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Urban Conservation Areas and Sustainable Development: Exploring the Relationship

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Abstract

With increasing emphasis being placed on concentrating development in urban areas and improving the quality of life in British cities and towns, the importance of accommodating necessary development without compromising the valued heritage and architectural quality of urban areas is now becoming central to sustainable urban development. Urban conservation policy and practice has the potential to contribute to this and other aspects of sustainability.

This paper explores this contribution and develops an analytical framework which draws out the key linkages between conservation area policy and sustainable development. The framework is then used to research the potential and actual contribution of urban conservation policy and practice in England, using a selective survey and two case studies (i.e. Winchester and Basingstoke).

The main conclusions from the research are that:

- Conservation area policy can make a significant contribution to the principles of sustainable development;
- Most local planning authorities in England have not fully woken-up to this potential and have not developed policies or practices to address it; and
- Urban conservation policy needs to develop a more proactive approach in which local planning authorities actively guide and encourage new development with regard to use, design, layout, methods of construction, materials and energy efficiency.

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1. Introduction

Many governments in the world now accept the principle (if not all the implications) of sustainable development. In the United Kingdom, the concept has been placed at the heart of the planning system, providing the core philosophy upon which policy formulation and implementation are to be built. Commitment to sustainability requires that all aspects of the decision making process and all areas of policy must be examined although so far attention has tended to focus on the more obvious topics such as traffic, housing, pollution and waste, with scant regard being paid to many of the "lower order" issues, such as urban conservation. However, with increasing emphasis being placed on concentrating development in urban areas and improving the quality of life in British cities and towns (DETR, 1998a), the importance of accommodating necessary development without compromising the valued heritage and architectural quality of urban areas is now becoming central to sustainable urban development. Furthermore, urban conservation policy and practice has the potential to contribute to other aspects of sustainability, some of which are not necessarily obvious.

This paper explores the relationship between sustainability and urban conservation, drawing out the key linkages and devising an analytical framework. The framework is then used to assess the potential and actual contribution of urban conservation policy and practice to sustainable development in England by means of a selective survey and two case studies. In order to establish the linkages between these two policy themes, the first part of the paper reviews the relatively limited range of literature on this topic and attempts to clarify the complex web of inter-relationships that appear to exist. It begins with some initial definitions.

2. Sustainable Development and Urban Conservation: Definitions and Clarifications

The concepts and principles of sustainable development and urban conservation have had different trajectories in the history of British town planning. ***Sustainable development*** is of more recent origin yet focuses planners' attention on the longer term in order to achieve, "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (WCED, 1987). This widely accepted definition has been complimented and extended by the United Nations Environmental Programme which states that sustainable development is about, "Improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (IUCN, UNEP, WWF, 1991).

The current UK Government's interpretation of sustainable development is similar to the previous Conservative Administration's definition. Both place as much stress on economic development and a overall improvement in the quality of (human) life as they do on environmental protection. Thus the 1990 version of the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development (DoE, 1990) suggests that,

> (sustainable development) means living on the Earth's income rather than eroding its capital. It means keeping the consumption of renewable natural resources within the limits of their replenishment. It means handing down to successive generations not only man-made wealth (such as buildings, roads and railways) but also natural wealth such as clean and adequate water supplies, good arable land, a wealth of wildlife and ample forests,

whilst the new Labour Government can state that,

> sustainable development is concerned with achieving economic growth, in the form of higher living standards, while protecting and where possible enhancing the environment - not just for its own sake but because a damaged environment will sooner or later hold back economic growth and lower the quality of life - and making sure that these economic and environmental benefits are available to everyone, not just a privileged few (DETR, 1998b).

Building on these and other definitions, a set of principles and key features can be developed which operationalise the concept in order to undertake policy formulation, appraisal and implementation (Shorten, 1993; Friends of the Earth 1994; Doak et. al. 1998). These are illustrated in Figure 1.

This kind of definitional framework stresses that sustainable development must encompass more than just the conservation of natural resources. Rather, it seeks to achieve this whilst also providing for the needs of mankind, increasing people's involvement in decision-making, considering social equity and improving quality of life. The symbiosis of economic, social and environmental systems is emphasised; the sustainability of economic and social relations is dependent on the state of the environment and vice versa. However, the key issue is to integrate these principles so that they are mutually supportive (e.g. economic activity which recycles the waste of other forms of production or development that increases habitats and ecological diversity) or, at least, that environmental impacts are minimised in order to maintain some kind of environmental balance.

Urban conservation is centrally concerned with the preservation of buildings and artefacts, either individually, in groups, for local areas or, indeed, for whole towns and cities. However, the motivation and justification for this process, usually involving state intervention of some kind, is tied-up with a range of aesthetic, socio-cultural, psychological, ideological and economic rationales which vary from place to place (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990, pp. 22-34). The practice of urban conservation in the UK has centred around the designation and implementation of policies concerned with conservation areas and individual historic (listed) buildings. The focus of this article is on conservation areas which were introduced by the 1967 Civil Amenities Act. Original estimates of about 1,250 designations were quickly out-stripped, and by 1992 there were in excess of 8,000 such areas, growing at a rate of some 200 per year. They account for over 1.3 million buildings, representing about 4% of the nation's stock. At least three-quarters of town centres have substantial conservation areas, whilst more than a third of the country's 10,000 villages are designated either in part or as a whole. This proliferation means that more than two-thirds of the population live in settlements which have designated conservation areas (Pearce at al., 1990). These figures emphasise the importance of the role that conservation areas have, or should have, in meeting the objectives of sustainable development, as they impact on so much of the population and cover so much built-up land.

