DTI Construction Industry Directorate Project Report:

Working with the community; Impacts report for general dissemination

Project report number 81169

Prepared for :

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Sustainable Construction

Working with the community

cc2031

Interim Report

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Executive Summary

This report (cc2031) constitutes Output no. 81169 of the BRE framework project, 'Working with the community'. The objectives of this project are to identify the range of impacts which construction projects produce on local communities both during and after construction and to demonstrate best practice in addressing the concerns of local people and businesses.

The report contains the results of two parallel investigations.

- A consultation exercise that was undertaken around five major construction projects in order to identify the range of impacts that construction projects can have on the wider community in which they are situated, and measures taken to address these.
- A series of interviews with industry professionals that provided further information about attitudes and opinions on the consideration of the concerns of local communities and that identified gaps in the provision of guidance for the industry.

The first part of the study involved carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with a variety of stakeholders including representatives of local communities, construction companies and design and client representatives concerned with the case study projects. The results of the consultation exercise highlighted a number of common impacts, both positive and negative and many instances of good practice carried out by the industry to address these. The impacts included such issues as noise, dust, reduced access etc, however the main concern over all the case studies was a perceived lack of communication and consultation with the local community throughout the construction process, from planning till after completion.

The case study consultation was complemented by interviews with members of the construction industry in order to identify their awareness of and opinions about existing best practice initiatives and guidelines on considering local communities, and barriers to their uptake. It was found that although it was accepted that there is a considerable amount of guidance to support work in this area, much of it was not made use of within the industry. Recommendations to increase usage include:

- Raising awareness of existing guidance by increased accessibility and the linking of disparate initiatives.
- A change in culture in the industry to one that supports 'Respect for people' in terms of other industry colleagues or the wider community.
- Education and training to raise awareness and skills in this area, particularly for site level personnel who are at the 'sharp end' in dealing with these issues.

The findings in this report will form the basis of a draft strategy for increasing respect for people in local communities by the construction industry, which will be developed further in a subsequent report (no. 81160).

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This report, Output number 81169, contains the results of a consultation exercise that has been carried out as part of the BRE Framework project, 'Working with the community'. The objectives of this report are to:

- Identify the range of impacts which construction products and processes have on end users and the wider community.
- Highlight awareness and use of existing best practice in considering and involving end users and the community at large in construction projects.
- Identify gaps in the provision of best practice, or barriers to its use.

In order to ascertain the range of impacts, both positive and negative, that construction projects have on local communities, a consultation exercise was undertaken around five major construction projects, four of which were taken from the M4I portfolio of demonstration projects. Interviews and focus group consultations took place with representatives of the local communities, the construction companies, and design and client representatives. The results of this consultation are presented here, together with the measures that have been undertaken to address these impacts, see Section 3.

The identification of best practice approaches in terms of minimising adverse impacts of construction projects on the community was undertaken through an interview process with members of the construction industry. The results of these interviews and suggested areas for improvement are given here as a gap analysis report, see Section 4.

The recommendations from the community consultations and the interview results will form the basis of a draft strategy for increasing respect for people in the community. This will be developed initially in Report 81170, which will also discuss the business implications of taking on board community issues.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the work of the project steering group and all those who helped us by taking part in the research for this report, either as interviewees on the case studies, participants in the community focus groups or in the gap analysis exercise. In particular we would like to thank the sponsors of the case study projects for allowing us full access to their information and personnel, as without this, we could not have achieved so successful an outcome.

2.0 Methodology

In consultation with the project steering group and M4I representatives, five case study projects were selected to form the basis of the consultation exercise. Four of these were selected from the M4I demonstration projects as suggested by the DTI, the fifth was a major housing project. Chosen to provide variety in the type of project and location to eliminate any source of bias in the type of impacts reported, the projects were:

- A junior school in the South of England
- A leisure facility in the Midlands
- A supermarket development in East London
- A hospital in the North East
- A housing development in the North West

Interviews were carried out with key personnel from each project, including representatives from the main contractor, client, architect, project manager, site manager, and Local Authority. Participants were asked about the perceived impacts of their project on the local community, both during construction and post completion, what measures were taken to address these, and how successful they were. Structured interview schedules were developed for each of the main groupings to give continuity. The interview for the main contractor concentrated on the impacts during the construction phase, while those for the designer/developer and client covered impacts during and post construction.

In addition to the interviews, two focus groups of local community members including residents and local business representatives were organised for each project. Each group had approximately eight participants, providing sixteen for each project in total. The focus groups followed a common structure (see Annex 1) and were designed to initiate discussion on the impacts the projects were having on local residents and businesses, what measures had been taken to address their concerns, and what suggestions they could make for improvement. The relationships between the local community and the industry throughout the whole construction process were also covered.

The participants in the focus groups in four of the projects were organised by a market research organisation and took place in local hotels, whilst the fifth group was organised by the local community centre who provided the venue. Participants were given a monetary incentive to take part and to cover their expenses.

3.0 Case study findings

3.1 Case study impacts during construction

The main impacts experienced by the local community during the construction of the five projects reported in the case study research have been combined and summarised in Table 1 to preserve anonymity. Any measures taken by the construction professionals to address these impacts have also been indicated.

The first column shows the general impact, with descriptions of the specific effects in the second, and the remedial measures taken in the third column.

Table 1: Impacts experienced during construction

General impact	Effect description	Measures taken
Noise	• Noise was felt to be particularly bad during demolition and the early stages eg pile driving, drilling, hammering. • Noise was caused by extra traffic, lorries, heavy machinery, and engines. • Local businesses were affected as doors had to be kept closed, and this reduced custom. • Normal site hours began early, 8am, meaning residents could not have a 'lie-in', eg on Saturdays. • Local residents kept windows closed at all times. • Residents complained to the Noise Abatement Society who monitored levels and found them unacceptably high. • Residents complained of unsociable working hours outside the watershed, either very early in the morning (eg 5.30am), late at night (after midnight), or Sunday working outside the agreed limits. • Pets were disturbed, eg dogs made nervous on walks.	• Working hours limited eg to 8-5.30pm and 8-1 on Saturdays. • If out of hours working was needed this was communicated to residents eg by newsletter. • Sub-contractors were reminded of working hours restrictions when complaints were received. • Work was halted during sensitive times. • Barriers such as plastic and plywood sheeting were used to reduce noise. • Breaks were defined to give neighbours relief from the noise. • Working hours could be increased when the work was restricted to the inside, at later stages of the project.

