if this gives communities (or their representatives) a more transparent and explicit basis upon which to subsequently make the difficult decisions concerning service provision and priorities.[20] This reflects the final issue listed at the start of this section of the report concerning the policy relevance of the developed approach, and the relationships to particular service areas.

[19] As such, a system of national independent checking for the accuracy of CQP scores would be inappropriate and unnecessary, although some small national advisory service may be valuable to assist CQP users, perhaps residing in CABE or the Audit Commission. Change over time, and the fact that the CQPs are being conducted and used locally to inform service provision will be far more important than relative scores or indeed methodological accuracy.

[20] A danger may be a tendency for such an approach to be adopted and used by already relatively engaged communities, and less so in deprived areas. However, the potential simplicity of the CQP method and the immediacy of the results may encourage a broader range of users, particularly if local councillors can be encouraged to lead the analysis in their own constituencies. The comparative nature of the CQP will also help to ensure that more affluent communities expectations are not unduly raised (leading to a further diversion of resources to those areas), because the relative advantages of some areas when compared to others, will be obvious for all to see.

3.47 When mapped against existing service areas, the 'cleaner/greener', 'safer', and 'stronger' dimensions of the framework map neatly onto three over-lapping, but distinct policy/service arenas (Figure 7.):

Fig. 7: The three service/policy arenas



3.48 Broadly, the 'cleaner/greener' dimension relates to what are sometimes known as 'streetscene' services, concerned with issues of public space management and maintenance. These services encompass roles such as street cleaning, parks and recreation, refuse collection and recycling, environmental health, etc.

3.49 Some of these aspects spill over into issues of safety, particularly health related aspects of the environment, but most of the safer agenda relates to how spaces are actually used, and to the role of society in regulating and controlling that use. The category encompasses how public order is kept in local communities through services such as policing, CCTV, traffic control, events management, parking control, etc.

3.50 Finally, both public order and space management services intersect with services concerned with generating and regenerating local environments, for example, the design of public parks and open spaces. But, beyond these concerns, services such as planning, highways design, urban design, regeneration, housing, and town centre management, all impact on the way local environments are designed, re-designed, and (more often) refurbished.

3.51 As such, the tripartite framework covers local environmental concerns from the creation or re-creation of local environments, to how they are used on a day-to-day basis and the ongoing maintenance of their fabric. In a context where every local authority carves up their local environmental services in a different way, and where every locality has a different network of service providers (public, pseudo-public and private), the proposal provides a simple 'universal' framework through which these different service arrangements can be encompassed and related, with crosscutting aspirations prioritised.

3.52 In essence the proposal gets around the need to relate standards to the network of local service areas and priorities by focusing instead on the bigger picture. It represents a logical extension of the crosscutting approach to service delivery advocated by Government in documents such as Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener.[21]

[21] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener*, London, ODPM

4. Conclusions

Summary of proposals

4.1 The problem of local environmental (or local community) quality can perhaps best be summed up in the desire to see better environmental standards on the ground, but not more performance standards to measure this by. The question is how can the former be achieved, and seen to be achieved, without the latter?

