

Case Study

Green Blue Heart Masterplan - Benchmarking and Visioning

Summary of Project

Supporting the preparation of the strategic masterplan for the *Green Blue Heart*, a series of connected sites and non-residential land uses between Middlesbrough and Stockton town centres. This was a strategic project seeking ... “[t]o create a city scale environment at the heart of the Tees Valley that will radically transform the environment, economy and image of the place”¹.

Project Partners

Client: Stockton Middlesbrough initiative [a partnership between Stockton on Tees Borough Council and Middlesbrough Council], ONE North East [the principal funding body for the consultant commission] working with British Waterways, Tees Valley Living, Tees Valley Regeneration and CAFE @ Tees Valley.

Project Report

The regional pilot programme was invited to support the preparation of a strategic masterplan, advising the Stockton Middlesbrough initiative, initially on the drafting of the consultant brief, suggestions, short-listing and appointment of consultants and on-going management and direct of the project as a member of the *Green Blue Heart* steering group. This enabling support was seen as flexible and as part of a collaborative process between client, project partners and any necessary consultant support and where the initial contact should be part of on-going collaboration with *CAFE* and *ONE* regarding the overall work of *SMi* as a promotional organisation.

Underlying the work of the appointed consultants was an understanding that the success of the work was dependent upon the awareness and acceptance by local members, planning officers and other stakeholders. The approach of the regional pilot programme was to support these ‘stakeholders’ in capacity building, procedural advice and other enabling work to become fully involved in the preparation and delivery of a visionary masterplan for the *Green Blue Heart* of Stockton Middlesbrough. This included a commitment to an approach that aimed to fully support any emergent proposals as part of the statutory planning system. As such, the approach to developing the necessary technical and spatial planning work and the enabling advice reflected the requirements of the planning system for collecting the necessary supporting evidence base, undertaking options testing, sustainability appraisal and ultimately determining the appropriate level of community and stakeholder consultation and involvement.

The close co-ordination with both of the local planning authorities and the eventual production of a joint area action plan SPD [as was the initial intention] for the project had implications for the detailed supporting evidence required through this brief and the procedures being followed. There was the

¹ Extract from the vision for the Green Blue Heart contained within; Stockton Middlesbrough initiative [December 2005] *Green Blue Heart Masterplan Brief*.

effective need to establish sufficient background material to allow for the identification, development and testing of strategic options within the project area; appropriate baseline material to allow for the production of a strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal; output from this work to assist the resources needed for initial community / stakeholder consultation work.

The first enabling advice was in the content and structuring of a consultant brief for the production of a masterplan. At this stage it was questionable whether the early aspirations for the project as nationally / internationally significant to assist the re-branding of the core of the emergent city-region would be met by a draft brief that was limited by the early drawing of site boundaries, consideration of limited options and that lacks sufficient supporting evidence. This ultimate aspiration for the work of *SMi* in re-branding the Tees Valley is strongly supported but one of the potential dangers within the draft brief is the loss of this aspiration as a result of narrowing down options and the spatial impact of the project.



[Input was provided for the revised consultant brief² and evaluation of competing bids against the brief requirements based upon experience, methodology and stages of work. Early records of the steering group and extracts from; LDA Design [May 2006] *SMi: Green Blue Heart: Stage One - Information review and Initial Research Report.*]

Thus, the regional pilot programme was seeking to support; both practical facilitation and financially; the early undertaking of a visioning task. This was seen as beneficial for a number of reasons

² Background documentation, including the consultant brief, is held by Stockton Middlesbrough initiative.

- It would act as an early international scoping / benchmarking exercise in highlighting projects of similar context, scale and aspirations throughout Europe. The structured recording of this exercise would provide an input into the development of the later stages of the work programme.
- It would establish an early approach to openness with the project and ownership over the process and the substantive ideas.

While there was additional advice provided in connection with the production of the consultant / project brief³, the lack of a clear and detailed vision, based upon comparable European projects, was perhaps the most critical aspect of the commission regarding the current stage of work.