Vibration	• Damage occurred to houses, eg cracking of walls, plaster. • Possessions were damaged, eg china/mirrors fell off shelves. • People were stressed by vibration from demolition and drilling at the same time.	• Some compensation and replacement of damaged items was provided.
Pollution	• Residents were worried about pollution, eg asbestos dust from the site coming into homes. • A diesel tank was positioned outside homes. • Residents were worried about possible pollutants in the dust.	• The diesel tank was moved after complaints • Worried residents contacted the Council about asbestos but got no response. • Samples were taken by a 'pollution watchdog' at the request of the residents, but no results were communicated to them. • The company reassured residents that asbestos removal was being undertaken properly.
Dust	• Homes were covered in dust, both inside and outside, particularly in summer. Windows, curtains, and bedclothes were covered in dust, even when the windows were closed. • Plants and gardens were damaged. • Cars were covered in dust. • Children could not play outside for many months. This was problematic, particularly in the summer. • Windows and doors were kept closed at all times. • Large piles of crushed concrete etc were left on sites. These blew around in the wind particularly in dry weather. • Health problems particularly asthma, bronchitis, conjunctivitis, and coughing were aggravated. • Residents were not informed how long the problem would last so	• Attempts were made to water dust down but these did not always work. Low water pressure was blamed. • Environmental Health Officers came when called by residents but no action was taken. • Sheeting/barriers etc were used to reduce impact of dust. • Car washing and window cleaning were carried out. • Compensation, eg flowers, chocolates, dry cleaning tokens, were given to residents.

	wasted time cleaning up only to find the same thing happened next day.	
Soil	• Piles of soil on site slipped into residents' gardens when wet. The problem recurred and complaints were made to the Local Authority and construction workers.	• Piles were covered with plastic sheeting. • Construction workers offered to shovel the soil back on to the main pile.
Dirt	• Pavements were made dirty with mud and sand. • Dirt was walked into houses/shops and damaged carpets etc. • The roads were very dirty, particularly in winter • Site access roads were not surfaced until the end of the project, increasing the amount of dirt. • In sites where the construction work was carried out in stages, the facility was open while construction was continuing, the dirt was a major problem for users.	• Wheel washers were used on all site vehicles. • Allowances were made in the budget for keeping roads clean. • Road sweepers were used regularly on the surrounding roads. • A road sweeper was based permanently on the site.
Parking	• Construction vehicles were parked in the surrounding streets, including heavy equipment. • Subcontractors' cars were parked inconsiderately. • Access to homes, shops, and bus stops was blocked by parked cars. • Passing trade to shops was negatively affected, as customers could not park nearby. It also reduced access for deliveries. • Access for the elderly was restricted, disabled bays were blocked. • Access for emergency services was reduced. • Locals/visitors could not park outside homes. • Dangerous parking reduced visibility, eg for children crossing roads, mothers taking children to school. • Double parking narrowed	• Letters were sent to all sub-contractors advising them not to park in the vicinity. • The company monitored car parking and dealt with all complaints and threatened culprits with dismissal. • Car parking was provided within the site as much as possible. • Additional car parking space was rented in adjacent car parks. • Security staff checked car parking and clamped unauthorised cars. • Contractors were bussed in, but this is not always practical. • Permit parking was introduced. • Local labour was used where possible so workers could walk to site or use public transport.

	the road.	
Closure of roads	• This prevented residents' access to homes and local facilities.	• Residents were sent letters warning of road closure and explaining the reasons.
Increased traffic	• Increased traffic movement was caused by deliveries to the site, lorry movements etc. • Employees and visitors' cars caused increased traffic movement. • Emergency vehicles had access problems. • Hold ups in the vicinity of the construction works caused increased journey times.	• Following discussions with the Highways Agency, five site entrances were agreed to spread the volume of traffic. • Construction traffic was denied access to the site during busy times, eg school drop off and pick-up times. • A person was appointed with responsibility for traffic management on the site. • All deliveries were timed and confirmed the day before to avoid queues of trucks. If drivers did not conform they were not used again. • Local suppliers and labour were used where possible.
Pavement obstruction	• Workmen's equipment and materials caused problems on pavements. • BT junction boxes and temporary bollards blocked fire exits from offices. • Hoarding/fencing on the site perimeter moved outwards to take over the pavement so that people had to walk in the road.	• Obstructions were moved as a result of complaints. • Safe footpaths on roads with handrails were provided when the pavement was blocked to allow safe passage for pedestrians.
Security	• Children were able to get on to the site and drove the machinery at night. • Perimeter fencing was often insecure. The panels were open with spaces between them. • Thieves were able to access the site and remove items.	• In one case study the same member of staff was always on duty at the gate. He was able to provide information for parents and forwarded complaints to the project manager. • The positioning of paths in one case study enabled the children to have a good view of the site in safety.
Hoarding/fencing of site	• Hoarding fell on residents and children. • Hoarding did not adequately contain noise,	• The site perimeter was checked regularly for loose panels. • The hoarding was solid

	dirt, dust. • The fencing surrounding the site took over the entire pavement. • Mesh fencing was used to increase the visibility of the site for local people/PR but this did not contain dust etc.	enough and high enough to contain dust and reduce noise. • If fencing had to encroach onto the pavement, alternative walkways were provided, eg a fenced off area on road. • In one case study agreement was made with the local Council on the provision of viewing areas for the general public to see the site.
Health and safety	• Physical risks to health from pollution, dust etc were feared. Local GPs were concerned about this. • Accidents occurred, eg from falling materials or potholes. • Broken pavements were not mended quickly enough. • Holes in roads and pavements were not covered, resulting in some residents tripping. • The constant noise and disruption caused stress. • Dark temporary access ramps / alleys caused falls. • The elderly were afraid to go out in the evening because of uneven surfaces and inadequate lighting. • Some reports of rats in the neighbourhood were made, possibly because of disruption to their habitats.	
Disruption of pedestrian access	• Previous rights of way were closed disrupting residents' access to buses/shops. • Safe routes were changed all the time. This affected the elderly and mothers with pushchairs.	• New footpaths were created for the elderly. • Well signed crossing routes were created. • Temporary access routes were always provided, with safe access for the elderly and disabled made easy with ramps etc.

General disorder of site and surrounding areas.	• The site looked messy when part of the project was open for use, eg piles of materials, rubbish. • The site looked unsightly for those whose homes overlooked it.	• Control measures such as formal inspections of site boundaries, toilets etc were put in place. • The project kept to schedule so that materials were used immediately and not kept lying around. • A philosophy of 'just-in-time' was adopted in consultation with residents to minimise disruption.
Power cuts	• Electricity cables were often cut accidentally causing power cuts – in one case for 8 hours in the evening. The site staff were only aware of this when residents complained	
Workmen	• Harassment sometimes occurred, eg wolf whistles from site workers. • Unhelpful or even rude attitudes of workmen were experienced when residents complained, eg about parking or noise	• All complaints were followed up by the construction company. • Workers were told to modify their behaviour and about the importance of respecting local people.
Invasion of privacy	• Where the site overlooked homes, the builders could see directly into bedroom windows.	• As above point.
Blocking of TV reception	• Residents and businesses could not pick up terrestrial TV as the construction site blocked signals. This detracted from business, eg for cafes who would normally have TV on for their customers.	
Litter	• Workmen dropped litter in the streets, eg around fast food shops. The problem improved after complaints were made but then worsened again.	• The construction company confronted the subcontractors in response to specific complaints. • Letters were sent out to subcontractors. • Letters of apology were sent to complainants.

