Creative Futures Moston Vale

Outcomes of a participatory planning process

Final Report
November 2003

Executive Summary

Between February and June of 2003, community members and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the early stages of creating a long-term vision for sustainability in the Irk Valley in North Manchester. This was a research project in partnership with the Mersey Basin Campaign, testing an innovative toolkit for enabling community and stakeholder participation in ecological planning. In the DesignWays process, participants use creative thinking tools to develop new options and ecological design to go 'beyond end-of-pipe thinking' to create alternative scenarios for sustainable development.

The envisioning was carried out with participants from NGOs, community groups, academia, public and private sector organisations, at two levels of scale. A total of 18 workshops and site visits allowed community members and partners to brainstorm new ideas, explore the assets which could be built on and enhanced, and explore how the area could be made more sustainable.

The workshops engaged active participation in planning at two levels of geographic scale. At the landscape level of scale, a framework was developed for future planning in the Irk Valley. At the site level of scale, a landscape plan was developed for a former landfill site, Moston Vale, working with members of the Moston Vale Residents' Association. This 22-hectare area of greenspace is within the management remit of the Irk Valley Project.

The Moston Vale plan is seen as the basis for regenerating the site, as part of Phase One of the Newlands project. The framework developed for the Irk Valley, both as maps and as a database of existing assets and new ideas detailed with information about sustainability and local significance, will feed into ongoing consultation in North Manchester.

This report describes the process and outcomes of the Moston Vale planning process. It begins with a description of the context, including the Irk Valley Project. The DesignWays toolkit is introduced, followed by a brief description of each stage and the outcomes of the workshops. Key aspects of the landscape plan developed from this process are then described. A discussion of the limitations of this pilot is followed by a series of recommendations for further steps in the areas of further consultation, implementation, and links with regeneration in the area.

A project website has been created for further information. From this website you can download:

Irk Valley	**Moston Vale**
• Report (for printing or screen view) • The two maps of outcomes (Landscape Visions and Ecological Design) • Legend for the maps • Full data base of ideas developed in workshops	• This report (for printing or screen view) • Landscape Plan • Supplementary notes on the plan • Full data base of ideas developed in workshops

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

"If anybody had said to me, in an ideal world what would you like to see? That is exactly what I would like to see" (resident of Moston and participant).

Between February and June of 2003, community members and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the early stages of creating a vision for Moston Vale, in partnership with the Irk Valley Project and the Moston Vale Residents' Association. The objective of this process was 'to develop a plan with residents and stakeholders that would enhance the value of the site for local people and wildlife'. These workshops were part of a process of developing a long-term vision for sustainability in the Irk Valley in North Manchester[1]. The objective of the Irk planning process was 'to develop a framework for the regeneration of the open spaces of North Manchester, encouraging creativity and consideration of sustainability principles'. As well as creating this framework for the Irk Valley, a landscape plan was developed for Moston Vale. The envisioning was carried out with participants from NGOs, community groups, academia, public and private sector organisations. The residents saw the fact that the planning process for Moston Vale was part of this broader envisioning process as valuable. It helped them to see how the site fits into the broader picture, and helped to engage participation from a range of local and regional stakeholders in the Moston site.

Figure 1 Stage in DesignWays process

This report highlights the outcomes of the process of envisioning the Moston Vale site. It accompanies the landscape plan developed for the site. There is a further report of the outcomes of the Irk process[2].

[1] This process was undertaken in partnership with the Irk Valley Project, as part of Ph.D. research into participatory planning, based in the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology, University of Manchester. The DesignWays process was tested, facilitated by its developer, Joanne Tippett. Zinnia Clark, also based in CURE, assisted with community mapping.

[2] The landscape plans and maps for the Irk Valley and Moston Vale, their accompanying legends, this report and the report for the planning process for the Irk Valley can be downloaded from http://www.holocene.net/irk.htm.

2 Action Research - The Context

The Irk Valley Project (IVP) is a partnership between Manchester City Council, NGOs, residents' associations, and local businesses. It works to create sustainable and accessible green spaces in North Manchester. The project began in May 2001 and covers 500 hectares of managed open space, within a 5000 hectare area. It contains seven miles of the River Irk, as well as several of its tributaries.