Following the establishment of a steering group and the appointment of *LDA Design* as the lead consultant, the regional pilot programme made an offer of enabling support⁴ in the preparation of the strategic masterplan for the Green Blue Heart, a series of connected sites and non-residential land uses between Middlesbrough and Stockton town centres. This interest in supporting the development of the GBH masterplan was in the context of a wider programme of 'action masterplanning' where there is the potential to add to and exploit a number of 'live' projects as learning / training exercises – effectively an approach to *learning by doing*.

As with any process and approach to masterplanning, there were discrete areas of training and capacity building suitable for the early stages of the work. The process loosely follows the *CABE* masterplanning publication⁵ and the rough structure of a masterplan report. In the context of the GBH programme, there are two broad areas of relevance relating to *capacity building* and *visioning*.

Initial thinking on the approach to capacity building in advance and during the visioning event is one of increasing political support for the project[s] and for being fully aware of the strategic potential through an increased awareness and detailed understanding of international exemplars – through a bespoke approach to 'benchmarking' elements of the masterplan. The suggested approach was to target key political decision-makers within the two local authorities [typically designated 'design champions' and members with portfolio responsibility for regeneration] combined with key officers [targeting heads of regeneration service and planning] and stakeholders to undertake a series of informal fact-finding tours within the UK and Europe that have a specific focus on the four broad areas being addressed by the GBH masterplan.

³ This included key project stages, outputs / deliverables that were suitable for supporting a statutory planning document and in a format for broader use within the Tees Valley city region. It was recommended that the draft brief was split into a series of linked and complementary work packages that could be undertaken as a single commission, or more likely through a series of smaller commissions targeted at specialist consultants. In every case, the aim was to maximise the level of local authority and partner input and to use consultants where there is a specific requirement for additional competencies rather than simple professional capacity. It included key aspects of 'mapping' resources, constraints and identifying spatial opportunities and external influences that would provide a robust evidence base for statutory planning in the long term.

⁴ This initial offer of enabling support was made at the first meeting of the GBH Steering Group, 15th February 2006 in the form of a briefing note.

⁵ Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment [2004] *Creating Successful Masterplans: A Guide for Clients* [CABE, London].

These four themes are;

- Strategic transportation infrastructure, including issues of reuse of rail land, options for new public transit interchange facility, co-ordination with work on the Tees Valley Metro Stage 2 feasibility project, the development of options for an additional transit stop and / or interchange within the GBH project area.
- Strategic landscape and ecology, where there should be an integration of the greenspace strategies for both of the local authority areas and the testing of approaches towards land reclamation. This is potentially two work packages addressing *landscape character* and *ecology*];
- Sustainable energy systems and additional appropriate technology, looking at options for sustainable fuels [including biomass, wind and hydrogen production], carbon sinks and sustainable drainage; and
- Recreation, sport, leisure; with consideration of flexible options. Issues of addressing *sporting infrastructure*, had explicit requirements for exploring opportunities for extending water sport and for benefits in supporting the requirements for London 2012 Olympics, including pre-event training and preparation.

The remit of each fact-finding tour was to make contact with professionals in locations with transferable project ideas and experiences, aiming to produce a short illustrated report [or visioning sections of the consultant study report] and presentation to the larger ‘visioning’ event [held with other local stakeholders within the Tees Valley] as a basis for international and national benchmarking.

The image is a composite of several elements related to the 'visioning' process:

- Hand-drawn Diagram:** A central box labeled 'sustainability' is connected by lines to four surrounding boxes: 'leisure & recreation', 'landscape & ecology', 'transport & infrastructure', and 'sustainability' (repeated). Above the top two boxes is the text 'visioning trips'.
- Workshop Photo:** A photograph showing a group of people sitting around a table in a workshop, engaged in a discussion or activity.
- Visioning Themes Grid:** A grid of small images representing various visioning themes, such as 'leisure', 'landscape', 'transport', and 'sustainability'. To the right of the grid are several charts and maps, including a bar chart titled 'Results of the Second Task presented at Stakeholder Workshop 2' and several maps showing spatial distribution of themes.
- Textual Content:** Several columns of text provide context for the visioning process, including 'First Briefing Session - What is the remit? What is good? What is important? What is bad?' and 'Second Briefing Session - What could be there? First Task'.