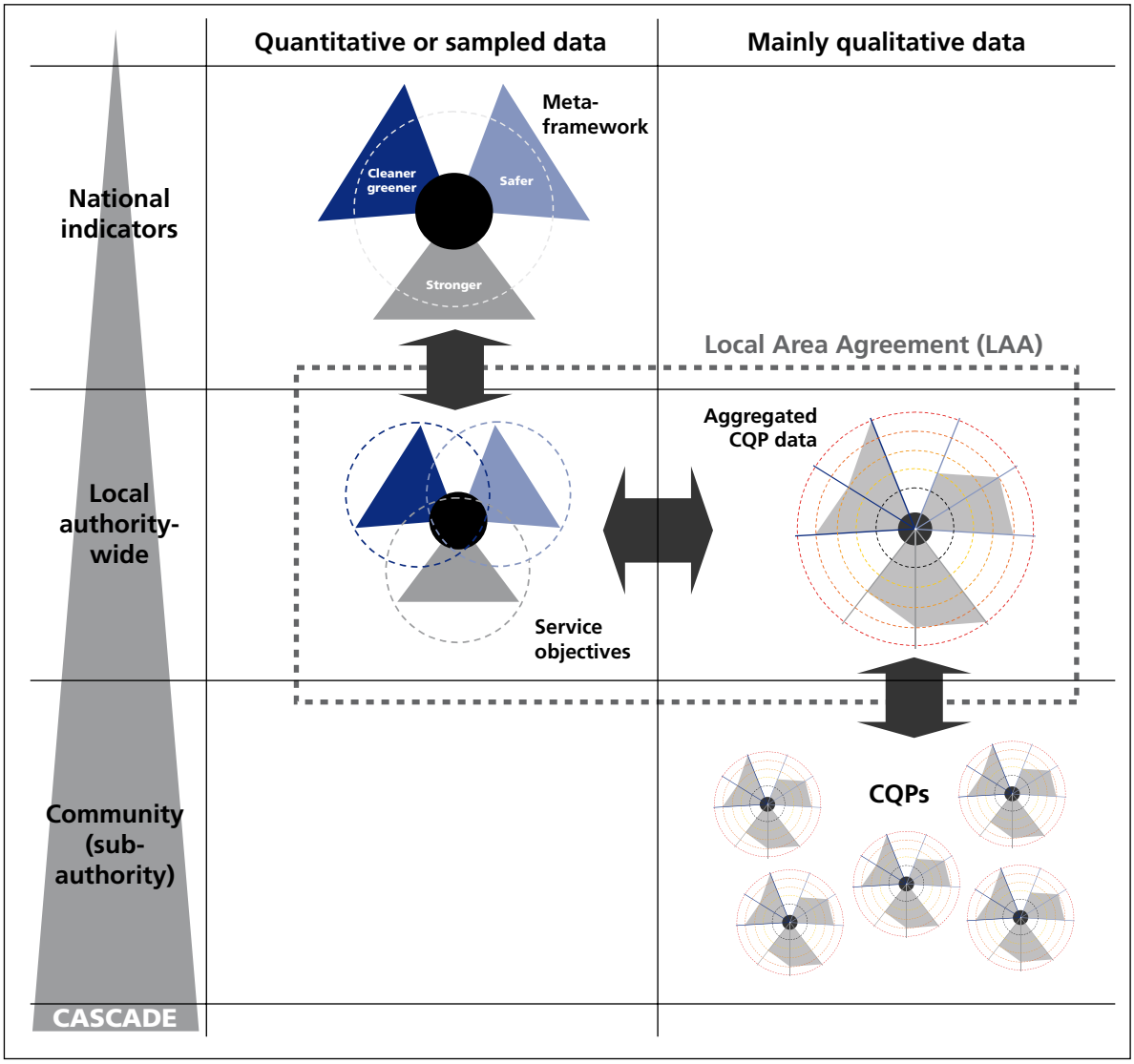
4.2 The proposals presented in the previous section do just this. They step back from the coalface, and instead of establishing a new and different set of quantitative standards, they establish a framework through which existing methods, standards and indicators can be related to one another, to different contexts, to different service delivery models, and across the cascade of scales – national to local. At the same time they would allow for a rationalisation of national data collection, and its replacement with a lighter touch locally based system.

4.3 The proposal also solves the inherent difficulty of representing national and authority-wide quantitative or sampled data with sub-authority (mainly) qualitative data in a comparable manner. It does this by measuring them separately, but representing them through a framework that invites and allows comparison. Thus, the Local Area Agreement (LAA) might establish a range of service-based objectives, alongside separate, but related, crosscutting qualitative goals, measured through aggregated CQP scores. The former would be defined nationally and would largely be of a quantitative nature or based on opinion polling. The latter would be agreed and measured locally.

4.4 Importantly, the proposals support and reinforce those contained in the 2006 Local Government White Paper. In the White Paper, an Outcomes-Targets-Indicators Framework is proposed,[22] with national priority outcomes supported by a reduced suite of indicators, and delivered at the local level through improvement targets agreed and managed through LAAs and local priority targets. This strongly echoes the recommended approach in Section 3 above and is summarised in Figure 8.