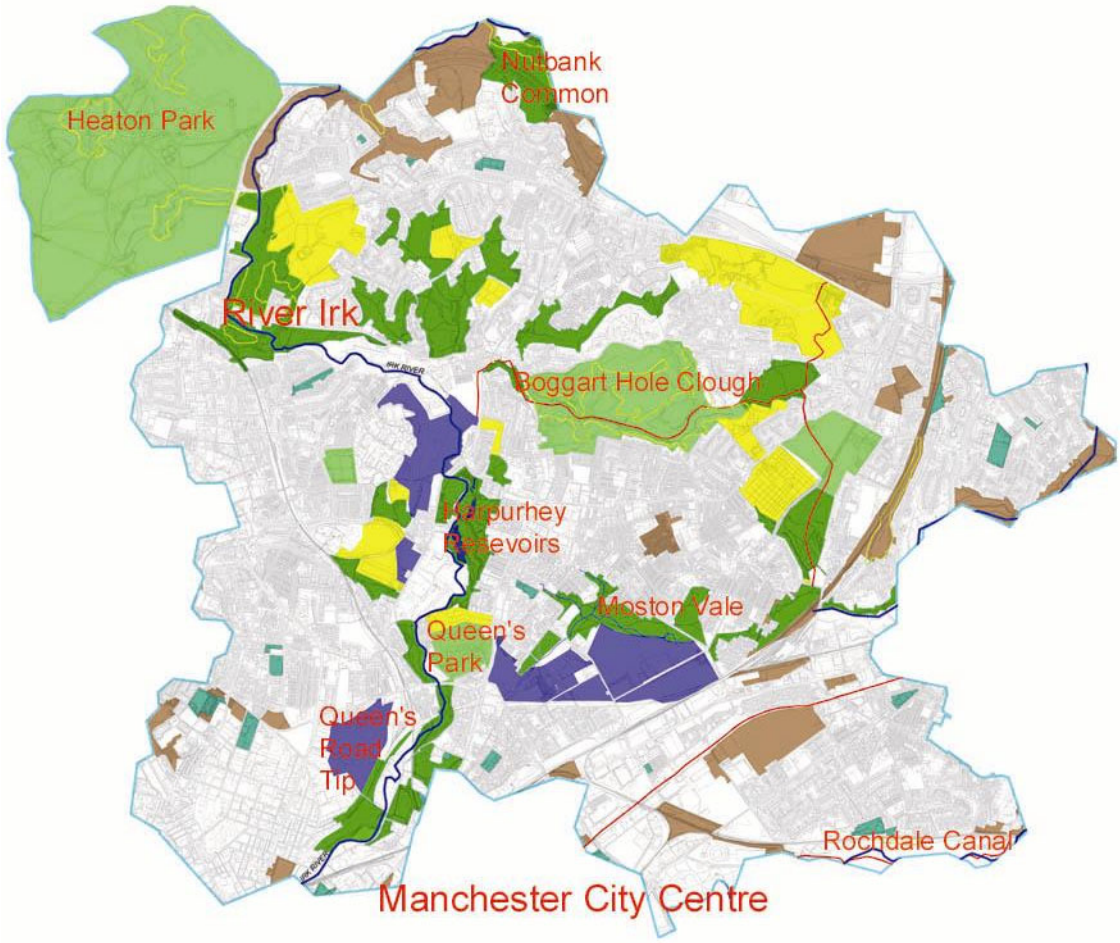

Figure 2 Map of the Irk Valley Project area

By the time of the project, the IVP had spent two years developing contacts with local groups, building support for the idea of a linked series of regenerated open spaces. Meetings with local groups and participation in small-scale regeneration activities (e.g. environmental improvement projects, such as wildflower planting) were organised. All participants, along with local and regional stakeholders, were invited to a final presentation of results and discussion of the process.

The Newlands scheme for reclaiming derelict and under-used land (Forestry Commission) supported this envisioning process as a trial of participatory methods, which is a core principle of Newlands. Moston Vale is a key site for the project. This project feeds into the ongoing creative consultation in North Manchester, and was supported by North City Arts. The outcomes of the workshops have been made available to the strategic planning process for North Manchester and to groups working in partnership with the Irk Valley Project. The envisioning process for the Irk Valley Project area

comprised a series of 8 workshops, to which a broad range of stakeholders was invited[3]. A landscape plan would also be developed for Moston Vale with members of the Moston Vale Residents' Association invited to attend 3 workshops.

2.1 Participating Stakeholders

Sector	Organisation
NGO/Partnership	Irk Valley Project
	Mersey Basin Campaign
	Red Rose Forest
	Groundwork Manchester, Salford & Trafford
	Mersey Valley Countryside Warden Service
	Ramblers Association
Community Groups and Residents' Associations	Moston Vale Residents' Association
	Boggart Hole Clough Community Action Trust
Public Sector	**Manchester City Council:** Manchester Housing Neighbourhood Renewal Environmental Services Manchester Leisure
	North Manchester Partnerships: North City Arts Enterprise and economic initiatives
	Newlands: Forestry Commission North West Development Agency
Academic	Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology, University of Manchester
	Department of Psychology and Life Sciences, Bolton Institute
	Mersey Basin Campaign - Research Advisory Group
Private Sector	Countryscape
	Milliken Industrials Ltd.
	HMG Paints

2.2 Moston Vale

Moston Brook is a tributary of the River Irk, which runs through North Manchester. The corridor of the Irk could be seen as the Silicon Valley of the 18th Century. The landscape carries the legacy of centuries of industrial development, both in its historical features (especially from water mills and dye works) and in areas of derelict and contaminated land. Rapid development in the 19th century

[3] Stakeholders were invited through local and regional networks, including the Irk Valley Project, Mersey Basin Campaign, Groundwork, North Manchester Partnerships, North Manchester Environment Forum, Red Rose Forest Community Network, Envirolink and Sustainability NorthWest. The IVP project officer contacted potential participants, and the author discussed the process with key players in the Forestry Commission, City Council and MVRA (Moston Vale Residents' Association).

led to building dense areas of housing, much of which remains today and is the focus of broad scale regeneration.

Moston Vale is a 22-hectare former landfill site located in a heavily populated area. Moston Brook was culverted on the site in 1969, when controlled land filling of the valley began. Before this time, uncontrolled tipping had led to flood problems. The stream was heavily polluted. Outbreaks of salmonella poisoning and polio in the 1960's focused attention on the unsatisfactory state of the stream. Land filling of the twenty-two hectare site ceased in 1989, with 75% of the valley filled(Glen Kemp Hankinson 1997). Since that time, there has been subsidence and re-colonisation of the site with some trees, grasses, seasonal ponds and small areas of marshy grass. The site is used for informal recreation, e.g. dog walking and kite flying, but has suffered from problems of dumping, burnt out cars, vandalism, fires and illegal motor-cross bike use.

Figure 3 Aerial photo of the Moston Vale site

Moston Vale was chosen for the site level part of the trial of DesignWays for several reasons:

- it is a fairly large (22 hectares) and under-developed site;
- it was seen as a possible Newlands[4] site and therefore had potential funding for capital improvements;
- existing established residents' association, Moston Vale Residents' Association (MVRA);
- existing record of work on the ground with Irk Valley Project (e.g. site boundary fencing and wildflower planting) (ability to build on existing social capital);
- interest of key people in the Residents' Association to work with IVP on project;

[4] The Newlands project is a funding stream for the regeneration of derelict, underused and neglected land in the North West. The project board consists of the NWDA, Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise, working in partnership with Groundwork, BTCV and the Community Forests (Red Rose, Mersey and Pennine Edge) to deliver regeneration projects (Newlands 2003a). Twenty four potential sites have been identified for renewal in the North West, using the innovative Public Benefit Recording System, which scores sites on various aspects of potential social, environmental and economic benefit (Newlands 2003b). Newlands phase one aims to restore 435 ha. of land in 5 years, with a 14 million pound capital budget and a 7 million legacy fund for management and maintenance over 15 years.

- the future Central Park (formerly known as North Manchester Business Park) lies to the south of the site;
- the site borders areas with neighbourhood renewal schemes, therefore change in the area is likely;
- and there is existing habitat information and initial site survey information.

An invitation to attend the initial presentation explaining the process, the site visit and the three envisioning workshops and was sent to 2000 houses with the Grapevine (MVRA newsletter). The project was introduced at the MVRA meeting, held every six weeks in St. John's Community Hall.