[The basis of the ‘visioning’ study trips around the four main themes of the masterplan. The same participants / stakeholders contributing ideas to a visioning workshop organised by LDA Design as part of the masterplan process in a colour-coded mapping exercise based on the same central themes – image from; LDA Design [May 2006] *SMi: Green Blue Heart: Stage One Consultation.*]

The initial intention was that the report and the accompanying presentation[s] should also be able to act as stand alone reports highlighting exemplars for the sub-region and will be used to populate *IGNITE* [the regional centre of excellence’s digital resource]. There would be a simple ‘brief’ for the study tour team to follow in preparing and undertaking this exercise.

The arrangements for the tours are flexible but would ideally involve up to two elected members and two local authority officers accompanied by an enabler [for example, a member of the consultants team, *SMi* officer, *CABE* enabler or similar]. Initial suggestions for areas to be visited included; Kronsberg, Hannover, Hamburg, Ruhr Valley [sustainable landscapes, energy systems]; New Islington, East Manchester, Liverpool [focus on recreation and sporting provision]; Lisbon expo [strategic landscape]; and Gunpower Park, Lee Valley, Greenwich London. These were ultimately refined into the two trips to Sweden and Germany. It was always expected to be an inevitable overlap in many of the issues explored within each locality.

This offer of enabling support was accepted by the Steering Group responsible for the management and preparation of the Green Blue Heart masterplan.

There was advanced preparation of briefing material for the study tour participants, addressing the urban context, highlighting approaches to masterplanning, individual projects of interest, and suggested structure for capturing this in a format suitable for *CABE* and *IGNITE* web resources, with a focus on individual case studies and ‘generic’ regeneration skills.



[Examples of invitation and briefing material; itinerary and city / project profiles; prepared for participants for the study trip to Sweden, April 2006]

In the case of both of the study tours there were separate arrangements for [1] travel / accommodation, and [2] site visits and local guides. The practical arrangements were supported by a local travel bureau and the site visits were co-ordinated by a professional enabler with language skills⁶.



⁶ This enabling support was provided by Delton Jackson [Senior Urban Design Officer, Leeds City Council] for the Swedish study trip and Jerome Hassler [Global Urban Research Unit, University of Newcastle].



[Study tour participants waiting for the tram in Vauban district of Freiburg and listening to a local authority guide on the Augustenborg housing estate on the outskirts of Malmö.]



[Examples of briefing presentation by guides and guest speakers from Hannover, Leipzig and Freiburg. These ranged from urban policy, local agenda 21 programmes, masterplanning through to individual regeneration projects. They have been collated and, with permission from the speakers, available as a digital resource from the *IGNITE* exhibition area]

In addition to the collected presentations and briefing material gathered on the tours, there was an extensive sharing of photographic material and many of the individual attendants provided staff seminars internally to their own organisations [*Stockton and Middlesbrough Councils, ONE North East and CABE* officers to the Regions Committee]. Guidance for specific case studies was provided so individual projects could be recorded for a variety of case study sources. This borrowed structures from the *CABE* on-line case studies and guidance from the *Academy for Sustainable Communities* on ‘generic’ project skills.



Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

Directory Exhibition

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Green Blue Heart

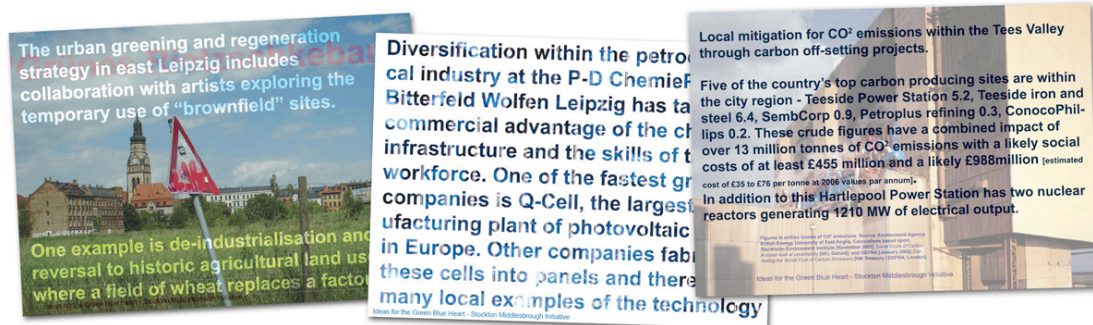
The largest green and blue area in the city of Middlesbrough is the 100-acre site of the former steelworks. The site is currently a mix of open land and some existing buildings. The site is a key part of the city's regeneration strategy and is being developed as a new residential and commercial area. The site is a key part of the city's regeneration strategy and is being developed as a new residential and commercial area.

The Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative [SMI] is undertaking work on a masterplan for the heart of the Tees Valley – the Green Blue Heart – as part of the series of plans aimed at regenerating and rebranding the city region. As part of this masterplanning process SMI has set up a small project team to work alongside Landscape Design Associates, the consultant's team appointed to produce the masterplan. As part of this masterplanning exercise, the project team is undertaking a benchmarking exercise through a number of targeted study trips in Europe and explore possible precedents for the Green Blue Heart. It is likely that they will also have transferable elements and be beneficial to the Tees Valley conurbation and the wider network of cities at the centre of national government's Northern Way strategy. CABE @ Tees Valley is financially supporting this feasibility work and the exploration of the potential relevance of best practice in Europe at this early stage in the planning process.

[Screen shot from the CABE @ Tees Valley exhibition space where the on-line resource of ‘messy’ project material has been collected, www.ignite-ne.com]

Initially, separate members of the study tours prepared summary ‘postcards’ of projects with significant transferable elements to sites and projects within the Tees Valley. These are intended to be short pieces of text and a strong

single image that introduces the project idea and signposts people towards further information.



[Examples of summary project 'postcards' from the study trip to Germany, May 2006]

"What is really fascinating is just how 'normal' the concept of environmentally-friendly housing actually is. This is accompanied by a refreshing approach to the architecture which delivers modern materials and design, without having to live in a fashion statement."⁷

"Over 100,000 people left Leipzig after reunification, leaving a massive over supply of housing. The City Council embarked upon an ambitious programme of demolishing the worst buildings and restoring the best. The result is a city peppered with outstanding buildings set in a landscape of pocket parks ... [as an example, this] ... oasis was a derelict and heavily polluted urban canal, but investment, good design and a forward-looking Local Authority transformed it into one of the most sought-after parts of Leipzig. The key was the very desirable waterfront; something that we in the UK have lots of"⁸.

"In doing research on the [Local Agenda 21 Haus, Hannover-Kronsberg] ... these brightly coloured houses stand out and are attraction in them selves. ... [t]he design and concept could be used at the barrage were this type of tourist accommodation could be put to good use and help with the different and new type of visitor accommodation available at The Barrage."⁹

While it is difficult to assess the range of impacts on projects within the Tees Valley, the extracts [above] from feedback from participants has been positive with an increase in the levels of enthusiasm about the potential for planning in shaping the Tees Valley – in the Green Blue Heart or another regeneration project. Many of the individual projects visited are being prepared as individual case studies for *CABE* and *IGNITE* web sites.

There was also a very direct input into the GBH masterplan process with a more ambitious transformational vision for the project – something that was being promoted by multiple individual who participated in the study trips.

⁷ Feedback response from Stockton planner following study trip to Vauban, Freiburg – May 2006.

⁸ Feedback response from Stockton urban designer / policy planner following study trip to Leipzig, – May 2006.

⁹ Feedback response from Stockton Member Design Champion following the study trip to Hannover – May 2006.



[The sites visited provided specific ideas but more importantly created higher aspirations and a local professional network with shared experiences – all of which helped to inform and shape the vision for the Green Blue Heart of Stockton Middlesbrough].

Timescale of overall project

The pilot programme involvement in the GBH steering group began in November 2005 with the focused work on the study tours between February and April 2006 to fit into the programme for the consultants preparing the GBH masterplan, although more detailed reporting and case study work extended beyond this timeframe. There remained on-going involvement in the GBH steering group as the masterplanning work continued from benchmarking through to a preferred option.

