

A vision for Thamesmead Towards 2016

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A report prepared on behalf of:
Gallions Housing Association, Trust Thamesmead and Tilfen Land

June 2007





Terms of reference

- To offer a vision that informs and guides future investment and planning for Thamesmead.
- To provide evidence to support bids for resources for proposed Thamesmead developments.
- To raise Thamesmead's profile with influential local, regional and national forums.
- To give the Local Authorities evidence to support Local Development Documents.

The overarching aim of this report is to contribute to Thamesmead becoming a more sustainable, balanced and inclusive community with a high quality of life for existing and future residents, visitors and businesses.

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Executive summary

- The purpose of this report is to contribute to the development of Thamesmead as a place of choice for residents, offering an enhanced quality of life within an inclusive sustainable community.
- It was commissioned by Gallions Housing Association, Trust Thamesmead, Tilfen Land, Thamesmead Co-ordinating Group and Bexley Council.
- The report builds upon previous studies undertaken by Llewellyn Davies Ltd in creating a *Vision for Thamesmead*.
- It was prepared between December 2005 and April 2006 and is based upon detailed consultations with residents and key stakeholders; documentary sources provided by Local Authorities, voluntary associations and other bodies; and the detailed analysis of survey data.
- The report consists of two main sections. Section one is the **Thamesmead Vision** and section two is **Thamesmead Today**.

Thamesmead vision

- **Section one** describes the **Thamesmead Spiral**. Building upon the six **big fixes** recommended by Llewellyn Davies Ltd in an earlier study, it consists of ten key themes. These, on the basis of policy interventions, would produce a step-change in the quality of life of residents. The **ten themes** of the Thamesmead spiral are:

1. Balancing the community – Diversifying neighbourhoods

A balanced and sustainable community consisting of a diversity of homes and household types that provide "balanced neighbourhoods". Residents are affiliated through their shared use of local educational, recreational and lifestyle facilities. A community with an absence of age, ethnic and income-related divisions.

2. Giving a heart to Thamesmead – Creating a vibrant Town Centre

A vibrant Town Centre providing a sustainable and balanced mix of retail, recreational, leisure and social/welfare facilities adequate for the needs of the local population. The evolution of today's shopping area into a Town Centre offering the required facilities to attract local people and provide a "heart" for Thamesmead. Facilities to include a range of "comparison" shopping (at present there is only convenience), the provision of community space for meetings/public gatherings/performances and other special interest activities.

3. Building quality neighbourhoods – Setting new standards

Quality neighbourhoods that improve personal well-being through the provision of sustainable economic, social, and leisure amenities. Neighbourhoods that have distinct identities which foster civic pride and personal self-confidence through thriving networks of families and friends.

4. Connecting Thamesmead – Neighbourhoods, community and region

Creating a transport infrastructure that allows for easy access to and from, as well as within, the community for employment, recreation and leisure purposes. Implementing a transport system that supports environmental sustainable objectives by encouraging the use of public transport, cycle routes and walkways.

5. Generating a dynamic local economy – Delivering local jobs

Developing a local economy offering employment opportunities for men and women according to their values and aspirations. Generating knowledge-based high value jobs that reduces commuting to other parts of London and the south-east. A broad-based local economy that attracts inward investment and also consists of a flourishing sector of entrepreneurs and small business owners.

6. Unleashing personal potential – Raising employable skills and improving the quality of citizenship

Providing local learning and training facilities for employable skills so all members of the community can engage in an expanding knowledge-based economy and have opportunities to develop their potential to the full.

7. Caring for the community – Providing healthcare for a changing population

Providing healthcare services that meet the changing needs of the community as its demographic and economic profile changes.

8. Unlocking Thamesmead – Creating an accessible and sustainable 'green' environment

Achieving a sustainable healthy environment that meets national and international guidelines in relation to pollution levels, emissions and personal access to, and use of, public, recreational and green spaces.

9. Re-Branding Thamesmead – Reinforcing a sense of identity and place

Thamesmead, as a community, offering a sense of place to which residents can identify and feel proud to belong. A community that is known, as a good place to live through the quality of its environment, social and economic amenities. A place in which residents choose to live as long-term stakeholders in its future growth and prosperity. A culture that encourages personal independence, responsibility and self-confidence.

10. Championing the community – Representing the residents

A community championed by a body acting as an ambassador for its residents' interests to national and local, public and private organisations.

Thamesmead today

- **Section two** of the report describes the socio-economic and demographic profile of Thamesmead today. It explores these by reference to the different neighbourhoods that make up the Thamesmead community. For the purposes of this report "neighbourhoods" are those designated by Gallions Housing Association for housing management purposes as well as "Waterfront" and "Golf course", "created" for this report to incorporate data on new housing areas. Data for neighbourhoods has been derived from aggregated sets of Output Area data from the 2001 Census.
- There is a much higher percentage of younger single person households compared with the national average. There is a substantial under-representation of "traditional" family households consisting of couples with dependent children. Thamesmead has more than twice the regional and national averages of households consisting of single parents with dependent children.
- The socio-economic profile of Thamesmead is skewed towards lower socio-economic groups. There is a higher percentage of men and women in low income, unskilled or non-wage households compared to regional and national figures. However, this statistic conceals significant differences between neighbourhoods.
- Thamesmead has an ethnically diverse population with the percentage of those of black family background almost twice that of London as a whole. 22% of the community's residents are born outside the UK, compared with Bexley (8%) and Greenwich (18%). The growth in the West African population is affecting the character of some neighbourhoods. International inward migration is attracted to the community through the availability of privately rented accommodation. Neighbourhoods that appear to have an increasing proportion of owner-occupiers are in fact, often, areas of tenants living in "overcrowded" privately rented accommodation. This is having a knock-on effect on the character of local schools, particularly pupil turnover, and the ability of the two local authorities to meet pupils' special needs.
- The housing stock reflects the demographic and socio-economic profile of the community. 40% of households live in apartments, double the national average. There is a very low percentage of semi-detached and detached accommodation although there are significant differences across neighbourhoods.
- Housing tenure reflects this pattern with 41% of all households in socially rented accommodation. Less than one-half of households are owner-occupied compared with over two-thirds for the national average.

- The Town Centre is little more than a retail park, a large supermarket and a small collection of convenience and fast food outlets. It is not a "true" Town Centre encouraging social interaction, local pride and community identity.
- Thamesmead has a diversity of neighbourhoods that reflects its highly varied socio-demographic profile. In some of these, a high percentage of single person and lone person households, international inward migration and young unattached people contribute to residential areas where there is little sense of local belonging. At its worst, there are parts of the community where a culture of fear prevails to the extent that older residents are reluctant to use public transport or enjoy the abundant local green amenities.
- As the Llewellyn Davis report and other studies have concluded, Thamesmead suffers from poor transport accessibility. This limits both access to job and recreational facilities in other parts of the region as well as discouraging inward business investment.
- Economic activity rates are in line with local, regional and national averages. There is, however, a wide diversity between neighbourhoods with only 36% of those living in the Moorings in full-time paid employment. This partly reflects the high percentage of single parent families in this neighbourhood.
- Education and skill levels are low and the lack of qualifications is particularly a problem amongst 15-19 years olds. There is a high drop out rate from the further education system and this inhibits employment opportunities.
- The health condition of the community, age-for-age, is worse than for regional and national averages. Moorings, Glyndon and Thamesmead East have particularly high levels of health and multiple deprivation.
- Thamesmead has abundant green space resources but these are often under-used because of fears for personal safety and vandalism. Access to green spaces further afield are inaccessible for many members of the community due to inadequate public transport provision.
- Thamesmead presently lacks a champion than can represent its interests to local authorities and other relevant administrative bodies. This is a source of frustration to many members of the community.

Background

This report builds upon previous studies commissioned to develop a strategic plan for Thamesmead. In 2001 Gallions Housing Association commissioned Llewellyn Davies Ltd to prepare a *Vision for Thamesmead*. This identified six “big fixes” and a number of “little fixes” that should be tackled:

The big fixes:

- Making better use of the Waterfronts
- Developing the Town Centre
- Expanding a balanced Transport system
- Getting the most out of the Green Space
- Changing the composition of Housing
- Creating an improved Employment mix

The little fixes:

- Better management and maintenance of the community’s infrastructure
- Designing out anti-social behaviour
- Providing improved leisure facilities for children and young people
- Better marketing and advertising of what is available and where

Thamesmead street map



Neighbourhoods are those designated by GHA for housing management purposes. *Waterfront* and *Golf course* are neighbourhoods “created” specifically for the report to incorporate data on new housing areas. Data presented in the report that “maps” exactly onto neighbourhood areas has been derived from aggregated sets of Output Area (OA) data from the 2001 Census.

Methodology

This report is based upon a wide-ranging and comprehensive consultation process with stakeholder organisations as well as interviews and meetings with Thamesmead's residents.

Around forty individuals from key stake-holding organisations gave tape recorded interviews. These explored their views on the issues facing Thamesmead and the future direction that its development should take. Meetings and consultations also took place with representatives from organisations that discussed the issues raised in interviews more broadly.

Additionally, a number of events took place over the consultation period that gave Thamesmead residents the opportunity to express their views – both verbally and through completion of questionnaires. A full list of organisations and individuals consulted is provided in Appendix I.

The **Vision** is underpinned in **Section Two** (Thamesmead Today) by quantitative data that describe Thamesmead's current socio-economic profile – including residents' age, employment status, health condition and educational attainment. This data is sourced primarily from the 2001 Census. Thamesmead, as an entity, does not fit discreetly within the administrative divisions typically used to structure survey data (such as local authority districts and wards). 2001 Census data is, however, structured at the level of Output Areas (OA) which map exactly onto postcode geography and which each contain around 125 households. These allow data to be presented that is specifically relevant to Thamesmead and which does not "overflow" into neighbouring areas. Output Area data also allows neighbourhood comparisons *within* Thamesmead to be made. Using specially aggregated *Output Area* data it has been possible to compare characteristics of people living in each of the neighbourhood areas used by GHA for the management of their housing stock. This has proved invaluable for identifying – in a spatially precise way – the diversity that exists *between* Thamesmead's neighbourhoods.

Updated Census projections are not available at the level of Output Areas. The decision to use 2001 Census Output Area data does, however, provide the opportunity to measure social change within neighbourhoods and across Thamesmead as a whole, when the next Census takes place in 2011, and again in 2021.

In using 2001 Census data this report adopts a consistent approach to that used by both Bexley and Greenwich Borough Councils in the development of their strategic plans. Both authorities, in formulating evidence-based strategies, use this as their core data. However, the preparation of this report has highlighted the absence of key, up to date, quantitative data in relation to the changing demographics of Thamesmead and particularly in relation to some of its neighbourhoods. For instance, there is no systematic data about the extent of buy-to-let properties and the consequences this is having for a range of amenities and services. To obtain reliable evidence on this trend would require a dedicated and in-depth social survey that is beyond the terms of reference and resources of this report.

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Thamesmead at a crossroads

Thamesmead is at a crossroads in its development. It is facing unprecedented changes that will have major impact on all aspects of its social, economic and demographic profile. Current proposals include major investment in a number of transport projects, mixed housing schemes, an expanded Town Centre, the opening up of its plentiful green spaces and River Fronts and the development of recreation and sporting amenities. These will require coordinated and planned intervention by key stakeholders. The purpose of this report is a vision of a Thamesmead in 2016 that is a place of choice for people who wish to enjoy an improved quality of life in a balanced, inclusive, sustainable community.

Thamesmead has the potential to be a community offering a quality of life second to none in south-east London. Our vision for Thamesmead is that by 2016 it could become:

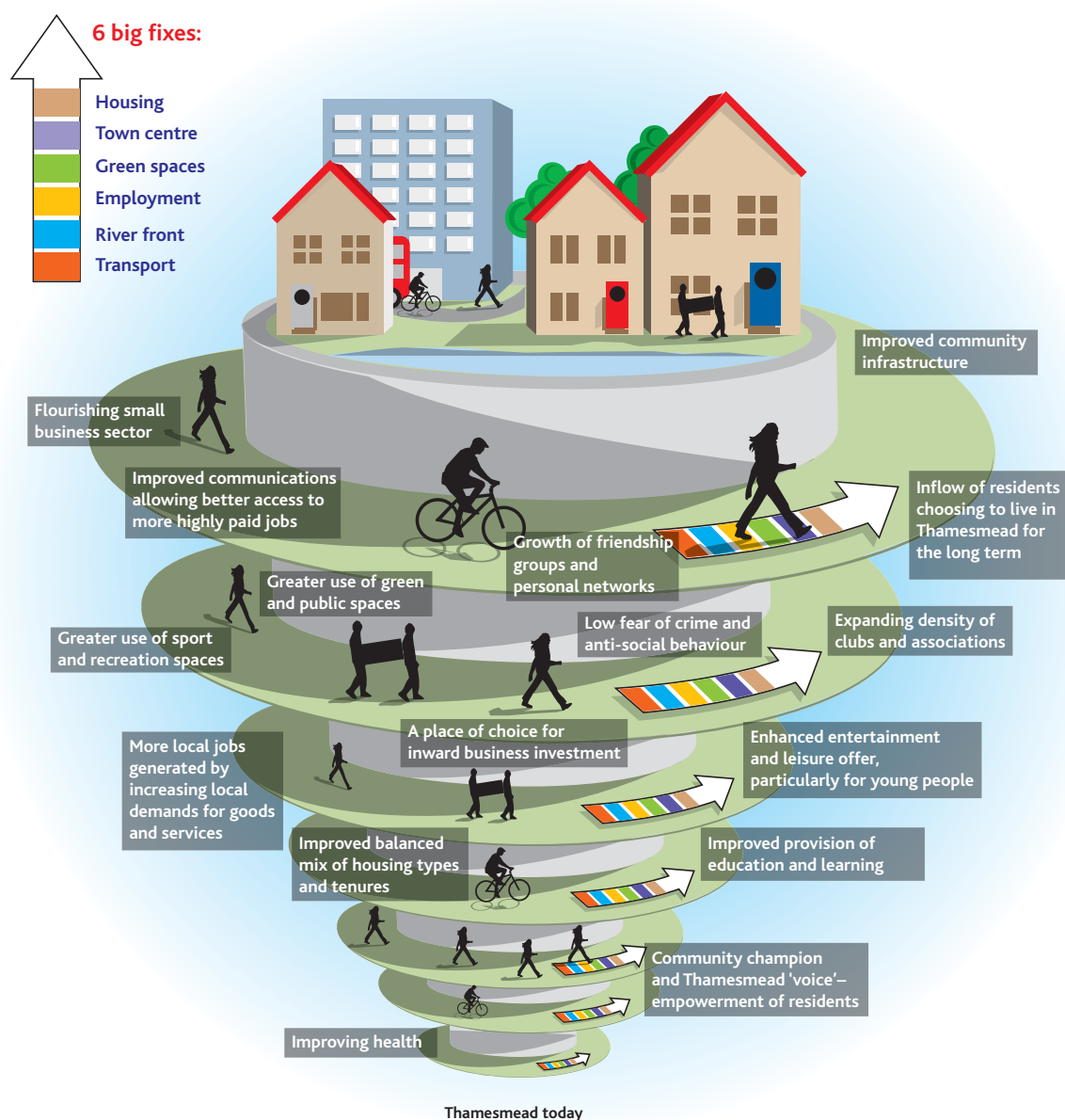
An inclusive, balanced and sustainable community that offers quality of life through its education, employment, leisure, and recreation opportunities. It becomes a community of choice for all of its residents.

The realisation of this vision can be described as the **Thamesmead spiral**. In this, Interventions by the major stakeholders, building upon the six Big Fixes recommended by the Llewellyn Davies report (2001), could combine to create a step-change in the quality of life enjoyed by the community's residents. The **Ten Themes** of the **Thamesmead spiral** are:

1. Balancing the community – Diversifying neighbourhoods
2. Giving a heart to Thamesmead – Creating a vibrant Town Centre
3. Building quality neighbourhoods – Setting new standards
4. Connecting Thamesmead – Neighbourhoods, community and region
5. Generating a dynamic local economy – Delivering local jobs
6. Unleashing personal potential – Raising employable skills and improving the quality of citizenship
7. Caring for the community – Providing healthcare for a changing population
8. Unlocking Thamesmead – Creating an accessible and sustainable 'green' environment
9. Re-Branding Thamesmead – Reinforcing a sense of identity and place
10. Championing the community – Representing the residents

The Thamesmead spiral: Towards 2016

These themes combining to create the **Thamesmead spiral** may be represented graphically as follows:



Theme 1

Balancing the community: Diversifying neighbourhoods

Vision statement

A balanced and sustainable community consisting of a diversity of homes and household types that provide “balanced neighbourhoods”. Residents are affiliated through their shared use of local educational, recreational and lifestyle facilities. A community with an absence of age, ethnic and income-related divisions.

Thamesmead has potential to be a place of first choice for more affluent households in the London region. With improved transport links it could attract inward migration of families and households from other parts of London, who wish to live in the community on a long-term/permanent basis.

These people could also be attracted to the community because of an expanded Town Centre with exemplar shopping and leisure facilities, and on the “doorstep” high quality waterfront, green and other public spaces

The growth of the population, by around 3000 to 4000 households and approximately 9000 people, will be primarily located at Tamesis Point and in the north-west of the community. Professional, managerial and key worker households aspire to live in quality neighbourhoods in which they are able to enjoy friendly relations. New housing developments providing high quality infrastructure such as retail amenities – to complement those on offer in the Town Centre – as well as architectural designs encouraging neighbourliness.

To achieve community balance new housing developments should incorporate a mix of housing stock and tenure types. To adjust for the high percentage of rented accommodation in Thamesmead today it will be necessary to provide a higher than average percentage of detached and semi-detached units available for owner-occupation.