3 The DesignWays Process

"I like the idea of 'putting the pens in the hands of the residents' because normally the way that we work is, the landscape architects make the plan and we take it back to the residents. With DesignWays the residents sat around the table with the leaves and the map and actually discussing amongst themselves where they think things should be placed on the map. I think it made a big difference in the final plan as well. I could see people looking at it and saying "Oh, that is what I suggested and I thought that should go there" and I thought that was really, really exciting. I enjoyed that" (participant).

SUNstainable DesignWays™[5] is a toolkit for enabling community and stakeholder participation in ecological planning. Large, colourful Mind Maps provide a transferable structure to coordinate the hands-on process. Participants use creative thinking tools to develop new options. The ecological design process helps participants go 'beyond end-of-pipe thinking' to create alternative scenarios for sustainable development. It is built on a framework for understanding sustainability and combines aspects of several methodologies. The underlying 'systems thinking' approach helps 'make the whole greater than the sum of the parts'.

DesignWays offers an integrated approach to active involvement in designing plans and projects. Its colourful tools and creative methods deliver dialogue that is animated and engaging. The process helps participants take a holistic view that builds on local assets. The expected results are twofold:

- viable plans that reflect resident and stakeholder aspirations and the distinctive character of an area,
- and capacity building, such that participants learn skills of communication and ecological design.

This capacity building enables participants to better contribute to 'planning for sustainability'. DesignWays provides a bridge for productive dialogue between local and professional participants. This helps to integrate bottom-up and strategic planning. DesignWays, with its transferable tools, has been successfully applied linking site and river catchment levels of scale.

Following the successful piloting of the design process in Southern Africa, DesignWays has been used in project planning in both academic and practitioner contexts, e.g. for teaching environmental science at Dominican University in California and in workshops with companies such as Hewlett Packard and Mondavi Vineyards. The DesignWays process has been developed into an Open College Network accredited course.

[5] Holocene Design coined the term SUNstainability ™ because the term 'Sustainability' is often used without reference to ecology and the vitality of the biosphere. SUNstainable implies the capacity to continue within the sun-driven cycle of ecology, without which there would be no economy or society.

4 Outcomes and Stages of the Process

Members of MVRA and several stakeholders who had been involved in the planning process for the Irk Valley attended workshops to plan the open spaces in Moston Vale. The first five steps of the 12-stage DesignWays process were carried out in workshops tailored to the time limits of the Residents' Association. Data about community assets and aspirations were fed into the planning process for the Irk Valley. In the longer series of workshops for the Irk Valley, ecological design principles were applied to the ideas developed by MVRA participants, so that the planning process informed the plan for Moston Vale[6]. The overall process was presented at 3 MVRA meetings.

4.1 Context

"*The local people there are absolutely the key and I think the local people, in most cases, don't see themselves as experts and they don't like to contribute to this. But they always contribute more than the experts, to some degree, because they are local experts*" (stakeholder from Irk Valley process).

The process was started with a site visit. Participants were invited to discuss the site's features and history. Early in the process they were asked to develop a picture of the existing assets and resources, and to analyse how to maximize their value. This is important to encourage positive dialogue about the possibilities for an area, as opposed to a focus on the problems and limits. An emphasis on sustainability suggests the need to build on local assets, in order to protect and enhance areas of ecological value, and to maximise the social benefits of economic activity. This is particularly important in areas of 'regeneration'. Regeneration can tend to focus on reducing problems, which might cause a loss of the assets and features that make a community unique.

[6] The steps of the full *DesignWays* process are:

1. **Creativity -** Brainstorming future possibilities (learning about creative thinking tools and developing new ideas continues throughout the process)
2. **Context -** Building a picture of existing assets
3. **Sustainability -** Analysis of project and resource flows against sustainability criteria
4. **Limits and Solutions -** Analysis of limits and problems, developing solutions
5. **Values and Goals -** Developing shared vision and goals
6. **Filtering Ideas -** Testing and filtering ideas against goals, sustainability criteria and current limits
7. **Ecological Design -** Applying ecological design principles
8. **Landscape Analysis -** Analysis of landscape ecology and historical information
9. **Integrated Decision Making -** Deciding priorities for action
10. **Design Synthesis -** Synthesising design ideas and landscape information
11. **Action Planning** – Prioritise actions and develop strategy to implement plans
12. **Implementation and Review** – Implement plan and allow for stages of learning and review from the implementation process

Figure 4 Site visit to Moston Vale

In the first workshop, participants were introduced to the E.A.S.E.L.™[7], a colourful, simple tool based on Mind Maps. A Mind Map is a graphic technique for representing ideas, using words, images, symbols and colour (Buzan and Buzan 1993). Participants wrote their ideas on colour coded 'leaves'[8].

Figure 5 The E.A.S.E.L. and 'green leaves' for new ideas

[7] The **E.A.S.E.L.™** is framework for organizing design information, created as a Mind Map with moveable branches under the headings: **E**conomics, **A**ctivities, **S**ocial Capital, **E**lements and Settlements, **L**andscapes. Each heading can be expanded to a more detailed Mind Map with sub-headings, which act as DesignWays' architecture for organising participants' ideas.

[8] Colour coding for the leaves:

- Green leaves = future possibilities
- Brown leaves = existing asset
- Grey boxes = problems and limits
- Yellow leaves = goals

The process is designed to allow all participants to contribute, to feel that *"they have got a space to speak"*, as one participant described it. As another commented, *"A lot of people are like me and they are not good at speaking if there are more than 2 or 3 people around, but they have things to say. It's like a classroom at school, you get the people who say things but that doesn't mean to say that everyone else doesn't want to say things but they can't, because they know that they are not the cleverest and they might get laughed at or so they don't really participate. So this is magnificent at getting people to participate and very important"*.