Budget [approx]

The combined budgets for both trips was in the region of £8,500 [t.b.c.] made up of travel, accommodation, subsistence and incidental expenses and enabling support of 5 days per project [preparation, attendance and write up time] working at the standards CABE enabling rates of £350 per day.

Nature of advice provided

Period of Assistance: *How and at what stage did you assist the client?*

Enabling advice was provided at several stages in the development of the GBH masterplan through direct involvement in the project steering group. It included;

- Format and contents of the brief. On-going work suggests that this should continue with a clear understanding of the relationship of this work with other strategic masterplans within the sub-region; including current work on Stockton North Shore and the development of an extended piece of masterplanning work being anticipated for 'Greater North Shore'¹⁰.
- Short-listing criteria and evaluation of consultant responses to the brief.

¹⁰ This is currently in draft format and being prepared by *Tees Valley Regeneration*. Comments on the initial brief have been made to *TVR* and *ONE North East* as the client body and funders for this work – made in the light of lessons from work on GBH masterplan.

There was an intention for early advice and involvement but a draft version of the project brief had already been prepared and a level of political momentum [and need for expenditure] behind the extent to which revisions could be incorporated. Ideally, this would have been a phased programme rather than a staged contract with the same consultants / consortium. Yet, the client's willingness to adapt the brief at a late stage was strongly welcomed¹¹.

Approximate time given to advise [in days]

Hard to estimate accurately beyond preparation, attendance and recording as it also required the pilot programme manager to 'recruit' appropriate local stakeholders through a number of live projects – a task that is difficult to separate. As a guide it took 10-12 days per trip plus the additional enablers support – a total of 25+ days. In addition, the involvement in the GBH steering group for briefing, commissioning and consultation has substantial time input of 20 days over a 12-month period.

Client involvement and the impact of the advice provided

Was there a client commitment to design quality?

Yes. The aspirations of SMi were significant and the project officers had the clear backing of Directors / Heads of service to meet these aspirations.

What was the design capacity of the client?

While there are high expectations for the overall work of SMi, the project team remains small, with part-time seconded staff from the local authorities and planning consultancies. This does create tensions with conflicting priorities and has left the project management and specifically management of the consultant team significantly under-resourced. The capacity of the team as a whole [and design capacity] remains limited due to the small number of staff working on the project.

This issue has resulted from staff costs being separate from project costs, with *ONE North East* as the key funding body being unable to pay for staff costs for core local authority services. There is a huge potential for staff development on this project, if the resources used for external consultants were used to build and develop a local delivery team.

How seriously did the client act on your advice? Were you genuinely welcomed into the project team? What was your most valuable contribution?

The client team was very open to constructive advice but there remained a conflict with project timescales. What should potentially have been a flexible and iterative process was pressured, initially by budget requirements and latterly by an inflexible contract with a team of consultants [influenced by the availability of key consultancy staff].

¹¹ These changes were made following the advertising of the contract and the short-listing, as evident in this extract from the invitation to interview from 23rd April 2006; ... "During the evaluation of tenders the client group has identified a number of matters which you should be informed of ... [including]; CABE involvement [and] Design innovation" ... "Since submission of the tender brief we have been successful in securing from CABE a willingness to assist in facilitating design workshops and liaising with the successful consultant in respect of design issues." ... "following client group discussions it has been decided, subsequent to the issue of the brief, to let the contract in 2 parts as follows: Part 1: Literature review, site analysis, consultation, identification and testing of options; Part 2: Preparation of detailed proposals, consultation on delivery mechanism for preferred option. Appointment for part 2 will be at the clients discretion and on the basis of satisfactory completion of part 1."

Within these constraints, the *SMi* team were welcoming and committed to project advice, support and on-going ideas. Perhaps the most significant influence has been through the team-building and development of shared vision and common values with all of the various project stakeholders. The gathering of ideas that were suitable for the masterplan vision was valuable – allowing every stakeholders; both members of the GBH steering group and other interests; to inform the substantive and procedural aspects of the masterplan. *LDA Design* as a group was supportive and open to recording and reviewing these ideas throughout the planning process.