Government policy on conservation is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) "*Planning and the Historic Environment"* which states that the policy imperative within conservation areas is to, "preserve their character, but not at the cost of setting them apart; they must be seen as part of the living and working community" (DoE, 1994). It emphasises that the best way to ensure their survival is that the buildings they contain should form part of our every day lives, to be used, occupied and lived in. Economically viable uses are to be encouraged. Thus the two main objectives stated in its introduction can be realised simultaneously. These are :

- to promote economic growth and make provision for development to meet the economic and social needs of the community; and
- to protect and enhance the environment in town and country and preserve the built and natural heritage.

They should, therefore, accommodate change so long as it does not, "threaten the juxtaposition of land uses and physical fabric which compromise the character of the area" (Pearce, 1994).

Looking at the two concepts of sustainability and urban conservation as outlined above might lead us to believe that there is a definite but relatively narrow relationship between them. This would link aspects of conservation and community need suggested in the policy guidance to a couple of the relevant principles and features depicted in Figure 1. However, this does not exhaust the possibilities, as the next sections tries to show. Indeed English Heritage has recently accepted that

the relationship between heritage and sustainability is more sophisticated than just the simple conservation of the historic environment, placing emphasis on economic, recreational and community dimensions (English Heritage, 1997).

3. The Relationship Between Conservation Areas and Sustainability

The contribution of urban conservation policy and practice to the principles of sustainable development can best be explored by dissecting the relationship into its component elements, not all of which are identified in the English Heritage discussion paper. These are overviewed below and illustrated, at the end, in Figure 2. Initially we concentrate on the 'positive' elements of the relationship before going on to draw-out some tensions and contradictions.

Traffic: Most urban conservation areas were developed before the private car began to dominate urban life and they often find it difficult to cope with increasing traffic levels. Road networks in these areas are usually constrained by physical form and layout. The conventional response, to provide new roads, is not usually an option and alternative means of control must be sought. This includes management techniques such as pedestrianisation of sensitive areas, high parking charges, road pricing, park and ride schemes and promoting other modes of transport.

These restrictions can support and encourage the use of alternatives such as public transport, leading to improved public service provision thereby creating a more viable service, encouraging yet further use. They can also make a contribution, through this, to improving equity, local safety and supporting communities in their attempts to 'reclaim the streets'.

Environmental Capacity: This concept highlights the importance of limits on the scale, intensity and impacts of new development. It can act as a key mediating concept in relation to the policy objectives of urban containment and concentration by regulating the development process in order to achieve sensitive forms of new building which pay due regard to a range of constraints.

The concept has been used in Chester (ARUP, 1995) to help identify and provide an understanding of the special historic qualities in the city and to highlight the tensions they are under. The study has enabled policy revisions to be adjusted in line with the principle of futurity and a set of guidelines has been drawn up to provide a plan for the effective environmental management of the historic town and its irreplaceable assets. It concluded that an understanding of environmental capacity and the setting of a "baseline" of existing environmental stock of the city as a whole should provide sufficient warning to enable an appropriate planning and management framework to be set in place before problems become unsustainable.

Notwithstanding this rationale, some have criticised the use of such concepts in historic towns and cities because of the inherent subjectivity of the approach in practice (Strange 1997). It is difficult to see, however, how a more 'scientific' framework could be developed in order to influence such a complex and inherently social process. As Strange admits, the policy discourse of historic conservation is essentially part of a political process: capacity planning stresses conservation-based precautionary principles in a debate which is becoming more loaded towards economic growth and the accommodation of that growth in urban areas.

Quality of Life: Conservation areas can contribute to quality of life in a number of ways. Frequent and large scale rebuilding can be disturbing in social and functional terms. Urban conservation area policy can prevent or hold-back damage to the built heritage. This allows change to be more incremental and organic, thereby maintaining familiar surroundings and the known network of schools, shops and communities. Others have emphasised the intrinsic social value of these

dimensions of urban life (e.g. Elkin, 1991). Secondly, older buildings tend to offer a robust style of building - their design enables flexibility of use which is reflected by the fact that many buildings have already been through a number of differing uses: residential, commercial, retail and even industrial (Barton et al., 1995). Conservation of this stock maintains this flexibility of use and potential use and, as new technology allows for more varied patterns of economic and cultural activity, so further uses for older buildings will become viable. Indeed the opportunities for maximising the potential of older buildings may be enhanced by the new requirements of major corporate users (Lizieri et. al., 1997). As part of the process of corporate downsizing , there is now more emphasis placed on attaining prestigious and central offices, smaller in scale but of a high quality and flexible design. This places the traditional town centre buildings in an excellent position for an ensured and continued viable use. It also aids urban viability in economic terms, a measurable factor in determining levels of quality of life.

