



Gateway People

**The aspirations and attitudes of prospective and existing
residents of the Thames Gateway**

JIM BENNETT AND JAMES MORRIS

4 JANUARY 2006

© ippr 2006

Gateway People: The aspirations and attitudes of prospective and existing residents of the Thames Gateway

Acknowledgements

This work has been made possible through the generous support of the British Property Federation, the Building and Social Housing Foundation, English Partnerships, Land Securities, Multiplex Developments (UK) Ltd, Shelter and Tilfen Land.

We would like to thank Miranda Lewis and Lula Durante for their work on the focus groups and interviews. We also thank the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, which helped us to contact people on their housing registers to be interviewed, and to Adrian Harvey at CABE for advice on housing and neighbourhood design issues. Thanks also to Kate Stanley for her comments on this report.

Sustainable communities and the Growth Areas

The Growth Areas identified within the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) represent the most ambitious housing growth policy since the 1960s. Achieving sustainable and economically successful communities on this scale is a significant challenge. ippr is looking at how the Growth Areas can meet their social and economic objectives and seeking to answer the questions of who is going to live in the Growth Areas and what types of new communities are they trying to create? This paper, the second from this project, reports on qualitative research that we have conducted with prospective and existing residents of the Thames Gateway.

About the authors

Jim Bennett is a Senior Research Fellow, and James Morris is a Research Fellow, at ippr.



The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) is the UK's leading progressive think tank and was established in 1988. Its role is to bridge the political divide between the social democratic and liberal traditions, the intellectual divide between academia and the policy making establishment and the cultural divide between government and civil society. It is first and foremost a research institute, aiming to provide innovative and credible policy solutions. Its work, the questions its research poses, and the methods it uses are driven by the belief that the journey to a good society is one that places social justice, democratic participation, economic and environmental sustainability at its core.

This paper has been prepared by Jim Bennett and James Morris.

This paper was first published 4 January 2006. © ippr 2006

30-32 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7RA
Tel: 020 7470 6100 Fax: 020 7470 6111 www.ippr.org
Registered Charity No. 800065

Contents

Summary	4
Introduction	6
Findings	10
Conclusions	20
References	23
Appendix: Methodology	24

Summary

If we are to create sustainable communities in the Growth Areas we need to understand the housing aspirations of prospective residents, and the needs and concerns of existing residents. A failure to take into account the views of prospective and existing residents risks creating divided communities and unpopular neighbourhoods, which will undermine the long-term social and economic sustainability of the Growth Areas.

In this study we spoke to different groups of people who were planning to move home about their housing aspirations and about whether a home in the Thames Gateway might meet those aspirations. We also talked to people living in relatively deprived parts of the Thames Gateway about their views on the growth planned for their area.

The key issues emerging from our qualitative research with prospective residents were:

- The prospect of more affordable housing in the Thames Gateway was attractive to low to mid-income groups. Higher-income groups were less willing to consider moving to the Thames Gateway, and were only likely to be attracted to locations with very good transport links or a strong cultural heritage.
- In considering different locations, people focused on trade-offs between proximity to family and social networks (particularly for people giving or receiving care), wages, housing costs and travel costs.
- Higher-income groups were resistant to the idea of mixed tenure developments, and although lower income groups were more enthusiastic, some expressed concerns about being looked down on by homeowners.
- All groups were concerned about the quality of housing and neighbourhood design of new housing developments and feared that the new homes in the Thames Gateway could be of poor quality, and in neighbourhoods without a sense of place.
- There was strong consensus about the need for new neighbourhoods to have access to a range of local private and public amenities, transport links and green space.
- Moving to an area with a sense of community and security was also considered to be important.
- People from black and minority ethnic communities were frequently concerned about the availability of culturally specific goods and services.

The key issues for existing residents were:

- They felt the capacity of public services and infrastructure to cope with growth was inadequate, and they believed that only new residents would benefit from any improvements such as new facilities and services.
- They did not think they would benefit from improved housing choices in their local area. They felt that only new residents would be able to access new homes.
- They felt that housing growth was likely to take up accessible green space in and around existing settlements.
- They were sceptical about the likelihood of any new employment opportunities being available to them.
- Existing residents expressed very negative attitudes towards prospective new residents, with some people expressing racist opinions and an expectation that new and existing residents would not integrate.

Our analysis suggests that in order to make the Thames Gateway and other Growth Areas communities of choice, the Government and delivery agencies need to:

- invest in infrastructure and community facilities that will make places attractive to people with more choice in the housing market; this will be essential in areas that currently have poor transport connections and little or no cultural heritage
- develop strategic frameworks for the Growth Areas to guide local planning decisions, informed by a

better understanding of the underlying demographic and migration drivers that will shape their future populations

- give greater priority to community development and invest in increasing the capacity and skills of local authorities and the community and voluntary sector to address community cohesion issues
- engage with and consult existing communities to ensure that the investment in the Growth Areas reflects their needs, as well as those of new residents
- maximise available planning powers and tools to ensure that the new neighbourhoods and housing are designed and built to a high quality across all tenures.

Introduction

The aim of this qualitative study was to gather evidence from existing and prospective residents of the Growth Areas about issues that will affect the sustainability of the new communities in the Growth Areas. It provides important new evidence about people's housing aspirations, their expectations about the new communities and the conditions necessary for making moving to a home in one of the Growth Areas an attractive option and a positive outcome. It also enables the voices of socially excluded people to be heard in the debate about delivering housing growth.

The Government has prioritised reducing regional imbalances in housing supply and demand in England. To overcome a shortage of housing in the South the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) has identified four Growth Areas¹ where an additional 200,000 homes will be delivered, over and above previous regional plan targets².

The Growth Areas approach represents a shift in regional planning policy. Previously, the Government would impose regional targets that would then be distributed at the local level among the local authorities in the region. Under the Growth Areas approach the Government has identified specific areas within the regions appropriate for more concentrated development. By adopting a more focused approach to housing growth the Government can reduce the impact of development on greenfield land and contribute to the regeneration of existing urban areas. This should enable faster rates of housing growth.

This research forms part of a wider project looking at the social and economic sustainability of the Growth Areas. The project will draw on demographic evidence and economic analysis, as well as this qualitative research, to make recommendations about how to achieve inclusive and cohesive communities in the Growth Areas.

The Growth Areas challenge: achieving balanced communities

The Growth Areas will create large new communities, bringing together existing and diverse new residents on a scale that has not been seen since the New Towns programme. This scale of development raises a number of significant challenges. Although the Growth Areas approach is different, the New Towns experience provides some important lessons about the difficulties inherent in achieving the right socio-economic balance in new communities and also in integrating new and existing residents (Bennett, 2005). At this scale, the issues of balance go beyond the usual considerations of creating mixed tenure developments. Through appropriate planning, there is the opportunity to deliver developments that can meet a range of aspirations and needs within a single community; however, historically this has only rarely been achieved.

