

Mapping the availability of Healthy Food in Sandwell

A Sandwell Health Action Zone Funded Project.

Research Team:

Dave Rex, Food Policy Advisor, Angela Blair, Food Access Worker,(now community food development worker) Sandwell Health Authority (now Rowley Regis and Tipton Primary Care Trust).

Elizabeth Dowler, department of Sociology, Warwick University.

Chris Grundy, Environmental Epidemiology Unit, dept of Public Health and Policy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

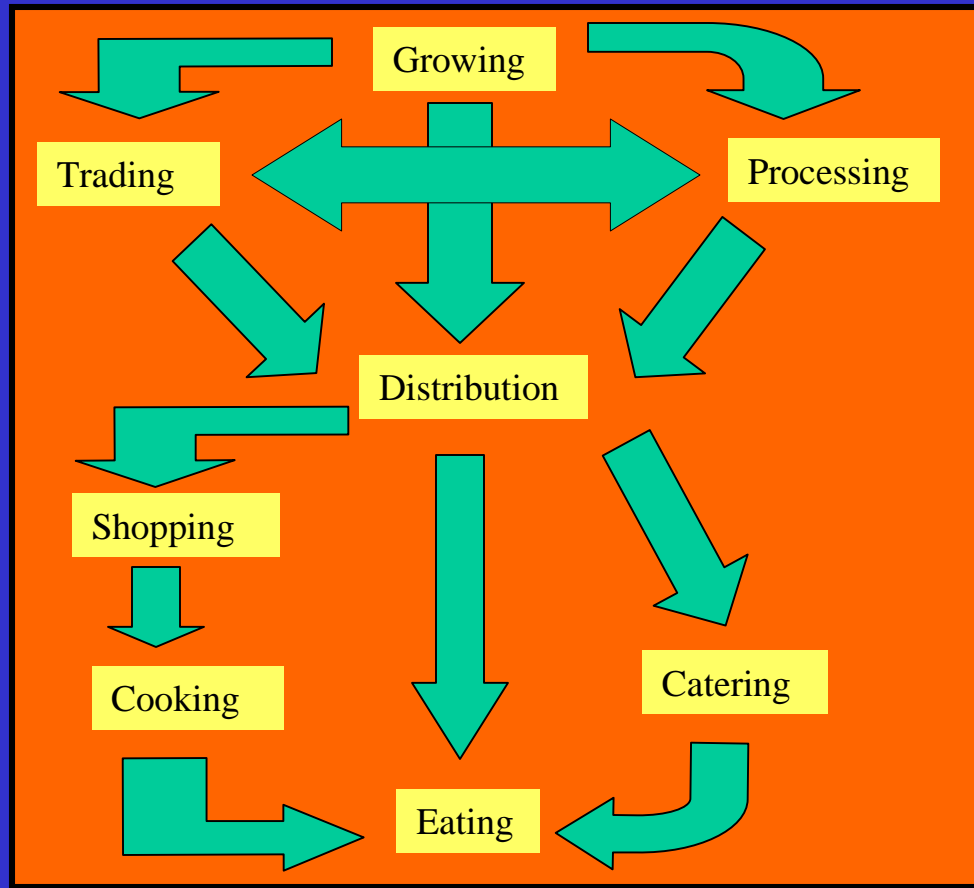
Angela Donkin, Consultant Food Economist.

About Sandwell

- 6 black country towns to the west of Birmingham.
- Major industrial heritage.
- Polluted.
- High levels of deprivation.
- Falling population.
- Low car ownership.
- 50% higher than average early deaths from CHD and strokes.

Socio - cultural

Environmental



**Nutrition and
food safety**

Economic

“Food is everybody’s business,
but no-ones responsibility”

“Good food is a bad commodity.
Good commodities are bad
foods”

Food Policy Board

- Health Sector
- Sustainable Development Team
- Food Safety and Trading Standards
- Urban Form / Housing / Planning
- Allotments Officer
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Voluntary Sector
- Sandwell Traders Association

Whose responsibility is “healthy eating”?

Project based solutions

- The individual
- Health Professionals
- The community
- The local voluntary Sector

“Downstream” Health Promotion



Policy based solution

- Local Government
- National Voluntary Sector
- National Government
- The E.U / WTO / UN
- The W.T.O and the U.N

“Upstream” Health Promotion

Traditional health promotion

- Focuses on individuals
- Assumes that people behave in a rational way
- Assumes that knowledge is the main barrier to healthy behaviour
- Assumes that people make free choices as individuals

Why people do not eat as well as they should

Money

Other priorities

Local Availability

Mobility

Time

Advertising

Knowledge

Confidence

Culture

Skills

Awareness

Acceptability

The role of food projects in addressing food access / consumption “problems”

Home Delivery Service

Market Garden Project

Community Cafes

Cooking Skills Projects

Food project workers (eg: Sure Start/5 a day)

We also need to restructure our food system.