However, a greater provision of owner-occupier housing units can be counter productive to achieving a balanced community profile if a high proportion of this stock, as it is released on the market, is purchased for buy-to-let purposes. Present-day high levels of privately rented accommodation masks the fact that, in Thamesmead, a true mixed-tenure community with a broader socio-economic profile has not, as yet, been created. Although there is no systematic quantitative data, “on the street” knowledge suggests the growth of buy-to-let properties in some neighbourhoods is leading to the accumulation of problems that sooner or later will have to be tackled. For instance, there are properties where there is excessive overcrowding and high tenant turnover. Broader outcomes of this include an excessive concentration of newly arrived migrant children in local schools with the effects this has for educational attainment and the demands on special needs resources.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

If Thamesmead is to be a balanced community by 2016, there will need to be the implementation of active housing management policies that monitor and closely manage privately owned housing units that are being used for buy-to-let purposes.

The 2004 Housing Act addresses the issue of *Houses in Multiple Occupation*. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in Thamesmead, many buy-to-let properties are occupied by more than one household unit. This implies that they could fall within the scope of the Act. If this is so, a registration process could be implemented with enforcement exercised by the two local authorities.

A balanced community is one in which there is not an over representation of particular socially excluded groups compared to their representation in the wider community and where the majority of residents have actively chosen to live there. An approach to this could be developed by Gallions and the Local Authorities in partnership, by means of a Local Lettings Plan (LLP), the administration and impact of which would be monitored regularly to ensure the desired outcomes are being delivered.

Residential areas with more stable populations will have an increasing proportion of older residents towards 2016. This will need to be recognised in planning health and welfare services and in the provision of easy access for those with mobility problems.

The regeneration of the older housing stock should incorporate “balanced neighbourhood” criteria through the development of units available for key workers and young professionals through shared ownership and owner occupation schemes. This would contribute to community balance by preventing a divide between affluent owner-occupiers in the newer housing developments located in the north-west of Thamesmead and tenants in the predominantly rental areas in the more traditional parts of the community.

The bedrock of any sustainable community consists of two/three generations of family members. The realisation of the Thamesmead Vision would be evident when it is a place of first choice for all its residents.

In summary, Thamesmead Vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Achieving a better balance of different household types. In particular increasing the proportion of homes comprising couples with children.
- Improving the provision of detached and semi-detached houses so that the range of available housing stock is extended to create a more affluent community.
- Attracting and retaining professional and managerial people, together with a higher percentage of key workers. This could be enabled by expanding housing provision for shared ownership.
- Increasing population stability so that generations of the same families choose to live in Thamesmead as a community of choice.
- Implementing local lettings plans which seek to achieve a balanced community. To ensure that buy-to-let properties do not generate neighbourhoods of overcrowded housing units and localities of acute economic and social deprivation. Reviewing the 2004 Housing Act and assessing its application to the buy-to-let market in Thamesmead.

Theme 2

Giving a heart to Thamesmead: Creating a vibrant Town Centre

Vision statement

A vibrant Town Centre providing a sustainable and balanced mix of retail, recreational, leisure and social/welfare facilities adequate for the needs of the local population. The evolution of today's shopping area into a Town Centre offering the required facilities to attract local people and provide a "heart" for Thamesmead. Facilities to include a range of "comparison" shopping (at present there is only convenience), the provision of community space for meetings/public gatherings/performances and other special interest activities.

Creating a vibrant Town Centre

A dynamic Town Centre is at the heart of any flourishing community. Thamesmead's Town Centre should aspire to being a sustainable shopping centre of first choice for residents. At present the growing local population has to travel to Bexleyheath or Bluewater for comparison shopping combined with leisure facilities. The imaginative development of the Town Centre is pivotal for broader social change in the community and will be the bedrock for a sustainable Thamesmead identity. The redevelopment of the existing shopping centre will be a step-change for Thamesmead with multiplier effects for the community in terms of employment, consumer choice, image and brand. It will, as a result, attract more affluent households to Thamesmead and these will contribute to a more balanced, sustainable community. Such development should be compatible with Greenwich's Urban Development Plan and would complement provision of facilities that are incorporated within this.





View looking west between typical blocks



View looking north by Harrow Manor Way

The Town Centre's development and planning should be iconic, incorporating designs that are visually exciting and that provide a broad leisure and retail experience rather than simply convenience shopping. There is the opportunity to incorporate leading edge thinking in relation to accessibility by cycle routes, footpaths and improved public transport systems. In particular the construction of the Thames Gateway Bridge could, with appropriate environmental controls, provide an opportunity for the Town Centre to be an impressive "gateway" to the regeneration area to the south of the river; or if nothing is done a further opportunity for the resident population to migrate to the retail facilities at Beckton. As such the development of the Town Centre should be seen within the context of contributing to the "gateway experience" of visitors to south-east London and should provide an exemplar for other Thames Gateway projects.

 "A town cannot flourish without a distinct clearly recognisable Town Centre – it is the heart of any community."

A future Town Centre should offer a holistic experience; a place for residents to enjoy since it is the heart of their community. The vision, therefore, is of a place that includes a broad mix of national retail brands combined with a more specialist offer of local traders. As a "true" Town Centre it is the location for the provision of community and recreation services. In this sense it acquires the characteristics of a traditional market town – but very much consisting of 21st Century features.

Modelling of Thamesmead's future population growth combined with the impact of the proposed Thames Gateway bridge and other transport infrastructure investments, indicates a large and rapid increase in local demand for both non-food and food retail outlets. According to research commissioned by Tilfen Land, Thamesmead's current non-food *catchment area* (potential shoppers) contains a population of 90,000. This is estimated to increase to at least 700,000 by 2016. Thamesmead itself, has a non-food shopping *population* (those who actually purchase products and services) that is set to increase dramatically; from under 10,000 today to over 30,000. It is estimated that by 2016, Thamesmead Town Centre could attract over 5.3 million shopping visits annually.

Today, Thamesmead attracts a regular food shopping *population* of just over 20,000 and has a food catchment population of 252,000. According to forecasts modelled by CB Richard Ellis these figures could increase to over 44,000 and 400,000 respectively by 2016.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

There are, however, spatial constraints that limit the further development of the present day shopping centre site. The current Town Centre has at its centre a 60,000 Sqft superstore and associated parking owned by Morrisons. With little or no local competition it trades very successfully and it is unlikely they would participate positively in a Town Centre redevelopment. The difficulties of developing the current site can, however, potentially be overcome by extending the Town Centre development onto Tamesis Point. This would have the advantage of combining a large residential development with an existing 50,000 Sqft retail/leisure provision and riverside frontage, with the Town Centre to provide a far superior, more integrated overall development.

The River Front offers the potential opportunity to create a unique Town Centre capable of providing an experience that will improve the quality of life for current residents as well as attracting more affluent incoming residents with riverside cafes, bars and restaurants.

 “It is estimated that by 2016 some 5 million shoppers could be visiting Thamesmead’s Town Centre every year.” 

The image of the Town Centre is pivotal to the upward Thamesmead spiral because of its spin-off benefits for employment opportunities, skill levels, and the opportunities for developing a more balanced, locally sustainable community. Thamesmead, with its projected population growth and unique geographic advantages, provides a unique opportunity to develop a Town Centre that incorporates iconic design, and has built within its plans the aspirations of an incoming affluent population as well as those of existing residents.

To promote and market a redeveloped Town Centre, as well as to ensure it offers a quality experience for visitors, it would be desirable to have a Town Centre management structure put in place.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Expanding the Town Centre into Tamesis Point to provide additional retail and leisure space of 250,000 Sqft.
- Attracting high profile retail brands to create a stronger district shopping offer that complements the retail offers of Bexleyheath, Woolwich and other local and regional centres.
- Encouraging additional small independent locally owned retail outlets that will meet specialist consumer needs.
- Providing a River Front spread of restaurants, cafes and bars to enhance the public life of the community and meets the requirements of a more affluent, expanding population.
- Creating a multi-functional entertainment and community hub that would provide a central, high profile, public space for small and large gatherings as well as the provision of a range of community services.

It could incorporate:

- Café, restaurant
- Facilities to meet the local demand for functions, worship, weddings etc.
- A learning and resource centre providing facilities such as computer suites, broadband access as well as perhaps traditional library services
- Space for local community groups, a local newspaper or radio station
- Advice, signposting, guidance service
- Performance and cultural space
- Visible Police presence with additional Community Support Officers to offer reassurance to traders, shoppers and residents. This would improve the public perception of the Town Centre as a safe space and encourage its greater use
- Crèche provision
- Space for an arts centre that would incorporate film and live entertainment complementary to the offer provided by neighbouring centres and large multiplexes.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

This space should be of high quality architectural design and equipped with state of the art technology – it should be owned, managed and funded by Trust Thamesmead, who should relocate their Head Office into it and ensure that it is financially sustainable.

- Providing provision for music and street performances – a bandstand, or covered raised platform.
- Attracting the provision of retail financial services.
- Re-establishing a traders' market, offering fresh vegetables, in line with the Mayor of London's objectives. This will require change in a Royal Charter but demand minimum capital outlay and add to the vibrancy of the Town Centre.
- Creating a Town Centre management strategy implemented by an appointed full-time officer and support staff.

Theme 3

Building quality neighbourhoods: Setting new standards

Vision statement

Quality neighbourhoods that improve personal well-being through the provision of sustainable economic, social, and leisure amenities. Neighbourhoods that have distinct identities which foster civic pride and personal self-confidence through thriving networks of families and friends.

Thamesmead aspires to have high quality neighbourhoods. These should improve personal well-being through a well provided mix of leisure, recreation and social amenities. There ought to be a mix of services that residents can access within walking distances, such as newsagents, post offices, pharmacies and other needed services.

Neighbourhoods need to have built environments that design out crime and anti-social behaviour. There should be little graffiti, vandalism, and fear of crime. Community support officers and other agencies will encourage the use of public spaces. Parents will become confident to allow their children to play in public areas without undue close supervision.

Neighbourhood stores should provide a mixed offer to complement what is available in the Town Centre. There will be easy access to the Town Centre and other shopping areas by public transport and improved pedestrian and cycle pathways. Neighbourhoods should have access to medical and welfare facilities. The police, housing and other services will need to provide neighbourhood facilities to meet resident's needs.

Neighbourhoods should have low rates of environmental pollution with recorded emission rates within official guidelines. There ought to be an improvement in the health condition of local residents, encouraged by easy access to green spaces and environmental and dietary improvements. The opening up of pathways and cycle routes will contribute to this.

As quality neighbourhoods, there will be a range of clubs and associations. These will be facilitated by neighbourhood halls allowing different age groups and sectors of society to enjoy their shared interests.

Regeneration schemes for the Arches, Tavy Bridge and the older parts of the community will encourage the use of public space. This will generate a greater sense of community pride. Gallions Housing Association should continue to roll-out their renewal strategy for their existing housing stock and to identify priorities in their neighbourhood redevelopment programmes.

New housing developments will also incorporate neighbourhood provision in their planning strategies to encourage neighbourliness and friendship groups.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Incorporating imaginative architecture in regeneration strategies to improve neighbourhood identity and pride.
- Redecorating the external appearance of high-rise residential towers to recreate these as appealing and distinctive landmarks.
- Implementing home allocation policies that will allow family members to live in close proximity with each other.
- Refurbishing road and building signs.
- Improving neighbourhood halls and community centres allowing locally based clubs and associations to flourish.
- Supporting neighbourhood shops which compliment the offer of the Town Centre and that act as “hubs” as meeting places.
- Regenerating derelict areas such as the Arches and Tavy Bridge according to best practice planning models and in relation to a regeneration strategic plan that identifies priorities for neighbourhood renewal.
- Improving the quality of neighbourhoods through implementing and expanding youth provision so that it is sufficient in all neighbourhoods.

Theme 4

Connecting Thamesmead: Neighbourhoods, community and region

Vision statement

Creating a transport infrastructure that allows for easy access to and from, as well as within, the community for employment, recreation and leisure purposes. Implementing a transport system that supports environmental sustainable objectives by encouraging the use of public transport, cycle routes and walkways.

Thamesmead should become fully incorporated within the local, regional and national economy through investment in transport infrastructure. This will open up employment, recreation and retail opportunities for residents and will allow a newly constructed Town Centre to develop as a retail location of first choice for a much larger consumer catchment area. It will also improve the availability of employment opportunities within a broader geographical region. Equally, the opening of the Thames Gateway Bridge could attract inward investment in the local economy through the relocation of businesses as well as encouraging higher rates of business start-up. However, any implementation of this project will need to take full and due account of any environmental outcomes for the quality of life of residents in the community.

“The continued development of CrossRail, Thames Gateway Bridge, Docklands Light Railway and Bexley North Transit will transform Thamesmead’s existing transport infrastructure.”

Section one: Thamesmead vision

There should also be reinforced the construction of Cross Rail and its Eastwards extension to Ebbsfleet, the extension of the Docklands Light Railway and the development of the Greenwich Water Front and North Bexley Transit systems. These will extend employment choices available to local Thamesmead residents across London and in North Kent, Ebbsfleet and the Medway towns. The upgrading of the A206 will add to the attractions of local business parks and provide more, higher paid jobs.

Within Thamesmead, and between the community and the sub-region, there should be transport schemes that encourage environmental sustainability. Enjoyment of the waterfront will be improved by further developing pedestrian and cycle route that will extend onwards towards London.

Thamesmead's abundant green spaces should be linked by well-lit, secure footpaths and cycle routes that offer personal safety through community support officers and electronic security.

Access between the Town Centre and neighbourhoods will be improved by upgrading existing footpaths and cycle routes. Men and women with mobility disabilities need improved access through the redesign and refurbishment of footpaths as the older residential parts of the community are regenerated.

Population growth and an appealing Town Centre will probably generate greater car traffic that will require appropriate parking facilities.

In summary Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Interconnecting Thamesmead to a broader local, regional and national economy offering greater job opportunities across London and in Kent and the Medway towns. Securing the extension of Cross Rail to Ebbsfleet and the development of the North Bexley Transit.
- Offering a wider range of retail and leisure choices for local residents.
- Allowing the reinvented Town Centre to be a destination of first choice through its retail and leisure offer for a wider population catchment area, especially from north of the river.
- Ensuring adequate provision for car parking in the newly created Town Centre.
- Enabling the community's geographical features – River Front, waterways and green spaces – to be enjoyed by a larger local and regional population through improved cycle and footpath routes.
- Improving access between the Town Centre and neighbourhoods through the opening up of footpaths and cycle routes.
- Improving pedestrian access by redesigning overhead walkways and creating more user-friendly footpaths.
- Developing the Green Chain walk to link in with regional footpath strategies.

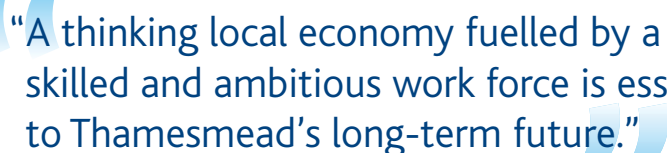
Theme 5

Generating a dynamic local economy: Delivering local jobs

Vision statement

Developing a local economy offering employment opportunities for men and women according to their values and aspirations. Generating knowledge-based high value jobs that reduce commuting to other parts of London and the south-east. A broad-based local economy that attracts inward investment and also consists of a flourishing sector of entrepreneurs and small business owners.

With improved transport connections, Thamesmead will offer improved opportunities for business relocation, business start-up and entrepreneurship. In addition to the continuing growth of warehousing and distribution facilities, an increased provision of quality facilities will offer an attractive location for high technology and other value-added services. These will provide better paid high skill jobs and that will contribute to Thamesmead as a balanced, and sustainable community. This greater earning capacity will generate a more affluent consumer catchment area for the redeveloped Town Centre.



“A thinking local economy fuelled by a skilled and ambitious work force is essential to Thamesmead’s long-term future.”

This step-up in economic profile will require learning and enterprise training facilities. This will need collaboration between local employers and training agencies. Schools will also work with employers to ensure curriculum content meets local skill needs. The Innovation Centre, located on the East Thamesmead business park, will contribute to this through its focus on technology businesses. Initiatives offered by the two local authorities should lead to an increase in business start-up rates among men and women. This growing small business sector ought to include retailers that will also reflect the spending needs of a more affluent local population.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

This small business sector will contribute to the community's sustainability through providing local employment. This will reinforce a sense of locality – the “market town” effect – as well as fostering a self-confident enterprise culture. Entrepreneurship will offer opportunities for personal success for those academically under-qualified or unable to have full-time paid employment. It will allow women, who for family reasons are unable to travel, to work and engage in full-time jobs.

Thamesmead will offer an excellent location for businesses trading in local, national and global markets. Easy access to the European market will be particularly attractive to businesses. There are opportunities to develop a business sector focus on environmental, sustainable technologies. The development of Thamesmead is based on skilful environmental management strategies and this has the capacity to be leveraged for further business opportunities. For example flood management schemes, management of industrial contaminants and the application of sustainable policies to housing developments.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Developing Veridion Park with a Centre of Excellence for ICT companies including a 50,000 Sqft Innovation Centre launched in partnership with Bexley Council. This will provide higher-grade technology related employment as well as opportunities for business start-up and the growth of small and medium sized enterprises.
- Marketing Hailey Road Business Park, incorporating Bexley Council's Belvedere Business Centre which provides a range of support services including serviced offices, a conference venue and business advice. It is a focus for government support for SME's and business start up.
- Fully developing Birchmere Business Park, consisting of four high specification units with easy access to the M25 and the South Circular road.
- Expanding the White Hart Triangle trading estate with Tilfen Land completing phases I and II, covering more than 50 acres and attracting new businesses that will create an additional 2000 jobs.
- Developing Woolwich Trade Park which as a council joint venture with Tilfen Land, will include a hotel and various retail outlets.
- Coordinating the provision of commercial accommodation to meet the aims of increased entrepreneurship and business start-up.
- Trust Thamesmead and the two local authorities working collaboratively to promote local labour and training schemes.

Theme 6

Unleashing personal potential: Raising employable skills and improving the quality of citizenship

Vision statement

Providing local learning and training facilities for employable skills so all members of the community can engage in an expanding knowledge based economy and have opportunities to develop their potential to the full.