In seeking to address the housing needs of the greater South East³ by focusing a significant proportion of new housing in the Growth Areas, there is an expectation that some people will move, possibly over a long distance, to a Growth Area in order to access housing. Residential mobility tends to be fairly low among people who are able to exercise choice in the housing market. They are able to access homes that meet their needs for long periods, and when they do move, they tend to move relatively short distances, unless they have a particular reason for relocating (Böheim and Taylor, 1999). Living in the social housing sector may also act as a significant brake on mobility (Champion et al, 1998), although policies to introduce greater choice may begin to change this. This means that, in order to deliver housing that meets needs and aspirations beyond the indigenous growth from within the Growth Areas, the housing offer must be sufficiently attractive to draw people in who would not necessarily be thinking of moving to these areas.

Part of the attraction of the housing offer in the Growth Areas will be relative affordability compared with other parts of the greater South East. But if the Growth Areas want to avoid simply being areas of last resort for people who can't afford to live anywhere else, they need to offer more than just affordability. Employment opportunities, social infrastructure and transport infrastructure will also be key determinants of the profile of in-migration.

1. The four Growth Areas are the Thames Gateway, Ashford, Milton Keynes-South Midlands and the London-Stansted-Cambridge Corridor.

2. Current regional planning targets are for 1.4 million homes by 2016 for London, the South East and East of England. These targets are about to be revised by new regional plans.

3. By the 'greater' South East we mean the Government Office Regions of London, the South East and East of England.

To achieve sustainable communities in the Growth Areas a balance will have to be struck between meeting the needs and aspirations of prospective new residents who have limited housing choices, the aspirations of prospective residents with more choice in the market and the needs of existing communities. If the Growth Areas are unable to meet the aspirations of people with choice in the housing market they will fail economically. If they develop in a way that is not sensitive to the needs of the existing population the communities' cohesion will suffer. If they do not meet the needs of people with limited choice in the market they will have failed to alleviate the severe housing needs in the greater South East.

Understanding how to achieve all three requirements necessitates talking to the people themselves. Regeneration policy has included focusing on the ways in which you involve residents in decision-making processes that affect their communities (see Imrie and Raco, 2003 for an overview). This will be important for the Growth Areas, in order to ensure that they develop in a way that delivers benefits to the existing communities. It will be particularly important for those Growth Areas with significant regeneration needs. But housing growth developments also need to address the needs of people who are not currently residing in the area, which raises a significant public involvement challenge. This requires an understanding of who the Growth Area's new residents might be.

Assessing who may live in the Growth Areas

Analysing in-migration in the context of significant housing and economic growth with allied increases in infrastructure capacity goes beyond the bounds of traditional approaches to housing needs assessments. New approaches are starting to be used in the Growth Areas (for example, Milton Keynes (ORS 2004) and the London segment of the Thames Gateway (Power et al 2004)), which have sought to identify the types of households that might move to specific parts of the Growth Areas. However, there has been no intra-regional assessment of migration to the Growth Areas to inform strategy at the highest level. This makes it difficult to identify prospective residents.

In order to make an assessment of who will live in the Growth Areas we need to consider the broader trends in demography and migration, as well as who will be attracted to the Growth Areas. While the population in England is growing at a moderate rate (0.4% pa) the rate of growth in the number of households is roughly twice as high (0.8% pa), and is fuelling significant housing demand. Falling average household sizes underpin the growth in the number of households, which can be linked to a mix of economic and social factors. Greater affluence and financial independence is enabling more people to choose to live alone (particularly women). At the same time more single person households are being created, through the trends of deferring marriage and cohabitation, divorce and relationship breakdown (Bennett and Dixon, forthcoming).

Within these national trends, the greater South East drives a significant proportion of the population and household growth (Bramley 2005). Between 1991 and 2003 London, the South East and East regions accounted for two-thirds of national population growth. Following a period of depopulation prior to the 1980s, the importance of London's role as a source of population growth has increased, through a combination of natural (indigenous) growth and migration (mostly from overseas).

In order to understand the implications of these national and regional trends for the potential make up of the Growth Areas' communities, it is important to map these drivers onto established trends in migration. A key factor in determining the make up of residents is whether the Growth Areas will be shaped by these prevailing trends in inter-regional migration within the greater South East, or whether the Growth Areas themselves are likely to alter these patterns significantly.

Currently within the greater South East, London's population growth is predominantly due to 'natural' or indigenous growth, which is indicative of its relatively young demographic profile. However, growth in the South East and East regions is dominated by in-migration, for the most part from London (Bramley 2005). This is consistent with the regional escalator model of migration (Fielding 1993), where young people move to London, become more affluent, form relationships, start a family and then move out of London to the surrounding region. With the exception of the London segment of the Thames Gateway, the Growth Areas are in the regions surrounding London; it is therefore likely that some of the in-migration will follow this long-established trend.

Within the broader trends of household growth and migration there are particular groups whose choices in the housing market are limited, for whom the Growth Areas may represent their best opportunity of a decent home. This could include people in housing need living in inadequate accommodation. It will also

include people whose accommodation may be physically adequate, but does not meet their aspirations, either because they are renting when they would prefer to own or because of the characteristics of the home (they might prefer larger accommodation) or the neighbourhood (levels of crime or congestion) in which they live. These factors have been identified as key determinants of migration (Champion et al 1998).

The Government has prioritised support for certain people who are unable to meet their housing aspirations, including workers in key public sectors such as the police, education and health (HMT/ODPM 2005). However, research has shown that there is a much larger group, who are not in housing need, and therefore do not qualify for social housing, but are not earning enough to buy a home in their area (Wilcox 2005). Analysis by Wilcox shows that, even using a narrow definition of the intermediate housing market (people who are priced out of market housing but do not qualify for social housing), there is a large proportion of younger working households (aged 20-39) in the greater South East who are currently unable to buy a home.⁴

The combination of the rising numbers of single person households and the problems of housing affordability in the greater South East indicates that the profile of prospective residents in the housing Growth Areas may include a greater proportion of households without children than the traditional 'escalator' model would suggest.

It is also likely that policy developments to promote choice in social housing could see the Growth Areas play an increasing role in meeting housing needs from across the region. The way in which local authorities previously operated their housing registers (waiting lists) through which they allocated available social housing in their area have severely limited mobility. Most local authorities used to operate a policy of not allowing people from outside their area to apply for housing in their district (unless they had a local connection, for example having close family members in the area). This meant that existing social housing tenants' only option for moving across local authority boundaries was through specific mobility schemes, allowing tenants to 'exchange' their homes with other tenants. This produced very little mobility.