Hence:

Food Policy Board with lobbying role

Community needs assessments

Work with neighbourhood shops

Work with caterers

Food co-operatives



Community food growing projects

- Improvements to the environment
- Better access to healthy food
- New skills
- Relaxation
- Sense of achievement
- Social interaction
- Greater awareness of foods grown

Food culture

Nettle soup syndrome

The Everest effect

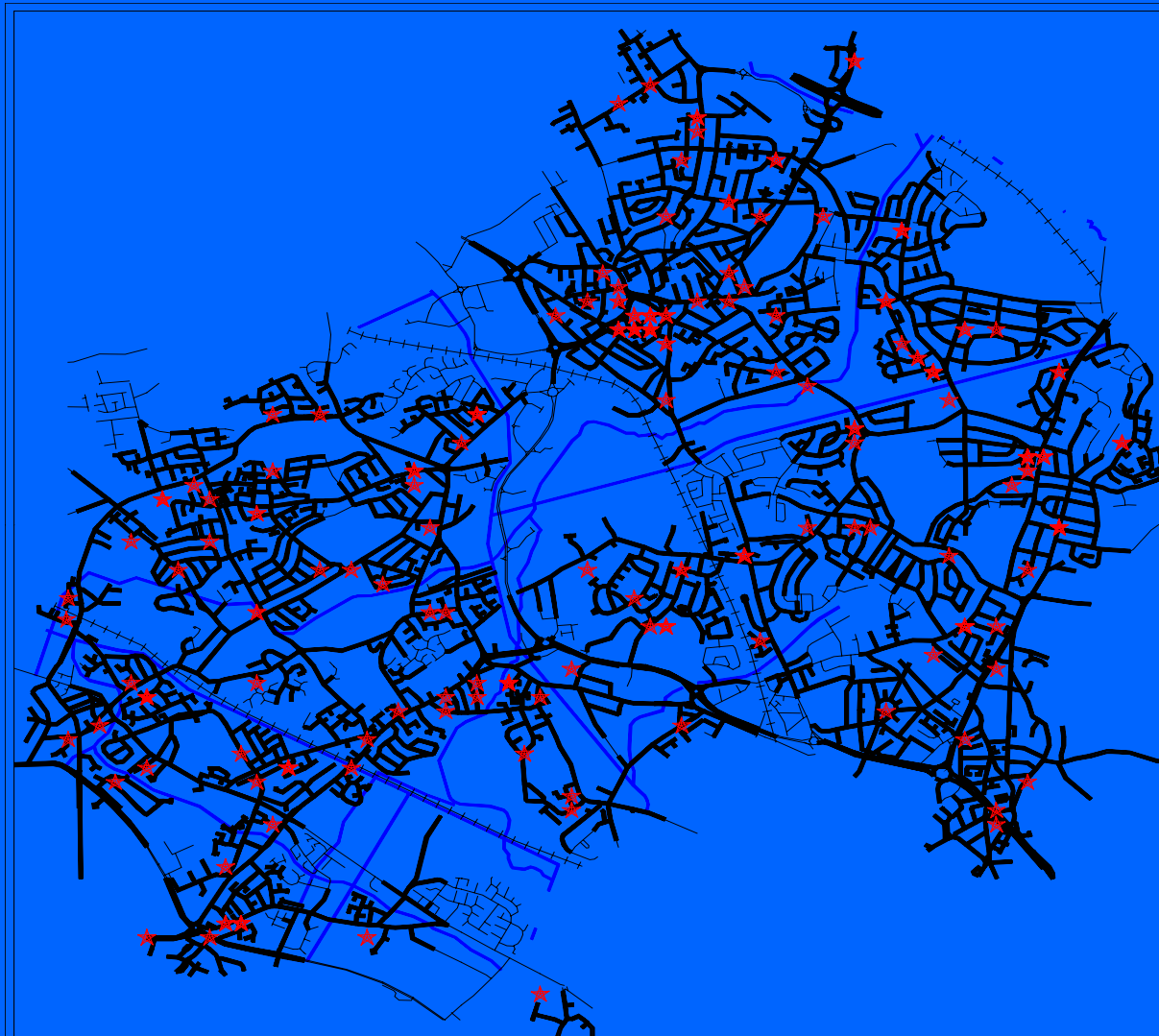
What did we do?

- Developed community shopping lists using participatory methods
- Visited 192 shops and recorded the availability of over 100 foods
- Interviewed 175 shopkeepers
- Used Geographical Information Systems to produce food access maps

What did we find?

- Most residents have poor access to fruit and vegetables.
- Most residents live within 500m of a shop selling food.
- Most residents live with walking distance of a shop selling cigarettes, chocolate and sweets.
- Local shops are struggling to survive and believe that selling fresh fruit and vegetables is too difficult.