“With a growing under five population, plans are in place to address the deficit in early years service and affordable, high quality childcare thereby enabling parents to train or continue their education.”

To become a dynamic, sustainable economy, Thamesmead will need to offer access to first-class learning and training facilities from pre-school and primary through to secondary, tertiary and continuing adult education. These should offer skills and qualifications required for high earning knowledge based jobs. This will add to the attractions of Thamesmead for business location. There also needs to be a culture shift with heightened aspirations for learning and skills. There should be greater lifelong learning engagement as demands of the local economy change.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

Education is not only about qualifications for employment. Access to learning and resource centres are important for personal self-development. Through these, men and women have the capability to expand their leisure and creative interests. The availability of Internet cafes allows for those who cannot afford their own broadband connections to expand their personal knowledge and aspirations. The development of the Town Centre providing a learning and resource centre would allow for this. Learning resources should also be provided in neighbourhoods. The newly developed residential areas in the North-west of the community will need to include these. These will also function as local hubs encouraging the formation of friendship groups and community networks. However, there should be caution in ensuring there is no duplication in provision of the two local authorities.

Thamesmead currently has a substantial deficit in early years services and affordable, high quality, childcare despite a growing under-five population. In neither Thamesmead Moorings nor Thamesmead East is there yet an established "Children's Centre". Both Boroughs currently have plans to address this issue. Greenwich has allocated funds to provide two children's centres in Thamesmead Moorings Ward by 2008. Bexley plans to build a children's centre at Greenmead.

The quality of primary school buildings and the education provided is good but there is an imbalance between supply and demand in the Greenwich side of Thamesmead. This means that, currently, some schools have been forced to accept temporary buildings. Greenwich has advanced plans to build two new primary schools to address this.

The choice of provision for parents and children at secondary school level is limited within the community, especially for girls. This represents a major obstacle to retaining professional and managerial people in the community if their children's secondary educational needs cannot be met. However, a new secondary school is planned for Woolwich and planning is under way to provide further secondary provision at Abbey Wood.

The "extended school" model needs to be implemented to develop the social, leisure and recreation skills of young people and to allow parents greater choice in gaining employment in jobs with "non-family friendly" working hours. Bexley has recently completed a strategic review of school infrastructure and is consulting on a clustering model for schools that will facilitate the provision of extended services.

The government's *Every Child Matters* programme formulated under the 2004 children's act requires local authorities to promote co-operation in order to improve children's well-being in relation to five key aims – be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Both local authorities have plans in relation to achieving these aims (Bexley, 2006-2009; Greenwich, 2006-2008).

Bexley's *Areas of Opportunity* programme is designed to improve the quality of life of local residents. A key element is to improve the life chances of local residents through educational attainment, health and access to employment. Thamesmead East is one of the Boroughs nine identified areas that will benefit from this programme.

The vocational offer at local secondary schools needs substantial enhancement and there is a low level of local young people taking up apprenticeships.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

Participation in higher and further education is low by comparison with regional and national averages as is the provision of community education in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Bexley Colleges plans to relocate from Erith to Bexleyheath will make access to Bexley post-sixteen provision more difficult. Greenwich Community College advised that in 2005 it had only 85 people enrolled from the Thamesmead area and it currently has 72 learners from the same area.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Locating a high profile, fully equipped and well-funded Learning and Resource centrally in the Town Centre. Promoting education and training facilities at the heart of the community.
- Extending policies that encourage widening participation in education and training among socially and economically disadvantaged members of the community; especially among single parents who, for reasons of childcare and transport accessibility, have been less able to develop their employable skills.
- Improving neighbourhood library and learning facilities with expanded public broadband Internet access.
- Increasing the rate of participation in higher and further education among socially and economically disadvantaged groups and encouraging their enrolment in access courses.
- Supporting improvement in school educational attainment through reducing pupil and teacher turnover, by “building” more demographically balanced, stable and cohesive neighbourhoods and investing in keyworker schemes.
- Strengthening links between local education and training establishments with local employers.
- With the projected increase in Thamesmead’s population expanded training facilities will be required. These should be compatible with the expanded amenities being offered in Erith and Woolwich.
- Developing and implementing an “extended schools” strategy across Thamesmead that addresses local needs and fulfils government policy requirements.
- Trust Thamesmead, collaborating with the two local authorities and Woolwich polytechnic secondary school, to develop the Northern Arches as a vocational education and training centre for young people.
- Developing partnerships between local schools, especially Woolwich Polytechnic and Bexley Business Academy, to develop a stronger focus on supporting lifelong learning and community education.
- Achieving each Borough’s targets in relation to the Governments *Every Child Matters* programme, as required under the 2004 Children’s Act.
- Achieving targets for enhancing the quality of life as stipulated in Bexley’s Areas of Opportunity programme through developing the capacity of voluntary and community groups to deliver enhanced activities and services.

Theme 7

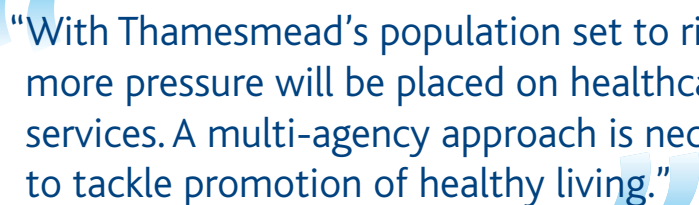
Caring for the community: Providing healthcare for a changing population

Vision statement

Providing healthcare services that meet the changing needs of the community as its demographic and economic profile changes.

Age-for-age the health condition of Thamesmead's residents is poor by comparison with the London region and the National averages. There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy, more people smoke and life expectancy is lower for both men and women. There is a higher incidence of death from heart disease and cancers.

An improvement in the general health condition of residents will require a multi-agency approach that focus on health promotion, preventative health strategies and the provision of additional services to meet the needs of those with chronic health conditions.



“With Thamesmead’s population set to rise, more pressure will be placed on healthcare services. A multi-agency approach is necessary to tackle promotion of healthy living.”

The growth of Thamesmead's population will also put added pressure on healthcare services. These will require expansion through the provision of a multi-professional, multi-functional facility located with easy access in the Town Centre. This will function as a hub for other primary care services offered in neighbourhoods. The regeneration of Tavy Bridge will include a new health centre that offers health, welfare, social and other voluntary services.

The population growth of Tamesis Point and further inward migration to the Moorings will lead to a younger population mix. This will consist of young families, single persons and residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds. This population profile will shape the character of healthcare provision; for instance, the demand for ante and post-natal care, as well as the treatment of minor ailments of children and young people.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

Some parts of Thamesmead will have an ageing population that will place added pressures on geriatric services as well as creating a greater need for home care support and services in the community. The recruitment of staff for these services should generate employment opportunities. Staff retention should be obtained through the offer of good employment conditions, working environments and flexible working practices.

The general health and welfare of a community is also shaped by the quality of its built and physical environment. The improvement of green space access and encouraging exercise through the use of cycle tracks and footpaths ought to contribute to this. The development of Thamesmead as a sustainable, socially-inclusive and balanced community will also have an impact. Taking these measures together, there should be a reduction in obesity, alcohol and substance misuse and cardio-vascular conditions. These will also be achieved through good health education campaigns that emphasise the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, as well as encouraging healthy diet and exercise regimes in local schools and colleges.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Providing a multi-professional/multi-functional purpose built health facility located in the redesigned Town Centre. This will function as a hub for other health and welfare services offered by Greenwich PCT and other agencies in the separate neighbourhoods
- Opening a newly-established Health Centre in a regenerated Tavy Bridge with joined-up health and welfare services offered by Bexley PCT.
- Promoting healthy eating and exercise regimes in local colleges, schools and the community.
- Implementing health promotion strategies in schools, the Town Centre and other public facilities that advertise the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.
- Developing Thamesmead as a balanced, inclusive community that will provide a high standard of living for all its members.
- Applying sustainable planning policies encouraging greater use of cycle paths and pedestrian walkways.
- Adopting the Mayor of London's guidelines encouraging easy access to fresh fruit and vegetable outlets.
- Implementing government recommendations in its sustainable communities proposals that all residents should be within ten minutes walking access to green space amenities.
- Achieving health condition targets as specified by the Department of Health so that Thamesmead achieves, at least, regional and national averages.

Theme 8

Unlocking Thamesmead: Creating an accessible and sustainable “green” environment

Vision statement

Achieving a sustainable healthy environment that meets national and international guidelines in relation to pollution levels, emissions and personal access to, and use of, public, recreational and green spaces.

Thamesmead offers a unique environment within the London region. Its extensive waterways include the River Front, rivers, canals and lakes. It also has extensive green spaces and has benefited from heavy investment in tree planting programmes. The environment offers a quality of life that will be of increasing appeal as transport systems both to and from the community as well as between its separate neighbourhoods are improved.

Thamesmead's residents already have easy access to many green spaces and to historic sites that can be better marketed as tourist attractions. These include Crossness pumping station and Lesnes Abbey. Future housing and retail developments can embrace these physical assets of the community. The redesigned and expanded Town Centre will incorporate the amenities offered by the River Front. Housing schemes at Tamesis Point should be designed to offer residents enjoyment of lakeside and riverside facilities.

“Maximum use should be made of
Thamesmead's outstanding natural
resources and exceptional environment.”

The regeneration of the older parts of the community offers opportunities to take greater advantage of Southmere Lake. The influx of more affluent owner-occupiers – as part of the Tavy Bridge regeneration programme – could create added demand for water-based sports and leisure activities. This is also likely to be the case along the River Front as the population at Tamesis Point grows.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

Thamesmead will have an expanded network of pedestrian and cycle-paths that link its neighbourhoods to green spaces, public areas, the River Front and the Town Centre. A more affluent incoming population will have high expectations of sports and recreation facilities. The younger population of Tamesis Point will want purpose-built local amenities. These should complement those provided in more centrally-located and expanded facilities near the Town Centre.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:


- Opening up access to the town's canals and lakes so they are attractive and well-used community resources. This will include the renovation of tow-paths, and the implementation of safety systems that increase public use. This will encourage the use of canals and lakes for canoeing, dingy sailing wind surfing and angling.
- Improving access to the River Thames so it is better used for walking and physical recreation.
- Enhancing the Green Chain and Ridgeway walks by improving pedestrian access at key locations and introducing lighting, signage and more architectural features.
- Developing sporting provision at Thamesmead Town Football Club.
- Providing local sporting and recreation facilities in newly developed residential areas with particular attention to the needs of younger people and children.
- Incorporating expanded health, sport and recreation facilities at Thamesmead Leisure Centre and at the re-designed, larger, Town Centre.
- Encouraging a greater use of parks and public gardens through expanding provision of Park Rangers and Community Support Officers.
- Improving access and signs to Crossness Engine Pumping Station and Lesnes Abbey to attract more visitors.
- Co-ordinating community facility improvement and provision as part of new housing development projects.
- Developing the Southern Arches as a youth leisure zone to complement the Tavy Bridge regeneration programme. This will require the mapping of the existing community infrastructure and the identification of needs and priorities.

Theme 9


Re-Branding Thamesmead: Reinforcing a sense of identity and place

Vision statement

Thamesmead, as a community, offering a sense of place to which residents can identify and feel proud to belong. A community that is known as a good place to live through the quality of its environment, social and economic amenities. A place in which residents choose to live as long-term stakeholders in its future growth and prosperity. A culture that encourages personal independence, responsibility and self-confidence.



“Communities thrive through residents taking pride in and ownership of their property, neighbourhood and environment.”



Thamesmead has the potential to be a great place to live. The opening-up of transport links will make it easily accessible from other parts of London and the south-east. Its unique landscape of lakes, canals, footpaths and cycle routes as well as the River Front, offer an attractive environment for younger, more affluent families.

The redesign and development of the Town Centre will add to its attractions as a place of choice to live. As Thamesmead develops as a balanced and sustainable community its upward spiral should lead to its re-branding. Thamesmead ought to be seen to offer excellent employment and lifestyle opportunities. This will be reflected in promotional campaigns of commercial and residential property developers, local housing associations and the two local authorities. A flourishing Town Centre is vital for creating a sense of place. The redesign and development of this will give Thamesmead a much needed focal point.

Section one: Thamesmead vision

Thamesmead should have architecturally appealing buildings located within the newly refurbished Town Centre and distributed across neighbourhoods to reflect their diversity and distinctiveness. The Tavy Bridge regeneration programme and redevelopment of the Boiler House appear to offer examples of what can be achieved.

These achievements need to be widely known – nationally, regionally and locally – through the development and implementation of a promotional strategy. This would aim to reverse any present day negative imagery and stress particularly the green accessible quality of life enjoyed by local residents.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Creating a Town Centre with outstanding architectural design.
- Designing iconic buildings reinforcing a sense of local pride.
- Refurbishing and redecorating the external appearance of the Lesnes Tower blocks to offer a distinctive “first impression” to visitors.
- Providing events appealing to all sectors of the community – as presently offered by the Trust Thamesmead Annual Festival.
- Creating a community radio station and newspaper focusing solely upon Thamesmead issues. Additionally, to work with existing local newspapers to widen their focus and distribution to enhance the positive profile of Thamesmead.
- Refurbishing and replacing derelict building and road signs.
- Actively promoting Thamesmead as a community of choice for residents.
- Developing and implementing a promotional strategy that emphasises the community’s “green” quality of life

Theme 10

Championing the community: Representing the residents

Vision statement

A community championed by a body acting as an ambassador for its residents' interests to national and local, public and private organisations.

Thamesmead offers a unique opportunity for close collaboration between Bexley and Greenwich Borough Councils. With a shared vision they have the capability to develop a strategic partnership that puts Thamesmead first. Starting with the premise that Thamesmead is a community, they can implement policies that embrace the aspirations of the three community stakeholders that emerged from the administrative restructuring of Thamesmead Town Ltd – Gallions Housing Association, Tilfen Land and Trust Thamesmead.

“As a new Thamesmead takes shape, it is vital that residents are provided with a clear and cohesive channel of communication, ensuring their voices are heard at both a local level and a national level.”

This could be a vehicle through which a range of issues are channelled to the two local authorities and other bodies. This would not cut across the two local authorities. Nor would it interfere with any other aspect of regional or local decision-making processes. It would act solely as a channel for the expression of interests of the Thamesmead community. This need will be more paramount as Thamesmead's population expands with a demographic profile that will generate demand for changing and added services. These will range from social and welfare to transport and employment issues.

In summary, Thamesmead vision 2016 will be achieved by:

- Upgrading the role of the Thamesmead Co-ordinating Group. Thamesmead already has, in its local MP and Ward Councillors, important ambassadors and champions but more can be done to ensure the needs of the community are registered with those who can make a difference. The regular Forum of senior officials from Bexley Council, Greenwich Council, Gallions, Trust Thamesmead and Tilfen Land that already exists to coordinate activity, will revise its annual programme to include bi-annual meetings that facilitate an update meeting with the local MP, Ward Members and community representations. The Regeneration Delivery Unit of Bexley Council will provide initial secretarial support but, overtime, this will be shared with other partners. Any arrangements will need to dovetail with emerging central government policy on Local Area Agreements and the role of strategic local partners in that process.

Community profile

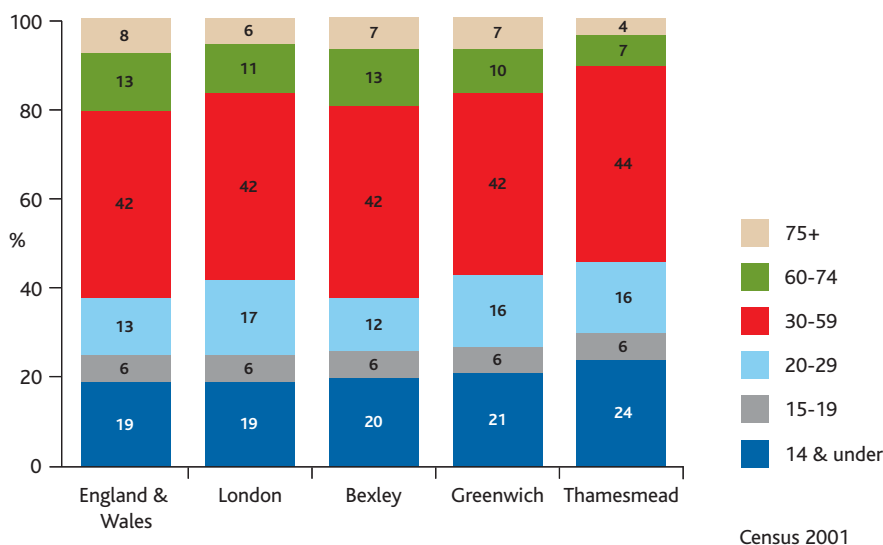
Demographic profile

Thamesmead had a population of around 27,000 according to the 2001 Census. Since then an additional approximate 5000 housing units have been constructed indicating the population today is approximately 34,000. A more precise estimate is difficult to obtain in view of the fact that Thamesmead is not a local government entity.

Thamesmead has a younger population compared to the local, regional and national averages. This is reflected in that:

- Almost one quarter of the population is under 14 years of age compared with a London and national figures of 19%.
- Only 11% of the population is aged 60 and over compared to a regional London figure of 17% and 21% nationally. Thamesmead has only one-half of the national percentage of those over the age of 75, and just two-thirds compared to London as a whole.