Since the 2000 housing green paper (DETR 2000), local authorities have been encouraged to operate choice-based lettings schemes, and all local authorities are expected to have adopted this approach by 2010. A significant feature of such an approach is to reduce significantly the bureaucracy and complex rules associated with the process of applying for social housing, and a specific policy objective is to increase cross-boundary mobility in the social housing sector. Evaluation of pilot schemes has shown that they can have a positive impact on people's willingness to 'widen their net' in terms of where they want to live.

In London there is some anecdotal evidence from the London Thames Gateway boroughs already operating choice-based lettings that applicants are willing to consider out-of-borough moves. Evidence from the London Household Survey indicates that the characteristics of households living in social housing wanting to move out of their current borough are single people or lone parents, younger people and people in employment (Power et al 2004).

In future there is likely to be increased emphasis on further enabling intra- and inter-regional moves within the social housing sector. In its five-year plan (ODPM 2005) the Government announced funding for new sub-regional and regional letting schemes. If the Growth Areas continue to be a focus for the development of new housing in years to come, then it is likely that the pressure for people to be able to move to affordable homes in these areas will grow.

The table below gives an overview of prospective Growth Area residents, based on the limited available evidence and assumptions based on established patterns of migration.

Demographic	Key factors that might affect the likelihood of a move to a Growth Area
Young affluent families	Housing and neighbourhood quality
Young single people	Employment
Households on moderate incomes	Housing affordability
Low income households	Social housing mobility policies

4. Thirty-five per cent in London, 34% in the South East and 29% in the East of England (Wilcox, 2005)

This study⁵

This study focused on one Growth Area, the Thames Gateway, for three reasons. Firstly, the plans for the Thames Gateway are well developed, so it was possible to be reasonably specific with participants about future housing and infrastructure provision. Secondly, the Thames Gateway has the strongest geographical link with London. As London is the main source of inter-regional migration within the greater South East, by focusing recruitment in the eastern parts of London it was more likely to get people thinking about migrating out of London towards the Thames Gateway area. Thirdly, we were aware that concerns had been raised about the particular challenges in 'selling' the Thames Gateway to prospective residents, and about the significant community cohesion challenges that integrating the new and existing residents would present.

Having decided on where to recruit, the next step was to define the groups to speak to. Attention was focused on low to middle income groups - people whose housing choices would be constrained to various degrees. This was because the market is best placed to respond to the aspirations of high earners, and also it is, to an extent, up to developers whether they aim to attract high earners to the Growth Areas. Overall the study included 56 people through a mixture of focus groups and interviews, from these different segments.

The first segment was people living in either temporary accommodation or overcrowded social housing. In London there are significant numbers of households living in temporary (63,000) or overcrowded homes (174,200). This segment is described throughout the report as *temporary or inadequate accommodation (TIA)*. People were recruited from Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

The second segment was people living in adequate accommodation, but in homes that did not meet their aspirations (principally because they were renting when they would prefer to own). We selected an income range (£20,000 to £40,000) that broadly reflected the criteria for the Government's key worker housing schemes, people who fall into the intermediate market who are unlikely to get priority for social housing but are unable to afford to buy a home. The recruitment was not limited to people in professions that meet the Government definition of a key worker. This segment is described throughout the report as *mid-income*.

The third segment had higher incomes (£40,000 – £80,000) and many already owned their current homes. This segment would represent more elective residents of the Growth Areas, and would be likely to fit the skills and income profile of households that some of the Growth Areas are keen to attract. Their choices in the housing market would still be constrained by what they could afford, but less so than the other two segments. This segment is described throughout the report as *higher-income*.

All participants in the mid- and higher-income groups came from Lewisham and Bexley. Only people who had an intention to move home in the next year were included in the groups.

As the plans for the Growth Areas will have significant implications for existing residents, they were also included in this study. Understanding their views will be important if growth is to benefit them. It was important to gather the views of people living in the more deprived areas of the Thames Gateway, who have perhaps the most to gain from the growth agenda, but at the same time may feel they have little power to do anything to influence it. Two areas of the Thames Gateway were identified, one in Kent (Sittingbourne in Swale) and one in Essex (Tilbury in Thurrock), which have relatively high scores in the 2004 Index of Deprivation, and coincide with parts of the Thames Gateway that have been identified as specific locations for increased growth.

5. See appendix for details of the methodology.

Findings

Why move and where to?

'With rent, what have you got to show at the end of the year? ... You're just paying off someone else's mortgage' Low-income, Lewisham

'If I don't get somewhere then my kids will never be able to' Low-income Lewisham

'It's a way of saving up for the future. You put your money into property for old age' Low-income, Lewisham

'I am looking for more rooms, so I can have a guest/study room' Higher-income, Bexley

All the prospective residents planned to move within the next year. Within each group the reasons for wanting to move were very similar, but there were significant differences between the segments. People in the higher-income groups tended to be moving for quality of life reasons. They were keen to upgrade their home – often looking for a larger home, with more rooms and a bigger garden. They also tended to want to move somewhere quieter. The mid-income participants were all extremely keen to buy their first home. They saw rent as a chronic waste of money. Those living in temporary or inadequate accommodation (TIA) were keen to move because their current accommodation was inappropriate to their needs. Typical participants included:

- A man living in a small, damp, two-bedroom flat with six other family members. Two of his children slept in bunk beds in the same room as him and his wife, while three slept in a bunk bed in the second bedroom.
- A woman living in a hostel with three children, one of whom had sickle-cell anaemia and was a wheelchair-user

The mid-income and higher-income groups were considering four types of location as places they might move to:

- The most popular locations were in, or just outside London, close to where people already lived.
- About half the participants in each group were also actively considering areas in the South East but outside London. The range of towns and villages under consideration was strongly affected by social ties, especially family ties.
- A couple of participants in each group were actively considering leaving the South East for other parts of the UK. Again, social ties were important.
- Several participants were considering overseas locations, though many were not doing so particularly seriously.

The TIA participants were not considering such a wide range of areas, largely because they felt their choice was restricted to properties made available by the local authority. They tended to focus on areas close to where they currently lived partly because that was all they felt was on offer and partly due to family ties to the area.

While the 'Thames Gateway' is a term that has a great deal of currency in policy and planning circles, it had very little meaning to the groups we interviewed:

'Is it that bridge across the Thames?' Mid-income, Bexley

Very few participants had heard of the Thames Gateway. The term never came up unprompted in discussions. Among the few participants who did recognise the term, there were two responses. Some identified the 'Thames Gateway' with the Thames Gateway Bridge that will link Thamesmead and Becton. They did not think it was anything to do with housing. A couple did associate the Gateway with housing development. Their main association was with flood risk:

'You'll need a periscope to see out of your window' Higher-income, Bexley

Prompting with a factsheet on the Gateway did not unlock any pre-existing associations, but it did allow people to form a view on the project as a whole. Introducing the Gateway concept initially led many to fear

the development of a homogenous housing estate stretching from Greenwich to the Thames Estuary. It proved important to be clear that the Gateway developments would cluster around existing settlements. It was also made clear that the new development would be linked to improved transport and other infrastructure. Once these points were made, participants were invited to think about the areas of the Gateway that were most appealing to them.