Local labour	• On some projects it was felt that not enough local labour was used. Local people had been in to the site to ask for work and had been refused. • No notices were posted outside advertising jobs for locals.	• Local labour schemes were used in conjunction with the local Councils (use of trade registers), to employ for example scaffolders, bricklayers, and plasterers. In one case study example, residents even complained that they had difficulty in finding a local tradesman as they were all employed on the construction site. • The use of local labour was a pre-requisite for being on the tender list. • The contractor may be scored on their performance at local recruitment. • Recruitment may be monitored regularly via postcode checks. • Funded trainee posts were created.
Short term benefits for local businesses	• In one case the site personnel brought business. The local café provided the site canteen. • Local shops/cafes/betting shops around the sites had increased business from the workmen.	

3.2 Case study impacts post construction

Only one of the projects, the supermarket, was fully open and complete at the time of the research. The leisure centre and hospital were in operation but still not entirely finished. The school will not be opened till September 2001, and the housing development was at the end of its first phase of development, with tenants having recently moved into the first group of new homes. However even these residents were able to make some comments about the impacts they had experienced so far and how they felt the completed development would affect them, both negatively and positively, as indicated in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Perceived negative impacts post construction

Impact	Effect description	Measures taken or suggested
Parking	• Inadequate car parking provision has been made on the site for the number of users of the facility. This means that users/staff park in local streets. • Alternative car parks are	• The Council have implemented a no parking policy in local streets. • Additional car parks have been provided. • Users were to be given free car parking tickets and a park and ride

	too far away so people park illegally. • 'Park and ride' and free car parking schemes were not provided. • Residents have difficulty parking outside homes and shops. • People park in residents' bays, in bays allocated to customers visiting local shops, and double park. • The Council response to parking problems is often not liked by locals. Eg residents have had a CPZ imposed although they voted against it 97%:3% and too few residents' spaces have been provided. • Parking restrictions have been introduced that are inappropriate for shop owners, eg making it difficult for staff and customers to park.	scheme provided • Better signage to car parks is needed. • Residents parking schemes may help. • Strict penalties should be implemented for illegally parked cars, eg clamping. • Additional car parking should be provided in close proximity to the development. • Public transport links should be improved. • Parking restrictions should take into account the needs of local businesses.
Access to bus stops	• Old access routes to buses etc have been blocked off. This is felt particularly by the elderly who have a longer and more difficult walk, in one case up and down steps. • Bus stops and pelican crossings are badly placed, leading people accessing the facility to cross the road dangerously.	• The importance of transport was appreciated – eg local transport representatives were invited to attend meetings. • Access advice can be obtained, eg from disability and elderly advice bodies.
Wayfinding	• Footpaths previously running through the site that were used by children for access to school have been closed. This was on the plans but only when it became a reality could people understand the implications. • Signage is poor for both local residents and visitors. • Residents have to be aware of the new layouts when walking in the area, eg new roads that need to be crossed, new crossing	

	points, new routes.	
Final plans/use differ from original	• The building use is felt to be different from that originally anticipated by locals, eg it is more noisy and disruptive. • The detailed design differed from the original, eg some residents objected to a 3-storey block of 48 flats that they did not expect, built close to their back gardens.	• All information about changes should be well communicated to local people.
Loss of wildlife	• Fewer new trees were planted than original planned and these are very small compared with the lost mature trees. The chosen shrubs etc are not designed to screen the development from residents. • Loss of green space and replacement by paved areas has led to a reduction in wildlife, birds etc.	• Equivalent trees/shrubs should be planted to replace the lost trees. • Some protected trees should be preserved.
Effect on neighbourhood	• Homes surrounding a development can lose value due to the impact of the development. • High walls around developments can create an 'us and them feeling' so that neighbouring residents feel excluded.	
Increase in traffic	• The new facilities have led to a general increase in traffic, eg from users, shoppers, increased numbers of employees etc. • Heavier traffic has brought increased risks for pedestrians, but often no safe crossing places were introduced even where there were schools nearby. • Increased traffic makes the area generally less pleasant to live in. Residents think of moving away.	• Park and ride schemes should be introduced and their usage monitored and encouraged. • Designated car parks located further away to keep traffic from developments have been introduced. • Access roads to developments should be constructed as far from homes as possible to cause minimum disruption.
Loss of facilities	• Loss of facilities for local children, eg an existing children's playground was	• Residents should be kept informed about the loss of facilities and how they will

	reduced in size to make way for a larger car park. • Loss of community facilities, eg a community centre was demolished to make way for the development. This was felt to be a great loss to the area although negotiations are still under way for alternative accommodation.	be replaced. • Facilities for local children /teenagers should be provided as so many of these are being removed by new developments. • 'The local Council should be involved more in this as it is our Council and should be acting for us.'
Litter	• Litter has increased in the streets, as a result of the users of the new development.	
Noise	• Increased noise from the facility is occurring due to users arriving and leaving, particularly if it is open late in the evening. • Increased noise from car parks is occurring if entrances and exits are close to residents' homes.	• Better barriers should be installed, eg glass panels at car park exits to muffle noise. • Notices to visitors should be put up to make them more aware of local people, eg do not hoot horn, make noise while leaving etc. • In some areas residents were given new double-glazing to reduce the noise impact.
Crime	• An increase in crime and muggings is thought to have occurred due to an increase in the number of visitors to the area and ease of access, eg car parks can provide a place to watch and cars are a magnet for thieves. • In some areas there are fears that the development could lead to an increase of undesirables in the area and bring more crime, eg A&E depts/concert venues/late night shopping.	• CCTV can be provided, as well as security guards and an increased police presence. • The development was built to 'Secure by design' guidelines and advice was taken to reduce the opportunities for crime. • Residents were given improved security with a swipe card system.
Views obstructed by new building	• Developments very close to residents' homes have spoiled previous views.	
Adverse effects on local business	• Some shops eg post office have experienced a reduction in trade because of competition. • There are concerns that the new homes will cater	

	for a smaller number of households than before so the market for local shops may be reduced. • Parking issues mean that people cannot park outside local shops for quick purchases. This has had a very bad effect on business. • Deliveries can be affected, eg Securicor vans cannot park outside shops because of fencing installed along pavements to prevent road crossing apart from at lights.	
Loss of landmarks	• The demolition of buildings can mean the loss of local landmarks, which is 'sad' even though these may have been disliked.	
Facilities not always useful for locals	• New cafés/restaurants are too expensive for local people. • Did residents need the new facility? • The new homes are not available for the surrounding local people. This causes resentment.	• Consider the effect on local people who may not benefit directly from the project.