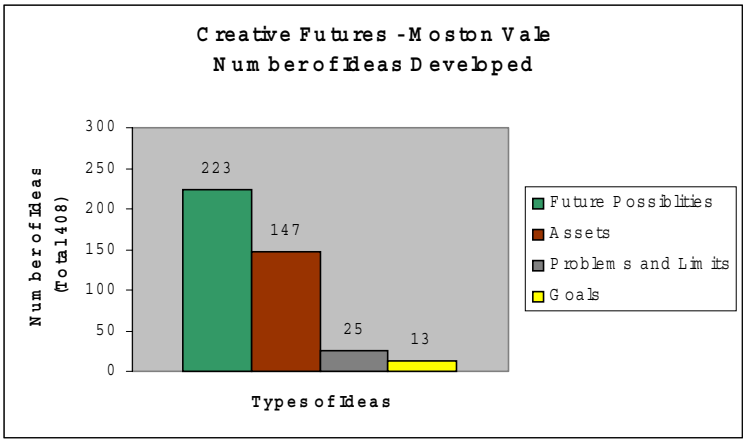

Figure 6 Summary of the types of ideas emerging from the process

As can be seen from the chart above, many more assets were identified than problems. This is not necessarily a reflection of a lack of problems in the area. Indeed, there is high unemployment, with many social and environmental problems. One resident said "To be honest go back10 years and I thought there was no future around here". Rather, the high proportion of assets is reflection of the way the DesignWays process helps participants to draw out the positive aspects of the area.

Participants were at first dubious about looking at the assets and suggested that there were not many assets in the Moston Vale area. Several techniques were used to stimulate discussion, and by the end of the evening, there were 80 assets written on leaves and clustered on the E.A.S.E.L. Project officers and community members discussed the area. At the end of the evening community members said they had remembered and learned more about their area than they thought possible.

Figure 7 Using an aerial photograph to locate assets

147 assets had been recorded by the end of the process. Similar to the planning process for the Irk, participants commented that they were surprised at how many assets there were in the area, many of which they were made aware of through this process. Many participants commented on the fact that they had achieved more in the space of time than they thought possible. One said: *"there was none of that big felt tip and a flip chart piece of paper stuff that drives you demented and drives everybody else demented as well, writing big lists of things that you then talk about one by one and people fall asleep and then you throw the piece of paper away. There was none of that it was great and was much better"*.

Some of the key assets that emerged from this process included the old hedgerow trees on site, and the associated history of the witches' ravine, where the witches' stone and cottage used to stand. Looking at historical maps showed that there used to be a stepping-stone near the brook, and the ideas of creating seats and a mounting block from a stepping-stone (for enhanced horse riding) emerged from this historical information. The history of the site was seen as important, despite the fact that much of the landscape has been buried. As one resident said *"[it] made us feel that we all had something to contribute. You made us feel wanted. Eileen, [an older participant] had far more memories than I did and I do know that that is something very precious to pick out something like that"*. The witches' stone was seen as an important resource for creating feature, with interpretation about the site. There is a similar stone in Queen's Park, which might provide interesting material for interpretative signs in both places.

The wealth of organisations and networks in the area was emphasised in discussions as an important resource for helping to engage community involvement on the site. When looking at the 'Economics' branch of the E.A.S.E.L., residents started with a fairly bleak impression of the economic resources in the area, but quickly started to develop a picture of local shops and resources that could provide the foundation for regeneration in the area.

Ideas about turning the history of the site into an asset included:

- preserve existing trees and hedgerows in construction and use of United Utilities monitoring station;
- turn the history of landfill in the area to an educational resource;
- and to recreate a water feature, echoing Moston Brook, using scrapes and reedbeds in the existing marshy depressions, accentuated with sculpture, following the line of the brook, include interpretative materials about the former brook'.

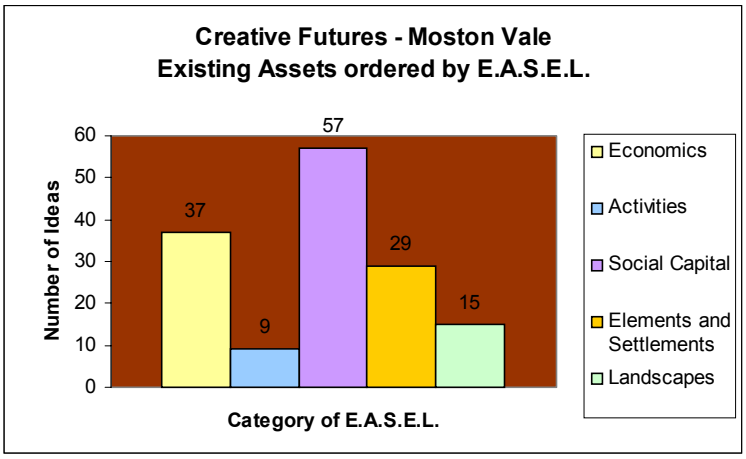

Figure 8 Summary of 'existing assets' - ideas developed in workshops

In the Moston Vale area, there were significantly more assets perceived under the 'Social Capital' category, e.g. the organisations, networks, and institutions. This was somewhat surprising, given that there was more of a focus on the physical environment in these workshops, as the main focus was on the former landfill site. This could reflect participants' sense of the importance of links to existing social and economic programmes and activities in developing the site. Charts of absolute numbers such as these are a crude measure of differences, and do not show the significance placed on the difference aspects mentioned by the participants (see below for more discussion of significance), but it does show an interesting pattern of local knowledge of social capital. This can form a very important resource for regeneration. The fact that the assets people saw in the area were heavily focused in the 'Social Capital' category, points to the value of engaging many different groups in planning for open space. Local participants saw the open space partly in terms of activities and programmes that could increase their use of it, helping to build a sense of local ownership. It is hoped this would reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour on the site. Participation in the planning process was seen as important in building this sense of ownership. As one stakeholder said, "*I suspect it changes the way you think about things, and again that will have effects on behaviour*". In talking of the plan created in these workshops, a resident said "*You have beautiful open space that currently really isn't doing anything and people are interested in creating something for the community out of that that the people themselves are responsible for and is not being imposed on them*".

4.2 Creativity

Human creativity represents a vast and often under-utilised resource. In endeavouring to improve quality of life, one of the most powerful tools lies in encouraging people to engage their own inventiveness. DesignWays encourages participants to ask - 'what is it we are really trying to do, and how can we design a better way to do it?' Several creative thinking techniques are taught and practised throughout the workshops. As one stakeholder said, "*it is great to see a community planning tool that is very creative but has very real results*".

Passing 'leaves' around in a residents' association meeting allowed more people to contribute ideas on both assets and new possibilities. The use of Mind Maps to create a picture of the group thought process makes it easier to identify areas of agreement and what is important to the group. 223 new ideas were developed in the three workshops held with participants.

