

LEIGH PARK, HAVANT

This case study provides a profile of the suburb, and assesses its current state of health. It considers the need for improvement and potential for renewal, before raising some policy issues. It is based on a visit, a workshop with representatives of local interests, and data from a range of sources including the 2001 Census, Local Knowledge, CACI, and FPD Savills.

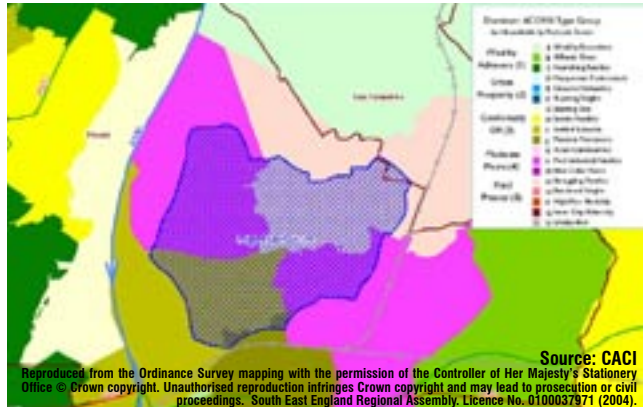
Leigh Park presents the issue of how to regenerate former council housing estates. It has been an important experiment in applying the principles of Community Engagement, including the Prince of Wales Foundation's Enquiry by Design process, which resulted in over 150 residents who want to be involved and 45 offering to serve as Area Panel volunteers.



What type of suburb is Leigh Park?

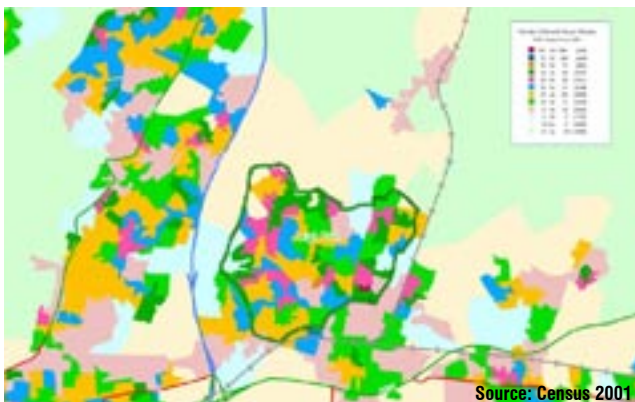


Defined by ONS as mainly suburban urban with a small suburban rural area

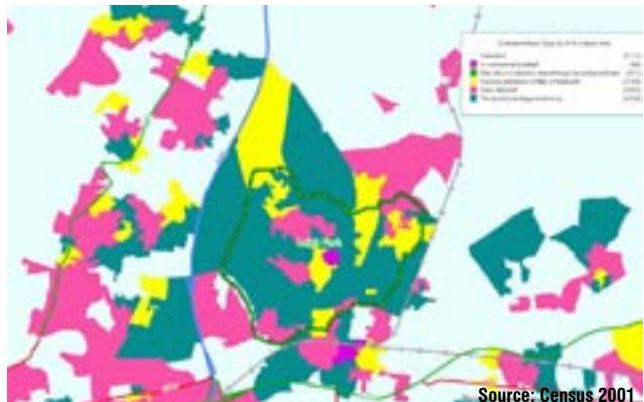


Dominant Acorn Type Group (with transport links shown)

- Blue Collar Roots
- Post Industrial Families
- Prudent Pensioners



Density: number of households per hectare (ONS)
A mixed area but mainly lower density below 30 - 50



Dominant House Type (ONS)

- Terraced
- Semi-detached
- Purpose build block of flats or tenements
- In commercial buildings

Physical features

a. Location The estate is just off the A3 (M), and about ten minutes drive North of the centre of Havant, with good bus links to Portsmouth. Surrounded by attractive countryside, including the Staunton Country Park, it is quite close to some major industrial estates. It is also only a few miles from Waterlooville (The Purbrook, Waterlooville, Cowplain area) which composes mainly post-war suburban development, with plans for a further 2-3,000 homes as part of a Major Development Area.

b. Age Leigh Park was a post-war phased development. It was intended as a New Town, initially to house those who had been 'bombed out' of Portsmouth or who were living in overcrowded conditions, with a planned population of 40,000 (which was never reached). The current level is 27,000 living in 11,500 houses, as average household sizes have fallen.