Table 3: Perceived positive impacts post construction

Impact	Description
Valued amenity/facility	• Local people have use of a local facility rather than having to travel, eg arena for concerts, improved hospital facilities, local supermarket etc. • The facility may appeal to young people.
Preservation of local history	• Some local landmarks have been preserved and restored eg blue plaques, statues.
Landscaping	• New landscaping can be a positive feature. • Trees can be saved and new ones planted or reused as part of the new scheme, eg used as logs for landscaping features. • A new public square has been created at the main entrance to one development with trees and sculpture to provide seating.
The development is architecturally pleasing	• The 'look of the buildings' may be particularly liked. In one case the new building fits in well with the old ones, which have been successfully stone cleaned.
Replacement of old or dilapidated buildings	• Old buildings were run down and had noisy machinery. Noise could be heard outside the building. The new one is well soundproofed so it is less noisy and sound cannot be heard outside. • 'An eyesore has been removed' eg tower blocks being

	thought of as very ugly and intrusive.
Improved view	• Dilapidated buildings were replaced by playing fields. • The removal of the high rise flats improved the view and allowed more daylight to penetrate.
Some types of development preferred to others	• A school and supermarket were preferred to other land use, eg housing developments that had been mooted for the sites.
Crime reduction	• In one area the new development has removed the drug problem in the area. There are more residents around at night so people feel safer.
Increased status of area	• The developments have increased the status of the area. They provide a focal point. • The developments have led to the regeneration of previously run down areas. • Property prices are rising and new businesses are moving in. New shops and homes are being built. • The developments have led to the areas being enlivened in the evenings as well as the daytime. • Local young people feel that they can get to concerts etc without having to travel to other towns.
Good for local business	• The developments have brought more people into the area and have been good for local businesses. In one area there has been increased trade for some local shops – one respondent quoted a five-fold increase. • The development has brought new shops and business to the area to serve the new users of the facility eg cafes, shops etc.
Local jobs	• The developments have brought employment to the area through regeneration. • The developments have themselves provided new employment opportunities for local people.

3.3 Communication and consultation with the local community

Communication and consultation were felt to be key to the success of a development by both local people and the construction professionals. All the projects had involved some degree of communication and consultation. Measures taken included:

- The use of the Considerate Constructors Scheme, or a similar local scheme, involving a need for community involvement.
- Meetings held at various stages of the development, pre-planning, planning and during construction.
- The provision of offices on site to provide information.
- Plans and pictures of the development on display for local people to view.
- The use of written media – letters, leaflets, posters, newsletters, reports in local papers. For example letters were sent out before a road was closed for sewage connection work. Also a web site was set up, although it has not kept up-to-date and fully utilised in terms of community consultation.
- General meetings and regular personal contacts were made to the local community.
- The use of local radio stations.

- Tours/visits to the site to view progress.
- Phone hotlines provided to deal with complaints and queries, with phone numbers displayed prominently.
- Visits by the construction team to local homes, schools etc.
- Involvement in the local community such as sponsorship of sports teams, local charity events.
- Involvement of school children. For example construction personnel, such as safety advisors, have visited the children, Art projects and projects on water recycling and demolition waste recycling activities have been carried out. Visits were made by local school children to the construction site. Also visits were made to local schools and an art competition was sponsored by the demolition company.

However in spite of these initiatives, on all the case study projects the local community representatives felt that the amount of communication and consultation that took place had been inadequate. Many people said that the only way they found out what was happening in their own neighbourhood was through rumour and gossip. They also found it very difficult to complain either because they did not know where to start or because the procedures did not work properly. For example, if they rang a phone line, they could not find anyone who would take responsibility. There were exceptions but this was usually because of work done by individuals or companies who felt that achieving best practice in communication was important, rather than as a result of the use of universal-industry wide procedures.

There was also a perception that local communities were often ‘kept in the dark’. Far from reducing their concerns, this had the affect of increasing them, as secrecy was seen as synonymous with ‘having something to hide’ and gave rise to fears about pollution or asbestos for example.

Many members of the local communities were also unhappy with the role played by their Local Authority in providing consultation and information channels. They felt that, as their representatives, they could have acted as intermediaries and provided a ‘one stop shop’ to deal with any issues, rather than just being another member of the project team.

Local people would also like to be informed about how long certain operations would be lasting so that they could plan their activities accordingly. For example when and for how long noisy or dusty activities would be taking place so that they would know when they could clean up, have a ‘lie-in’, etc.

There were few opportunities to give any feedback either during or after completion. The only feedback channel appears to be the number of complaints received, but given the reported difficulty experienced by local people in making a complaint this is a far from accurate reflection of the true situation. People are not necessarily proactive in such situations particularly if they are unused to dealing with bureaucracy. Many respondents reported that they either did not know how to make a complaint, or that when they did they found themselves being passed around so much that they gave up. A low rate of complaints found does not therefore necessarily indicate a high level of local satisfaction.

3.4 Conclusions arising from case studies

3.4.1 Impacts experienced during construction

Although the five case study projects were very different from one another, the main concerns reported by the local communities were very similar. The common impacts experienced during construction were:

- Noise from machinery, increased traffic etc.
- Dust particularly from demolition activity, sandblasting.
- Dirt and mud from the site affecting streets, pavements homes and shops.
- Parking disruption by workmen, site vehicles, and site visitors.
- Increased traffic and congestion caused by deliveries, site traffic, and workmen's vehicles.
- Restriction of access to homes, shops and streets.
- Safety risks from holes in pavements, difficult road crossings, and falling materials.
- Health impacts from dust and pollution as well as psychological effects such as stress.
- Poor behaviour of workmen in terms of lack of consideration and rudeness.

However it is important to place these impacts in context. In all the sites visited, attempts had been made to mitigate many of these effects, due to the forward thinking and vision of the companies involved, although not always successfully. Feedback from local communities has shown that they recognise that inevitably some disruption will occur, and the key to minimising impacts may well lie in communication processes, as many of them can only be alleviated not avoided.

Measures to address these impacts had been taken by the construction companies but, particularly in terms of dealing with dust, noise and parking, these were felt to be inadequate. Good practice measures that were highlighted in the research included:

- Planned measures to control dust, noise and traffic.
- The use of local labour such as involvement in local labour schemes and the sponsoring of traineeships.
- Good site security with 24-hour security guards and secure site hoardings.
- Ensuring benefits to local businesses eg site canteen, local suppliers.
- Good relationships and communication with the local community including visits to schools, charity events, and viewing of the site.

3.4.2 Impacts of development post construction

Although most of the projects were not fully complete, local people felt able to express their concerns about the impact they felt that the projects were already having on their communities, both positive and negative, and to make judgements as to future effects. There was a fairly even split between positive and negative views. In general the development itself was welcomed as an improvement to the area but there were some details that caused concern. Opinions also differed, depending on an individual's circumstance, eg a development could increase trade for some businesses but reduce it for others.

Although these impacts were experienced after completion of the projects, many of them link back to the planning stage and had often been anticipated by local people at the outset. The respondents felt that many problems could have been avoided if they had been addressed at that time. A number of these negative impacts were common to the five projects, including:

- Parking problems for residents and local businesses.
- Reduced access to bus stops, shopping etc, affecting the elderly in particular.
- An increase in traffic generated by new facilities.
- A loss of facilities for the community, particularly for children.
- An increase in noise and disturbance generated by the new development.
- An increase in crime due to changes in the local area.
- The obstruction of views.
- The final plans or development usage being different from what was expected.