Figure 9 'Passing leaves' for brainstorming ideas at MVRA meeting

Some of the creative ideas that were developed in the workshops included:

- develop a kids' science education area – to include interactive exhibits such as water channels - can be self managed with instructions;
- highlight the former meander of Moston Brook (proposed as the main pathway on the site, Moston Brook Way) with innovative lighting at night - e.g. underlit blue lighting;
- collection and recycling of materials for arts and crafts;
- and growing materials for artistic use on site (e.g. willows and reeds) and artistic activities on site.

It was suggested that the artistic programmes be developed with the existing programmes running at the Simpson Memorial Hall. Such local knowledge of programmes and possibilities for connections is particularly useful for implementation. Participants were encouraged to build a holistic picture of future possibilities and relate these to the existing assets by using moveable pieces on the growing Mind Maps. Thus valuable ideas that emerge from a creative thinking process can be made more practicable.

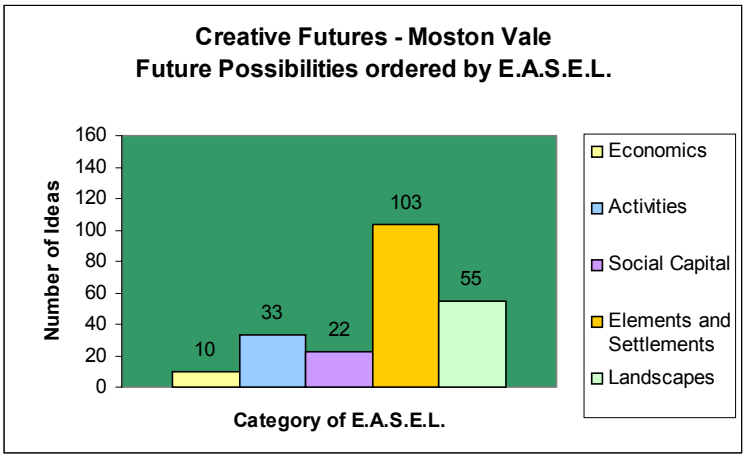

Figure 10 Summary of 'future possibilities' - ideas developed in workshops

More ideas were developed under the category of 'Elements and Settlements' (the built environment), followed by ideas for 'Landscapes'. Given that the starting point of these workshops was a landscape area, the emphasis on the built environment might seem surprising. What it may reflect is that in a heavily urbanised area participants see the open spaces as intimately linked to the urban fabric.

4.3 Sustainability

In this stage of the design process, a framework for understanding sustainability was introduced. Education about sustainability is an important starting point for dialogue. Tools are introduced to help participants make strategic decisions. Ideas are tested against a model of sustainability, using The Natural Step™ framework. As one participant said, "*it is almost a set of rules that guide you… a tool that you can use and apply*". In this workshop, the Natural Step was introduced at the same time as the technique of Mind Mapping. This was felt by some participants to be sufficient, and by some to be too rushed. In interviews, participants said they felt that it was important for them to understand framework of sustainability, especially as it played an important role in the planning process for the Irk Valley landscapes. This session was used to develop new ideas for the site, building on the information about assets from the previous week.

Ideas that were emphasised by participants from this workshop included:

- Fresh produce/Farmers' markets
- Demonstration eco-house in the area
- Demonstration wildflower garden
- Garden features from recycled materials e.g. old sinks
- Education about the value of composting and how to compost

It was felt that a demonstration area and display on the site would be useful. This could include facilities for community composting as well as for composting materials from the site itself. The display could include information about the history of site. As the site developed, demonstration urban gardens showing possibilities for typical garden spaces in the area could be incorporated.

Figure 11 Community composting facilities

4.4 Limits and Solutions

In participatory planning it is generally not very difficult to prevent an exclusive focus on problems. In the DesignWays process thinking about problems is deliberately kept until later in the process. It is then introduced along with tools to help to maximize the value of thinking of the problems in terms of finding solutions to them. The problems and limits that were mentioned in the workshops were used as a tool for brainstorming solutions. . One participant commented, "*It's a good technique for giving people a voice about their concerns but not letting them dominate and then other people feeling they are unable to say anything positive*".

In particular, participants felt concern about:

Moston Vale site

- Maintenance issues need to be resolved
- Inappropriate motorbike use of site
- Major road separating north and south of the site
- Peoples' fear of open space
- Dog fouling and litter

General in area

- Insufficient people who care about the area
- Inconsiderate landlords/short term tenants
- Confusion over who is responsible for decision making
- Decision makers not listening to youth

Several of the perceived problems, such as subsidence on the landfill site, were also seen as potential assets. Initially, the boggy areas were seen as a problem. However, many ideas to enhance the wet areas were developed. The idea of creating a boggy garden gave rise to that of building boardwalks in the wet area. Planting coppice species could provide resources for artistic projects and allow for education about former craft practices such as basket weaving. The seasonal ponds were seen as potential picnic sites. Interpretation materials were seen as important to help visitors understand the value of the marshy areas. The fact that the brook is so deeply buried was also seen as a problem. Again, the marshy areas were seen as a resource in this respect, as it would be possible to highlight the former meander of the brook with both the main path and scrapes in the marshy areas, extending the boardwalk to small bridges over these scrapes to give a sense of crossing a waterway.

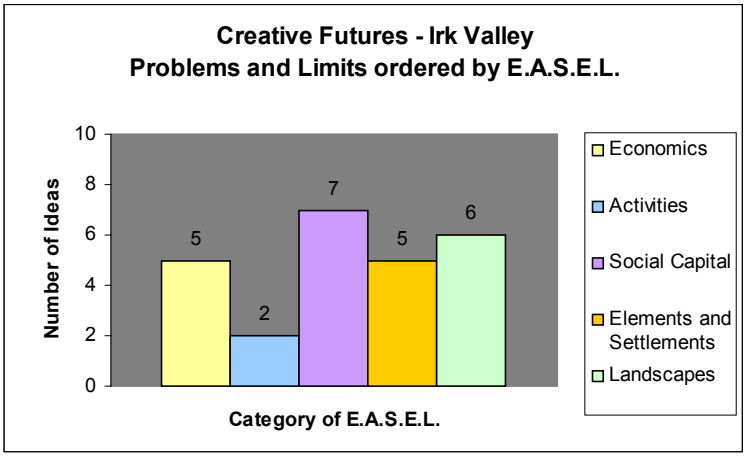

Figure 12 Summary of 'problems and limits' - ideas developed in workshops

Discussion of causes of problems tended to focus on the social aspects, as people's behaviour was seen as the ultimate cause of economic and environmental problems.