Which parts of the Thames Gateway appeal to prospective residents?

Few participants had considered moving to any of the areas within the Gateway prior to the focus groups and interviews. However, having seen an outline of the plans for the Gateway most participants considered the possibility of moving to areas within it.

The mid-income groups were broadly enthusiastic about the Gateway though sceptical that the plans would be delivered. Many were drawn by the relatively low house prices, which they felt might enable them to get on the housing ladder more quickly, or with a more satisfying home than would otherwise have been the case. The TIA participants were similarly enthused by plans to build more homes, hoping that it would make it more likely that their council would be able to find them more suitable accommodation:

‘It gives people the option to move out. Single parent families can never afford a mortgage so this is the only way to move out’ TIA

The higher-income groups tended to be more negative. Because they were less price sensitive than the lower income groups and more in control of their choices, they were able to consider a wider range of locations, trading off price against a property’s location and neighbourhood. They saw the Thames Gateway as a Government-driven initiative that would provide low-quality, monotonous housing (other participants had similar concerns but gave them less weight). These associations led to a minority of higher-income participants rejecting the Gateway out of hand:

‘The more I hear about it, the more I worry that it will be like Thamesmead or Milton Keynes’ Higher-income, Lewisham

‘You wouldn’t know if you were in East London or the middle of Swale’ Higher-income, Bexley

Participants divided the Gateway into three loosely defined zones:

- The ‘outer Gateway’ – areas significantly beyond the M25 such as the Medway Towns, most of Thurrock and Swale
- ‘Suburban areas’ – areas close to the M25 such as Barking and Dartford,
- The ‘inner Gateway’ – areas well inside the M25 such as Greenwich and Stratford.

Below is a summary of the factors that led people to prefer a particular zone or to reject the Gateway entirely.

A dominant theme in most of the groups was a desire to get out of London. However, issues around employment, caring responsibilities, transport costs, transport times, reputation and cultural amenities limited people’s willingness to move away from their current area and mitigated the appeal of the outer Gateway areas in particular. The most popular areas were suburbs such as Barking and Dagenham, and areas close to the M25 such as Dartford. Respondents looking to buy felt they would not be able to get as big a house for their money in these suburban areas as they would further out, but were happy to make this trade off.

The inner areas of the Gateway were the least popular among all the groups. The majority of mid-income and higher-income respondents were not attracted to what they thought would be similar or less suburban locations than where they currently lived. While the TIA respondents generally felt they would move wherever they had to, they were often loathe to move to inner Gateway areas either because of caring responsibilities or needs, or because they were as tired of city life as respondents in the other groups.

Most participants in all groups were very negative about city life. They felt that urban living posed too many risks to their children’s safety and moral development and offered too few opportunities to play and learn. This was linked to a sense of decline – people felt that the city had become a worse place to live over their lifetime:

'Of course, I know everywhere is getting worse in the world, but I don't want my daughter to be brought up having to see the things that happen round here. East London is getting worse, more gangs, more fights, more stabbings, more guns. I want to move somewhere nicer. The schools aren't bad round here, but they're better further out. I don't want to move to Dagenham or Ilford, but further than that.'

TIA, Tower Hamlets

Concerns about crime were particularly acute. Many participants were fearful that their children could be caught up in criminal activity either as victims or, thanks to the gang culture they perceived to be prevalent in schools, as perpetrators. These concerns were very significant for some of the mid-income groups and most of the TIA participants. The TIA participants had more direct experience of being the victims of crime and were often fearful for their own safety and that of their families. These concerns were a strong 'push' factor, leading people to prefer the outer Gateway and suburban areas:

'When you haven't got a family you can live anywhere. When you have kids you can't. Living in London isn't safe'. Higher-income, Bexley.

Younger participants who did not have children tended to have a very different view about city life. They were keen to be able to access London's social amenities. Some were also interested in having a short journey to work. This led them to prefer the inner Gateway:

'I am a city girl. I wasn't born in the village and I'm not ready to stay in a village.' TIA, Hackney

'I don't want to move out of London, I'm too young to do that' Higher-income, Lewisham

Family commitments were also a key factor influencing where people felt able to move to. Some were positively disposed to much of the Gateway, but felt unable to move more than a couple of miles from their parents' homes, either because their parents provided childcare, or because their parents required care. These issues tended to affect the TIA and lower-income groups more than the higher-income groups. For many in those groups, this was the single most important issue and it greatly restricted their ability to move to the outer Gateway:

'My dad is 80. He has had a stroke and a heart attack. I can't go far away because the first thing is I need to look after my parents. I have to do shopping for them, see them every day. I can go to Mile End, Wapping, Bethnal Green, Poplar, but can't manage from Barking ... If I didn't I would go to Stratford or Barking or somewhere.' TIA, Tower Hamlets

'I'd be on my own if I moved so far away. At the moment I can at least get someone to watch the children a few times a week while I go shopping or clean the flat, that would be really difficult' TIA, Tower Hamlets

Participants with less demanding caring responsibilities or needs were prepared to consider both the inner Gateway and suburban areas – particularly if they could drive.

Perceptions of the financial impact of moving to the Thames Gateway were significant. Participants in all groups felt that earning potential was lower outside of London and that many types of job were simply not available. At the same time, they thought that living costs would be lower further out, and lowest in the outer Gateway. This led to a trade off between potential earnings, housing costs, travel costs and travel times:

'You wouldn't get paid as much money so it makes more sense to live closer to London and make more money' Mid-income, Bexley

'If I went all the way out there I'd have to change my whole way of life' Mid-income, Bexley

'If I move out to Swale or wherever, I'd get a job out there and just settle down' Mid-income, Bexley

'I'd go further out, but no further than Dartford. I could go further but the money you are saving on your house you are spending on public transport. Plus you are adding half an hour.' Mid-income, Bexley

Those on lower incomes felt that their London wage would not justify the cost of commuting from the outer Gateway. They felt that they would need to work in the outer Gateway if they were to move there.

Those on higher incomes felt that they would be significantly worse off if they worked out of London, so they did not plan to change jobs. This meant that they restricted their focus to areas of the Gateway that

were easily commutable. Time and cost rather than distance were the key issues, so for example, people were perfectly willing to move to the Medway towns provided the train journeys were not much longer than an hour.