Common positive impacts reported included:

- The provision of a valued new amenity/facility.
- A development that is visually pleasing.
- Replacement of old, dilapidated buildings.
- Improved views.
- Increased status/regeneration of the area.
- Benefits to local businesses.
- Increased local job opportunities.

3.4.3 Compromise

In general, although many of these impacts were very annoying to the local people, most of the respondents were prepared to accept a certain amount of disturbance as inevitable when a major construction project was taking place in their neighbourhood. They realised that in any development it would not be realistic to expect to get everything they wanted, but that there would always have to be some compromises. In all the case studies the main issue that arose was they could have put up with most of the problems if there had been better communication and consultation from the construction companies, local Councils and developers.

3.4.4 Communication

There appear to have been major gaps in communication, both in informing local people about what was happening and in finding out what they thought about what was going on. Better communication would have enabled their views to be heard and increased their understanding of why things were being done a certain way. Although most of the construction professionals did try to involve the local community, and there were many examples of good practice, lack of communication was a major source of complaint.

There was also a great deal of dissatisfaction with the provision of complaints procedures. These were felt to be inadequate. It could be so difficult and time consuming to make a complaint that most people did not bother, and when they did felt that little action was taken.

3.4.5 Discrepancies in experiences

In all the case studies projects there appeared to be major discrepancies between the descriptions of impacts and measures taken to address these given by the developers and construction companies and those given by the local communities themselves. For example, companies reported that they had displayed telephone numbers, sent out letters, and held meetings, while the local community said that they had not seen any of these. There could be a number of reasons for these differences in perception.

- It is well known that people often do not read written materials that are delivered to their homes and even ignore notices unless they are drawn to their attention. They do however remember visits and attending meetings.
- The discrepancy could partly arise from the fact that much communication activity was limited to the immediate vicinity of the site rather than the wider neighbourhood.
- There could be differences in expectations of the amount and type of communication used. For example on a long term project, lasting a number of years, the local people expected continuing involvement and often preferred face to face methods, while the companies often relied on a single initial meeting and written communication, eg letters, posters, subsequently. Communication should therefore take place at all stages of a development and a variety of methods should be used in order to capture different audiences.
- Both construction professionals and the local community highlighted that in the area of community consultation there are few procedures laid down as to what needs to be done, and who should take the overall responsibility for such actions. In cases where good practice has been followed this is largely at the instigation of individual companies or individual employees rather than a combined effort by all parties involved – developer, construction company, contractor, Local Authority, design team etc. In many cases some of these had a very good relationship with local people and considered their needs whilst others did not, but as far as the local people were concerned they were not aware of the different sectors involved but perceived the development as a whole. An example of this was that impacts caused by a demolition company were blamed on the construction company who took over later, although they were not responsible.
- The perceptions of local people are often coloured by their experiences in the early stages of the development, eg during the planning stages. If they were not happy with these and possibly were against the project being built at all, this had a ‘halo effect’ and produced negative attitudes to the project as a whole. This was also the case where more than one construction project is taking place in an area. If one company is implementing best practice measures and the other is not, they tend to be ‘tarred with the same brush’ and blamed for issues that are not their fault. This is particularly relevant where there are long term and short term projects being carried out simultaneously.

3.4.6 Representation

Many of the focus group participants felt that they should have had one ‘port of call’ when making complaints, and that they needed help in negotiating what was often a minefield. They would like someone, eg a Local Authority representative, who would be responsible for looking after their interests and acting as a go-between in this area.

3.4.7 Expertise

Often it was the site manager, as the most visible contact for local people, who was at the sharp end to take the blame for any problems that arose, and who appeared to be the nominated representative from the construction company for dealing with these. They therefore had to deal with irate members of the public and frequently with issues that were not in their control or their responsibility.

It was felt that however good the intentions of many of these employees and their companies are, they do not have training or expertise in communication and PR. They also do not have the time or personnel to devote to carrying out a comprehensive community consultation that will continue for the lifetime of a project and beyond, often for a number of years.

3.4.8 Variation in the industry

It should be noted that these projects were taken from the ‘top end’ of the industry. All the companies and organisations involved felt that it was important to consider the needs of the local communities in which they were operating and were trying to implement measures to address these needs. They were all very interested in taking part in the research in order to receive feedback on their performance in this area and thus bring about further improvement. It could be assumed that there are many other companies and organisations in the industry who do not have this culture and ethos and who would require much more help and guidance to implement improvements in respecting local needs.

3.5 Recommendations arising from case studies

The focus group participants and interviewees were asked for suggestions to guide future developments with a view to reducing their negative impacts on the local community.

The main recommendations were:

3.5.1 Communication and consultation

- The community should be consulted from the earliest stages onwards as to whether the development is needed at all, what is the right location for it etc.
- A format for local consultation should be disseminated to Local Authorities and construction companies.
- Leaflets and mailshots should be sent regularly to all the local community, including local businesses. Regular newsletters informing of latest developments, changes to

schedules etc should be included to keep residents informed of progress throughout the project.
- Opportunities should be given for all local people to attend meetings and talk to representatives of the construction company/developers. These should be well publicised.
- The construction team should be proactive in calling meetings or visiting residents, and not leave it to the residents themselves to initiate this.
- A specific place should be provided for making complaints – this should be easy to access.
- A manned 24-hour number should be provided. The number should be actively given out and well displayed.
- Residents should be given guidance about what to expect from a construction project, eg a leaflet setting out normal procedures, statutory requirements etc.

3.5.2 Independent monitoring

- Council staff and senior construction company managers should visit the site regularly, unannounced, to carry out inspections and 'see for themselves' what is actually happening.
- Independent monitoring of construction site and mitigation measures should be undertaken.
- A designated person should be named as a liaison point for the community. A regular 'surgery' should be set up with pre-arranged dates to allow locals to discuss issues.
- If a scheme such as the Considerate Constructors Scheme is used, this should be publicised in the local community.

3.5.3 Recognition of disruption

- Rapid action should be taken in response to any requests for action.
- Compensation should be awarded or help given for cleaning carpets, curtains, walls, window cleaning etc or any inconvenience caused. This must be adequate, not just a few vouchers for goods that are not needed.
- More consideration should be given to local residents and businesses of the effects the construction will have. More forethought should take place at the pre-construction stage.
- A rate or rent reduction could be offered during the construction period.

3.5.4 Contribute to local community

- More local labour should be used and vacancies advertised on site.
- Local communities should be invited to events, such as opening ceremonies etc.
- Consider facilities for local people eg housing, children's facilities, community amenities.

4.0 Gap analysis

4.1 Gap analysis methodology

The case study consultation highlighted areas where there appear to be gaps in the provision of measures taken to address impacts of construction projects on local communities. In addition to the comments of the local community participants, the interviews with the construction industry and Local Authority professionals involved provided further information on where perceived gaps exist in the provision of advice, guidance etc to support their work in terms of considering local people. To supplement this data a series of 'Gap Analysis interviews' was carried out with a sample of industry representatives from Local Authorities, construction companies, architects and designers and client bodies.