Conservation areas can positively contribute to people's quality of life by helping to create a pleasant living environment. Often the buildings in conservation areas are on a human scale in terms of height and massing, with greater consideration given to their orientation. This provides greater environmental compatibility compared to many recently built areas with their dramatic micro-climatic effects (Elkin, 1991). Also, older buildings generally exhibit fine grained features, which slows the pace of life, which in turn can enhance the quality of experience and create a less stressful atmosphere - an aid to improving health. Human scale development combined with architectural interest aids legibility and permeability (Bentley et al., 1985), improving the perception of access to facilities, encouraging actual use and thereby aiding vitality. This in turn can strengthen economic viability and hence many of the intangible qualities of life which are interdependent on financial stability.

Finally, older buildings are generally available at lower rentals. Bentley, et al. (1985) argue that increased rents reduce variety because the specialised uses which contribute towards variety are often relatively unprofitable and cannot afford to locate in areas where redevelopment has taken place. The retention of older buildings therefore enables a wider variety of uses and promotes the principle of equity.

Mixed Use: Mixed use development is often seen as an important element of a sustainable environment, although not without some qualification (see Rowley, 1996). However, in broad terms we can point to the adaptability of older buildings which can facilitate mixed use within local areas. This in turn enables people to live, work and socialise within that same area. This can not only reduce the need to travel, but also improve personal safety and increase urban vitality.

Energy Efficiency : Within conservation areas there are a number of factors which have relevance to the consumption of energy. The main contribution comes from discouraging traffic, which is a major consumer of fossil fuels, and conserving and re-using existing buildings. The first of these has been discussed above. With regard to the second, it has been estimated that buildings consume approximately 40% of UK delivered energy and are responsible for 50% of carbon dioxide emissions; one of the main causes of global warming (Vale and Vale, 1993). Buildings impact on energy efficiency and consumption in two main ways, in *construction* and *in use*, (Barton et al. 1995; BRE 1991).

Construction costs accounts for about a quarter of the 'lifetime' energy requirement of a high energy efficient building. This is termed 'embodied energy', approximately 70% of which is accounted for by the manufacturing of the building materials which stresses the importance of conserving the materials already in use (Barton et al., 1995; Owens, 1992). *In use* the total lifetime use of energy in buildings is not yet quantifiable, but it does make the dominant contribution to the energy consumption of a building. The levels of efficiency obtainable in new buildings are impossible to reproduce in older buildings, although it is possible to vastly improve thermal efficiency through

'retrofit' schemes (Day and Brandon, 1997).

Regeneration: Conservation areas can act as a catalyst for urban regeneration efforts which can aid the overall policy of urban concentration. In particular conservation areas often provide the basis for cultural, economic and environmental initiatives and are favoured areas for private sector investment. Furthermore, the production of conservation strategies and plans can focus and integrate both public and private sector initiatives and allow for greater participation in the regeneration process.

Tourism: The architectural quality and the built and cultural heritage of conservation areas attract both foreign and indigenous visitors, bringing considerable economic advantages and helping to ensure the preservation of the more eminent attractions. The knock-on effects of tourism also supports a diversity of uses (Allison et. al., 1996), which facilitates mixed use.

Local Agenda 21: LA21 seeks to encourage local authorities and their communities to develop a new consensus over policies for sustainable development. Consulting and involving the general public strengthens the 'ownership' of policy and provides a greater chance that necessary lifestyle changes will be undertaken by individuals. The majority of the UK population are affected by conservation area policy. They have the opportunity to instigate designation, comment on policy proposals prior to adoption and are relatively well informed over development proposals within a conservation area. As the consultation and involvement of the general public is at the heart of the Local Agenda 21 process it would seem wise to build on the popularity and accepted success of a policy which already incorporates their involvement.

The picture painted so far has been essentially rosy but it is important not to overlook the downside of urban conservation policy. Relevant issues are listed below.

Conflicts of Interest: It is inevitable that a policy such as conservation areas which has wide reaching effects results in conflict. Some of the obvious sources of conflict are between:

- Developers and conservationists.
- Owners/investors and conservationists.
- Local authority departments competing for limited funding.
- Areas designated and the peripheral areas excluded.
- Elected members and local authority officers.

Although the process of discussing and mediating conflict is an important part of planning intervention, there is no doubt that this can take time and resources to achieve. Also, there is a constant danger that these tensions and conflicts of interest can surface to undermine the implementation of conservation area policy. These conflicts of interest can increase when the intensity of uses or users is increased.

Variability in Conservation Area Quality: The blanket application of conservation area policy to the range of urban areas which have been designated has raised some concern (Larkham and Jones, 1993). Although the sustainable development features of many of the older conservation areas is quite robust, there are others (including some of the more modern areas) where the quality of building construction, designed with shorter lifespans in mind, provide more of a challenge than an opportunity.

Traffic Displacement: The general necessity in conservation areas to enforce strict traffic management may result in those whose dependency on car usage is high (for whatever reason) going elsewhere. This will have the twofold effect of increasing distances travelled and reducing potential economic income. Furthermore, traffic may be deflected into less regulated and constrained areas, moving rather than solving the problem and perhaps having a negative impact in relation to the

principle of equity.

Building Maintenance and Improvement Costs: The high levels of building maintenance required in conservation areas imposes high costs on ownership, some of which are offset by raised property values and income generated from such sources as tourism. However, as many buildings are in public ownership, the burden of maintenance often falls on the local authority and other public institutions. Public funding therefore may be diverted to ensure conservation of the built form rather than being put to more 'sustainable' uses. Furthermore, potential benefits may be stymied by the stringency of development control, e.g. solar panels or more intense forms of development may be considered 'out of character' and refused.