Suburban areas were particularly popular among black and minority ethnic (BME) participants. BME participants were as likely as white participants to see city life (and particularly inner city life in Lewisham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets) as being fraught. However, they tended to favour suburban areas of the Gateway as they felt they would provide better access to culturally specific goods and services, ranging from specialist medical treatment to shops selling hair products appropriate for Afro-Caribbean hair:

‘I wish to move outside London if I can get a job there. But my daughter comes first – she has sickle cell, which is a black disease. The hospitals won’t know because it’s pure white out there [beyond the M25].’ TIA, Hackney

While BME participants correctly perceived the ethnic make-up of the outer Gateway population to be largely white, few saw that as a problem in itself. Several of the black participants we interviewed argued that they did not want their colour to be a barrier to their choice of location:

‘I do like mix. If you live in the mix you get different views and you get along. I know the Muslim people, if you live different communities: White, Black, Chinese; you get more knowledge’ TIA, Tower Hamlets

The practising Muslims we interviewed wanted a mosque that was accessible, but were very happy to live in communities with a mixed ethnic and religious character:

‘My husband is a Muslim, where is he going to pray out there?’ Mid-income, Lewisham

People who preferred the outer Gateway were often planning a family or had children in primary school. They felt that moving out of London would provide a safer environment in which to bring up their children. They also expected more space in the home, a garden and more communal play-space. There was also a sense that schools were likely to be better out of London. However, once children had started secondary school parents were loathe to move them.

The perception that houses in the outer parts of the Thames Gateway would be exposed to significant flood risk was an issue: far from relishing the prospect of river views, many people were concerned about flood risk and the implications for insurance availability and premiums as well as personal safety.

‘I would like to move out there, but the problem is the water. God forbid it bursts.’ TIA, Hackney

However it was not sufficient to put more than a couple of people off the idea of living in the Gateway.

Participants were more willing to consider places they had visited. Those without significant first-hand knowledge emphasised that any final decision on locations would depend on getting some experience of the places under discussion.

‘A place might look good on the map, but you’ve got to go there. Like what I just heard about the nuclear power station [on the isle of Sheppey, mentioned by another participant in the group]. I thought it looked good till I heard about that, but you only know those things when you have a look around’ Higher-income, Lewisham

‘Having been brought up in Bow and Poplar, Dagenham is far out to me. It is like living in the countryside.’ TIA, Tower Hamlets

Many participants were unsettled by the government’s role in the Gateway. Their mental model of Government-sponsored housing development was often the Thamesmead estate or, to a lesser extent, towns like Milton Keynes. Neither of these examples was seen as successful, and Thamesmead in particular was seen as a case study in both failed housing development and the Government’s perceived (in)ability to plan new housing. In practice, many of these concerns came down to the neighbourhood- and property-level characteristics, which are discussed in the next section. These issues were particularly significant for the higher-income groups, who felt they could choose to move elsewhere.

‘As soon as you hear stuff like Thamesmead you run. A friend lived on the river there, it was amazing. But you don’t want to say you live there.’ Higher-income, Bexley

Participants were concerned about the image of an area irrespective of the reality of life on the ground

there. These issues were partly linked to concerns about resale value, though for most participants this was a surprisingly marginal issue. The key issue was that they felt a postcode and neighbourhood reflected on their social status and identity as individuals. This was particularly important for the higher-income groups.

People tended to prefer towns with a sense of history and character – for example Rochester rather than Gravesend.

‘Rochester is nice – it’s got a bit of character.’ Mid-income, Bexley

There was strong resistance to the Isle of Sheppey among all groups. Despite the lower housing costs, people felt the area was a backwater which offered few opportunities for work or for children. It was also looked down on – it was seen to be an embarrassing place to live.

‘Swale? Is that the Isle of Sheppey? But there’s nothing on the Isle of Sheppey. Not even a supermarket. It’s a marsh.’ Higher-income, Bexley

‘You wouldn’t go to the isle of Sheppey unless you wanted to marry your sister. It’s a bit inbred.’ Mid-income, Bexley

Participants from south London were loath to move north of the river. They felt that Essex was ‘flat and boring’, that the settlements in the Essex part of the Gateway were less attractive than those in Kent, and that the people were less friendly. We did not talk to enough north Londoners to draw robust conclusions on whether they held similar views about Kent.

‘I just wouldn’t consider Essex. It’s different up there.’ Mid-income, Bexley

‘Essex is flat and boring.’ Higher-income, Bexley

Housing and neighbourhood aspirations

There was a strong consensus on the factors that make for desirable neighbourhoods and homes. The relative importance of the factors identified below varied from participant to participant, but all were significant for the vast majority of participants.

Unsurprisingly, affordability was key to many participants. Participants in the mid-income groups often described themselves as being ‘desperate’ to get on the housing ladder. They felt they were only just able to secure a mortgage that would be big enough to purchase a minimally adequate property.

In contrast, the higher-income groups had more flexibility in their budget, and most were already living in homes that they considered adequate. As such, they were more focused on value for money. They were not committed to spending the maximum that they could afford, but instead were prepared to spend a little extra than they intended if it secured significantly better value.

The TIA segment was the least focused on affordability, which was unsurprising since they were looking to move to social rented housing. The key barrier to their moving was not price, but the number of points they had in the choice-based letting scheme operated by their council.

There was a great deal of concern about the quality of new-build properties. This came through in every group and in every interview. While people felt that there were some reliable benefits to new-builds – particular around energy costs – they thought that they were consistently poorly constructed. Key concerns included:

- thin walls and floors within and between properties (especially flats)
- small room sizes
- poor quality finishing.

These concerns were linked into an overarching suspicion of house builders. Participants felt that developers were unlikely to do anything beyond the bare minimum necessary to make a property saleable and that this was inconsistent with having genuine concern for quality:

‘I’m paranoid about new-build houses – a lot of them are lifeless ... You hear horror stories about problems with builders’ Higher-income, Bexley

'Old houses, they are strong. These days when they make a house it is very light. You can hear people in the next property. Old property you can't put a nail [in the wall], you have to put a drill. Here you can put a nail with your hand' TIA, Tower Hamlets

'New property gets warm quick' TIA, Tower Hamlets

'[New-build homes] have thin walls and ceilings. You get these little holes in the ceiling where they've used nails to attach the plasterboard and they slowly come out so you either need to keep filling it or bang it up' TIA, Tower Hamlets

'We get bigger TVs and bigger stereos, but they keep the walls really thin so you can hear everything.' Mid-income, Lewisham

Design quality came up as an issue without prompting in the mid-income and higher income groups, and came through in prompted discussions with all three segments:

'They don't bother to design the property. They just want more people.' TIA, Tower Hamlets

People's views were explored after prompting with images of different sorts of home design. While the range of images was neither detailed enough nor controlled enough to provide reliable views about the individual designs, they acted as a useful stimulus for a broader discussion of design.