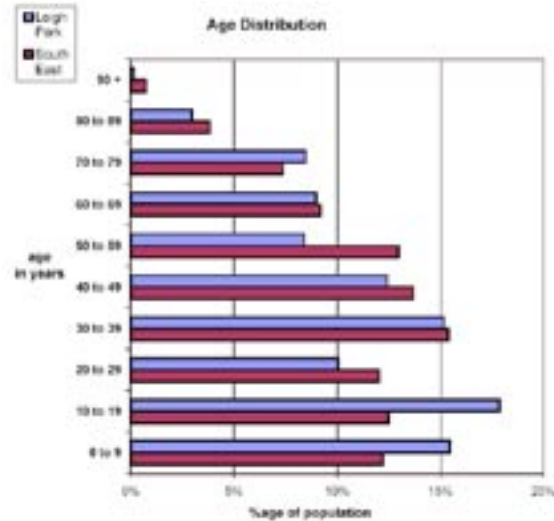
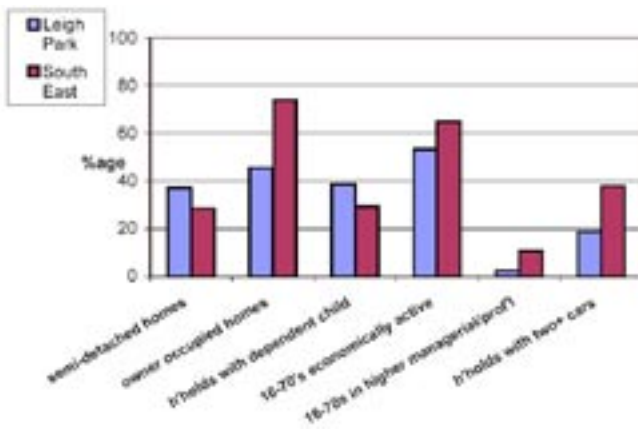
In its day it was promoted as 'the Garden City of the South', but looks like a typical low-rise Council estate. By 1951, 7,000 people lived in Leigh Park, largely in semis, and much of the remaining housing was built in the succeeding decades, and included some system-built housing. There has been virtually no new housing in the last ten years, but there has been some home improvement, and restoration of the system-built homes. The majority of houses that have not been sold under the 'Right to Buy' are owned and managed by Portsmouth County Council.

c. Layout The estate consists of three main parts, known as Leigh Park Central, West Leigh, and Warren Park, plus a distinct centre known as Greywell/Park Parade, though a number of other 'neighbourhoods' can be identified:

- The early parts are largely made up of two storey red brick terraces, on curving

roads off wide and relatively straight main roads.

- Warren Park differs in being largely built on Radburn principles that separate pedestrians and cars, with a number of four storey blocks of flats, and a significant open space running through the middle.
- Greywell/Park Parade is pedestrianised, and consists largely of two storey flats over shops, which face inwards. There is a new Sure Start centre providing a nursery for working parents.
- The overall density is relatively low at 10.5 houses per hectare, but with variations in terms of the amount of open space, and garden size.
- The areas with the most development potential are on the edge, particularly near the A3 (M), and the Procter and Gamble site, which covers 8.3 hectares.