Inequity: Residential property prices, including rents, are generally higher within conservation areas. The ability of lower income groups to stay within the area can be a problem. Often, their new residential location will be further from sources or potential sources of employment. Not only does this restrict residential choices, but adds to financial problems as travel costs rise, thereby perpetuating, and possibly increasing, existing inequalities.

Lack of Integration: Conservation areas concentrate attention on specific areas. This can lead to a blinkered approach, dominated by conservation objectives, which fails to see inter-relationships with the rest of the urban area or with other policy aspirations (like urban concentration). Also properties and areas abutting conservation areas may suffer decline or stagnation as a result of their location, with regeneration effort and funding being concentrated within the conservation area.

Tourism : Dependency on tourism as a source of income is a concern. If tourism is permitted to become the overriding economic base of an area, the very qualities which made it worthy of conservation may be lost. Intensive tourism can impose costs on local residents i.e. the need to manage visitors and traffic and associated problems (Allison et. al., 1996). Strange (1996) suggests that competitive economic policy focused on tourist promotion has now begun to dominate local debates about the sustainable development of historic towns and that this has side-lined historic conservation into a 'constraint' which has to be overcome or dealt with (within the overall pro-growth framework).

This overview of the potential symbiosis between urban conservation and sustainable development has suggested a number of dimensions or elements which exist or could be developed. It has also highlighted some potential conflicts and tensions which need to be managed if the benefits of urban conservation areas are to be realised. The range of elements are illustrated in Figure 3, but how are these potential inter-relationships being dealt with in UK planning practice? The next section attempts to cast some light on this, using recent survey and case study evidence from local authorities in England.

4. Conservation Area Policy in Practice

The empirical research was undertaken using two main methods; a questionnaire survey of 44 local authorities (response rate of 59%) and case studies of the urban conservation areas in Basingstoke and Winchester in the South East of England.

The selective survey of local planning authorities revealed the following:

- Of the 80% of respondents with adopted or draft local plans, 44% have carried out an environmental appraisal. In all cases, conservation area policies are recorded as being 'satisfactory'.
- All but five of the local plans contain a section dedicated to conservation areas, but no

authority considered conservation area policies to be significant in the furtherance of sustainable development principles.

- Less than half the respondents considered that public participation had an effective role to play in conservation area designation, stating that problems can arise as a result of lack of technical knowledge.
- None of the respondents have carried out any research into the relationship between conservation areas and sustainable development, although 68% consider this would be beneficial.
- 36% state that conservation area policy has prevented development in the past that would now be considered unsustainable and 72% cited cases where conservation area policy has encouraged new viable uses for existing buildings.
- Respondents, once prompted, generally felt that conservation areas have a positive contribution to play in achieving sustainable development. Out of a total 425 responses 61% were in the affirmative, 32% were negative and 7% were uncertain (see Figure 3).

These results reveal that whilst conservation of the built environment is considered important for its own sake, the linkage with sustainable development has not been acknowledged. When prompted however, respondents could recognise the positive contributions resulting from conservation area designation.

The case study analysis looked at two vastly differing places in terms of their historic environment and approach to sustainable development.

a) Basingstoke

Basingstoke is a 1960's expanded town which suffers from a poor image. Redevelopment included the demolition of much of the old market town, replacing it with larger and more serviceable retail and commercial buildings. Thus the typical market town mix of uses within the central urban area was lost to an essentially dual-functional (shopping and business) environment, planned around the segregation of pedestrians and vehicles. Based on reputation (commonly referred to as "Boringstoke", “Basingjoke“ and “Donut City”), it is an unlikely place in which to expect good examples of either conservation areas or environmentally sustainable development to be found.

However, the case study analysis revealed that conservation of the remainder of the historic built form has become a planning policy imperative, the conservation area to be enhanced and promoted as part of a drive to provide Basingstoke with an improved image. Also, as part of the environmental appraisal of the Deposit Local Plan (BDBC, 1992) officers dealing with conservation area issues were specifically consulted. The Plan fared well in the assessment. However, for conservation area policies, which make no reference to sustainable development, beneficial impacts are confined to the local environment, the impact on national and global sustainability being assessed as negligible, indicating that the technique used does not enable a comprehensive assessment of <u>all</u> environmental implications.

In terms of sustainable development, the designation of the Old Town Conservation Area in 1977 has had a number of impacts. The enhancement and improvement schemes have done much to improve the environmental quality of the conservation area which has led to an improved quality of life for residents and other users. This has also encouraged the use of alternative means of transport to the car thereby improving air quality and reducing polluting emissions. However, these schemes have made calls on limited council funds which could, it might be argued, have been better used for other schemes or initiatives such as an integrated transport network or social housing. Also, the concentration of investment in the conservation area has meant that there are only tenuous benefits

for the wider community, although its central location and mixed economic and cultural base allows it to 'serve' a wider set of needs than local residents.

Improved environmental quality has attracted visitors, thus providing a boost to the retail trade and the wider economy. Policies have been successful in encouraging mixed use and this has included housing. The grain within the conservation area is much tighter than in the adjacent redeveloped area and this, combined with the variety of uses, creates a vibrant street scene, encouraging use, enhancing visual delight and creating a legible and permeable environment thereby aiding safety and security. All these factors have a positive impact on quality of life and help towards ensuring a future for the historic environment.