Examples of new housing design stimulus (source: CABE)

The strongest theme to emerge was a desire for individuality. Participants, by and large, had negative perceptions of new-build homes on this criterion – particular homes on large developments. They believed most new developments to consist of monotonous, characterless homes designed purely to minimise costs. Participants in all segments consistently preferred designs that showed variety at a neighbourhood or property level over designs that did not:

'They are all made out of the same sort of shiny brick. They look like plastic houses.' Higher-income, Lewisham

'We don't want to feel like we are living as just one more in a series. We want our home to be a bit different.' Mid-income, Lewisham

'Those flats all look the same, but that one where each doorway section is a different colour, that looks more individual.' Higher-income, Lewisham

Other themes that emerged were:

- A preference for street designs that had communal space in front of the home, particularly green space.
- A strong desire for privacy. This related to concerns about build quality and sound insulation, but also led to a desire for private gardens in addition to communal space and individual entrances in blocks of flats.
- Parking was particularly important for participants with children and the need to park more than one car was emphasised by the higher-income groups.

Virtually all participants wanted more space than they had at present. Ideally, they wanted larger rooms,

more rooms, more private outdoor space and more public outdoor space. However, the meaning of 'more' varied from group to group and person to person, as did the relative importance of this issue.

For participants in inadequate accommodation, 'more space' meant a home which was not overcrowded – one where parents and children could sleep in separate rooms. In contrast, participants in the higher-income groups tended to want larger rooms and a spare room they could use for guests or as a study.

The desire for increased private space was a critical issue for participants in inadequate accommodation and the higher-income participants who wanted to trade-up:

- For people in inadequate accommodation, space was the key issue with their current home and so moving to a home of similar size would do little to address their needs.
- The higher-income groups largely considered their current accommodation to be satisfactory, but wanted to move to a superior home. They saw increased internal and external private space to be essential attributes of superiority. This was partly because they associated this with the calmer, quieter way of living they were looking for and partly because it was a sign of status.
- The mid-income groups were less interested in private space as they were more focused on getting on the housing ladder.

All three segments also wanted more public space around their homes – particularly space where children could play safely.

There was an interesting link between attitudes to space and attitudes to the Gateway. People were more prepared to compromise on internal and external space in areas closer to London than those further away. In particular, participants in the mid-income and higher-income groups rejected the thought of living in flats outside of London:

'It's a bit of a failure if you move all the way out there and end up in a small place like you could live in in London'. Higher-income, Bexley

A key criterion by which participants judged neighbourhood design was 'the milk test'. Participants judged a potential home by the ease with which they could buy a pint of milk late at night. Participants accustomed to easy access to convenience stores were loathe to lose the flexibility that proximity brings. This issue was particularly important for parents with young children, especially single mothers with more than one child. They found it hard to get their children in and out of the house, and wanted to spend as little time as possible in supermarkets, walking down the street with children or leaving children at home alone. Participants did not want to have to get in their car to get a single pint of milk:

'The number of times I walk to the corner shop because I haven't got any milk! You need one of those.' Mid-income, Bexley

'You need shops you can walk to. Just for bread or milk. And maybe a takeaway.' Mid-income, Lewisham

'When I go to a house I look at the street. Where the shops are located. Bus stops and train stations. Facilities I'm going to need every day.' TIA, Tower Hamlets

Aside from convenience stores, participants wanted:

- A short walk to nursery provision and primary schools
- A doctor's surgery within 15-20 minutes' travel time
- Good transport links:
 - For the higher-income groups and those who drove in the mid-income groups, road transport was key.
 - For those planning to work in London, rail travel times effectively marked out the areas they would be prepared to move to. People often felt that a commute should not take more than an hour.
 - For the mid-income and the TIA groups, bus travel and local rail travel were key.
 - Individuals who were the primary user of a single family car tended to be concerned about their partner's transport needs as well as their own.

Participants in all segments wanted to live in a place that had a sense of community. They wanted neighbours to look out for each other (without invading each other's privacy). Many participants felt there was a lack of a sense of community where they live:

'I want a community where the neighbours know each other and stop troublemakers. What is causing all the problems is there is nobody who cares. There is no community spirit. Everyone is "I don't care, I don't care" and it's wrong.' TIA, Hackney

'Here children can't play. You have to lock them indoors. It's not good for their mental state. You won't know what they are doing if they go out. It's scary.' TIA, Hackney

Issues of community were strongly linked to issues around security. People felt that perceived high levels of street crime and anti-social behaviour in their current neighbourhoods were the result of a reduced sense of mutual identification and reduced willingness to speak out when children were playing up.

Participants in all segments strongly preferred living near owner-occupiers to living near renters, particularly social renters. Often this was because people felt that owner-occupiers had greater incentives to look after their property and neighbourhood and that this translated into homes that were better maintained and neighbourhoods with less anti-social behaviour. This attitude was clear among those in socially rented accommodation as well as owner-occupiers; however there were differences. While those in social housing were at pains to emphasise that it was a small minority of people in socially rented housing who caused problems, participants in the higher-income groups were much more sweeping in their attitudes. They tended to view social housing as a source of risk to their family and property and were keen to minimise that risk. This attitude was manifested in both rational concerns about the link between social housing and house values and a more emotional sense that social housing somehow 'lowers the tone' of a neighbourhood:

'You don't want to move all the way out there to have a block of flats at the end of your garden.'
Higher-income, Bexley

'If they are going to start building estates left, right and centre – I wouldn't move there.' Higher-income, Bexley

'You don't want to get your perfect house, then have a burnt out Ford Cortina at the end of your drive.'
Higher-income, Bexley

'I visit lots of houses council give [to tenants]. Nice houses. They break the walls, put pen marks. I think I want to live here. I look after the property.' TIA, Tower Hamlets

An interesting note of complexity was that, while participants in socially rented accommodation were in favour of more mixed tenure neighbourhoods, there was also some concern that owner-occupiers would look down at social renters. This was informed by stories of people in mixed tenure accommodation being assigned the smallest properties or even being forbidden from going into communal areas used by private residents.

Participants with children were very concerned about the quality of schools available in any area they might move to. Many participants whose children were not yet at school expected schools out of London to be better than schools in London. The picture was slightly different for parents with children at school as most of the people we talked to were broadly happy with the schools their children attended.

People expected schools in the Gateway to be new. This brought advantages in terms of new equipment and buildings, but the lack of a track record meant that people found it hard to judge whether the school would be good or not. A couple of participants talked about balancing the excitement of being involved in a new school from its start with the risk of choosing a school which did not have a track record.

Attitudes of existing residents

As well as interviewing prospective residents, we held two focus groups with existing residents in Sittingbourne and Tilbury. Both groups were comprised largely of people living in social housing with family incomes below £25,000. At least half the participants in each group were not in the labour market; they were either unemployed, disabled or at home looking after children. Both groups had very similar views about their towns – they thought they were dreadful places to live:

'The town has grown but the facilities haven't – we're over populated.' Sittingbourne

'They say Kent is the garden of England. Well Sittingbourne is the compost heap. It's where they dump all the crap.' Sittingbourne

'There's nothing here at all.' Thurrock

Out of the 16 people we interviewed, only three recognised the term 'The Thames Gateway' and only one of the three had any idea what it meant. This is a very small sample from a very tightly defined section of the existing Gateway population, but it is a worrying statistic.