Neighbourhood features

a. Role Leigh Park is becoming more of a 'dormitory' suburb as a result of economic and demographic changes. It is classified by CACI as largely 'post industrial families', and in the past has provided affordable housing to working class families who originally worked in the Dockyards, and then post war in the factories that thrived in Havant, such as Procter and Gamble and Kenwood. The number of local jobs has decreased significantly for example Procter and Gamble, once employing 1000, is closing down. The Planning Brief for the site hopes to attract a mix of uses, including space for 350 jobs that will be lost.

b. Image and identity In spite of an increase in owner occupation, there is still a stigma associated with the area. However the schools and health centres might help to provide a sense of local identity.

c. Demographics The area is relatively homogenous, with 32% within the age group 20-44, and with 65% family households. 45% of all households have children, and 37% of all households have dependent children. Four wards show high concentrations of deprivation, and have attracted £8 million of Single Regeneration Budget funding (plus matched funding).

There is a high level of out commuting

(55,000 economically active residents, but only 37,000 jobs within the borough).

d. Housing demand Little new housing has been built until recently, and there has been a degree of inertia that has inhibited development of several publicly owned sites. Further some of the applications have been considered inappropriate. However now that 45% of the houses are privately owned (acquired under the 'Right to Buy') the area offers some of the cheapest housing available near the South Coast. New people, especially 'aspirant young couples' are seeing the area as a 'first rung on the ladder'. They will tend to use cars to get to work, possibly adding to the pressure on parking spaces. On the whole, however, the area is relatively stable, with low rates of turnover, but is gradually changing in some ways that may make it less sustainable:

- **Households receiving state benefit** As social housing is allocated according to need Leigh Park's population reflects a higher proportion of economically inactive households e.g. young single mothers.
- **Elderly poor** As children have left home, there are significant numbers of people living on limited incomes in large houses that are expensive to heat and maintain; there seems to be relatively little housing designed with the needs of the

elderly in mind.

- **Loss of young people** With prices having increased from £71k to £120k in the last two years, there is a real shortage of intermediate housing, and there is concern that local young people cannot afford what is available, and in order to become independent are ending up in 'bed sits' in Portsmouth.

e. Social infrastructure The area enjoys a good range of schools and social services, though the quality is not what it needs to be if the area is to become more socially balanced. There are some local shops, and there is a large new Asda/Walmart superstore on the edge. Taxis are often used to bring shopping back, with several people sharing a taxi. Previous consultation has revealed a number of key issues for the community including the need to:

- **improve transport** (particularly more direct bus routes, and easier access to services e.g. hospital)
- **articulate local identity** (to help overcome the stigma and rather dreary looking streets)
- **extend leisure facilities** (particularly places for young people to go)
- **tackle crime** (particularly car theft)
- **facilitate enterprise**
- **develop community schools**

Health of the suburb: priorities and opportunities for improvement

The first part of the workshop comprised a scoring/ranking exercise using a ten category scorecard (5 physical and 5 social characteristics). Participants were asked to score questions within each of the ten categories, and the results used to stimulate discussion and reach consensus on priorities. A further ranking exercise enabled the priority categories below to be identified, together with some ideas for improvement.

Commerce Havant needs to encourage more start-ups, including Community Businesses, in order to adapt to a changing economy, and to overcome the ‘dockyard culture’ it has inherited (which includes third generation unemployed). The Procter and Gamble site provides a first class opportunity to do this (see section Room for renewal and redevelopment below).

Character There is too much uniformity, with a predominance of two storey brick semis and terraces. New housing is needed that will look different, and make Leigh Park as a whole more diverse

Possible improvements:

a. Improved public realm This might include revisiting street names, providing more places to sit, and making better use of the green verges (likely to be lost to car parking)

b. Parking courts Solutions need to be found that provide greater security without taking over front gardens e.g. echelon parking

Capacity Even more important than the

NEIGHBOURHOOD SCORE CARD - LEIGH PARK

- * 1. Poor ** 1 to 5 where
- 2. Adequate 1 = least important and
- 3. Good 5 = very important