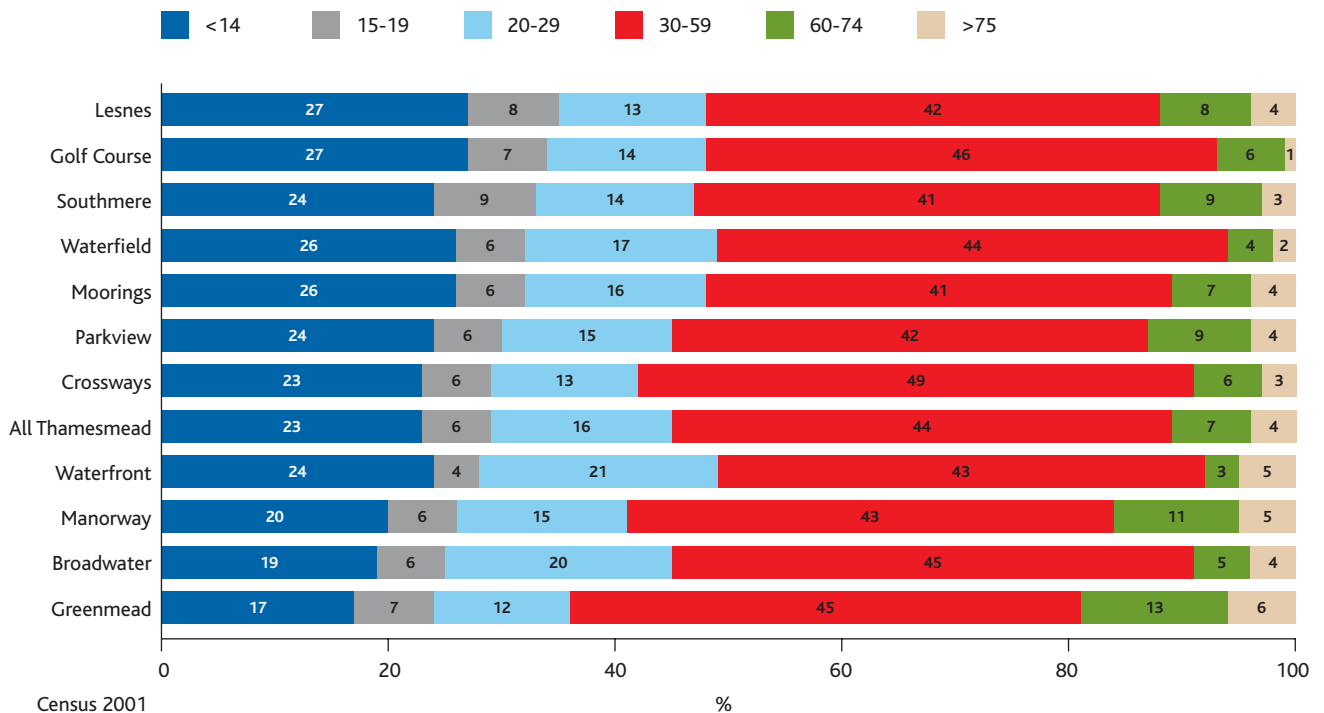
Chart 1. Thamesmead age structure (%)



Section two: Thamesmead today

There are some differences in the age balance of the neighbourhoods of Thamesmead, but these are not particularly significant. These are shown in chart 2. Lesnes, Waterfield, Moorings and Golf Course have a higher percentage of those aged less than 14 years compared to the Thamesmead average. Greenmead has a higher percentage of those aged over 60 years.

Chart 2. Age structure of Thamesmead neighbourhoods (%)



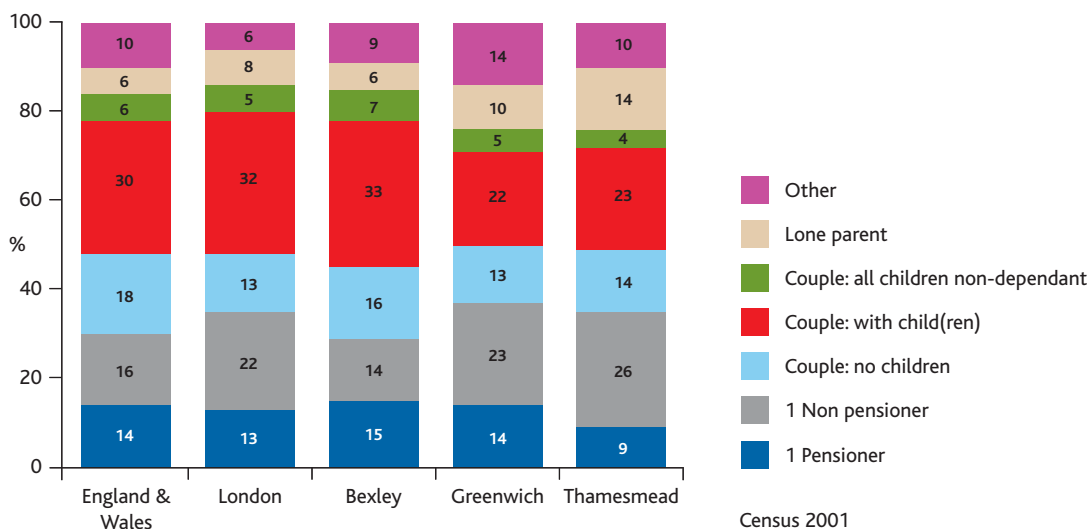
Section two: Thamesmead today

Chart 3 shows that the overall distribution of household types in Thamesmead is broadly similar to other local, regional and national profiles.

But there are also some differences. Thamesmead has:

- A higher percentage of young single person households – 26% compared with a national average of 16%.
- A lower percentage of pensioner households.
- A lower percentage compared to regional and national average of married (as distinct from cohabiting) households composed of couples with dependent children.
- A substantial under-representation of “traditional” family households consisting of couples with dependent children: Less than one-quarter compared about one-third nationally.

Chart 3. Thamesmead household composition (as % of all households)

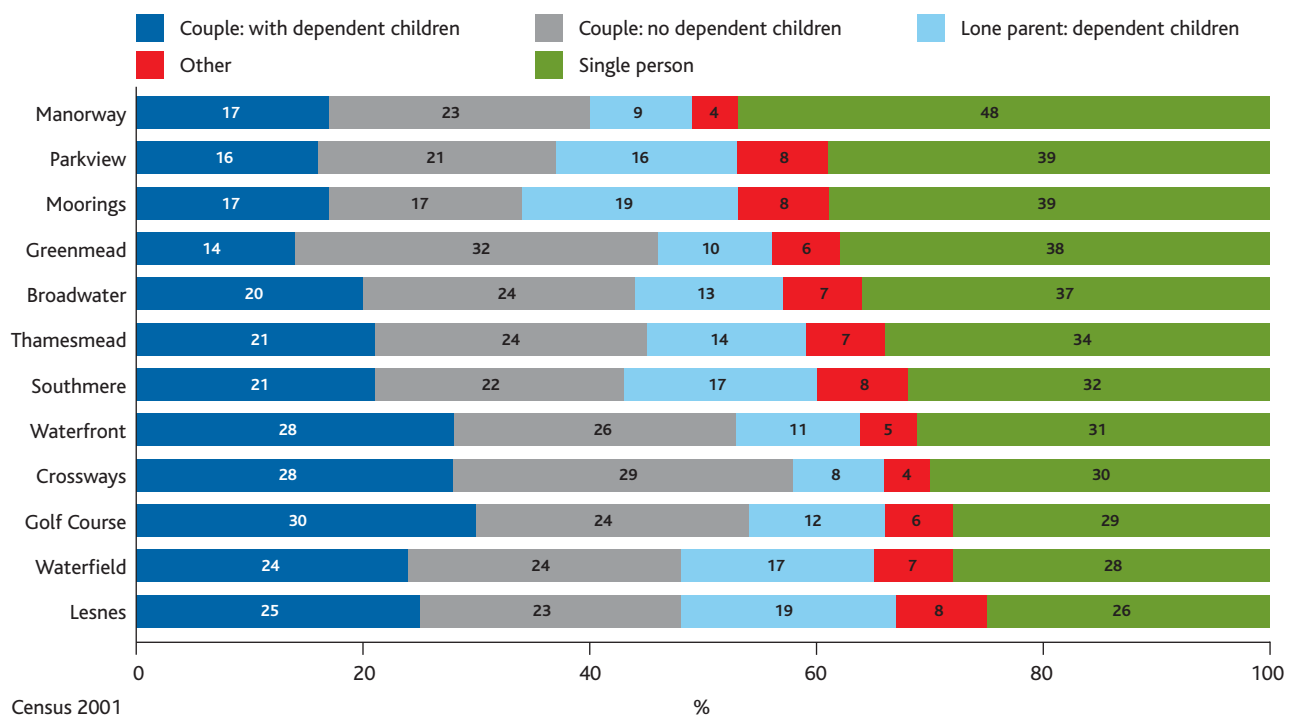


Section two: Thamesmead today

Chart 4 illustrates differences between Thamesmead's neighbourhoods' household composition.

- 48% of Moorings households are single person.
- Crossways (29%) and Greenmead (32%) have higher percentages of households consisting of couples with no dependent children.

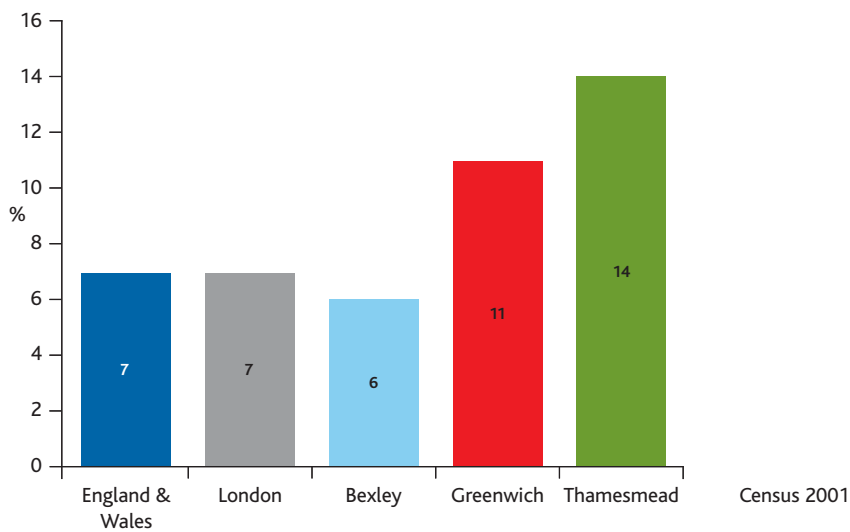
Chart 4. Household composition of Thamesmead neighbourhoods (%)



Section two: Thamesmead today

Detailed analysis of household composition shows Thamesmead has a higher percentage of households consisting of single parents with dependent child(ren). This is more than twice the average for the region and for England and Wales (chart 5).

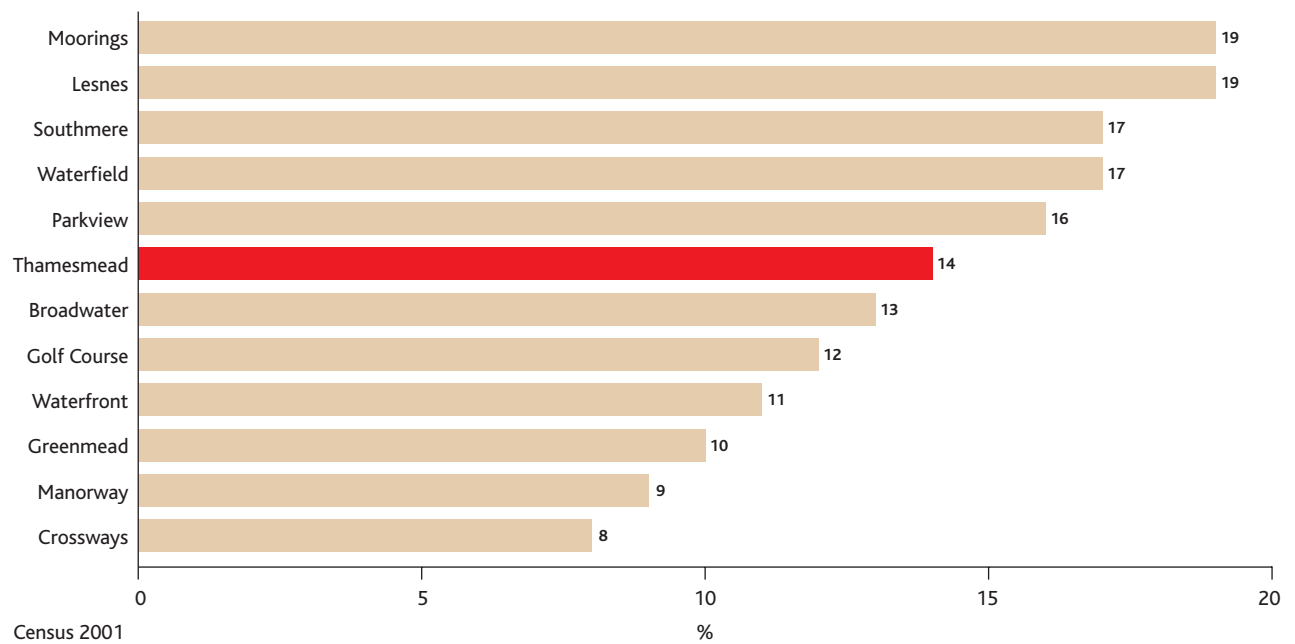
Chart 5. Percentage of households composed of lone parents with dependent child(ren)



Section two: Thamesmead today

There are important differences between neighbourhoods in the percentage of lone parents with dependent children, as illustrated in chart 6.

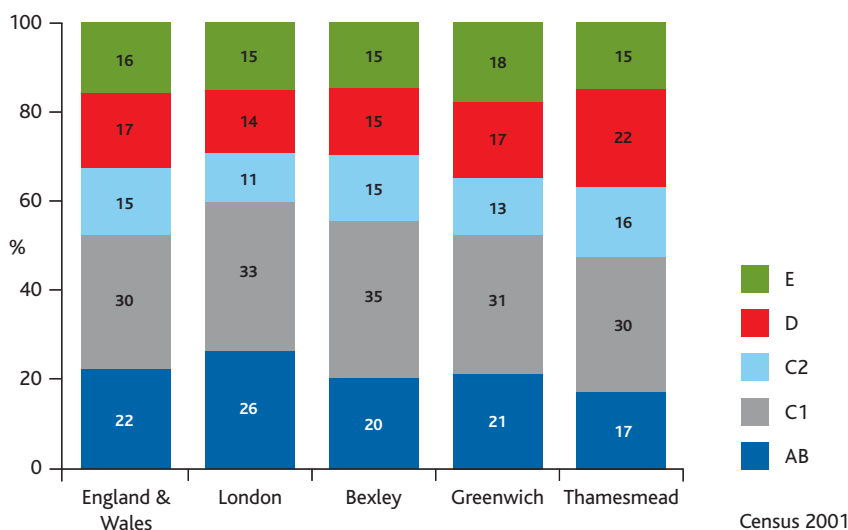
Chart 6. Percentage of lone parent households in Thamesmead neighbourhoods



Socio-economic profile

The overall socio-economic profile of Thamesmead is skewed towards lower income socio-economic categories (chart 7). Thamesmead has a lower percentage of people in managerial and professional households (AB's) and a higher proportion of people in low-income unskilled or non-wage earning households (DE's) compared to local, regional and national figures.

Chart 7. Socio-economic profile of all people aged 16+ (%)

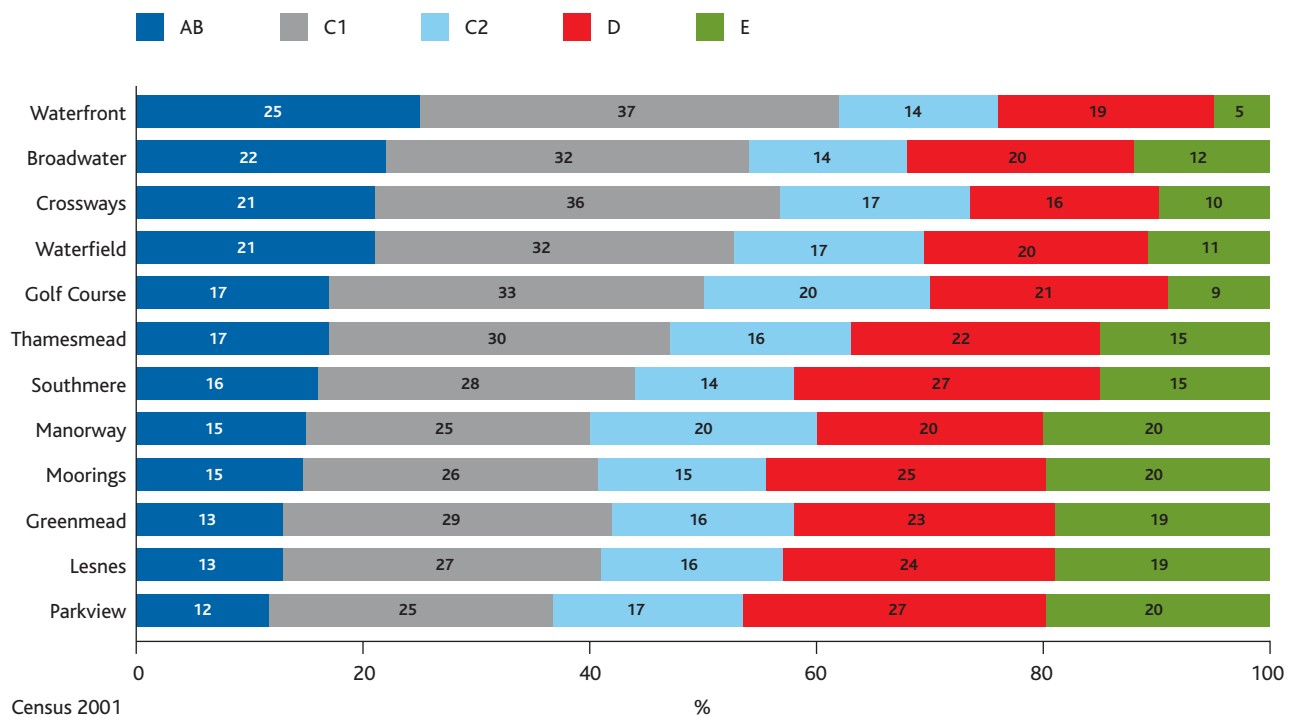


Section two: Thamesmead today

There are also substantial differences within Thamesmead neighbourhoods (chart 8).