What part of the support given worked well and what could have been done better?

It became clear that many of the ideas from the study tours not only had relevance for the GBH masterplan, but were also potentially influential for other strategic sites within the Tees Valley. This included the work on several significant areas of housing market renewal within the core of Middlesbrough [testing ideas of car-free development, the passive house standard, principled cf. spatial masterplans etc.], other riverside masterplans and the individual content of smaller schemes dealing with sustainable infrastructure, community planning processes and

Were there any problems encountered and how were they or could they have been overcome – technical, political or procedural?

One of the lessons gained was through the political contacts within Hannover, where the deputy leader met with and briefed the study tour. The Tees Valley issue of leadership and shared values was made aware of the need for strong political leadership and project champions to innovate working methods and bring new standards. Like most projects, the delivery of high quality and sustainable projects have political, financial and procedural barriers to overcome. Hannover had a particular relevance in showing how this could be achieved through strong [and learning] leadership.

In this context, there were issues about attracting significantly senior officers and members from the Tees Valley to take part in this exercise. Many of the initial ideas, dates and arrangements we made to fit around senior policy makers who ultimately failed to attend. It would be interesting to know if this indicates a lack of understanding of vision and process within planning, a lack of capacity or a reluctance to be associated with any site-specific project.

Did the client appoint a Design Champion and/or architectural design advisor?

Not directly. Although both officer and member Design Champions from both of the local authorities were heavily involved in the trips, the feedback and the direction of the GBH masterplanning process.

What skills did the client develop during the enabling involvement and will this impact beyond the project?

The extent of the skills is impossible to assess as each individual had their own interests and projects as a focus. There is an intention to undertake a formal review [by phone and / or email] to gauge more accurately the extent of the influence and the skills actually used in projects within the Tees Valley. At

a basic level, there were important skills in networking and lateral thinking that are relevant to most of the people who were involved.

Outcomes

What will your input have on the quality of the end product?

The investing of staff time and financial resources at the visioning stages of this masterplan has had a direct and acknowledged influence on the content and ambition of the GBH masterplan.

Do the procurement design and construction methods used provide lessons for other or best practice for wider dissemination?

The exercise involved stakeholders who were also working on several other strategic planning projects within the city-region and many of the substantive ideas have also helped to influence work on housing market renewal master planning and a series of overlapping spatial masterplans along the Tees River corridor – at the stage of brief writing, review through to support for international project development.

Next stages

What are the next steps in terms of the project's progress?

The drafting and sharing of the case study material and some structured review of the skills / training experience for the participants will provide some interesting views – on the use of information in 'live' projects [indicating how successfully the tours were tailored to fit the local requirements], and how this learning experience compares to more formal presentation and workshop sessions.

The production of the GBH final report will provide the setting for the next stage – delivery, with an emphasis on attracting funding.

Are there key dates that the CABE should be aware of as the project goes forward, e.g. when it might be worth revisiting the project to check progress /. the opening of the building?

The final GBH plan and the potential for Design Review. This has been delayed as the SMi Director role has remained vacant for a significant time. This leadership role was filled from the beginning of June 2007 and the expectation is that more momentum will be generated around this strategic landscape project.

Key issues

What were the key issues that came out of this project? - Can you draw out a few summary lessons, core benefits of being involved with this project or key issues that we can learn from?

There are several important lessons from the GBH visioning work ...

- The blurring [or clustering] of project boundaries means that individuals need not have defined roles within specific projects – people need not be defined by their job descriptions or sectors of work;

- The importance of growing a learning network – with informal networking and debate alongside the formal presentations being as critical in team building;
- The potential for ‘pyramid learning’ – with participants taking lessons back to their own organisations and disseminating examples, contacts and other resources to a significant number of secondary contacts.

Further information

Contacts: David Allred [Major Projects Officer, Middlesbrough Council] and
Iain Robinson [SMi Project Officer, Stockton on Tees Borough Council]

e-mail: david_allred@middlesbrough.gov.uk; iain.robinson@stockton.gov.uk

This case study is based upon a generic *CABE Enabling Project Support Report* and *IGNITE* format.