Preliminary desk research that had taken place at the start of the project was used to develop a table of existing initiatives and guidance, see Annex 2. This table was sent to the prospective interviewees by e-mail or fax. They were asked to mark any initiatives they were aware of, any they used, and also to add any further initiatives that they knew of that did not currently appear in the table. They were then interviewed about their responses, about their views on working with local community, any gaps they saw in current provision and any suggestions for new guidelines or initiatives. The results of these interviews together with information gathered in the case study consultation form the basis of the preliminary gap analysis and are given in Section 4.2.

4.2 Gap analysis results

4.2.1 Table responses

Twenty industry representatives were sent copies of the initiatives table. Fourteen were returned. The responses in terms of awareness and use of the given best practice initiatives and guidance are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Numbers of respondents who were aware of and used best practice initiatives

Title of initiative	Aware of	Use
Considerate Constructors scheme	11	6
Quality Mark Initiative ('Cowboy builders' scheme)	10	0
DETR 'Code of practice on the dissemination of information during major infrastructure projects'	6	0
DETR 'Best practice guides on the Environmental Assessment process'	13	5
M4I Demonstration projects	8	5

Construction Best Practice Programme Key Performance Indicators - customer satisfaction with Construction Process and Product	10	5
DETR - Housing research summary ' Regeneration that lasts - a Guide to good practice on Social Housing estates	3	1
Environment Agency 'Pollution prevention guidance notes'	8	4
CABE - 'Better Public Buildings'	10	3
Housing		
Housing Corporation guidelines eg Impact of housing on local employment	4	0
Housing Action Trusts targets eg 'Job creation;	5	2
Housing Forum Demonstration Projects	7	2
National Housing Federation publications on Education and Employment	2	0
Clients/consultants		
Construction Clients' Confederation - Clients Charter	7	2
BCO Guide 2000 - 'Best practice in the specification for offices'	7	5
RIBA 'Environmental checklist for development'	6	2
Environmental bodies/groups		
English Heritage(Scotland/Wales) publications - Listed buildings/Historic landscapes	10	3
English Nature - Guidelines on Sites of Special scientific Interest	9	3
Council for the Protection of Rural England/Civic Trust guidance on regenerating towns	6	0
Local Authorities		
LGA publications relating to construction impacts on the community	3	1
I&DeA Publications - 'Innovation in public participation', Community Planning - a report'	4	0
LA21 - Guidance notes - 'Community Participation', 'Planning, transport and Sustainability'	8	2
Other		
BREEAM - Implications of buildings on the local community – pollution, transport etc	9	9
Specific impact factors		
CIRIA Best Practice Guides - Waste Minimisation', 'Environmental good practice on site'	9	7
BS5228 - 'Noise control on construction and open sites'	9	5
CIRIA - 'Planning to reduce noise exposure in construction'	5	2
BS6472 - Evaluation of human exposure to vibration in buildings'	4	3
HSE - HSG 66 'Protection of workers and the general public during the development of contaminated land'	5	4
BRE - Compliance guidance on water regulations	6	3
BRE - 'Site Layout planning for daylight and sunlight. A guide to good practice'	9	5
Institution of Lighting Engineers - 'Guidance notes for the reduction of light pollution'	6	3
HSE - Best Practice Guide 'Protecting the public - your next move'	4	3
BRE guidelines - 'Wind environment and buildings'	5	3

As can be seen in the tables, there is a wide variation in awareness and use of the various guidelines and initiatives. Even when there was awareness of schemes these were not often used as it was pointed out that awareness did not mean that the respondent had the depth of knowledge to make use of an initiative. They also did not know how it could be used in their work even if it was relevant to them. Many respondents had heard of much of the guidance for the first time via the Initiatives Table.

4.2.2 Interview responses

Interviews were carried out with the respondents to the Initiatives Table plus four further respondents who did not take part in the exercise. The results of the interviews are summarised below:

4.2.3 Benefits of considering the community

- It was accepted that local community concerns are becoming an increasingly important issue for the whole industry. Previously they were seen as a standalone issue but now they are becoming part of the wider sustainability agenda for both local and national government.
- Respondents felt that if they keep local people informed of what is going on, it keeps everyone on their side. They are then more ready to accept some of the problems that inevitably happen on large projects. *'There is a great advantage of consulting the community – at first it is a pain but you get better results, less problems afterwards and a better community.'*
- Complaints can be costly and time consuming to deal with. Dealing with complaints, going through complaints procedures, and writing reports on what happened and why, involves unnecessary paperwork and this costs money. In addition, if the situation is so bad that local people take their problem to the Council's Environmental Health Department, this can bring legal problems, which can hold up a project for months. It is usually easier to talk to people before it gets to that stage.
- Complaints also bring adverse publicity, especially for public sector clients so need to be avoided. Public organisations have a duty to think about the community, as they are answerable to the local Council, MPs, or government departments if there are complaints.
- An improved relationship with the local community improves the image of the industry in general.
- The benefits of considering the community are difficult to prove. Some guidance showing the business benefits would help to prove the case, eg how increased investment in this area will produce savings further down the line.
- It was felt to be a duty and common courtesy to tell people what is going on in their 'back yard.'

4.2.4 Barriers to uptake

- There was thought to be a lack of familiarity with much of the existing guidance. In part, this is a result of the sheer volume available, although dissemination and publicity are also issues.
- Available schemes are generally felt to be very useful. However their effectiveness and usage often depends on the age and experience of the construction project

management. It was seen as a challenge for the future to get these accepted more widely at site level. If they are filtered down through the organisation, workers will then be more aware of the effects of their work practices on the community.

- There was also a perception that *'we are legislating ourselves into oblivion'*. Many initiatives are seen as additional red tape or European interference and many people just switch off. They would prefer just one page of useful guidance rather than reams of documents.

- The behaviour of a contractor on a 'social site' was felt to be different from elsewhere. It was felt that sometimes local community needs are not given the same respect as on such sites as on commercial sites. The attitude is sometimes, *'Doing it for a bunch of people on housing benefit so why should we bother?'*

- Where there is a high degree of public consultation required, it was realised that certain skills are needed to deal with it. A large organisation can have a community services team or PR department but the construction workers on the site are seen as the ones in the front line. Dealing with people who are angry or frustrated needs ability and skills which a site manager does not necessarily have.

- The level of qualifications of construction workers was also seen as having some bearing on their awareness of the needs of the local community. In construction there is a huge variety of employees – those who are very well qualified and those who have no qualifications whatsoever. If workers were more highly skilled and better trained, then it was felt that the message of responsibility and care for the community would be more likely to be listened to.

- The status of the construction industry was also thought to be an important issue. The degree of respect with which other parties, both inside and outside the industry, treat construction companies was seen as having an influence on the culture of the industry, which then impacts on the respect given by the industry to the general public.