- Waterfront has 25% of residents who may be classified as AB (professional or managerial households) compared with Parkview (12%) and Lesnes (13%) and Greenmead (13%).
- Almost one-half of Moorings and Parkview residents live in D/E households (on state benefit or unskilled employment) compared with only 24% of Waterfront residents.

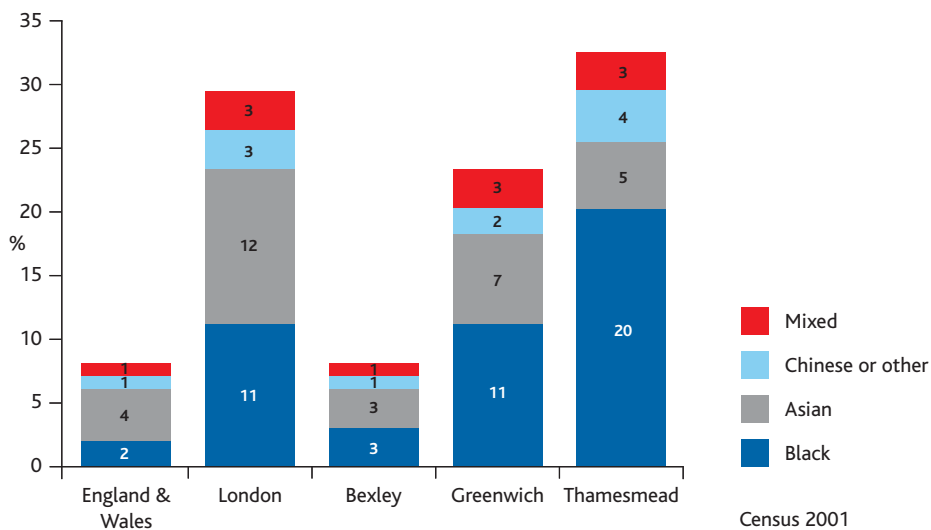
Chart 8. Thamesmead neighbourhoods socio-economic profiles (all people aged 16+) %



Ethnic composition

The ethnic composition of Thamesmead is different to national and local averages as shown in chart 9. The percentage of those from Black groups is almost twice that for the percentage of London as a whole.

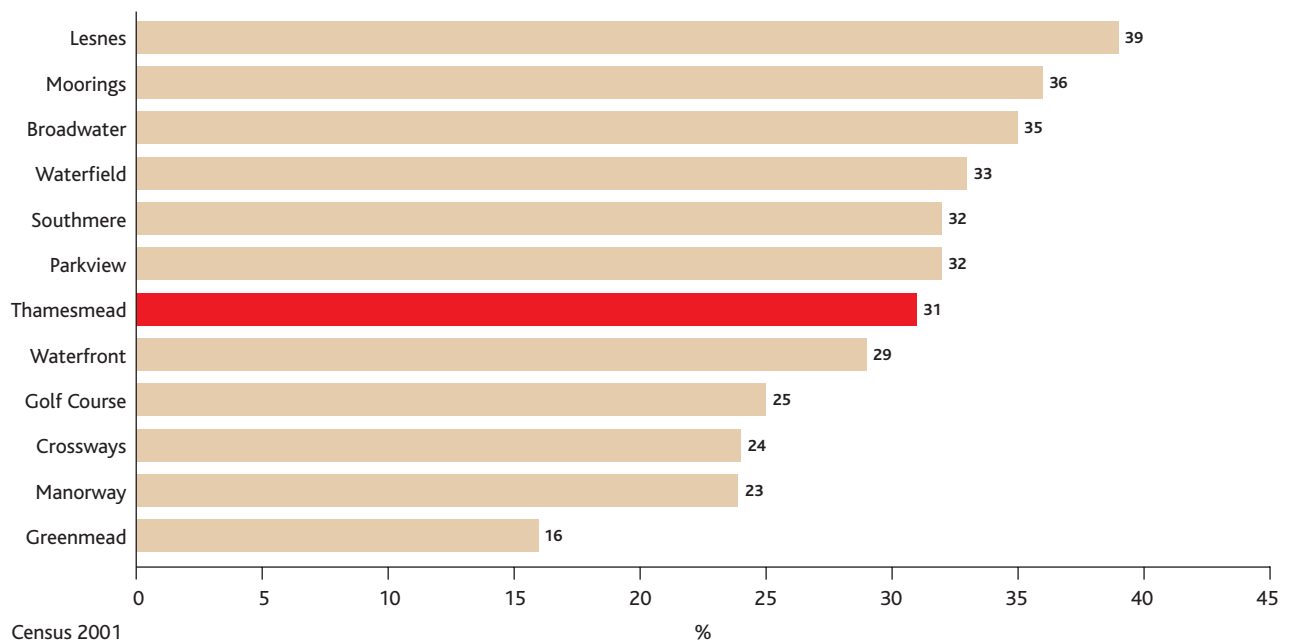
Chart 9. Percentage of the population from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups



Section two: Thamesmead today

Neighbourhood differences in the distribution of ethnic minority groups are shown in chart 10. Lesnes, Moorings and Broadwater neighbourhoods have higher percentages.

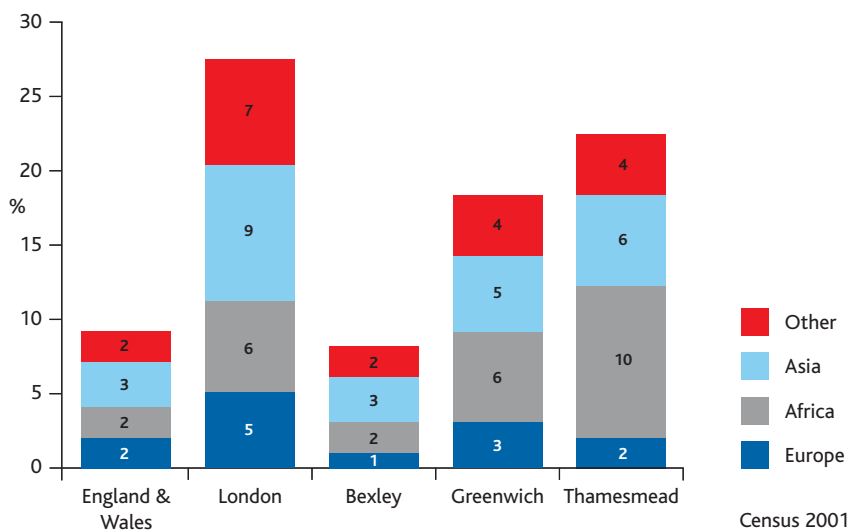
Chart 10. Percentage of population in Thamesmead neighbourhoods who are BME



Section two: Thamesmead today

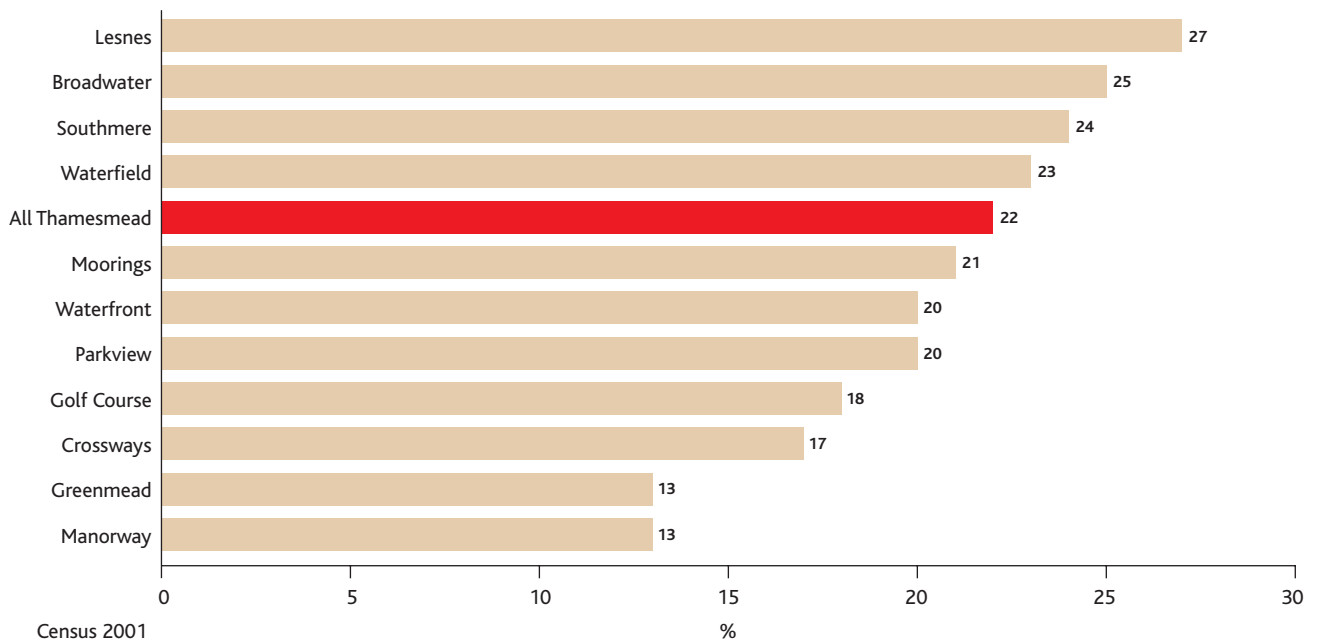
Thamesmead has a higher percentage of residents born outside the UK than either Bexley (8%) Greenwich (18%) and England and Wales (9%). 22% of the community's residents are born outside the UK compared with 27% for London as a whole as illustrated in chart 11.

Chart 11. Percentage and origin of those born outside UK



Section two: Thamesmead today

Chart 12. Percentage of residents born outside the UK by Thamesmead neighbourhood

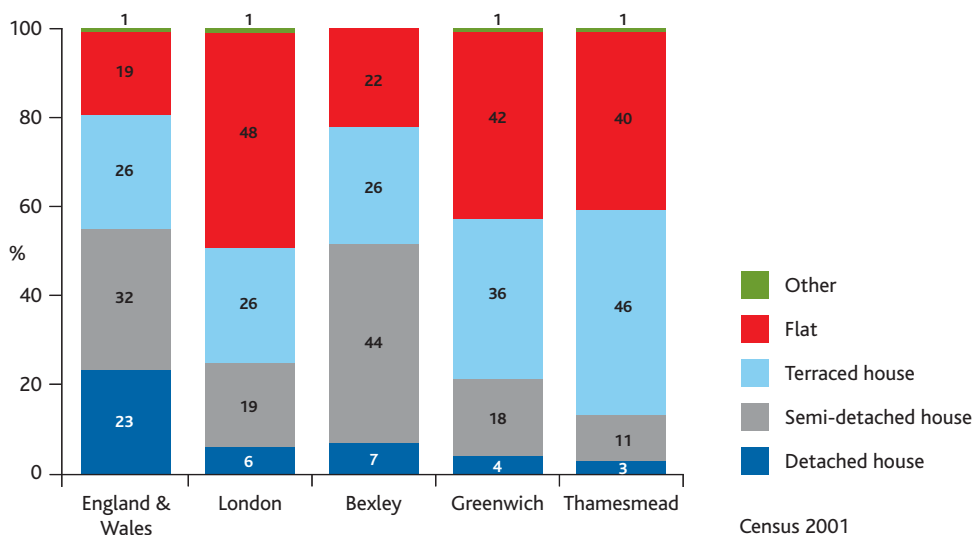


The growth in the West African population is affecting the character of some neighbourhoods as a result of short-term lettings. The magnitude of this trend is difficult to determine. Many homes that appear owner-occupied are rented to recently arrived immigrants.

Housing stock

The housing stock reflects the demographic and socio-economic profile of the community. As chart 13 illustrates 46% of the housing stock consists of terraced houses, compared with 26% for both London and the national average. By contrast, there is a very low percentage of semi-detached and detached accommodation. Only 11% of stock is semi-detached compared with 32% nationally and only 3% consists of detached houses compared with 6% in London and 23% in England and Wales. 40% of households live in apartments; double the national average.

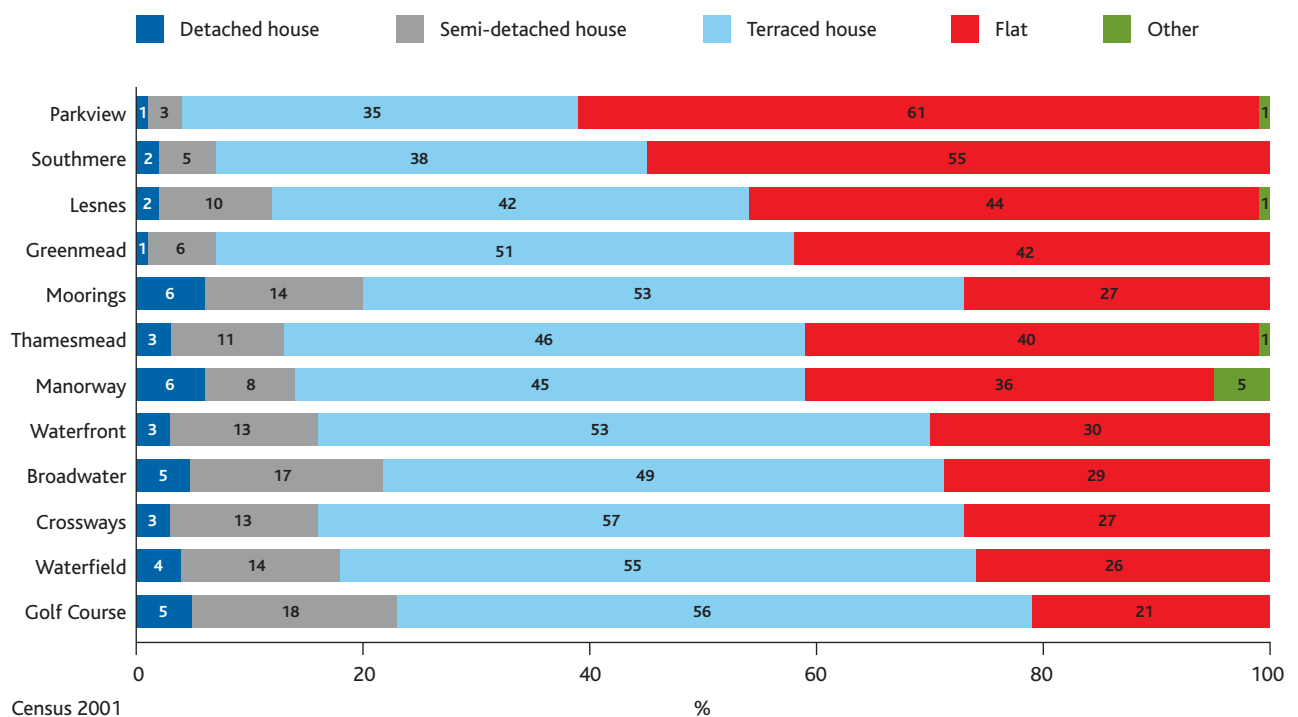
Chart 13. Housing type (% of all households)



Section two: Thamesmead today

Within Thamesmead there are significant differences in the distribution of different housing types (chart 14). Over 60% of homes in Parkview are flats compared to less than a fifth of homes close to the golf course. Conversely, nearly a quarter of homes near the golf course are either detached or semi-detached compared to just 4% in Parkview.

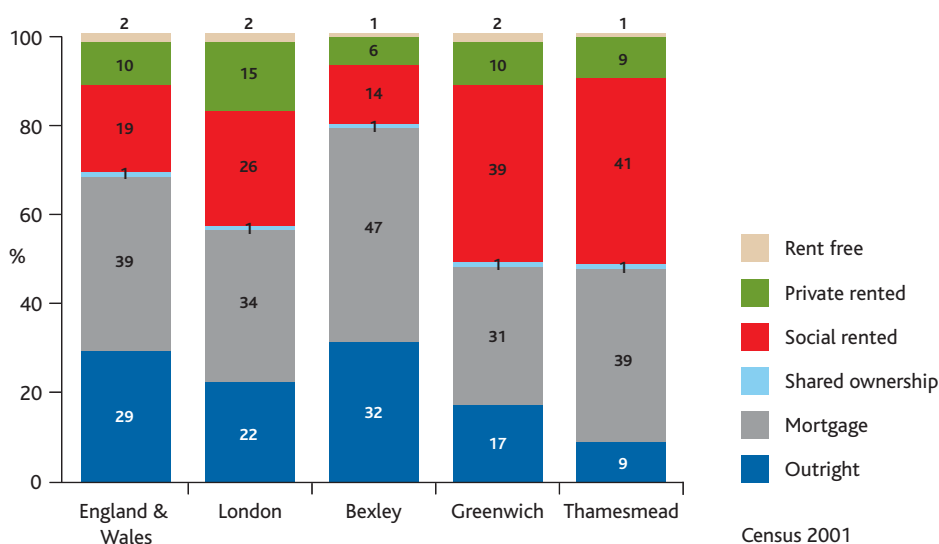
Chart 14. Distribution of housing type in Thamesmead neighbourhoods (% households)



Housing tenure

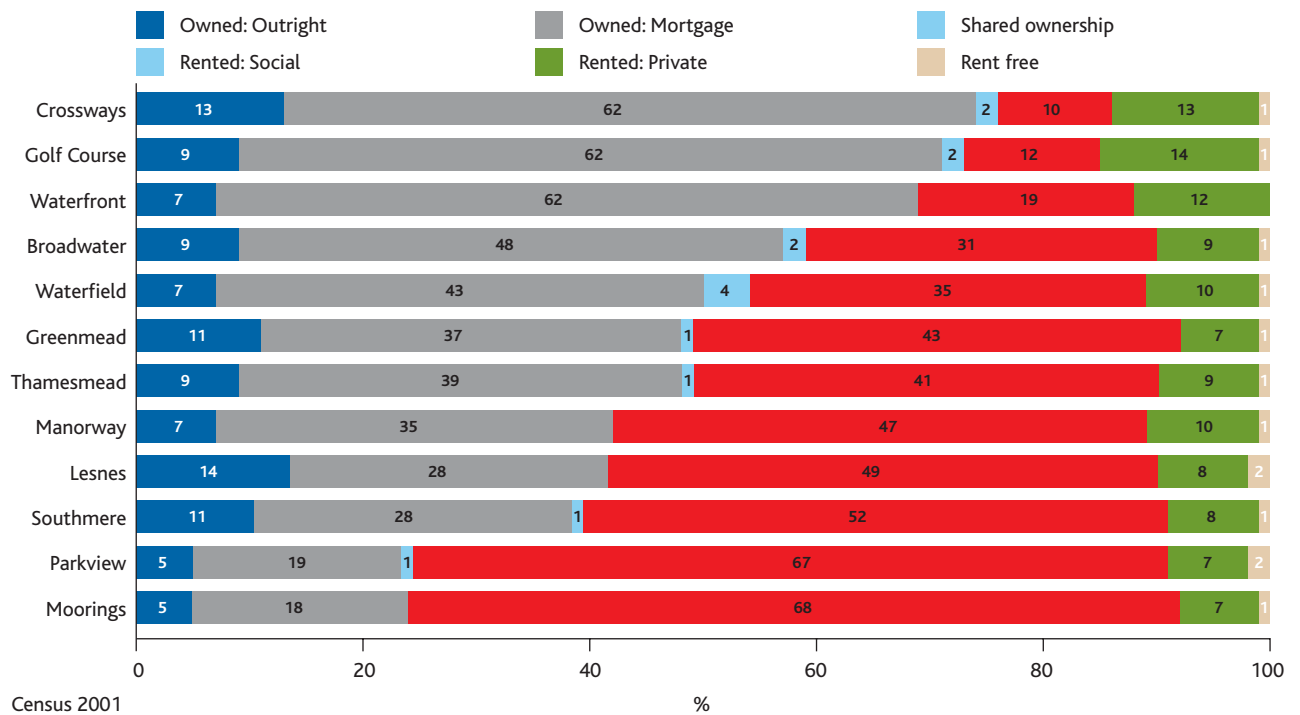
Housing tenure further reflects this pattern as shown in chart 15. 41% of all households live in socially rented accommodation compared to 26% in London and 14% in Bexley and 39% in Greenwich. Nine percent of households live in privately rented accommodation – roughly in line with the national average but below the 15% for London as a whole. Less than one half are owner-occupiers compared with over two-thirds for the national average.