4.5 Values and Goals

In this stage of the design process participants synthesize goals from the plethora of ideas developed in the previous workshops. Developing such goals is an important task in assessing the significance and relative importance of the ideas brainstormed in earlier sessions. The aim of this analysis was to stimulate discussion about whether or not the goals were moving towards sustainability, and whether or not they were likely to improve quality of life in the area. This stage of synthesising goals is important in developing an overview of the direction of the plans, and well as providing principles against which future possibilities can be tested.

The discussion of goals in the Moston Vale workshops was focused on the site itself. This enabled participants to clarify what was important to them on the site. This information was important for filtering ideas to be considered for further development in the site plan. New ideas for the site also

emerged from this discussion of goals. This stage will require further workshops with more participants to refine the goals.

From discussions in the previous workshop in which the concept of sustainability was introduced, the goal of developing organic land management (no synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers, etc.) was stressed by community members. Other goals to emerge from the workshop included:

- Protect and enhance what we have
- Bring people and communities together
- Develop facilities and areas for people of all ages and for many different kinds of activities
- Develop an ongoing programme of activities and opportunities for involving people of all ages
- Recycling- composting -waste reprocessing facility including education centre / interpretive materials using history of site as an example
- Create informal country park with meadows and trees
- Create an area that is good for wildlife, including planting species native to the area

The discussion about creating an area that was good for wildlife led to discussing the long-term possibility of restoring the brook, digging out the landfill and returning the brook to its old contours. This stimulated some debate as to feasibility and the need for an ecologically sound way of dealing with the landfill material. In the meantime, it was agreed as important to highlight the history of the site and to develop innovative ways of showing where the brook used to be, as part of developing the character and educational value of the site.

Three important goals emerged for the areas surrounding the site:

- Central Park to show-case sustainability, including Sustainable Urban Drainage, energy efficient building and composting facilities
- Regenerate and revamp old houses in the neighbourhood to show case ecological building and sustainable technologies
- Maintain the character of the neighbourhood in regeneration processes

This aspect of the workshops, developing goals, would benefit from further time and attention. The starting list of goals could be used to stimulate discussion about the area. Participants felt that the work on the Moston Vale site could help to catalyse regeneration in the area. Both the goals and new ideas developed in these planning workshops could provide a valuable starting point for further planning and participation in developing plans.

4.6 Filtering Ideas

In this stage of the process, the information gathered in the previous steps, such as looking at areas of un-sustainability, problems and goals, was used to start the process of filtering out the important ideas from the large number of ideas that had been generated. These ideas are 'tested' against the long-term goals and criteria of sustainability. Moveable icons are used in an effort to make this process, enhance transparency and stimulate dialogue. The information from these icons was recorded in the database developed from the ideas put forward in the workshops by participants (using Excel). Thus ideas can be 'sorted' by perceived importance and ability to meet goals. This was used to help decide which elements to work with in the final design stage.

Figure 13 Social Capital E.A.S.E.L. filled in for Moston Vale

4.7 Ecological Design

The future possibilities that were considered by the participants to be important for advancing the goals of the project were elaborated and developed through the application of ecological design principles. In the Moston Vale workshops some of the tools used in the Irk planning process were introduced. 'Nodes and Networks' charts were used to discuss possible flows of money, information and people. The use of the social nodes and networks tool stimulated discussion about links to local artistic programmes, and ways of maximising school involvement on the site. The ideas from the Moston Vale workshops were further refined and discussed in the longer planning process for the Irk Valley, where they acted as a smaller scale example of the framework being developed.

Figure 14 Consideration of social networks as they relate to Moston Vale

4.8 Design Synthesis

This stage of the design process involved synthesising the landscape information with the future possibilities and the ecological design ideas developed in the previous workshops. At this stage, the design team working in the Irk level workshops continued to develop the ideas for the Moston Vale site. They worked on maps and overlays, developing more detailed plans for the Moston Vale site, using the ideas and goals developed by the participants in the workshops for the MVRA.

A plan was developed for the site stressing the importance of historical information and interpretation. This plan and the maps[9] produced for the Irk Valley project are part of the award winning global Green Map System (see www.greenmap.org).

4.9 Action Planning

The plans for Moston Vale and the landscape framework for the Irk Valley were presented for discussion to the Moston Vale Residents' Association, the steering group of the Irk Valley Project, staff in the Mersey Basin Campaign and to a workshop attended by over 50 regional and local stakeholders. Attendees were able to see the results of the planning process. They learned about DesignWays in hands-on workshops looking at priorities and means of achieving the plans, facilitated by participants of the DesignWays workshops for the Irk Valley. The action planning stage requires further workshops with key players and bodies who could implement the plans. Plans should be reviewed and revised later, after some of the ideas have been implemented.

5 Key Aspects of the Moston Vale Plan

This description and the following notes accompany the landscape plan created for the site (download from http://www.holocene.net/irk.htm). There are further design notes and details in the document Creative Futures – Moston Vale, Supplementary Notes, also on this site.

The overall tenor of the plan rests in enhancing existing features, such as the existing woodland in the Witches' Ravine, the boggy areas in marshes, and through planting of trees on the small hillocks created by subsidence to create woodland glades. Biodiversity enhancement was seen as important, with large areas to be developed as wildflower meadows. Participants felt it was important to maintain an open aspect to the site, as well as enhancing habitats for wildlife. Tree planting should be carried out so that site lines and views are kept open. This echoed the earlier recommendation in the Phase One habitat survey to use natural shapes for planting, blended in with the landscape, with mowing regimes and seeding the grassland with local wildflowers to enhance diversity (Lee-Gallon 2001). One idea to emerge from brainstorming was to accentuate the small hills that have developed due to subsidence, planting them with clumps of trees (appropriate to the soil and site) so that they become more distinctive features.