'There should've at least been an opinion poll so we could say what we thought.' Thurrock

When they were given some basic facts and information about the plans, initial reactions to the developments planned for Thurrock and Sittingbourne were overwhelmingly negative:

'This place is too small – everyone will be screaming.' Sittingbourne

'I personally don't see how any of us in Thurrock will benefit from it.' Thurrock

'As long as they don't just bring the people and bring other things with it, otherwise it'll be a nightmare.' Thurrock

'A lot of people from London and other places come here because it's cheaper, but we're left in the same position because there aren't any jobs which mean we can get on and better our lives.' Thurrock

Participants felt that any new homes would be monopolised by incomers. They expected the homes to be expensive and require a London wage to justify the mortgage. Even those homes that didn't require a London wage were expected to require a higher wage than they had. There was also a fear that some of the new homes would be bought for buy-to-let by richer outsiders, driving up prices and stopping locals buying. They could see no benefit from the creation of rented homes as they were satisfied with their existing accommodation (though not necessarily with their neighbours and neighbourhoods).

There was also concern that new housing was being planned when people felt that significant issues around the existing neighbourhoods were not being addressed. While participants were largely content with the physical characteristics of their homes, they were concerned about crime and anti-social behaviour on their estates and thought that this should be addressed before attention shifted to new housing.

The new homes were expected to eat into the countryside and urban green spaces. The countryside was seen as one of the few benefits of living in the areas we visited and was already felt to be under threat:

'We have barely got enough room for greenery now. Everyone is living in everyone's pockets.'
Sittingbourne

Participants were wary of claims that new employment opportunities would be created by the Gateway, and felt that any new jobs would go to the newcomers rather than existing residents. They didn't feel that the skills in Tilbury would be relevant to the types of jobs being created. They also distrusted the claim that there would be more training, as they felt that the infrastructure was not there to support it:

'The people moving down into the houses will get the jobs, not the people already here.' Thurrock

'You're either going to be creating highly skilled jobs and then you'll need to bring people in, or you'll be creating menial jobs and to be honest there's enough of those around here anyway.' Thurrock

Participants believed that new services would be created, but expected them to be reserved for newcomers. They did not think that there would be any improvements to their services, and that in all likelihood they would be overrun when the new facilities for the new developments were unable to cater for demand. They expected there to be significant tensions between newcomers, who would enjoy the benefits of new schools, and existing residents, who would not be able to access them.

They also were concerned that greater numbers of people would lead to more incidences of crime, unless measures were put in place to prevent it:

'If they don't put some entertainment for the youth in when they do the Gateway it will only get worse. We already get gangs coming from St Chads onto my estate.' Thurrock

Participants were also very suspicious of people of other cultures – in particular black and Muslim people.

While participants in Sittingbourne were less concerned about black newcomers than those in Tilbury, they were deeply concerned at the prospect of a significant Muslim population emerging and the establishment of mosques. There was a sense that a significant BME community would somehow undermine the 'Englishness' of the local community. Participants found it hard to articulate how this would happen or what this meant:

'The ones that are moving down here, you can't even speak to them, they don't speak our language.'
Thurrock

'They'll open shops for them, like hairdressers for black women, we don't need that.'
Thurrock

'Would they build churches for us in their countries?'
Sittingbourne

Away from racial concerns, there was also some concern that newcomers would be wealthy and look down on existing residents:

'The yuppies won't mix with us.'
Thurrock

'Londoners are snobs.'
Thurrock

Participants did believe that new transport services would be built, but doubted they would benefit them personally. In Thurrock, they expected new provision to bypass their towns, and be focused around Grays. Road improvements were not particularly welcomed, largely because few participants drove. They were most interested in new bus routes, a reduction in the cost of busses or improvements to the local train stations. A particular concern in both towns was that the far platform could only be accessed via a tall set of stairs – these proved a significant physical barrier for mothers with prams.

Conclusions

Our study found that the housing growth in the Thames Gateway may attract people on moderate incomes, and also people needing social housing (if policy on choice in the social sector develops to enable more inter-regional mobility). The parts of the Thames Gateway outside of London are likely to be attractive to young families. This is consistent with existing patterns of migration out of London. The key trade-offs that the people we spoke to described as part of their decision making process were between proximity to family and social networks (particularly significant for people giving or receiving care), wages, housing costs and travel costs.

The higher-income groups were less willing to consider the Thames Gateway. Their reluctance stemmed from negative associations with large-scale development, new-build housing and mixed tenure communities. Their responses may have been more favourable if they had been asked to consider specific locations rather than the Thames Gateway as a whole.

Existing residents living in relatively deprived areas of the Thames Gateway had little or no knowledge that they were living in an area which had been identified as being suitable for housing growth. When they were made aware of this, their initial reactions were overwhelmingly negative.

The findings of this study point to a number of significant risks that could undermine the creation of sustainable communities in the Thames Gateway.

Perhaps the most troubling insight was into the ill-informed and suspicious attitudes of the existing residents we interviewed in the outer areas of the Gateway. While this was a small sample, there was virtually no dissent from the view that the Gateway development was unlikely to bring any significant benefits to participants and would lead to significant tensions between new and existing populations. When one respondent described the Gateway plans as 'a recipe for violence', there was little disagreement.

Participants expected there to be two key flashpoints: public services and social cohesion. They expected new public services to be superior to existing provision but to be monopolised by new residents. There was also an expectation that the new residents would be non-white and that would lead to the creation of a separate community that was somehow less trustworthy⁶ and would not integrate with the existing population.

These concerns were underwritten by a general sense of powerlessness and exclusion. Participants felt that their part of the world was generally ignored by the Government, and that within their locality they were ignored by the 'authorities'. They simply did not believe that growth might correct this perceived imbalance.

A second major risk is that the Thames Gateway developments will fail to attract the sorts of home buyers needed to produce genuinely mixed communities. The higher-income group was far less interested in the Thames Gateway than the mid-income and TIA groups. It was also more likely to draw unflattering parallels with previous large housing development programmes such as Thamesmead. It is also likely that some parts of the Thames Gateway will find it considerably harder to attract this group than others. Places that are either very well served for transport, or have a sense of history or a strong cultural heritage likely to fare better than those that do not.

Policy implications

The following policy implications flow from the findings of this study and our preliminary analysis of the demographic trends that will affect all the Growth Areas. They are relevant for government, regional and sub-regional bodies as well as the local authorities and local delivery bodies in the Growth Areas.