Chart 15. Housing tenure (% of all households)



Section two: Thamesmead today

Chart 16. Distribution of housing tenure within Thamesmead neighbourhood (% households)



The Town Centre

Thamesmead has a retail centre but its spatial layout does not enhance public life of the community. It presently comprises 22000 square metres and consists of a large food store; a mall of small retail outlets with a variety of retailing, catering and service offers; a retail park consisting of six outlets and a leisure centre owned by Greenwich Borough Council. Morrisons is the retail magnet that draws residents to the Town Centre. The mall is occupied by small independent retailers with almost one-half of them offering convenience services. The retail park is separate from the Town Centre and consists of a mixture of discount warehouses and high street brands. Spatially this small cluster is not connected to the rest of the Town Centre to create a coherent identity.

The Town Centre is currently, therefore, an odd mixture of neighbourhood and district shopping facilities.



Thamesmead Town Centre



Neighbourhoods

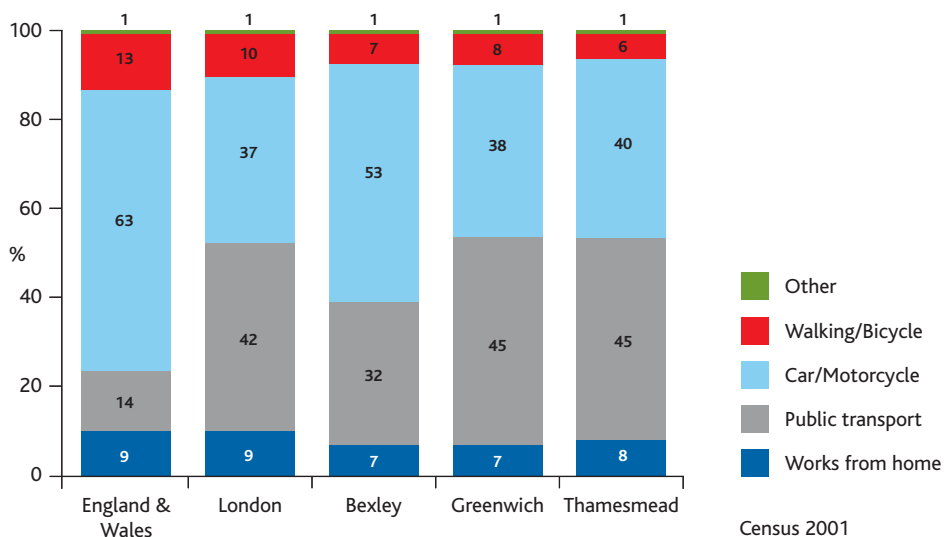
Thamesmead consists of a cluster of neighbourhoods ranging from those created in the 1960's through to those more recently established in the Northern area over the past decade. Each of these has a different socio-demographic profile.

The socio-demographic profile of Thamesmead with its levels of single person and lone parent households, international inward migration, young unattached people and childless couples contributes to residential areas where there is little sense of belonging. It is difficult to develop sustainable neighbourhoods in these circumstances but it is probably one of the biggest challenges facing the future growth of Thamesmead. The best solution is to attract more people who choose and want to live in Thamesmead in the long-term. It is only with stable populations that flourishing neighbourhoods evolve characterised by high levels of social activity and low rates of anti-social behaviour and crime.

Transport infrastructure

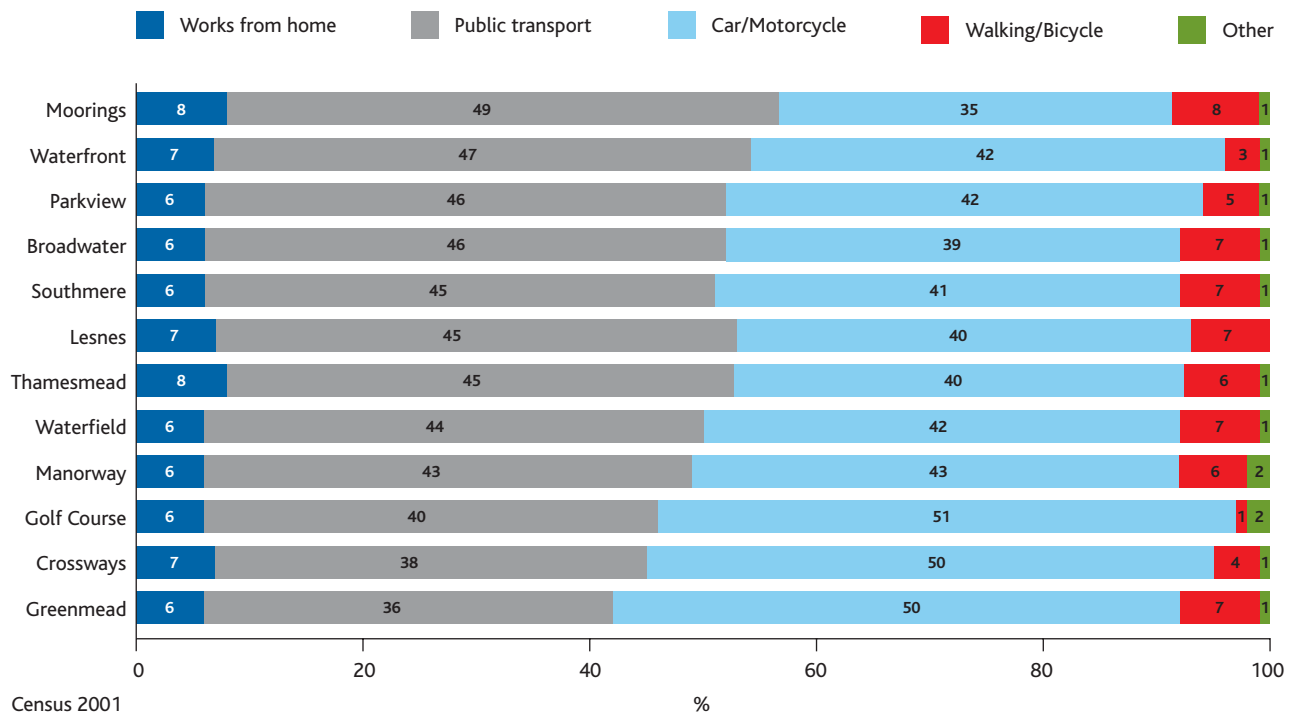
Thamesmead has suffered from poor transport accessibility. It has the reputation of being an “isolated” part of south-east London. This has limited access to jobs and recreational facilities in other parts of the region for its residents.

Chart 17. Main method of travel to work (%)



Section two: Thamesmead today

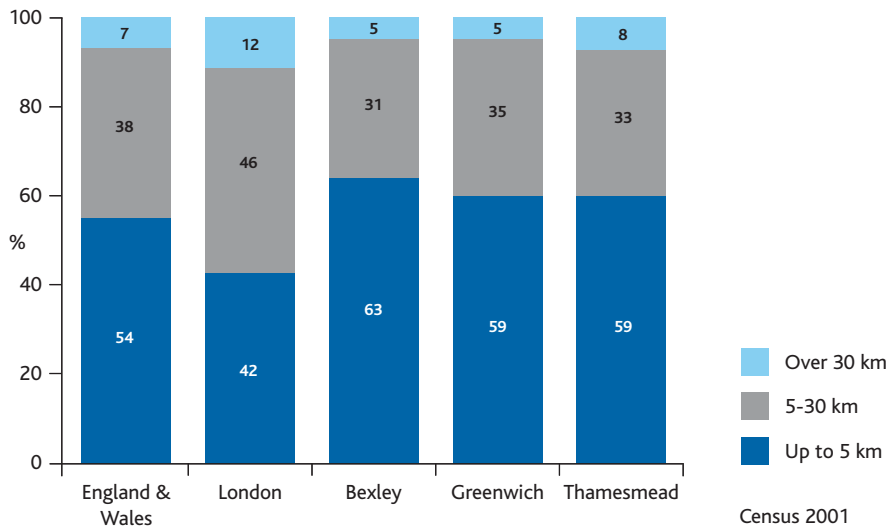
Chart 18. Main method of travel to work by Thamesmead neighbourhood (%)



Journey to work patterns are similar to those for Greenwich and Bexley (charts 17-19). 59% of gainfully occupied Thamesmead residents work within 5 kilometres of their homes compared with a national average of 54% but higher than the 42% of those living in London. Only 8% travel more than 30 km to work; a figure that is in line with the local and national averages. Only a higher percentage of those living in London have longer journeys to work.

Section two: Thamesmead today

Chart 19. Distance travelled to work (% those in work)

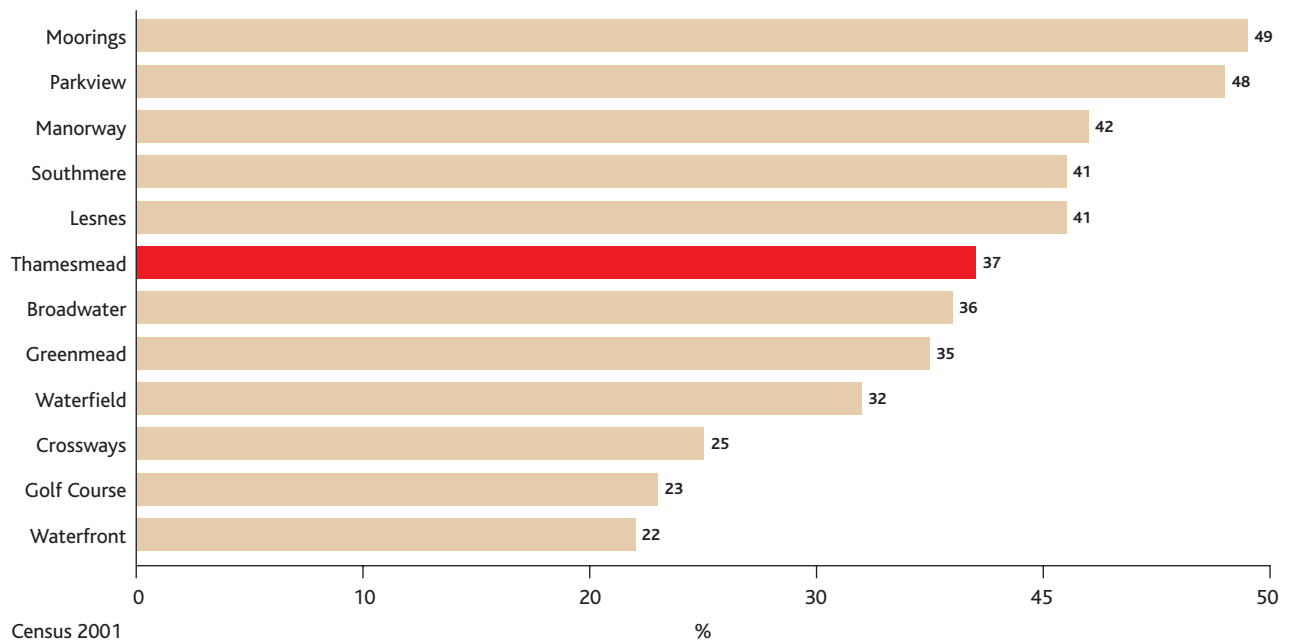


The architecture of the original Thamesmead disregarded the needs of those with mobility difficulties. Stairways and multi level designs have created an alien environment for the disabled, parents with young children and those who wish to use bicycles. Future housing developments and regeneration schemes are legally compelled to reflect these needs.

In Thamesmead 37% of households do not own a car; this increases to virtually one-half of those in the Moorings, and falls to just 22% for those in the Waterfront (chart 20).

Section two: Thamesmead today

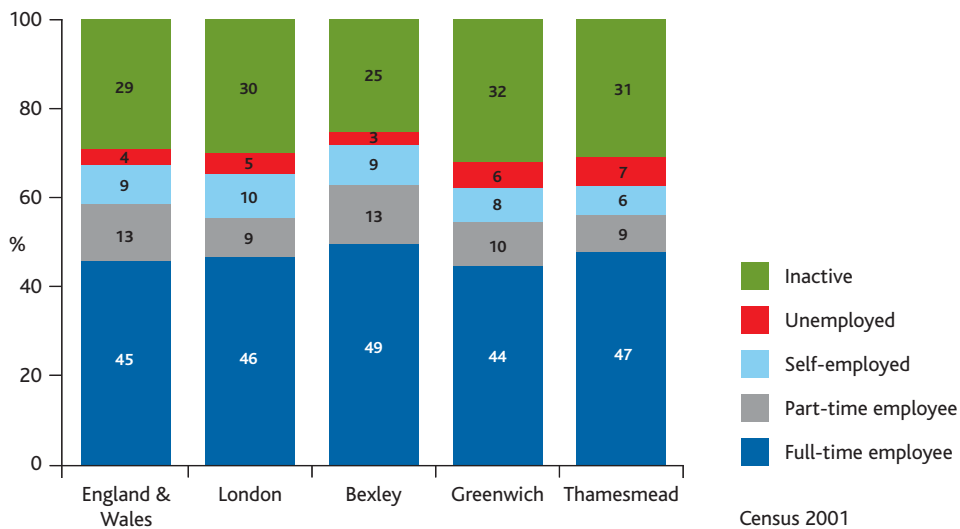
Chart 20. Percentage of Thamesmead households with no car by neighbourhood



The local economy

The employment status of the Thamesmead working age population is shown in chart 21.

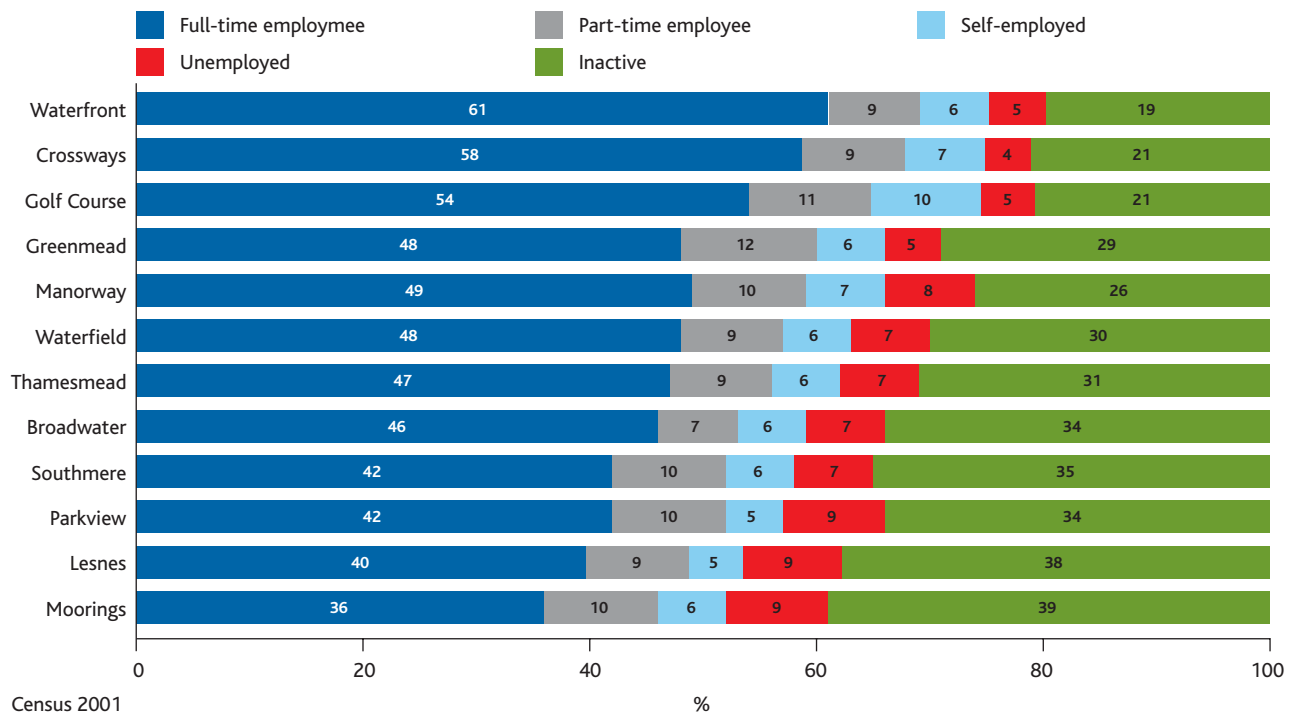
Chart 21. Economic activity (% of those aged 16-65)



Section two: Thamesmead today

Whilst the percentage of working age adults who are gainfully employed is similar to England as a whole there are large differences between Thamesmead neighbourhoods (chart 22). Over 61% of those living in the Waterfront area are in full time paid employment compared to just 36% of those living in the Moorings.