It was seen as very important to look for creative ways of bringing the memory of the brook back into the landscape, in landscaping features and through highlighting the wetland areas. This included creating the main path, Moston Brook Way, along the former meander of the brook

[9] The maps were produced and designed by:
- Joanne Tippett (CURE)
- Zinnia Clark (CURE)
- Matt Brown (Countryscape)
- Drew Anderson (Groundwork)
- Nuala Murphy (CURE)

(enhanced by wetland scrapes in areas where the brook meandered too much for a path). Boardwalks can accentuate the experience of walking over the wetland scrapes. This path would be enhanced by landscaping with art work, perhaps also blue lighting along the path at night to emphasise its particular role in the landscape, acting as an echo of the former brook. Art gardens could both incorporate artwork and provide a venue for artistic activities. These could use materials grown and collected on the site.

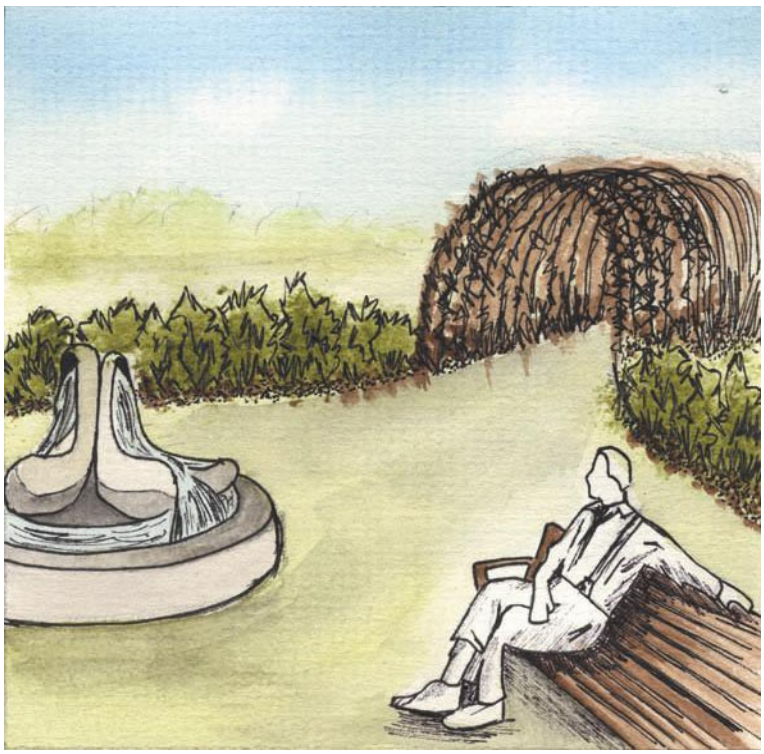

Figure 15 Impression of an art garden using woven willow

Good quality paths were seen as essential. A bridleway to encourage more equestrian use of the site was suggested. A major source of contention in the workshops was the conflict between dog use of the site and dog fouling and the desire for more pedestrian access. It is very important to put in several easily accessible dog runs, no littering and fouling signs and bins throughout the site, especially at entrances and intersections of pathways. Design for dog use should be carried out in cooperation with local dog wardens.

The creation of play areas was seen as very important. It was suggested that youth groups should design these in detail. A need for a skateboard/active sports area, an area with facilities for different ages groups and possibly also an 'Adventure zone', combined with a youth hut was perceived. The need to upgrade the existing football pitch to an all weather area was stressed, as it is frequently too muddy to be used.

Several community facilities were suggested, including a Community Pavilion, for activities and events. A refreshments kiosk was seen as a valuable addition to the area, once the use of the site was increased. Temporary stalls for a farmers' market could be set up in front of the community pavilion, and which would help to attract people to the Moston Vale Site.

Figure 16 Community pavilion with Farmers' Market

Community composting facilities formed the core of the area focused on allotments. Facilities for composting were seen as an important new facility, both for the community and for the site, enabling management of its green wastes in a more sustainable way. Such facilities could act as a catalyst for more sustainable regeneration in the area as well as on the landscape. Interpretation about the history of the site as a landfill was seen as a good starting point for educational materials about the need for composting. Once the composting facilities were operational, urban demonstration gardens were seen as an important feature. This could help residents and visitors learn about possibilities for their own gardens. These should be tailored to show options for the types of small garden spaces typical in the area. They could include demonstrations of creating garden features from recycled materials, gardening for wildlife and integrated pest management through the use of herbs and companion planting.

5.1 Regeneration in the Local Area

The edge between the Central Park and the site needs careful consideration. Participants thought it was important that the business park feel like part of the open space. Sensitive planting of natural screens was seen as important. Residents were keen to discuss possible ways in which the business park could showcase sustainability principles. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems for the site run-off was seen as important, whilst energy efficient building and composting facilities could be encouraged.

The housing in the surrounding area is typically very high density 'pavement tenements'. Whilst some of the houses are neglected and some are boarded up, much of the basic building stock is sound. With sensitive renovation, it would be possible to retain the historic character of the area, develop a wider range of housing types and improve the environmental performance of the buildings. Much of the housing stock consists of two bedroom houses. Remodelling should be able to create three and four bedroom houses by combining terrace houses, as well as creating more diversity in the housing

stock through developing flats from some of the existing houses. Discussions during the planning process suggested that new developments should demonstrate a high level of ecological awareness in design, both in terms of materials used and energy efficiency. Participants felt it was important to make sure that new buildings were of a high quality and enhanced the existing character of the area.

The regeneration of the open spaces, including Moston Vale, is an important part of regenerating the area. Well sign-posted trails and interpretive materials can enhance links between the open space sites. Where houses were to be demolished to create open spaces, it was seen as important that these be used to create green links between the larger open space areas. These sites should also be used to enhance the sustainable management of urban rain run-off.

6 Limitations of the Study and Further Research

This study was undertaken as a pilot, testing the DesignWays process as part of Ph.D. research sponsored by the Mersey Basin Campaign. The project ran from February to June of 2003. Participants were interviewed before and after the process. Findings from this Ph.D. research will be posted on www.holocene.net. Early results suggest that this is an effective tool for enabling meaningful participation. Several gaps have also been identified, along with recommendations for improvement.

The short project lead in time, dictated by the nature of the research process, meant that there were gaps of representation on the planning team (e.g. from the health and economic sectors). For the Moston Vale plan, a lack of resources for outreach meant it was not possible to target hard-to-reach sectors of the population, such as youth groups. The following recommendations provide a summary of possible further steps both to help fill some of these gaps and to maximise the value of the plans.