A. Physical capital	Score*	Rank**
1. Choice		
• can the area accommodate the stages in a family’s life cycle?	1	3
• does it offer a mix of house types and affordability?	1	
2. Connectivity		
• can you reach services and jobs without too much stress?	2	2
• are there basic shops and quality open space within easy walking or cycling distance?	2	
3. Conservation		
• are natural resources being saved e.g. energy, water, materials (waste)?	2	2
• is bio-diversity being encouraged e.g. trees, wildlife?	2	
4. Character		
• does the area look attractive and cared for?	1	4
• has new development enhanced the area?	1	
5. Commerce		
• are there other uses in the area, such as employment or leisure?	1	5
• are there places to set-up a business?	1	
B. Social capital		
1. Community		
• do people feel a sense of pride?	3	3
• does the area readily accept newcomers?	1	
2. Civic life		
• are there enough places to meet others e.g. pubs, clubs, open spaces?	2	4
• are the shops and services welcoming?	1	
3. Crime		
• do residents feel safe when they go out?	1	2
• do residents feel their property is safe?	1	
4. Climate for enterprise		
• is it a good place to start a business?	1	5
• is there sufficient purchasing power to support local businesses?	2	
5. Capacity (and quality) of services		
• can you get to see a doctor without a long wait?	2	1
• can you get into an acceptable secondary school without a long journey?	2	

numbers of doctors or teachers, is the quality of the services

Possible improvements:

a. A new primary health centre Possibly developed through the LIFT programme, this might also help in articulating local identity.

b. ‘Alternative sports’ There is priority need for activity that can engage the interests and energy of young people, for example through a sports centre or gym facilities, or assisting young people to access existing facilities.

c. Play facilities A range of play spaces are called for that can help strengthen community spirit (and incidentally make the area look more inviting). One idea was to convert an older industrial building into a multi-use centre with a central play court with seating that could be used variously for tournament games, as a cinema, or a theatre.

Crime Some progress is being made, through a local police office with 16 officers and a sergeant, and police now ride around on bikes making their presence

much more visible. A multi agency approach is also being used.

Possible improvements:

a. Layout changes Fundamental changes to the layout of some areas would help e.g. turning the Radburn blocks into streets and courtyards

b. Housing development More housing near the centre e.g. for elderly, would create more eyes on the street

c. 'Hang out' places and spaces As well as sporting facilities young people need safe places to just 'hang out', such as skate board parks (two of which have already been provided in Warren Park and West Leigh). However these must be carefully sited to avoid opposition.

Connectivity Radical proposals have been made to improve the links, and there is scope to downgrade some of the main roads, and use some of the open space to better effect (which accounts for a quarter of the land area). While buses have been improved, and an improved bus station in Havant Town Centre is planned, walking and cycling look unsafe, and car usage is likely to grow substantially. Issues of safe play space, and improved walking/cycling routes also arose.

Possible improvements:

a. Home zones One way of reconciling cars and children is the reallocation of space, as has been done successfully in many Dutch towns with 'woonerfs', and which is being tried out in the UK in a number of places

b. Safe walking and cycling One reason Continental suburbs work better is that the car is not allowed to dominate residential areas, and instead both pavements and cycle ways form continuous direct networks that are safe and pleasant to use,



Opportunity to Create an Urban Village at Leigh Park

Urban Design Principles

- developing a new quarter with its own identity and character, while enhancing the town
- raising the density to an acceptable and appropriate level
- plugging into adjacent streets to increase permeability.

Illustrative only

with the minimum of conflict.

Choice There is too little choice, particularly as far as the intermediate market is concerned. Leigh Park is not going to attract executive housing, but it should be easier to find a first independent home, which includes providing more smaller units, (and ones that can be expanded or upgraded as resources allow). Other gaps include modern housing for the elderly, and accommodation for key work-

ers. Though there is a desperate need for social housing, it was felt that greater balance was needed as a whole.

Room for renewal and redevelopment

In addition to the above improvements there is the following potential for the area to become more sustainable through renewal and development. However the Inspector's review of the Local Plan paradoxically cut the requirement from



an extra 300 units by 2011 down to 250. Yet values have risen to a level where Leigh Park can now attract private investment, and the community has begun to understand the value of higher density development.