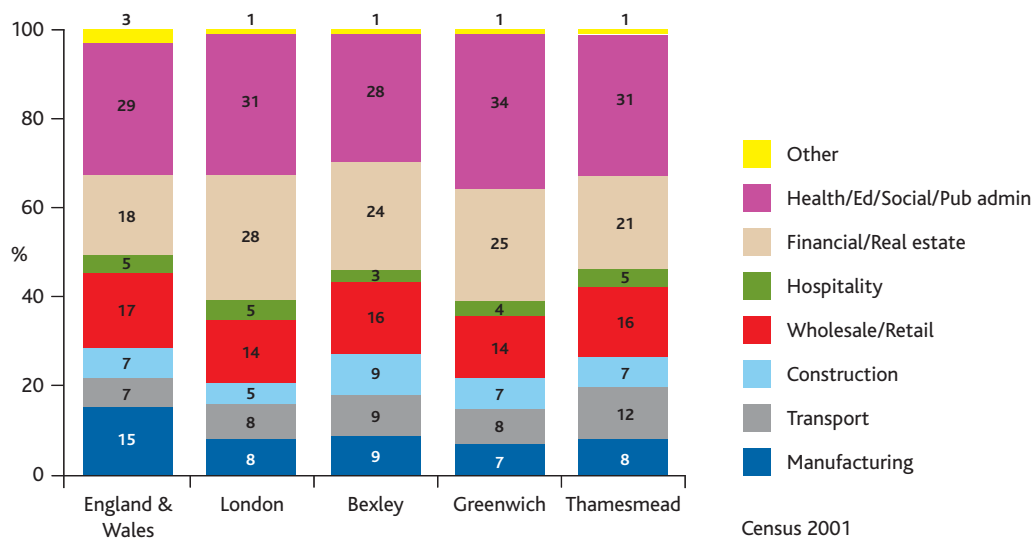
Chart 22. Economic activity (% aged 16-65) by Thamesmead neighbourhood



Section two: Thamesmead today

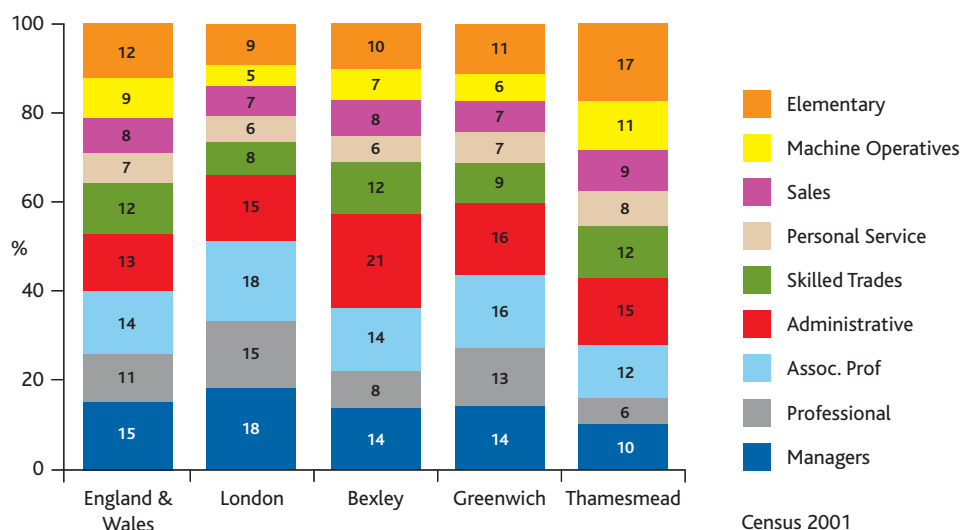
The distribution of employment by industry is shown in chart 23. This illustrates there are few substantial differences in the industrial distribution of jobs between Thamesmead, other localities and the region.

Chart 23. Distribution of employment by industry (%)



The occupational profile of Thamesmead (chart 24) shows that in line with Bexley there is a much lower percentage engaged in managerial and professional employment compared with Greenwich, London and England and Wales. Conversely there is a higher proportion engaged in routine manual and sales employment; 37% compared to a London average of 21%.

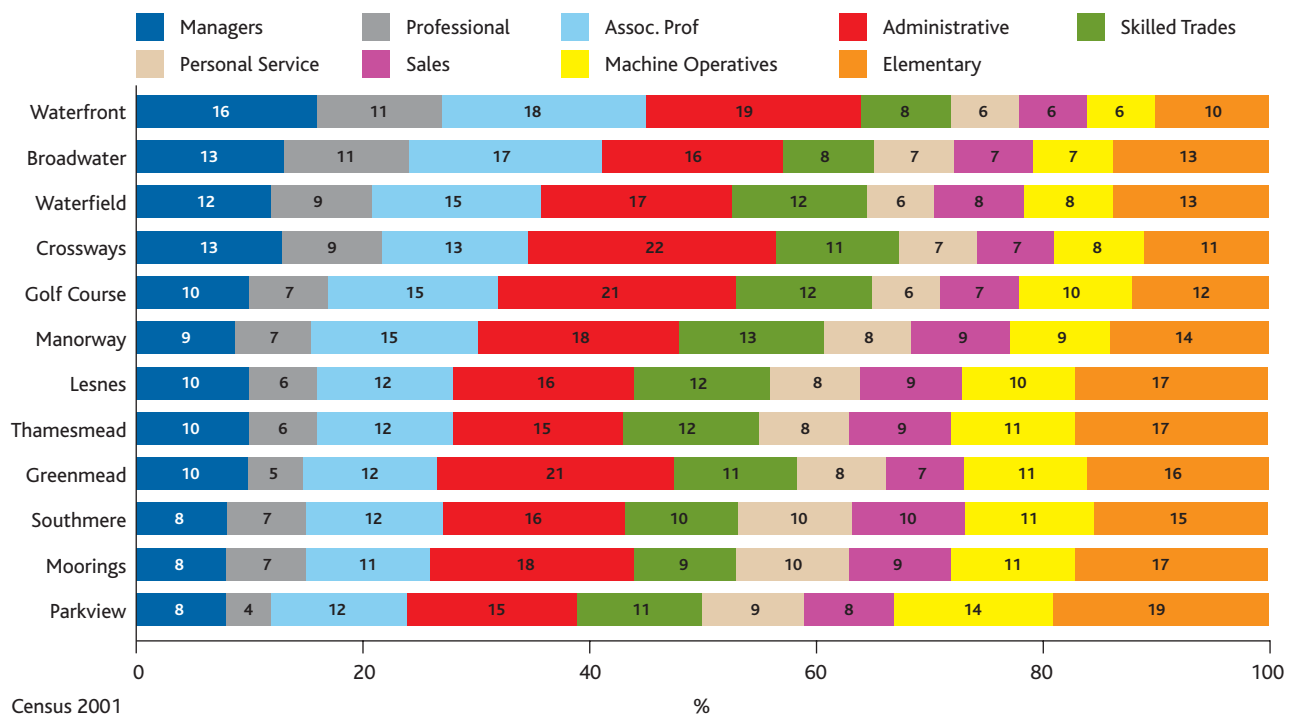
Chart 24. Distribution of employment by occupational group %



Section two: Thamesmead today

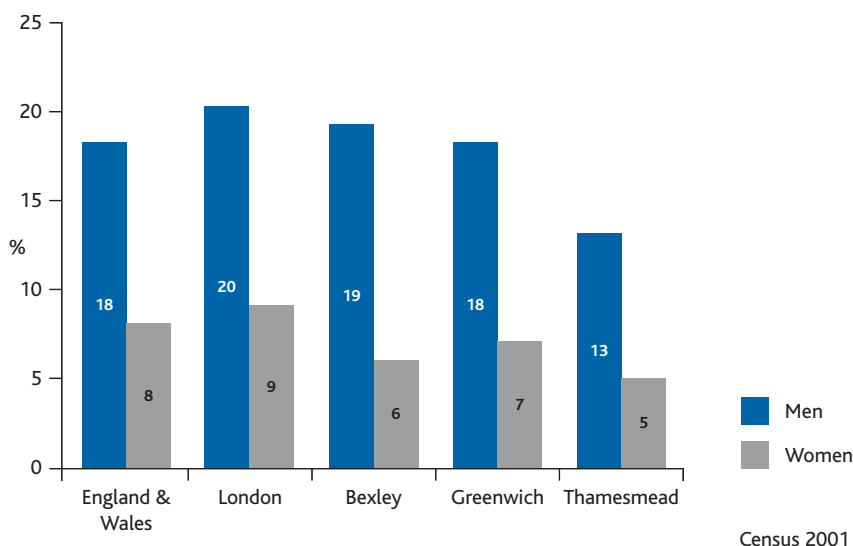
As expected there are big neighbourhood differences with Waterfront consisting of 45% of those employed as managers and professionals compared to only 24% in Parkway (chart 25).

Chart 25. Distribution of occupational groups by Thamesmead neighbourhood (%)



Rates of self-employment are lower in Thamesmead than national or regional averages (chart 26).

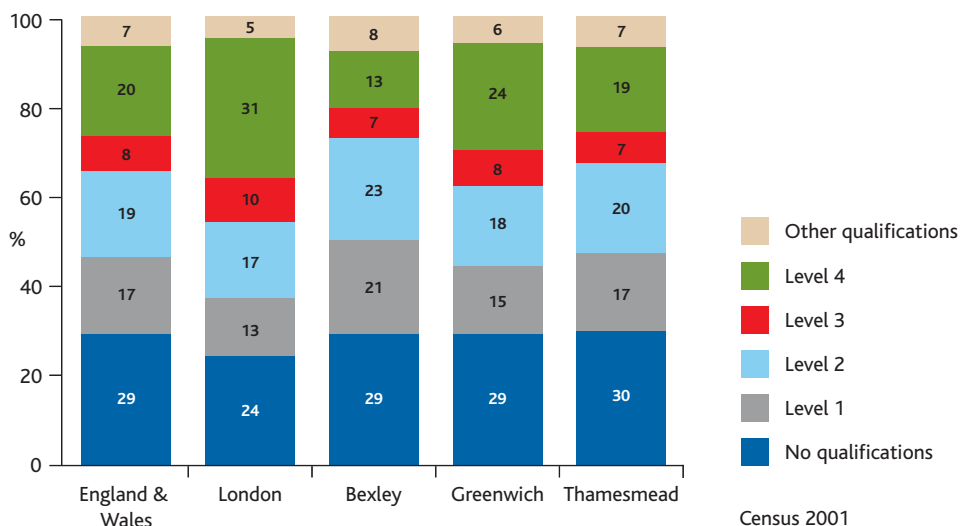
Chart 26. Percentage of men and women in self-employment (% of all in work)



Education and training

One third of Thamesmead residents aged 16-74 have no qualifications; a figure in line with local and national averages (chart 27). 37% of Thamesmead residents have level 1 or 2 qualifications, which, again, is in line with the national average. Only 26% have a level 3 or 4 qualification, which is below the percentage for Greenwich and London and slightly below the national average of 28%.

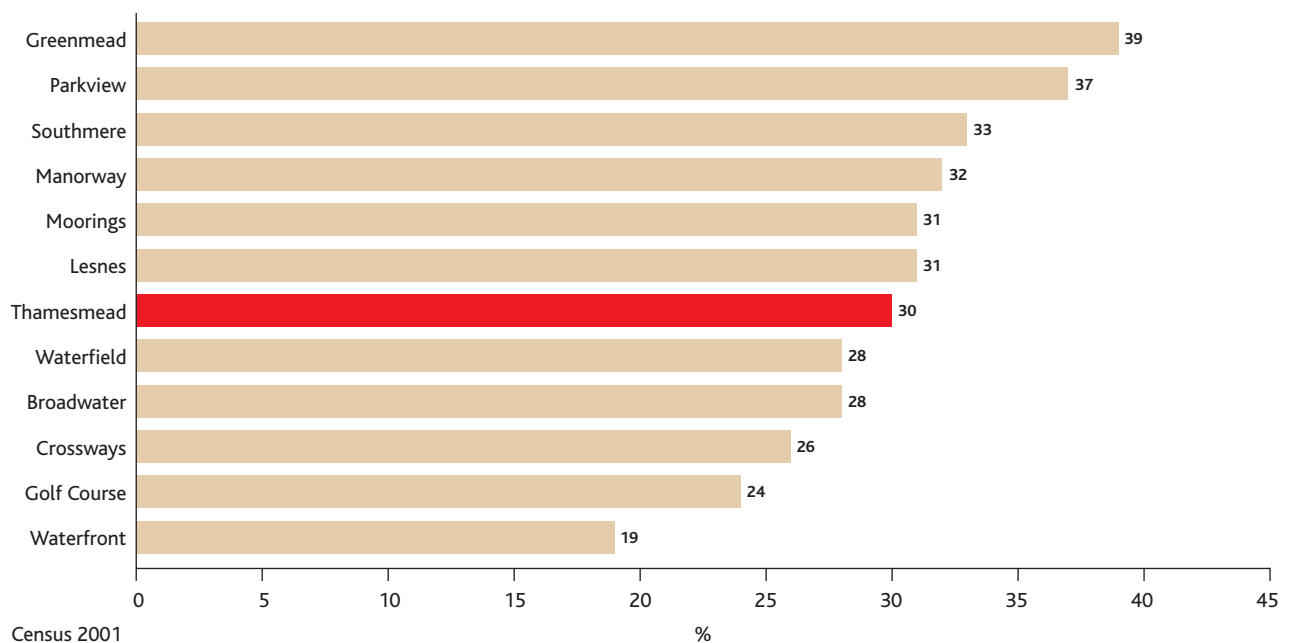
Chart 27. Qualifications of people aged 16-74 (%)



Section two: Thamesmead today

Neighbourhood differences in level of qualifications reflect their employment and occupational profiles; Greenmead and Parkview have high percentages of those with no qualifications compared with only 19-26 per cent in Crossway, Golf Course and Water Front (chart 28).

Chart 28. Percentage in each Thamesmead neighbourhood with no qualifications (age 16+)



The lack of qualifications is particularly a problem among 15-19 year olds. There is a high drop-out rate from the further education system and this is inhibiting their access to employment opportunities locally as well as in the London and south-east.

Health condition

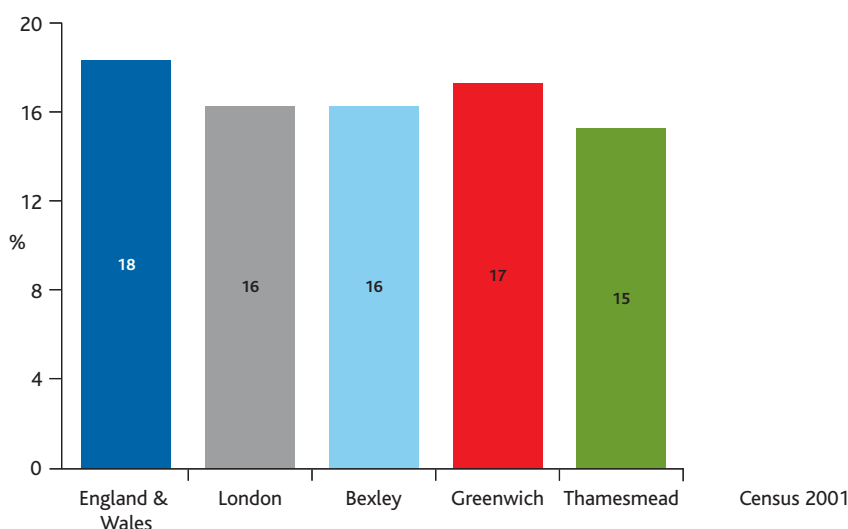
The health of residents in Thamesmead is slightly better than national, local and regional averages (chart 29). This is a result of Thamesmead's younger age profile. But, (and most significantly) age-for-age the health condition of the community is lower than for national and regional averages.

Data for health condition is available at the Ward level. According to local authority health profiles provided by the Department of Health, Glyndon, Moorings and Thamesmead East have significantly lower life expectancy rates compared to the England average. Lesnes Abbey has a life expectancy rate lower than the national average, but this difference is not statistically significant.

In terms of inequalities as measured in relation to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004 ward averages) Glyndon and Moorings are among the most deprived 25% in England. Lesnes Abbey and Thamesmead East perform better on the IMD but are still in the second most deprived quartile in England.

Major health issues in Thamesmead today include a higher rate of teenage pregnancies than either the London or National average, an estimate that many more people smoke than the national average and that men and women in the community are more likely to die from smoking, heart disease, stroke and cancers.