7 Further Steps and Recommendations

This section includes several recommendations for further steps to refine and utilise the framework created in this process.

7.1 Further Consultation

- The plans that were developed should be used as the basis for further consultation and discussion in the area.
- In order to maximize the value of the plan for different user groups, outreach to community groups and different sectors of the population, in particular youth groups, children, parents and older people, needs to be carried out. This could both help to refine the overall plan and placement of activities, providing valuable input into the detailed design of areas.
- In the light of Moston Vale being expanded across Church Road, a full consultation with residents should be undertaken to discuss the location of the BMX track and skate park.
- Involve youth and youth groups in detailed design of skateboard park and activity zones.
- Involve children of appropriate ages in designing the play areas.
- Organise field trips for residents, to meet people from other areas with similar projects, and to visit sites of best practice for inspiration, e.g. The Earth Centre, near Doncaster (http://www.earthcentre.org.uk/) and Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth, Wales (http://www.cat.org.uk/), to see some examples of ecological landscaping, ecological resource use, etc.

7.2 Implementation

- Emphasise use of local resources in construction and management of the site, e.g. local industry, buying plants from local nurseries, using local graphic artists to develop signage and local manufacturing of landscape features.
- Emphasise use of recycled materials in construction, e.g. recycled bricks for landscape features from demolition in area.
- Involve young children in the design *and* construction of an artistic wall around the play area.
- Work with youth groups to implement aspects of the skate park/activity area, especially in decoration and artwork.
- Encourage community events to implement aspects of the design. Events that involve planting and artistic activities are particularly suitable. Pride and a sense of ownership is likely to be much enhanced by involvement in both detailed design and implementation.
- Develop Land Trust or 'Friends of' Group to assist with managing the site, and provide support and training for the group.

7.3 Links with Regeneration in the Area

- Hold workshops with project officers working in regeneration in the area to go over the resources in the database and maps and to gain further input into ideas for the area.
- Look for possible way to develop youth programmes and provide space in area, e.g. working with the head of the football club and keen community members from MVRA.
- Maximize links with schools to develop educational materials, science programmes and on-going activities.
- Look at maximising the value of new pocket parks in the densely populated areas for green links, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and ecological benefits as well as social benefits. Develop plans for SUDS as means to involve businesses from the park into the plan.
- Develop the ecological design process further with participants, with more participatory planning workshops looking at the regeneration of the area, looking in particular at the resource flows, green links between open spaces and links to social programmes such as education.
- Capitalise on the broader social and environmental information that emerged from this process to add value to other projects and programmes in the area. Develop the social and economic connections, to encourage new spin off partnerships and benefits from landscape improvements.
- Coordinate with ongoing programmes to both gain more data and maps and to feed into their participation and planning processes (e.g. Water Framework Directive). Promote outreach to bodies that could implement ideas from the planning process.
- Ongoing process to develop ideas and build on the information developed in the maps and databases. Several ideas were identified as important in the initial filtering phase, and there are more ideas in the databases which may be appropriate / important as the projects develop and conditions change.

- Develop a Geographic Information System (GIS), possibly through a local college, to allow for updating of information and coordination of bio-monitoring and restoration activities in one central data source. This should be linked to the area's Local Strategic Partnership.

8 Outcomes

The Moston Vale plan is seen as the basis for regenerating the site, as a key part of Phase One of the Newlands project. The framework developed for the Irk Valley, both as maps and as a database of existing assets and new ideas detailed with information about sustainability and local significance, will feed into ongoing consultation in North Manchester. The Moston Vale plan acts as an example of how this framework can be applied in practice. Organisations including North Manchester Partnerships, the Forestry Commission and the Irk Valley Project see this framework as a valuable source of information for strategic planning.

Figure 17 Community members viewing Moston Vale plan at MVRA meeting

These reports are summarised from the author's Ph.D. research. Early results from the trial of this innovative planning process have been positive. Participant responses included "*all the participants are proud about it*", "*the outcomes seemed magnificent*" and "*I was surprised about the energy and enthusiasm generated*".

9 References

- Buzan, T. and B. Buzan (1993). The Mind Map Book. London, U.K., BBC Books.
- Glen Kemp Hankinson (1997). Proposed Strategy for the Development of Open Space Facilities in North Manchester. Manchester, North Manchester Regeneration Ltd., Manchester City Council: 55.
- Lee-Gallon, N. (2001). Habitat Survey Report for Church Lane Landfill Site Harpurhey. The Wildlife Trust - Lancashire, Manchester, N. Merseyside, Habitat Survey Team.
- Newlands (2003a). North West England - Partnerships - Newlands, Forestry Commission,. 2003.
- Newlands (2003b). Summary of PBRS Methodology, Forestry Commission, North West Development Agency.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dave Barlow, IVP project officer, for the time and energy he put into this project. Janette Bennett from the Moston Vale Residents' Association worked wonders in setting up presentations, assisted by the MVRA committee.

Zinnia Clark (CURE) supported this process through facilitating community mapping. Nuala Murphy, Matthew Wilkinson (CURE) and Drew Anderson (Groundwork) provided invaluable assistance.

Many thanks to the participants in the planning process, whose enthusiasm was only matched by their creativity.

Prof. John Handley, Joe Ravetz of CURE at the University of Manchester and Walter Menzies of the Mersey Basin Campaign have provided invaluable insight and support in the academic component of this work. Amanda Wright of the Mersey Basin Campaign has helped greatly to develop the educational aspects of the process as the External Moderator for OCN accreditation.

The Harpurhey Neighbourhood Project Community Centre and St. John's Community Hall provided excellent venues and support.

Many thanks to the sponsors of the process and research:

The North West Development Agency and the Forestry Commission through the Newlands Project
North City Arts
Mersey Basin Campaign
Avecia
Milliken Industrials Ltd.
HMG Paints
British Vita
Countryscape

The Economic and Social Research Council and the Mersey Basin Campaign have supported the research of which this process was a part.

For further information about this research contact:
Joanne Tippett
Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology
School of Planning and Landscape
University of Manchester
Oxford Rd.
M13 9PL
UK
Tel 07951 006242
jo@holocene.net

For further information, to download copies of this report or its accompanying maps, see:
www.holocene.net/irk.htm