  It was thought that currently, many construction companies are not given respect, particularly by the client and are not treated as professionals. They felt that they are required to carry out a professional job and yet they are generally seen as having lower status than the rest of the team and that architects and clients will not make the change and talk to them in advance of construction starting. They do not therefore have any ownership of the project. It was felt that change in this respect needs to start from the top. An example was given of a recent project where a contractor was appointed in a consultancy role during the planning stage. An unexpected 'pay-off' of this was that the workforce developed a pride in their jobs. A functional and rewarding team developed. Because it was such a good atmosphere the workers would do things outside of their remit, eg they put in an extra footpath for older people and they became more motivated to reduce potential problems.

- The selection criteria on which the client company bases the decision to engage a construction company was also seen as having an impact on the level of

consideration given to the local community. If the client chooses the contractor on the basis of cost alone, then it is unlikely that they will get the best PR and community awareness. The issue is the price that clients are prepared to pay for good quality work. Clients do not appreciate that working with the community costs money in the short term, eg Considerate Constructors Scheme registration or BREEAM. In the long term it is not a cost but the client needs to be educated to put this culture in place. Many clients are only thought to be interested in time and cost and they therefore do not appreciate it if a project is late because of community issues.

- A further issue mentioned related to tendering for contracts. As the initial tender for work is unpaid, consideration of the impacts on the community are not planned adequately. At the moment there is often only 2 weeks between winning the contract and starting the project – which is obviously too little time to give the matter due care and consideration. One way to improve performance in this area would be for contractors to allow more time in the planning stage to address these issues. This work could be at the contractors 'own risk', but they would be able to back claim if they were subsequently awarded the contract.

- The fragmentation of the industry into different groups who are responsible for different stages of a project was also a barrier to uptake. As there is no continuity, no one person takes responsibility for these issues throughout its life. Also during construction it is usually the construction workers who receive complaints from the public and are expected to deal with problems as they are visible, although these might be outside their remit eg increased traffic or the appearance of a development.

  It was thought to be very difficult to gauge what the Local Authority should do and what the construction company should do, so often things are not followed through properly. One Council member said that he would not want individual complaints to come to him as this would overwhelm him with work. Even within Local Authorities there is little communication about these issues between the various departments eg planning, environmental health, etc. The industry is so fragmented that this area is often neglected.

4.3 Comments on existing guidance and initiatives

- There was a wide variation in awareness and usage of guidance and initiatives. In part, this was dependent on the role of the respondent and the type of projects they usually worked upon.

- There were felt to be too many disparate initiatives that are not linked in any way. In fact some respondents commented that this was the first time they had seen guidance relating to community impacts listed together. The various initiatives would be more useful if they were publicised in a way that made them meaningful to different sets of users, ie indicating at which stage of the construction process each

could be used, which people they would be most relevant for, with a very short description of each.

- There was also felt to be 'almost too much' available in terms of initiatives and guidance in this area. It would be helpful to have them summarised in one place as guidance for respecting the community.
- There were also concerns about how authoritative the guidance is and how far different initiatives are accepted by the industry.
- There was felt to be much useful guidance in existence but some of this needs updating, eg in the light of the Urban White Paper.
- It was felt that there are gaps, not in specific guidance ie on dealing with dust, safety etc as this all largely exists, but in terms of some sort of signposting. This would serve to bring it all together in a simple form that could be accessed easily with the facility for obtaining more detail if needed.
- The national Considerate Constructors Scheme was felt to be useful and most respondents were aware of it. '*It is good as it makes you aware of what is important outside the site. Sometimes you can only think about your little world inside the hoarding*.' For some respondents the scheme was only a start as they had their own company schemes that went beyond its requirements. There was also some confusion as there are local schemes as well as the national one and these are slightly different from each other.

  Although the Considerate Constructors Scheme was thought to be a good scheme and respondents who have used it would use it again, it was felt that it could be improved. It was thought that it is not policed properly, ie only one inspection is carried out over the life of a project and the company is given two weeks warning of visits. The scheme run by the City Corporation in Central London is felt to be very strictly policed and is therefore well respected. There are regular visits and if there are any problems, eg mud on the roads or scaffolding, these are expected to be dealt with.

  There were also comments about the speed of the feedback eg recommendations for awards, which is felt to be too slow. If a company is to receive an award they should be told immediately the job is finished. Now it is not given until the project is long finished and the team has moved on and possibly disbanded. If the scheme is to motivate them, there should be commendations given throughout the project.

  It was also felt that the scheme should be used to provide assistance in terms of advice and guidance if they see something that is not right during an inspection.

4.4 Proposals for new guidance

- Construction companies are always looking for new ways to reduce noise and dust on sites as these are the 'main bugbears.' This, it was felt, would be helpful for everyone, those working on site as well as the local community.

- It was felt that at the briefing and design stages it would be helpful to have a simple checklist for the team to consider indicating which issues may cause problems and what needs to be done to mitigate these.
- Some guidance would be useful to give advice about how issues should be prioritised ie how can one decide which impacts are more important if they clash eg pollution, safety, visual impact, environmental issues etc. One example is the crushing of concrete on site. Although this reduces waste and cuts down on the number of truck journeys made, it also has an impact on local people in terms of increasing the amount of dust generated.
- One respondent commented that it would be useful to have a separate, independent forum for dealing with the 'people aspects' of developments. This would be run by an independent body that would be seen as neutral and fair and that would be listened to by all parties. ACAS was cited as a good example of this. Local Authorities are not always trusted by local people as they are sometimes seen as biased and as having their own agenda.
- It was accepted that buildings are not standalone- they affect the whole environment that surrounds them eg they change views, can increase wind, parking problems etc and can have social and economic impacts on a wide area. The planning system does not always look at the impact on the area in general but only the immediate vicinity. This should be addressed, possibly as an extension of the environmental assessment.
- It was suggested that for designers, it would be useful to have broad-brush socio-economic guidance to demonstrate the likely impacts on communities of certain types of development in certain areas eg urban, rural, retail, schools etc. This could be in the form of a tool similar to ENVEST with a scoring mechanism. Details of a proposed project could be entered and the impacts on the community for various options could be scored and compared. This could highlight which parts of the proposed project could cause problems with the community, which changes would have the biggest impact and how these could be addressed.
- The interviewees all felt that help in carrying out consultation and communication with local people would be useful. *'It is part of 'best value' to rigorously ask yourself what the community think of what we are doing but there is no way of getting their opinions as yet.'* It would be useful to have additional help in finding out what the real concerns are and guidance for this would be useful. For example how to carry out communication and consultation, what should be covered and when, how this should be done etc. Also ideas on techniques of engagement would be helpful. At the moment it was felt to be very much 'ad hoc' and up to the common sense of the practitioner. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have some simple standard guidance, perhaps with sample wording for letters, posters etc. This should go right though a project from the initiation stage to handover.
- Where a high degree of public consultation is needed, it is felt that certain skills are required to deal with this and that project managers, site managers etc do not

necessarily have these, although they are on the front line. Dealing with people who are angry, frustrated etc needs particular abilities and skills. A project manager is not normally involved with dealing with the public but it is a key issue. It is felt that some sort of training in these skills would be very useful.

- An awareness of the local community could be an integral part of construction industry training for site workers. This would have the effect of standardising the quality of work that is done in respect of this issue. It would raise awareness that when undertaking a construction project there are issues outside the project itself that need to be addressed.