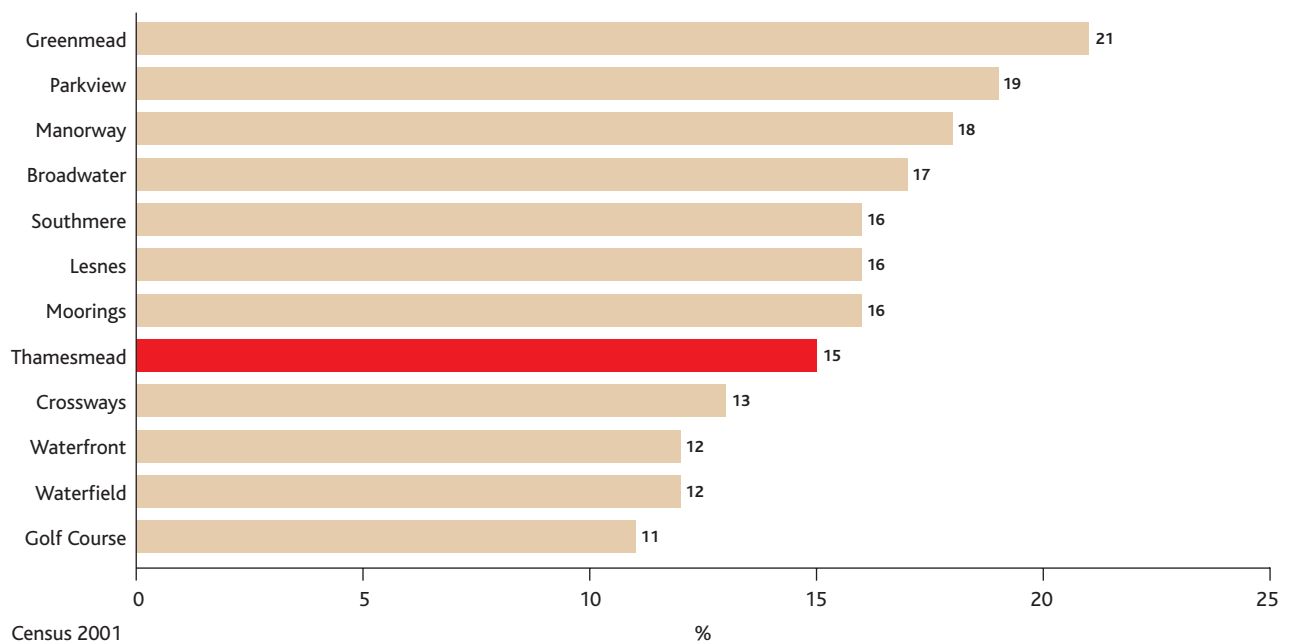
Chart 29. Percentage of people with long-term disability or illness



Section two: Thamesmead today

As expected Greenmead and Parkview have higher rates of long-term disability and illness while the incidence is lower among Waterfront, Waterfield and Golf Course residents (chart 30).

Chart 30. Percentage with long-term disability or illness by Thamesmead neighbourhood



Section two: Thamesmead today

There is little difference in subjective feelings of health well-being among Thamesmead residents compared with local, regional and national patterns.

Chart 31. Subjective health rating (%) of Thamesmead residents compared to national and local populations

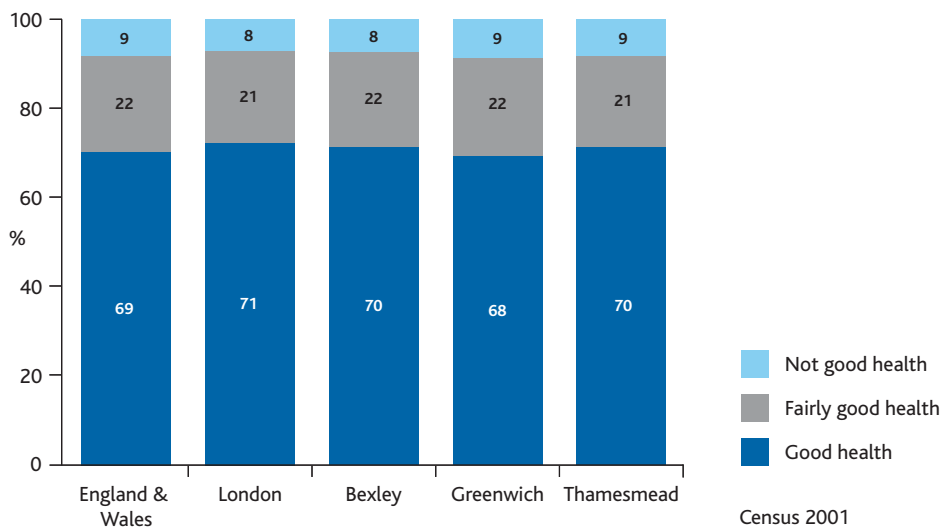
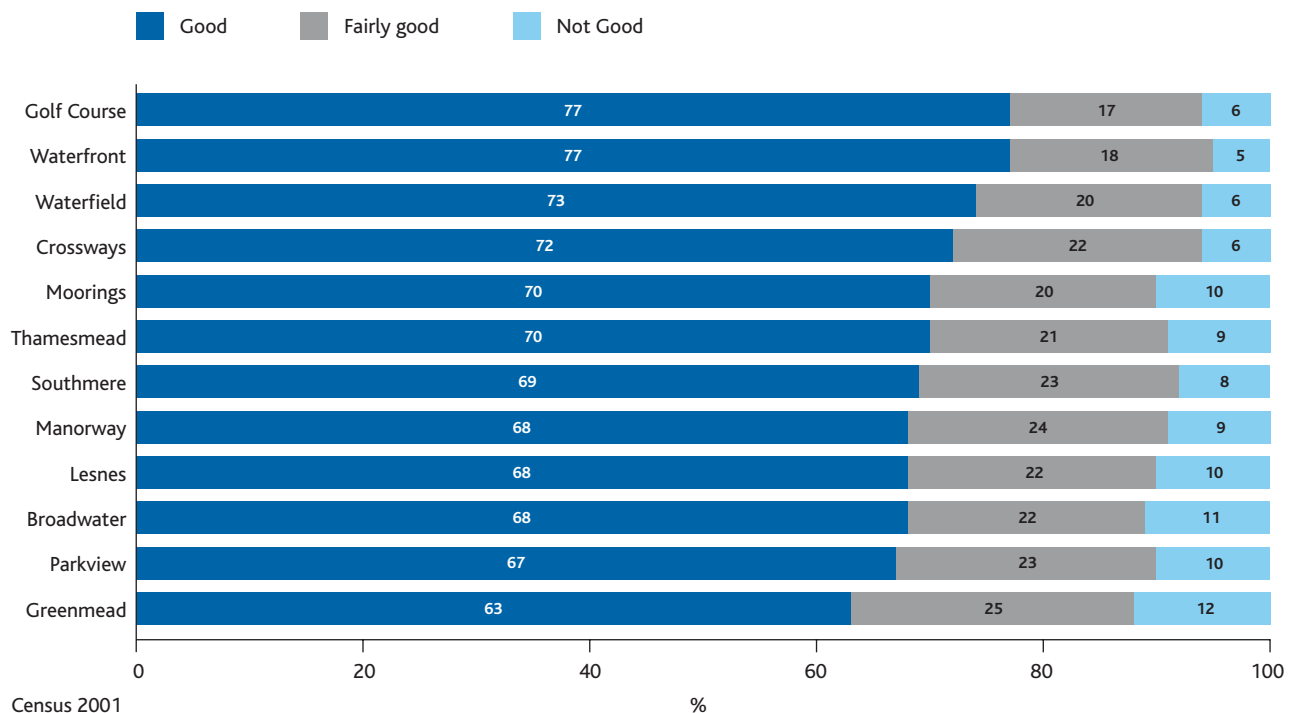


Chart 32. Subjective health rating (%) of residents in Thamesmead neighbourhoods



Green spaces and the environment

Green space resources are under-used because of fears of personal safety (as stated by many residents in interviews and questionnaires). Parents are unhappy for their children to play in these areas without close supervision and there is little in these green spaces to attract older children and teenagers. What does exist is locked or disused due to high levels of vandalism.

Parts of Thamesmead give the impression of urban areas with an excessive use of concrete – often defaced by graffiti. Wide roads, bridges and pathways contribute to the break-up of the community into discrete neighbourhoods. Its spatial layout and architecture also limits the accessibility of those with young children, those with disabilities and older residents.

Thamesmead's image

Thamesmead has an unjustified image and reputation. In the 1960's it was seen as "path breaking" in its architectural design and it attracted town planners from all over the world. It was a "future model" for urban regeneration that would avoid the monotony of suburban sprawl that, until then, had been offered as the major solution for urban planning.

Thamesmead has little "sense of place". It lacks balanced leisure, recreation and retail facilities. It also has few informal extended networks of families, friends and neighbours. The original GLC architectural plan was never fully implemented. The outcome is that the community lacks architectural and planning coherence as specified in the original plans. Many older residents do have a deep sense of belonging but this is not evident among newly arrived residents. Many stated they had little community identification and regard the place as a dormitory.

A community without a champion

The direction of Thamesmead is driven by GHA, Tilfen Land and Trust Thamesmead and two London Borough Councils. In fulfilling their statutory duties each of these organisations looks at Thamesmead from a specific perspective and within the context of their own broader strategic agendas. The overall opinion of residents in the interviews undertaken as part of this study is that *Thamesmead lacks a 'champion' that can represent its interests solely and exclusively.*

Epilogue:

Thamesmead 2016

A scenario that must not happen

In Thamesmead in 2016 the initial impression of any visitor is that this is a place of fear. There are few people in the streets or in public green spaces. Residents feel that they live in a personally threatening environment. When shown around the community the most common statement is “you would not come here alone”. There is growing social division and increasing polarisation and tension between different sectors of the community. The young feel excluded with inadequate provision of leisure and recreation amenities geared to their needs and aspirations. This is an experience reinforced by their inaccessibility to the facilities available in other parts of London, one of the most exciting and dynamic cities of the world.

“The image of Thamesmead as a desirable and safe place to live is a distant memory. Today, Thamesmead conjures up a stark picture of aspiration and anti-social behaviour.”

Ethnic tensions, particularly among young adults, have become more apparent, driven by fears over the lack of affordable homes, the local availability of suitable jobs and poor education facilities for their children. There is greater violence on the street, more petty crime, vandalism and greater feelings of fear – “afraid to go out of my own front door” – creating a general view that Thamesmead is the last place in the world you would want to live.

Thamesmead is now on a downward spiral. There is a high population turnover with residents staying only until they are able to afford to move to more desirable parts of London and the South-east. Knock-on effects follow from this, such as a high turnover of pupils in schools are reinforcing problems of discipline and education attainment. Much of this is associated with international inward migration and issues of language and culture give teachers excessive pressures for improving the educational attainment of their pupils. Local teachers are becoming increasingly demotivated, with working in Thamesmead's schools regarded as 'last choice'. Newly qualified young teachers take teaching posts in Thamesmead as 'stepping stones' for better positions or because they cannot get posts elsewhere. Either way, high levels of sick leave and a high turnover of teaching staff are now the norm in Thamesmead's schools.

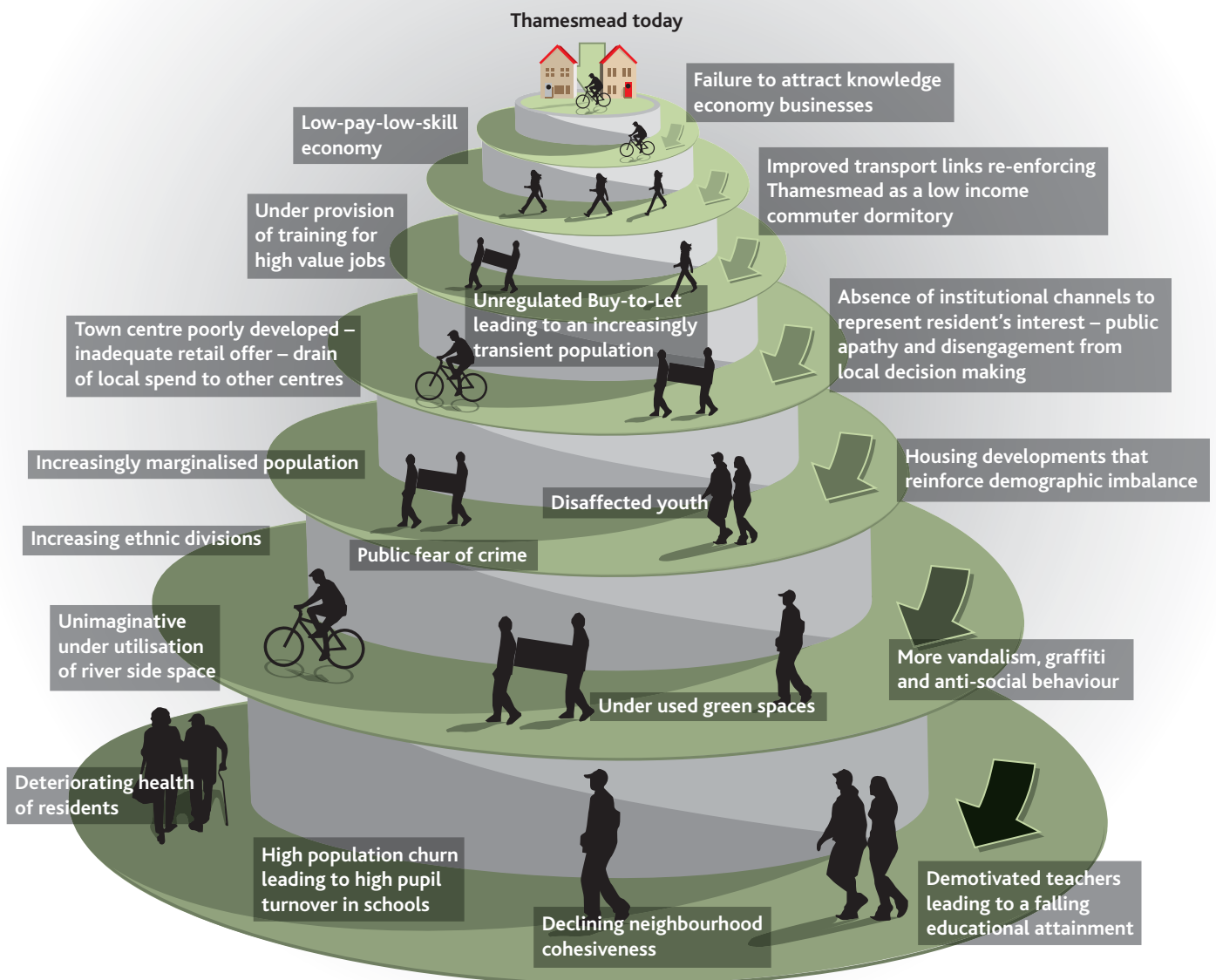
This is adding to Thamesmead's downward spiral because young people are increasingly unprepared for employment. Their failure in basic literacy and numeracy skills, together with low personal aspirations reinforce a local culture of 'unemployability' that deters both small and large businesses from locating in the area. With transport inaccessibility to the major employment opportunities in the wider London region, economic inactivity and unemployment rates in some parts of the community is high.

There is an ongoing deterioration in civic pride and self-respect. Thamesmead has become a low morale community with little self-confidence. This, in turn has led to alienation, resentment and a continual decline in the quality of social capital. Neighbourhoods have lost their "heart and soul" with an absence of networks, families and friends that offer personal support and social integration. Any that do exist – among the young and ethnic minorities – reinforce divisions in the community rather than override them to create forces of empowerment and social integration.

This is the nightmare scenario. Thamesmead has become a community of social division, a place of last resort, low income, deprivation, high crime, vandalism, failing schools, demoralised public sector employees, deteriorating health, and uncontrolled inward migration. There is a growing inadequacy of recreation, leisure and retail services.

Civic pride continues to deteriorate as does self-confidence and personal respect. Support mechanisms, offered by personal networks of families, friends and neighbourhoods, become of diminishing importance. And unless there are special financial incentives, the two local authorities give little priority to addressing these emerging problems. Thamesmead has become a place of fear where "No one goes out alone at nights".

Thamesmead 2016: A scenario that must not happen



Appendix I

People and organisations consulted

Submitted written responses were obtained from:

L. Bird – Head Teacher	Linton Mead Primary School
B. Bramar – Head Teacher	Hawksmoor Primary School
T. Claridge – Vice Chair	Trust Thamesmead
N. Diment – Associate Director	Planning: CB Richard Ellis
R. Medhurst – Head Teacher	Northwood Primary School
R. Neill – AM	Leader of the Conservative Group, Assembly Member for Bexley and Bromley
J. Ogudayo – Trustee	Trust Thamesmead
G. Reynolds OBE – Principal:	Thamesmead YMCA
K. Savill – Trustee	Trust Thamesmead
J. Ward-Wilson – Service Manager	Youth Awareness Programme

60 Residents made written submissions, of which 26 provided contact details.

In-depth interviews were conducted with:

Toni Ainge	Bexley Borough Council
John Alderton	Consultant to Trust Thamesmead Ltd
Mark Budd	Green Chain
Sue Chalkley	Gallions Housing Association
Aman Dalvi	Gallions Housing Association
Peter Dean	Board Member, Gallions Housing Association
Chris Donovan	Bexley Borough Council
Peter Ellershaw	Bexley Borough Council
Mick Hayes	Trust Thamesmead
Graham Horton	Gallion Residents Board
Nigel Houston	Tilfen Land
Jey Jeyaraj	London Thames Gateway Delivery Unit, ODPM
Peter Neal	CABE
Bob Neill	Greater London Assembly

Margaret O'Neill.....	Bexley Borough Council
Janet Smith.....	Bexley Voluntary Services Council
Jackie Smith	Trust Thamesmead
Andrew Tucker	Thames Gateway London Planning

Meetings were held with groups representative of:

- Education
- Community Services
- Police
- Public Sector Employees

Discussions were held at public meetings organised by:

- Gallions Housing Association
- Trust Thamesmead Ltd

Appendix II

References and documentary sources

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CABE (2005)	<i>Is the Grass Greener: Learning From International Innovations in Urban Green Space Management</i>
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CABE (2005)	<i>A Guide to Producing Park and Green Space Management Plans</i>
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CABE (2004)	<i>What Would You Do With This Space: Involving Young People in the Design and Care of Urban Spaces</i>
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Gallions Housing Association (2005)	<i>The Thamesmead Strategy and Vision Review</i>
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