# Mapping the availability of Healthy Food in Sandwell

A Sandwell Health Action Zone Funded Project.

Research Team:

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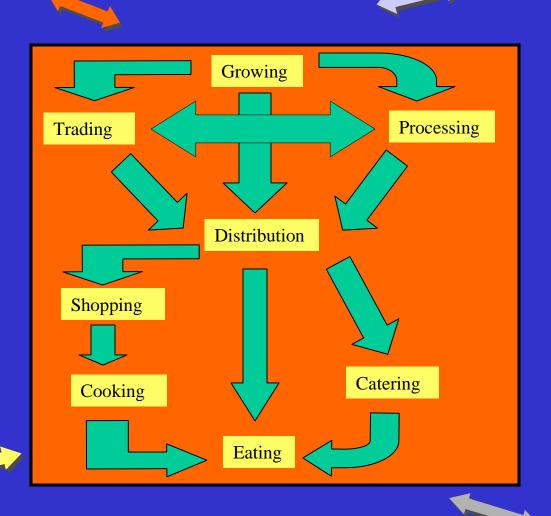
Angela Donkin, Consultant Food Economist.

#### **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



- •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 Knowledge

Other priorities Confidence

Local Availability Culture

Mobility Skills

Time Awareness

Advertising 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

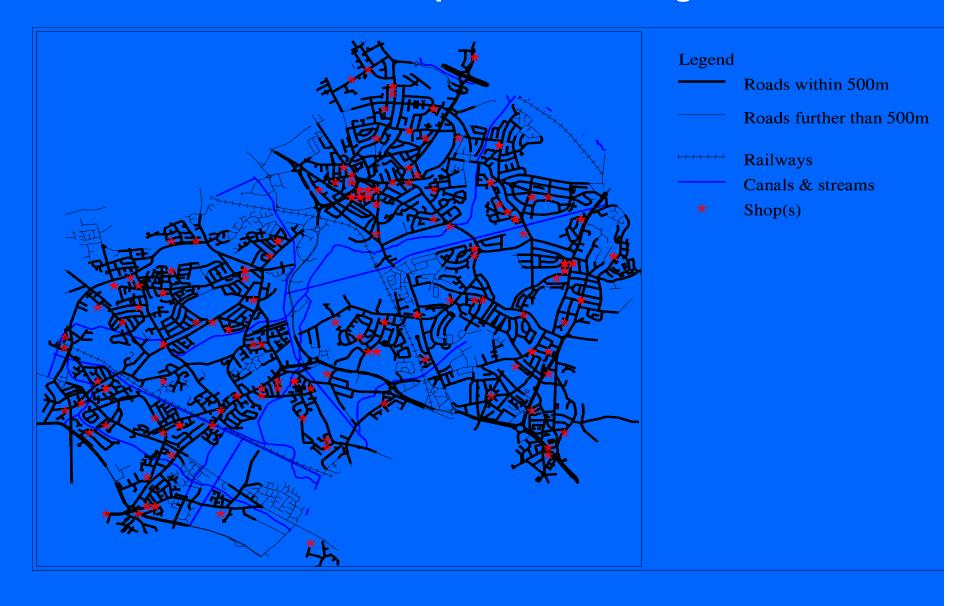
## What did we do?

- •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

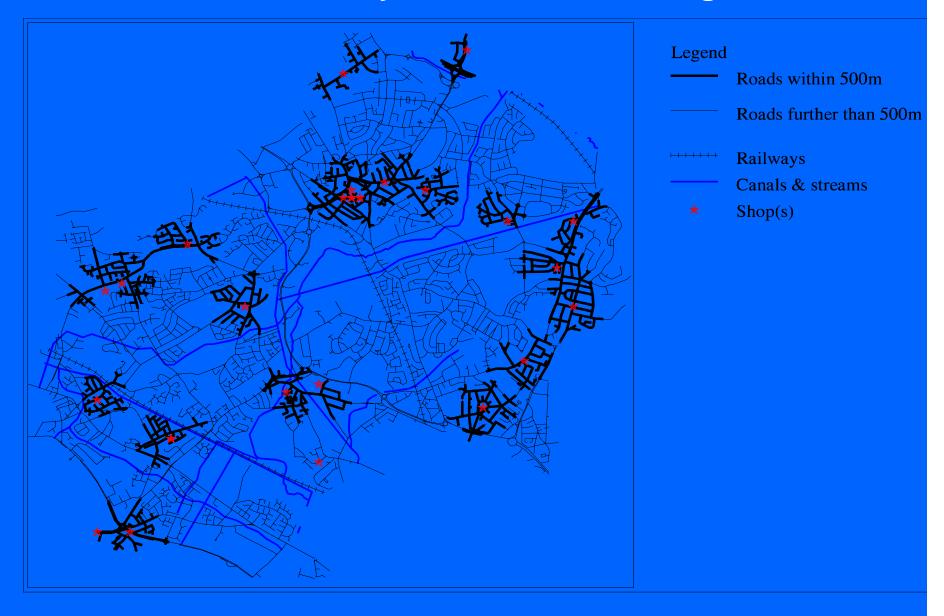
### What did we find?

- •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**



#### **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.