- **Sustainable urban neighbourhoods**

There is a major opportunity to develop the Procter and Gamble site as a mixed use development. It should yield at least 200 new homes, and could be viewed as a demonstration project for sustainable design e.g. Zero Energy Development. It might also attract innovative people into the area, and go some way to creating a more balanced and diverse population. The planning brief for the site provides for three hectares of industrial units, but there may not be sufficient demand. However there is a need for business incubators offering flexible space, and part of the industrial space might be given over to this use. This would also ensure that there were a few early rungs on the premises ladder to house expanding businesses. A masterplan for the Procter and Gamble site, which lies between the main road and the shopping centre, would provide the means of showing not only the opportunity for housing and employment uses, but also the reinforcement of Greywell/Park Parade, possibly with a healthy living centre, council office and even a small cinema.

Redundant pubs such as The Heron offer

another redevelopment opportunity, and have the added advantage of existing car park space.

Other possible opportunities include:

- **Home extensions and improvements**

Relatively low house values and fragmented ownership rule out redevelopment of existing blocks, but there are a number of opportunities for making the housing stock more sustainable: For example, local building skills and DIY can be tapped in order to reducing energy loss through both double glazing and external render. Extra space could be created e.g. by developing sun rooms, conservatories, front porches, loft extensions. This may also make multiple occupation less problematic.

- **Community hubs** The development of both schools and local health centres, with grouped practices, can also be used to provide community facilities eg meeting space, play space, in walking distance of where people live.

Recommendations for policy

Former Council estates such as Leigh Park throw up a distinct set of policy issues, which do not apply to other types of suburb:

- **Area Management** Places like Leigh Park should not have to rely on their levels of deprivation in order to receive special

attention. They require continuous and locally based Area Management. In particular local authorities need to take the lead in the planning of new facilities and in setting out how public land should be used to make communities more sustainable. Making Leigh Park sustainable requires a substantial time period of action e.g. tangible results are only just starting to show since SEEDA put in funding two and a half years ago.

- **Multi Agency Working** Further, in areas with high levels of deprivation it is crucial to get 'joined up working' in the delivery of services, e.g. health and housing. In addition there may be a need for extensive social work and community intervention in order to overcome problems such as drug and alcohol addiction.

Council estates inevitably have people with high levels of dependency, for example long-term illness and teenage pregnancy, and who are reliant on good public transport.

- **Design Guides** There is an interest in developing guidance or rules that can encourage appropriate development and improvement from the 'bottom-up' rather than relying just on the negative Development Control process. This could include specifying the ways in which houses can be extended, and safe parking spaces provided.



Some ‘stunning’ modern design is needed if Leigh Park is ever to escape its legacy of ‘boring streets’. Vision for Havant recommended the use of study tours, and a Housing Plan that would take account of the range of needs and potential development sites. A practical design guide is urgently needed to influence the development of schemes like the Procter and Gamble site, the new community schools, and the primary health centre. It should tap into experience elsewhere in South East England e.g. Kent, Surrey and Essex, but also might gain inspiration from experience abroad e.g. the Netherlands.

- **Masterplans** Securing a balanced mix of uses where there are major sites like Procter and Gamble to be developed requires a masterplan. In high risk/low value situations, the public sector needs to take the lead, working with potential private developers or the site owner. The Development Brief issues for the Procter and Gamble Site in June 2004 does not provide much guidance on how the site should be laid out, or specify how much funding should be allocated to providing community benefits. The valuable work done so far on Creating Quality Places, and involving the community needs to be developed further if a key opportunity is not to be lost to change the look of a principal gateway, and to attract more en-

trepreneurial people to live in Leigh Park.

- **SMART Transport** With rising levels of car usage, action is needed now to provide attractive alternatives if places like Leigh Park are not to end up dominated by cars, while many people remain dependent on poor public transport. Possible tools include Quality Bus Corridors, car sharing (using mobile phones to facilitate arrangements), and a cycling campaign (with cycling courses and hire schemes), but all rely on changing attitudes, as the car will be seen as a smarter, cheaper, and more reliable option by many. There may be the potential to set up a community business to promote alternatives, perhaps using some form of alternative funding e.g. Time Banks. Action to reallocate pavement and road space to provide safe, continuous and direct cycle ways may need to be carried out at the same time. Ideally cycle ways would link to schools, health facilities, shops and bus routes.