The conservation area has developed an important role in providing affordable retail and leisure premises to independent traders. Indeed, the conservation area (by virtue of its ambience, environmental and architectural quality, mix of uses, accessibility, comparative sense of security, pedestrianisation and residential mix) has become the heart of the town's 'evening economy' and an important part of the town's overall vitality and viability. In relation to the needs of future generations, this should secure a thriving and diverse town centre for years to come.

Environmental improvements in the conservation area have set in motion wider regeneration in the surrounding area (i.e. bringing run-down and vacant houses and commercial property back into use, often for people on low incomes and small local enterprises). However, there is evidence that increasing demand has also displaced some established residents who have had to move to areas of the town which are less accessible to the enhanced mix of services now provided in the town centre. On the plus side, the viability of the re-use of older buildings is becoming increasingly evident, possibly as a result of demolition restrictions. Many purpose-built office buildings and functional dwellings which replaced terraced housing and business premises now stand vacant, prematurely out of date and inflexible. At the time of the research, this was reflected in the market where office rents for vacant modern blocks were as low as £40 per square metre, whilst many (occupied) older buildings were achieving £100 per square metre.

No research into energy efficiency has yet to be carried out, but the requirement to do so is acknowledged as is the need for the local authority to undertake a proactive role in its promotion. Similarly, the local authority is aware of the need for increased public participation and local interest groups are now consulted over development control issues which may affect the fabric of the conservation area. However, their responses have been confined to the visual and structural impact of development proposals. Work on Local Agenda 21 has commenced and it is hoped that this will provide a vehicle by which local community interests can become more involved in influencing policy and practice relating to the conservation area.

b) Winchester

Winchester provides a sharp contrast to Basingstoke, both in terms of built environment and approach to sustainable development. Heritage and conservation of the built environment are well established features in the urban context, and the benefits to the local environment from incorporating the principles of sustainable development are less obvious.

The Winchester District Local Plan: Deposit Draft (WCC, 1994) reaffirms the local authority's commitment to conservation, retaining it as one of its primary objectives whilst placing emphasis on environmental improvement and energy conservation. No environmental appraisal of this plan has been undertaken, nor was one planned. However, conservation area policies for Winchester are similar in content and objective to those of Basingstoke and Deane and it can be assumed that an environmental appraisal would have produced similar results i.e. that the policies have little impact on sustainable development issues beyond the local level. Having said that, it is interesting to note that the City Council has very recently initiated a broad capacity study which is attempting to deal

with increasing pressures for new development in and around the city. It is still too early to tell whether this study will lead to an integrated appraisal of the sustainability and other dimensions of the city's built heritage, but initial signs are encouraging (Winchester City Council, 1997)

Until very recently, sustainable development has not been given high priority in Winchester. Work on Local Agenda 21 has only recently commenced, and the findings of an environmental audit are yet to be implemented. This is reflected in the planning department which takes a cautious approach due to resource constraints and limited interest from officers and councillors.

Case study analysis suggests that there are a number of issues relating to Winchester City Council's conservation area policy which are important in the drive for more sustainable forms of development. These are listed below.

Winchester has developed an integrated ***transport*** strategy which seeks to reduce car-born traffic in the central area and improve accessibility based on alternative modes of transport. The principles of heritage protection and preservation embedded with the Council's conservation area policy have been fundamental in helping to secured sufficient funding to implement the strategy. The City now has 330 park and ride spaces and associated traffic management measures. The service is highly successful and operates at capacity. Further parking and traffic management schemes are proposed, taking into consideration the need to maintain the economic viability and vitality and improve the city's environment.

Viability of retail and business premises has been negatively affected by the traffic management schemes introduced. However, conservation area designation and the associated restrictions are only partially responsible for these problems (e.g. the retail market is also suffering from competition from out-of-town schemes). Traffic management is therefore a somewhat double edged sword, bringing both benefits and disbenefits for the economy and quality of life of residents.

The city performs well in terms of ***vitality***. Primary retail units are in high demand with Plan policies encouraging a diversity of uses, especially restaurants and bars, subject to compatibility with conservation area objectives. The City markets itself well, with visitor levels remaining high throughout the day and well into the evening.

Conservation area designation may be stunting the growth of ***tourism*** within the city, having a negative impact on both vitality and viability. The City has a shortage of hotel accommodation, not due to a lack of potential suppliers, but as a direct result of the requirement to preserve existing buildings, which limits the scope of redevelopment, site assembly and hence viability of provision.

The impact of conservation areas on ***urban regeneration*** in Winchester is hard to assess. The urban conservation area has areas falling into disrepair, which without investment may become derelict. On-site parking facilities are rare and dependency on public transport for access is relatively high and set to rise in accord with the transport strategy. Few companies are willing to occupy premises in the knowledge that access by car is likely to become increasingly restricted. Conservation area designation may be responsible for the decline of certain areas, rather than regeneration.

Residential uses, however, have fared well over the last few decades. Terraced housing has seldom become derelict. However, the negative side of an affluent population is high levels of car ownership and subsequent traffic congestion and atmospheric and noise pollution, and inequity amongst urban residents as lower wage earners are forced out to cheaper residential areas.

The Local Plan acknowledges the role that planning should play in ***energy conservation***, but surprise was expressed at the suggestion of any relationship with conservation areas.