- A brief guide to the whole process for local people was also suggested. In planning departments it was felt that much time is taken up with explaining to the public what a letter is about and what the next stage will be. It would therefore be very helpful to have something to send out, a simple guide for the community eg' Knowing your rights', explaining what the system is all about. There are guides for businesses and householders who wish to obtain planning permission but not for the local people who are affected. This links in with a similar point made by local people in the case studies who thought that it would be very helpful for them to be provided with some guidance about what to expect when a construction project is being carried out in their area. They would like guidance about their rights and the responsibilities of the developers and contractors. They would then understand what is normal, and what was not, and be able to target their actions accordingly.

- Some local Councils have a fairly well developed range of practices in terms of working with the local community, but many carry out only the statutory consultation when dealing with the planning process. There was felt to be a lack of coherent policy documents or guidelines to use as a minimum standard, some work along these lines was suggested.

4.5 Sharing information

- It was realised that even where measures are taken to consider the community there are no ways of monitoring the success of these after the project has been completed. Respondents felt that some kind of questionnaire, possibly covering the issues that have been highlighted in this research, could be used to evaluate and review the use of best practice initiatives.

- It was felt to be important to obtain feedback in this area, both from one's own projects and learning from other people's experience. The results can then be used to create good practice checklists to use in future schemes. Knowing what concerned people in one project could be taken into account when developing a similar scheme. This could save much time and trouble eg one respondent highlighted a project where a footpath being closed went to public enquiry and caused a long delay. They learned from this to go about it differently. Post occupancy studies are not usually carried out so it is very difficult to monitor these

issues but it was suggested that it would be very useful to get some feedback at the end of each project.

- What happens on a project in terms of impacts and measures taken is usually just shared between the people involved on a particular project – it is not shared throughout the industry or even within a company or Local Authority so it is lost knowledge. It was suggested that it would be useful to be able to capture this sort of information eg via a seminar once a year, or via a website.

4.6 Gap analysis conclusions

The results of the gap analysis study supported the findings of the case study research. All the interviewees agreed that it was becoming increasingly important to consider the impact of construction projects on the wider community as part of the wider 'sustainability agenda', and that this brought considerable benefits. These included a smoother planning and construction process as well as savings in cost and time taken in dealing with complaints and problems. There were also seen to be advantages in terms of an improved image for the project and for the construction industry in general.

Although there is a certain amount of guidance available in this area, the respondents reported a wide variation in awareness and usage. Even where there was awareness, it did not follow that there was sufficient depth of knowledge to make use of an initiative. It was also felt that much of the guidance took the form of checklists rather than actual practical advice and that there were too many disparate initiatives that are not linked in any meaningful way.

The National Considerate Constructors Scheme was felt to be a good scheme and most respondents were aware of it but it was felt that even this could be improved in terms of policing and links to practical advice and guidance.

In addition to the limitations in existing guidance, there were felt to be a number of other barriers to improved consideration of the local community in construction projects. One of these was thought to lie in the culture of the industry in general. The degree of respect with which other parties, both inside and outside the industry treat construction companies and their employees was seen as having an influence on the respect given by the industry towards the general public. It was felt that currently many construction companies are not given this respect, particularly by the client and that this affects ownership and motivation at site level. This is also compounded by the continuing emphasis in construction on short-term costs as opposed to long term benefit.

The fragmentation of the industry was also seen as a barrier as it reduces opportunities for communication and information sharing and the possibility of any on-going responsibility for community issues. Issues that arise during construction are usually expected to be dealt with by construction workers on site although these are often out of their control. Many of these issues should be addressed much earlier on in the process, even at the planning stage eg parking problems.

The respondents, who included designers, construction companies and clients and Local Authority representatives, generally felt that new guidance was needed to support them in working with the community but that this should be guidance in its widest sense. It should not only focus on written information but should include elements of education and training and a means of obtaining feedback and sharing information to improve communication and co-operation at all levels.

5.0 Way forward

It is clear from the findings that although there is largely an acceptance within the construction industry of the importance of considering the impacts of its work on the wider community within which it operates, this does not always manifest itself in terms of successfully addressing local concerns. Construction projects not only impact upon the quality of life of local residents but also can affect local businesses in terms of lost trade and other problems. The feedback from local communities has shown that they although they are affected, often quite badly, by the physical impacts of construction they largely recognise that it is inevitable that some disruption will occur. They would welcome improvements in the mitigation of these impacts but even more important from their point of view is the perception that consideration is not given to their needs via communication and consultation.

The industry representatives agreed that it was becoming increasingly important for them to consider the impact of construction projects on the wider community but although the case study research highlighted much good practice they accepted that much of the work done in this area is often insufficient and inconsistent. There were thought to be a number of reasons for this:

- The literature review that was undertaken at the start of this project demonstrated that there is a considerable amount of advice and guidance in the public domain to support working with the community. However there is a wide variation in awareness of this guidance and much if it is not made use of within the construction industry.
- There were felt to be too many disparate initiatives that are not organised or linked so as to increase accessibility.
- The culture of the construction industry was not seen as a culture that supports ‘respect for people’ either in terms of industry employees or the wider community. Short-term costs were felt to be emphasised against long-term benefit. The fragmentation of the industry means that there is no on-going responsibility for these issues that is taken through the life of a project.
- The site level personnel are often those who are at the ‘sharp end’ in dealing with these issues although this is not always appreciated in the industry. There is a gap in the industry in terms of awareness and skills that can be linked to education and training at all levels.

There were a number of suggestions from participants in the research as to what could be done to improve the situation in terms of additional initiatives, guidance or advice. These included:

- Training to raise awareness of community impacts and to develop the communication and consultation skills needed to address these.
- The provision of a tool that rationalises the existing guidance and makes it accessible. Suggestions ranged from a simple checklist to more sophisticated systems to aid prioritisation and decision making.
- The provision of a system for sharing information on the issues and the success of measures taken. This could take the form of seminars and websites and could make use of questionnaires for post completion feedback and monitoring.
- Guidance and advice for all parties involved in construction projects ie contractors, sub-contractors, architects, planners etc, in how to carry out communication and consultation within the local community.
- Guidance for the local community themselves to inform them about what to expect when a development takes place in their area.

The results from the case study exercise and the gap analysis interviews given in this report will be used to form the basis of a proposed strategy for change for the industry to support increased respect for people in terms of improvements in working with the community.

This strategy will include the identification of the key drivers for change in the construction industry that will encourage uptake and awareness of guidance in the area and that will include the business benefits of such approaches. It will also map the impacts derived from the case study research against the best practice measures that were taken at the various stages of development and incorporate existing information and guidance derived from the initial desk research for this project (Output no. 81165). The analysis of this information will be used together with the results of the gap analysis interviews in order to identify particular areas where there is currently felt to be a gap in knowledge or uptake in the industry. Best practice tools or guidance will then be developed in three of these gap areas and tested out within a further case study project that will be selected in discussion with the project steering group.