[22] See Chapter 6, and in particular the diagram on page 123 of Department of Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities, The Local Government White Paper*, London, DCLG

Fig 8: The Toolkit



A new focus – community quality

4.5 So do the proposals meet the objectives set out at the start of the project? The original objectives were:

- To establish acceptable standards of local environmental quality
- To examine options for establishing minimum standards for liveability service delivery and make recommendations for the best way forward.

4.6 During the course of the project it quickly became apparent that the many standards and measurement methodologies already in place adequately cover much of the field, albeit in a fragmented manner. The project therefore focused on:

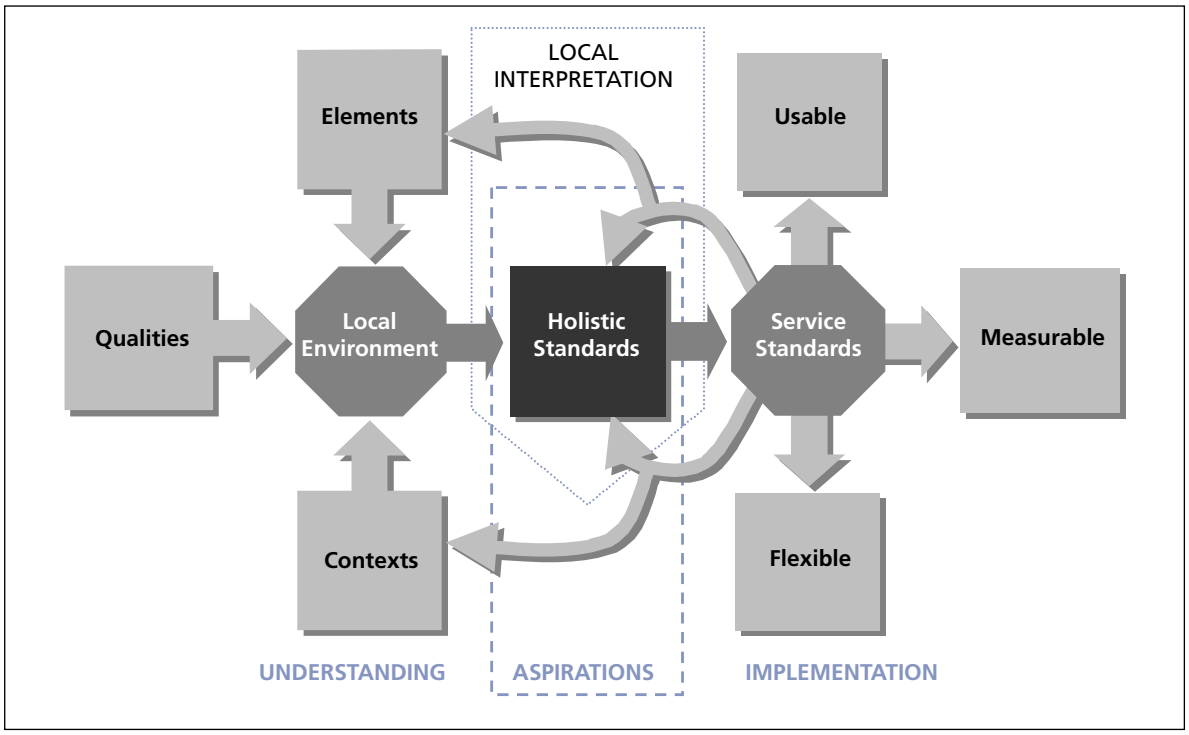
- Identifying which factors are important in perceptions of local environmental quality

- Providing a 'toolkit' through which existing approaches and standards can be related in a manner that is suitably usable, measurable and flexible in order to reflect local contexts and aspirations, and a more holistic notion of local environmental quality

- Establishing how these might relate to the range of local environmental services.

4.7 These were reflected in an analytical framework developed at the start of the project,[23] and represented in Figure 9. The analytical framework encapsulated a range of challenges for defining local environmental standards that were reinforced by the literature and subsequent qualitative research.