Local Agenda 21 will give the local population a forum through which to have an input into the future of their environment. Until now public participation has not been encouraged by the local authority, who consider that conservation area management and control require specialist knowledge. The recently initiated 'Future of Winchester Study' is, however, planned to feed into the emerging Local Agenda 21 strategy by undertaking a visioning process which will, "develop and test long-term scenarios for the future role of Winchester - going beyond traditional land-use planning to develop a more holistic way forward" (Winchester City Council, 1998). Again, it is too early to assess the success of this project in making the types of linkage suggested in this paper.

The findings from the two case studies, and those from the survey, are summarised in Figure 4. Although the evidence collected is somewhat tentative, it suggests that the framework developed in this paper provides a relatively robust picture of the relationship between urban conservation and sustainable development. When prompted, local planning officers can see the logic of these inter-relationships but few have proactively sought to build them into their policy justifications, strategies or action plans for urban conservation.

5. Conclusions

This paper has indicated that there is a multi-dimensional relationship between urban conservation policy and the principles of sustainable development. Many of the elements of urban conservation make a positive contribution to sustainability, although there are tensions and negative aspects which need to be 'managed'. However, the evidence from the research is that many local planning authorities in England have not fully woken-up to this potential and have not developed policies or practices to address it or directly confront the unsustainable tendencies mentioned. Irrespective of the awareness of English planners, the evidence is that urban conservation policy in the towns and cities of England plays an important part in delivering environmental, social and economic benefits in line with sustainability principles.

Others have suggested that contemporary policy debates in historic towns are dominated by a dialectic between an imperative for economic growth promotion and the traditional policy discourses of urban conservation (Strange 1996 and 1997). The analysis carried out in this paper illustrates how that debate is encompassed within the principles of sustainable development. It also shows that the traditional rationale for urban conservation (heritage and environmental protection) is narrowly focused and that a wider 'policy discourse' can be developed based on the framework put forward here.

If local planning authorities are to maintain the broader perspective and truly integrate urban conservation policy and practice into the concept and principles of sustainable development, then a more proactive approach to the evaluation and rationale of urban conservation is required. English Heritage (1997) have gone some way to expand the breadth of relevant considerations, but this paper has suggested there is even more potential to take the conservation discourse further. This requires local authorities and other stakeholder groups to build awareness, research, justification and subsequent policies and action programmes to tackle the range of elements. These include undertaking environmental capacity studies and policy appraisals, as a basis for debate and policy formulation; developing design and development guidelines which manage the introduction of new buildings in a sustainable way with regard to use, layout, landscaping and construction methods; co-ordinating traffic management initiatives, public transport programmes, and cycling and walking strategies which respect and make use of the assets of the historic built environment; progressing economic development initiatives which seek to retain the necessary balance of activities and uses appropriate to such historic areas; and preparing energy conservation strategies which deal creatively with the particular features of older property. In these ways urban conservation areas can make a

fuller and more productive contribution to the principles of sustainable development. It would strengthen the arguments in favour of (proactive and sustainable) conservation at a time when policy debates in historic town and cities are shifting towards greater support for more unconstrained forms of economic and property development. This type of urban growth accommodation is often justified on sustainability grounds. This paper has suggested that a broader conception of sustainable development needs to built upon, one which expands the policy debate to take-in the diverse roles that urban conservation areas can play in maintaining important qualities of life and managing the whole process of urban development and redevelopment in historic towns and cities.

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APPENDICES:

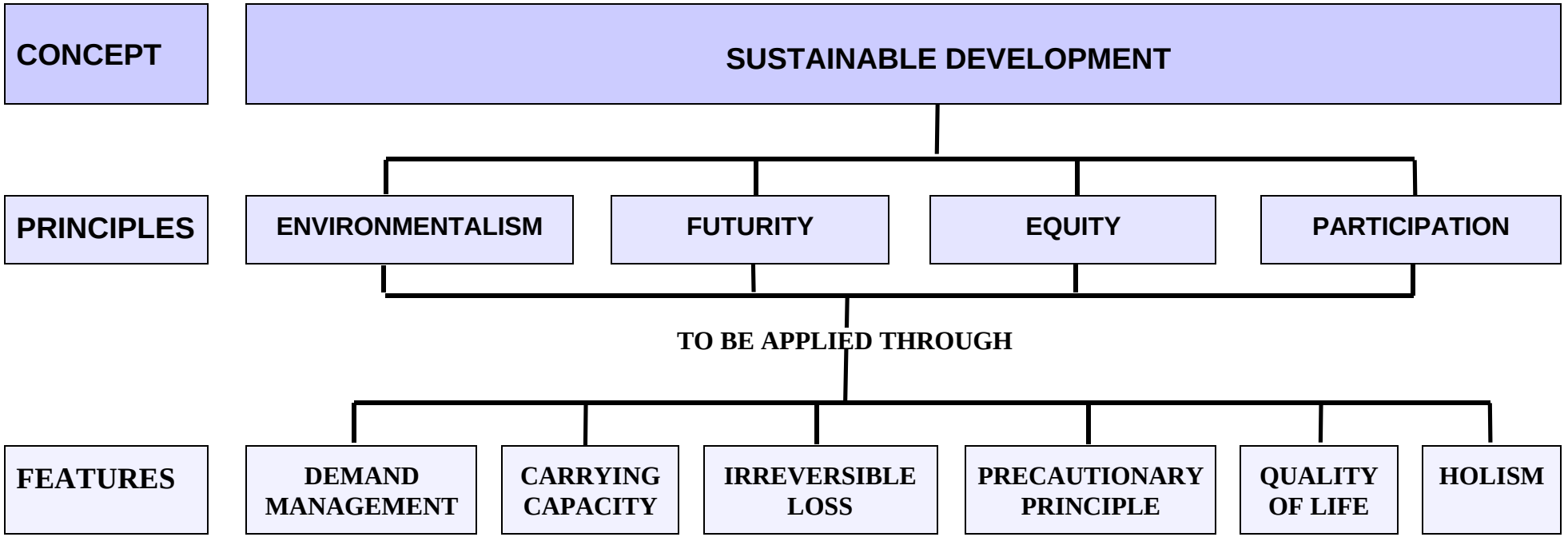

Figure 1: Framework for Assessing the Contribution of Urban Conservation Policy to Sustainability