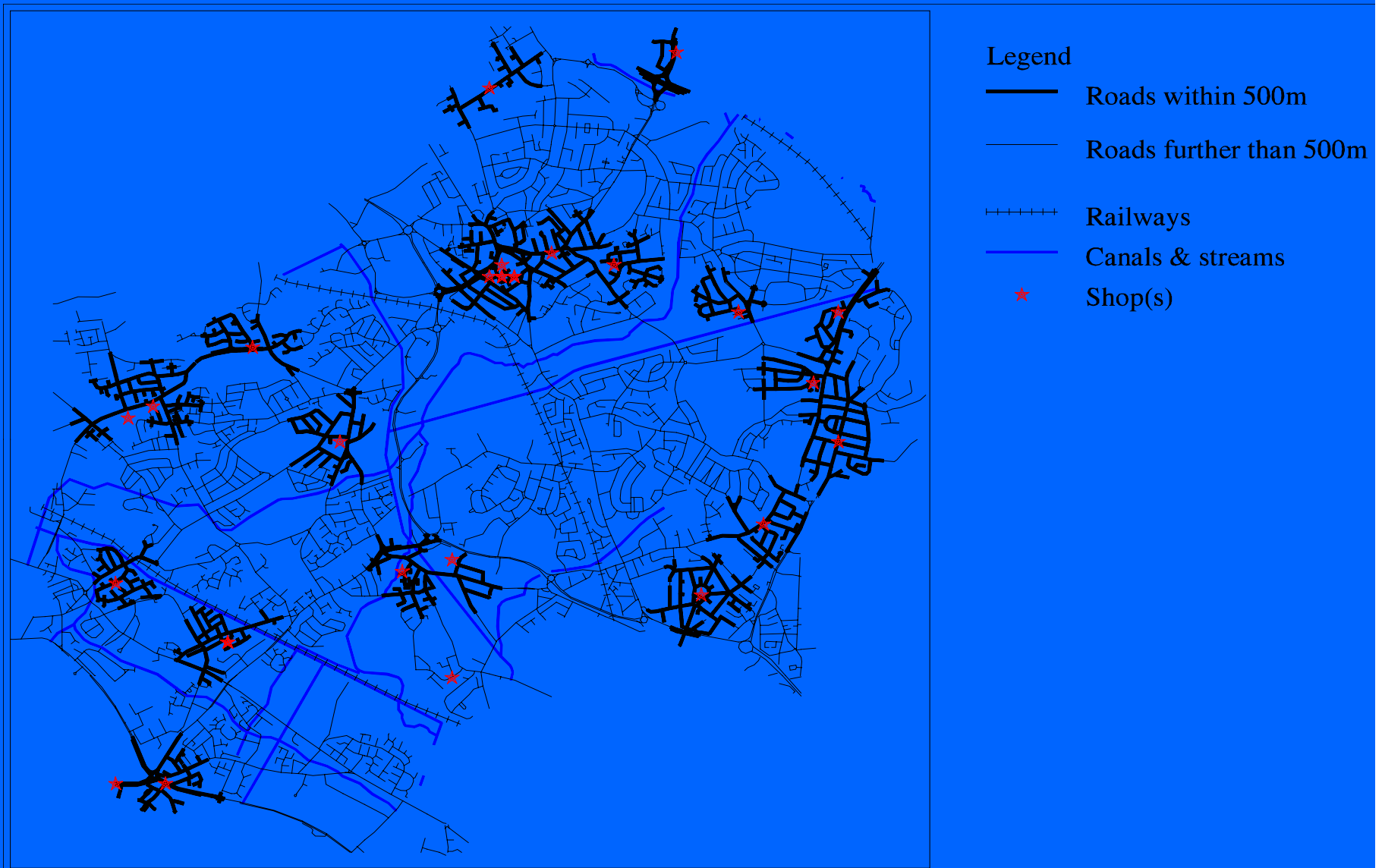
Access to a Food Shop Within Walking Distance



Legend

- Roads within 500m
- Roads further than 500m
- ++++ Railways
- Canals & streams
- ★ Shop(s)

Access to Reasonably Priced Fruit and Vegetables





local shops in local authority estate, Sandwell
*(picture taken summer 2000 by Angela Blair, food access worker,
Sandwell Health Authority)*

The “free market” at work?



Food co-op and retailer working together?



Solutions to food access

- Internet shopping?
- Food co-ops?
- Grow your own?
- More supermarkets?
- Improvements to transport?
- Farmers markets?
- Proactive planning, regeneration and commitment to minimum standards of retailing?

Why neighbourhood retailing is important for health

- Can improve access to nutritious food
- Encourages walking and cycling as forms of physical activity
- Keeps money local
- Encourages social interaction
- Reduces traffic congestion and pollution

Conclusion

- Neighbourhood retailing is important for social, economic, physical and environmental health.
- The decline in healthy neighbourhood retailing disproportionately affects the poorest residents.
- New housing developments for people with cars should provide attractive local alternatives to food shopping by car, within walking and cycling distance.
- Investing in healthy sustainable neighbourhood retailing should be a priority for neighbourhood renewal and regeneration programmes.