Fig. 9:a The Analytical Framework



4.8 The intension was to ensure that each aspect was fully addressed in any proposals, particularly the need to devise a usable, flexible and measurable toolkit with the potential to address a holistic local environmental agenda. Returning briefly to the analytical framework helps to determine whether these aspirations have been met.

4.9 The first dimension of the framework was the local environment. This is a policy area full of contested terms and concepts, and throughout the research these, to some degree, have been used inter-changeably (eg local environmental quality, liveability, neighbourhood quality, etc.), demonstrating the confusion. The analytical framework implied that it is vital to understand this context for action before seeking to influence its quality, whilst the qualitative research revealed that the most powerful association users have with it is through the notion of 'community', emphasising the need for a strong community as the fundamental basis for delivering a higher quality, more liveable environment. Hence the toolkit focused on measuring local environmental quality at the community level, and not just on a national or even authority-wide basis.

[23] see Intermediate report – 05/06

4.10 The next dimension of the analytical framework was the need to develop a set of holistic standards that encompass the full range of factors that consciously or subconsciously impact on perceptions of local quality. The literature revealed that existing approaches to measurement are highly partial, and therefore sub-optimal in terms of establishing local service priorities. Also, standards of all types are liable to inherent problems over their tendency to over-simplify and distort complex issues, their lack of responsiveness to context, their tendency to turn minimum aspirations into maximums, and their inability to deal with certain types of data, particularly qualitative factors.

4.11 Unsurprisingly, therefore, whilst the literature and the qualitative research revealed the infinite complexity of local contexts and patterns of service provision, the review of standards and methodologies demonstrated the incompatibility of much of what is currently being measured. At the same time the stakeholder workshops revealed great resistance to change, and a perceived substantial opportunity cost to moving from existing approaches to measuring quality in the local environment. The proposals therefore suggest an alternative to extending existing standards-based approaches to measuring quality, moving instead to a looser but broader holistic notion of quality.

4.12 As such, a set of Positive Local Qualities (PLQs) were developed following in-depth analysis of the qualitative results. These subtly extend the national 'Cleaner, safer, greener' agenda to a more holistic 'Cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda that, it is argued, should become a new focus for national and local policy. The PLQs encompass the full range of local environmental elements and qualities revealed in the literature review, and are universal, being applicable to any context.

4.13 The final dimension of the framework is the implementation of these holistic aspirational qualities through local services and their related standards, and from there, back to influence the quality of the local environment. It has not been possible, nor indeed is it desirable, to develop a set of new standards for all the multitude of services that influence local environmental/community quality. Instead, a new meta-framework is suggested, that will help to bring together and relate the standards and measurement methodologies already in place.

4.14 This exercise recognises that certain gaps exist in measurement approaches, reflecting the need for a small number of new or refined approaches that will fill these gaps, particularly around issues of economic vitality and viability, and in some of the qualitative aspects of the agenda. In these areas, greater local (professional and community) interpretation will be required about what is or is not acceptable in different local contexts. The approach allows both qualitative and quantitative data to be compared together by explicitly building these dimensions into the overall framework, whilst recognising that they are different and require different approaches for their measurement.

4.15 A key proposal is the development of a Community Quality Profile (CQP) that will engage local professionals from across the broad range of service areas as well as the communities they serve, in order to make crosscutting judgements about the contribution they can make to the 'Cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda. The approach is flexible, providing space for setting appropriate local standards and interpretation; usable, being based on the nine PLQs revealed through engaging with local users of public space; responsive to different contextual circumstances whilst also providing comparable data to cascade up to national level; and – if considered desirable – capable of being aggregated into a single measure of local community quality at the local authority-wide scale as a basis from which to agree local improvement targets and to chart improvement.

The next steps

4.16 The further development and trialling of the recommended approach is strongly recommended. Such an exercise might consist of three work packages:

- **The development and trailing of the CQP into a working online tool.** The proposal set out in Section 3 provides a sketch of what such a tool might look like and its capabilities. Underpinning each dimension would be a layer of detailed questions, standards and analysis that would need to be developed and tested in the field, including testing of the weighting algorithm.