Mixed communities

In many parts of the Thames Gateway and the other Growth Areas local delivery bodies will be aiming to attract some higher-income residents through the housing growth in their areas. Our research indicates that people with more choice in the housing market are less likely to be attracted to the Thames Gateway. Their negative associations with large-scale new development, Government planned housing and mixed tenure

6. Data from the Census shows that in 2001 the population of the Thames Gateway districts outside of London were 90-96% white

has implications for the way in which developers and delivery bodies should market housing to this group. It also has implications for the investment strategy for the Thames Gateway. Areas without strong cultural heritage or high quality transport connections (such as the Channel Tunnel Rail Link) will struggle to attract higher-income households. Locations of significant growth will need to offer more than just aspirational housing to attract this group and will require investment in services, infrastructure and culture to improve their marketability. Otherwise they will not attract a broad enough range of incomes to improve their prospects for economic sustainability.

Given that the higher-income group had very negative views of social housing and social housing tenants, it will be important that, in delivering mixed tenure developments, planning authorities require developers and housing associations to adopt a 'tenure blind' approach. If social housing is sensitively blended with market housing this will help to address the perception of social housing and reduce fears that a mix of tenure will impact on the value of properties.

Community cohesion

The strength of negative views about the impact of housing growth and the prospect of greater diversity in the local community is very worrying. There are three key areas where policy responses could help to improve the prospects for cohesive communities in the Growth Areas.

Firstly, there is clearly a need for greater involvement of existing residents in the development of local delivery bodies' plans. Greater public involvement has the potential to increase the extent to which investment in the Growth Areas addresses existing residents' concerns about the quality of infrastructure and public services. Reflecting existing residents' views and needs in the investment and delivery of new services should address the perception that new investment only benefits the new residents.

Secondly, as well as taking on board the views of existing residents, delivery bodies need to plan ahead as to the public service requirements of new communities and ensure that there is adequate capacity in core public services in advance of the growth in population. Lack of public services' capacity to cope with growth was a key issue for existing residents and a potential source of significant tension between new and existing residents.

Thirdly, local delivery bodies should place a greater priority on community facilities and community development in their plans. Access to culturally specific services and places of worship was identified as a key need for prospective BME residents. In order to achieve cohesive communities local authorities and delivery bodies need to assess the capacity of the community and voluntary sector and have a strategy for addressing weaknesses and gaps. This is likely to require additional resources. They will need to develop approaches with this sector to expose myths, confront racism and involve new and existing residents in activities, including cultural activity, to build a shared sense of community.

Strategic frameworks

The Government has recently announced that it will publish⁷ a new strategic framework for the Thames Gateway in 2006. The other Growth Areas are at varying stages of development of their own overarching strategies. These strategies will guide planning decisions taken at the local level. The evidence base on the demographic and migration trends that will shape the new communities in the Growth Areas needs to be improved to inform these strategic frameworks, otherwise there is risk of building the wrong types of housing in the wrong places in the Growth Areas.

Neighbourhood and housing design and build quality

The long-term prospects of the Thames Gateway and other Growth Areas will be significantly affected by the quality of the new housing and neighbourhoods. This is relevant to both the market and social housing in the Growth Areas, which should be fully integrated. Monotonous, low quality housing in neighbourhoods without communal green space and good quality local facilities will not be popular. The planning authorities in the Growth Areas need to ensure that they use the available policies and tools, including development briefs, master planning, design codes and sustainability appraisals to ensure that new developments are of the highest quality. Further investment is needed in the skills and capacity of local planning authorities to deliver planning and urban policy objectives. This should be a priority for the

7. Speech by David Miliband to the Thames Gateway Forum (23/11/05)

new Academy for Sustainable Communities. The Growth Areas should be seen as an opportunity to build exemplar developments that can begin to change negative perceptions of new housing.

References

- Bennett J (2005) *From new towns to growth areas: Learning from the past*, ippr
- Bennet J and Dixon M (forthcoming) *Single person households and social policy: looking forwards*, ippr/jrf
- Böheim R and Taylor M (1999) *Residential mobility, housing tenure and the labour market in Britain*, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Institute for Labour Research, University of Essex
- Bramley G (2005) *Research analysis on demand, supply and affordability*. Paper prepared for the ippr Commission on Sustainable Development in the South East
- Champion T, Fotheringham S, Rees P, Boyle P and Stillwell J (1998) *The determinants of migration flows in England: A review of existing data and evidence*, DETR
- DETR (2000) *Quality and choice: A decent home for all*, DETR/DSS
- Fielding A (1993) 'Migration and the metropolis: An empirical study of inter-regional migration to and from South East England', *Progress in Planning* 39: 70-166
- HMT/ODPM (2005) *Extending homeownership*, TSO
- Imrie R and Raco M (2003) *Urban renaissance? New Labour, community and urban policy*, Policy Press
- ODPM (2003) *Sustainable communities: Building for the future*, ODPM
- ODPM (2005) *Sustainable communities: Homes for all*, TSO
- Opinion Research Services (ORS) (2004) *Milton Keynes South Midlands study of population and migration*, ORS
- Power A, Richardson L, Seshimo K and Firth, K (2004) *A framework for housing in the London Thames Gateway*, LSE
- Wilcox (2005) *Affordability and the intermediate housing market*, jrf

Appendix: Methodology

The research focused on three segments of prospective residents, and one segment of existing residents. In total, we interviewed 56 people through six focus groups and eight in-depth semi-structured interviews. This sample is adequate to draw fairly robust conclusions about the sample as a whole and some more tentative conclusions about the sub-segments within the overall sample.

Prospective residents

The prospective residents groups:

- lived in areas adjacent to the Gateway, principally Lewisham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Bexley
- were planning to move home in the next year – this meant that they were already seriously thinking about what they wanted from their next home
- were evenly split between men and women
- had an ethnic mix that reflected the mix in the community in which they lived
- were between 25 and 55 years old

At least half the participants in each segment had children

We picked out three segments as being of particular interest:

Title	Segment	How researched?
Higher-income group	Owner-occupiers with a family income between £40,000 and £80,000.	Two focus groups of eight: - one in Lewisham - one in Bexley
Mid-income group	Live in rented accommodation. Family income between £20,000 and £40,000. Half the participants were key workers.	Two focus groups of eight: - one in Lewisham - one in Bexley
Temporary or inadequate accommodation (TIA) group	Individuals and families in temporary or inadequate accommodation.	Eight in-depth interviews carried out in participants' homes in Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

The groups and interviews began with an open discussion of people's housing needs and aspirations. This moved onto a discussion of the Gateway, which was initially unprompted, but then informed by a fact-sheet. Discussions covered the geography of the Gateway, neighbourhood design and exterior home design.

Existing residents

As we were concerned about the social justice implications of the Gateway programme, we focused on one group of existing residents – low-income residents in some of the more deprived areas of the outer Gateway. We carried out two focus groups, each of eight people. One was held in Tilbury and one in Sittingbourne. All participants were between 25 and 55 and had a maximum family income of £25,000. Half the participants in each group were not working: they were either unemployed, disabled or looking after children. There were more women than men in each group. This is a narrow segment of the existing population of the Thames Gateway. It is important to bear this in mind when considering the views expressed.