- **Delivery vehicles** The regeneration or ‘restoration’ of Leigh Park has become one of SEEDA’s priorities, and an Enquiry by Design process engaged the community in the development of an Environmental Improvement Plan, with funding under the ODPM’s Design Initiative. In order to maintain the momentum of this exercise, and given limited capital funds

and a shortage of staff with the time and capacity to manage regeneration projects, the Creating Quality Places project partners (SEEDA, Havant Borough Council, Portsmouth City Council and Hampshire County Council) are considering the creation of a Special Purpose Delivery Vehicle. This needs to overcome the problem of ensuring there is a vision shared by all the Authorities, and the capacity to involve development partners where there are a number of different land owners particularly Portsmouth City Council.

However, Leigh Park, which is larger than a small town, needs more than one form of partnership. With the development of major sites there is the potential to set up a community Development Trust with a property base to allow for rental income to fund initiatives. An alternative model is that of a Groundwork Trust to promote better use and refurbishment of public open space.

There may also be scope for setting up the equivalent of an Urban Regeneration Company or mini Development Corporation to take over land owned by Portsmouth Council, along with other sites needed to create viable development packages, and to enter into partnerships that use private finance to achieve public goals.

Summary findings from FPD Savills' Market* report on Leigh Park

Residential

- A series of Council built housing estates, now predominantly occupied by people in routine and lower managerial/intermediate occupations, and classified by Acorn as 'post industrial' or 'hard pressed –struggling families' to the North, and 'settled suburbia' to the South.
- There is an almost equal split between owner occupied and socially rented housing in the suburb.
- There is a very small residential investor market, with 5% rented privately (compared with 12% nationally) but this is growing.
- Described by agents as an area considered to have a poor reputation. Values are therefore relatively low making it popular with first time buyers and those in 'blue collar' occupations.
- Property values are relatively low compared with the rest of Havant (at least 17% lower than Havant as a whole across all property types). Yet value growth in the suburb over the last couple of years matches that seen in Havant district.

Retail and Leisure, Office and Industrial

- There is very little or no office space in Leigh Park itself. There is some office space on the business and industrial estates found on the south east boundary of the suburb. Space classified as 'other business space' is also found in the same periphery location.
- Occupier demand for offices in Leigh Park and Havant town centre is extremely weak and institutional investor demand is virtually non-existent.
- As larger office users would tend to look to Portsmouth, and to locations with better road links, the only demand is likely to be from existing small businesses.
- 17% of the District's vacant industrial units representing 21% of its floor space is in locations adjacent to the suburb.
- Leigh Park is seen as one of Havant's three principal shopping centres, which has the Greywell/Park Parade shopping centre. Rents at Greywell, the more popular part, range from £10-15 psf and Park Parade £5-10 psf.
- Low levels of affluence, and the area's reputation mean that there is low retail demand (Leigh Park accounts for 45% of the available units in the borough). Based on current conditions in the Borough it is unlikely customers will be drawn from outside the suburb.
- There is very little in terms of leisure space within the Leigh Park suburb, and is confined to Crown Bingo Club (close to Greywell Shopping Centre). This is successful in attracting customers from outside the suburb. There are a number of Local Plan ambitions to develop leisure facilities in a number of locations across the Borough.
- Intuitive investors have shown little interest in Leigh Park, although there is some developer interest for niche mixed-use e.g. Dwyer plc.

Future action

- It is important that future development changes the area's profile, rather than just reflecting current demand, and relates to what is likely to happen elsewhere.
- The key to the future is developing more owner occupied residential units, and/or small scale business space, not offices.
- Extra retail should only be considered if it replaces some of the existing space
- Private investment on any scale will only be attracted once the area's environment and reputation has improved, and this will require a significant public sector initiative.
- An innovative mixed use scheme on the Procter and Gamble site might turn the area around.

* The full market report can be found at www.southeast-ra.gov.uk