- **The development of a model Local Area Agreement (or model LAA theme).** Some idea of the nature of this has already been provided in Section 3. This could be developed into a national model by working in partnership with the Local Government Association and other interested parties to ensure that the final agreement offers the appropriate level of incentive, contextual responsiveness and precision to achieve its aims

- **The rationalisation of the existing BVPIs.** The intention here would be to develop a small suite of BVPIs, or even a single indicator, to more comprehensively and far more explicitly reflect the 'cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda along the lines suggested in Section 3. Overall the aim should be a simplification of national indicators, rather than their expansion, but also a move towards the delivery of liveability – 'environmental and community quality' – as a crosscutting service objective.

4.17 Over time, and reflecting the agenda delivered through the suggested follow-up work above, it is likely that the range of existing methods and indicators summarised in Table 4. will also be refined to better relate to the 'cleaner, greener, safer, stronger' agenda. Opportunities might also be taken to fill the identified strategic gaps in what is currently being measured at national and authority-wide scales, particularly in the important areas of the vitality and viability of local environments and their attractiveness.

Annex 1:

Full list of methods and indicators reviewed

1. Agora Observatory (ATCM and Manchester Metropolitan University)
2. Air Pollution Standards (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs DEFRA)
3. Analytic Audit Tool and Checklist Audit Tool (St Louis University)
4. Area Characterisation (English Heritage)
5. Benchmarking (Public Sector Benchmarking Service and IDeA)
6. Best Value Performance Indicators – User Satisfaction Survey (Communities and Local Government)
7. Best Value Performance Indicators (Communities and Local Government)
8. BORG – Groningen Public Space Management (Municipality of Groningen)
9. BREEAM (British Research Establishment)
10. Capacity Studies (Communities and Local Government and Greater London Authority GLA)
11. Community Street Audit (Living Streets)
12. Community Trend Method (University of Wisconsin – Madison)
13. Comprehensive Performance Assessment (Audit Commission)
14. English Housing Condition Survey (Communities and Local Government)[24]
15. Environmental Exclusion Indicators (Brook Lyndhurst for Communities and Local Government)
16. Friendly Spaces Indicators (Urban Ecology Coalition, Minneapolis)
17. Green Flag Awards (Civic Trust)
18. GreenSTAT (Greenspace)
19. Key Performance Indicators for Planning and Management of Public Open Space (IOSS, Australia)
20. Key Performance Indicators for Town Centre Managers (ATCM)
21. Key Performance Indicators on Liveability of Urban Centres (Arizona State University)

[24] The user satisfaction survey element of the Survey of English Housing and the English House Conditions Survey are to be merged.

22. Level of Service Framework (Parks Victoria, Melbourne)

23. Local Environmental Quality Survey of England (Encams and DEFRA)

24. Local Performance Indicators (Audit Commission and IDeA)

25. Local Quality of Life Indicators (DEFRA and Communities and Local Government)

26. Market Town Healthcheck (Action for Market Towns, English Heritage and The Countryside Agency)

27. Measuring Physical Quality of Areas (MORI and Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment CABE)

28. Minimum Standards for Open Space (National Playing Fields Association)

29. Natural Green Space Standards (English Nature)

30. Pedestrian Environment Review System (TRL and Transport for London)

31. Place Consultation Tool (CABE)

32. Placecheck (Urban Design Alliance)

33. Public Park Assessment (Urban Parks Forum)

34. Scorecard Scheme (Municipality of Aarhus)

35. SPG for London on Play and Informal Recreation (GLA)

36. Standards and Indicators of Quality for Parks (University of Vermont)

37. State of the English Cities Report (Communities and Local Government)

38. State of the Urban Environment Report (Environment Agency)

39. Street Audit (San Diego State University)

40. Street Excellence Model (UDAL)

41. Survey of English Housing (Communities and Local Government) 20

42. Sustainable Development Strategy Indicators (DEFRA)

43. Town Centre Healthcheck (Association of Town Centre Management)

44. Urban Amenity Indicators (Ministry of the Environment, New Zealand)

45. Urban Decline Prevention Key Indicators (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors)

46. Waste Data Flow (Chartered Institution of Wastes Management CIWM)