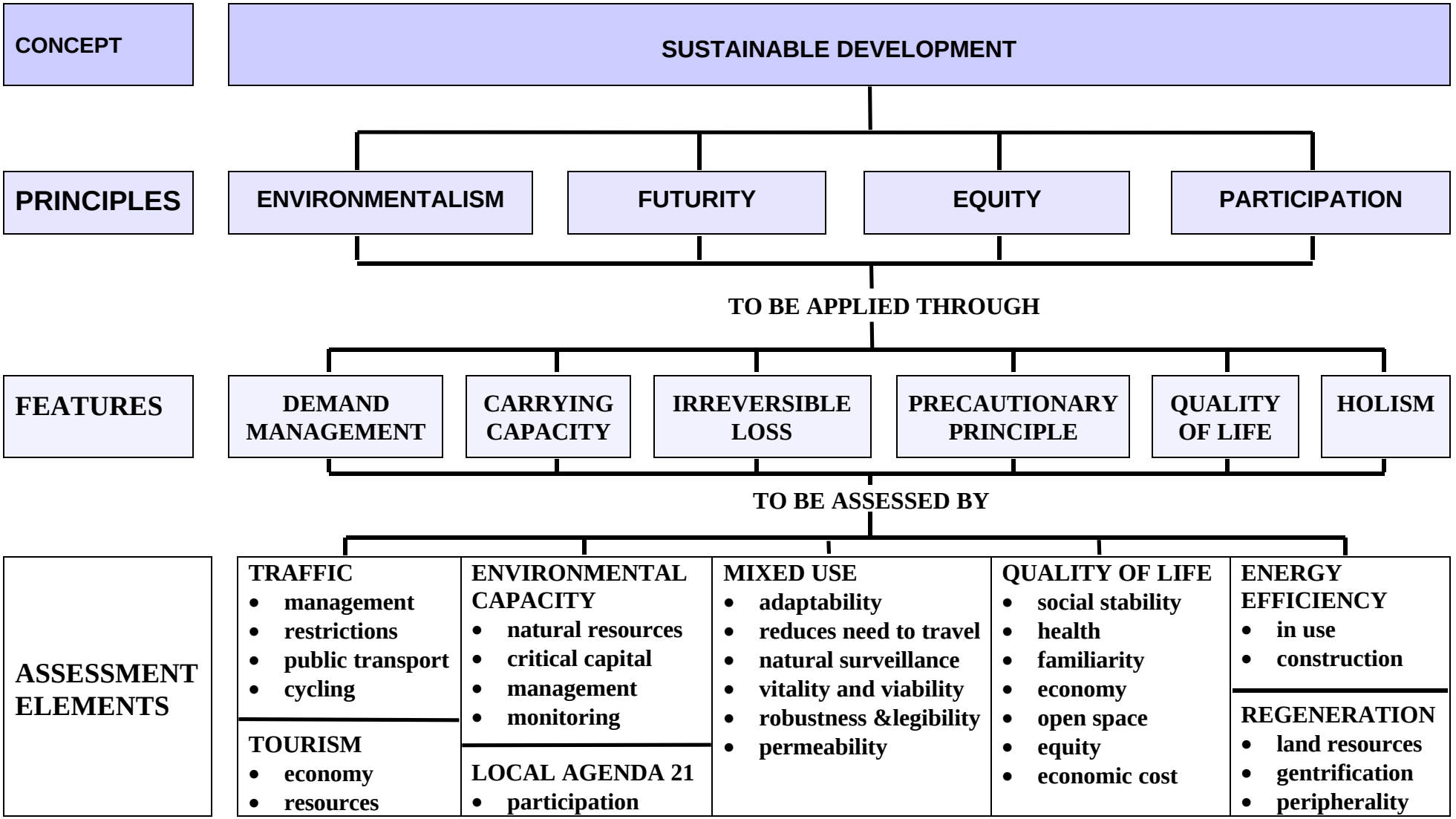

Figure 2: The Relationship Between Urban Conservation Policy and Sustainability

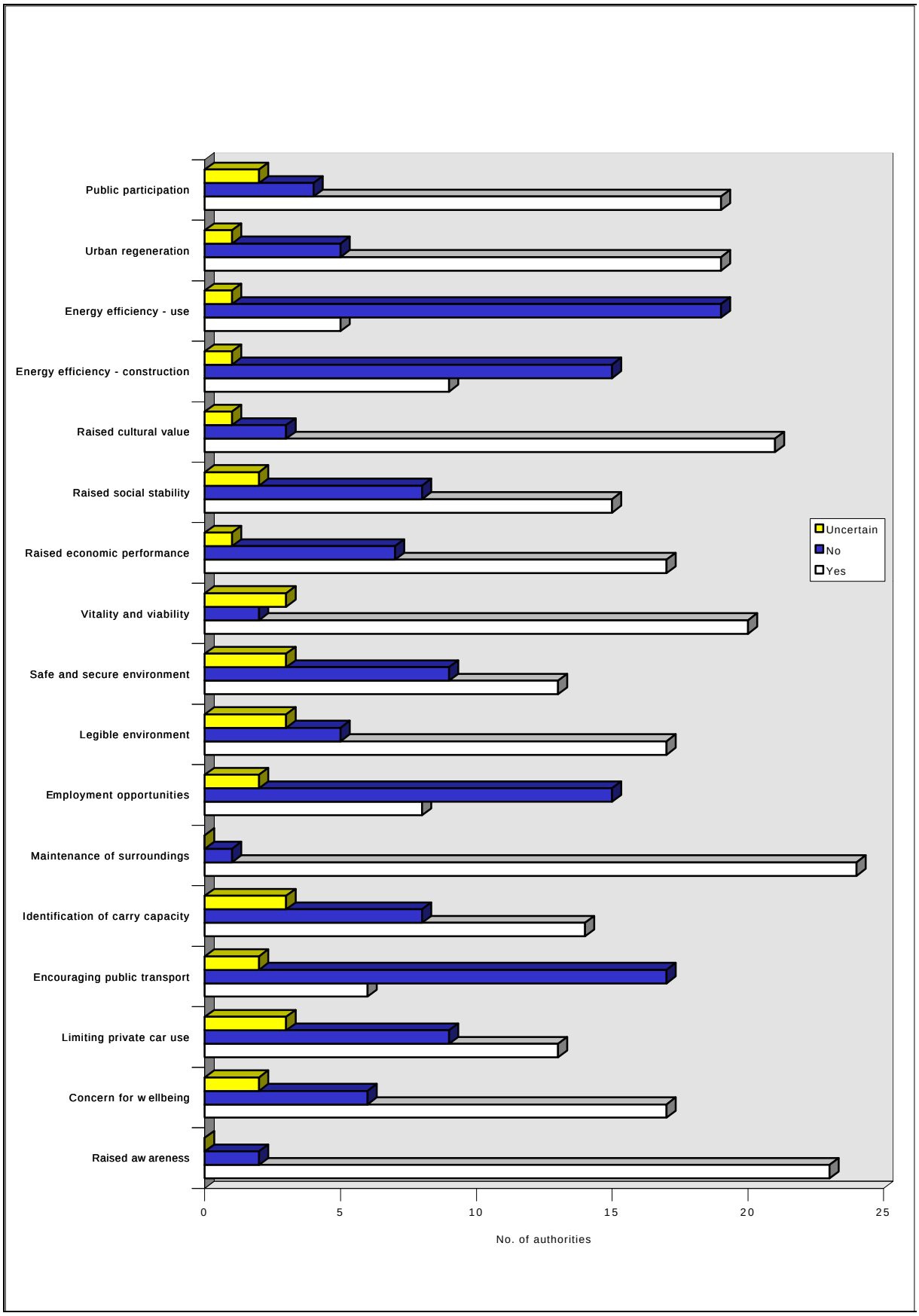

Figure 3: Aspects of Sustainability which can be Achieved by Conservation Area Designation (Source: LPA Survey)

	Basingstoke	Winchester	Questionnaire
Assessment Criteria			
Traffic			
management	✓	✓	✓
restrictions	✓	✓	✓
public transport	✓❍	✓	✗
cycling	✓	✓	⊗
Tourism			
economy	✓	✓	✓
resources	✓	✓	✓
Env. Capacity			
natural resources	⊗	⊗	✓
critical capital	⊗	⊗	✓❍
management	✓❍	⊗	✓❍
monitoring	✓	⊗	✓❍
Local Agenda 21			
participation	✓	⊗	✓
Mixed Use			
adaptability	✓	✓❍	✓
reduced need to travel	✓❍	✓	✓❍
natural surveillance	✓	✓	✓
vitality and viability	✓	✓❍	✓
robustness & legibility	✓	✓	✓
permeability	✓	✓	✓
Quality of Life			
social stability	✓❍	✗	✓
health	✓❍	✓❍	✓
familiarity	✓	✓	✓
economy	✓	✓	✓
open space	✓	✓	⊗
equity	❍	❍	⊗
economic costs	✗❍	✗	⊗
Energy Efficiency			
in use	❍	❍	✗
in construction	✓❍	❍	✗
Regeneration			
land resources	✓❍	✓❍	✓
gentrification	✓❍	✗	⊗
peripherality	❍	✗	❍

Key :

⊗ No information available ✗ Adverse impact ✓ Beneficial impact

● No relationship or impact ✓❍ Likely beneficial, but uncertain impact ✗❍ Likely adverse, but uncertain impact.

❍ Uncertainty of prediction

Figure 4: Summary of Research Findings from the Survey Questionnaire and Case Studies